The Rights of People with Cognitive Disabilities to Technology and Information Access

Linguistically Accessible Version*

- Twenty-eight million citizens in the United States have cognitive disabilities. People with intellectual disability, mental illness (such as bi-polar disorder), brain injury, stroke, and dementia are included in this group.

- People with cognitive disabilities are entitled, or have a right to, full inclusion in society. Some of the laws that give them these rights are section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, The Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA), The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), and other state or local laws.

- To be able to take part in society people with cognitive disabilities need access to information. They need information about their rights, responsibilities, and duties of citizenship.

- Many people with cognitive disabilities have limited or no access to current understandable information about technology. This technology includes such things as cell phones, computers, televisions, and radios.

- Technology and computers can be very hard to understand and use. They have changed how people communicate with each other. This includes how people learn new information, respond to information, and share information with each other.

- People with cognitive disabilities must use and understand the technology in order to take part in life. It also helps to promote self-determination which allows people with cognitive disabilities to make their own decisions.
Technology needs to be made in ways that are based on ideas and rules made by technology makers. They need to make sure that all people, including people with cognitive disabilities, have equal access to these devices. All devices should work together with different programs.

Protecting the civil rights and dignity of all people is important. Having security and privacy options built into the devices is a must.

There are many benefits to making sure that people with cognitive disabilities, their families and service providers have access to information and communication technologies. It builds a new market by creating jobs for people. It allows people with disabilities to rely less on public services. It is worth spending money on because it will help more people with cognitive disabilities take part in the community.

Current federal and state funding supports do not usually pay for these technologies for people with cognitive disabilities. In order to help pay for these technologies for people with cognitive disabilities, consumers and providers need to advocate for and get low-cost solutions in public and private sectors.

*Translated from the original document by Amy Goodman, Co-Director of Autism Now, and others at The Arc. The original document can be viewed at: www.colemaninstitute.org/declaration*
The Rights of People with Cognitive Disabilities to Technology and Information Access

Whereas

- Twenty-eight million United States citizens have cognitive disabilities such as intellectual disability; severe, persistent mental illness; brain injury; stroke; and neurodegenerative disorders such as Alzheimer's disease;
- People with cognitive disabilities are entitled to inclusion in our democratic society under federal laws such as the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), the Developmental Disabilities Assistance and Bill of Rights Act (DD Act), the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, and under state and local laws;
- The disruptive convergence of computing and communication technologies has substantially altered how people acquire, utilize, and disseminate knowledge and information;
- Access to comprehensible information and usable communication technologies is necessary for all people in our society, particularly for people with cognitive disabilities, to promote self-determination and to engage meaningfully in major aspects of life such as education, health promotion, employment, recreation, and civic participation;
- The vast majority of people with cognitive disabilities have limited or no access to comprehensible information and usable communication technologies;
- People with cognitive disabilities must have access to commercially available devices and software that incorporate principles of universal design such as flexibility and ease of use for all;
- Technology and information access by people with cognitive disabilities must be guided by standards and best-practices, such as personalization and compatibility across devices and platforms, and through the application of innovations including automated and predictive technologies;
- Security and privacy must be assured and managed to protect civil rights and personal dignity of people with cognitive disabilities;
- Enhanced public and private funding is urgently required to allow people with cognitive disabilities to utilize technology and access information as a natural consequence of their rights to inclusion in our society;
- Ensuring access to technology and information for the 28 million people with cognitive disabilities in the United States will create new markets and employment opportunities; decrease dependency on public services; reduce healthcare costs; and improve the independence, productivity, and quality of life of people with cognitive disabilities.

Therefore

We hereby affirm our commitment to equal rights of people with cognitive disabilities to technology and information access and we call for implementation of these rights with deliberate speed.

View endorsers of this document and join us at: colemaninstitute.org/declaration
FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT THE DECLARATION

1. Why do you use the term “cognitive disabilities” rather than “intellectual disability” in the Declaration?

The term “cognitive disabilities” was specifically selected to include a broad range of cognitive conditions that can impact quality of life and independent living. Cognitive disabilities include intellectual disability, autism spectrum disorders, severe, persistent mental illness, brain injury, stroke, and Alzheimer’s disease and other dementias. Technology and information access is essential for all people to live an inclusive life in our society today. People with intellectual disability and other cognitive disabilities together pose a formidable block of potential users of technology: An estimated 28.5 million Americans, more than 9% of the U.S. population, had a cognitive disability in 2012. People with cognitive disabilities worldwide are believed to exceed 630 million individuals, according to recent World Health Organization estimates (2011).

2. Why is this Declaration important?

*The Rights of People with Cognitive Disabilities to Technology and Information Access* is a statement of principles on the rights of all people to inclusion and choice in relation to technology and information access. The Declaration builds on the recognition of the rights of people with intellectual and developmental disabilities to be integrated into the community. Decades of advocacy by parents, people with disabilities, and conscientious professionals in the field have resulted in the principles of inclusion and choice being codified in laws, policies, and practices affecting people with disabilities and their families. This Declaration moves the discussion into the realm of one of the newest expression of community integration: the use of technology to socialize with others, share common experiences, participate in government, have access to education, and engage in commerce

3. Why is it important that the Declaration be released now?

The pace of the digital age is accelerating rapidly through new innovations, such as those in cloud computing, where the potential positive impact of cloud-based initiatives include not only improved personal communications, but also health promotion, disease prevention, enhanced social interaction, and individualized supported employment opportunities such as remote job coaching. Technology and information access today is no longer a luxury; it is essential for
people with cognitive disabilities to have the same access as their peers without such disabilities in order to fully participate in the worlds of today and tomorrow. Human-centered computational support technologies must be adapted or uniquely developed and properly disseminated to match the unique needs and preferences of individuals with cognitive disabilities. Advancing the rights of people with cognitive disabilities to technology and information access is an extremely important next step in the worldwide implementation of inclusion and choice.

4. How will this Declaration help people?

The Declaration, which is being officially released internationally through the AAIDD journal, *Inclusion*, and at the Coleman Institute’s October 2, 2013 conference in Colorado, will stimulate greater attention, both in the U.S. and worldwide, to the possibilities now at hand for people with cognitive disabilities while simultaneously championing their rights as citizens of the world to access such technologies in home, school, and the workplace.

5. How can you as an individual or organization become involved?

We invite all of you who support the Declaration to visit the website of the Coleman Institute for Cognitive Disabilities at www.colemaninstitute.org, sign the declaration, and use it to advance your advocacy efforts for and with people with disabilities.
The Rights of People with Cognitive Disabilities to Technology and Information Access

How to Endorse the Declaration

You may endorse The Rights of People with Cognitive Disabilities to Technology and Information Access as an individual, an organization, or both. Endorsing the Declaration signifies your support of its principles and allows you to join the growing social movement.

To endorse as an individual or an organization, simply visit the Coleman Institute website at:

www.coemaninstitute.org/declaration

OR

Individual endorsers may sign your business card and drop it in the designated bowl at the registration desk anytime during the conference.

How to Promote the Declaration

Invite your friends and colleagues to join you as an endorser on Facebook, Twitter, and other social media outlets. Point other supporters to the Coleman Institute website so they can show their support:

www.coemaninstitute.org/declaration

If your organization has endorsed the Declaration, you may also use the press release template on the back to help spread the word. Modify the press release with your organization’s details and distribute. You can also link from your organization’s website to the Coleman Institute’s website shown above.