A Tool Kit for Communication and COVID-19

Communication is foundational for everything we do. It is individualized and fluid. Everyone communicates in one way or another, however for some individuals, communication can be even more complex and sometimes challenging. Effective communication is essential for sharing symptoms people may be having, as well as for complying with medical treatment. It is also important that everyone has access to information on the novel Coronavirus and what is happening in their community. The Coronavirus has many people feeling anxious and scared too; it is important for everyone to have equal access for communicating those feelings. The Office of Developmental Programs, Special Populations Unit has developed several tools and are sharing a couple resources to assist those who are supporting individuals with non-traditional communication during these tough times.

COVID-19 – Communication Supports
   - A tool that can be used to facilitate communication while an individual is in the hospital. It includes a visual pain chart, a communication board, and communication tips.

Signs for in Hospital Rooms
   - Sometimes something as simple as hanging up a sign in your hospital room that says you are Deaf, Hard of Hearing, or Deaf-Blind can be very helpful as a reminder for nurses and doctors. This is a tool can be simply handed to your doctor or nurse.

Communication Profile & Care Needs Form
   - Communication Profile is a quick, person-centered tool used to help those that may not know the individual well enough to communicate effectively with them.
   - The Care Needs Form was made to be provided to medical professionals in case of emergency.

Flowchart for Supporting Someone who is Deaf or Hard of Hearing
   - A tool that can be used to help determine the most effective way to communicate with someone with a hearing loss when no other guidance is available. The tool also includes Video Remote Interpreting (VRI) tips.

COVID-19 Updates in American Sign Language (ASL)
   - Regularly updated information on COVID-19 in American Sign Language (ASL) https://www.nad.org/coronavirus/ and https://emergencyaccess.info/

Tips for Supporting Someone who is Deaf-Blind
   - Tips for supporting someone who is Deaf-Blind.
   - The Pennsylvania Training and Technical Assistance Network (PaTTAN) has a webpage developed to provide resources and supports: https://www.pattan.net/Disabilities/Deaf-Blind/COVID-19
   - Helen Keller National Center also has a webpage: https://www.helenkeller.org/hknc/covid-19-communication-guidelines

The goal of the Special Populations Unit is to assure effective communication for the individuals that we support, especially during these challenging times. **The Special Populations Unit is available at RA-ODPDeafServices@pa.gov or RA-PWSpecialPopUnit@pa.gov for Case Consultation, Training & Resources, and Deaf, Hard of Hearing, and Deaf-Blind Support.**