



CONNECTICUT STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

# **Supporting Parents and Caregivers of Students with High Needs During the COVID-19 Pandemic**

## **Communication Skills**

**May 15, 2020**

# Supporting Parents and Caregivers of Students with High Needs During the COVID-19 Pandemic

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# ***Supporting Parents and Caregivers of Students with High Needs During the COVID-19 Pandemic***

The information and resources included in this resource guide are organized into ten different topical categories:

- Getting Started;
- Communication Skills;
- Literacy;
- Math;
- Science, Social Studies, and Current Events;
- Physical Activity and Mobility;
- Life-Skills and Self-Help Skills;
- Art;
- Sensory Activities; and
- Play and Leisure.

## **[Resource Guide](#)**

## **[One-Pager](#)**

## **[Getting Started](#)**

- 1) Some Functional Tips
- 2) Self-Care for the Parent/Caregiver
- 3) Setting Up the Environment for Continued Educational Opportunities at Home

## **[Overview & Getting Started Webinar](#)**

- [Download the Presentation](#)

# Session Presenters & Goal

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## Session Goal

- ✓ Provide an overview of the **Communication Skills** section in the resource guide



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# Communication Skills

## SOCIAL SKILLS SUPPORTS

Social skills are the skills needed to interact with others in society and are impacted by a person's mode or method of communication and how effective they are in using their communication skills. Social skills can be difficult for children with high-needs because the expectation for what is an appropriate social skill varies so widely between different activities. For example, if your favorite grocery store worker says "hi," you can wave and say hi back, but if grandma says "hi," she might also expect a hug (pre-COVID-19). Some of our students who are highly social may have a difficult time understanding social distance and may need explicit instructions to social distancing during COVID-19. These changing social rules become even more difficult for children who have difficulty differentiating between social skills during this emergency time.

# Communication Skills

## EXPRESSIVE/RECEPTIVE VOCABULARY SUPPORTS

Vocabulary is so important for all of us. It allows us to understand conversations, read books, and express ourselves through speaking and writing. Research shows that children with high support needs often require direct instruction and repeated exposures to learn vocabulary words. Our highest need children require direct repeated practice hearing and using those words during multiple activities with multiple communication partners. Vocabulary is essential for basic communication. A child can have all their speech sounds, and all the social skills, but if they don't know the word for banana, they still can't get a banana for their breakfast. For many students with high support needs even once they know the specific word, they have a hard time recalling those words when they need it. For those children, it is important that we provide visual supports for their language, as well as developing their vocabulary for categories and descriptive words, so they can describe the word they are thinking of when they forget.

# Communication Skills

## AUGMENTATIVE AND ALTERNATIVE COMMUNICATION (AAC) SUPPORTS

Augmentative and alternative communication (AAC) incorporates strategies that expand or enhance speech to increase communication skills. Some children may have difficulty making their needs known verbally and may need AAC methods to support or replace speech or writing. AAC is a range of tools from low-tech such as picture supports and facial expressions all the way to high-tech, dynamic display voice output communication devices. Consult with your child's teachers or school-based team to learn about strategies and tools used in school and then identify the method or methods which might work best with your child in the home setting and share them with your child's team or teacher.

# Thank You! – Be Safe!

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- Deborah Richards, CREC
- Joyce Rioux, CREC

*We are all in this together!*