

Collection of Free and Inexpensive Health Care Communication Aids

Many professionals who work with communication vulnerable children and adults *outside* of health care settings understand the importance of helping their clients to be better-prepared for the high-stakes communicative interactions they too often confront during these health care settings

The following collection of mostly free resources is full of materials that speech therapists, educators, occupational therapists and other professionals can keep on hand to distribute to clients/patients and/or their family members. Many free downloadable resources (communication boards, *etc.*) that can be printed out (hard stock paper works best) and kept on hand are available, as well as quite inexpensive resources that can be ordered in quantities and distribute to clients.

- **Central Coast Children's Foundation medical encounter communication board (free)** This free downloadable communication sheet has been specifically designed for regular medical encounters in clinics or doctor's offices, and could also prove useful during emergency room visits.. On one side of the board are general phrases and statements one might use in a doctor's office. On the other side are questions and statements that one might need in conversing with a doctor.
http://www.patientprovidercommunication.org/userfiles/file/1_1MedicalEncounterCommunicationBoard.pdf
- **Bedside communication board from Widgit, UK (28 languages) (free)** Bronwyn Hemsley, a speech pathologist in Australia, conducted field research to determine the most important phrases that patients wish to convey to caregivers when they do not have the ability to speak. The Central Coast Children's Foundation then adapted these phrases onto a communication board and had them translated into many different languages. Widgit UK then affixed their own symbol sets to the boards and published them on their web site. The boards are thus the result of a global effort to make these phrases accessible and useful to a wide audience within hospital settings. <http://widgit-health.com/downloads/bedside-messages.htm>
- **SPEAK Unlimited Paramedic and EMC communication board (free)** This symbol communication board was created as a tool to assist Paramedics and those in the Emergency Medical Services in interacting with any individual for whom clear speech is difficult or impossible. Available in British English and dual-language American / Spanish. <http://widgit-health.com/downloads/paramedic-board.htm>
- **Toby Churchill Alphabet Board (free)** The Toby Churchill Alphabet Board is a free and effective support for communication. Literate clients can use it

to spell out messages as a supplement their current means of communication (e.g., as a backup to a high-tech communication aid), or as part of a broader communication strategy. The PDF that follows contains 4 choices of keyboard – QWERTY, qwerty, ABCD or abcd. Each also contains some useful symbols depicting a variety of feelings, plus a few extra common words (and, the, yes). Individuals just point to the letters to spell words in order to communicate. <http://www.toby-churchill.com/news/free-downloads-and-support-alphabet-communication-boards/>

- **Temple University Emergency Communication Board: English/Spanish/Haitian Creole (free)** This communication aid includes key messages (“I can’t speak, but I can hear and understand you”), symbols of important words, a pain scale (“I will point to where I hurt”), and other valuable features. It includes a number and letter “keyboard.” On the back is a personal information form to be filled out by an individual, a family member, a familiar support person, a doctor, or an emergency responder. <http://disabilities.temple.edu/aacvocabulary/e4all.shtml#index>
- **My Health Passport for Hospital/Clinic Visits. Florida Center for Inclusive Communities. (free)** *My Health Passport* is a health advocacy document that describes the unique supports and preferences of an individual. It is designed to be shared with many types of healthcare providers, in clinic and hospital settings, especially for providers who are not very familiar in providing care to individuals with intellectual disabilities. Hard copies of *My Health Passport* are currently available, and can be ordered free of charge by contacting [Dr. Liz Perkins](#) or (813) 974-7076. The forms are also available online. <http://flfcic.fmhi.usf.edu/resources/materials/health.html>
- **Picture Communication Symbols, Department of Communities (Disability Care Services) and the Department of Community Safety (Queensland Ambulance Service) (free)** This communication board was developed as a tool to enhance communication between paramedics and patients with communication vulnerabilities at the first point of contact in an emergency medical situation in Queensland, Australia, but it has broader uses, for example, in emergency rooms, . It includes a visual pain scale, body outlines to help locate sources of pain, tips for interacting with injured individuals, and other useful features. <https://www.qld.gov.au/disability/documents/community/medical-signing-board.pdf>
- **Widgit’s Hospital Procedures. (free)** A series of resources designed to help patients with learning difficulties understand the procedures, sequence of events and people associated with a visit to hospital. http://www.widgit.com/resources/health/hospital_procedures/index.htm

- **How to ask “yes” “no “ questions (free)** This one page downloadable sheet can be used to help health care professionals ask yes/no questions more productively.
<http://www.patientprovidercommunication.org/userfiles/file/HOWTOASKYES NoQsdocx.pdf>

MINIMAL COST

- **ICE (In case of emergency) Communication Card from Widget. (\$25, Canadian (about \$20 US), for a pack of 20)** The Widget ICE Communication Card is credit card sized and folds flat and thin to fit in most wallets and purses. It easily folds out accordion-style to a larger sheet. One side contains personal ICE information, on which individuals can write necessary health and personal contact information. On the reverse side is a compact symbol communication sheet containing symbols and phrases for quick essential non-verbal communication. <http://www.bridges-canada.com/symbolizing/software-products/widget-health/ice.aspx>
- **Widget Patient Communication Sheet (\$20 Canadian (= \$16 US) for a packet of 10)** This sheet is designed with symbols so that patients of all languages and reading abilities can communicate without the spoken word. The sheet features all the major requests and replies along with a pain scale and body diagram to support communication in a hospital setting: <http://store.bridges-canada.com/konakart/ShowSearchResults.do>
- **Green House Publications: Pack of 50 medical communication boards (\$14)** Intended for use in hospitals, rehab units, acute care, emergency rooms, assisted living facilities, nursing homes, clinics, hospice care and in the home, these two sided card peel-off stock boards, available in Spanish or English, include a pain scale for determining where and how badly one hurts, (2) 68-clear, 4-color pictures depicting wants, needs, ailments, comforts, questions, emotions, *etc.*, (3) easy to understand instructions for patient response alternatives, (4) Alphabet for spelling out words, and (5) numbers for numerical information: <http://www.greenhousepub.com/hecacobo.html>
- **AliMed, Critical Communicator Board in 21 languages (\$28 for a packet of 30)** Provides help with understanding medical problems in foreign languages. Helpful for those who have difficulty communicating even basic needs on a temporary basis. Include a pain scale, words and pictures for now (immediate attention, such as hard to breathe), pain (ache, burning, sharp), comfort (head up/down), people (husband, wife, doctor), alphabet, numbers, and days of week. <http://www.alimed.com/the-critical-communicator.html>

- Also available in a children's version in English and Spanish. <http://www.alimed.com/the-critical-communicator-for-kids.html> (\$32-\$33 for a packet of 25)