

# New Option for AAC Users | CPD

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Cough Drop is shown on an Android tablet and phone and on a Mac laptop. The app can be synched across multiple devices

A Salt Lake City-based company gave a brief demonstration of its new cloud-based augmentative and alternative communication (AAC) app at Utah State University's assistive technology lab recently. AAC apps are used on electronic devices by people who have difficulty using spoken language. Users communicate by tapping a picture on the device, which then speaks using an electronic voice. Existing AAC devices and apps can be costly and difficult to customize and use.

The new app, called Cough Drop ("because every voice deserves to be heard") is a cloud-based subscription service that allows the user, or communicator, to access it from multiple devices. Parents, teachers and selected others, called supervisors, have unlimited access. Updates occur in real time.

This means, company founder Brian Whitmer explained, that a teacher can make changes to a student's electronic communication board and have it uploaded by the time that student gets home from school. Current technology requires the student to leave his or her device with the teacher, essentially leaving the student unable to communicate with anyone until returning to school the next day.

Cough Drop was founded by Whitmer after his experiences with AAC for his young daughter, who has Rett syndrome and is nonverbal. Whitmer, who received his bachelor's and master's degrees in computer science, with an emphasis in usability, from Brigham Young University, is also a co-founder and board member of

Instructure, Inc., which created Canvas, USU's learning management system.

Clay Christensen, AT lab coordinator, said he tries to find the best fit in high-tech and low-tech solutions for people with disabilities, and has been searching for a simple, user-friendly AAC app.

"We are just trying to bridge the gaps, and give quality of life back to these people," he said. "They are intelligent, they're just trapped inside themselves and we have to figure out how to help them communicate."

*UATP is a program of Utah State University's Center for Persons with Disabilities.*

For more information about Cough Drop, or to start a two-month free trial, visit their [website](#) (for best results, use Google Chrome.)