Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19):
COVID-19 and Communication
ODP Announcement 20-043

AUDIENCE:

Administrative Entities, Supports Coordination Organizations and Agencies, Other Service Providers, and Other Professionals Supporting Individuals with Autism, Intellectual Disabilities, and Other Developmental Disabilities

PURPOSE:

To announce and disseminate the Tool Kit for Communication and COVID-19

DISCUSSION:

The Office of Developmental Programs (ODP), Special Populations Unit is pleased to share the Tool Kit for Communication and COVID-19. It is important that everyone has access to information on the novel Coronavirus and what is happening in their community. Effective communication is essential for sharing symptoms people may be having, as well as for complying with medical treatment. The Coronavirus has many people feeling anxious and scared, too; it is important for everyone to have equal access for communicating those feelings.

The Tool Kit is attached and below are two webinars that ODP is hosting to review each element of the Tool Kit and how to use it most effectively. Please note that each session will be in both English and American Sign Language. To register for a webinar, please click one of the links below.

| For Individuals and Families | April 15th from 1:00pm - 2:00pm
| https://attendee.gotowebinar.com/register/7815671004460681229 |
| For Providers and Others | April 15th from 2:30pm – 3:30pm
| https://attendee.gotowebinar.com/register/8160931949233537037 |
Please contact the Special Populations Unit at RA-ODPDeafServices@pa.gov with any questions.
Communication is foundational for everything we do. It is individualized and fluid. Everyone communicates in one way or another, however for some individuals, communication can be even more complex and sometimes challenging. Effective communication is essential for sharing symptoms people may be having, as well as for complying with medical treatment. It is also important that everyone has access to information on the novel Coronavirus and what is happening in their community. The Coronavirus has many people feeling anxious and scared too; it is important for everyone to have equal access for communicating those feelings. The Office of Developmental Programs, Special Populations Unit has developed several tools and are sharing a couple resources to assist those who are supporting individuals with non-traditional communication during these tough times.

**COVID-19 – Communication Supports**
- A tool that can be used to facilitate communication while an individual is in the hospital. It includes a visual pain chart, a communication board, and communication tips.

**Signs for in Hospital Rooms**
- Sometimes something as simple as hanging up a sign in your hospital room that says you are Deaf, Hard of Hearing, or Deaf-Blind can be very helpful as a reminder for nurses and doctors. This is a tool can be simply handed to your doctor or nurse.

**Communication Profile & Care Needs Form**
- Communication Profile is a quick, person-centered tool used to help those that may not know the individual well enough to communicate effectively with them.
- The Care Needs Form was made to be provided to medical professionals in case of emergency.

**Flowchart for Supporting Someone who is Deaf or Hard of Hearing**
- A tool that can be used to help determine the most effective way to communicate with someone with a hearing loss when no other guidance is available. The tool also includes Video Remote Interpreting (VRI) tips.

**COVID-19 Updates in American Sign Language (ASL)**

**Tips for Supporting Someone who is Deaf-Blind**
- Tips for supporting someone who is Deaf-Blind.
- The Pennsylvania Training and Technical Assistance Network (PaTTAN) has a webpage developed to provide resources and supports: https://www.pattan.net/Disabilities/Deaf-Blind/COVID-19
- Helen Keller National Center also has a webpage: https://www.helenkeller.org/hknc/covid-19-communication-guidelines

The goal of the Special Populations Unit is to assure effective communication for the individuals that we support, especially during these challenging times. The Special Populations Unit is available at RA-ODPDeafServices@pa.gov or RA-PWSpecialPopUnit@pa.gov for Case Consultation, Training & Resources, and Deaf, Hard of Hearing, and Deaf-Blind Support.
Why do we need a Communication Profile?

Communication is foundational for everything we do. It is individualized and fluid. Everyone communicates in one way or another, however for some individuals, communication can be even more complex and sometimes challenging.

What is a Communication Profile?

The Communication Profile is a quick one-page training tool. This person-centered support helps those that may not know the individual well enough to communicate effectively with them. It was made to be easy to read and easy to understand for those that may not know the individual.

Why is it important to have a Communication Profile during the Coronavirus crisis?

- The Coronavirus has many people feeling anxious and scared. It is important for everyone to have equal access for communicating those feelings and it may be extra challenging for individuals who communicate in a non-traditional way.
- It is important to be able to communicate symptoms that the person may be experiencing to others. Compliance with medical treatment also depends on effective communication.
- It is important that the person has access to information on the Coronavirus and what is happening in their community.
Why should I complete the Care Needs Form?

What is the Care Needs Form?
The Care Needs Form is a quick one-page tool that can be provided to medical professionals in case of emergency. The form includes information on how the person moves around, how they eat/drink, use the bathroom, take medication, etc.

Why is it important to have a completed Care Needs Form during the Coronavirus crisis?
The Coronavirus has overwhelmed many hospitals and medical centers. Medical professionals need quick and easy access to important information to help them provide the level of care necessary. Completing the Care Needs Form can give them a quick glance into how to support the individual.
### My Communication Profile Description

**My name is:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>How I share information</th>
<th>How I take in information</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

**A description of how the individual communicates.**

- **Expressive:** How they share information
- **Receptive:** How they take in information

**Helpful tips to use to best communicate with the individual.** This may include a best communication partner(s) - someone who is able to best understand and communicate with the individual most of the time.

**Communicating about things the individual enjoys** is a great starting point for communication. Also, what they like can be used as motivation for communication.

**Some individuals have sensory concerns or things that may interfere with effective communication.**

For further guidance, contact ODP’s Special Populations Unit at RA-PWSpecialPopUnit@pa.gov.
## My Care Needs Description

### My Care Needs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>How I move around:</th>
<th>A description of how the individual moves around: they use a wheelchair, walk independently, or need support</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>How I eat and drink:</td>
<td>A description of the food/drink consistency needed, preferences, feeding tube or not, adaptive supports needed, assistance required</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How I use the bathroom:</td>
<td>Use of briefs or not and when, any sensitivities, how often on the toilet, any bowel movement guidelines</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How I take medication:</td>
<td>Medications by PEG tube, in applesauce, in a drink, etc., prefer liquid medications or capsules, number of medications at a time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other important things about me:</td>
<td>A description of other things that are important for the individual: this could include any medical equipment needed, any best practices, a medical decision maker/guardian, etc.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Example**

### My Communication Profile

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>How I share information</th>
<th>How I take in information</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- Bites wrists (frustrated, upset)</td>
<td>- Short, concrete questions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Grabs others (can be reaching for attention or frustration)</td>
<td>- Picture support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Pointing</td>
<td>- Direct acknowledgment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Clapping (exciting or agreeing)</td>
<td>- I hear best in my right ear</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Leading others to desired items</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**How to best support my communication?**

- Say my name before our interactions so I know you’re talking to me
- Ask me questions and provide me with wait time
- Use real pictures (not cartoons or line drawings) to support my communication
- Look at me when you’re talking, even if I am not looking back
- Before new/different environments, prepare me for what to expect
- My best communication partner is my father, Bob

### My Care Needs

#### How I move around:
- I use a cane to support me when I talk
- I have trouble with my hand-eye coordination

#### How I eat and drink:
- I am lactose intolerant
- I am on a low cholesterol diet
- I use a weighted spoon to eat
- I use a straw to drink from a cup

#### How I use the bathroom:
- I don’t need any support using the bathroom
- Flushable wipes are helpful

#### How I take medication:
- I have trouble swallowing capsules
- I take medications in applesauce or in liquid form

#### Other important things about me:
- I am Jewish and my religion is important to me
- My father, Bob, is my legal guardian
- I don’t like to be alone

### Things I enjoy

- Coffee
- Quite environments
- Puzzles
- Animals
- Swimming
- Calming music

### Things that may interfere with my communication

- Crowded areas
- Loud environments
- Strong smells
# My Communication Profile

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>My name is:</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

## How I share information

## How I take in information

## How to best support my communication?

## Things I enjoy

## Things that may interfere with my communication

Adapted from My LifeCourse Portfolio One-Page Profile
My Care Needs

How I move around:

How I eat and drink:

How I use the bathroom:

How I take medication:

Other important things about me:
COVID-19 and Communication Support

Preferred Method of Communication

- Interpreter
- Gestures
- Pictures
- Reading & Writing
- Augmentative & Alternative Communication

Pain Scale

- 0: NO HURT
- 2: HURTS LITTLE BIT
- 4: HURTS LITTLE MORE
- 6: HURTS EVEN MORE
- 8: HURTS WHOLE LOT
- 10: HURTS WORST

Communication Tips

- Get their attention before you speak
- Ask and/or indicate before touching the person
- Ask them their preferred method of communication
- Don’t assume that lip-reading is an effective means of communication; using gestures & body language are best
- Minimize distractions and the number of people interacting with them
- Use simple language, ask one question at a time, and be aware of your facial expressions and body language
- Know that hearing aids/cochlear implants may improve hearing but may not improve understanding

Tips for using the Communication Board (on the next page)

- Tell them to point to the pictures/words on the page
- Use the board yourself to model communication
- Give extra time for response & tell them you will take the time to listen
- The board should be kept within their reach at all times
- Acknowledge and respond to each message
- Remember to respond to their facial expressions, body language, and behavior as well

Who can I go to for help with communication?

The Office of Developmental Programs, Special Populations Unit
RA-PWSpecialPopUnit@pa.gov
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>I feel</th>
<th>happy</th>
<th>scared</th>
<th>confused</th>
<th>frustrated</th>
<th>tired</th>
<th>bored</th>
<th>sad</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>sick</td>
<td>hot</td>
<td>cold</td>
<td>runny nose</td>
<td>cough</td>
<td>doctor</td>
<td>nurse</td>
<td>call nurse</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>diarrhea</td>
<td>can't breathe</td>
<td>vomit</td>
<td>stomachache</td>
<td>oxygen</td>
<td>medicine</td>
<td>eye drops</td>
<td>interpreter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>fever</td>
<td>sore throat</td>
<td>dizzy</td>
<td>headache</td>
<td>hearing aids</td>
<td>inhaler</td>
<td>walker</td>
<td>more</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>lotion</td>
<td>chapstick</td>
<td>glasses</td>
<td>tissue</td>
<td>blanket</td>
<td>pillow</td>
<td>loud</td>
<td>all done</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>shave</td>
<td>walk</td>
<td>watch tv</td>
<td>new channel</td>
<td>family</td>
<td>home</td>
<td>bed</td>
<td>now</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>call</td>
<td>shower</td>
<td>clean glasses</td>
<td>change me</td>
<td>bathroom</td>
<td>drink</td>
<td>eat</td>
<td>later</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>yes</td>
<td>no</td>
<td>maybe</td>
<td>good</td>
<td>bad</td>
<td>need</td>
<td>want</td>
<td>stop</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
COVID-19 Crisis Communication Method

When possible, use an appropriate, in-person interpreter for best communication.

The individual does not use interpreters.

No in-person interpreter is available.

Do you have access to Video Remote Interpreting (VRI)?

Is a familiar communication partner available for support?

Can the person read & write English effectively?

Is the individual able to effectively use & understand VRI?

Use familiar person to support communication.

Use graphic communication board for basic communication.

Use pen/paper or white board with short phrases or drawings.

Yes

Using multiple methods together can be most effective. Natural gestures and body language are always helpful additions.

No

Use VRI. See accompanying tips.

NOTE: This is specific to the COVID-19 crisis & should not be implemented for business as usual.
I AM **DEAF-BLIND**

WITH UNIQUE

COMMUNICATION NEEDS.
I have a disability and I require accommodations while I am under your care:

1. Please keep a copy of this document visible at the top of my chart.
2. Please hang this in a prominent place in my hospital room while I am in the hospital.
3. Please communicate with me using clear, plain language.
4. I need communication-related accommodations to communicate effectively and to provide informed consent.
5. If you have any trouble providing my requested communication supports, please make a call to my emergency contact who can help.
I AM **DEAF OR HARD OF HEARING**

**WITH UNIQUE**

**COMMUNICATION NEEDS.**
I have a disability and I require accommodations while I am under your care:

1. Please keep a copy of this document visible at the top of my chart.
2. Please hang this in a prominent place in my hospital room while I am in the hospital.
3. Please communicate with me using clear, plain language.
4. I need communication-related accommodations to communicate effectively and to provide informed consent.
5. If you have any trouble providing my requested communication supports, please make a video call to my emergency contact who can help.
Tips for Supporting Someone who is Deaf-Blind

- Communication methods are as individualized as the person and may include:
  - Touch cues
  - Gestures
  - Real objects as reference
  - Tactile Sign Language
  - Large print or close up viewing for someone with low vision
  - Braille

- A person with deaf-blindness typically navigates life via touch; touching objects and people to understand information in the environment.

- Communication may take much longer than expected.

- The individual may prefer more communication than expected, such as describing where things are or what you are doing.

- Many people with deaf-blindness, particularly those with an additional disability such as a developmental disability, may not have a complete system of communication and may not understand a lot that is happening around them.

- Being in an unfamiliar environment and experiencing things out of the normal routine, is very challenging for someone with deaf-blindness. Helping the individual to feel safe and calm is an important prerequisite to communication and treatment.

- What to do:
  - Let them know you are there by touching them gently on the shoulder.
  - Identify yourself in the same way with touch (your watch, ring, long hair, glasses, etc.), your name, and your role, each time you interact with them.
  - Allow extra time for the person to consider their response. A delay does not necessarily mean they do not have a response.
  - Tell them when you are leaving the room.
  - Do not force them to touch something or move their hands or body without permission first.
  - Do not move important items around.
  - For someone with a vision loss, seeing the item up close, in their periphery, with brighter light, or with contrasting colors may be needed.
Video Remote Interpreting (VRI) Tips

Video Remote Interpreting (VRI) is a service that provides communication between Deaf or Hard of Hearing persons who use American Sign Language (ASL) and hearing persons that are in the same location, utilizing an interpreter by way of a computer with a webcam and Internet connection or a tablet using a cellular connection.

Below are some tips to ensure this process is as effective as possible:

- Test equipment and Wi-Fi connection before beginning the interpreting session.
- Request a Certified Deaf Interpreter to be the on-screen interpreter, if available.
- Be sure to position the screen so that the Deaf person can see the interpreter and the interpreter can see the Deaf person.
- Speak clearly and loudly enough for the interpreter to hear you; this may require some maneuvering of yourself or the screen.
- Speak directly to the Deaf person, not to the interpreter.
- Allow extra time for effective communication.
- Use words to describe where you are pointing; refrain from saying “this” or “over there”.
  - Remember, the interpreter cannot see you, they can only see the Deaf person.
- Some Deaf individuals may not understand that the person on the screen is interpreting what is happening in the room; an in-person interpreter is always more effective.