

# Communication Portfolios

giving a voice to young children  
with complex communication needs



## What is a Communication Portfolio?

A Communication Portfolio is a portable notebook that includes photos and descriptions of a child's unique way of communicating his or her wants, needs, and preferences.

## Why make a Communication Portfolio?

- Young children with multiple or significant disabilities, including deaf-blindness, often face challenges in developing communication.
- They may use facial expressions, body movements, vocalizations, or sign approximations.
- Unfamiliar people may have difficulty understanding the child's communication attempts.
- Parents are a rich source of information about their child's unique communication skills.
- It is essential for this information to be shared with educators as the child transitions from early intervention to school services.



## Creating a Communication Portfolio

- Complete The Communication Matrix ([www.communicationmatrix.org](http://www.communicationmatrix.org)) or another communication assessment of your choice.
- Take pictures of the child using his/her communication skills.
- Organize the assessment information and pictures into the notebook using a template.

## When to use the Communication Portfolio

- Families are encouraged to share their child's Communication Portfolio with the education team prior to evaluation and assessment and again at the IEP meeting.
- Families and educators use the Communication Portfolio at home and at school to increase the consistency of communication strategies.
- The Communication Portfolio is updated as the child gains new skills.

## Families and Practitioners share their experiences...

- A parent uses the Communication Portfolio to help others “get to know and understand” her daughter and to “know what to do and what not to do” with her.
- “I saw [the parent] be involved and feel validated...to me that was worth it all in itself,” relates an early intervention service provider who supported a family during transition.
- “It was extremely helpful for us during diagnostics to understand, prior to meeting her and prior to evaluating her, what we were looking for in terms of communication and how she was responding...” shares a member of the educational team.
- “It was really nice to pull out [the Communication Portfolio] in the session and know immediately what to do with her,” relates a speech-language pathologist.
- A parent explains the benefit of the small Communication Portfolio notebook, “she has a bag on the back of her wheelchair, so she takes the actual notebook with her to school...because of course the paperwork and files are kept in the office, but she has a copy physically with her.”



**For more information, including the Communication Portfolio template and instructions, contact:**

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