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ASHA Co-Sponsors, Participates in, Events at U.N. Disability Conference

Champions Recognition, Understanding of Communication Disability in Global Policy Context

(New York, NY-June 10, 2019) Ensuring the availability of resources that support accessibility in higher education for students with communication disability; giving communication disability its due in the global policy context; and taking appropriate approaches to the communication needs of persons with dementia will be spotlighted at the United Nations (U.N.) Headquarters in New York this week by the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association (ASHA).

The setting will be the 12th Session of the Conference of State Parties to the U.N. Convention on the Rights of Persons With Disabilities, an annual gathering that holds “side events”—sessions that address global disability topics and issues.

This morning, ASHA is co-sponsoring a side event that will focus on how assistive, adaptive, and accessible technologies can be used to support students with disabilities in higher education.

ASHA Chief Executive Officer Arlene A. Pietranton, PhD, CAE, will present at the event. “Data regarding the resource picture for students with disabilities is much clearer at elementary and secondary school levels than it is in higher education,” Pietranton says. That is a hurdle that must be jumped, she notes, to be in keeping with the U.N. Convention on the Rights of Persons With Disabilities and to meet the Sustainable Development Goals that the world body has established for the international community to reach by 2030.

“More information is needed about the need for and the availability of resources,” according to Pietranton. “Additionally, we must ensure that the resources are accessible and their availability is made known so people can count on them in their pursuit of higher education.”

ASHA is also involved with a second side event—scheduled for Wednesday, June 12—that will highlight the need for greater recognition of communication disability in the global policy context <https://internationalcommunicationproject.com/2019/05/international-communication-project-event-united-nations/>. It will be hosted by the International Communication Project (ICP), which has more than 50 participating organizations and entities worldwide, and will be co-sponsored by the government of Australia. ASHA is an ICP founder and is actively involved steering and promoting the Project. Two other ICP founders, Speech Pathology Australia and the Royal College of Speech & Language Therapists, organized the Wednesday event.

On Thursday, June 13, Pietranton will present at a third side event organized by Dementia Alliance International, this time with the aim of highlighting the importance of mitigating the communication disability associated with dementia.

“We welcome and appreciate these opportunities to have an active role at the UN disability conference this week,” Pietranton says. “We must work to reduce barriers so persons with communication disability are fully included in society, something that is directly linked to ASHA’s vision—making effective communication, a human right, accessible and achievable for all.”

About the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association (ASHA)

ASHA is the national professional, scientific, and credentialing association for 204,000 members and affiliates who are audiologists; speech-language pathologists; speech, language, and hearing scientists; audiology and speech-language pathology support personnel; and students. Audiologists specialize in preventing and assessing hearing and balance disorders as well as providing audiologic treatment, including hearing aids. Speech-language pathologists identify, assess, and treat speech and language problems, including swallowing disorders. www.asha.org

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