

PRESS RELEASE

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Syracuse University Unresponsive to Critics of Facilitated Communication Event

Syracuse University continues to promote Facilitated Communication (FC), a dangerous and harmful practice used on people with disabilities discredited 25 years ago, and leading experts in the field of Communication Sciences, along with concerned citizens, researchers, academics, healthcare professionals, and science journalists want to know why.

On October 1-2, 2018, Syracuse University's Institute of Communication and Inclusion (ICI) will host a 2-day workshop to teach parents, educators, and care givers how to use Facilitated Communication, a technique that requires a facilitator to hold the hand, elbow, shoulder, back or other body part of a person with disabilities, prompting a non-speaking person to spell words and sentences. Well replicated scientific research has demonstrated that facilitators influence and author the messages obtained through FC and the messages obtained via this technique are not those of the people with disabilities.

Major educational and health organizations, including the New York State Department of Health, have policies in place discouraging its members from using FC and denounce FC as unscientific and unethical. In 2018, the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association (ASHA) reviewed its position, which has been in place since 1994, and reaffirmed its stance against FC.

Throughout the years, Syracuse University has come under criticism for continuing to disseminate information about FC which is misleading. Its own student newspaper, The Daily Orange, ran a series of articles in 2016 condemning FC. The Communication Sciences and Disorders Department has distanced itself from the ICI, stating on its University web page: "The Department of CSD does not offer, study, or affiliate itself with Facilitated Communication (FC) or Supported Typing (ST)." And, yet, the University appears unresponsive to both the scientific evidence discrediting FC and expressed concerns from their own staff and community.

On September 5, 2018, a letter, signed by an international group of concerned citizens, clinicians, researchers, academics, healthcare professionals, and science journalists, was sent to Chancellor Syverud of Syracuse University outlining these concerns, in the hopes that Syracuse leadership would reconsider giving its imprimatur to this invalidated and demonstrably harmful practice at the ICI's October conference, as well as consider making longer term changes to halt all training and resources allocated for the promotion of FC and

related variations. To date, Syracuse officials have not responded to this letter and the conference is scheduled as planned.

We have attached the letter and reference list with this press release.