

# Tracks to Transition: Improving Communication for Teens with Special Needs.

People with delays in communication have goals, plans for the future, feelings, emotions, and can have meaningful relationships. It may take some teens longer to learn to talk, listen, and communicate with others. When communicating with teens, remember these tips:

- Talk slowly.
- Use plain words. Do not use expressions that can be confusing or have more than one meaning.
- Use short, simple sentences.
- Use short, direct commands. For example, "Come here." "Show me." "Pick up your books."
- Use a tone of voice that matches your message.
- Use body language and facial expressions that match your message.
- Look directly at the teen when speaking to them.
- Ask about their emotions by naming them. For example, "Are you sad?" "Are you angry?" "Are you happy?" instead of "How do you feel?"
- Listen to the teen. Give them extra time to respond to you. Sometimes people with delays in communication can understand others easier and more quickly than what they can reply with words.
- Tell the teen if you do not understand what they are trying to say.
- Offer another way for the person to communicate. For example, use pictures, writing, gestures, or use of a tablet or other device.

These tips can help the teen with communication delays feel calmer, secure, and confident in expressing themselves.

