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## RALPH EDWARDS ELECTED PRESIDENT OF TASH

WASHINGTON, DC - TASH, an international disability advocacy organization, announced that Ralph W. Edwards of Swampscott began a three-year term as President. Founded in 1975, TASH advocates for human rights, equity, opportunity, and the full inclusion of people with disabilities in every aspect of community life. With chapters in 17 states and four countries, its membership consists of individuals with disabilities, family members, policy-makers, educators, service providers, researchers, and other professionals. Its goals are advanced through advocacy research, professional development, legislative advocacy, policy, and information and resources for self-advocates, parents, and families.



“The individuals we serve are among the most vulnerable in our society,” says Edwards. “They are subject to abuse, neglect, segregation, and institutionalization. They tend to have higher deleterious health outcomes, lower educational achievement, lower economic prospects, and complex quality of life challenges. Through TASH advocacy of inclusive policies and application of effective, evidence based practices, advocates and families are empowered to enhance their quality of life.”

Edwards recently retired from state service as Director of the Office of Citizen Leadership at Massachusetts Department of Developmental Services (DDS). With a career of community engagement and empowerment, he works to involve advocates and family members in policy formulation and program evaluation. Prior to DDS, he was Director of HIV/AIDS Prevention and Education at the Department of Public Health. “Marginalization is a common thread of individuals with Developmental Disabilities or HIV/AIDS or Substance Abuse Disorder as well as disproportional representation of people of color. Their voices must be heard and issues addressed within a social justice and human rights context,” says Edwards. “Advocacy organizations such as TASH provide research, training, and a forum to identify and support paths to enhance the quality of life for these individuals, their communities, and our society.”

Edwards is the grandson of Eliza Rachel Edwards, the father of Jon Kofi and Brent, and married to Vicky Pulos. He is a graduate of Tulane University, University of Texas School of Public Health, and Harvard University Kennedy School of Government.

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A 501(c)(3) non-profit organization, TASH is an international grassroots leader in advancing inclusive communities through research, education and advocacy. Founded in 1975, we are a volunteer-driven organization that advocates for human rights and inclusion for people with the most significant disabilities and support needs – those most vulnerable to segregation, abuse, neglect and institutionalization. The inclusive practices we validate through research have been shown to improve outcomes for all people. More information about TASH can be found at [www.tash.org](http://www.tash.org).