

Autism Speaks Grant

Purpose

- To increase the communicative ability of our individuals through new technology hardware and software.
- To obtain augmentative alternative communication devices (AAC) for speech therapy evaluations.

Program room

- Go talk (4, 8, 16 icon)
- Computer software (Boardmaker Plus, Timo's lesson creator, intellitools)
- Touch screen computer monitor.
- Adapted switches for multiple access

Communication materials received

- Mercury II
- Chat PC-4
- Visual support software
- Overlay maker software
- AAC evaluation software

Plan for program room

- Trial group of 10 individuals for pilot room
- Present individuals with numerous communicate options
- Record changes in behavior with new equipment to indicate direct wants/needs.
- Expand rooms and increase participants over a period of time

Communication room plan

- Begin to provide therapy using state of the art communication systems.
- Begin the process of evaluating individuals for alternative augmentative communication devices
- Increase communicative options through the use of new computer software to create low tech communicative systems

Program Room Results

- From the pilot room, 10 individuals were chosen to start with.
- Difficulties were noted when numerous software and hardware were presented at once.
- Individuals become non-responsive towards new materials.

Communication results

Therapy can now target use of specific equipment to help determine most appropriate type of AAC device.

- Saving money from not having to rent machines from other vendors

Use of computer software

- Benefits:
- Use of the touch screen computer.
- Creating of specific boards to work on carryover of goals, as well as present new material in conjunction with the unit's day plan
- Specific cause and effect boards, while using the touch screen computer monitor, to increase overall participation.

Future plans

- To begin to order software for remaining rooms once its effectiveness has been fully tested.
- Additional AAC evaluations to be administered to help increase our individual's overall communication skills.
- Slowly replicate plan to increase communication goals through the use of new materials received from the grant.

Use of AAC device

- E.M.
- Never used an AAC device before.
- Refused use of low tech boards on the past (communication board)
- Limited expressive vocabulary

The Communication and Psychology departments: Joining forces

- A guiding philosophy: Problem behavior is communicative behavior
- DDI mentor Ted Carr pioneered this concept in the late 1970's
- DDI was one of the first organizations to implement practices related to this approach

What may problem behavior communicate?

- A desire to access something (person, place or thing)
- A desire to avoid or escape something

Functional behavior assessment

- The process by which we identify what problem behavior is most often telling us about a person's wants or needs
- Process: Examination of the context of problem behavior. Look for trends.

What next? A three prong approach

- Teaching communicative replacement behaviors
- Modify the environment
- Modify the consequences

Teaching Communicative Replacement Behaviors

- Consultation and coordination with our speech department. May include:
 - Applied behavior specialists bring information on behavior function to our speech department. Helps develop communication programs.
 - Speech department often joins psychology department's small group supervision sessions
 - Cross training on behavior plans and community-based communication programs.