



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

Introduction

In March 2014, the Colorado House and Senate unanimously voted in favor of House Joint Resolution 14-1011, “Declaration of The Rights of People with Cognitive Disabilities to Technology and Information Access.” In May 2015, the Maine General Assembly passed a “Joint Resolution Concerning The Rights of Persons with Intellectual Disabilities and Autism to Technology and Information Access,” becoming the second State in the US to formally adopt principles of “The Rights of People with Cognitive Disabilities to Technology and Information Access” declaration (the Declaration). This Guide serves as an abbreviated version of the State Legislative Toolkit (www.Colemaninstitute.org) and is intended to offer insights and suggestions that can be customized to accommodate nuances found in different state legislatures throughout the country, with the goal of legislative adoption of the principles outlined in the Declaration.

Connection and Education are Key

Your Network

- Endorse the Declaration yourself—and, add your organization.
- Remember having one or more committed people spreading the word about the importance of the Declaration can make a huge difference.
- Take the time to educate your immediate network (family, friends, colleagues), by sharing the Declaration videos and other information available from the Coleman Institute for Cognitive Disabilities (www.colemaninstitute.org).

Guidance and Tips

1. Connection and Education are Key
2. Identify Champions
3. Spread the Word ... and Wealth
4. Share the News

The Legislative Network

- Learn and understand the legislative process to understand options and identify strategies.
- Research members of your General Assembly or legislature to learn who may have interest or personal connection with the Declaration and/or its core principals.
- Personally introduce the Declaration to key members of your state legislature and others, preferably people with whom you have relationships, who can influence policy.
- Talk to stakeholders and become aware of what elements of the Declaration could form the basis of legislative interest and potential opposition in your state.

Identify Champions

- Preferably a local person/organization that already believes in the value of supporting people with cognitive disabilities and who trusts you.
- Others with which to align/partner may include:
 1. Self-Advocates and advocacy organizations.
 2. Families and individuals for whom the Declaration resonates.
 3. Provider organizations & their networks - across the continuum of cognitive disabilities.
 4. State University Centers for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities (UCEDD).

Spread the Word ... and Wealth

Strengthen Your Position

- Bring in real world evidence, marshal facts, develop arguments, define issues and shape public debate.¹
- Use 'real-world' examples and statistics to highlight why people with cognitive disabilities in your state require access to information and technology to participate in daily life:
 1. In the 21st Century, people find and maintain careers via technology.
 2. Tele-health and tele-medicine are becoming the norm for a majority of the population, especially in rural areas.
 3. Social media such as Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram are avenues many people are using to connect with their communities, form friendships, and romantic relationships.
 4. Commerce, shopping, and other products and services are available over the Internet and on technology platforms.

Tell The Stories — Again and Again

- Empower and encourage self-advocates and their families to share their stories - they have the biggest impact.
- Be strategic with your communications. Use the tools found on the Coleman Institute website: www.colemaninstitute.org
 1. Keep written materials to ONE PAGE.
 2. Keep talking points simple and concise.
 3. Whenever possible meet personally with legislators, executive branch officials and government employees.
 4. BEFORE votes are taken, know who your supporters are and who your opposition is.
 5. Encourage like-minded people - colleagues, peers, self-advocates, families, et al. - to continue reaching out to elected officials and others to lobby on behalf of the Declaration.
 6. Say "Thank You" often.

State Legislature

- A joint resolution is a great first step.
- The Declaration offers very good 'legislative intent' language that can be used to frame a bill.
- Be attuned to word sensitivity and don't be afraid to slightly alter terms to prevent losing momentum.
- Rely on experiences from Colorado and Maine to guide your approach.

Tell and repeat stories often — reflect on how access to information and technology increases independence and quality of life.

Share the News

- Keep the Coleman Institute for Cognitive Disabilities updated on your overall work, progress, and outcomes.
- Publicize the outcome of your work across broad in-state networks.
 1. Service agencies will have an opportunity to integrate Declaration language into Rights statements.
 2. Self-advocates and families will use the information to drive change and will be empowered to use the information in their advocacy work.

¹ Proudfoot, S. (July, 2004). Elements of Successful Lobbying. Available at http://www.hillwatch.com/Publications/Bulletins/Successful_Lobbying.aspx. Retrieved 8/22/2015.