



## Augmentative Communication

### What is augmentative communication?

An augmentative communication system is any form of communication that is not verbal, such as sign language, or pointing to objects, photos or picture symbols. The use of an augmentative communication system can help a child share his/her needs, feelings and thoughts. Often, when a child begins to learn the power of telling someone something, he/she will begin to try harder to speak.

### What is the benefit of augmentative communication?

Speaking is easier than pointing or signing, and a child will naturally want to do what is easiest. Picture or signing communications help children learn to talk if it is possible for them to do so.

### How do children use augmentative communication systems?

One of the first avenues attempted is often sign language. Nonverbal children benefit from sign language as a form of visual reference to highlight word meanings and enhance language comprehension (understanding). Signed cues can expand expressive communication by reminding a child what to say.

Another option is picture communication, in which children are taught how to initiate and exchange information for a preferred item or activity. Depending on the child's understanding, this system may be developed using photos or picture symbols. The child will hand the picture to the communication partner in order to get what he/she wants. This may begin as a choice between preferred and non-preferred activity, and can become a system with multiple pictures or symbols to choose between, allowing greater communication opportunities for the child.

### How could my child benefit from speech-language therapy?

At Kenny Kids, our pediatric speech-language pathologists will work with you to give your child a holistic approach to communication. They are skilled in evaluating children's understanding and use of expressive language skills. A comprehensive, individualized communication plan will be developed for your child.

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### **Kenny Kids™ Pediatric Rehabilitation Program Locations**

#### **Kenny Kids – Buffalo**

*Across the street from  
Buffalo Hospital*  
300 Catlin St., Suite 101  
Buffalo, MN 55313  
763-684-3888

#### **Kenny Kids – Coon Rapids**

3111 124th Ave. NW  
Coon Rapids, MN 55433  
763-236-7337

#### **Kenny Kids – Owatonna**

Owatonna Hospital  
2250 NW 26th St.  
Owatonna, MN 55060  
507-977-2150



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## *Augmentative Communication (cont'd)*

### **What can I do at home?**

Begin to observe your child's preferred and non-preferred activities, foods and toys. Notice how your child communicates with you, including gestures, vocalizations and crying. Your child's speech-language pathologist will provide you forms on which to record this information.

## **LEARN MORE ABOUT AUGMENTATIVE COMMUNICATION**

### **AMERICAN SPEECH-LANGUAGE-HEARING ASSOCIATION**

[www.asha.org](http://www.asha.org)

*Visual Strategies for Improving Communication: Practical Supports for School and Home*

Author: Linda A. Hodgdon

*Quick and Easy: Ideas and Materials to Help the Nonverbal Child Talk at Home*

Authors: Carolyn Rouse and Katera Murphy