

The Communication Plan: A Tool for Establishing Partnership Between the Family and Audiology in Early Intervention

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Learning Objectives

- Participants will be able to:
 - Explain the importance and usage of the Communication Plan in Early Intervention
 - Describe the components of the Communication Plan and how/when/by whom it is to be completed
 - List ways that audiologists can partner, collaborate, and team with educational professionals, families, and students in preparation for school entry

WHAT

is the Communication Plan (CP)?

The CP is a document created to establish discussion among Individualized Education Program (IEP) team members regarding a Deaf/Hard-of-Hearing/Deaf-Blind (D/HH/DB) student's communication skills¹, access, and needs.

The CP is a required component of the IEP in Pennsylvania, as it is used to complete other sections of the IEP (Chapter 14 Regulations [§14.131(a)(1)(iii)]). It is reviewed at the beginning of every IEP meeting.

WHO

creates the CP?

The IEP team, including:

- Educational audiologist
- Teacher(s) of the D/HH/DB
- Educational interpreters
- Family members
- Child

WHEN

is the CP completed?

- Prior to developing the IEP
- Annually, with the IEP renewal
- Any time a change occurs in:
 - hearing
 - amplification
 - communication
 - placement

WHY

is the CP important?

The CP addresses aspects of language and communication that might impact a child's overall progress in school and other activities.

The CP establishes the child's most effective means of communication across all their environments² and is used to determine IEP accommodations, specially designed instruction, and goals.

Completing the Communication Plan: A Case Example

JR, a 5-year-old boy, has recently transitioned to kindergarten. JR was born with Trisomy 21 (Down syndrome) and has bilateral mild-moderate conductive hearing loss and a speech and language delay. He is a long-term hearing aid user and communicates using a mix of spoken English, American Sign Language, and an augmentative and alternative communication (AAC) device. Knowing that JR's communication will impact the rest of his IEP goals, his IEP team completes the Communication Plan at the beginning of their IEP meeting. This will inform decisions in the IEP that support JR's reading, communication, and the use of and access to assistive technologies in the classroom and in extra-curricular activities.

SECTION I: Language and Communication Needs

This section includes the languages and modes of communication the student currently uses in different environments and settings. The team will discuss if these modes are effective for learning and development. Other considerations in this section include medical, social, and cultural aspects of the student's life that may influence their communication.

COMMUNICATION PLAN FOR A STUDENT WHO IS DEAF/HARD OF HEARING OR DEAF-BLIND (ANNOTATED)

School Age _____

The primary purpose of the Communication Plan is to establish discussion among IEP team members who review the student's needs based on communication skills and access. It is to be used to complete other sections of the IEP, including accommodations, appropriate specially designed instruction, and IEP goals. Therefore, the Communication Plan must be completed prior to the development of the IEP.

Communication Plan Contributors – please list your first and last name and role/ title:

Name:	Jane Smith	Role:	Teacher
Name:	Joe Road	Role:	Parent
Name:	Sally Sue	Role:	Educational Audiologist

ANNOTATION
Contributions could be made by IEP team members present at the meeting or submitted to the LEA prior to the meeting by educators, related service providers, student, family members and/or other needed contributors.

SECTION I: LANGUAGE AND COMMUNICATION NEEDS

1. What evidence is available to substantiate the student's language and communication mode (are an effective means to support the student's access to information, people, and experiences across multiple environments)? For example, assessments, observations, student input, provider input, caregiver input.

For provider and caregiver input, JR's language and communication are impacted by his developmental disability. The Test of Auditory Comprehension of Language was completed with JR. Results show that JR's receptive language is delayed compared to same-aged peers.

ANNOTATION
Assessment and observation data should inform the team whether the student needs additional support to improve communication skills and access to academic instruction. Examples of assessments may include: Test of Auditory Comprehension of Language, The Screening Instrument for Targeting Educational Risk (S.I.T.E.R.), Oral and Written Language Scales (OWLS), Clinical Evaluation of Language Fundamentals (CELF-5), Cottage Acquisition Scales For Listening, Language, and Speech, The MacArthur Communication Development Inventory. Please note this list is not exhaustive.

2. Are there other contributing factors that impact effective language and communication development and full range of needs? For example, medical diagnosis, social, cultural, or additional identified exceptionalities.

JR was diagnosed with Trisomy 21 (Down syndrome) at birth. Within his first two years of life, he spent consecutive months in the hospital for a multitude of surgeries. JR did not attend a preschool program. He was only exposed to speech and language at home.

ANNOTATION
Please detail any additional factors that may influence the student's language and communication skills. Those may include medical diagnosis, social factors, cultural factors, mental health concerns, homelessness, or other relevant issues.

3. Using the key below, indicate the student's observed language(s) or communication modes. Only mark those that apply
 Key: Always = A Often = O Sometimes = S

Student's Languages	Home		During Instruction		Non-Instructional Settings		Comments
	Receptive	Expressive	Receptive	Expressive	Receptive	Expressive	
American Sign Language (ASL)	S	A	S	O	S	A	He ASL when others do not understand what he wants or needs, but does not understand when tasks are asked of him.
Spoken English	S	O	S	S	S	S	
Sign Language other than ASL (e.g., British/Spanish Sign Language)							
Other Spoken Language (e.g., Spanish, Nepali)							
No formal language							

Student's Communication Modes	Home		During Instruction		Non-Instructional Settings		Comments
	Receptive	Expressive	Receptive	Expressive	Receptive	Expressive	
American Sign Language	S	A	S	A	S	A	Prefer ASL
Communication Device	S	A	S	O	S	A	
Cued Speech							
Gestures/Home Signs	S	O	S	O	S	O	
Listening and Spoken Language	S	S	S	S	S	O	
Manually Coded English Systems (e.g., Signed English)							
Object/Picture System	S	O	S		S	O	Independent use of AAC on iPad
Pidgin Signed English (PSE)							
Tactile sign language							
Touch cues							
Written or brailled English							
Other							

ANNOTATION
This chart is to inform the school team regarding the student's preferred method for learning and communicating. Languages and communication modes checked are to be those used and preferred by the student to receive communication and express ideas. This may not be the same for receptive and expressive preferences and in different settings (i.e., classroom, extracurricular events, home). Non-instructional settings include settings such as lunch time, school clubs and extracurricular activities. The "Comments" column provides a place to note any additional communication modes used by the student.

4. Does the student show a need for support/instruction to be able to communicate more effectively with family? Describe.

JR uses spoken English, ASL, and AAC device at home. He uses all three communication methods for expressive language. He uses spoken English and ASL for receptive language sometimes. He often can communicate what he wants or needs, but does not understand when tasks are asked of him.

ANNOTATION
Identify the mode(s) used and describe the communication experienced between the student and family members. This must address the preferred communication mode by the student and the family. If the current mode(s) is not adequate, the team should consider developing goals to improve the student's communication with family/caregivers.

5a. Describe the opportunities for direct communication with peers (hearing, deaf, hard of hearing, or deaf-blind) that are to be addressed in the IEP.

JR uses ASL and AAC device at school for expressive language. He does not consistently use spoken English at school. He can sometimes understand spoken English and ASL. He does not hold effective communication with his teachers or peers.

ANNOTATION
Identify the mode(s) used and describe the communication experienced between the student and peers. This must address the preferred communication mode of the student and peers.

5b. Does the student show a need for support/instruction to communicate more effectively with peers? Describe.

JR prefers independent play. He does not communicate with his peers due to his delayed receptive language abilities. JR shows a need for support to communicate more effectively with his peers in the classroom.

ANNOTATION
If data and/or observation show that the current communication mode(s) of the student and peers is not effective, the team should consider developing goals and/or specially designed instruction to improve the student's communication with peers.

6. Is the child deaf-blind? Yes No

If yes, how does the student's vision loss impact access to communication and visual and environmental information. Describe.

ANNOTATION
For those students who have both visual impairment and hearing loss, identify the mode(s) used and describe how it provides access to visual, auditory, and environmental information. This must address the mode of communication used for instruction. If the current mode is not effective, the team should consider developing goals for the student in order to improve the student's communication skills to access visual, auditory, and environmental information.

SECTION II: Academic Level, Services, and Assistive Technology

This section includes the technology and assistive devices the student uses in different environments that provide access to language. It addresses what special instruction, technology, or assistive devices are necessary for the student to have access to equal opportunity to engage in educational material.

3. What specially designed instruction and/or accommodations are needed for the student to have equal opportunity to participate and make progress in their educational program?

American Sign Language Interpretation		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
C-Print		<input type="checkbox"/>
Captioned Media		<input type="checkbox"/>
CART		<input type="checkbox"/>
Cued language transliteration		<input type="checkbox"/>
Deaf-blind interpreting (tactile or visual)		<input type="checkbox"/>
If Deaf-blind, instruction and access to the educational setting delivered with the support of an Intervener		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Direct instruction by a teacher proficient in the language(s) and communication		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
English Transliteration		<input type="checkbox"/>
Note-taking		<input type="checkbox"/>
Oral interpreting		<input type="checkbox"/>
Other		<input type="checkbox"/>

ANNOTATION
Identify all supports needed by this student for participation in their educational program. This information may be used to identify specially designed instruction, appropriate accommodations for instruction, related services, etc., in the IEP. American Sign Language Interpretation and English Transliteration must be provided by qualified interpreters. The team should ensure that the student's input is documented here if appropriate. Please refer to definitions in the Glossary for each listed support.

4A. Check the appropriate box(es) in the chart below to indicate observed technology used by the student.

Technology	Sometimes at School	Consistently at School	Sometimes at Home	Consistently at Home
Bone Anchored Hearing Aid (BAHA)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Classroom Amplification System	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	N/A	N/A
Cochlear Implant (CI)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Communication Device	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Hearing aid(s)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Hearing Assistive Technology (HAT)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Add additional comments on technology use here:
 JR uses bilateral hearing aids majority of the time at home and in school. When JR participates in his life skills class, the teacher also wears a remote microphone that connects to his hearing aids.

ANNOTATION
Note the frequency of all technology currently being used by the student and staff.

4B. Amplification technology use in school is monitored through:

Independent monitoring/reporting by the student: Yes No

Hearing technology checks done: Yes No

Indicate frequency of monitoring and staff title for each type of amplification technology used:

Technology	Frequency (e.g., daily/weekly/monthly) by	(Staff title)	(Back-up staff title)
Hearing Aids/HAT	Monthly	Educational Audiologist	Teacher of the Deaf
Hearing Aids	Daily	Homeroom teacher	

ANNOTATION
Note how all amplification technology currently being used by the student in school will be monitored and by whom. Also discuss whether there are training needs for any staff, family and/or peers and who will provide the training. Any identified training needs should be listed in the IEP.

4C. List any needed supports/trainings for student, family (if desired), staff, and peers in the IEP.

JR's homeroom teacher should be responsible for making sure his devices (hearing aids and AAC) are on every day - this may require training in knowing the device operations, common troubleshooting techniques, and maintenance. Because this is a new environment for JR, a classroom listening assessment (CLA) should be completed to evaluate the need for other assistive technology, which could lead to additional training.

ANNOTATION
Identify any additional elements that need to be addressed in the IEP (e.g., interaction with like peers, impact of progressive diagnoses or capabilities, changing programming, transition, development of adolescent social/emotional needs, placement changes, equity of cultural diversity and identity).

CP in Early Intervention (EI)

While not mandatory in the Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP), the CP is beneficial in EI settings for children who are D/HH/DB. Communication can be challenging for these children due to reduced access to visual and/or auditory language³. Early inclusion of the CP in the IFSP can help facilitate discussion about all the communication options available to families. Inclusion of the CP in the IFSP also promotes effective communication in the child's "natural environment" before attending school.

Future Directions

The CP plays an important role in the IEP. It facilitates a D/HH/DB student's access to social, linguistic, and educational input within the school system. The CP helps educate, prepare, and include families in the early education process. As of February 2024, the CP is only a required component of the IEP in a few states, including Pennsylvania. Within the state of Pennsylvania, it is not yet mandated as a required component the IFSP.

PaTTAN hopes to expand the CP's use into EI, IFSPs, and beyond the state. The early completion of the CP when completing the IFSP helps center language and communication access in the planning and provision of EI services.

Scan the QR code to visit the PaTTAN website for more information on the CP



Scan the QR code to view poster references

