

Individualized Supports

Communication

Individualized communication supports help leaders understand the thoughts, ideas and needs of participants. Supports may assist an individual to communicate with leaders or help leaders understand the communication styles of participants. It's critical to remember that just because a child has communication challenges, it doesn't mean they don't understand you.

Active Listening

- Show respect by giving children the time they may need to respond to a question or request.
- Don't allow other children to interrupt them or speak on their behalf.
- If you are not sure what a child said, repeat back what you heard and ask if that is correct

Non-verbal communication

- Children who don't speak clearly or use verbal language still have a lot to say - it's up to leaders to work on finding ways to understand them
- Focus on ways to understand how the child may communicate 'yes' or 'no'. This allows you to frame questions with simple 'yes' or 'no' answers and increase the autonomy and input of the child.
- You may also want the child or caregivers to show you how they communicate other important information such as: help, needing to use the bathroom, hungry, thirsty, stop, more, play.
- The type of non-verbal communication used by one child will not necessarily be the same as others. Focus on getting to know the child and how they communicate, rather than making any assumptions.

Augmentative or Alternative Communicate

- Augmentative or alternative communication (AAC) tools or methods can help individuals enhance their communication
- unaided options don't involve equipment and instead focus on things like pointing, simple signs, gestures (thumbs up/thumbs down) or facial expressions.
- aided AAC involves the use of whiteboards, notepads, PECS (picture exchange communication systems), flash cards or higher tech tools like iPads with apps or speech generating devices
- Depending on the type of AAC used by a child, you can ask if it is helpful for you to use the tools or device yourself. For PECS or apps, you could also work with caregivers to add photos or phrases from your program to make communication more personalized and relevant