

TOPIC: IN SUPPORT OF EDUCATION OF AUGMENTATIVE ASSISTIVE COMMUNICATION DEVICES TO AID INDEPENDENCE OF PATIENTS WITH COMMUNICATION DISABILITIES

SUBMITTED BY: Ohio Valley General Hospital Student Nurses Association

WHEREAS, adults with acquired neurological conditions develop their verbal communication and literacy capabilities as typical speakers and writers. During the past three decades, Augmentative Assistive Communications (AAC) technologies have been developed to compensate for these natural communication losses; and

WHEREAS, most people in acute medical settings need to communicate regularly with hospital staff in order to participate in their own care, and they report an urgent need to communicate with family members at this uncertain and frightening time in their lives ; and

WHEREAS, barriers exist in healthcare: These barriers may include 1) medical teams that do not refer individuals for AAC services, 2) personnel who prefer not to be burdened with additional work in an already busy (and, perhaps, understaffed) workplace, and 3) Speech Language Pathologists (SLPs) and other professionals who are not familiar with conducting AAC interventions in these settings ; and

WHEREAS, a one-time survey showed that 2.5 million people said they needed assistive technology that they did not have. The inability to pay for such technology was the main reason given for the unmet need. Assistive technology can be critical in the lives of people with disabilities; and

WHEREAS, hospital staff members are unlikely to be knowledgeable about Augmentative Assistive Communication and AAC has proven to be essential in the way healthcare professionals talk with patients and the AAC staff cannot provide service without a request or referral from the medical team and the nursing coordinator often assumes the role of patient advocate during communication intervention and actively encourages physicians to request AAC services; and

WHEREAS, a 2006 survey of AAC caregivers reported very positive attitudes toward AAC technology. Those with greater AAC technology skills reported greater rewards associated with care-giving. They reported increased perception of social closeness to the individual with ALS and less difficulty in providing care; therefore be it

RESOLVED, that the National Student Nurses' Association (NSNA) encourage the need for education on the benefits provided by augmentative communication devices for people with disabilities who otherwise are unable to effectively communicate with others by increasing both the frequency and occurrence of information, programs, and presentations to help members identify, refer, obtain, and follow up with clients who are appropriate for augmentative communication; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the NSNA include informative articles in *Imprint* regarding the purpose of AAC devices, the criteria for a client to obtain an AAC device, how to identify appropriate SLPs for evaluation, and how to advocate on behalf of clients while they are pursuing an AAC device, if feasible; and be it further

RESOLVED,

that the NSNA consider inviting a speaker knowledgeable with AAC devices to speak at the annual convention and facilitate education and the use of AAC devices, if feasible; and be it further

RESOLVED,

that the NSNA send a copy of this resolution to the American Nurses Association, the National League for Nursing, the National Disability Rights Network, the American Association of Colleges of Nursing, the National Organization for Associate Degree Nursing, and any others deemed appropriate by the NSNA Board of Directors.