**Create a Communication Dictionary**

Many individuals in Level VI have multiple communication modes (tangible symbols, pictures, gestures, sounds, speech generating device). A Communication Dictionary:

* allows all partners (adults and peers) to understand intent and respond appropriately
* makes transitions to new environments and people easier
* contains the individual’s “words” (tangible symbols, pictures, gestures, sounds) and their communicative intent
* format is selected for ease of use by the individual and may be in a binder, key chain, portable container, etc.
* must be maintained as the individual’s vocabulary increases

**Steps for Building a Communication Dictionary for an Individual**

1. Create a list of the 2D- or 3D- symbols, textures, pictures, line drawings, words, signs, sounds, etc., that the individual uses to represent a specific activity, event, or person.
2. Check with other partners, including family members, to ensure the list is comprehensive and consistent.
3. Collect these items identified in Step 1.
4. Determine how they will be represented (picture/description) in the dictionary
5. Determine item portability and accessibility across all environments.
   1. Depending on the size of the individual’s vocabulary, multiple “dictionaries” may be needed to be used in specific environments. (Note: multiple dictionaries require some duplicate vocabulary.)
   2. Consider which symbols may need to be transitioned to a more portable symbol, such as whole object to partial object or thermoform, partial object to photo.
6. Label each of the items to ensure understanding of their representations by all communication partners.
7. Stress to all partners the importance of consistent, immediate responding.
8. Ensure the individual’s dictionary(ies) is readily available to all communication partners.