

Office of Developmental Disabilities Services

Knowing Your Rights during COVID-19

Background

It is important for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities to know that they have the right to the same medical care and treatment options as anyone else. This fact sheet outlines some important information that people with I/DD need to know during the COVID-19 pandemic.

You cannot be treated differently because of your disability.

- You can go to a doctor or hospital just like anybody else. If you have COVID-19 symptoms call your doctor and get direction on what to do, call back if you get worse.
- You have the right to document and make sure others know your preferences for medical care if you get sick.
- You have the right to get the treatment you need. If you get COVID-19 and need assistance to breathe, you have the right to access medical equipment like a breathing machine (ventilator).
- You do not have to sign anything at the hospital that you do not want to.
- You cannot be denied medical treatment because you have a disability.

Before you go to the doctor or to a hospital:

- Talk with people you trust if you want their help making decisions. It is a good idea to write down your wishes for medical treatment **before** you get sick. Even though it is hard to think about it is important to write down what kind of care you want if you are very sick. Hospitals have to follow your wishes that you put into forms. See the “ODDS List of Resources: Knowing Your Rights during COVID-19” for more information on how to document your treatment preferences.
- Contact important people in your life to make sure they know you are sick and are going in for treatment. This could include family members, friends or your case manager.

- You can refuse or agree to any treatment, and you can also change your mind about your treatment options at any time.
- Make sure you have any documents you need including:
 - Any communication materials you may need, such as a communication board, iPad or other tablet
 - Paperwork you have completed to document your treatment preferences
 - Emergency contact information for people close to you
 - A list of any medications you are taking, and anything you are allergic to
 - Any documents you need about your medical condition

Ask your medical providers to make sure a copy of all this information is put in your medical chart and also make sure a trusted person has a copy.

Once you are at the doctor or hospital:

- Make sure they know your treatment and communication preferences.
- If needed, ask hospital or clinic staff to talk slowly and clearly.
- You can ask the doctor any questions you have or request more information.
- If there are certain things that bother or upset you, let your medical providers know. For example, if you are scared about needles or having your blood taken, tell them so they can find ways to accommodate you.
- When you talk with your medical providers, they should tell you all the different options to treat you while you are sick including any side effects for any choice.
- You can bring a family member or other helper with you unless they are also sick. Hospitals can limit visitors to COVID-19 patients. However, hospitals may still allow a trusted person as an accommodation or support if safety precautions are in place. Not allowing a reasonable accommodation may be a violation of your rights.
- You may be asked if you want to complete an advance directive or “Do Not Resuscitate (DNR).” You do not have to sign anything that you don’t understand or don’t want to sign.
- If you are sick and have to stay overnight in the hospital, make sure your medical providers know they need to let your support team know. When you are well enough to go back home, make sure the medical providers communicate with your support team before you leave or are discharged somewhere else so they can prepare and can get you any additional equipment or new medicines you may need.