

## Strategies you can use to help with communication:

Support your loved one to understand you, attend to you and remember what you're saying to them.

### When THEY are speaking:

- Help them access a communication board, a "yes/no" board or a pen and paper
- Encourage gestures, body language, eye contact and facial expressions
- Encourage the use of a digital device such as a phone, iPad or tablet
- Allow extra time
- Write down key words and present choices

### When YOU are speaking:

- Eliminate distractions
- If they are only able to answer yes/no, start with broad questions and then narrow down to specifics
- Use a calendar
- Write key points down as you speak using a pen and paper or digital device
- Allow extra time to process information
- Break complex information into simple chunks or steps

## For more support

### Ask for a speech-language pathology (SLP) consult.

An SLP works with patients, their families, and care teams to offer other communication strategies.

### Acknowledgements

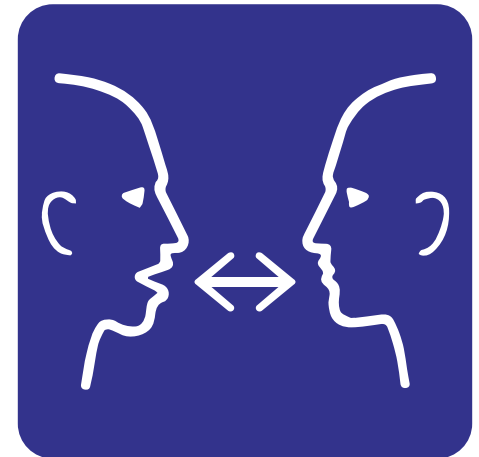
St. Paul's Foundation  
Communication Assistance for Youth and Adults (CAYA)

### Visit our website at

[icu.providencehealthcare.org](http://icu.providencehealthcare.org)



## HOW TO COMMUNICATE WHEN CRITICAL ILLNESS MAKES SPEAKING DIFFICULT





[www.providencehealthcare.org](http://www.providencehealthcare.org)


## Personal Items

If you have glasses, hearing aids and/or dentures, staff will put them in the plastic pouch and denture cup provided.

**PATIENT BEDSIDE POUCH**

 **GLASSES**  
(      READING      DISTANCE )

 **HEARING AID**

 **DENTURES**

## Complete a Communication Care Plan with your loved one's nurse

Care plans are posted over the bed and patients can take their care plan with them if transferred to another hospital unit.

PLEASE POST AT THE HEAD OF THE BED

**COMMUNICATION CARE PLAN**

THANK YOU! GAIL (SLP) PAGER 33640

PREFERRED NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

PREFERRED LANGUAGE: \_\_\_\_\_

PLEASE MAKE SURE THE PATIENT ALWAYS HAS:  
(circle the items that apply)

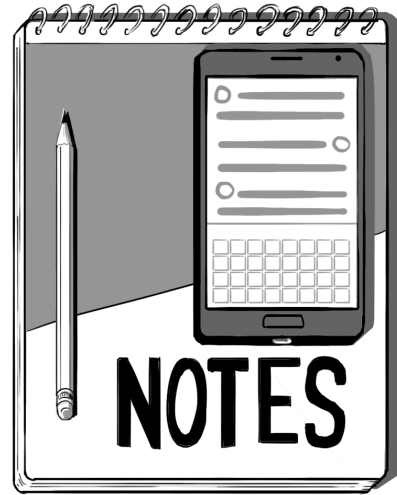
EYE GLASSES      DENTURES  
HEARING AIDS      \_\_\_\_\_

DATE POSTED: \_\_\_\_\_

TIPS/TOOLS CURRENTLY PRACTISING  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

PATIENT USES THESE COMMUNICATION SIGNALS/GESTURES:  
YES: \_\_\_\_\_ NO: \_\_\_\_\_  
Other signals/gestures:  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

PATIENT LIKES TO TALK ABOUT:  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_



## Spelling and Writing Tools

Someone who cannot speak may be able to use a pen and paper, write messages on a phone or tablet touch screen, or point to letters to spell words on an alphabet board.

**ICU COMMUNICATION BOARD** Patient Initials: \_\_\_\_\_

A	B	C	D						
E	F	G	H						
I	J	K	L	M	N	NEW WORD			
O	P	Q	R	S	T	ERROR			
U	V	W	X	Y	Z	DONE/QUIT			
0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9














You can also help your loved one to better understand or remember a message by writing down key words or events such as "Mom visit 2 pm tomorrow."

## Visual Tools

A symbol, photo, real object or written word can help a patient to express themselves when they are tired, confused or unable to speak.

Communication boards may be useful for someone who needs to communicate. They can either point to a desired message or someone else can point to each message in sequence and ask the patient to confirm (e.g. "Do you need suctioning? Yes or No?").

**ICU COMMUNICATION BOARD** Patient Initials: \_\_\_\_\_

<b>SUCTION</b> 	<b>PAIN</b> 	<p>10 WORST PAIN</p> <p>9 </p> <p>8 SEVERE</p> <p>7 </p> <p>6 MODERATE</p> <p>5 </p> <p>4 MILD</p> <p>3 </p> <p>2 NO PAIN</p> <p>1 </p> <p>0 </p> 
<b>MOVE ME</b> 	<b>ITCHY</b> 	
<b>MEDICINE</b> 	<b>NOT ON THIS PAGE</b> 	

In addition to pre-made communication boards, there are blank boards available. You can add pre-made symbol stickers, drawings or write your own words to customize blank boards as desired.

Speak with your nurse or respiratory therapist about how you can help your family member or friend better communicate during their stay.

Nurses and respiratory therapists can help make communication tools for you.