

Submitter: Rebecca Burke
On Behalf Of:
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Measure: HB2618

I work as an outpatient hospital-based speech language pathologist with young adults and adults who need or use Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) devices to communicate with others. Sadly, I sometimes work with individuals, often Hispanic who have not yet received a device to communicate. They range from chronological ages of 17-21 but their cognitive ages have ranged from 4- 21 years of age. It then falls to my colleagues and I to help them and their families get the "talking box" to communicate. Examples include an AAC device so they can attend the local community college and converse with their professors, or the young man who could use a paper/ pencil alphabet eye gaze sheet to tell me his favorite zoo animal is "chicken" and his Native language (such as Mandarin/ changed for confidentiality). He was truly locked in with no voice; somehow his device got lost along the way when he moved. I am also lucky to provide a voice to those who just want to say "pizza", "please", "ball" or "love Mom." Where were the needed services for these young adults through their school years? I believe it was because the school based clinicians simply had more individuals on their caseload than they could possibly handle. I'm tired of having to help them play catch up, and instead want them to receive the services that they deserve; the right we all deserve, the right to communicate.