

Augmentative Communication News

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UPFRONT

Over the past decade, there has been an employment explosion in the augmentative and alternative communication (AAC) community. Service providers are employed within a range of governmental, rehabilitation, health-care, and educational systems, or are self-employed. Researchers are working on projects supported by universities, companies, foundations, and governments. Manufacturers have catalogs of products and offer support mechanisms with consultants and 800 numbers. The field of AAC has an international society (ISAAC) with national chapters. Many professional organizations have AAC special interest groups. Consumer organizations have mission statements

addressing the right to communicate. We have AAC journals, newsletters, books, data bases, and electronic networks. We have laws and public policies that mandate access to communication. We have people in the "right places" acting as advocates. The budgets of some AAC companies and institutions have surpassed the million dollar mark. Some of our fund raising events are no longer bake sales, but rock and roll extravaganzas. We have so many conferences that it could keep some of us out of town, most of the time. Without question, there has been an exponential increase in the number of people employed because of their connection to AAC service delivery. This is true all over the world.¹

There is one exception. One group remains unemployed—those who use



For Consumers

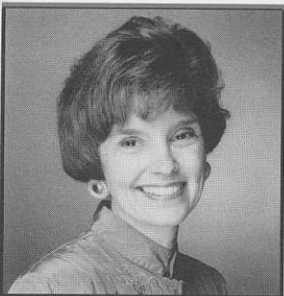
What do you want to be when you grow up?

For all adults, including those who benefit from AAC intervention, employment is not only about survival. Rather, employment can and often does determine the quality of a person's life. In addition to providing monetary benefits, employment creates opportunities for friendships and for learning. It helps define how you feel about yourself and how other people perceive you. One of the first things people ask is, "What do you do?" To say, "nothing" is self demeaning. Employment often determines where you live and sleep, how you meet your basic needs, and what you do with your leisure time.

Vocational choices are a summing up of abilities, interest, and values on one side and the opportunities of the labor market on the other side. When the choice is made realistically, it represents a compromise between aspiration and reality.²

The path to employment

Today, we know that most adults with severe expressive communication impairments are not employed. We also know that many could be. With shifting attitudes about people with disabilities and increased legal mandates, more AAC users soon will be. The path to employment for those who use AAC techniques and devices already exists, but it has been denied. As for everyone, the pathway must begin in childhood. Vocational choices are a "summing up of abilities, interests, and values on one side, and the opportunities of the labor market on the other side. When the choice is made realistically, it represents a compromise between aspiration and reality."² As such, the search for an adult career is a response to the expectations (cont. pg. 2)



UPFRONT (from page 1) AAC techniques and devices to communicate . . . the only reason the field exists!

This August, the field of AAC began to focus on our unemployment problem at the First Annual Pittsburgh Employment Conference (PEC@). This issue of ACN strives to sharpen that focus and carry it beyond Pittsburgh. For Consumers discusses the need for professionals and families to increase expectations and expand the early experiences and employment opportunities of individuals who use AAC. The

University/Research section summarizes information reported at the conference about employed AAC users in community-based jobs. In the Clinical News and Equipment sections, results of the ACN Employment Survey conducted during May, June and July, 1993 are presented. Finally, the Governmental section considers how to encourage government agencies to become more responsive to the needs of people with severe communication problems. Thanks to all who responded to the ACN survey and to those participating in the PEC@ for sharing your opinions, insights and experiences. The PEC sponsors are to be congratulated for bringing the employment issue to our attention and for structuring the conference in such a way that AAC users were active participants throughout. I learned alot!

Sarah W. Blackstone, Ph.D.

For Consumers (cont. from page 1)

of those around us and a direct result of our opportunities and experiences. A small child may want to be an astronaut, dancer, doctor, teacher, and fireman before he or she is 10 years old. Teenagers learn what it's like to work outside the home by baby sitting, doing a paper route or selling something door to door. Summer or part time jobs teach young people work ethics and allow them to earn money and be independent. Along the way, many discover what

they don't want to be, as well as what they like and can do well.

People who are born with or acquire a severe disability are not expected to be "gainfully employed." Thus, many children are never asked "what do you want to be when you grow up." Do children who use AAC have aspirations? You bet they do! Table I gives 16 examples. How should we respond? For example, if a child with cerebral palsy and limited speech wants to be a veterinarian, shouldn't we at least read her books

about animals and ask a local veterinarian to let her volunteer. Ten years from now, if she still wants to be a vet, what might virtual reality and other technologies enable her to do? I'm sure I don't know—do you?

It is essential for all adults to have meaningful work throughout their lives.

The relationship between employment and work

Work refers to activities requiring specific skills and commitment that are recognized by society as having some value.

Employment refers to a contractual condition wherein one does steady work for pay and other benefits.

People with disabilities should have the same range of options available to them as other adults. In addition to employment, other types of "work" should be recognized: Parenting, household management, making investments, creating art, picking up litter, serving on a school board and so on. In a lifetime, all adults may work part or full time, volunteer, move in and out of the work force, go back to school, change jobs and even professions.

FIGURE 1. An Adult's Day



As adults, we spend approximately 1/3 of each day asleep; 1/3 doing work, and the rest of each day divided between attending to basic needs and engaging in leisure activities (see Figure 1.) While the emphasis of our activities shifts over the decades, adults do spend a large portion of their lives working. Thus, as we approach the important issue of employment in AAC—or should I say unemployment?—let us remember that steady work for pay, is not the only type of work adults want to do. It is essential for all adults to have meaningful work throughout their lives.

Table I. "What do you want to be when you grow up?"³

Name	Age	Answer	How expressed
Chad Dailey (PA)	9 yrs	Actor	Dynavox, Eye gaze
Katie Farrie (NJ)	8 yrs	Veterinarian	Speech. TouchTalker w/IEP+
Kurt Gallucci (NJ)	7 yrs	Manager at McDonalds	Manual board with mom asking questions
Teri Owens (PA)	13 yrs	Work with computers	Drawing
Elizabeth Unger (NJ)	9 yrs	I think a nurse. Not sure	Touch Talker with IEP+
Courtney Whitfield (CO)	11 yrs	Do operations (surgeon)	Dynavox
Alisha Wing (LA)	5 yrs	Ride motorcycles	Dynavox

From Florida Lindsay (age 6) = Cow girl; Daniel (age 7) = Computer worker; John (age 11) = Scientist; Elizabeth (age 12) = Writer; Christina (age 14) = Mommy; Faye (age 15) = Teacher; David (age 16) = Truck driver; Mike (age 20) = Professional student
From Illinois: Chris (age 11) = Fireman or do computer.

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University & Research

Survey data on
employed AAC users

Perusal of the literature in AAC reveals little information about employment. At the PEC@ conference, several presenters reported the results of surveys they had conducted. Two are summarized below.

Individuals with congenital/acquired disabilities

Light, Stoltz and McNaughton⁴ from Penn State University surveyed adults who use AAC and were employed in community-based jobs during 1992-93. Goals were to collect information about basic demographics, types of jobs held, how they were secured and maintained, job satisfaction, and barriers. Thirty-one adults from across North America responded, ages 22-52 years (mean age 33 years 5 months). Most were males (65%) with congenital disabilities (cerebral palsy 74%, mental retardation 16%, vision 10%, hearing 10%, autism 10%, traumatic brain injury 10%). Only 60% graduated from high school. Of these, 30% also had an undergraduate/graduate degree. Fifty-six percent (56%) said they were literate, i.e., able to read a newspaper.

All said they use a combination of communication modes: voice output communication aids for face to face interaction (70%), gestures/signs (50%), light tech devices (50%), and speech (50%). To write, they used a computer with a standard keyboard or emulator, and/or their AAC systems. Only 25% were not required to write at work. One person indicated the need to write, but had no means to do so. These individuals held a diversity of jobs:

- Clerical positions 11(35%): mail clerk, data entry, secretary, sorting mail, tracking inventory.
- Laborers 4(13%): mowing lawns, cleaning, maintaining gardens.
- Trainers, counselors, educational aides 4(13%): training clients on AAC systems, promoting literacy among AAC users, helping in classrooms.
- Cook and dishwasher 3(10%)
- Technical consultants 3(10%)
- Consumer advocates 3(10%)
- Artist or writer 2(6%)
- AAC specialist 1(3%)

More than half (52%) felt school had not prepared them for employment. Forty percent (40%) attributed *finding a job* to their family and friends, rather than vocational training programs (27%) or school (15%). They attributed *getting a job* to job skills (43%), support from family and friends (30%), help from vocational rehabilitation (17%) and schools (7%). Reasons given for *keeping a job* were: hard work (50%), good job skills (38%) and help from supervisors and co-workers (25%). Most (67%) said they worked part-time (up to 30 hours), 27% worked between 30 and 40 hours, and 6% worked more than 40 hours. Assistance at their work site was needed by 63%, but most of these individuals required support less than 5 hours per week.

Multiple barriers confront these individuals: Problems with communication (62%), technology (58%), transportation (54%), architectural barriers (31%) and attitudes (48%).

Nevertheless, they report a high level of satisfaction with job duties (94%), their supervisors (90%), co-workers (81%) and salary (77%). Many (48%) said, however, they had essentially no chance for promotion or advancement.

In concluding her talk, Light stressed the importance for individuals with severe speech impairments to have:

- Effective communication skills.
- Access to assistive technology.
- Reliable equipment. Time must not be lost when equipment breaks.
- Functional, marketable skills.
- A positive work ethic.
- An appropriate job match.
- Strong interpersonal skills/strong support network.
- Positive social attitudes/work environment.
- On-the-job assistance.
- Access to reliable transportation.
- A barrier-free work environment.

Individuals with neurodegenerative conditions

Fried-Oken⁵ from Oregon Health Sciences University conducted a survey of employed adults with neurodegenerative diseases. Five men and 1 woman responded. All (ages 47 to 70 years, mean age 59 years) were employed as professionals (physicist, psychologist, video editor, professor, business analyst and physician). All had a diagnosis of amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (ALS) with a post-diagnosis period ranging from 3 months to 9 years (mean of 4.71 years). Note: These data demonstrate that life expectancy and the period during which an individual can work for persons with ALS is impossible to predict. Three respondents continued to work for their prior employers. Others were self employed and worked from home. All used personal assistants. All had difficulty speaking—3 had reduced intelligibility, 2 were unable to speak and 1, who is on a ventilator, used a Portex cuffed "trach-talk" tube with an on/off remote switch.

These individuals said their work productivity depended on an ability to generate text. All used personal computers with keyboard emulator software and switch access and said speech synthesis and printers are important. AAC system components included: Words+ Scanning WSKE with Multi-Voice, EZ Keys with MultiVoice, Co-Writer/KE-NX, the ZYGO Scanning Macaw and various switches (e.g., Able-Net universal switch and TASH round switches).

Their advice to others with neurodegenerative diseases?

- Get a good system and spend time to really learn it.
- Interface your AAC system into the company's computer network.
- Find someone who knows equipment and what is possible so you can remain as independent as possible.
- Acquire and use AAC systems as soon as possible.
- Develop and use your potential to the fullest.
- Be persistent.
- Be willing to learn a new method.
- Use electronic mail.

Final Comments: These data clearly demonstrate people who use AAC are working in community-based jobs.

Researchers! We still need information describing the characteristics, perceptions, experiences, aspirations, and frustrations of AAC users who are not employed, i.e., information about the majority.



Clinical News

Results of ACN survey

Augmentative Communication News conducted a survey during June, July and August, 1993 to gather information about what people in the field know and think about the employment of individuals who use AAC. Characteristics of the 204 who responded are described in Table II. To summarize, most respondents were professionals (clinicians, educators, researchers, and manufacturers), primarily from North America. Most have been involved in AAC for more than 6 years and reported working at a variety of primary employment sites. Given the characteristics of those responding, the results (and this discussion) reflect the perceptions and experiences of professionals in AAC, rather than AAC consumers or family members.

TABLE II. DESCRIPTION OF 204 RESPONDENTS TO ACN SURVEY

Country Of Origin		Role		Years in AAC		Employment Site	
U.S.A	84%	Clinicians	62%	1 - 3 yrs	16%	Schools	30%
Canada	9%	Educators	18%	3 - 6	24%	Universities	14%
United Kingdom	4%	Researchers	6%	6 - 10	31%	Rehab	14%
Other (Japan, Sweden, The Netherlands, Australia)	3%	AAC users/families	4%	10 - 15	16%	Centers	
		Manufacturers/representatives	2%	> 15 yrs	13%	Clinics	10%
		Other	8%			Hospitals	5%
						Other (varied)	30%

Total number of AAC users. Respondents said they knew a total of 5,333 people who use AAC techniques. Some reported knowing only one person, while others knew 500 people (mean=31). Note: No attempt was made to identify or describe individual AAC users so it is probable some AAC users were counted by multiple respondents.

Number of AAC users who are employed. Nearly 25 percent of those responding said they knew no employed AAC user. Respondents did report, however, a total of 727 AAC users who are employed. In other words, only 14% of the 5,333 AAC users known by respondents (ages 16-64 years old) are employed. Closer examination of the data reveal that counted among the 727 employed were some people in sheltered workshops, as well as those working in the community.

How do AAC employment statistics compare? The popular press reports employment rates for able-bodied adults in many countries at +90%. Rates for disabled adults ages 16-64 years are significantly lower (39.3%).⁶ Even lower are rates for people with speech impairments ages 21 to 64 (34.9%) and those unable to speak (24.4%), according to the 1990 Survey of Income and Program Participation (SIPP), a national household survey.⁷ Results of the ACN survey suggest even lower employment rates for AAC users between 16 and 64 years old. No actual count was done; however, respondents, largely professionals specializing in AAC, would be expected to know and if anything, to overestimate, rather than underestimate the number of employed adults. Also, considering people in sheltered workshops were counted (and hadn't been in other studies),

the ACN results (14% working) offer a guesstimate that is most probably, still on the high side.

Types of Jobs. To determine the types of jobs these 727 employed AAC users are doing, we asked respondents to make a list. Most to least frequently mentioned were:

- **Data entry** (quality control, programmer, accountant/bookkeeper, converting codes on computer for a art gallery)
- **Assembly work in sheltered workshops** (sorting, packaging, shredding foam, making pillows, separating plastic)
- **Custodial** (housekeeper, maintenance, building manager, dishwasher, kitchen helper)
- **Laborer** (gardener, stablehand)
- **Clerical** (secretary, paper shredder, label maker, mail clerk, cashier, inter-office messenger)
- **Self employed** (writer, consultant, guru, actor, printer)
- **AAC related jobs** (consultant, rehabilitation counsellor, aide in speech department)
- **Service jobs** (supermarket, busser, host, food preparation (Pizza Hut, MacDonalds), dietary assistant, patient escort)

- **Other jobs:** lawyer, physicist, teacher, professor, engineer, architect, librarian, lobbyist, actor, fisherman, chief executive officer, policy analyst.

It is noteworthy that a large number of jobs held by AAC users are associated with low pay. Because of this, even employed individuals may have limited economic leverage and thus, limited control over their lives.

Part time vs. full time work. Respondents reported more than half (56%) of the 727 employed AAC users work fewer than 20 hours per week, and very few work full time. Light et al.'s⁴ study also found a majority of individuals who use AAC work part time. Recent statistics for part-time workers in 21 countries ranged from 4.8% in Spain to 33.2 percent in the Netherlands.⁸ Although part-time work is a way of life for millions of men and women, a survey of the 12 EC nations found that 37% of able-bodied part-timers would prefer to work full-time.⁹ For persons with disabilities, part-time employment can and does offer a reasonable and important alternative. Unfortunately, it also can have negative economic ramifications and preclude individuals from receiving a range of necessary benefits.¹⁰

Getting and Keeping a Job: Communication skills are required for successful employment. In an attempt to ascertain how ACN subscribers perceive the importance of specific communication skills, we asked respondents to rank the 3 communication skills they judged to be most important for 1) getting and 2) keeping a job, from a field of 10 choices. Figure 2 displays these results. To summarize, respondents ranked *being able to exchange information* as the most important skill for both getting and keeping a job. Ranked second was an ability to *ask questions*. The third, fourth, and fifth ranked skills were *using a communication device* (low and/or high tech), *being a good listener/following directions*, and *using a computer*. *Using socially appropriate phrases* such as "Hi, how are you today" and "excuse me" were important for getting a job, but *chatting* was felt to be more important for keeping a job. *Writing and using the*

phone were ranked as least important, probably because people with severe communication impairments are less likely to have jobs that require these skills.

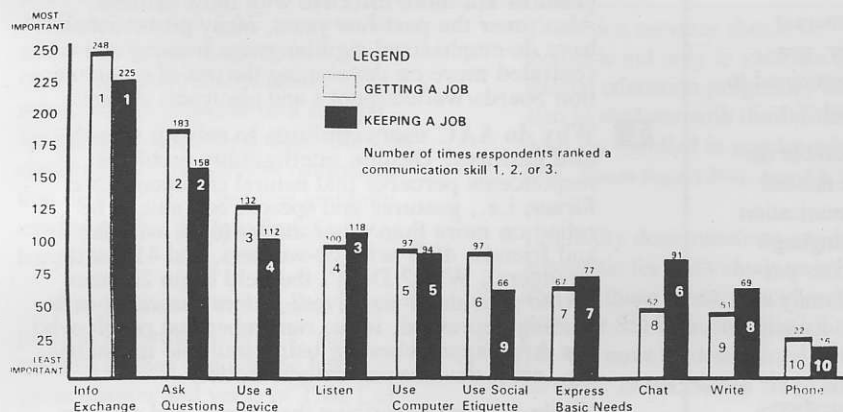
Barriers to employment: A multitude of existing barriers were identified. The two most frequently cited were a lack of education about the capabilities of AAC users and lack of information about the possible job-matches that exist. Additional barriers were:

- Negative attitudes and/or reduced expectations on the part of employers, families and AAC professionals.
- Characteristics of communication, such as slow rate.
- Factors related to the use of technology, and problems with devices.
- Limited job skills.
- Amount of support required.
- Limitations in interpersonal skills.
- Costs.
- Need for appropriate job sites.
- The recession.
- Need for role models.
- A lack of employment experience.

At the PEC@ conference, participants discussed *prejudice* as being primarily responsible for the large unemployment of people with severe disabilities, including those who use AAC. There seemed to be a consensus that until and unless people in our social, educational and rehabilitation systems (that's us), as well as employers and the general public, increase expectations and expand opportunities for AAC users to do real work in their communities, any real improvement in the AAC employment statistics is unlikely.

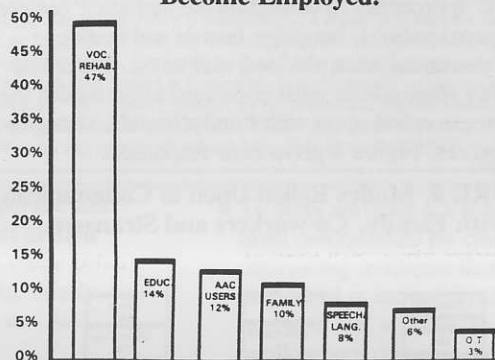
Helping individuals who use AAC to become employed: As illustrated in Figure 3, respondents to the ACN survey said vocational rehabilitation counsellors should play a major role in helping individuals who use AAC to become employed. However, many also felt that responsibilities should be shared by educators, AAC users, families, speech/language pathologists, and others.

FIGURE 2. Communication Skills Needed by AAC Users for Getting and Keeping a Job.



At the conference, many felt primary responsibility lay at the feet of our educational systems. Teachers, clinicians and parents must plant the seeds for employment in early childhood by raising expectations, teaching necessary skills, and providing relevant experiences throughout school.

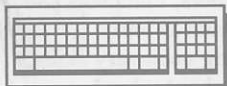
FIGURE 3. Responsibility for Helping AAC Users Become Employed.



Nine way to increase employment options

The following strategies were suggested by respondents to the ACN survey and during the conference.

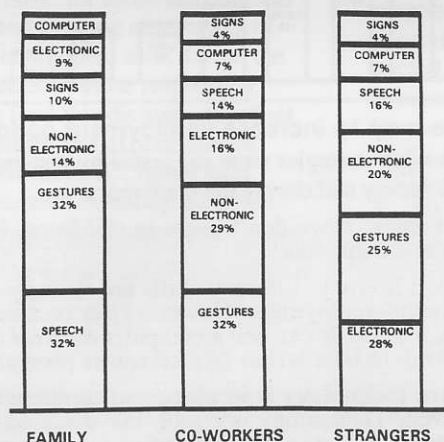
1. **Begin early.** If we don't begin in childhood, it is much more difficult.
2. **Develop literacy.** Literacy skills are strongly correlated with employment. However, just because someone is literate or can use a computer does not mean they have to be a writer or a computer programmer.
3. **Be sure technology is in place and competency is achieved.** Technology is a tool. For many people who use AAC, it is the only means for them to be productive. It must be available at all times and people using it must be competent. This takes time and can be achieved only with guided practice.
4. **Develop jobs.** More emphasis should be placed on finding options for individuals in their communities. Many at the conference said networking is the single most important way to get a job.
5. **Educate employers.** Professionals (particularly rehabilitation counsellors) and AAC users need to educate employers about hiring people who use AAC techniques.
6. **Make sure proper support is available and actually occurs.** Many will need personal assistants at least part of every day. Other types of support can often be handled by co-workers or by making slight alterations to the task or job schedule.
7. **Increase awareness in the community.** Developing a network of people who use AAC in their communities and increasing their visibility are the most effective strategies.
8. **Use role models.** Success stories bring hope. Several respondents suggested people with acquired or degenerative disabilities who remain employed would be particularly helpful.
9. **Be brave. Be a dreamer. Be persistent. Be insistent. Be employed!**



Equipment Technology issues and employment

People who have severe speech impairments rely on many AAC approaches to communicate including gestures, speech approximations, language boards and books, electronic communication devices, and so on. We asked ACN survey respondents what communication modes they felt AAC users relied upon with family/friends, strangers, and co-workers. Figure 4 gives their responses.

FIGURE 4. Modes Relied Upon to Communicate with Family, Co-workers and Strangers.



Families: Respondents said individuals who use AAC rely mostly on speech, gestures, and non-electronic devices with family and friends. Electronic devices, signs and computers are perceived as being used less often.

Co-Workers: With co-workers, respondents said gestures and non-electronic devices are preferred modes. They think electronic communication devices and computers are used more often than they were with family and friends. Speech is used less often. Manual signs are reportedly used infrequently and/or by few individuals.

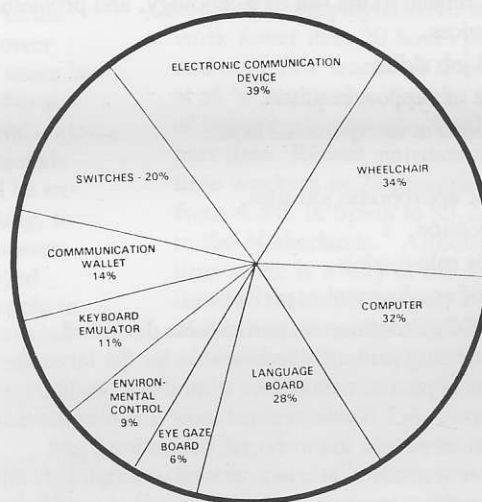
Strangers: Electronic devices are relied on to interact with strangers more than other modes. However, gestures, non-electronic devices, and speech are perceived to be used often, while signs and computers are not.

At the PEC@, Figure 4 data generated considerable discussion. Why is there a perceived dependency on natural communication modes? Why are electronic communication devices used primarily with strangers? Why are language boards/books and wallets, i.e., nonelectronic devices perceived as more useful than high technology with family and co-workers? Why do manual signs and computers have comparatively limited value as interaction tools?

Of course, the survey does not answer these questions. However, in a separate question about the types of technol-

ogy considered most helpful in the workplace, additional insights are provided. Results are displayed in Figure 5. Responses reveal multiple technologies are considered to be important to AAC users in the workplace. The most important were electronic communication devices, wheelchairs, and computers. Language boards, communication wallets, switches, keyboard emulators, environmental control devices and eye gaze boards were also listed.

FIGURE 5. Helpful Assistive Technology for AAC Users in the Workplace.



Studies by Light et al. and Fried-Oken, the data in Figures 4 and 5, and personal statements by individuals who attended the PEC@ strongly support the following statement—*To be employed, AAC users must have access to assistive technologies, particularly electronic communication devices.*

Survey data raises other important questions:

- 1. What role, if any, do manual signs play?** Data in Figure 4 show that respondents do not believe manual signs are useful to many AAC users, even at home. Why? Because sign language must be intelligible to communication partners. Most strangers don't understand signs. Most employment situations can't support sign language instruction. Apparently, gestures are more effective with most partners. Also, over the past few years, many professionals have de-emphasized sign language training and concentrated more on developing the use of communication boards/wallets/books and electronic devices.
- 2. Why do AAC users continue to rely on speech and gestures?** Despite intelligibility problems, respondents perceive that natural communication forms, i.e., gestures and speech, continue to be relied on more than other modes (68% with family and friends, 46% with co-workers, and 41% with strangers). What? Didn't the field begin 20 years ago to provide alternatives? Before panicking or becoming depressed, let us remember that people who use AAC approaches are using multiple modalities, i.e., aids, devices and natural modes.

While it is not surprising that speech and gestures are used with familiar partners, it remains unclear (at least to me) why AAC users (continued on page 7)

(EQUIPMENT cont. from page 6) would rely on seemingly more unintelligible and thus, less powerful modes with strangers and co-workers. Are speech and gestures really effective or are they used because AAC devices are not available? Is there something about devices AAC users find unreliable? In any case, should we spend more time training people to use speech and gestures effectively if these are in fact, their modes of choice?

3. What is the role of communication aids? We are told that a) non-electronic communication aids are relied on more than electronic devices except with strangers. b) communication aids (high or light tech) are used twice as often with co-workers and strangers as with families. We don't know why.

Final Comments: The success of AAC will be measured by the degree to which it benefits people with severe communication impairments in ways they not only recognize, but they value. The following quote captures an experience that speaks directly to the true value of employment and assistive technology for people who use AAC:

They just said I was unemployable and turned their backs on me. Then [many years later]. . . I had the biggest smile on my face when I heard "Jim, Jim, with today's technology, I think you may be employable." It so happened I had my Westinghouse identification tag hanging on my wheelchair. I pointed to it and they almost stopped dead in their tracks. I said [using a Liberator, his electronic communication device], "Six years, buddy, as an Associate Staff Assistant in the Reprographics Department." There was dead silence and I just rolled away in my [electric] wheelchair. **Jim Prentice, 1993**¹¹

Governmental Knowledge is power

In the United States, the government recognizes that:

Work fulfills the need of an individual to be productive, promotes independence, enhances self esteem and allows for participating in the mainstream of life in America. 29 USC Section 720 (a) (1) (ii).

Further, it has legislated that

Individuals with disabilities including individuals with the most severe disabilities are generally presumed to be capable of engaging in gainful employment. 29 USC Section 720 (a) (3) (A).

Yet, people with severe communication disabilities are being denied meaningful employment opportunities. Lewis Golinker, a lawyer who specializes in the field of AAC, says, "this is because the device funding, training and job development, and placement services are not provided."¹²

The Medicaid Act, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act and the Rehabilitation Act, all authorize, if not mandate, the provision of both AAC devices and AAC services. In addition, the provision of individualized vocational rehabilitation (VR) services is expected to be a catalyst for persons with severe disabilities, including those with severe communication disabilities, to become gainfully employed. It's the law, but it's not happening.

The purpose of this section is to provide information to U.S. subscribers so they can use the law (i.e., quote chapter and verse of Title 1 of the Rehabilitation Act) to assist individuals who have severe com-

munication disabilities to persist and insist on services that result in their employment. Some of the many important things professionals, family members and people who use AAC need to know are:

- Public schools and vocational rehabilitation (VR) programs have a joint responsibility to ensure that people with significant communication disabilities between 16-21 years develop workplace competency skills. Rehab Act 29 USC Section 721 (a) (24) IDEA 20 USC Section 1401 (a) (19)(20)
- No gap in services should exist between the education system and the VR system. Thus, an eligible individual's Individualized Written Rehabilitation Program (IWRP) should be completed before the individual leaves school. Senate Report # 102-357, page 30.

Individuals with disabilities including individuals with the most severe disabilities are generally presumed to be capable of engaging in gainful employment"

29 USC Section 720 (a) (1) (A).

- Transition services should be available not only to students in special education programs, but also to students with disabilities who are enrolled in regular education. Senate Report 3741, page 30; 3744 page 33.
- Eligibility determinations can be automatic for individuals in school and for those already receiving SSDI or SSI benefits. Eligibility for VR must be determined within 60 days. 29 USC Section 722 (a) (2): (a) (5).

- To deny services a VR counselor must demonstrate by clear and convincing evidence that such an individual is incapable of benefiting from VR services in terms of employment outcome. Section 123 (c) (4) (A) of P.L. 102-569

Note: The terms "clear and convincing" were included in the bill because it "constitutes the highest standard used in our civil system of law. Clear means unequivocal. Thus, there must be a high degree of certainty before a designated state unit can conclude that an individual with a disability cannot benefit from vocational rehabilitation services in terms of an employment outcome." Senate Report page 37.

- Interagency agreements are encouraged. They can be used to clarify the shared financial responsibilities of public education, Medicaid, and VR programs for the purchase of required AAC devices. 29 USC Section 721 (a) (11)
- Technology needs must be addressed in the IWRP. 29 USC Section 722 (b) (1); 723 (a) (12)

"The IWRP should provide for regular and periodic assessment to ensure that a match exists between the supports, the technology and the current and changing needs of the individual who will be using the technology. . ." (Senate Report, p. 39)

In his presentation, Golinker stressed that it's the law that challenges the "VR counselor to direct his/her energies, VR funds and other efforts toward identifying and providing services and supports that are desired and needed to make employment a reality."¹² Our job is to expect that employment is possible and be disbelieving when told otherwise. As one individual who uses AAC techniques stated:

Employment permits financial independence from government agencies such as Social Services and Social Security. Hallelujah! **Rick Creech**¹³

Augmentative Communication News

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³ Thanks to Joan Bruno (New Jersey), Gail Van Tatenhove (Florida) Fran Featherly (Illinois) and Beth Sinteff (Pennsylvania) for collecting these answers. Thanks also to the children and their families

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⁸ Eskey, K. (1993) Part-timers hold 1 of 6 U.S. jobs. *The Monterey Herald*, September 6, 1993.

⁹ As reported by Eskey, K. in article above. No primary reference cited.

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To receive application instructions, contact: Words + /ISAAC 1994 Outstanding Consumer Lecture, ISAAC Secretariat, P.O. Box 1762 Station R, Toronto, Ontario M4G 4A3. Winners will be notified on May 15, 1994.

¹¹ Prentice, J. (1993). Communication opens both wooden and psychological doors. Pittsburgh Employment Conference for Augmented Communicators Proceedings of the 1st Annual Conference. Pittsburgh:Shout Press. 1:11-12.

¹² Golinker, L. (1993). Employment, the law and augmentative communication. Pittsburgh Employment Conference for Augmented Communicators Proceedings of the 1st Annual Conference. Pittsburgh:Shout Press. 1:24-40.

¹³ Creech, R. (1993). Productive employment for augmentative communicators. (1993) Pittsburgh Employment Conference for Augmented Communicators Proceedings of the 1st Annual Conference. Pittsburgh:Shout Press. 1:105-108.

RESOURCES

The best resources are the authors of the 20 papers included in the Proceedings from the PEC@ and their references. You can order this 117 page document from SHOUT Press, 1000 Killarney Avenue, Pittsburgh, PA 15234. (800) 934-4391. \$30 US. Special limited \$5 discount for ACN subscribers. Send \$25 US plus \$2.50 Shipping.

The 2nd Annual PEC@ will be held from August 12-14, 1994 in Pittsburgh. Mark your calendars!

A resource for the Rehab. Act is: Christopher Button entitled: *Special Report PL 102-569. A New Season for the Rehabilitation Act The Word From Washington*, October-November, 1992. UCP, 1522 K Street NW, Suite 1112, Washington, DC 20005. (800) 872-5827.

Equipment mentioned in this issue is available from the following companies:

TouchTalker, Liberator: Prentke Romich, 1022 Heyl Road, Wooster, OH 44691.

Dynavox: Sentient Systems, 2100 Wharton, St., #630, Pittsburgh, PA 15203.

Scanning WSKE, EZ Keys: Words +, Inc. P.O. Box 1229, Lancaster, CA 93584.

Scanning Macaw: ZYGO Industries, P.O. Box 1008, Portland, OR 97207.

Switches, Able net, Inc., 1081 Tenth Avenue, S.W., Minneapolis, MN 55414. TASH, Unit 1, 91 Station Street, Ajax, Ontario, Canada L1S 3H2.

Multivoice. Institute on Applied Technology, The Children's Hospital, 300 Longwood Avenue, Boston, MA 02115. Note: also available in many devices.

KE:NX, Co-writer: Don Johnston Developmental Equipment, P.O. Box 639, 1000 N. Rand Rd., Bldg. 115, Wauconda, IL 60084.

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