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*Equity, Opportunity, and Inclusion for People with Disabilities since 1975*

## **Joint Position Statement on the Right to Equal Access to Medical Treatment**

In the context of the COVID-19 crisis, the undersigned organizations agree and strongly endorse the message that the presence of intellectual and developmental disabilities, including those with the most significant disabilities, should not be an indicator for withholding or limiting access to medical care. We recognize that this population is particularly vulnerable to limited access to healthcare and experiences increased risk for isolation and lack of timely, accessible information regarding healthcare. In recent days, we have grown increasingly concerned with the information provided regarding the healthcare treatment guidelines published related to the COVID-19 outbreak (Cha, 2020; Mounk, 2020). These guidelines pave the way for increased discrimination toward individuals with disabilities and older individuals who have contracted COVID-19.

We assert that individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities, including those with significant disabilities, have the following human and civil rights:

- Access to high-quality, appropriate medical treatment
- Access to timely and accurate information in accessible formats (e.g., plain text, visuals, plain language)
- Access to supports and support persons to address the individual's unique support needs related to social/emotional, communication, physical, and healthcare aspects.
- Access to supported decision making (see below resource on describing supported decision making) and representation during any emergency guardianship or conservatorship proceedings

In addition to the above rights, people with intellectual and developmental disabilities, including those with the most significant support needs, have the right to practice self-determination and live with maximum autonomy according to their unique abilities. More than ever, there is a critical need to provide individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities access to support persons of their choice and individualized services, including creative accommodations, as they access healthcare. We encourage healthcare providers to be mindful about promoting physical distancing without limiting opportunities for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities to benefit from social support networks.

We advise against actions concerning medical treatment that perpetuate ageism and ableism. There is a long history of unethical practices, including eugenics and institutionalization, which has led to the dehumanization, disenfranchisement, and devaluation of the lives of individuals with disabilities. These practices have occurred in particular around access to resources and information. It is our responsibility to ensure we do not return to these unethical practices and ensure the humanity of all individuals is maintained.

Respectfully,

TASH  
Spina Bifida Association  
Autistic Self Advocacy Network  
United Cerebral Palsy National  
Georgia Advocacy Office  
American Association of People with Disabilities  
United States International Council on Disabilities

Disability Awareness  
The Arc of the United States  
Ohio TASH  
Missouri TASH  
Ohio Safeguards, Inc  
Good Life Networks  
Total Living Concept, Kent, Washington  
Institute on Disabilities, Temple University  
Marbridge Foundation  
abicommunity.org  
Cal-TASH  
IGNITE Collective, Inc.  
Autism Society of America  
Disability Rights Vermont, Inc.  
Family and Advocate  
New Directions for Maine Families  
Autism Society Of Southern Illinois  
Illinois Council on Developmental Disabilities  
The Learning Community  
Support Development Associates  
Illinois Parents of Adults with Developmental Disabilities Unite  
Vision for Equality, Inc.  
Institute on Disability and Human Development, University of Illinois at Chicago  
Arizona TASH  
West Philadelphia Parent Support Group  
Shared Support Maryland, Inc.  
PA Families Need Nurses Now  
Center for Public Representation  
Illinois TASH Chapter  
Disability Rights International  
The Fund for Community Reparations for Autistic People of Color's Interdependence, Survival, and Empowerment  
Thomas' Supports, Inc.  
KFI  
Bridges of Indiana  
The Alliance for Citizen Directed Supports  
The Collaborative for Citizen Directed Supports-New Jersey  
Values Into Action  
Autistic Women & Nonbinary Network  
Down Syndrome Connection of the Bay Area  
Down Syndrome Connection of the Bay Area  
Physicians for a National Health Program  
The College of New Jersey  
The Arc Wisconsin

Wisconsin Board for People with Developmental Disabilities  
The Arc of New Mexico  
The Arc Georgia  
HIGH IMPACT Mission-based Consulting & Training  
Center for Outcome Analysis  
Pennhurst Memorial & Preservation Alliance  
Maryland Developmental Disabilities Council  
Virginia Board for People with Disabilities  
Lester and Rosalie Anixter Center  
The Arc of Ohio  
Syntiro  
Rhode Island Developmental Disabilities Council  
Equip for Equality  
Volunteers of America Mid States  
University of Central Florida  
The Arc New York  
National Disability Rights Network  
KY-TASH  
Iowa Developmental Disabilities Council  
Kansas Council on Developmental Disabilities  
Self-Directed Advocacy Network of Maryland, Inc.  
National Council on Independent Living  
Pennhurst Memorial and Preservation Alliance  
New Jersey Council on Developmental Disabilities  
The Arc Maryland, Inc.  
The Arc of Delaware  
The Arc in Hawaii  
Sibling Leadership Network  
The Arc of Illinois  
Governor's Council on Disabilities and Special Education  
Disability Rights Pennsylvania  
Family Voices NJ  
SPAN  
NJ Family Voices  
Garden Center Services  
Disability Law Center of Alaska  
Idaho Council in Developmental Disabilities  
Washington State Developmental Disabilities Council  
Lutheran Family Services of Virginia  
The Arc of Illinois  
Ga Parent Mentor Partnership  
Maryland Center for Developmental Disabilities  
Speaking for Ourselves  
Green Mountain Self-Advocates

AUCD  
Autism National Committee (AutCom)  
Lesley University  
Self-Advocates Becoming Empowered (SABE)  
Diversified Enterprises, DBA Tift Co. Bd. of Health  
The Community of Exceptional Artists  
Indiana Governor's Council for People with Disabilities  
Brain Injury Association of Maryland  
Disability Rights Maryland  
NAMI Maryland  
The Freedom Center  
The Arc, Jefferson, Clear Creek & Gilpin Counties  
TASH New England  
Self Advocates United as 1, Inc.  
Pennhurst Memorial and Preservation Alliance

## **Resources on Plain Language Information and Supported Decision-Making**

Plain Language Information on COVID-19 (in [Spanish](#) with pictures ([text only version](#)) and [English](#) with pictures ([text only version](#)))

[What is Self-Advocacy?](#)

[Using Plain Language](#)

[Supported Decision Making](#)

[Thinking Ahead \(planning for care\) resource](#)

[National Resource Center on Supported Decision-Making](#)

[Supported Decision-Making FAQs](#)

References:

Cha, A. E. (2020, March 15). Spiking U.S. coronavirus cases could force rationing decisions similar to those made in Italy, China. *The Washington Post*, Retrieved from <https://www.washingtonpost.com/health/2020/03/15/coronavirus-rationing-us/>

Mounk, Y. (2020, March 11). The extraordinary decisions facing Italian doctors. *The Atlantic*, retrieved from <https://www.theatlantic.com/ideas/archive/2020/03/who-gets-hospital-bed/607807/>