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Communication Observation Tool

Use this Communication Observation Tool to collect baseline data about the types and styles of communication used by children and adults in any location. You can use this tool downloaded onto your computer if that is easier or print the tool and write in your observations.

Set aside a minimum of 20 minutes for each observation. During the observation, do not participate in what is happening. Watch and listen quietly. Direct people in the environment to talk to you at another time. Initially this may be challenging, but over time everyone will learn to interact with you when you are not observing. Try to observe during times when it is likely there will be plenty of interactions such as meal preparation time, meal time, during ADLs, preparing for an outing, participating in an interactive outing, etc.

For each observation, focus on one person whose communication is limited in some way. Watch this person carefully. Check off each time you see this person attempt to communicate using any communication method listed below. If the person uses the same method more than once, put a tally mark next to that method each time it is used. If you notice someone communicating in a way that is not listed, add it in one of the blank spaces at the bottom of the tool.

Each time you observe an initiation, observe if there is a response from someone else. If there is a response, briefly write what response was given. Note whether the response seemed directive (tell the person what to do) or responsive (letting the person know that you understood and following up.) Note if any augmentative communication was used. Record any notes about what you are observing.

Our Definitions

Initiation: something that a person does that could have the intent to send a communicative message to another using any communication method (see list below.)

Response: something that is done by another person after an initiation. A response acknowledges that a communicative message has been sent. The response is directed to the initiator.

Directive Communication: a message sent to someone that tells the person what to do or to give a direction to the person

Responsive Communication: a response that lets the initiator know that the message was understood. The responder tries to address the possible message being sent.

Augmentative Communication: using something to ADD to the communication. Augmentative communication methods include: writing, typing, pictures, drawings, use of objects

Some Communication Methods or Signals

- speech
- vocal sounds
- gestures and movements of the hands
- facial expressions
- body movements
- pacing
- proximity
- eye gaze: looking at something or someone, looking away from something or someone, staring
- object use
- moving objects
- crying
- spitting
- humming or singing
- screaming or shouting
- hitting or hurting self
- hitting or hurting others
- pushing something or someone away
- reaching for someone or something
- touching self
- touching others
- running
- throwing
- using sign language
- using a picture or writing/typing
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SAMPLE Confidential Communication Observation Tool

Name and title of observer: Barbara Doyle

Date: January 2, 2010

Start and end time: 4:40PM-5:05PM

Place of observation: Main Street House

Initials of person being observed: JKL

Staff present during the observation: Mindy W., Alan Y., John J.

<u>Initiation observed</u>	<u>Response observed</u>	<u>Responsive or Directive?</u>	<u>Augmentative Communication used?</u>	<u>notes</u>
Vocal sound	none			Sound did not seem loud enough to attract anyone's attention
Gaze shifted to object (game)	Asked if he wanted it	responsive	no	
Moved away from the table	Told to come back to the table	directive	no	
Hit his head with his hand	Told not to hit himself and he stopped	directive	no	I wondered why he did that
Started to sing	None			
Stood up	None			
Moved close to the stove	Told to be careful it is hot. Staff quietly asked him to move away from the hot stove.	directive	no	Maybe he was checking to see what was cooking?
Paced for two minutes	Staff offered to play cards with him	Responsive	Yes, showed him the cards	
Vocalized IIIIII	none			I don't think staff heard him. His sounds were quiet.
Shouted a sound	Told to please be quiet.	Directive	no	Staff were busy making dinner
Shouted again	Staff came over to him and asked him what he wanted. Reminded him that dinner would be ready soon.	Responsive	no	I wondered if he knows what "soon" means

