

IAT Announcements:

AAC Device Procedures Part I



Meet Our Team

- **Emily Kinsler, Coordinator, Countywide Services**
- **Lauri Silver, Special Educator, Instructional Facilitator, Academic Support**
- **Dawn Trotter, Speech & Language Pathologist, Communication Support**
- **Stephanie McAllister, Program Assistant, All student iPad support, Student Communication Support**
- **Jenny Jones, Program Assistant, Middle & High School Support, All staff iPad support**

HCPSS Instructional Access Team



Staff Responsibilities:

AAC Device
Maintenance and
Functionality

Staff Responsibility: AAC Device Maintenance

Ongoing care keeps our AAC tools clean, safe, and ready for student use. Thank you for your support!

To ensure hygiene, functionality, and longevity of AAC iPads, staff are asked to share in the following responsibilities:

- **Cleaning:** Clean screens, cases, and keyguards weekly (or more often if dirty) with electronics-safe wipes or a soft damp cloth. Avoid moisture near ports and speakers. Staff will receive a starter set of wipes; schools will need to provide more. Here's a [recommended option](#).

Staff Responsibility: AAC Device Maintenance (cont)

- When returning a device that is no longer documented in an IEP to IAT, all components must be returned (cases, charging blocks, charging cables, iPads, etc.)
- Schools are responsible for replacing the iPad charger blocks and/or cables should they be lost or damaged. Student accessories are clearly marked in blue. ([Ordering Info](#))
- In addition, AAC devices must be cleaned before they will be replaced or collected from a school.

Staff Responsibility: AAC Device Maintenance (cont)

- School programs (RECC, ES, MS, HS, CLS) will be receiving starter sets of wipes approved for electronic cleaning
- Additional wipes should be ordered by the school
- Staff will also receive 2-gallon zipper bags to protect iPads from spills during meals, snacks, or activities where devices may be exposed to liquids. Please use them!!!

Staff Responsibility: AAC Device Functionality

1. **Wi-Fi Connection:** Devices **MUST** stay connected to HCPSS Wi-Fi using the student's [active directory login and password](#) to allow for app updates.
2. **System Updates:** Ensure iPad [operating systems remain up to date](#).

Staff Responsibilities:

iPad Troubleshooting and
Breakages

iPad Troubleshooting: Malfunctioning

When staff or parents report that a communication iPad is broken or malfunctioning, consult with the SLP, then:

- 1) Is the iPad connected to HCPSS WiFi for at least a school day?
([Directions](#))
- 2) Is the iOS updated? ([Directions](#)) ****DO NOT UPDATE TO IOS 26 until instructed**
- 3) How old is the student's vocabulary file (using the recommended naming convention: Last name, First name, Date created)? Files older than 2 years may cause operational issues. Consider making a new copy from a template.
- 4) Once 1-3 have been completed AND the iPad continues to have performance issues, the SLP or designee will contact:
- 5) Stephanie_McAllister@hcpss.org and Dawn_Trotter@hcpss.org

New Process for Breakages/Loss/Theft

DSE has asked the Instructional Access Team to collect more thorough data about student iPad breakages, loss, and theft.

August 2024-June 2025

IAT issued 173 new AAC iPads

179 replacement AAC iPads

In less than one month (August-September 22, 2025), IAT has replaced 22 devices.

New Process for Breakages/Loss/Theft

With this data, IAT and school-based teams can spot patterns of breakages or losses and take steps to prevent them before they happen.

Pattern Identification

✓ A pattern might look like:

- The same student throws their device during transitions in multiple classrooms
- Device is broken during independent work when staff support is limited
- Breakages occur mostly during high-stress times of day

Pattern Identification

❌ A pattern is not:

- One break at home
- Another student accidentally damages the device
- One-time incident of the student throwing the device
- One-time incident of student dropping the device

iPad Breakages/Loss/Theft

What is a breakage?

- Is the screen shattered?
- Is the screen protector cracked or coming loose from the case?
- Is the case broken or cracked?
- Is the charging port blocked?

Email [Stephanie McAllister@hcpss.org](mailto:Stephanie_McAllister@hcpss.org) and [Dawn Trotter@hcpss.org](mailto:Dawn_Trotter@hcpss.org). **WE** will send you the link each time to the NEW **AAC Device/Case Breakage and Loss Form**

iPad Breakages/Loss/Theft (cont.)

AAC Device/Case Breakage and Loss Form

Prevents back and forth emailing with IAT to collect :

- The specific student information required to set-up a device
- Collects the cause of the breakage/loss/theft of the device

iPad Breakages/Loss/Theft (cont.)

AAC Device/Case Breakage and Loss Form

Who completes the form?

SLP will receive the form from IAT

SLP and/or case manager will complete the form.

*SLP should work with case managers to complete this form until the case manager or SLP is comfortable. This will ultimately reduce some of your workload around device replacement.

AAC Device/ Case Breakage and Loss Form

You will need the following information prior to completing this form:

Student Information

- First and Last name of the student (as it appears on the IEP)
- School
- SLP
- Case Manager
- [Active Directory Login and Password](#)

AAC Device/ Case Breakage and Loss Form

You will need the following information prior to completing this form:

Device Information

- What specifically is broken (case, screen, screen protector)?
- What app is required?

AAC Device/ Case Breakage and Loss Form

Incident Details

- Who was with the student when the breakage occurred and/or who reported it?
- Where did the breakage occur?
- Why did the breakage occur?
- How did the breakage occur?
- When did the breakage occur?

**If breakage occurs at home, please contact family to answer these questions.

A Word About AAC Device Loss and Theft

Any HCPSS device that is lost or stolen—whether at school or at home—requires a police report to be filed **before** a replacement can be issued.

- If the device goes missing at **home**, the **family** must file the police report.
- If the device goes missing at **school**, the **school-based team** must file the police report.

To obtain the device's serial number before filing, contact

[Stephanie McAllister@hcpss.org](mailto:Stephanie_McAllister@hcpss.org).

Reports should be filed with the Howard County Police Department by calling the non-emergency line: **410-313-3200**.

Pattern Identification

- IAT and School-Based SPED team will determine if a pattern of breakage or loss is or has emerged
- IAT will reach out to the school-based team to schedule a short, problem-solving meeting with the case manager, SLP, and any other individuals that might assist in developing preventative strategies
- School-based teams can reach out to IAT at any time to meet and engage in problem solving

Problem - Solving Meeting

A Problem-Solving Meeting must occur **prior** to a replacement device being delivered to the school

- IAT and the school-based team will review the current breakage/loss data
- Identify root causes
- Develop a proactive plan
- A Device Implementation Plan will be completed by IAT with input from the school team
- The Device Implementation Plan will be reviewed by IAT and the school team to determine success of strategies. The follow-up meeting will be scheduled at the time of the initial Problem-Solving Meeting

Important Notice About Device Replacement

Devices **will be replaced** after each reported incident.

However, **if a pattern is identified and we request a problem-solving meeting** but do not receive a response or cannot schedule a meeting, **we will not be able to replace any further broken devices** until a plan is in place.

This ensures we are taking steps to prevent ongoing breakage and protect the student's access to communication.

Resources

- [IAT Canvas Site](#)
- [Google Staff Professional Learning Calendar](#)
- [Google Family Professional Learning Calendar](#)
- [Google Family Site](#)
- [Google Communication Site](#)
- [Preventing AAC Device Breakages: Proactive and Responsive Strategies](#)