I P C A

Inventory

of

Potential

Communicative

Acts[1]

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INVENTORY OF
POTENTIAL COMMUNICATIVE ACTS

Name of Person: _____

Your Name: _____

Your Relationship to the Person: ☐ Teacher   ☐ Parent   ☐ Other (Specify) _____

How long have you known this person? _____ years _____ months

	Day	Month	Year
Today's Date:	_____	_____	_____
Person's Date of Birth:	_____	_____	_____

School/Centre: _____   Diagnoses: _____

_____

_____

Background

The Inventory of Potential Communicative Acts (IPCA) is based on three years of research funded by The University of Queensland and the Australian Research Council. To date, the research and field testing has involved over 30 children with developmental disabilities and severe communication impairment (DD/SCI). Current research is examining the validity of the IPCA for intervention purposes. At the present time, the instrument can be used for gathering descriptive information on communication behaviors.

The IPCA is designed to be completed by educators, therapists, family members, or other individuals who know the individual well enough to serve as a useful informant. As a general rule of thumb, anyone who has known and cared for the individual for at least six months could complete the IPCA. The IPCA seeks to identify any **Potential Communicative Acts** that might be used by an individual for any of 10 different **Communicative Functions**.

A **Potential Communicative Act** is defined as any behavior that you think the person uses for communication purposes. These behaviors might include vocalizations, body movements, facial expressions, breathing patterns, challenging behaviors, or stereotyped movements. These behaviors might also include more symbolic forms of communication, such as speaking some single words, producing a few manual signs, or using a picture-based communication board. To help you in identifying these types of behaviors, Table I lists a number of behaviors that are used by some individuals with DD/SCI to communicate with others. It is important to bear in mind that this list is not exhaustive. In completing the IPCA, you are encouraged to identify any behaviors that you have observed the person to use in communicating with others.

With the IPCA, the specific meaning that a person is attempting to communicate with a particular behavior is referred to as the **Communicative Function**. The IPCA seeks information on 10 distinct functions. Under each of these 10 functional categories, a number of more specific communicative functions are included. Again, this list of specific communicative functions is not exhaustive and you are encouraged to include other specific messages or purposes that the person has been observed to express. Space is provided for you to record examples of other specific functions.

Table 1. Examples of Potential Communicative Acts

Vocalization	Body movement	Face/eye movement	Breathing	Challenging behavior	Stereotypic movements	Symbolic forms
Sounds Yells Grunt Cry/whine Laugh	Moves closer Moves away Tenses Wiggles Repositions body Reaches/touches Pushes/pulls Points	Purses lips Stares Opens eyes Closes eyes Shifts eye Gazes away Gazes toward	Rapid Slow Hold Swallow Sigh Blow	Aggression Tantrum Self-injury Destruction of items	Arm flapping Hand wringing Body rocking Head weaving	Speech Manual signs Gestures Head nod Eye point Picture board

Directions

The IPCA consists of a series of questions which are designed to identify the behaviors that a person uses to communicate. In completing the device, you are asked to list behaviors that you have observed the person to use for a number of specific communicative functions. The IPCA also asks you to provide a concrete example of the circumstances under which the person has been observed to use the behavior to communicate. These examples should be as detailed as possible. In writing your examples, please provide information about *when*, *where* and *how* the behavior occurs. If the person does not seem to express one of the specific functions, then you should write "**Does Not Do This**" in that section. For example, the first question asks you to: "Describe how the person greets you/others". For this question, you may have noticed that the person greets you by making eye contact, smiling, and extending her arms outward. Your specific example might be something like: "When I first see her in the morning and say 'Hello,' she always looks at me, smiles, and reaches out her arms."

Scoring Grid

A Scoring Grid is included at the back of this inventory. The Scoring Grid is designed to provide a visual summary of the information documented in the IPCA. First of all, one would enter the person's behaviors into the blank spaces in the first column of the grid. Completing the Scoring Grid involves shading-in those cells corresponding to the behaviors and functions that have been identified in the IPCA. For example, if the IPCA reveals that the person uses the behaviors of **Reaching** to make a **Choice,** then the cell which corresponds to the intercession of this behavior and this function would be shaded-in. If a person does not exhibit a particular behavior/function combination, then that cell would be left blank. Once all of the identified behavior/function cells have been filled-in, the Scoring Grid can be used to give an indication of the extent of a person's communicative repertoire. Scanning the completed Scoring Grid from top to bottom, for example, will provide a overview of the different behaviors that the person uses to communicate, whereas scanning from left to right will indicate the range of communicative functions exhibited by the individual. A more detailed summary of the information from the IPCA will come from examining individual cells as these indicate exactly what behavior(s) a person uses to communicate a specific function. A summary of the information from the IPCA can be shared among educators, therapists, family members, peers, and other relevant individuals to ensure that all communicative partners are aware of the behaviors that person uses to communicate, and what these behaviors mean when they occur in a particular context. When all communicative partners are aware of the information collected in the IPCA, there is perhaps a much better chance that the person's communicative attempts will be encouraged, acknowledged, and reacted to appropriately.

Social Convention

Please describe how the individual . . .

Items	Behaviors	Examples
For Example: **1. greets** **you/others**	*** smiles** *** eye contact** *** extending arms out**	**When I walk up to Rebecca in the morning and say hello** s**he always looks at me, smiles, and reaches out her arms.**
1. greets you/others		

2. indicates
   farewell to
   you or others		

3. responds to
   their own
   name		

4. other		

Attention-to-Self

Please describe how the individual . . .

Items	Behaviors	Examples
1. gets your attention		
2. seeks comfort		
3. requests a cuddle/tickle		
4. shows off		
5. other		

Reject/Protest

What does the individual do if...

Items	Behaviors	Examples
1. their routine is disrupted		
2. they are required to do something they don't want to do		
3. they don't like something		
4. a favourite toy/food is taken away		
5. an adult stops interacting with them (eg stops playing an activity)		
6. other		

Requesting an Object

Please describe how the individual lets you know they want...

Items	Behaviors	Examples
1. an object (eg. toy or book)		
2. something to eat		
3. more of something		
4. TV or music		
5. other		
6. other		

Requesting an Action

Please describe how the individual lets you know they want or need...

Items	Behaviors	Examples
1. help with dressing		
2. help with a game		
3. to go to the toilet		
4. someone to come/be near		
5. other		
6. other		

Requesting Information

Please describe how the individual lets you know they want...

Items	Behaviors	Examples
1. clarification (eg if they don't understand something you said)		
2. information about something (the name of something)		
3. other		

Imitation

Please describe how the person imitates or attempts to imitate the following communicative actions of others...

Items	Behaviors	Examples
1. another's speech (eg. sentences, single words, or vocalizations)		
2. head nod "Yes"		
3. head nod "No"		
4. shrugging shoulders		
5. pointing		
6. other		

Responding: Choice Making

Please describe how the individual . . .

Items	Behaviors	Examples
1. makes a choice between two or more objects (e.g., foods, drinks, toys)		
2. chooses what they want to do		
3. chooses when to start an activity		
4. chooses when to stop an activity		
5. other		

Responding: Answer

Please describe how the individual . . .

Items	Behaviors	Examples
1. reacts when someone talks to them		
2. tells you yes, in response to a question		
3. tells you no, in response to a question		
4. other		

Comment

Please describe how the individual lets you know they...

Items	Behaviors	Examples
1. are happy, pleased, enjoying something, or excited		
2. are unhappy, sad or anxious		
3. are bored or disinterested		
4. find something funny		
5. are frightened or surprised		
6. are in pain or feel sick		
7. are angry or feel frustrated		
8. are tired		
9. other		

The End