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SIGNS OF  COMMUNICATION, LLC

Does this sound familiar?

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Hope nobody notices, that nobody laughs. Try desperately, desperately, to make sure nobody ever finds out how little you understand.



This was my reality for my entire K-12 education. I had no idea what was going on and I was convinced it was all my fault when I missed due dates for assignments or failed classes.

It wasn't until years later that I realized how much I had been failed by the educational system. I didn't learn my multiplication tables until college. It would be easy to blame it on a particular communication method, but the truth is more complicated than that.

Access to communication is not simply adding an interpreter, captioning, or hearing aids. The problem wasn't that I didn't sign. It was that I didn't have effective communication and more than that, nobody was planning for me to achieve effective communication. Now, I want to help YOUR child achieve effective communication in school and thrive.

How can you have effective learning without effective communication?

Without effective communication, how can learners make any progress on their IEP goals?

Communication is the foundation for which all other learning develops. It is possibly the single most important part of a deaf or hard of hearing child's education.

Yet, not all states use "Communication Plans" for deaf and hard of hearing learners. Therefore, Signs of Communication has developed this Communication Plan template for your use in IEP plans and meetings. You got this! Feel free to reach out to me for support or to share your victory at info@signsofcommunication.org

Jacqui Wunderlich

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The Communication Plan was developed based on federal law as well as best practice examples from several states which mandate the usage of Communication Plans for deaf and hard of hearing students (such as Florida, Virginia, Colorado and Pennsylvania).

The Communication Plan should be reviewed annually and can be attached to the IEP. It is not a checklist, rather, it is intended to guide meaningful discussion and to develop an action plan to address the learner's language and communication needs.

The determination of which appropriate method of communication(s), auxiliary aids and services for effective communication **MUST** be individualized to the learner's needs and on a case-by-case basis. Not all deaf or hard of hearing students will require interpreters. Not all deaf or hard of hearing students will use hearing assistive technology. The school district cannot make decisions based on the student's residual hearing or what may be provided to other students.

All educators and school personnel working with the learner (teachers, Speech Language Pathologists, educational interpreters, counselors, behavior specialists, educational audiologists, Occupational Therapists, paraprofessionals, etc.) should be fully qualified according to state law, including applicable licensure or certification. They should have demonstrated proficiency in the learner's primary language(s) and communication method(s).

Assessments of the learner's receptive, expressive and hearing abilities should be completed by qualified professionals such as SLPs, educational audiologists or ASL specialists.

If the family does not use the same mode of communication as their child, they should be provided with necessary supports (including counseling or instruction) to build their proficiency in effectively communicating with their child and building necessary skills to allow them to support the implementation of their child's IEP. Learners **CANNOT** be denied instructional opportunities based on their family's language or communication abilities - IEP. § 300.34 (c)(8)(i-iii).

The majority of the Communication Plan can be completed prior to an IEP meeting, although some sections may require team discussion.

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COMMUNICATION PLAN

The primary purpose of the Communication Plan is to guide the IEP team in discussing the learner's needs based on communication skills and access in accordance with the IDEA law and relevant state guidance. Communication Plan results and findings can be used and incorporated throughout the IEP plan, such as in Present Levels, Strengths, Needs, Specially Designed Instruction, Support Personnel, Related Services, Annual Goals & Benchmarks, and Accommodation & Modifications.

IDEA 2004, § (14 9d) (3) (B) (iv) Development, review, and revision of IEP.

(2) Consideration of special factors. The IEP Team must - (iv) Consider the communication needs of the child, and in the case of a child who is deaf or hard of hearing, consider the child's language and communication needs, opportunities for direct communications with peers and professional personnel in the child's language and communication mode, academic level, and full range of needs, including opportunities for direct instruction in the child's language and communication mode;

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I. LANGUAGE & COMMUNICATION NEEDS

The learner's primary language is:

(check all that apply)

EXPRESSIVE

RECEPTIVE

- | | | |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|---------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | No emerging language |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | English |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | American Sign Language |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Other Spoken Language: |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Other Signed Language: |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Combination of languages: |

Comments:

The learner's primary method to access & use language:

(check all that apply)

EXPRESSIVE

RECEPTIVE

- | | | |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | No emerging communication |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Eye gaze |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Pointing |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Gestures / home sign |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Spoken Language (Auditory-Oral methods) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | American Sign Language (ASL) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Fingerspelling |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Pidgin Signed English / Contact Sign |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Signed Exact English |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Cued Speech |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Lipreading / Speechreading |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Vocalizations |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Pictures/Symbols |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Written / printed language |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Facial Expressions |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Braille |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Leading/Guiding others to what they want |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Pro-tactile Sign Language |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Augmentative & Alternative Communication (AAC)
Device: |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Other: |

Comments:

What, if any, communication/language services does the learner receive outside of the school environment?

How does the learner communicate with their family and/or others they live with? What language(s) and communication modes are used?

What other factors are present which influence the learner's communication and language development (such as physical, cognitive, socio-emotional, etc.)?

Summarize learner's general receptive and expressive language and communication skills based on informal and formal assessment results.

Can caregivers/family and the learner effectively communicate with each other?

Yes No

If no, what supports are needed to improve communication proficiency?

Can peers and the learner effectively communicate with each other?

Yes No

If no, what supports are needed to improve communication proficiency?

Can teachers/aides and the learner effectively communicate with each other?

Yes No

If no, what supports are needed to improve communication proficiency?

Comments:

II. AUXILIARY AIDS & SERVICES

“The school must honor the individual’s choice unless the school can prove that an alternative auxiliary aid or service provides communication that is as effective as that provided to students without disabilities and affords an equal opportunity to participate in and benefit from the service, program, or activity” (DOJ-DOE FAQ, p. 9).

What supports are needed to participate and make progress in the general education curriculum? Auditory access should be evaluated with functional listening evaluations.

Devices / Services	Never at School	Sometimes at School	Usually at School
Personally-owned Hearing Aid(s)			
Bone-Anchored Hearing Aid (BAHA) or Cochlear Implant(s)			
School-provided hearing aid(s)			
School-provided FM system			
School-provided sound-field system			
Augmentative & Alternative Communication (AAC) Device			
Captioned media			
Live-captioning (C-PRINT, CART, TypeWell, etc.)			
Interpreter			
Note-taker			

Devices / Services	Never at Home	Sometimes at Home	Usually at Home
Personally-owned Hearing Aid(s)			
Bone-Anchored Hearing Aid (BAHA) or Cochlear Implant(s)			
School-provided hearing aid(s)			
School-provided FM system			
School-provided sound-field system			
Augmentative & Alternative Communication (AAC) Device			
Captioned media			
Live-captioning (C-PRINT, CART, TypeWell, etc.)			
Interpreter			
Note-taker			

How are auxiliary aids monitored?

Independent student report Staff check

Hearing assistive technology checks:

Circle frequency: Daily, weekly, monthly by _____ (staff name)

What is the learner's level of independence with hearing assistive technology?

High Support Moderate Support Low Support Independent

What training/support is needed for the staff or learner to ensure effective use of any auxiliary aids/hearing assistive technology?

If an interpreter is being used, what type?

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> American Sign Language Interpreter | <input type="checkbox"/> Signed Exact English Transliteration |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Pidgin Signed English Interpreter | <input type="checkbox"/> Cued Speech Transliteration |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Oral Transliteration | <input type="checkbox"/> Protactile Interpreter (for DeafBlind) |

What visual / auditory supports are currently used or might be required to support the learner accessing or using communication in their school environment?

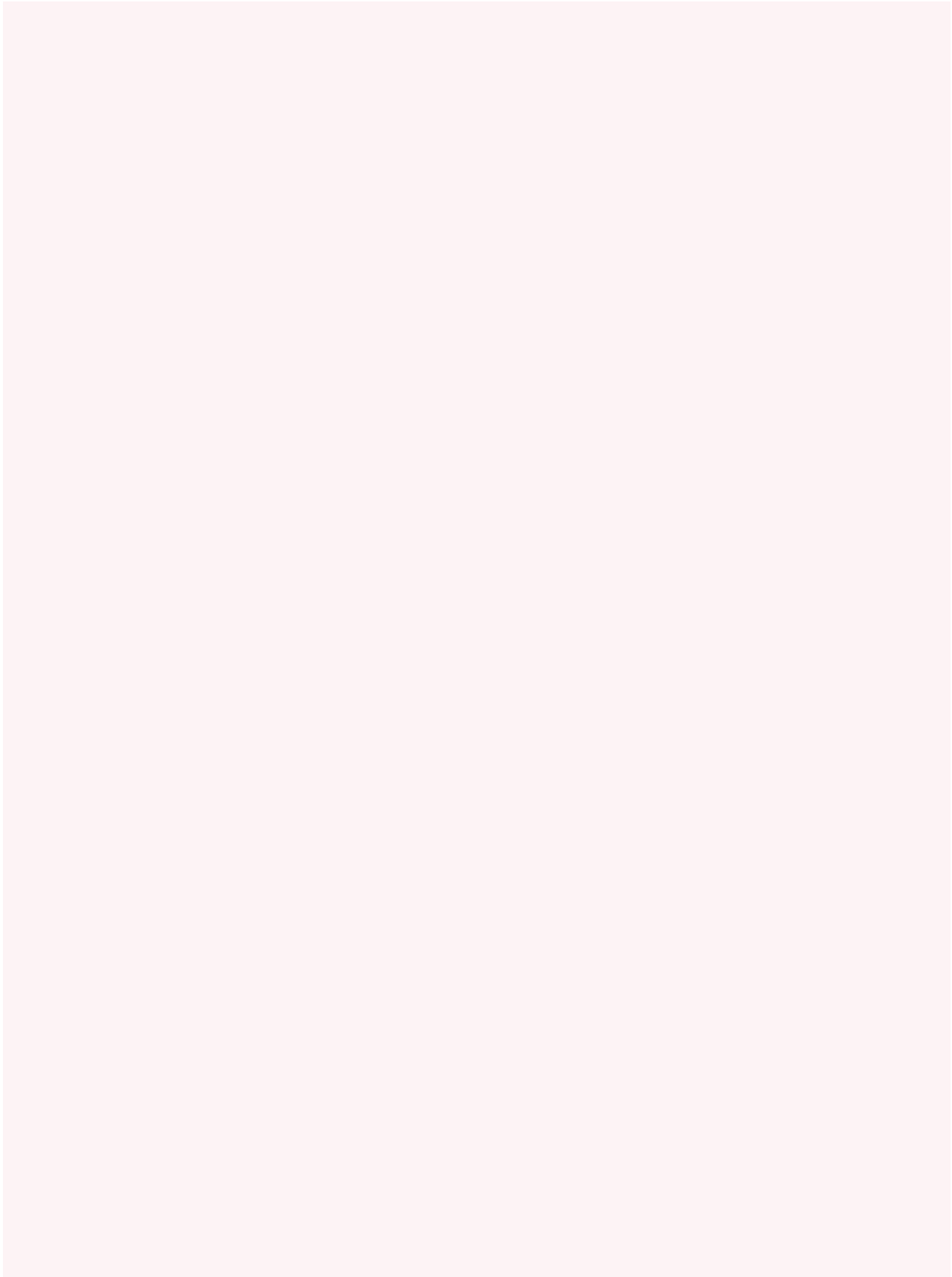
- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Preferential seating | <input type="checkbox"/> Limit visual obstructions |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Special lighting | <input type="checkbox"/> Captioned media |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Limit noise distractions | <input type="checkbox"/> Large print |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Videophones | <input type="checkbox"/> Visual alerts & alarms |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Tactile alerts | <input type="checkbox"/> Obtain student's attention first |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Enhance lip-reading conditions | <input type="checkbox"/> Other: |

Please describe any other assistive technologies or accommodations needed to provide communication access:

What is the alternate plan to maintain effective communication if any of the following occur?

- Interpreter is absent
- Notetaker is absent
- Substitute teacher in the classroom
- Hearing aid or implants not working or unavailable (battery dead, forgot at home, broken, lost etc.)
- Closed captions are not available for media (such as online videos)
- Other assistive technology (such as iPad or FM system) is not working or unavailable
- Emergency virtual instruction
- Emergency situation such as fire, tornado, active shooter, earthquake, etc.

Address alternative plan(s):



III. OPPORTUNITIES FOR DIRECT COMMUNICATION

What opportunities does the learner have for direct communication with peers and educators in the student's language and communication method? Direct communication here means WITHOUT needing anybody else to facilitate the interaction (such as an interpreter or captioner).

Is instruction provided to the learner directly by a teacher proficient in their preferred language(s) & communication method(s)?

Yes No

What opportunities do they receive to engage in direct communication with teachers or school personnel?

Do other peers directly communicate with the learner using their preferred language(s) & communication method(s)?

Yes No

What opportunities do they receive to engage in direct communication with peers?

What opportunities does the learner have to meet/interact with deaf and hard of hearing role models?

What supports or services are needed to increase the school personnel or educator's communication proficiency?

IV. ACADEMIC LEVEL

Is the learner on grade-level for reading?

Yes No

If no, what level are they at and what is the plan to increase skills?

Is the learner on grade-level for writing?

Yes No

If no, what level are they at and what is the plan to increase skills?

Is the learner on grade-level for mathematics?

Yes No

If no, what level are they at and what is the plan to increase skills?

Is the learner able to participate in classroom activities?

Yes No

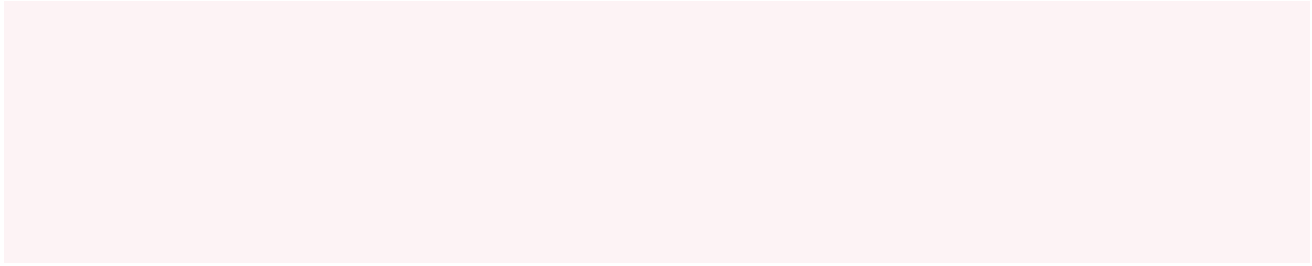
If no, what is the plan to increase skills?

Is the learner on grade-level daily living/functional living skills?

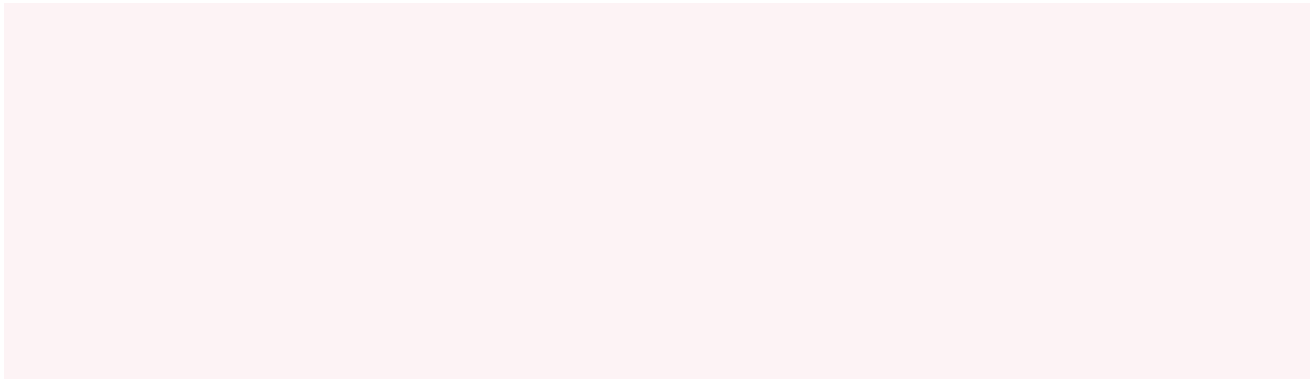
Yes No

If no, what level are they at and what is the plan to increase skills?

What other supports or accommodations are needed to support the development of grade-level academic or daily living skills?



Comments:



V. FULL RANGE OF NEEDS

Title 34, Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) section 300.117, requires accessibility to all components of the educational process, including school-sponsored activities (e.g., related services, assemblies, field trips, extracurricular activities, athletics).

What services / accommodations may be necessary for these activities?

Does the learner plan to participate in any school-sponsored extracurriculars?

Yes No

If yes, what extracurriculars? What is the plan to provide effective communication?

Are there any cultural or religious factors that may impact communication?

Please describe.

RESOURCES

- Contact me at info@signsofcommunication.org with your questions or visit www.signsofcommunication.org to learn more about having Signs of Communication support you and your child. We can help you find an advocate or support you in your own learning journey. We offer FREE 30-min initial consultations to help you decide what is the best fit for you.
- [The U.S Department of Justice and the U.S. Department of Education issued document "Frequently Asked Questions on Effective Communication for Students With Hearing, Vision, or Speech Disabilities in Public Elementary and Secondary Schools." \(2014\).](#)
- [U.S. Department of Education, Office of Civil Rights Guidance on "Deaf Students Education Services"](#)
- [IDEA website](#)
- [The Outreach Center for Deafness & Blindness Communication Planning Guide for Students Who Are Deaf or Hard of Hearing](#)
- [Pennsylvania Training and Technical Assistance Network \(PaTTAN\) Guidance for Communication Plans](#)
- [Florida Resource Materials and Technology Center for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing](#)
- [Hands & Voices Special Education Advocacy](#)
- [Laurent Clerc National Deaf Education Center](#)
- [Bill of Rights for Deaf and Hard of Hearing Children \(National Association of the Deaf\)](#)
- [American Society for Deaf Children](#)