



The Communication Mentors' Network . . .

. . .supporting effective communication & fuller lives through Assistive Technology & Augmentative / Alternative Communication. . .



The Communication Mentors' Course™

- ★ Become a part of a growing movement!
- ★ Develop increased expertise in Assistive Technology (AT) & Augmentative/Alternative Communication (AAC)!
- ★ Build networks of local people working together!
- ★ Access the Mentors' AT/AAC Lending Library!
- ★ Help people 'find their voice', increase choice/control!
- ★ Shift attitudes, help others hear the 'native language' in everyone!
- ★ Build your confidence & skills...

...YOU can make a difference!

www.communicationmentors.org

Continuing education credits available for Social Work and Developmental Disabilities Nursing (DDNA).



"... I can't believe how
asleep I was before..."

"... I know now that I can
make a difference, a
REAL difference..."

"... this changed my life..."

"... I've found my voice
as I've helped others
be heard..."

"An amazing, uplifting
learning experience..."

"... really opened more doors of
opportunities for me..."

"A great adventure & a
long journey for me...thank
you for the experience &
the opportunity..."

"Looking forward to continue to
teach what I learn, share the
experiences of everything..."

"I enjoyed the learning experience
... everyone has a voice."

Table of Contents

Why a Communication Mentors' Course?	4
Who is this Course for...?	5
Who are Communication Mentors?	
What type of commitment do I need to make?	6
What is the Course schedule and topics?	7
How can I get involved?	8
Outcomes	9



Why a Communication Mentors' Course?

The lack of recognized communication to express even basic wants and needs is a well-known issue plaguing far too many people with severe and multiple disabilities and the human service systems supporting them. Also well-known and well-documented are the ramifications this has on the healthcare, rate of abuse / neglect, services provided, and general "self-determination" of these vulnerable people.



The Communication Mentors' Course was developed to "build capacity" in a local area by gradually addressing this issue by helping others see how people are already communicating, assisting them to find or expand their voice through often simple accommodations as well as other Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) systems. By designing an almost year-long course of study in how to support communication with people who have not been typically considered for traditional speech therapy, our goal is to help establish a network of Communication Mentors within service provider agencies and within the general locale who will, over time, become available to assist others to find and use more effective means of communication as well as other tools for increased independence, choice, and control.



Who is this Course for...?

Participants must meet the following criteria:

1. have a minimum of 6 mos. experience supporting at least 1 person directly who has difficulty communicating and
2. a.) have the desire and necessary support to develop a role as a Communication Mentor within their organization or
b.) have the desire and necessary support to be available to other organizations and people as a Communication Mentor or
3. have other experience or training which, upon review, is judged to be equal to the above.



Who are Communication Mentors?

Direct Staff	Director of CIE
Supervisors/Managers	Behavior Therapy/Psych.
Directors	Supports Coordinators
College/University Professors	Family members
Administrative Staff	Speech & Language
Residential/Home	School District
Vocational/Employment	Nursing/Healthcare
Early Intervention	Training/Staff Development
Life Sharing	Users of AT
Senior Services	Graduate Students
Center for Independent Living	Interested Citizens and Friends



What type of commitment do I need to make?



Participating Communication Mentors must agree to the following:

- Full attendance at all 8 classes (most classes meet 1 day per month, two meet 2 days),
- Participation in a minimum of 4 "clinical supervisions" to gain valuable first-hand experience (e.g. assist at a AAC/AT Clinic, assist in ongoing communication support appointments, assist another graduate Communication Mentor, assist in presentations / training sessions, etc.),
- Keep up with all assignments, readings, online discussions, and appointments as scheduled,
- Gradually begin to work with others within their organization or be available to help Communication Mentor to explore and use AAC/AT systems,
- Regularly meet and discuss with an advisor within their organization or elsewhere the effects of their learning and growing practice as a Communication Mentor,
- Fulfill any other individually designed activities, as suggested by the Course Leaders
- Have fun, further fan their passion for assisting others, and find real ways to help everyone be heard!

What is the Course schedule and topics?

Below is a typical Course schedule. Classes generally run 9:30 a.m. — 4 p.m. (See insert for specific dates/classes).

Session #	Session Title / (Guest Presenter)
<u>Session 1</u>	Starting at the Beginning: of Us, Our Course, Our Work, AT, & AAC!
<u>Session 2</u>	Choice & Control: The Real Deal in Helping People to Find a Voice!
<u>Session 3</u>	Seeing Many Possibilities: Systems / Modes of AAC, Positioning, Accommodations, Devices, Materials, & How to Decide What for Whom!
<u>Session 4</u>	Steps Along the Way: Helping a Person & Their Supporters Get Started, Build Skills, Create Goals, Document Their Journey, & Build Portfolios of Success!
<u>Session 5</u> (2 Days)	The Autism Spectrum (Bill Stillman)
<u>Session 6</u>	Building Support for Communication Development (Martha Leary)
<u>Session 7</u>	Finding Independence: Pushing Others to Strive for Independence in Communication, in Work / Home / Social Areas, & Away From Our Support!
<u>Session 8</u>	Moving On: Being a Mentor, Training Strategies, Professional Standards, & Helping to Build Ongoing Change!



Continuing education credits available for Social Work
and Developmental Disabilities Nursing (DDNA).



How can I get involved?

The Communication Mentors' Course has been offered in many locations through grants, collaborative efforts, or other funding.

By participating in the Course, Communication Mentors have access to the following elements:

- a. The Communication Mentors' Course itself.
- b. Two large-scale training workshops by internationally known experts in creative Communication Support (Martha Leary) and better understanding the Autism Spectrum (William Stillman).
- c. "Clinics" to provide informal exploration of AT / AAC by local people.
- d. Assist with general training sessions (e.g. Everyone Communicates! Basics of AT / AAC, Considerations for Investigations with People who Communicate Differently, etc.).
- e. Gradual development of (or access to an existing) locally-based Communication Mentors' Network Library and AT Center.
- f. Development of a local support network to provide ongoing work in that locale.
- g. Communication support to local citizens with little or no known communication systems and their supporters.



Contact Networks for more information...
see last page for contact info.!

Some Outcomes To-date...

- 🧑 Hundreds of people have been assisted by the Communication Mentors' Networks!
- 🧑 People with a variety of "life issues" - from birth through old age, accident, injury, illness, etc..
- 🧑 Specifically noted effects on Mentors:
 - Job changes to do more specific Communication Work
 - Assisted with AAC/AT training
 - Assisted in explorations & ongoing support
 - Returned to school for advanced degree/certification
- 🧑 Agency / County changes:
 - Procedures developed re: Communication Support
 - Increased ongoing training re: AT/AAC
- 🧑 Development/involvement in ongoing committee re: AT/AAC





*For more information regarding the
Communication Mentors' Course,
please contact:*

Rosa McAllister, M.Ed., A.T.P.
Networks for Training and Development, Inc.

The Commons at Valley Forge
1220 Valley Forge Rd., # 17
P.O. Box 206
Valley Forge, PA 19481-0206

610-935-6627

rosam@networksfortraining.org

1.866.683.3651 (tollfree)

www.communicationmentors.org

Networks for Training and Development, Inc.
The Commons at Valley Forge
1220 Valley Forge Rd., # 17
Box 206
Valley Forge, PA 19481-0206