

NETWORKS

for Training & Development, Inc.

Valley Forge: (610) 935-6624, Fax (610) 935-6497

Sunbury: (570) 286-7694, Fax (570) 286-7697

• *Dedicated to Promoting Inclusive Communities Through Quality Training, Technical Assistance, and Demonstration* •

September 2, 2011

Dear friends and colleagues

Recently, we at Networks made a very hard decision to temporarily suspend our various Assistive Technology (AT) related activities due to a complaint made against Networks to the PA Speech and Hearing Board regarding our services. In our concern about this, we felt we needed to take responsible action while we attempted to find out more information about the allegations. We have fully complied with an interview, we feel we have done no wrong, and the nature of the complaint is unclear.... and so we have decided to reconvene our AT services.

Many of you know that we became involved in AT services for the simple reason that too many people with severe disabilities are never seen as communicating beings nor referred for traditional services. This was certainly true for many people with whom we were personally involved. Early on, we looked for help but were stymied and so sought to learn more ourselves from internationally known experts and gradually built intensive learning experiences with them. As with our other areas of expertise within Networks, others gradually came to us for assistance. And from this gradually grew our "Technologies for Independence and Control" area of service which has included our very popular Communication Mentors' Course, many other AT related training topics, and direct assistance to people and their teams to explore possible AT. We have continued to stretch ourselves in-house to learn more, have sought additional professional certification in AT, have built collaborations with many professionals and groups specializing in AT, have been asked to join various committees re: AT, have received professional and personal accolades for our work, and have been acknowledged as AT experts by many. And, as part of our very mission, we have felt compelled to share our knowledge with others to assist the thousands of people with disabilities waiting to be heard.

We have tried to be clear from the start what our scope and area of practice is and is not. We have asserted all along that like many other areas of service with people with disabilities we are assisting them to explore, we are "assessing" their situations, and we are helping supporters look at possible ways to address these situations. And like many working in the field of AT, we have worked hard to be responsible and professional in acknowledging our expertise while also noting that this is an area that is shared by many professionals and is not the purview of just one group. Unfortunately, though, some may have seen our message as unclear and our work as suspect.... this was certainly never our intent.

We apologize to any colleagues we may have offended or confused. We sincerely apologize for any inconvenience we may have caused to those seeking our help. In the three weeks we suspended these activities, approximately 40 appointments needed to be canceled or put on hold.... quite a staggering number and what we feel is further indication of the need that is present for people with significant disabilities and the work that we have been doing in the area of AT for the past decade. And we apologize for needing to explain our actions in this email.

It is our firm belief today, as it was a decade ago, that we need to find ways to better hear everyone. Too many people are waiting. Too many are believed to be non-communicative. The responsibility is shared between all of us to do something... and only by working together can we truly assist people.

Sincerely,

Shauna J. Roman, M.S.
Executive Director

Jill C. Gromen, M.S.W.
Assistant Executive Director

Rosa C. McAllister, M.Ed., A.T.P.
Assistant Executive Director