

Safety and AAC

Safety is often a significant concern for families who have children who are unable to communicate through speech. SLPs are essential to developing comprehensive AAC systems that address safety communication needs and self-advocacy skills. By programming safety-related vocabulary, teaching information-sharing strategies, modeling self-advocacy, and providing structured practice across environments, SLPs can effectively integrate safety skills into AAC intervention.



1 Program Essential Safety Information into the AAC Device

- ✓ **Personal Identification Info:** Include the child's name, address, phone number, emergency contacts, and any other essential information. Use AbleNet's Device Personalization Guide to gain needed information about clients.
- ✓ **Medical Information:** Add allergies, current medications, and any medical conditions they may need to share with others.
- ✓ **Communication Styles:** Program phrases that allow the user to quickly explain to others that they use this device for communication and need to always keep it with them.
- ✓ **Dedicated Page:** Consider creating a dedicated "Safety" page that consolidates personal and medical information into one place for easy access.

2 Practice Using AAC to Relay Safety Information

- ✓ **Practice Answering Questions with the Device:** Begin by modeling both asking and answering questions so the child can see the response. Then ask the child the question and support them as they practice responding independently.
- ✓ **Start with Low-pressure Role Play:** Practice answering safety scenarios during role playing or games in sessions. Toys are a great way to incorporate play into practice. Use a firetruck or other rescue vehicle and have the user practice sharing identifying information.
- ✓ **Practice in Different Environments:** Work with families to build practice into daily routines and community activities, supporting carryover in meaningful contexts.
- ✓ **Include Familiar and Unfamiliar Communication Partners:** Practice with family, peers, and teachers, gradually introducing unfamiliar communication partners.
- ✓ **Use Video Modeling:** Show videos that demonstrate safety scenarios, then practice identifying appropriate responses together.

3 Program and Model Self-Advocacy Skills on the Device

- ✓ **Consent and Refusal Language:** Target using phrases such as "no," "stop," "I don't want to," and "all done."
- ✓ **Sensory and Support Needs:** Include phrases about sensory preferences, processing time, or support needs (e.g., "It's too bright," "need headphones").
- ✓ **Help-seeking Phrases:** Program phrases such as "I need help," "I'm lost," or "I don't understand."
- ✓ **Expressing Discomfort:** Program phrases like "I don't like that," "I need a break," and "That hurts."



Safety skills develop through consistent, supportive practice over time. By programming personal information, practicing safety strategies, and building self-advocacy vocabulary into AAC devices, SLPs help equip children with tools that support their safety and independence.