

## Message from the ISAAC President

**Juan Bornman**

Dear ISAAC family,

It gives me great pleasure to write this first message as ISAAC President, despite the strange new place we find ourselves in. January 1, 2020 seems light years ago, as so much had changed since.... I remember how excited we all were, as the symmetry of 20/20 has such a positive ring to it – the year of “perfect vision” – but then the global COVID-19 pandemic struck. It brought the world to a standstill, creating tectonic shifts in how we make sense of everything around us. Our vocabulary increased with new constructs, such as social distancing, herd immunity, and lockdown. We are united all over the world as members of global village, creating a sense of solidarity as we face a deadly modern enemy: the coronavirus.

Preventing the spread of the virus has resulted in strict lockdown rules that have changed our daily lives, with restricted mobility and travel opportunities, disrupted work and home schedules, cramped economic activity and growth, and in some contexts, exacerbated poverty and social inequality. For the first time in ISAAC’s history we have had to postpone our biennial conference, which was planned for idyllic Cancún in México, as international travel is restricted. Sanitization, wearing a mask, online-shopping, webinars, and waiting for a vaccine became part of our everyday routines, the so-called “new normal.”

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Season’s Greetings from  
all of us at ISAAC!

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International Society for  
Augmentative and Alternative Communication

## Message from the ISAAC President ...continued

As the pandemic unfolds, with stricter lockdown rules in many countries due to the second wave, it is crucial to take stock of current challenges, plan our responses, and reflect on how we would like to react – individually and collectively. We can engage with this opportunity from a thermometer or from a thermostat perspective. Thermometer people are those individuals who gauge the environmental temperature around them – and report on it. They are the individuals who may wait for plans to be



*We can engage with this opportunity from a thermometer or a thermostat perspective*

made for them, often feeling like helpless victims of this invisible corona enemy. Thermostat people, on the other hand, are those individuals who “manage and control” the heat. Thermostats are designed to keep the heat the same – when things are too warm, the thermostat cools it down, and when things are too cold, the thermostat heats it up. So, while a thermometer only measures temperature, the thermostat maintains it.

So, what on earth do thermometers and thermostats have to do with ISAAC? The short answer is – everything!! The pandemic is causing more questions than answers. It has reminded us all that the only constant variable is change. It has heightened emotional reactions like fear, anxiety, depression, and guilt – but also resilience. It has

brought to the fore the importance of implementing well thought-through, timely plans to limit the impact on our organization and our members, as we have no doubt that ISAAC is all about our members. I want to ensure you that the new ISAAC Executive Board is brimming with ideas and plans for 2021-2022, which we will share with you in due course. We are ready and willing to serve our ISAAC family and are grateful for the opportunity you have given us. We are also working full steam to plan for the 2021 conference. We also want to thank the outgoing Executive Board for laying a solid foundation upon which we can build.

As 2020 comes to an end, I want to encourage all our members to make sure that we tackle this global COVID-19 storm with a positive thermostat attitude, finding our unique purpose and calling. Although we are not all in the same boat, we are all in the same storm. May each one of us learn how to ensure that our boats are sturdy enough to withstand the waves, and how to turn our sails to the wind, so that we face the new year ahead with renewed energy and strength!

Until then,

*Juan*

Juan Bornman  
ISAAC President  
2020 -2022



# From the Executive Director

## Franklin Smith

Welcome to the December 2020 edition of The ISAAC Communicator.

Here in Ontario (Canada), like many parts of the world, we are now experiencing a surge of COVID-19 cases, hospitalizations and, unfortunately, deaths. Case counts are over 1,000 new cases daily, with the majority of deaths still occurring in our vulnerable populations of the elderly and those with significant co-morbidities. This is up from just a few months ago, when the number of new and resolved daily cases were both hovering around 100. In many of North America's jurisdictions we are now struggling with balancing the oftentimes conflicting government policy requirements of public health and long-term structural damage to our societies as a result of lockdowns (economic, mental health, family stress, etc.).

We know that many other parts of the world continue to struggle as well, and we here at the ISAAC International office in Toronto send to all of our stakeholders around the world, only good wishes!

### **ISAAC Executive Board**

Welcome to the 2020-2022 ISAAC Executive Board (EB)! We officially welcomed our new EB at the beginning of October, comprising:

Juan Bornman (South Africa), President  
Tracy Shepherd (Canada), President-Elect  
Nadia Browning (Canada), Chair of the ISAAC Council  
Signhild Skogdal (Norway), Chair-Elect of the ISAAC Council  
Kevin Williams (USA), Vice-President for LEAD  
Gabriela Berlanga (México), Vice-President without Portfolio  
Sally Clendon (New Zealand), Vice-President without Portfolio  
Miroslav Vrankic (Croatia), Vice-President without Portfolio

The ISAAC International staff looks forward to a close collaboration with all of our EB members during the coming two years!

### **Membership Renewal 2021**

Over 700 2021 membership renewal packages were sent out via email to current and past members of ISAAC in November, representing membership in ISAAC-Australia, ISAAC-Canada, ISAAC-US (USSAAC), and ISAAC International. If you are one of these current or past members of ISAAC and did not receive an email with your personalized 2021 membership renewal package, please send an email to [membership@isaac-online.org](mailto:membership@isaac-online.org).

If you have any other questions related to your membership, please send an email to our Membership Coordinator, Carol Silverberg, at [carol@isaac-online.org](mailto:carol@isaac-online.org).

We are thrilled with the response so far with 2021 membership renewal!

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## From the Executive Director ...continued



The ISAAC International office also plans on sending membership renewal reminders, early in 2021.

If you are an ISAAC member through one of our other Chapters who manage their own membership, please contact your Chapter directly to inquire about 2021 membership renewal.

**Please also make sure to keep reading, as ISAAC International is thrilled to be offering a significant new benefit to our members....**

### ISAAC Webinars

ISAAC has, over the course of the past number of years, developed a significant capacity to host informative and well-attended webinars. This has been done in close collaboration with our friends and partners at both ISAAC-US (USSAAC) and, more recently, ISAAC-Canada.

We have now built a strong archived content library, making use of our [website](#) and [YouTube channel](#).

Beginning early in January 2021, the majority of archived webinars will be moved to a new location in the Members Only area portion of our website. What this change means is that, as of then, only members will be able to access the majority of our archived webinar recordings.

Further, registration for upcoming new webinars will likewise only be available from within the Members Only area, and a valid ISAAC member ID number will need to be entered at time of registration.

This change now represents a significant Member Only benefit, and it is our hope that many of the people who have benefited from attending/viewing our very well received webinars will, if they have not already done so, become members of ISAAC.

As always, I extend my challenge to all of our other Chapters or non-Chapter members from around the world to take advantage of the opportunity of hosting their own webinars using the ISAAC International webinar platform. We here at the ISAAC International office stand ready to assist!

### Conference 2020



As previously announced, Conference 2020 in Cancún, México has been postponed, and is now scheduled to take place between July 31<sup>st</sup> and August 5<sup>th</sup>, 2021.

As more details about the scientific programming and other areas of planning for ISAAC 2020 become available, we will share them with all of our stakeholders.

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## From the Executive Director ...continued



### Future ISAAC Conferences

As previously announced, ISAAC International is planning on creating and hosting an "ISAAC Connects" all-virtual event, currently scheduled to take place in 2022. The ISAAC EB and staff are currently working on the framework for this event, and we will have more to report in the coming months.

### AAC Journal

ISAAC International is pleased to announce that Ralf Schlosser and Rajinder Koul will be carrying on as AAC Editor and Co-Editor, respectively, during 2021 and 2022.

Thank you, Ralf and Rajinder, for your continued hard work and commitment to the AAC journal!

### ISAAC International Emergency Preparedness

The current COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted the importance of risk management, emergency preparedness, and strategic planning. Fortunately, we here at the ISAAC International office remain well positioned to manage our Association during this challenging time, thanks to the efforts and ongoing positive engagement of our staff and volunteer leadership.

ISAAC International will be shortly reaching out to our Chapters and Council to offer this planning capacity as a template for the benefit of all ISAAC members.

As always, I welcome your thoughts and feedback. Please do not hesitate to contact me directly, at [franklin@isaac-online.org](mailto:franklin@isaac-online.org), should you require any further information or assistance.

Regards and thanks,

Franklin Smith

ISAAC Executive Director

*Messages from ISAAC's President and Executive Director are available in translation on our website.*



## New Issue Now Online!

The **Communication Support World Network Newsletter**, published twice yearly, focuses on emerging AAC nations. [Click here](#) to access our December 2020 issue.





## ISAAC Council Update



A huge thank you to those who attended our 2020 Special ISAAC Council Meeting on July 31<sup>st</sup>, and our follow-up ISAAC Council Sharing Time on August 26<sup>th</sup>, both held virtually due to COVID-19 restrictions. At the August meeting it was wonderful to have such a dynamic sharing of information among the representatives from our Chapters around the world. If you would like to review our progress during this challenging year, the minutes from these meetings, along with the Report to Members presentation, are posted in the [Members Only](#) section of the ISAAC website. You will need to log in with your member ID number and password, as these documents are only available to ISAAC members.

Two of ISAAC's Working Groups, established in 2018, are busy completing their work. The UNCRPD group monitors how AAC and communication are reflected in the [UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities](#). Another group is working on access to social media. Please forward your ideas for new projects to [nadiabrowning@gmail.com](mailto:nadiabrowning@gmail.com).

A quick reminder to my dear colleagues renewing their ISAAC memberships: please consider sponsoring a person who uses AAC in your community, or a professional who is new to AAC, or one who you would like to give the gift of connecting with the AAC world. Please add a donation to your membership. This will be very appreciated and useful!

[Nadia Browning](#)  
ISAAC Council Chair

## UN Update

December 3<sup>rd</sup> is the **International Day of Persons with Disabilities (IDPD)**. This year, UNESCO chose the theme: "Building Back Better: Towards an inclusive, accessible and sustainable post COVID-19 world by, for and with persons with disabilities."

For more information, visit

<https://www.un.org/en/observances/day-of-persons-with-disabilities>.

## International AAC Awareness Month October 2020

ISAAC celebrates International AAC Awareness Month each October. Our 2020 theme was *Bridging the Silence through Solidarity*. Visit the [ISAAC website](#) to see examples of the innovative projects and events that happened around the world this past October.



## Chapter News



### Communication Matters (ISAAC-UK)

#### The Communication Matters Sessions: A series of Twilight Presentations for AAC Awareness Month – A Summary

Communication Matters hosted a series of virtual events throughout October for AAC Awareness Month. Over 400 people registered and we have received some lovely feedback and raised some much-needed funds for the charity.

"The CM Sessions" had both academic and social elements - there were presentations from AAC users and a range of professionals in the field of AAC, as well as suppliers of communication equipment. The supplier presentations have been made publicly available and can be accessed [here](#).

We are very grateful to all the presenters who gave their time for free and would like to thank everyone who bought a ticket.

Over 93% of those who completed the feedback survey rated the sessions overall as 'good' or 'excellent' and over 97% found them good value for money.

We want to share a few comments from the survey:

- "The presentations were interesting and provided lots of useful tips and ideas for future work and practice."
- "Some very interesting speakers and presentations from across the globe."

- "This was my first real experience of seeing and hearing from a whole range of AAC users, especially those using higher-tech AAC devices. I've been a SLT for 16 years, and this has really opened my eyes to a whole new world. I hope that it will enhance and shape both my professional practice, and my personal interactions with AAC users."
- "I liked how you brought the AAC community together."
- "I have improved my practise as a comms partner in the last month - so much so we have gone from single word to three-word utterance using AAC. AND, for the first time, he used his comms boards outside of the home. My upskilling improved his confidence more in a month than his formal therapy has done in years."
- "Insight into my own reactions to people with disabilities - my own perceptions have been challenged."
- "I was able to join online and I felt part of a brilliant community (I had always wanted to attend a CM conference but never got the opportunity so thank you, I loved and learned!"
- "I have a much better understanding of the AAC world."

Please follow us on [Facebook](#) or [Twitter](#) to find out about our future events. If you would like to be added to our mailing list please email [admin@communicationmatters.org.uk](mailto:admin@communicationmatters.org.uk).

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## Chapter News ... continued

### Jamie's #500mileswithoutavoice



We are thrilled that one of our members, Jamie Preece, decided to do a fundraising challenge for Communication Matters.

"I am a communication device user and the charity means a lot to me and others in the AAC community, so I am going to spend the month of August raising awareness and funds," explained Jamie. "I love riding my mobility scooter but do not have my communication device on it. I will ride my scooter most days or maybe every day throughout August and aim to do #500mileswithoutavoice."

Jamie smashed his initial 500-mile target in the first two weeks and even after setbacks decided to carry on and do another 500 miles before the end of the month.

Everyone at Communication Matters wants to take this opportunity to say a huge congratulations to Jamie for his amazing fundraising effort. Jamie more than doubled both his initial fundraising target, raising an incredible total of £2155. Thank you so much Jamie!

It is not too late to show Jamie your support. Visit [Facebook](#) to find out more. Thank you to those who have donated so far!

### CM Journal Online Offer

We are pleased to announce that our first online edition of Communication Matters Journal is now available for [download](#) from our website.



The CM Journal is normally only available to our members and is printed and posted to them, however, as this is an online trial issue we have made it publicly available for this issue only!

Please take this great one-off opportunity to read some fantastic articles about AAC and share with your family, friends, and colleagues.

### Communication Access UK



On November 12, 2020, Communication Matters, the Royal College of Speech and Language Therapists, and partner organizations launched the Communication Access

Symbol and e-learning for businesses. The new disability access symbol is supported by a free training package. This will improve support for 14 million people in the UK with communication difficulties.

To find out more, follow [this link](#) and look out for social media updates via the hashtag #CommunicationAccess.

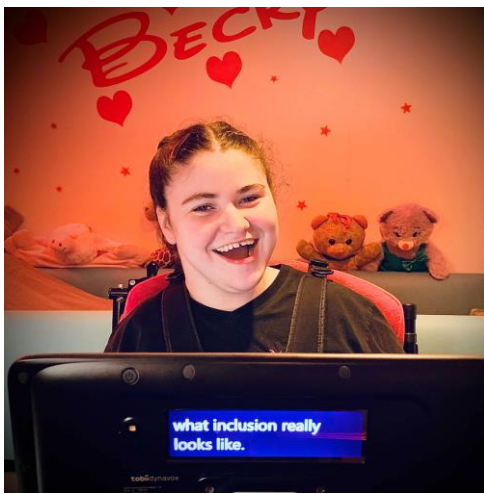
***For more Chapter updates, visit our International AAC Awareness Month [news page](#)***



## Feature



### Becky “EyeGazeGirl” Tyler gains greater independence and control with Google Assistant in Snap Core First



Earlier this Autumn, [Tobii Dynavox](#) and Google announced a new collaboration to make Google Assistant available in Snap Core First communication software. For people with disabilities, this partnership enables easy access to Google Assistant and all its functionalities, such as smart home control and enjoying entertainment, from any location. This offering is the first part of a collaboration between the two companies to develop solutions that enable greater access to technology and information for their users.

Becky Tyler from the UK is an eye gaze artist and gamer with cerebral palsy who was able to try the new offering before it was publicly launched. She has seen several benefits with using Google Assistant in Snap Core First.

“The biggest improvement to my daily life is the possibility to find information a lot faster than before. Previously, I had to type my question in Snap, copy and paste it into the Google search bar and then scroll down to the result to find the information I needed. It was a lengthy process for me when working on research projects. Now, I can just type my question in Snap Core First and let Google Assistant read it out, which makes it so much easier for me to do my homework.”

Becky is also an advocate for equality and inclusion and runs her own YouTube channel, [Eye Gaze Girl](#). In the channel, she demonstrates how she uses eye tracking to play games such as Minecraft and The Sims4. She is tech-savvy and always interested in trying new technologies, both for the fun of it as well as to explore how gadgets and solutions can simplify tasks and routines.

“I already had several smart devices at home such as Phillips Hue lights and Hive heating controls. Now I can connect these to Google Assistant and watch a Netflix movie on my TV by asking Google to play it. It is really cool and so easy. It makes me feel empowered and more independent when I am in control of my environment.”

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## Feature ...continued

This is not the first time Becky has used smart technology. She previously used another solution but faced some challenges with it.

“I tried using another solution for a couple of years. However, it sometimes had trouble with recognizing my voice, especially when playing music. With the connected Google Home Mini, it is calibrated to recognize my voice and I have never had problems giving it a command.”



*It makes me more empowered when I am in control of my environment*

For Becky, the collaboration has made it easier for her to conduct regular tasks at home and has given her greater independence by controlling her environment. Still, when being asked what her favorite command is, Becky’s fun and mesmerizing personality shines through.

“Well, I never say no to a good laugh and people who know me will probably not be surprised to hear that my favorite command is ‘Tell me a joke’. Sure, some of the jokes can be a bit corny, but it always makes me laugh.”

- Submitted by Lina Perdius, Corporate Communications Manager, Tobii Dynavox

## News



In partnership with Sport and Recreation VIC, **Scope Australia** is leading the Pathways to Participation project – removing barriers to inclusive sports and recreation in Victoria.

Input from people with disability is essential to bringing meaningful change. We are therefore seeking direct feedback from people with disability in Victoria through our online survey. We would be most grateful if you could please pass this survey link on to anyone with a lived experience of disability who may want to participate. Participants also have the opportunity to enter into a voucher draw.

More information can be found [here](#).

- Submitted by Grace Rapoport, Marketing & Communications Advisor, Scope (Aust) Ltd

## COVID-19 Resources

Visit the [ISAAC website](#) for a list of **COVID-19 Resources** for people who use AAC. Included are resources compiled by the ISAAC UNCRPD Working Group. ISAAC Chapters in Australia, Brazil, Canada, Denmark, Israel, Netherlands/Flanders, and the US have added to this page, which also features screening guidance kits available in Chinese, English, and Vietnamese.

## News ... continued



### CDAC Report

#### Communication Supports in Exercising Capacity, Choice and Autonomy Article 12, CRPD

Like many countries, Canada ratified the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD). Recognition that people with disabilities enjoy legal capacity on an equal basis is at the core of Article 12 of the CRPD. Article 12 clarifies that this requires that people have access to the supports they may need to communicate and/or make decisions. Canada is now exploring ways to implement Article 12.

With funding from Employment Social Development Canada, **Communication Disabilities Access Canada** (CDAC) has developed an online resource that describes implications of Article 12 for people who have disabilities that affect communication when revealing and exercising their capacity to communicate and make decisions that matter to them. The resource provides recommendations for practices, policies and procedures to guide healthcare, legal, justice, financial, and social services in identifying and providing the supports people may require to communicate and/or make decisions.

CDAC believes that communication is the foundation for implementing Article 12, regardless of whether an individual makes decisions independently, with assistance from trusted people or relies on a substitute decision-maker to make decisions on their behalf, based on their known will and preferences.

We encourage our ISAAC and AAC colleagues to play active roles in promoting how this legislation and similar accessibility legislation can be used to protect the rights of people who use AAC to exercise choice, decisions and autonomy in their lives. You can do this by:

- Learning about CDAC's [resources](#) that pertain to Article 12 in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities
- Knowing the [key concepts](#) related to CDAC's interpretation on how Article 12 protects an individual's right to exercise capacity, make choices and communicate decisions that affect them.
- Watching and sharing [CDAC's webinars](#) to promote awareness of the barriers and communication supports that people may need in healthcare, legal, justice, financial, supportive housing, independent living and community services.
- Supporting people who have communication disabilities to know about, and [document and communicate](#) about, the communication supports they may require when using services.
- Providing the [communication tools/systems](#) they need to communicate in decision-making contexts.
- Documenting the [communication supports](#) that an individual may require in formal communication reports.
- Supporting healthcare, legal, [justice](#) and social services in developing [policies and procedures](#) to identify and provide communication supports.

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## News ...continued



- Training support people to [assist an individual](#) with communication and / or decision making.
- Assisting substitute decision makers in interpreting [non-symbolic communication](#) of preferences for individuals with significant cognitive disabilities.
- Providing [direct communication assistance](#) and communication tools in critical capacity assessments and decision-making situations if the individual has no obvious way of communicating; if capacity to provide informed consent is questionable; if there is evidence of a conflict of interest, undue persuasion or coercion from support person(s) and in high risk situations such as medical assistance in dying.
- Providing [communication intermediary support](#) to victims, witnesses and accused persons in police and justice settings.

### Supporting CDAC Webinars and Resources

1. Communication and Capacity: [Context and Guiding Principles](#) (Barbara Collier)
2. Communication Disabilities: [Barriers and Impact on Choice and Control](#) (Barbara Collier)
3. Legal Context for [Exercising Capacity](#) and Provision of Communication Supports (Lana Kerzner)
4. Communication Supports: [Formal, Symbolic Communicators](#) (Barbara Collier)
5. Communication Supports: [Informal, Non-Symbolic Communicators](#) (Jo Watson)

### Moving Forward

- Identify a number of people in your organization to take on a leadership role in developing policies, procedures and practices to ensure people have the communication supports they need for effective communication and decision making.
- Check CDAC's [recommendations](#) for different service sectors.
- Watch and share the CDAC communication support [webinars](#).
- Use or adapt the communication support forms:
  - [Identifying communication supports](#)
  - [Guidelines for communication supports](#)
  - [Communication support chart](#)
- [Email your questions](#) to us on ways to ensure people can effectively communicate and make informed decisions when using your services.

### **Webinar: Communication Supports in Exercising Capacity and Autonomy February 10, 2021 @ 7 p.m. EST**

[Register Here](#)

*Presenters:* Barbara Collier, Dr. Jo Watson, and Glenda Watson Hyatt

Participants will learn about Article 12 in the CRPD, communication supports to exercise capacity, choice and autonomy, CDAC's online resources for stakeholder groups, and how to promote and safeguard a person's right to autonomy in their lives.

**PLEASE NOTE: The registration process now requires members to first log into their accounts on the Members Only section of the ISAAC website.**

## Chapters



**ISAAC-Australia** • [www.isaacaustralia.com](http://www.isaacaustralia.com)

**ISAAC-Brazil** • [www.isaacbrasil.org.br](http://www.isaacbrasil.org.br)

**ISAAC-Canada** • [www.isaac-canada.org](http://www.isaac-canada.org)

**ISAAC-Denmark** • [www.isaac.dk](http://www.isaac.dk)

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**ISAAC-Sweden** • [www.isaac-sverige.se](http://www.isaac-sverige.se)

**ISAAC-Taiwan** • [twsaac.blogspot.com](http://twsaac.blogspot.com)

**ISAAC-UK** • [www.communicationmatters.org.uk](http://www.communicationmatters.org.uk)

**ISAAC-US** • [www.ussaac.org](http://www.ussaac.org)

### Contact Us

Do you have a question or comment?  
Please feel free to send an email to  
[feedback@isaac-online.org](mailto:feedback@isaac-online.org)

## ISAAC Webinars

Tuesday, December 15, 2020

12:00 – 1:00 PM EST

**Comprehensive Conventional Literacy**  
**Instruction in AAC/ Enseñanza Integral de la**  
**Lectoescritura Convencional en la CAA**  
**Registration Full**

A prelude to an ISAAC Pre-conference Workshop, with an overview of comprehensive conventional literacy and a framework for determining when students are most likely to benefit.

PLEASE NOTE: As of January 2021, the majority of ISAAC webinars and archived recordings will be available as a benefit of membership, and accessed through the Members' Only portal. A limited number of webinar recordings will remain open to the public.

## Upcoming Events

January 25 - 28 & February 1 - 4, 2021

**ATIA 2021: AT Connected**

ISAAC is pleased to support ATIA, the Assistive Technology Industry Association, in its upcoming activities that focus on AAC. [ATIA 2021: AT Connected](#) is a virtual event.

\*\*USSAAC is co-sponsoring the AAC strand "meet up" on Monday, January 25<sup>th</sup>. For details, contact the AAC Team at [AACStrand@atia](mailto:AACStrand@atia)\*\*

### PWUAAC Online Chats

Visit [PWUAAC Online Chats](#) on the ISAAC website for updates.





## Our Vision & Mission



*ISAAC's Vision is that AAC will be recognized, valued and used throughout the world.*

*ISAAC's Mission is to promote the best possible communication for people with complex communication needs.*

*ISAAC is a Non-Governmental Organization in consultative status with the United Nations Economic & Social Council.*

## Stay Connected

ISAAC Chapters and members worldwide are invited to submit items of interest from your country or region. News, AAC practice tips, research, personal essays, in article format or as a link to online articles or resources, will be reviewed and made available on the ISAAC website as appropriate. Please send articles and photos to [Nola Millin](#).

## Stay Social

Stay in the loop! Follow ISAAC news & views in the AAC community on our social media!



## Staff

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*Augmentative and Alternative  
Communication AAC*

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## The ISAAC Communicator



Published four times each year.  
Comments welcome! Please  
contact [Heather Stonehouse](#).