



It's Your Right!

What is a right?

If you live in the United States, you have rights. A right:

- Protects you and lets you make choices as long as you don't hurt yourself or others; and
- Helps guarantee equal treatment for everyone.

People who have disabilities have the same rights as everyone else. Your rights are also protected and can't be taken away from you.

Rights come with responsibilities

Responsibility helps people to live and work together.

Responsibility means making choices and accepting the consequences of those decisions.

You can take advantage of different opportunities and learn from your experiences.

It's up to all of us to take responsibility for ourselves.

What are your rights?

- To be treated like everyone else;
- To live as independently as possible;
- To say what you want;
- To be told about things done for you;

- To say "NO" and ask people to change the things they do for you;
- To complain, ask questions, and make suggestions about the services you receive;
- To look at information written about you;
- To use the courts and have a lawyer;
- To have privacy;
- To be free from abuse/neglect/exploitation;
- To pick your own friends;
- To talk to anyone you want; when you want; how you want and alone if you want;
- To decide how you spend your time;
- To keep and spend your own money;
- To own things and decide what to do with them;
- To wear your own clothes;
- To open your own mail;
- To take classes and learn new things;
- To worship how you choose;
- To get married and have children;
- To get a job; and
- To vote.

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What about making decisions?

A basic right is to make decisions for yourself.

You make your own decisions unless you have a guardian, who is another adult who has a court order that says they can make certain decisions for you.

If you are 18 or older, you do not have a guardian unless one is appointed by a judge in court.

What if you have a guardian?

If a judge appointed a guardian for you, you have a right to:

- Ask for a copy of the court papers appointing the guardian; and
- Tell your guardian what you want and ask that person for their support in making the decisions you want.

You have rights!

No matter where you live or receive services, you have rights.

People cannot:

- Hurt you. If someone hurts you, tell someone. If they don't listen, tell someone else.
- Separate you from others or put you in a room by yourself.
- Give you medicine to make you calm, unless you give informed consent, or it's an emergency.

What is informed consent?

Informed consent means you should get information before you make decisions about what type of services you receive. It also means being given information about all the providers available in your area.

Whenever someone is going to do something to you or for you, they must tell you. You have a right to get all the information you need to make a good decision. Ask these questions:

- “What good will it do me?”
- “What could go wrong?”
- “What could happen if I don't do anything or something different?”
- “What are my other choices?”

If you need help understanding the answers, ask more questions.

People may ask you to sign something to give them permission. When you make up your mind and say either yes or no, this is called informed consent.

Is it okay to change your mind?

YES! Remember this is your life, and it is your right to say yes or no. No matter what you decide, people must honor your decision. If they don't find someone else to help you.

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