

Communication for Safe Care: Inclusive Communication Training



Module One: Introduction to Communication



What is Communication?

Communication is how people share information, ideas, thoughts, or feelings with each other. It happens when we talk, write, use gestures, or find other ways to send and receive messages. Good communication helps us understand each other better and build stronger connections.

Good communication helps us to:

Build
relationships

Understand

Solve
problems

Work
together

Why is communication important in health?

- Builds trust between patients and healthcare workers.
- Ensures accurate diagnosis and treatment.
- Empowers patients to make informed decisions.
- Improves health outcomes and patient safety.
- Facilitates health education and promotion.
- Coordinates care among healthcare workers.
- Addresses emotional and psychological needs of patients.

What happens when communication breaks down?

When communication breaks down, misunderstandings can occur, information may not get through accurately, and relationships can suffer. People might feel frustrated, confused, or ignored.

Module Two: Communication Support Needs

What are communication support needs?

- Any condition, impairment, or difficulty that impacts how someone sends, receives, or understands information
- Can be mild or severe, long-term or temporary

Not all disabilities can be seen.

You can't tell if someone has a disability just by looking at them.

Communication support needs are an invisible disability. This means that any of your patients could need support to communicate. This can include:

- People with intellectual disabilities, autism, language or speech disorders etc.
- People who speak English as a second language
- People with hearing impairment
- People experiencing information overload
- People who have low literacy levels



1.2 million

Australians have
a communication
disability

Module Three: Inclusive Communication

Communication access means that everyone can participate regardless of their spoken language; mode of communication; or presence of a communication disability ("Communication Access | Scope Australia", 2018).



Module Three: Inclusive Communication

Legislation

- There are international and domestic laws that state that people with disabilities must be able to access information on an equal basis
- Despite this, many people with disabilities can't access information
- People with disabilities have **worse health outcomes** and **lower life expectancies** than people without disability

Why is communication access important to you?

Reduces
errors

Improves
outcomes

Increases
engagement

Improves
staff
satisfaction

How do we improve communication access?

- Reasonable adjustments - making changes or providing assistance to overcome barriers
- Creating accessible documents
- Using simple communication strategies with every consumer of our service
- Completing Teach Back training and using the principles when we speak to patients
- Asking people about their communication support needs so we can best support them

Module Three: Inclusive Communication

Reasonable adjustments are when we make changes or provide assistance to reduce or help overcome barriers to access and participation

Examples of reasonable adjustments for someone with a **physical disability** could include: modifying the physical environment by adding ramps or railings



Examples of reasonable adjustments for someone with **communication support needs** could include: changing the way you present information by using visuals, reducing background noise, using gesture, using Teach Back etc.



Module Four: Communication Strategies

**Simple strategies to improve communication access
that can be used anytime, anywhere, with anyone.**

**Allow extra time when
talking**

**Ask one question at a
time**

**Don't rush their
response - be patient**

**Use a normal tone and
volume - don't shout**

**Ask the person what
helps them
communicate**

**Use clear, simple
language**



**Don't pretend to
understand**



**Changing the lighting to
consider sensory needs**

**Removing distracting
items e.g. visuals on the
walls**

**Providing visual aids
that support
communication e.g. pen
and paper**

**Removing or minimising
background noise**

**Positioning furniture to
be face to face**

**Position key items in
plain sight and within
reach**

Module Four: Communication Strategies

Teach back is a communication technique where healthcare workers ask patients to explain in their own words what they need to know or do about their health

Explain key information
clearly - no jargon

After explaining the
information, engage the
patient by asking open
ended questions

Invite the patient to
repeat or summarise the
information back to you in
their own words

Can you tell me what you
understood about your
treatment/condition?

Could you explain to me how
you would take this medication?

Can you tell me what you need
to do to manage this condition?



Module Five: Alternative and Augmentative Communication

Alternative and Augmentative Communication (AAC) refers to techniques and tools used to supplement or replace spoken language for individuals with communication support needs. People need AAC for lots of different reasons.

Unaided AAC

- Body language
- Gestures
- Facial expressions
- Sign language

Aided AAC

- Communication boards
- Speech generating devices
- Picture exchange systems
- Mobile apps

How do I help someone who uses AAC?

- Ask the person how they like to communicate
- Talk directly to the person
- Be patient - it may take some time before they can get their response out
- Ask just one question at a time
- Make sure the person always has access to their device and that it is always charged and ready to go (imagine if you lost your voice and couldn't talk - that is how AAC users feel when they can't access their device)



Module Six: Asking about Communication Support Needs

Communication support needs can affect the way a person speaks/uses their voice, listens/understand information, and how they interact with people and the environment. Asking people about their communication support needs means we can make reasonable adjustments.

Do you need help with communicating or understanding information?



How do you prefer to communicate?

(e.g. talking, gestures, communication board/device)

What helps you understand information?

(e.g. support person, more time, written or visual information)



Is there anything that makes you feel uncomfortable in the environment?

(e.g. bright lights, loud noises, taste or feel of gels/solutions)



Do you have a support person that comes to appointments with you?