

# YOUR RIGHTS.....



In a State  
Supported  
Living Center



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**This book belongs to:**

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## A special note about your rights

This handbook tells you about the rights and privileges you have if you are receiving services in programs offered through the Texas Department of Aging and Disability Services (DADS) state supported living centers.

There are some basic things that guide your rights.

- 1 People have rights.** Rights are what you are allowed to do and how you should be treated.
- 2 Rights are not limited without due process.** Due process is a review process that makes sure your rights are not taken away from you without a good reason.
- 3 People have a right to be free from abuse and neglect.**
- 4 People have responsibilities with the exercise of rights.** Responsibilities are your duties that you need to try to do, if you are able.

Staff can help you learn about your rights and responsibilities.

*All services are provided in compliance with the Civil Rights Act of 1964, as amended, and in the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990.*

## Important words and what they mean

**Advance directive** – A document that tells your doctor what sort of treatment you want for yourself, should you get very ill. You can write a “living will” or arrange for a “durable power of attorney for health care decisions.”

**Advocate** – A person who helps you make decisions and looks out for your best interests.

**Appeal** – To ask for a special meeting when you disagree about a decision.

**Behavior Therapy Program** – A written, specialized program that staff can use to help you learn how to control your behavior.

**Consent (informed consent)** – When you agree to do something or give permission to do something. You must understand what you are agreeing to, be over age 18, and not have a guardian.

**Constitutional rights** – Certain rights that the United States Supreme Court says the United States Constitution guarantees each person living in an institution, such as a state supported living center.

**Due process** – A review process to make sure your rights are not taken away from you without a good reason.

**Determination of mental retardation (DMR)** – Testing done by a doctor or psychologist to find out if you have mental retardation.

**Guardian or Legally Authorized Representative (LAR)** – Somebody appointed by the courts (often your parent or





other adult family member) or your parent if you are under age 18. Your guardian or LAR makes certain decisions for you, as outlined in the court papers. These decisions may be about your money, your rights, and/or your physical needs.

**Hearing** – A special meeting to talk about something with which you or your guardian do not agree.

**Planning meeting** – A meeting with your team to develop service plans that will help you meet your goals. (This is sometimes called a “staffing.”)

**Qualified Mental Retardation Professional (QMRP)** – The staff member who arranges services to meet your needs and help you achieve your goals.

**Responsibilities** – What you need to do in order to have your rights and to continue your services

**Rights** – What you are allowed to do and how you should be treated.

**Rights protection officer (RPO)** – The person whose job it is to help protect your rights.

**Service Planning Team (interdisciplinary team)** – A group of people who make suggestions for the programs that will help you meet your goals or dreams. You and your guardian are also members of the team.

**Treatment** – This is something that is done for you, like providing you with training.

## Your rights under the Constitution of the United States

The United States Supreme Court says that the United States Constitution guarantees certain rights to each person who lives in an institution for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities, such as a state supported living center. These constitutional rights are:

- 1** A right to adequate food, shelter, clothing, and medical care.  
 Medical care means not only emergency care, but also regular and preventive care.
- 2** A right to reasonably safe conditions of confinement.  
 This includes the right to be protected from abuse, neglect and exploitation.



- 3** A right to be free from undue bodily restraint.  
 A person living in a state supported living center may not be restrained unless a professional determines the restraint is necessary to assure the person's safety or to provide needed training to the person.

- 4** A right to the training and development of skills needed to ensure safety and to facilitate a person's ability to function free from bodily restraint.

A person living in a state supported living center must be provided training to ensure his safety and to help him be free from bodily restraints. Training should also be provided to prevent the person from losing the self-care skills he had before entering the facility.





The United States Supreme Court also says people living in a state supported living center have these additional rights:

**5** The right to move to the community when:

- the state supported living center's treatment professionals determine the placement is appropriate,
- the person or his guardian does not oppose the placement, and
- the placement can be reasonably accommodated, taking into account the resources available to the state and the needs of others with mental disabilities.

**6** The right to due process if the person or his guardian object to the administration of psychotropic medications.

If a person or his guardian object to taking psychotropic medications, the state supported living center must follow the review procedures described in the Consent to Treatment with Psychotropic Medication – Mental Retardation Facilities rule (Title 40, TAC, Chapter 8, Subchapter I, Section 8.206)

## Your rights under the Persons with Mental Retardation Act

If you are a person with mental retardation living in Texas, you have the following rights:

- 1** You have the same rights all citizens have, unless some of these rights have been taken away by a judge.

These rights include the right to vote, to practice a religion, to keep your own possessions, to agree to buy things, and to get married. You cannot be treated differently because of your disability.

- 2** No one should hurt you, take advantage of you, or ignore your needs.
- 3** You have the right to live and receive services where you can make as many of your own decisions as possible. This may be with your family, with your friends, alone, or where there are people trained to help you.
- 4** You may have the right to go to public school until age 22.
- 5** Before you receive services, a doctor or a psychologist must determine that you have mental retardation and explain to you what that means. If you do not agree with them, you can also ask for a meeting to review your case. You can ask for a second opinion that you would pay for with your own money. You can ask for services from other agencies and organizations.
- 6** For issues needing consent, you should be able to understand what you agree to. If you have a guardian or LAR, he or she may make decisions for you.
- 7** Before a guardian is named, you will have a hearing in court with a judge. Only a judge can give you a guardian. That guardian may be a parent or another adult. This hearing is considered due process.





- 8** If you are looking for a job and have the skills to do the job, you cannot be denied it just because of your disability. If you have a job, you have the right to be paid fairly like everyone else.
- 9** You have the right to have treatment and services that are best for you. You can change your mind about any or all of the services you receive.

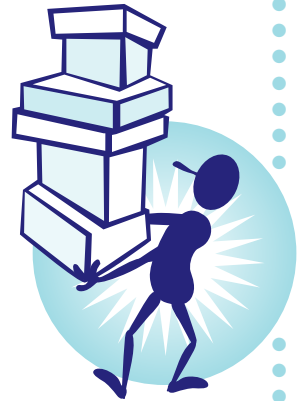
## Your rights in a state supported living center

If you receive services in a state supported living center, you have all the rights listed in this handbook under constitutionally protected rights and the Persons with Mental Retardation Act. In addition, you also have the following rights:

- 1** You have the right to a normal home with a good setting. Your home should be clean and safe.
- 2** You and your guardian or advocate should be told about your medical condition, how you are doing, any problem behaviors, the risks of treatment, and your right to refuse treatment.
- 3** You have the right to be free from unnecessary drugs and/or restraints. If you do things that hurt you or others, you may be given drugs and/or be restrained. There has to be a plan for you that will help cut down on the need for drugs and/or restraints. This plan is known as a behavior therapy program.
- 4** You do not have to do work without pay. If you have a job, you have the right to get paid fairly. Helping around the house, such as cooking or cleaning up, is

not considered work, but is a responsibility. Responsibilities are what you need to do in order to have your rights and to continue your services.

- 5** You may meet with other people in a place where you can be alone.
- 6** You can send and receive your mail without anybody opening it. If you need help sending, opening, or reading your mail, you can ask someone to help you.
- 7** You have the right to choose and keep any objects and clothing that are yours. You have the right to wear clothing that fits, is in good condition, and keeps you warm or cool enough. If you don't have suitable clothing, it will be provided for you. You should also be provided a place to store your things.
- 8** If you are married and you both live in the same home, you have the right to share a room.
- 9** You should always be treated with respect. You have the right to not have anyone hurt you, say mean things to you, be too personal with you by touching you in the wrong way, or make you feel bad by what they say or do to you. Tell staff, your parent, guardian, or advocate if this happens. Report all abuse to the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services at 1-800-647-7418.
- 10** You have the right to have regular mealtimes. You, your doctor and/or nutritionist can help decide what kind of food is best for you.





- 11** You have the right to visit anyone you want. You can meet privately with visitors. Be careful not to bother the others in your home because of your visits. Your friends and family can visit you here and, if it is okay with your friends or family, you can go visit them.
- 12** You have the right to manage your money, be trained to manage your money, or have help in managing your money. You can ask staff if you need help or have questions. You can look at records that show how much money you have. If you have a guardian or LAR, they may decide how your money is managed.
- 13** You have the right to make and receive telephone calls in private. You can ask staff to help you.
- 14** You have the right to make decisions about your daily life, including things like what you want to wear.
- 15** You have the right to privacy during treatment and care of your personal needs and when you want to be alone. If staff help care for your personal needs, they should close the door so other people cannot see you. Everybody should knock before entering, and wait for you to answer if you can, before entering your room.
- 16** You have the right to be out of bed and out of your bedroom during most of the day, moving around and doing things. Staff will help move you if you need help.
- 17** You should be provided with basic personal items and supplies, like shampoo and toothpaste. If you like a different brand or type of personal need item, you can buy the item you like with your own money.

**18** You have the right to receive medical and dental care.

**19** You have the right to have services and supports that will help you do things for yourself like taking care of your own personal needs. A plan for your treatment will be developed by you, your guardian, and your team. You have the right to go to meetings about you and tell your team what you want to learn and be involved in. This includes your annual planning meeting. You can also invite a friend or advocate to your meeting.



**20** You do not have to be moved from where you live without a good reason, unless it is an emergency. You should be given enough time to get ready to move. If you feel you are being rushed, ask for more time to get ready to move.

**21** You have the right to ask to live in the community.

## Your guardian's rights and responsibilities

If you have a guardian, there are certain decisions they can make for you. Your guardian might make decisions about

- your money,
- where you live, or
- what services you will receive, and
- consent to medical treatment.

If you are able to make a choice about something, your guardian should let you. If you feel this is not the case, you should talk to your guardian.





## Your guardian helps to protect your rights

Your guardian should participate in the planning meetings with you and your service planning team. Your guardian may look at your records and talk with staff about you. Your guardian can file complaints for you.

Your guardian has to tell the court every year about how you are doing. For the guardian of the estate, this is called an annual accounting. For the guardian of the person, it is known as an annual report. The law requires all guardians to complete an annual accounting or report to the court, no matter how long they have been a guardian. When your guardian files the annual accounting or report, they are given letters from the court to show the guardianship is current. They need to share this letter with your staff. Your guardian helps protect your rights.

## Your responsibilities

Along with rights come certain responsibilities.

Responsibilities are your duties that you need to try to do, if you are able. You may not be able to do all these things by yourself, and you can ask for help.

- 1 You should not hurt others.
- 2 You should follow the rules and regulations of your program.
- 3 You should tell staff what you need.
- 4 You should speak up at your service planning meeting and tell your team about your goals and dreams.

- 5 You should try your best to follow the service plan developed by your service planning team. If you do not like your plan, you can ask that the plan be changed.
- 6 You should be on time.
- 7 You should help take care of the home where you live.
- 8 You should take care of your things and not bother other people's things.
- 9 If you leave, you should tell staff where you will be.
- 10 You may have other responsibilities, and staff can help you learn what they are.



## Special meetings

### Guardianship hearing

If you have a guardian, the guardian had to go to court to tell the judge why he or she wanted to be your guardian to help you make decisions. This process in the court is known as due process. If your guardian is given permission by the court to make certain decisions, then your staff will need your guardian's permission before restricting any of your rights in those areas. You have the right to know about your guardian's decisions.



### Human Rights Committee

Sometimes, your team may recommend taking away one or more of your rights. If they do, then another group of people will have a meeting to decide if they agree. This group is called



the Human Rights Committee (HRC). You can tell the HRC how you feel about the restriction of your rights. This review is due process. The review is to make sure that your team doesn't restrict your rights without giving you a chance to talk about it. If you have a guardian, the HRC will need your guardian's permission before restricting any of your rights.

### **Administrative Hearing**

If you or your guardian or LAR do not agree with the findings of a determination of mental retardation, you can request an administrative hearing. You must submit a request to the director. This request must be made within 60 days of the determination of mental retardation.

### **How to make a complaint**

If you have a complaint about your services or how you have been treated, you should call one of the following people or groups and tell them. Ask staff to help you do this if you need help.

### **Your Rights Protection Officer**

You can talk to your local Rights Protection Officer where you get services. Their telephone numbers and addresses are on page 15 of this handbook and are also posted at all service locations.



**You can call DADS Consumer  
Rights and Services at  
1-800-458-9858**

## State offices

If you or your family members want to report complaints or violations of your rights, you should call Austin, Texas:



**Consumer Rights and Services  
Texas Department of Aging  
and Disability Services . . . . . 1-800-458-9858**

If you think staff have abused you, neglected you, or taken advantage of you, you should call and report this to:

**Texas Department of Family  
and Protective Services (TDFPS) . . . . . 1-800-647-7418**

If you want to complain about public school,  
you should call:

**Texas Education  
Agency (TEA) . . . . . 1-800-252-9668**

Other places you can call if you have complaints  
or need help:

**Advocacy, Inc. . . . . 1-800-252-9108**

**The ARC . . . . . 1-800-252-9729**

**Parent Association  
for Retarded of Texas, Inc . . . . . 512-453-7145**

If you are hearing impaired and need TDD to make a phone call, you can get help from:

**Relay Texas (voice) ..... 1-800-735-2988**  
**(TDD) ..... 1-800-735-2989**

## **How to reach your Rights Protection Officer**

You can talk to your Rights Protection Officer.

**Your Rights Protection Officer is:**

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**Your Rights Protection Officer's telephone number is:**

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**Notes:**

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## Texas Department of Aging and Disability Services

DADS toll-free Consumer Rights  
and Services number:

**1-800-458-9858**

### Attention Medicaid recipients

Under the Medicaid Estate Recovery Program, the state may file a claim against the estate of a deceased Medicaid recipient, age 55 and older, who applied for certain long-term care services on or after March 1, 2005.

For more information call  
1-800-458-9858





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Department of Aging  
and Disability Services

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