Augmentative Alternative Communication (AAC) Specialist

**Definition:**
An Augmentative Alternative Communication (AAC) Specialist works as part of an interdisciplinary team in assisting County Office and district staff, and parents in the assessment, identification, planning, and implementation of assistive technology for the purpose of language and communication development. An AAC Specialist makes recommendation on the implementation and use of appropriate technology (low tech and high tech) and provides consultation and instructional support to staff, parents, and users in order to facilitate full access to the users educational, recreational, domestic, and vocational programs.

**Distinguishing Characteristics:**
- Under the direction of a department or program administrator, the Augmentative Alternative Communication (AAC) Specialist conducts activities associated with the assessment, assignment, and implementation of AAC for students with severe disorders of communication.
- Contact with others include peers, district and other agency staff, the public, as well as routine contact with administrators, teachers, families, consumers and their representatives at meetings, workshops, trainings, presentations and conferences.

**Supervision Exercised and Received:**
A SELPA administrator provides general direction.

**Example of Duties and Responsibilities:**
*Duties and Responsibilities may include, but are not limited to, the following:*
- Participate as part of a collaborative team which may include parents, care providers, Speech, Language and Hearing Therapists, Hard of Hearing Teachers, Visually Impaired Teachers, Occupational and Physical Therapists, instructional and agency staff. Provides assessment, consultation, and instructional support services for students with Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) needs.
- Determines AAC needs as part of a comprehensive assessment, which addresses all areas related to the student’s disability and based on the student’s strengths, tasks, and expectations.
- Uses best practice assessment, data gathering procedures, and strategies to conduct a needs-based assessment utilizing a team approach and the student’s educational environment and setting.
• Prepares and delivers written reports as required
• Accepts and reviews referrals in accordance with established ATC Program procedures
• Provides and participates in staff and parent training activities related to AAC across the Special Education Local Plan Area (SELPA)
• Develops and maintains positive working relationships with referring IEP Team members, including speech and language pathologists, teachers, psychologists, therapists, and parents/guardians
• Participates in professional growth activities such as conferences, classes, staff meetings, and visitations
• Maintains program, equipment, and student data in accordance with the SELPA ATC procedures
• Coordinate or participate in a variety of educational meetings related to student needs
• Provides oversight of approval for Speech Generated Devices (SGD) through Low Incidence Funds
• Work the same number of contracted days and hours as other certificated staff but follow a calendar determined by the needs of districts and agencies served
• Insure a safe and healthful environment for all students, adhering to all applicable laws, codes and County Office policy
• Perform other duties as assigned

Employment Standards:

Knowledge of:
• Developmental stages of communication (pre-verbal to verbal) including the understanding of communicative intent, forms of communication, functional communication, and use of core vocabulary when using AAC
• Evaluating children’s symbolic skills
• Various aspects of aided and unaided AAC systems
• General purposes and applications of AAC systems
• Perceptual skills that is necessary to access different AAC systems
• How seating and positioning influences access to AAC systems, and the ability to collaborate with other professionals to optimize seating and positioning for AAC use
• The broad array of switches and corresponding skills necessary to use them to access AAC devices
• Methods used to customize AAC systems
• Laws/regulations regarding individual’s rights to access AAC and other forms of assistive technology
• Interagency relationships and effective methods of program coordination
• Current developments in computer and rehabilitation technology hardware and software

Ability to:
• Apply and share knowledge of developmental stages of communication and language when making AAC recommendations
• Provide training, direction and consultation regarding a student’s AAC needs
• Write IEP goals, including objectives/benchmarks which are measurable, observable and verifiable
• Function as a positive, contributing member of an educational team
• Complete an AAC assessment and deliver information clearly in both written and oral form
• Maintain and improve professional skills and knowledge
• Be flexible and receptive to change

**Computer Skills:**
- Basic Word Processing skills, such as the ability to format, save files for cross-platform use and in different versions, work with toolbars, menus, and rulers, insert graphics, use borders, and print labels and envelopes.
- Basic Database skills, such as the ability to sort and retrieve records; create layouts, reports, create and print mailing labels; perform mail merge for form letters; add, edit, delete fields and records.
- Basic spreadsheet skills, including the ability to open, modify, save, and print a new or existing spreadsheet, and enter text and numbers.
- Basic email skills, including the ability to send and open a file attachment.
- Basic Internet usage including the ability to utilize its resources for instructional purposes, use a search engine, bookmark a site, download a file, copy text, edit bookmarks and observe copyright regulations.
- Skills with computers, including a broad range of assistive technology resources.
- Skills to prepare and give training and presentations to various audiences.

**Education and Experience:**

*Any combination of education and experience that would provide the knowledge and abilities is qualifying. A typical way to obtain the knowledge and abilities would be:*

**Education:**
- A Master’s degree in the area of Speech – Language Pathology or Communicative Disorders and Sciences is required.
- Specialized training and/or experience in Augmentative Alternative Communication is preferred

**Experience:**
- A minimum of two (2) years working in a setting directly related to the assessment and implementation of Augmentative Alternative Communication (AAC) and/or Assistive Technology is preferred.

**Credentials:**
• A valid California Speech-Language Pathology Services Credential or a Clinical or Rehabilitation Services Credential with Speech, Language and Hearing authorization is required.
• An ASHA Certificate of Clinical Competency in Speech Language Pathology is preferred.
• An Assistive Technology Certificate is also preferred.

Physical Abilities:
The physical demands described here are representative of those that must be met by an employee to successfully perform the essential functions of this job.

- Positions in this classification work indoors and sit for long periods of time.
- The position requires daily oral communication in person and on the telephone, and frequent written communication.
- Requires speaking and hearing ability sufficient to hear over phone and carry on routine conversations.
- The work involves operating a computer, calculator, copier, and other equipment, and involves repetitive arm and hand movement.
- Requires hand-eye-arm and finger dexterity to use a personal computer keyboard, ten-key, and other common office equipment.
- Entering data by touch requires the ability to hear computer alarms for errors.
- Forms and copies are color coded, requiring the ability to distinguish among colors.
- Requires visual acuity sufficient to recognize people, words, and numbers.
- May need to occasionally lift up to twenty (20) pounds and in excess of twenty (20) pounds with assistance.

Work environment:
The following conditions may be present:

- Walking on uneven ground when outdoors.
- Exposure to student illnesses, injuries, infections and bodily fluids.
- May be exposed to chemicals contained in cleaning products.
- May be required to maneuver into awkward positions.

Other Requirements:

- Must be fingerprinted and a satisfactory Department of Justice and Federal Bureau of Investigation records checks must be received by the Sonoma County Office of Education, prior to employment.
- Proof of TB test will be required upon employment.
- Proof of COVID-19 vaccinations are required upon employment.
- Must pass a pre-employment physical (if applicable).
- May be required to obtain first aid and CPR certificates within the first 6-12 months of employment.
- May be required to drive with or without students; some positions may require a current California driver license, proof of insurance, and possible participation in the DMV Pull
Notice Program once employed.