

## AAC Mentors

# AAC Mentors: The Real Deal!

### WHAT AND WHY:

AAC mentors are individuals who use AAC

And can:

- Provide models of AAC use that is more proficient than the target student
- Become a role model for the target student
- Offer support to teachers, therapists, and family members



**WHO IS THIS FOR:** AAC mentors can be extremely supportive for people who use AAC, from young children through adults. Mentors can also provide support and models for family members of people who use AAC, supporting them in seeing possibilities! Finally, mentors can provide direct or indirect instruction for professionals working with people who use AAC.

**HOW TO:** Mentors can help in a variety of ways, as summarized below.

**Role Model:** We have found that people who are (relatively) proficient users of AAC can be a fantastic role model to:

- People who use AAC – helps them see the **purpose** of using a device, and observe strategies
- Family members – provides a possible 'map' of the future. Family members repeatedly talk about the HOPE that having good users of AAC engenders!
- Professionals – offers a model of what it can look like, so that expectations are raised.

**Been There / Can Share Experiences:** People who use AAC, family members, and professionals are often interested in hearing about experiences with AAC, and to talk about strategies and actions that were helpful (and NOT helpful. In addition, it's helpful to be able to ask questions of someone who 'talks the talk!'

**Direct Instruction:** As they become more sophisticated and metacognitive (aware of how they use devices and strategies to communicate effectively), mentors can support professionals in providing direct instruction for students who use AAC devices. For example, when she was in her early 20s, Krista, a device user from age 6, became a habilitation provider, working directly with students who use AAC. She played language games using the device, and generally modeled language skills in home and community settings.