

# Speech Pathologists who work with AAC



**Rainbow Inclusion**

Your very rainbow and disability friendly place

## We are Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Intersex, Queer/Questioning, and Asexual (LGBTIQA+) people who use augmentative and alternative communication (AAC). This is what we would like you to know.

- We have diverse genders and sexual identities.
- We are sexual beings just like everyone else.
- We often live in community with other LGBTIQA+ people.
- We need support to communicate about who we are and who we care about.
- We want to feel safe to communicate about who we are and who we care about.
- You may be one of a small number of people we trust to talk about our sexual orientation or gender identity.



As speech pathologists, you work hard to carry out best practices in AAC, including following Speech Pathology Australia's Clinical Guidelines in AAC<sup>1</sup>. You can apply best practices in AAC when it comes to gender and sexual diversity by focusing on the last two principles in the "Principles of AAC Services" in those Clinical Guidelines: "Individual approaches" and "Cultural considerations and cultural responsiveness."

## So, what can you do to provide best practice AAC intervention to us and our families?



## Use strategies to make us feel safe

- Make your support visible by doing things like putting up rainbow flags or celebrating LGBTIQA+ significant days like "Wear It Purple Day."
- Keep activities and language open to all genders and sexualities. Anyone can enjoy a spa day or footy, and anyone can be attracted to the barista at the café. Ask about a partner instead of a girlfriend or boyfriend.



## Vocabulary

- Individualise vocabulary for our identity, friendship group, and family.
- Consider the picture symbols in the system. For example, consider changing the symbol for "family" if we have same-sex parents. Think about what the symbol communicates to us and the people in our lives about what is "normal" or "acceptable."
- Include vocabulary about gender and sexual diversity so that we can engage in discussions about the broader world.
- Include age-appropriate vocabulary about sexuality and gender. Even children need to talk about their bodies and practice bodily autonomy.
- Make sure we have the vocabulary and the skills to communicate consent. Embed working on consent into our therapy sessions and goals.

queer



transgender



family



## Gatekeeping and advocacy

- Talk with parents, guardians, and support workers about the need for vocabulary for a diverse world.
- Talk with potential gatekeepers about us as sexual human beings and advocate against ableism and infantilisation.

## Professional development:

- Q Learn more if you need to! This blog post by an AAC user is a great explanation of some of the issues: <https://anotherqueerautistic.wordpress.com/2018/11/21/what-i-wish-others-knew-about-interacting-with-me-as-an-aac-user>
- Q Read this article about the experiences of LGBTIQ+ people with disabilities in health care: O'Shea, A., Latham, J. R., McNair, R., Despott, N., Rose, M., Mountford, R., & Frawley, P. (2020). Experiences of LGBTIQ+ People with Disability in Healthcare and Community Services: Towards Embracing Multiple Identities. International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health, 17(21). <https://www.mdpi.com/1660-4601/17/21/8080>
- Q Read this article about complex communication needs, AAC, and romantic and sexual relationships. Darryl Sellwood, Parimala Raghavendra & Ruth Walker (2022) Facilitators and barriers to developing romantic and sexual relationships: lived experiences of people with complex communication needs, Augmentative and Alternative Communication, DOI. <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/07434618.2022.2046852>

<sup>1</sup>Speech Pathology Australia (2020). Augmentative and Alternative Communication Clinical Guideline. Melbourne: Speech Pathology Australia.



This document was made with a team of co-designers with disability. It is part of a project called *Information for Inclusion*. The project is run by Deakin University, Inclusion Designlab, and Thorne Harbour Health. It was paid for by an NDIA ILC Grant.

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From our hearts, we acknowledge the First People of Australia, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

We show our respects to Elders past, present and future and to Mums and Dads, Aunties, Uncles, cousins, nieces and nephews and family. Brotherboys and Sistergirls are part of the rainbow flag.

For all the self advocates who are people with intellectual disability: Nothing about us without us.



Point your phone's camera at this QR code to be taken to the **Rainbow Inclusion** website