

Evidence-based practices are a way to ensure that consumers receive appropriate treatments with the potential for the greatest success to meet their individual person-centered needs.

Evidence-based practices are also a method for SCCMHA to ensure the best use of limited resources through the delivery of proven services and supports for persons with disabilities in the Saginaw Community.

For more information about Evidence-Based Practices, please call our Evidence-Based Practice and Trauma-Informed Care Coordinator at 989-272-7372 or go to <https://www.sccmha.org/resources/evidence-based-practices.html>.



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SAGINAW COUNTY
COMMUNITY MENTAL
HEALTH AUTHORITY

PECS: Picture Exchange Communication System

An Evidence-Based Practice

What is the PECS?

PECS (Picture Exchange Communication System) is a modified applied behavior analysis program designed for early nonverbal symbolic communication training. While it is not designed to teach speech, the latter is encouraged indirectly, and some consumers begin to spontaneously use speech while in the program. In addition, although PECS is commonly used as a communication aid for children with autism spectrum disorder (ASD), it has been used with a wide variety of learners, from preschoolers to adults, who have various communicative, cognitive, and physical impairments, including cerebral palsy, blindness, and deafness. The program may take several months or several years to complete.



PECS Phases

PECS consists of six phases and begins by teaching an individual to give a single picture of a desired item or action to a “communicative partner” who immediately honors the exchange as a request. The system goes on to teach discrimination of pictures and how to put them together in sentences. In the more advanced phases, individuals are taught to use modifiers, answer questions and comment.

Phase 1 – How to Communicate: During this phase, the program shall be initiated with enticement whereby a preferred object or food item is displayed or shown to the consumer.

Phase 2 – Distance and Persistence: During this phase the exchange shall continue with attempts to increase the consumer’s independence. The consumer will learn to remove the picture from a display board for the exchange and, in doing so, engage in more physical movement than during Phase I in order to accomplish the exchange.

Phase 3 – Discrimination Between Symbols (Picture Discrimination): During this phase the consumer learns to select the target picture from a choice of multiple pictures that differ in various dimensions.

Phase 4 – Using Phrases (Sentence Structure): During this phase the consumer will combine the object picture with the carrier phrase “I want” on a sentence strip and give the strip to the communication partner.

Phase 5 – Answering a Direct Question (Answering Questions): In this phase, the consumer will learn to respond to the question “What do you want?” by exchanging the sentence strip.

Phase 6 – Commenting: In this phase, the consumer will learn to respond to the questions “What do you want?” vs. “What do you see?” vs. “What do you have?”

For More Information

Discuss PECS eligibility with your current treatment provider or contact Saginaw County Community Mental Health Authority’s Centralized Access and Intake Unit (CAI) at (989) 797-3559.