



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

Mission

TASH advances the human rights and full inclusion of people with the most significant disabilities in all walks of life. TASH believes that no one with a disability should be forced to live, work, or learn in a segregated setting; that all individuals deserve the right to direct their own lives.

Description

TASH is an international grassroots leader in advancing inclusive communities through research, education and advocacy. Founded in 1975, we are a volunteer-driven organization that advocates for human rights and inclusion for people with the most significant disabilities and support needs -- those most vulnerable to segregation, abuse, neglect and institutionalization. The inclusive practices we validate through research have been shown to improve outcomes for all people.

TASH began as a membership association for researchers whose work focused on students with “severe and profound disabilities” – the term used at the time by the Department of Education. These early founders and members soon recognized that involving parents and self-advocates strengthened the integrity of their research, and also ensured that their work was both useful and influenced practice. Over the ensuing 34 years, TASH has become a rich blend of researchers, professionals, direct service workers, parents and people with disabilities, making for a very robust blend of perspectives and a shared commitment to quality lives for the people we advocate for.

A family’s connection to advocacy organizations such as TASH is often a catalyst for a greater connection to services which meet the needs of families. The power of parent-to-parent contact in the lives of children with significant disabilities cannot be overstated. Involvement with TASH leads parents to resources and support that infuse them with positive messages and encourage them to have high hopes and expectations. Families are able to work closely with peers as they navigate service systems which are often complicated and difficult to understand. They are in close contact, through many learning opportunities and formal and informal communications, with people who have successfully lived with disability who are able to lend support and inspiration through difficult times.

TASH conducts the following activities to promote change:

- facilitates professionals networking and learning progressive practices from each other;
- identifies threats to inclusion and advocate for change;
- publishes and disseminates emerging and evidence-based practices;
- uses research to watch trends and seek solutions, and
- supports parents as they navigate difficult systems on behalf of their children.

Our track record for the past 35 years demonstrates a series of breakthroughs influenced by TASH's work that have improved the lives of countless children and young adults who would have otherwise been institutionalized, segregated and excluded from typical life experiences. Most of these practices have also improved quality of life for the broader population, including:

- Positive Behavior Supports, developed for people with challenging behaviors caused by disabilities like autism, which is now the basis for whole school reform;
- Customized employment, which fits a productive job to an individual, widely credited as a means to maintain employment for those older Americans who choose it;
- Supporting adults with disabilities to live in their own homes, a living model that is more humane, moral and *cost efficient* than typical congregate living arrangements, and has vast implications for an aging society; and
- Strategies for inclusive education, which allows students with disabilities to become valued members and learners in their neighborhood schools.

TASH has a commitment to and is increasingly improving our track record for reaching out to and involving growing numbers of families of color that include family members with significant disabilities. In the past year alone, we have involved more than 230 families of color who are all new to disability advocacy.

TASH's recognized assets are:

- 1) A widely respected peer reviewed scientific journal, *Research and Practice for Persons with Severe Disabilities*, about progressive supports and inclusive practices throughout the life span.
- 2) *Connections*, a magazine written by members with expertise in a variety of issue areas, meant to guide parents, practitioners and self-advocates about putting research into practice.
- 3) State-of-the-art training opportunities through webinars, regional conferences and an annual conference, attended by an average of 1200 people each year.
- 4) Knowledgeable advocacy on evidence-based practice in inclusive education, whole school reform, person centered community living supports, positive behavior supports, augmentative and alternative communication, professional preparation for educators, integrated employment, and transitioning students to adult living.

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