Section I: Introduction

History of this document

At the close of the national facilitated communication conference held in Syracuse in May, 1998, a meeting was held to discuss the need for developing standards for the training and use of facilitated communication (FC). At that meeting, we decided to develop a document which clearly describes the elements of best practice in facilitated communication, and outlines a training process which promotes those best practices. Our intention was to produce a document which would:

- develop consistently high-quality practice of facilitated communication across users and facilitators,
- increase the focus on working toward independence, and
- give assurance to agencies that the method is being applied correctly.

This document represents the work of approximately 20 highly experienced facilitated communication trainers from the United States and Australia. It is the first edition of a work which will, by its nature, be continuously subject to revision and refinement.

Who is it for?

This document is intended to be of use to:

- Facilitated communication trainers, as a means of bringing their training and supervisory practices in line with those which have been seen to be important and effective in many settings;
- Facilitators, as a means of self-evaluating their own training and practice, and identifying those areas in which further training or supervision is needed;
- Parents and others advocating for facilitated communication services for a child or friend, as a means of informing themselves and others concerning the adequacy of services being received;
- Administrators and supervisors, as a means of planning the services needed when a commitment has been made to support someone who uses facilitated communication;
- Facilitated communication users, as a tool in maximizing their own involvement in the design and implementation of the services and supports they receive; and
- Researchers, as a way of informing them of current understanding of best practice in the field.
What's included in this document?

This document is made up of several interconnected parts:

- A description of fundamental values and principles underlying the use of facilitated communication, and best practices embodying those principles;
- A framework for training and technical assistance, which identifies several levels of competence to be achieved by facilitators as they gain training and experience, and the means whereby that training can be gained and supported;
- A list of facilitator competencies which facilitators are expected to master as they gain training and experience;
- An appendix listing the resources - books, articles, handouts, and videotapes - which are used in training and supervision;
- Appendix checklists used in monitoring facilitated communication user skills, and facilitator acquisition of competencies.

What this document is not:

This document is not intended to serve as a free-standing "how-to" manual; since mentorship and supervision are a vital part of the training process, this document is intended to serve as a tool supporting that personalized guidance. Neither is this document a professional code, dealing with the issues of accountability, liability, or ethical practice as defined by various professions. Rather, this document attempts to define best practices across professions, with the facilitated communication user as the primary reference point. It is not a model policy for agencies or districts, although it could be of great use in the development of such policies.

How to access the training called for in this document

The Facilitated Communication Institute of Syracuse University serves as an informational clearinghouse on training in facilitated communication throughout North America. It provides the kinds of training described in this document, and maintains lists of regional resources in training and supervision as well. The Institute can be contacted by mail, at:

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