

TASH Resolution on the Right to Communicate (2016)

Statement of Purpose

The right to communicate is both a basic human right and the means by which all other rights are realized. All people communicate, and are presumed to have an active interest in communicating their decisions and choices. In the name of fully realizing the guarantee of individual rights, we must ensure:

- that all people have a means of communication which allows their fullest participation in the wider world; and
- that their communication is heeded by others.

Where people lack an adequate communication system, they deserve to have others collaborate with them to discover and secure an appropriate system. No person should have this right denied because they have been diagnosed as having a particular disability. Access to effective means of communication is a free speech issue.

Rationale

Freedom to Communicate. People with communication disabilities must be allowed to use the communication system of their own choice in all communication interactions in any setting. In no case should an individual be left without a means to communicate. This includes all forms of augmentative and alternative communication, assistive technology, and access to a variety of effective methods and strategies. In any instances where such use is forbidden, there should be recourse to the legal and protective systems.

Access to Communication. All persons with disabilities communicate, and should have access to opportunities to learn to communicate effectively. All people with communication disabilities should have continuous access to and use of augmentative and alternative communication. "Access" includes: a) access to assessment to aid in

choosing a suitable method, b) access to training in the method, c) access to any equipment needed, both in the short term during training and in the longer term for continued use on a daily basis if training is successful, and d) access to skilled and trained support partners so communication can take place across environments; e) access to ongoing evaluation of progress in whatever method the individual chooses and modifications as indicated; and f) access to adequate funding to ensure long term training, support, and needed equipment.

Education and Life-Long Learning. Instruction is an essential element of learning to communicate. People using augmentative or alternative communication must be given any assistance necessary in order to communicate with others across the life span. The individual support team must ensure that any equipment, training, or staffing necessary for continued communication is provided to that person and to those with whom he or she wishes to interact on a regular basis. The individual support team must ensure that the person's communication system and supports follow the person when transitioning across the life span.

Respectfully submitted by:

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For more background information on the Resolution on Right to Communicate, view the [cover letter](#).