AAC TRAINING PLANNING TREE

The AAC planning tree is designed to support teams in determining the required supports and services (including training and technical assistance) for school personnel, contractors, and other student team members to promote successful communication and meaningful access to instruction for students who use augmentative and alternative communication systems.

For additional support in the consideration, selection, implementation, or training of AAC or other assistive technology devices or services, refer to the back of this flyer, visit the AT Network website, or scan the QR code here:

AAC = Augmentative and Alternative Communication
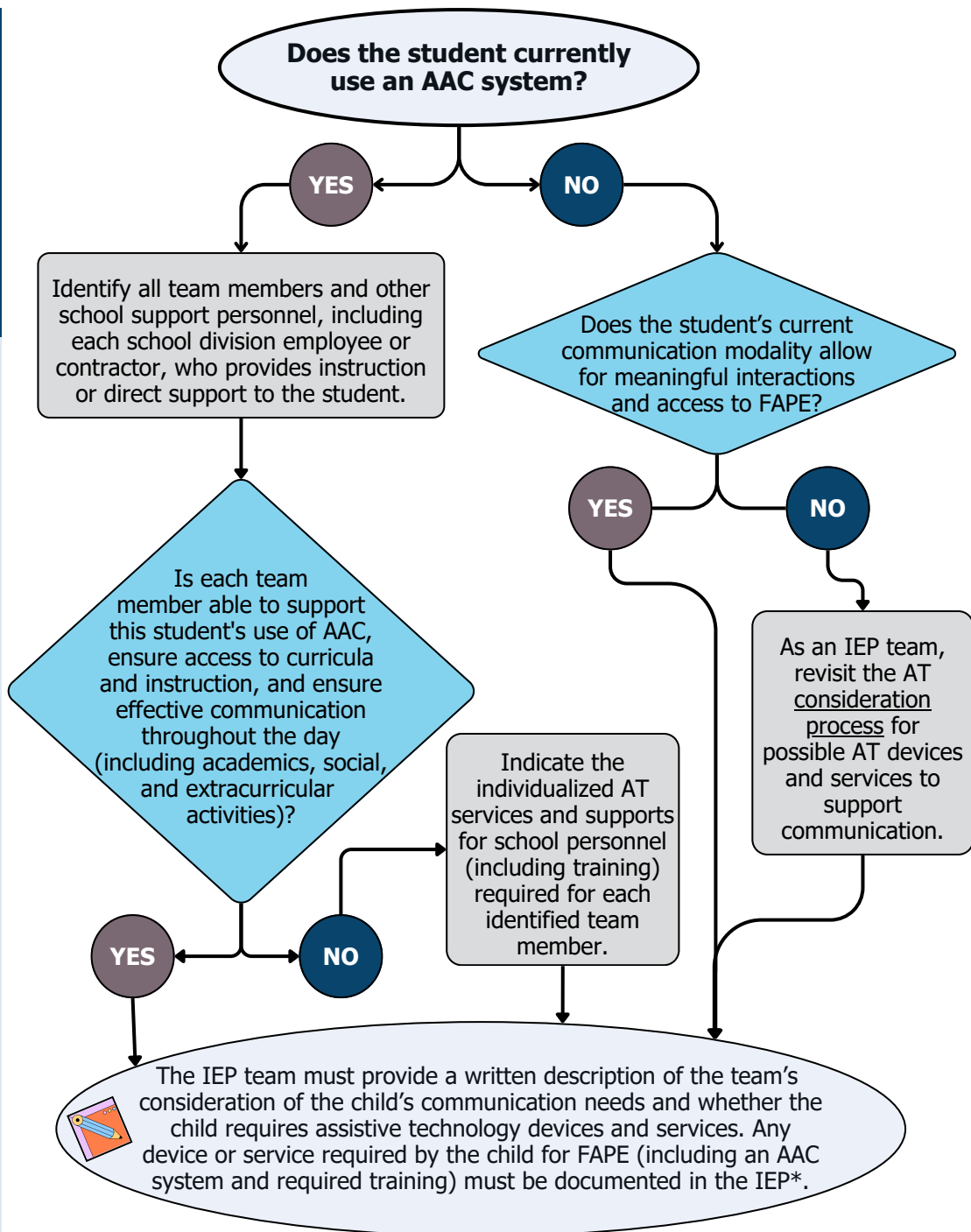AT = Assistive Technology
ESY = Extended School Year
FAPE = Free appropriate public education
IEP = Indvidualized Education Program
SLP = Speech Language Pathologist
OT = Occupational Therapist
PT = Physical Therapist

Does the student currently use an AAC system?

YES → Identify all team members and other school support personnel, including each school division employee or contractor, who provides instruction or direct support to the student.

NO → Does the student's current communication modality allow for meaningful interactions and access to FAPE?

Is each team member able to support this student's use of AAC, ensure access to curricula and instruction, and ensure effective communication throughout the day (including academics, social, and extracurricular activities)?

YES

NO → Indicate the individualized AT services and supports for school personnel (including training) required for each identified team member.

(communication modality question) YES

NO → As an IEP team, revisit the AT consideration process for possible AT devices and services to support communication.

The IEP team must provide a written description of the team's consideration of the child's communication needs and whether the child requires assistive technology devices and services. Any device or service required by the child for FAPE (including an AAC system and required training) must be documented in the IEP*.

*Any training required for a school division employee or contractor who provides instruction or direct support must be provided prior to the provision of instruction or direct support to the student in accordance with § 22.1-217.4.

Did You Know?

All AT (including AAC) devices and services, communication access/support needs, and, when needed, individualized training for staff who provide instruction or direct support to the student must be documented in the student's IEP. AT services and supports for school personnel, including individualized training, must be provided prior to the provision of instruction or direct support to the student, or as soon as possible after the need is identified by the IEP team.

AAC Training - Frequently Asked Questions

What is HB2219? Is it a new requirement?

House Bill 2219 (HB 2219, now Code of Virginia §22.1-217.4) amends the Code of Virginia by defining AAC and building on requirements for IEP documentation and staff training for students who need or use AAC. Virginia's special education regulations already require IEP teams to (a) consider the child's communication needs, (b) consider whether the child requires assistive technology devices and services, and (c) document needed devices, services, and supports for school personnel in the IEP (VAC 8VAC20-81-110(F)). HB2219 re-emphasizes these expectations for students who need or use AAC and adds an explicit timeline for when individualized training must be provided.

Will a general, division-wide AAC training satisfy HB2219?

While it's helpful to provide a foundation for all school division personnel, a general, division-wide AAC training alone doesn't meet the requirement of HB2219 or potential AT services identified by the IEP team. Training must be individualized and tied to the specific student's AAC and communication access needs and the specific staff who will teach/support the student.

Who may require individualized training?

HB2219 requires individualized training for each school division employee or contractor who provides instruction or direct support to the student and is identified by the IEP team as needing training. This may include general and special educators, paraprofessionals, related service providers - SLPs, OTs, PTs, bus drivers, and/or other staff that support communication and access beyond the classroom who directly support instruction or access. It does not mean every adult in the building, and individuals will vary based on the needs of the students and identified personnel.

What counts as "training"? What topics should we consider?

Training should include activities that equip individuals with the knowledge and skills needed to effectively support students. AAC-specific training may include: system setup and operational basics; aided language modeling and partner strategies; embedding core vocabulary in routines and academics; prompting and wait-time; planning for access; and troubleshooting. Training should be individualized to the student, instruction and support staff, and educational contexts.

Who is responsible for planning and delivering the training? Is the SLP solely responsible?

No one title or role is responsible for planning and delivering training. The IEP team identifies what training is needed and for whom. Training may be delivered by a combination of professionals (e.g., SLP, AT/AAC specialists, special educator, vendor representative, or regional TTAC staff), depending on the content and who has the needed expertise as determined by the IEP team.

When must training occur and how often?

If staff are known before school starts, individualized training for those individuals (as identified in the IEP) must occur before the school year (including ESY) begins. If changes happen mid-year (new enrollment, staff changes, school/classroom/setting transfers, initial IEP or amendment), training happens as soon as possible thereafter. Additional and/or continued training based on student and staff needs may be identified and documented by the IEP team.

Where do we document AAC needs and training in the IEP?

A student's communication needs, required AT devices (including AAC) and services (including training), and supports for school personnel required by a student for FAPE must documented in the IEP with each IEP development, review, and revision (VAC 8VAC20-81-110(F)). How and where this information is documented within the IEP will be unique to each student and IEP teams should follow local school division policies and procedures.