

THE RIGHTS OF MAINE CITIZENS WITH DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES

(This straightforward explanation of consumer rights, adapted from 34 MRSA Chapter 186-A, is intended for use by consumers and providers.) I would like to tell you about the law that says how other people are supposed to treat you. This law says that you have the right to do certain things, and there are other things which no one can make you do. For example:

1. No one can tease you or make fun of you. You can tell them to leave you alone if they do.
2. No one can stop you from going to church or saying prayers if you want to.
3. No one can read your mail unless you say it's O.K. No one can stop you from mailing a letter.
4. No one can stop you from using the telephone, TTY, or fax machine, and no one can listen to your phone calls unless you say it's O.K.
5. No one can stop other people from coming to visit you and no one can hang around when you have company unless you say it's O.K.
6. If you have a job, you have to be paid fairly according to existing laws. You can ask your case worker for details.
7. No one can stop you from voting, and no one can tell you who to vote for. After you vote, no one can make you tell who you voted for unless you want to tell.
8. No one can take away your clothes or money, or touch any of your things unless you say it's O.K.
9. No one can take away your food to punish you or to be mean to you.
10. No one can stop you from going to the doctor if you don't feel well or the dentist if your teeth hurt. No one can stop you from asking the doctor to come see you if you don't have a way to get to his/her office. If you want to see the doctor or dentist, just ask. No one can make you go to the doctor or dentist if you don't want to.
11. No one can make you take medicine to punish you or just to keep you quiet or sleepy.
12. No one can stop you from talking to other people.
13. No one can stop you from going outside to walk around or going to movies or things like that.
14. Nobody can hit you or hurt you for doing something wrong.
15. No one can hold on to you against your will unless they are sure you are going to hurt yourself or someone else. No one can hold you against your will just to punish you or be mean to you.
16. No one can put you in a bed with bars on it unless it is to protect you from falling out.
17. You have a right to see anything that is written about you. All you have to do is ask. No one can show these records to anybody unless you say they can.
18. You have the right to get together with other people you live with and to form a group to make sure your needs known to those who own and run the place you live and work in.
19. Before anyone can put you in an institution such as Bangor Mental Health or the Augusta Mental Health Institute, they have to prove to a judge that you need to go to an institution, and that an institution is the best and only place for you at the time.

- 20. If you think someone is trying to stop you from doing any of these things or isn't treating you the way they are supposed to, you can tell your caseworker or someone who is your friend to help you make them stop treating you wrong.**
- 21. No one can talk about you to others without your permission.**
- 22. If you use sign language or gestures to communicate, you have the right to work, live, and relax with other people who can sign to you and can understand your signs and gestures.**