

[Tell Tony Attwood to End the Hate: Autistic People Deserve Equality in Family Law and Relationships](#)

Category : Family Law and Relationships

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Hello,

I'm writing to ask you to sign our [petition](#), calling on Dr. Tony Attwood and Dr. Isabelle Hénault, two respected experts in the world of Autism, to disassociate themselves from hate groups promoting stereotypes and libels that seek to encourage discrimination against Autistic people in family law and relationships. We in the disability community have long suffered from many forms of discrimination, stereotyping and discrimination. Historically, one of the most pervasive forms of this type of discrimination has come from those who use stereotypes and psuedo-science to try and deprive us of one of the most common ways of expressing membership in the human community - the right to have a family, to marry and to raise children on an equal basis with any other citizen. The eugenics movement is one of the most well known examples of this dangerous and unethical means of discriminating against people with disabilities, as is the related idea that disabled people are inherently unfit as spouses or parents. In the name of these kinds of stereotypes, people with disabilities have been deprived of parental rights and discriminated against in divorce and child custody cases for generations. In the Autistic community, we face opponents who seek to propogate these same forms of hatred, often claiming to do so either for our own good or wrapped in the guise of the same types of false science that justified the involuntary sterilization of hundreds of thousands of individuals worldwide who were deemed unfit to raise children.

For the last decade, groups like Families of Adults Afflicted with Asperger's Syndrome (FAAAS) have been promoting the idea that prolonged family contact with Autistic adults in romantic or family relationships is harmful to "normal" people. Amongst other methods, they have done this by promoting "Cassandra Affective Deprivation Disorder," a term invented by British psychologist Maxine Aston. Cassandra Affective Deprivation Disorder, a condition developed by Aston and which serves as the basis for much of her marketing and income, is claimed by Aston to be a depressive disorder caused by romantic involvement with an Autistic person. CADD is based entirely upon pseudoscience, personal grudges, and stereotypes rather than any form of accurate research or evidence. CADD has never been recognised by any psychological association and is not supported by any peer-reviewed scientific research. Aston and others involved with such groups have purported to diagnose clients with CADD, despite having no legitimate authority for doing so. In CADD support groups, clients are encouraged to "vent" about the failures of their partners and to characterise Autistics in general as unsuitable for family life.

Attwood and Hénault have, despite respected professional activities and scholarships in other contexts, consistently appeared and promoted Cassandra-related events and organizations. Over the past decade, both Attwood and Hénault have been regular presenters at events sponsored by FAAAS, which actively promotes the Cassandra concept. Attwood and Hénault are closely associated with FAAAS through their membership in the FAAAS Professional Advisory Panel. The founder of FAAAS, Karen Rodman, has publicly described Autistics as randomly violent and has suggested that Autistic children ought to be excluded from public schools. Through its activities,

FAAAS has sought to influence social workers and family law courts to make biased decisions removing custody of children from Autistic parents and discriminating against Autistic adults in other family law contexts, as detailed in a paper by FAAAS member Sheila Jennings Linehan, who also has levied this libel against other neurological disability groups. Several articles by ASPIA, a group in Australia with the same goals and objectives as FAAAS, founder Carol Grigg appear prominently on the FAAAS website, and the content of Grigg's articles clearly shows that she also promotes the false accusation that autistic people and others with disabilities are likely to abuse their family members. She explicitly makes this claim in an article entitled Asperger's Syndrome in Adults: Potential for Abuse?

Though Autistic adults now face discrimination in family law settings, all credible research on the topic states that Autistic people are far more vulnerable to being abused than the general population and have no natural predisposition towards abusive behaviour. By promoting a libel that places Autistic people at a disadvantage in family law contexts, FAAAS, ASPIA and other promoters of CADD have decreased opportunities for Autistic people to seek protection against abuse. Due to the presumption of fault promoted by these groups, Autistic adults are at risk of being discriminated against if they attempt to terminate abusive marriages and other relationships. Furthermore, these libels threaten the rights of Autistic people and all people with disabilities to fully participate in society by marrying, having children and enjoying the right to be judged on the basis of ones actions not by ones medical diagnosis.

We're asking you, regardless of your background or interest in Autism or cross-disability issues, to join us in signing this petition to help secure the rights of all people to be treated equally under the law. Our petition can be found at: <http://www.ipetitions.com/petition/AttwoodHenault/> and if you are interested in e-mailing directly tony@tonyattwood.com.au is the e-mail address for Dr. Attwood and ihenault@internet.uqam.ca is the e-mail address for Dr. Hénault. Thank you for your support. Together, we can mobilize our community and stop discrimination wherever it rears its ugly head.

As always, Nothing About Us, Without Us!

Regards,
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