
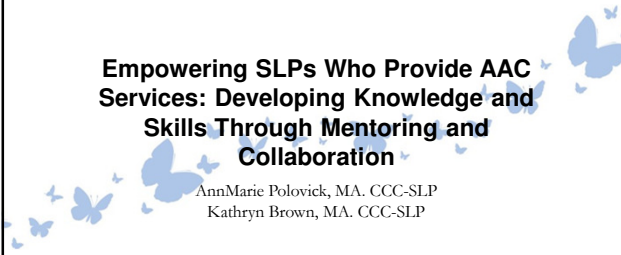


Empowering SLPs Who Provide AAC Services: Developing Knowledge and Skills Through Mentoring and Collaboration

AnnMarie Polovick, MA. CCC-SLP
Kathryn Brown, MA. CCC-SLP






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Disclosures


- AnnMarie Polovick
 - Financial: Employee of Nationwide Children's Hospital
 - Non financial: None
- Kathryn Brown
 - Financial: Employee of Nationwide Children's Hospital
 - Non financial: None



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Learning Objectives

- Participants will list key components of an AAC competency program.
- Participants will describe 2 benefits of clinician mentoring.
- Participants will provide 2 strategies they can use in their setting to support clinicians in providing AAC services.



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Speaker Bio

Ann Marie Polovick, MA, CCC-SLP

- Graduate of Kent State University, 1991
- 8 years in the public school setting
- Clinical Therapies, Clinical Manager Assistive Technology
- 33 years of training in Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) specializing in medically complex children in the pediatric outpatient hospital setting



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Speaker Bio

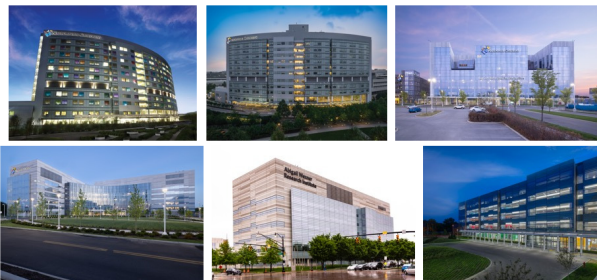
Kate Brown, MA, CCC-SLP

- Graduate of The Ohio State University, 2005
- Clinical Therapies EBP Coordinator
- 12 years of training in Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) specializing in medically complex children in the pediatric outpatient hospital setting



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Nationwide Children's Hospital (NCH)




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- Growth of SLPs that reported treating Autistic patients: 29%-83% between 2021 & 2023.
- Growth of SLPs providing AAC services: 14%-51% between 2021 & 2023.

Changing Caseloads

- ASHA Healthcare survey (2021-23) reports an increase in AAC provision by SLPs.

ASHA SLP healthcare survey report: Caseload characteristics: [SLP Health Care Survey Report: Caseload Characteristics 2021-2023](#)




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- Autism Spectrum disorder was noted as the top area of intervention with **94%** of respondents reporting they treat children with Autism.
- **71%** of respondents reported providing AAC services in the school.

Changing Caseloads

- ASHA 2022 School Survey reported high degree of AAC provision by SLPs.


American Speech-Language-Hearing Association. (2022). 2022 Schools Survey report: SLP caseload and workload characteristics. www.asha.org/Research/membership/Schools-Survey




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BJC

Tell us about your caseload



- About what percentage of your caseload are AAC users?
 - Link to survey



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Slide 8

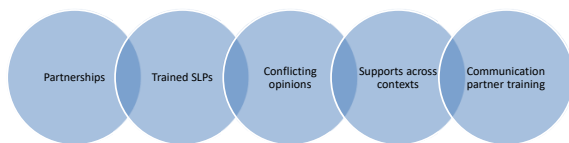
BJ0 Children with Autism instead here
Boster, Jamie, 2025-09-25T14:43:17.777

Slide 9

BJ0 You may want to explore using Mentimeter, like Gina did for her presentation at the Summit, I think you can do so many questions for free.
Boster, Jamie, 2025-09-25T14:43:53.825

BK0 0 [@Boster, Jamie] Yes! That's my plan! :)
Brown, Kathryn, 2025-09-25T15:08:58.103

Caregiver Reported Barriers



Kim, J., & Soto, G. (2024), Buckeridge, Buckeridge, K, et al. (2024), & Hanley, E., Martin, A. M., et al. (2023).



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SLP Reported Barriers



Boster & Polovick, 2025



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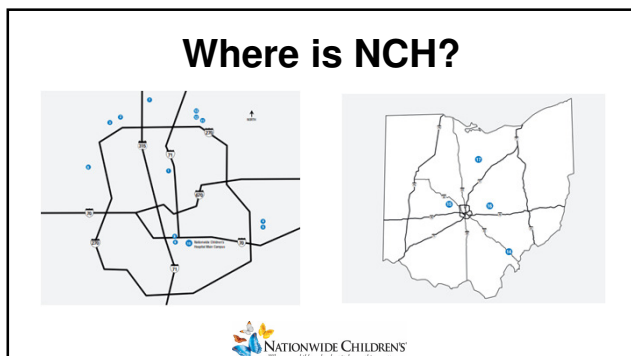
What are your barriers?



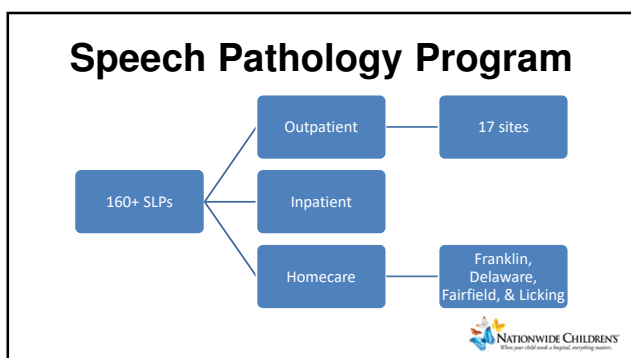
- What are your barriers to providing AAC services?
 - Link to survey



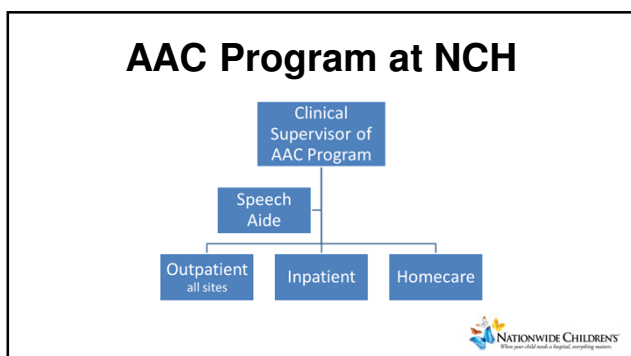
12



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14



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Growing AAC program at NCH



- Structured competency
- Education and training
- Mentorship



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Strong Roots



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Structured Competency



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Getting started

WHO: Identify AAC champions

WHAT: Equipment resources

WHERE: Start small!

HOW: Strong roots!



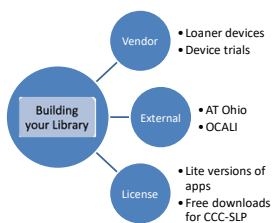
19

WHO: AAC Champions



20

WHAT: Equipment Needs



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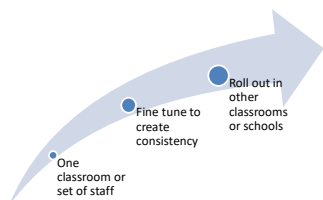
Slide 19

BK0

What if "How" ties in "consistent, accessible, and manageable"






Brown, Kathryn, 2025-09-25T12:55:20.714

WHERE: Start Small



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Why AAC Comps?

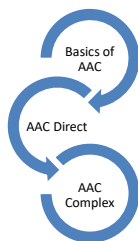
-  To provide best care to patients
-  To create a continuum of learning
-  To create mentorship relationships
-  The population of AAC users is growing
-  "Practice at top of your license"

Light & McNaughton, 2012; Ratcliff, Koul, & Lloyd, 2008



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Example from NCH



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Competencies Outlined

Criteria and Orientation Activities:

- ☒ Clinician has completed the Learning Center curriculum titled, "NCH 2024 Basics of AAC"
- ☒ Clinician has completed therapy sessions with AAC users for > 6 months
- ☒ Literature and Resource Review:
 - ☒ Current research articles on file on Speech Sharepoint (sort by competency AAC DIRECT)
 - ☒ Familiarize ASHA [Practice Portal--Augmentative and Alternative Communication](#)
- ☒ Review all AAC Direct Powerpoint presentations on Speech Sharepoint
- ☒ Review additional documents on Speech Sharepoint to supplement competency learning
- ☒ Review vendor websites for devices and software:
 - o PRC/Saltillo
 - o Tobii Dynavox
 - o Talk to Me Technologies
 - o Forbis
 - o AbleNet
- ☒ Review iOS device comparison sheet (Speech Sharepoint)
- ☒ Review fact sheet on software with non-English language options (Speech Sharepoint)



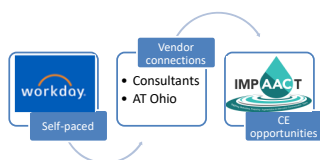
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Training and Education



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Training and Education



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- ASHA's SIG 12 is AAC focused
- RERC on AAC Learning Center
- The Informed SLP has CE options






Beyond a Conference

- Conferences are often costly.
- They require missed days of work
- They often require travel




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Consistent Messaging

- Develop a flow or process
 - Consistent across schools/sites




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Accessible to all

- Work together to create a set of documents that can be shared
- Store documents in an easily accessible location



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Tell us about your access to training



- How do you access training and education on AAC
 - Link to survey



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Mentorship



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- Fill in knowledge gaps
- Provide real time feedback
- Keep up with change

Benefits of Mentorship

Boster & Polovick, 2025



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Tell us about you



- What barriers to mentorship do you experience in your setting?
 - Link to survey



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Obstacles



Boster & Polovick, 2025



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Mentoring from Afar



Email groupings



AAC direct
consults



Team meetings



36

Rewards & Outcomes



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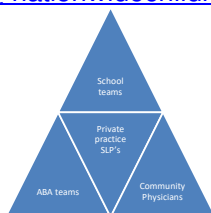
February 20, 2026



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Manageable: collaborate!

AAC@nationwidechildrens.org



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Time to Win!



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Contact

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EBP Coordinator
Kathryn.brown@nationwidechildrens.org

2025 Forbes "America's Best Employers for Women" list



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Thank you