



Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) and Assistive Technology (AT) Services

Evaluation and training for these services are provided by Lisa Bardach, MS CCC-SLP, a licensed and certified Speech-Language Pathologist.

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- Voice preservation
 - Voice preservation through voice and message banking is a way to store your vocal identity. Our voices are an integral part of our personalities, and preserving one's natural voice can be critically important to maintaining a sense of self. It's something that may never be needed or used, but if there comes a time when natural speech is no longer an option, people are typically relieved that they put in the time and effort to preserve their voice.
 - **Voice banking** is the process of creating a synthesized voice that sounds like you by digitally recording a number of sentences and sending them to a 3rd party to create the voice.
 - **Message banking™** is the process of digitally recording specific messages in your own voice with your own inflection and intonation, and storing them on a computer for later use.
- Voice amplification – ALS can affect the voice, making it difficult to speak loudly, be heard in noisy environments like cars or social gatherings, project your voice, or say more than a few sentences at a time without getting fatigued. A voice amplifier can make the voice louder without adding effort. A microphone worn on the head and simple compact amplifier are all that is needed.
- Low tech communication tools – these are tools that are not electronic and require no power or charging. They can be highly useful throughout the disease process and require minimal to no setup and training. They include things like alphabet boards, phrase boards, and eye gaze boards, and can be used even if the only movement a person has is looking up.

- Speech generating devices (SGDs) – also known as voice output communication aids, are electronic augmentative and alternative communication (AAC) systems used to supplement or replace speech or writing for individuals with severe speech impairments, enabling them to verbally communicate. SGDs use synthesized speech for voice output. An individual's banked voice could replace the commercially available synthesized voices that come with an SGD. Additionally, banked messages can be downloaded into SGDs to supplement text-to-speech (TTS). There are many different SGDs available from multiple manufacturers. A comprehensive evaluation by a licensed and certified speech-language pathologist is critical to finding the right equipment and getting it funded by insurance. Most medical insurances, including Medicare and Medicaid, cover these devices.
- Enhanced options to access cell phones, tablets, and computers – there are multiple options to continue to use electronics even when hand movement and dexterity are limited, including voice activation for those whose speech is still functional.
- Apps for text-to-speech communication (iOS and Android) – text-to-speech (TTS) is a form of speech technology that converts text into a spoken voice output (speech). Text to speech allows a computer, tablet, smartphone, or application to speak written text aloud. On most products, the speech is usually provided by commercially available synthesized voices. It is very helpful in giving a voice to people who have lost their own. There are lots of apps available for both iOS and Android platforms, so it is important to consider a variety of features that may be useful when selecting an app.
- Personal alert systems – this is a way of getting attention from someone who is in another room or another place, get help at night, let someone know you are done in the bathroom, etc. These systems can be accessed even if no hand function is available.

Evaluation and training for all of ALS of Michigan's AAC services can be provided in person and remotely. Please contact Lisa Bardach at (248) 354-6100 x227 or lisa@alsofmi.org to learn more.