

# Resolution on the Right to Communicate – Cover Letter

The TASH Board of Directors has revised and finalized a new Resolution on the Right to Communicate in response to member recommendations. The Resolution was reviewed and supported by these prominent TASH members, many of whom worked together on the revision. We thank these members for their support and dedication to TASH's mission.

Judy Bailey  
Fredda Brown  
Pascal Cheng  
Harvey Lavoy  
George Singer  
Tracy Thresher  
Julia M. White  
Don Cardinal  
Marty Agran  
Fred Spooner  
Christy Ashby  
Rob Horner  
Jean Trainor  
Nate Trainor  
Darlene Hanson  
Susan Yuan  
Mary Falvey  
Jeff Strully  
Pat Mirenda  
Rita Rubin  
Sue Rubin

As an organization, TASH has always supported the right of all people with disabilities to full and equal access and meaningful inclusion in schools, the workplace, and

communities. This has long included a focus on the fundamental right to communicate. For more than two decades, TASH has had a statement on the Right to Communicate. This resolution reaffirms TASH's support for the right of people to utilize their desired means of expression, including access to the alternative and augmentative communication systems and supports of their choice. For many years, this resolution specifically listed Facilitated Communication (FC) as one of those possible systems or methodologies.

At the most recent TASH conference in 2015, a small group of interested members met, including researchers both in support of the method and those that are not in favor of its utilization, practitioners, and an individual who uses FC. Their discussions included concerns related to scientifically based research around FC and the perception that, in light of recent events in the media, TASH was withdrawing its support for FC, and in turn, individuals who use FC. The outcome of this almost four-hour meeting was a suggested revision to the Resolution on the Right to Communicate that included the removal of facilitated communication from specific mention in the statement. The rationale for removal was to recognize that while TASH continues to support the fundamental right of all people to communicate using their desired method and have that communication respected by others, it is not the position of the organization to recommend, support, or deny any specific communication device, approach, or methodology. The revised Resolution on the Right to Communicate, drafted by these members, is intentionally broad so as to be relevant to all people with communication needs and to be responsive to the ever evolving research in the fields of developmental disability and communication.

The drafters of this revised resolution are hopeful that this change is not perceived as a weakening of support for individuals with complex communication needs and their rights to have their preferred communication methods available and supported. Facilitated Communication has always been subject to controversy which continues today. However, there are many members of TASH who have benefited from this method and their communication must be fully considered.

We trust that all TASH members are united in a belief that the role of TASH is to support its members and to be in alliance with all people with disabilities who face oppression,

marginalization, and doubt. A grounding principle of TASH is the presumption of competence and self-determination, which necessitates a willingness to consider all possibilities and provide the widest range of options for communication for all people.

Sincerely,

Ralph Edwards, President

Barb Trader, Executive Director