DANCE WITH THE GIRL YOU BROUGHT - ADAPTING AAC SYSTEMS TO MEET USERS' NEEDS

0.05 ASHA CEU and .5 Act 48 PDH

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LUCY IANNAMORELLI IS A FULL-TIME EMPLOYEE OWNER OF PRC-SALTILLO AND IS A MEMBER OF ASHA.

DEBORAH WORKS AS A TRAINING AND IMPLEMENTATION SPECIALIST FOR THE MINSPEAK ACADEMY AT PRC-SALTILLO WHERE SHE ALSO WORKS ON THE CONTENT DEVELOPMENT AND BILINGUAL AAC TEAMS. SHE IS A MEMBER OF ASHA AND SIG 12.
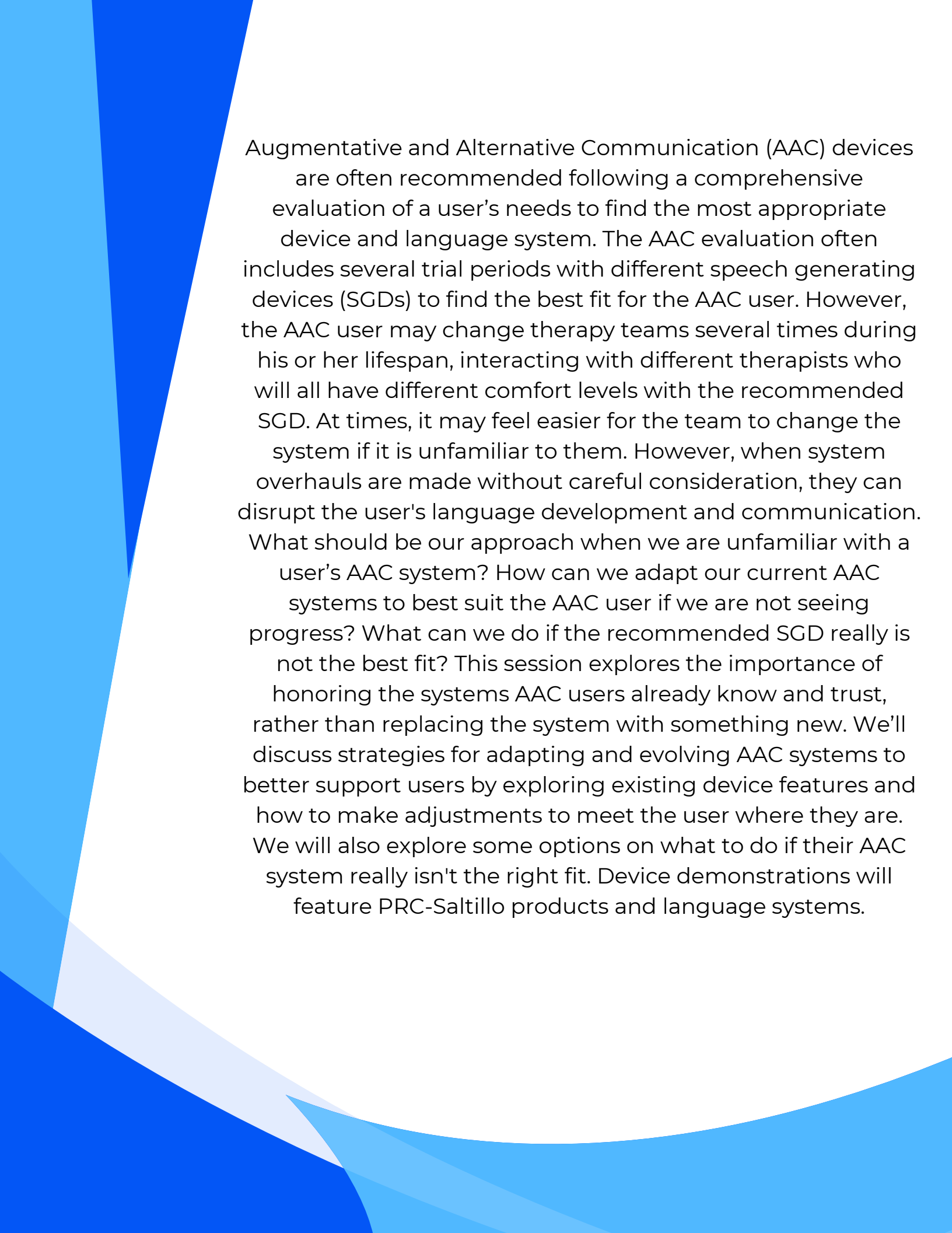
DARLETTE HAS NO RELEVANT RELATIONSHIPS TO DISCLOSE.

Learning Objectives:

- Explain the value of maintaining familiar AAC systems and how it supports user autonomy and success.
- Identify strategies for customizing vocabulary, layout, and access methods to better align with a user's current abilities, preferences, and goals.
- Identify options on what to do if data proves that the AAC system needs to be changed to best support the user.

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Pennsylvania Speech-Language-Hearing Association

Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) devices are often recommended following a comprehensive evaluation of a user's needs to find the most appropriate device and language system. The AAC evaluation often includes several trial periods with different speech generating devices (SGDs) to find the best fit for the AAC user. However, the AAC user may change therapy teams several times during his or her lifespan, interacting with different therapists who will all have different comfort levels with the recommended SGD. At times, it may feel easier for the team to change the system if it is unfamiliar to them. However, when system overhauls are made without careful consideration, they can disrupt the user's language development and communication. What should be our approach when we are unfamiliar with a user's AAC system? How can we adapt our current AAC systems to best suit the AAC user if we are not seeing progress? What can we do if the recommended SGD really is not the best fit? This session explores the importance of honoring the systems AAC users already know and trust, rather than replacing the system with something new. We'll discuss strategies for adapting and evolving AAC systems to better support users by exploring existing device features and how to make adjustments to meet the user where they are. We will also explore some options on what to do if their AAC system really isn't the right fit. Device demonstrations will feature PRC-Saltillo products and language systems.

Speaker's Bio: Lucy Iannamorelli, M.S. CCC-SLP is an AAC Consultant with PRC-Saltillo, supporting Western PA and WV. Prior to joining PRC-Saltillo, Lucy worked as a speech-language pathologist at a special education school where she supported children from age 3 to age 21 with a range of communication needs. She has extensive experience supporting AAC users and their families and is passionate about helping individuals find their voice. Lucy shares, "I believe that there is an AAC system out there for all bodies, and the best way to start is finding something meaningful and exciting to talk about or connect with!" She holds the Certificate of Clinical Competence in Speech-Language Pathology from the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association (ASHA) and a state license in Speech- Language Pathology from the state of Pennsylvania.

Deborah Witkowski, MA, CCC-SLP, is a speech-language pathologist with 35 years of experience. She has devoted her career to working with individuals with complex communication needs. She served as assistive technology consultant for multiple school districts in the state of Connecticut over a 15-year period. She also spent 12 years working as a content developer and clinical consultant for Semantic Compaction Systems. It was there that she had the opportunity to develop Unidad, a robust bilingual Spanish/English language system. Deborah works as a training and implementation specialist for the Minspeak Academy at PRC-Saltillo where she also works on the content development and bilingual AAC teams. She is a member of ASHA and SIG 12.

Darlette Navrotski, M.A., CCC-SLP, dedicated 37 years as a regional consultant with PRC-Saltillo, serving Western Pennsylvania and West Virginia, where she provided education, training, and support to individuals and teams exploring or using AAC devices. A master's level speech language pathologist with a background in linguistics, Darlette also has experience teaching English as a second language. Her journey in AAC began at the University of Pittsburgh, where she worked as a research assistant on a two-year Department of Education grant titled 'Promoting Communication in Non-speakers." She later served as an adjunct professor at the University of Pittsburgh, contributing to AAC coursework and mentoring future professionals in the field.