

Teaching and supporting communication skills

People using services sometimes need additional support with communication. As a service provider, you have a duty to communicate with a person in a way they can understand, and sometimes you may also be responsible for teaching a person communication skills or reinforcing skills they are learning. In some situations, a therapist or teacher may be able to support the person and train caregivers on how to support communication skills. In other situations, it may be up to the provider to develop a plan for improving communication.

Resources

Training resources for providers

The following tools may be helpful in training direct caregivers or with developing a plan to support the person's communication skill development.

- [Communication and intellectual/developmental disability, DHS form 7646B \(PDF\)](#)
- [University of Minnesota fact sheet: Communicative alternatives to challenging behaviors](#)
- How to support a person with increasing their ability to communicate with others, DHS form 6810H (PDF) [add link once developed]
- [University of Minnesota TIES Center: Communicative supports tips for educators](#)
- [Picture My Future: A guide to communicating with a person with intellectual disability \(PDF\)](#)
- [iCommunicate Speech and Communication Therapy: Adults with special needs and learning disabilities](#)
- [Minnesota Department of Education: The role of Speech-Language Pathologists in evaluating communication skills of English learners \(PDF\)](#)
- [Braininjurymn.org: Cognitive problems after traumatic brain injury](#)
- [Centre for Neuro Skills: Cognitive and communication disorders](#)
- [Minnesota College of Direct Support – Everyone Can Communicate](#)
 - If you need access, visit the [DHS College of Direct Support webpage](#) for instructions.

Funding resources

For people using waiver services:

- [Specialist Services](#) can fund ongoing support from many different types of trained consultants to assist the team and the person with communication needs.
- [Exception requests](#) can fund extraordinary costs a provider incurs when the framework rate does not meet the person's needs. This might become applicable as the team develops a support plan for communication skill building and may discover that some of the plan components require additional funding.
- The resource [Guidance on support technology and service planning](#) outlines how to pay for support technology that may be necessary to facilitate meaningful communication.

Other services:

- The [Early Intensive Developmental and Behavioral Intervention \(EIDBI\) benefit](#) offers medically necessary services and supports to people under the age of 21 with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) or related conditions. The services provided through this benefit are designed to promote people's independence and participation in family and community life.

[Are there other services we should highlight here that can solely focus on communication skill building as the primary reason for the service?]

Other resources

- [Minnesota Guide to Assistive Technology](#) – Use this resource when a person might benefit from using a device to communicate.
- [Minnesota Department of Health: Speech-language pathologist and audiologist licensing](#)
- [Minnesota Department of Education: Speech or language impairments](#)

Provider requirements

Informed decision making

[Minn. Stat. 256B.4905](#) requires providers to support informed decision making. "Informed decision making" means a process that provides correct and complete information to help an individual make an informed choice. This information must be accessible so that the individual is able to demonstrate understanding of the options. The process must consider and offer to the individual, in a person-centered manner, the following:

1. Reasonable accommodations as needed or requested by the individual to fully participate in the informed decision-making process and acquire the information necessary to make an informed choice.
2. Discussion of the individual's own preferences, abilities, goals, and objectives.
3. Identification of the person's cultural needs and access to culturally responsive services.
4. Information about the benefits of inclusive and individualized services and supports.
5. Presentation and discussion of all options with the person.
6. Documentation of each option discussed.
7. Exploration and development of new or other options.
8. Facilitation of opportunities to visit alternative locations or to engage in experiences to understand how any service option might work for the person.
9. Opportunities to meet with other individuals with disabilities who live, work, and receive services different from the person's own services.
10. Identification of any barriers to assisting or implementing the person's informed choice and authorization of the services and supports necessary to overcome those barriers.
11. Ample time and opportunity to consider available options before the individual makes a final choice or changes a choice.

Assessment and support plan requirements

A person's assessed needs (including communication needs) must be documented in both their assessment and support plan. When applicable, the written support plan must include a summary of their assessed communication needs, and the person's options and choices to meet their communication needs. If the person needs support with learning new communication skills, it is recommended that the support plan outline:

- What actions staff should take to support the person.
- Instructional materials for staff, or where to find those materials.
- How often staff should engage in those support activities.
- What tools the person and their staff need to support effective communication.
- A plan to collect and review data to track the person's progress with learning new communication skills over time.

If more details are needed, the team may want to use the [How to support a person with increasing their ability to communicate with others, DHS form 6810H \(PDF\)](#) guide to develop a communication skill building plan with the person.