Augmentative Alternative Communication and Restraint and Isolation
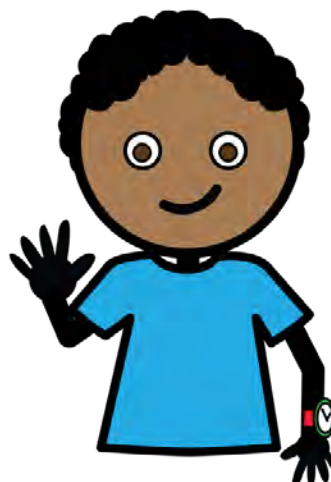
RATIONALE	❏ Augmentative Alternative Communication (AAC) devices allow both speaking and non-speaking students to express themselves in moments of stress, which can be critical during a crisis situation, such as restraint and/or isolation, for both the user and the listener. ❏ Students who are non-speaking are at increased risk of isolation and restraint. During these periods of restraint/isolation, all students, regardless of communication modality, have a right to communicate their wants and needs. Students using vocal communication can communicate with others at all times, through speech. A student with an AAC device has the same right to always have access to communication. Additionally, the use of functional communication has been shown to reduce maladaptive behavior (Walker & Snell, 2013). ❏ "AAC uses a variety of techniques and tools to help the individual express thoughts, wants and needs, feelings, and ideas (i.e., objects, gestures, manual signs, line drawings, symbol communication boards, speech-generating devices)." (American Speech-Language-Hearing Association, n.d.). ❏ **There are no prerequisite skills for anyone to use AAC.** ❏ This document will address the importance of ensuring an AAC device is available to an individual the entirety of their time during a crisis situation.
REGULATIONS AND GUIDELINES	❏ The removal of a student's AAC device for any reason, is prohibited. The removal/ restricted access to an AAC device eliminates a student's ability to communicate their needs, therefore, taking away a basic human right. We have a duty to respect each student's dignity. ❏ "The use of isolation or restraint as a means of coercion, punishment, convenience or retaliation on any student receiving special education services, as defined by [T.C.A.] § 49-10-102, is prohibited. Removing or disabling any equipment or device that a student requires, including, but not limited to, a power wheelchair, brace, augmentative communication device, or walker, as a means of coercion, punish-ment, convenience, or retaliation on any student receiving special education services, as defined by [T.C.A.] § 49-10-102, is prohibited." See T.C.A. § 49-10-1305(e). ❏ For more information please review this document: FAQ: Restraint and Isolation for Students with Disabilities (tn.gov) ❏ Always follow a student's Individualized Education Program (IEP), Behavior Intervention Plan (BIP), and safety or crisis plan.
MATERIALS	❏ Primary AAC tools are within student's reach. ❏ Back-up AAC tools are within student's reach. ❏ AAC tools requiring battery power are charged. ❏ Include vocabulary for self-advocacy. ❏ AAC tools match student's age and skill level.

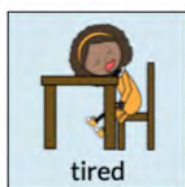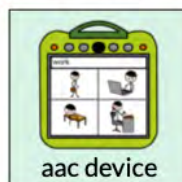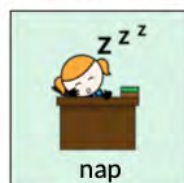|	
STAFF SKILLS	❏ Acknowledge messages from the student, even if you cannot honor their request. Phrases like, "I heard you want me to go away" or "I see you don't like this" can be helpful. ❏ Ensure a plan for teaching student how to use back-up AAC tools while student is calm. ❏ Model how to respond and protest safely. ❏ Include plan for teaching and practicing AAC system usage during instructional blocks.
RED FLAGS	❏ Removal of any component of AAC system. ❏ Requiring students to earn access to any component of AAC system. ❏ Speaking negatively about a student in front of them.
PROBLEMATIC COMMENTS	AAC tools are imperative to a student's dignity. The following comments represent some examples of real-life challenges that may require problem solving but are not reasons to prevent access to an AAC tool. ❏ "Student throws AAC tools." ❏ "Caregivers don't have AAC tools charged when student arrives." ❏ "Student stims with AAC and disrupts learning." ❏ "Staff have not been trained how to use device." ❏ "The student does not know how to use device."
CHALLENGES AND CONSIDER- ATIONS	Have a plan for ensuring alternative options are available if any component of the AAC system is: ❏ broken before or during isolation or restraint, ❏ used in attempt to injure self or others, and/or ❏ unavailable in some situations All AAC tools should include options for students to request basic needs, such as bathroom, food, water, a break from demands, and access to calming items. Use low-tech options, including picture cards or written words in situations where the primary device is difficult to access safely.
REFERENCES	American Speech-Language-Hearing Association (n.d.). *Augmentative and Alternative Communication* (Practice Portal). asha.org/Practice-Portal/Professional-Issues/ Augmentative-and-Alternative-Communication/ Tennessee Department of Education (July 2021). Frequently asked questions. Restraint and isolation for students receiving special education and related services. tn.gov/ content/dam/tn/education/special-education/Restraint%20and%20Isolation%20 FAQ%20FINAL.pdf

I need help	Please stop

I am…	I need…
tired, cold, hot, sick, hungry, in pain, sad, angry, scared	eat, drink, headphones, nap, break time, bathroom, call, aac device, walk
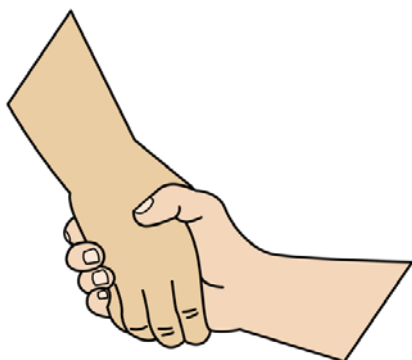
Guidelines: This purpose of this communication board is to assist students with expressing themselves. The "please stop" symbol is included for students to communicate they want another person to stop. It is not to be used as a method to tell students to stop.

CREATED WITH Smarty Symbols

I am...

tired	cold	hot
sick	hungry	in pain
sad	angry	scared

I need...

eat	drink	headphones
nap	break time	bathroom
call	aac device	walk