

Ottawa Children's Treatment Centre

CLINIC FOR AUGMENTATIVE COMMUNICATION (CAC) – ELIGIBILITY GUIDELINES

1) GENERAL ELIGIBILITY

The CAC team serves children and youth living in Eastern Ontario (excluding portions of Lanark-Leeds-Grenville). We accept referrals for new clients up until their 18th birthday.

2) ELIGIBILITY FOR FACE-TO-FACE COMMUNICATION ASSESSMENT

The CAC team serves clients who have complex augmentative & alternative communication (AAC) needs that cannot be met by their own speech-language pathologist. In most cases, the client should be introduced to an aided communication system (ie: picture/symbol board or book), and should be demonstrating appropriate and functional use of that system, before being referred for CAC assessment. Speech-language pathologists can request consultation through our All About AAC service if they need assistance to get a client started with AAC.

Referral for CAC assessment may be appropriate when the client's ability to use AAC is limited because of a severe motor or visual impairment, or when there is a demonstrated need for a speech-generating device or other complex AAC system. A client may benefit from a speech-generating device when there is a need to communicate in group situations or with peers, to combine words into sentences, to express a range of social communication functions, or for greater independence in the community.

Clients are generally eligible for CAC face-to-face communication assessment if they fall into one of the following groups:

- 1) The client has a severe motor or visual impairment that limits his ability to use communication symbols (ie. unable to easily see or point to symbols), but demonstrates intentional non-symbolic communication (eg: understands cause-effect, uses behavioural signals such as sounds or facial expressions to get attention or to indicate that he does or doesn't want something, chooses between 2 objects by looking at the one he wants, etc).
- 2) The client is independently using an aided communication system (ie. picture board, theme boards, communication book, PECS) with a total of 10-20 symbols to express himself in at least one environment (ie. home, school, community); can reliably choose from at least 3 symbols at a time; and may benefit from a simple (low tech) speech-generating device or Boardmaker software, but the primary speech-language pathologist is not an ADP Individual Authorizer.
- 3) The client is independently using an aided communication system (ie. picture board, theme boards, communication book, PECS) with a total of 20 or more symbols to express himself in at least one environment (ie. home, school, community); can reliably choose from at least 4 symbols at a time; and may benefit from a more complex (high tech) speech-generating device or other complex AAC system (eg: one which uses spelling, allows for a broad vocabulary, and/or enables the client to combine symbols to create phrases/sentences).
- 4) The client's primary means of communication is speech, he has a large spoken vocabulary and speaks spontaneously in short phrases or sentences, but his speech is often hard for others to understand.

Clients are *not* eligible for CAC assessment if they need AAC solely for school.

If the client is not eligible for CAC assessment, the speech-language pathologist can request consultation through our All About AAC service. For information about this service, please see:

<http://www.octc.ca/documents/OCTC-All-About-AAC-EN.pdf>

3) ELIGIBILITY FOR WRITING AIDS ASSESSMENT

The CAC team serves clients who have complex writing needs that cannot be met by an occupational therapist working in the community.

Clients are generally eligible if they meet all of the following criteria:

1. The primary diagnosis is a physical disability (eg: cerebral palsy, muscular dystrophy)
2. The client's ability to write manually is not sufficient to meet their writing needs
3. The client demonstrates basic literacy skills (ie. able to independently generate text if given an appropriate means to do so)
4. The client needs to produce written work at home on a regular basis
5. The client does not already have a writing aid at home that can meet their needs
6. The client requires a writing aid with adaptations such as a specialized keyboard, specialized software or other alternative access methods

Some preschool or kindergarten-aged children with very limited hand function may be eligible for assessment before their basic literacy skills have developed, if they show the potential to develop literacy.

Clients who require a writing aid for home use but who do not need any adaptations to a regular computer or any specialized software should be assessed by an occupational therapist in the community who is designated as an ADP Individual Authorizer.

As of Sept 2010, clients who do not have a physical disability but who meet all of the other criteria listed above *may* be eligible for CAC assessment as part of a pilot project. These clients must have a fine motor or motor planning impairment that affects their ability to write, and they must be referred by an occupational therapist. For further information about this project, please contact the CAC Program Administrator at 613-688-2126 ext. 4319.

Clients are *not* eligible for CAC writing aids assessment if they need a writing aid solely for school use.

If the client is not eligible for CAC assessment, the primary occupational therapist can receive some guidance by requesting a consultation through our All About AAC service. For information about this service, please see:

<http://www.octc.ca/documents/OCTC-All-About-AAC-EN.pdf>