

Enhancing Care in ALS for SLPs, Patients, and Caregivers

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AMYOTROPHIC LATERAL SCLEROSIS (ALS) IS A PROGRESSIVE NEURODEGENERATIVE DISEASE

characterized by muscle weakness and the loss of motor control over time. Patients may eventually lose their ability to walk, talk, eat, and breathe independently

80-95% OF PEOPLE WITH ALS (PALS) EXPERIENCE SEVERE COMMUNICATION DIFFICULTIES

necessitating alternative communication methods ranging from low-tech picture boards to high-tech devices with voice output

THE PRIMARY RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE SLP

address speech, language, and dysphagia impairments in ALS patients, especially dysarthria and **implementation of augmentative and alternative communication (AAC) devices**, including communicating with AAC vendors, educating patients and caregivers, and anticipating changes in AAC needs as the disease progresses

VOICE AND MESSAGE BANKING

allows patients to record their voices for future communication with their AAC device via a synthetic voice or through legacy messages. This is often an emotional process requiring patience and support from SLPs and caregivers

ACCESS STRATEGIES

how the individual uses their device based on motor limitations- can be via direct or indirect pathways. Working with PT and/or OT can be a great tool to determine the best option for the patient

WHEN COMMUNICATING WITH AN AAC USER, REMEMBER

to be patient and be an advocate for the individual. Keep a slower pace, maintain eye contact, and invite the user to be an active part of group conversations

THE SLP EVALUATION AND FUNDING REPORT

is a comprehensive report with assessments of the patient's speech, language, cognition, communication goals, and treatment plan to determine medical necessity of the device. Once written, it will need to be approved by insurance

EARLY PLANNING FOR AAC, COLLABORATION AMONG CARE TEAMS, AND LEVERAGING AVAILABLE SUPPORT NETWORKS ARE VITAL IN ENHANCING ALS CARE

ALS is a dynamic, progressive disease that will affect each patient in unique ways. Not all patients will see the benefit of SLP services immediately, but it is our responsibility to present them with available information and resources to assist them in making informed decisions and preparing them for changes throughout the process



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Low/Mid-Tech

- Paper, picture exchange, single button system, etc.
- Generally inexpensive
- No or limited voice output; generic voice
- Some modalities require partner assistance or higher-level motor function for scanning and selection
- Users with less complex communication needs (requesting, Y/N questions)

High-Tech

- Electronic
- Intensive training for use
- Costly; requires funding via insurance
- Complex speech generation; synthetic voice
- May be eye gaze compatible
- For users with high-level cognitive functioning and complex communication needs

- Robust vocabulary
- Customizable
- Multiple access options
- Can be used in conjunction with one another



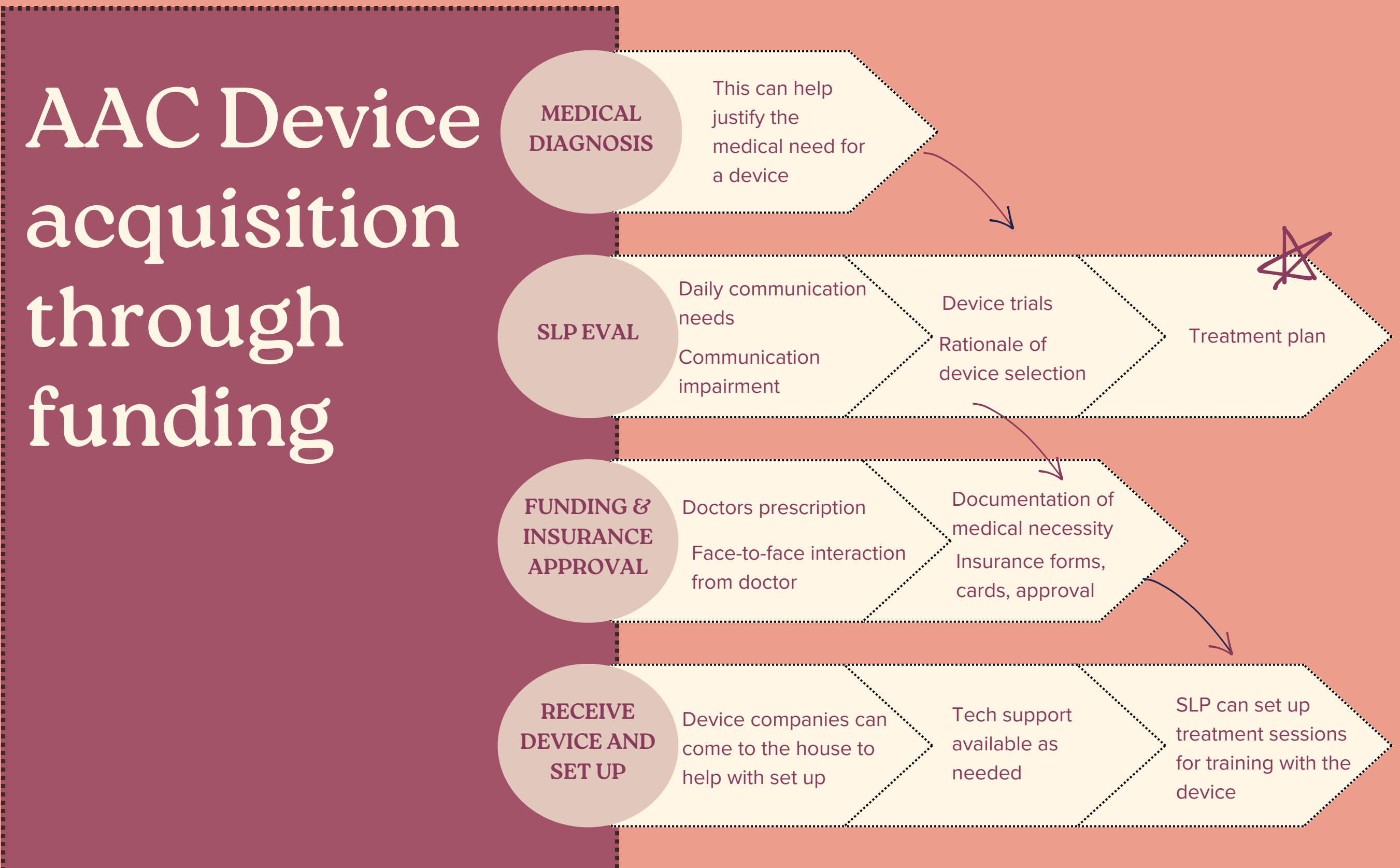
SCAN THE QR CODE FOR ACCESS TO A GOOGLE DRIVE WITH A COMPREHENSIVE RESOURCE BINDER, INCLUDING LOW-TECH COMMUNICATION BOARDS, COMMUNICATION PARTNER TIPS, CAREGIVER SUPPORT, AND MORE

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When selecting a device...

- Consider the technology and the user's preference
- Explore all AAC companies/vendors in your area
- Some companies will offer high-tech eye gaze systems
- Consider Apple vs. Windows based
- Mounting options
- Connect with local ALS Association: they may have additional recommendations

It is best to start the process as soon as possible as the insurance funding process can be long!