

Know Your Rights

A group of approximately ten people are seated around a large, light-colored wooden table in what appears to be a classroom or meeting room. They are engaged in a discussion, with some looking at a tablet on the table and others looking towards each other. The room has white walls and a whiteboard in the background.

What is a right?

What is a responsibility?

What rights do I have as a person?

How can I make changes in my life?

How can I work towards my goals?

***Read this book and
find out!***

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How do I use this book?

This book is about the rights and responsibilities that all people have. It talks about how to make changes in your life and in the world. It explains how you should be treated and what you can do if you don't like the way you are being treated.

In the book, you will see stars next to some of the words. Each star is for a different topic.

- ★ This star is for topics that are short and easy to understand.
- ★ This star is for topics that are a little longer or more complicated.
- ★ This star is for topics that are longer, have many different parts, or use words that not everyone knows.



The blue box means this is a story. The story will be an example of a person standing up for his or her rights. Some of the stories are true, and some are just examples. The true stories have a picture of the person telling the story. All of the stories are about things that can and do happen



All of this book is for everyone!

The stars are there to let you know what might be harder to understand at first. It can be helpful to have someone read this book with you and talk through questions you may have.

If you are a person with a developmental disability reading this book:

- ★ This book is for you. It is about how you should be treated, your responsibilities, and your life.
- ★ It also tells you what to do if you aren't being treated the way you should be. The book gives you ideas about the people you can talk to about this. In addition to those people, you can call the **Justice Center at 1-855-373-2122**. The Justice Center is a state agency that makes sure people who get services are safe and are treated with respect.
- ★ Take your time. Don't try to read this book all at once. If you need assistance, Job Path will help you find someone you trust to read it to you. If you read something you don't understand, talk to someone you trust about what it means.
- ★ As you read, think about your own life. There might be times when you aren't being treated the way you should be.
- ★ You might have goals for your life. You have the right to stand up for yourself and make changes in your life.
- ★ Some people have legal guardians. If you have a guardian, there may be limits to what you can decide by yourself. If you do not know if you have a guardian, ask someone you trust like a family member or your care manager. Even if you have a guardian, you still have the right to speak for yourself.

If you are a staff member who supports a person with a developmental disability:

- ★ Take your time reading this book. It is more than just a requirement for your work. It is the foundation of what you are doing on your job.
- ★ If you're reading this with or to someone, take time to discuss it with the person. Try reading a section or two each week, instead of the whole book all at once.
- ★ Focus on what the person you are supporting is interested in learning about.
- ★ Read the stories, and see if you can think of similar examples in the life of the person you are supporting.
- ★ Talk with the person you are supporting about what each of you would do in the different situations presented in the book.
- ★ As you read, think about your work. There might be times when you haven't realized that people's rights aren't being respected.
- ★ It is your responsibility to speak up when someone isn't being treated the way he should be. Your supervisor is the first person you should talk to if that is the case.

What is a Responsibility?

★ A **responsibility** is something that it is your duty to do. Someone can help you with a responsibility, but it is up to you to answer for it.

★ **For example:** If you have a cat, it is your responsibility to give it food and water and take care of it.

If you have a job, it is your **responsibility** to show up on time in order to get paid.

If you live in your own apartment, it is your **responsibility** to pay your rent.



★ You have the responsibility to speak up for your rights and the rights of other people.

★ You have the responsibility to be involved in your life.

★ You have the responsibility to use your rights wisely.

What is a Right?

- ★ A **right** is something you can do that is your choice and no one else's. No one can take a right away.

When you have a right to do something, you get to decide



- ★ You have rights because you're a person. All people have the same rights. When you have a right to do something, you get to make choices about it.

- ★ **For example:**

The right to vote means you get to choose if you want to vote and who you want to vote for.

There are some rules about how you should be treated.

- ★ **For example:**

There is a rule that you should be free from abuse, which means that no one is allowed to hurt you.

- ★ Knowing your rights will help you to be able to advocate for what is important to you

- ★ Being healthy and safe means being free from harm, danger, and sickness. It also means feeling good and being happy.
- ★ Sometimes, other rights might be limited so you can be healthy and safe.



You have the **responsibility** to be involved in planning for your health and safety and to take good care of yourself.

Health and Safety

- ★ If you are getting support from an agency in your home or in the community, they have to make sure you are healthy and safe.
- ★ Sometimes, other rights you have might be limited to make sure you are healthy and safe.
- ★ Some people take medication that can change how they feel. It is okay to take this medication. Prescribed medication should make you healthier. But there can sometimes be side effects to medication. It is always your choice whether or not you want to take this medication, but it is your responsibility to make good decisions about your health and safety. If you have questions about your medication, you should discuss them with your doctor and other people you trust, so that you can make wise decisions about what to do.
- ★ If you have a legal guardian, you may not be able to decide this by yourself. If you do not know whether you have a guardian, you should ask someone you trust to find out if you have a legal guardian.
- ★ You have the **right** and **responsibility** to be involved in planning for your health and safety. You have the responsibility to make good decisions. If you need assistance in making these decisions, you should talk to someone you trust.
- ★ Being happy is a big part of being healthy and safe. To be truly healthy, you should be doing things that make you feel good about your life.
- ★ If you have a restriction for your health and safety, it doesn't have to be forever. You have the right to learn new things and make changes in your life so you won't need the restriction any more.
- ★ Any limits you have on your rights should **only** be to keep you healthy and safe. Your rights should **never** be limited to make things easier or less expensive for your agency.
- ★ If you disagree with a plan to keep you healthy and safe, you can speak up about it. You can tell your family, a manager at your agency, or your care manager.

Raul lives in a group home. He would like to travel on the subways by himself. In the past, Raul has gotten lost when he rode the trains by himself. He has to have a support worker go with him to make sure he is safe when he rides the trains. Because Raul wants to be more independent, his support workers help him learn to travel. They look at signs and landmarks when they travel together. Raul can practice traveling with a support worker following behind him in case he gets lost. After practicing for several months, Raul can travel safely on his own. He doesn't need a support worker to travel with him to keep him safe anymore.

Dignity and Respect

You have the **right** to be treated with **dignity and respect**.



Being treated with **dignity** and **respect** means that other people should treat you like an adult.



It also means that other people should treat you as an equal and respect decisions you make.



No one should treat you like you are worth less than they are.



You have the **responsibility** to treat others the way you would like to be treated.

Dignity and Respect

- ★ You are an adult. People should speak to you like they would speak to any other adult. They should never talk to you like a child.
- ★ You should never be ignored or treated as though you don't matter.
- ★ When it is time to make any kind of decision about your life, you need to be part of the conversation. No one should assume that they know what you think or what's best for you.
- ★ People should include you in conversations when they are talking. They should share any information about you with you.
- ★ Everyone should respect where you live and the things you own. That means knocking and asking if it is okay before entering, asking before using your things, and being a polite guest. This is true even if you live in a group home.
- ★ Your support staff shouldn't spend their time on their phone, listening to music, or doing anything else when they are supposed to be working with you.
- ★ Your support staff should ask you about what you do and don't want help with. They shouldn't assume that you want help with something without asking you first.
- ★ If someone isn't treating you with respect, you should tell your family, a manager at your agency, or your care manager.

★ Janielle's Story



I had a home attendant who made a mistake. I use a wheelchair, and my home attendant was helping me get to the bagel store. When we got there, she left me outside and went in without me. I was really annoyed. She wasn't treating me with respect. When she got out, I asked her, "Why did you do that?" She said the bagel store was too busy. I told her that I always choose and order my own food. "I wanted to go with you," I said, "next time don't do that again." She said she was sorry, and she didn't make that mistake again.

Freedom of Religion

You have the **right** to freedom of religion.

- ★ You get to choose what religion you believe in and what church, mosque, synagogue, or other place of worship you would like to go to.
- ★ Or, you can decide not to believe in any religion or go to any place of worship.



You have the **responsibility** to respect other people's religious choices.

Freedom of Religion



Your support workers should help you get to your chosen church, synagogue, mosque, or place of worship.



Your support workers shouldn't tell you your beliefs are wrong or try to make you believe what they believe.



No one can make you go to a place of worship if you don't want to.



People can be friends and work together even if they believe different things.



The right to freedom of religion is written down in the Constitution of the United States. This means no law can take it away.



If someone won't let you go to the place of worship you want, you should tell someone. You can tell your family, a manager at your agency, or your care manager.



Joseph lives in a group home. When he was growing up, he went to a Catholic church every Sunday. He decides that he wants to go to the Catholic church in his neighborhood. Sue works with him on Sunday. Sue is not a Catholic. When Joseph asks Sue to take him to church, Sue says she won't take him because she isn't a Catholic. What Sue did was wrong. Joseph has the right to decide what church he wants to go to. Joseph talked to the manager at his group home. The manager made sure another worker helped him get to church on Sunday.

Privacy

You have the **right** to privacy.

- ★ Privacy means deciding who can see you, hear you, and be around you.
- ★ It also means deciding who can know information about you like your health, your relationships, and your disability.
- ★ You can decide when you want time alone without staff, family, or roommates.



You have the **responsibility** to respect other people's privacy.

Privacy

- ★ You can decide when you want to spend time alone in your house or your room.
- ★ You can make a phone call without anyone else listening to what you say.
- ★ You can open and read your own mail without anyone else reading it first.
- ★ You can decide you would like to spend time with someone without staff with you. This time can be with a friend, family member, or someone you have a relationship with. The only time staff **must** be with you is if it is to protect your health or safety.
- ★ Your staff shouldn't tell other people about your disability or other things about you unless you say it's okay.
- ★ Your life, your disability, your medical information, and your relationships are private. That means you get to decide who gets to know about them.
- ★ You might have books, binders, or information stored in Job Path's Electronic Health Record (EHR) system, either at your home or in the Job Path office, containing a lot of private information about your life. Not everyone gets to read those books or binders. The only people who should read them are people who work with you and need to know private information about you. You have the right to read them or have them read to you.
- ★ If someone won't let you have privacy, you should tell someone.



Tiffany lives in a supportive apartment. Sometimes, she likes to close the door to her room and listen to music all by herself. Joan is Tiffany's support worker. She opens the door to Tiffany's room without knocking. Tiffany told Joan to knock first. Joan didn't listen. She kept opening Tiffany's door without knocking. What Joan did was wrong. Tiffany has the right to have private time in her room. Tiffany told her MSC. Her MSC made sure that all Tiffany's staff knock on her door and ask for permission before going into Tiffany's room.

Freedom from Abuse and Neglect

You have the **right** to be free from abuse and neglect.

- ★ No one is allowed to hurt you, touch you in a way you don't like, take away the things you own, or say mean things to you.
- ★ Your staff aren't allowed to insult you or put you down.
- ★ If your staff or caregivers ignore you when you need help, that's **neglect**, and it is always wrong.



You have the **responsibility** to tell someone if you or someone you know is being abused or neglected.

Freedom from Abuse and Neglect



It is always wrong for someone to kick you, hit you, push you, or hurt you in any way. If someone says they are doing it to punish you, they are wrong.



It is wrong for someone to make fun of you, call you names, yell at you, or threaten you.



Your house should be safe and comfortable. It should be clean.



You should have good, healthy food to eat. You should be able to get to your food when you want. You should always have enough to eat.



You should have clean clothes that fit, that you like, that are in good shape, and that keep you warm in the winter.



If you are hurt or sick you should be able to see a doctor right away.



It is wrong for staff to touch your body in any way that makes you feel uncomfortable. It is wrong for them to show the private parts of their body or make you show yours.



Some people need help with bathing and dressing. It is okay for a staff member to help you with those things if you need them to. But they should do it in a way that makes you feel comfortable. If you feel uncomfortable when a staff member is helping you bathe or dress, you should tell someone.



You have the power to stop abuse by reporting it.



If you or someone you know are being abused or neglected, you can tell your family, a manager at your agency, your care manager or you can call the Justice Center at 1-855-373-2122



Ray lives in a group home. He does chores like washing dishes to help out around his home. Sometimes he forgets to do his chores. One of the support workers, Ben, gets angry when Ray forgets his chores. He called Ray “lazy” and “slow” and Ray felt very upset. What Ben did was wrong. It isn’t okay for him to insult Ray, even if he is angry or thinks Ray made a mistake. Ben was abusive to Ray. Ray told the house manager what Ben had said. She found a different support worker for Ray.

Voting

You have the **right** to vote.

- ★ Voting means making a choice about who you want to be in charge of your city, state, and country.
- ★ Everyone who is a citizen of the United States and at least 18 years old gets to vote. Your vote counts the same as everybody else's vote.



You have the **responsibility** to be involved
in your community.

Voting

- ★ Sometimes there are elections and people vote to pick who is in charge. For example, there are votes to pick the mayor of New York City, the governor of New York State, and the president of the United States.
- ★ Sometimes there are votes to change a law directly. These can be called **referendums** or **ballot initiatives**.
- ★ When you go to vote, it is in a private place. No one will see who you vote for.
- ★ No one can tell you who to vote for. You can talk about whom you want to vote for if you want, but you are the only one who gets to decide.
- ★ It can be hard to decide who to vote for. People who want you to vote for them put out information. It's a good idea to read information from both sides before you make a decision. Your staff should help you find and read the information you want, register to vote, and vote on election day.
- ★ If you want to vote and someone won't let you, you should tell someone. You have the right to get the help you need so that you can vote.
- ★ The right to vote is written down in the Constitution of the United States. This means no law can take it away.
- ★ If someone isn't letting you vote, you can tell your family, a manager at your agency or your care manager.

★ Tanya lives in a group home. She is 20 years old. She watches the news a lot and really wants to vote for president. Whenever she talks about voting, her support workers change the subject. They won't help her fill out her voter registration form. They think that she doesn't know enough about politics to vote. What they're doing is wrong. Tanya is an adult and she has the right to vote. Tanya told her MSC that she wanted to vote, and her MSC helped her fill out the voter registration form. Her MSC called her house and talked to the staff about Tanya's rights. They stopped ignoring her and started helping her find information about the election. On election day, they took her to her polling place so she could vote.

Choose Your Relationships

You have the **right** to choose your relationships.



You have the right to have a friend, boyfriend, girlfriend, husband, wife or other partner.



You and the person you are in a relationship with get to decide what your relationship is like and when it begins or ends.



If you would like, someone can teach you more about sex and relationships.



You have the **responsibility** to treat your partner with respect.

Choose Your Relationships

- ★ In any relationship, your partner should respect you, and you should respect your partner.
- ★ The decision to be in a relationship with someone is up to you and that person. If you want, you can get advice from friends, family and staff. But they don't get to decide for you.
- ★ Even if your staff don't like the person you are in a relationship with, they can't force you to break up or stop you from seeing that person.
- ★ You have the right to privacy when you are visiting someone or have a visitor.
- ★ You have the right to look for people to date. This includes using dating websites and going to dating events.
- ★ Some men like to date men, and some women like to date women. That is okay. You get to decide who to have a relationship with, even if your staff or family doesn't like it. If a staff person is mean or rude to you because of who you like to date, or tries to make you stop liking men or stop liking women, that is abuse and it is always wrong.
- ★ You have the right to learn about sex, dating, and relationships.
- ★ There are some infections that can be passed from one person to another during sex. Using a condom can prevent some of these. Using a condom during sex can also prevent women from getting pregnant. You have the right and responsibility to have, use, and learn about condoms.
- ★ There are pills or shots that women can take so that having sex with men won't make them pregnant. These are called "**birth control.**" You have the right to learn about birth control and women have the right to choose if they want to use it.

★ Tony's Story



I've been dating my girlfriend for six years. My family didn't want me to date her. They were scared I would get hurt because I have a disability. One time, they even told my home attendant not to let my girlfriend into my apartment. I told my home attendant not to listen to them. I said, "It's my decision and it's my apartment." My home attendant supported my decision. Even though some people don't want us to be together, we have the right to have a relationship. Like every relationship, we've had ups and downs. But we've been persistent. We have a good relationship, and we love each other.

Choose Your Relationships

- ★ You can make it a goal in your Life Plan to learn about sex or relationships. That means your staff will have to work with you on learning what you want about sex and relationships.
- ★ New York State has laws to make sure people are not abused in a sexual way. One law says that when people with developmental disabilities have sex, they have to know how to say “yes” or “no” about whether they want to have sex so that they are not abused. Being able to make a choice about whether you want to have sex or not is called “consent.”
- ★ If you want to have sex, a clinician will ask you what you know about consent, as well as things like privacy, protecting yourself from abuse, and knowing how to use condoms and birth control. The clinician will decide if you know enough to make your own decisions about sex. This is called an “**Informed Consent Determination.**”
- ★ It’s okay if you don’t know everything at first. You have the right to get as much education as you need about sex and try as many times as you want to show that you can make your own choices about sex.
- ★ If someone isn’t letting you choose your own relationships, you should tell someone.
- ★ You can tell your family, a manager at your agency , your care manager or anyone else you trust.

★ Maria wants to find a boyfriend. She would like to have sex when she meets the right person. A social worker talks to Maria about what she knows about sex. This is called an **Informed Consent Determination.** The social worker says that Maria can’t say “yes” or “no” to sex because she doesn’t know what sex is or how to use a condom. Maria decides she would like to take a sex education class to learn more about sex. Maria learns a lot about sex in the class. After the class, she asks to speak to the social worker again to have an **Informed Consent Determination.** This time, Maria is able to answer all of the questions about sex. The social worker decides that Maria can make her own decisions about sex from now on.

Your Money is for You

You have the **right** to use your money to buy what you want and need.

- ★ You should be allowed to carry and use as much of your money as you are able to.
- ★ Even if you need someone to help you with your money, your money should always be used to buy the things **you** want and need.



You have the **responsibility** to pay your bills.

Your Money is for You



If you live somewhere run by an agency, a staff person should sit down with you and talk to you about money every year. They should help you figure out what you can do on your own and what you need help with.



Some people can handle all of their money themselves, other people need help to spend all or some of their money.



If you have a legal guardian, or representative payee, your guardian or payee, can make decisions about money for you. Your money should still be used to buy things you want and need. If you're not sure if you have a guardian or representative payee, ask someone to help you find out if you do.



If someone is helping you use your money, you can still tell them what you want and need to spend it on.



When your staff helps you buy things like clothing, they should be things that you like, not what your staff likes or thinks you like.



Your staff should never use your money or your food stamp card to buy things for themselves.



If someone is taking your money for themselves, it is financial abuse and it is always wrong.



If you want to handle more of your money yourself, your staff should teach you.



If you want to be more independent in using your money, you can make that a goal in your Life Plan. That means that staff will have to help you learn about using money.



If someone isn't letting your money be used for you, you should tell someone. You can tell your family, a manager at your agency, or your care manager.



Steven lives in a group home. One day, his manager Charles brought Steven some new clothes. Charles had used Steven's clothing check to buy him clothes without talking to him. Steven didn't like the clothes Charles had picked. What Charles did was wrong. He should not have spent Steven's money without talking to Steven. Steven told his MSC what had happened. Steven's MSC talked to Charles. Charles took the clothes he had bought back to the store. Then Charles and Steven went shopping together. With his money, Steven picked out clothes that he liked and bought them

Living Where You Want

You have the **right** to live where you want.



You can decide to live in any kind of place you want, as long as it is a safe, healthy place for you.



You have the **responsibility** to take care of your home.

Living Where You Want

- ★ You have the right to make choices about where you live and the people you live with. If you are interested in changing the place where you live, you should start by talking to your care manager or someone you trust.
- ★ You need to live somewhere that offers the right kind of support for you. The place where you live must be healthy and safe, and you should have the help you need to stay healthy and safe.
- ★ You have the right to learn the things you need to know to live more independently.
- ★ If it is your goal to live on your own, your agency has to support you in trying to reach that goal, even if it means that one day you will leave the agency.
- ★ If you live in a house or apartment run by an agency, you can decide that you would like to live somewhere run by a different agency.
- ★ You can live by yourself, with a roommate, girlfriend, boyfriend, husband or wife. You have to agree with each other that you would like to live together.
- ★ Sometimes it can take a long time to find a new place because there is a waiting list for some places to live.
- ★ It is good to be persistent when you want to change where you live. Talk to a lot of different people about where you would like to live.
- ★ Wherever you live, you should have a key to your house.
- ★ If you aren't getting the help you need to live where you want, you can tell your family, a manager at your agency, or your care manager.



Gina lives in a group home. She wants to live in her own apartment. She tells all her staff that she wants to live in her own apartment. They tell Gina that she must stay in the group home. Gina talks to her MSC. Her MSC tells Gina's staff to teach Gina about how to manage a household and help her find her own apartment and the support she needs to live there. Gina has to wait while the agency finds an apartment and gets funding for her support, but finally she gets her own place.

Advocating for Yourself

You have the **right** to advocate for yourself.



Advocating means communicating what you think and feel about what you want to happen in your life.



People need to listen to you no matter whether you speak, write, sign, gesture, or use an assistive device.



Even if you have to do something you don't like, you can still give your opinion about it.



You have the **responsibility** to listen respectfully to other people, even if you don't agree with them.

Advocating for Yourself

- ★ You are the number one person in charge of your life. You should be listened to and asked about all decisions that affect your life.
- ★ People should pay attention to you, even if it takes you a long time to talk, if you talk in a different way, if you use sign language, or if you use a device to speak for you.
- ★ It can be hard to advocate for yourself sometimes. You might feel embarrassed or shy. Remember, it is your right to communicate and be paid attention to. Talking to someone you trust about your feelings can help you get ready to speak up for yourself.
- ★ You have the right to talk to anyone who is involved in your life. That includes your direct support workers, the director of your program, your doctors, and the director of your agency.
- ★ Be persistent when you are advocating for yourself. Sometimes you have to repeat what you want or need in order to get it.
- ★ You don't have to agree with your friends, family, support workers, and agency. You can still work with people and be friends with people when you disagree.
- ★ Some people with developmental disabilities work together to advocate for themselves, which is called "**self advocacy**." There are lots of self advocates in your city, state, and around the world.
- ★ The 1st Amendment of the Constitution of the United States guarantees your right to advocate for yourself. That means no law can take that right away.
- ★ If someone isn't letting you speak up for yourself, you can tell your family, a manager at your agency, or your care manager.



Ella lives in her own apartment. She has staff that come to support her three times a week. Ella wants to speak to new staff before they come to her apartment. She wants to find out if they will get along with her and be respectful to her before they come to her apartment. She told the supervisor at her agency what she wanted. Ella's supervisor ignored her and sent new staff to her apartment without speaking to Ella. What the supervisor did was wrong. The supervisor should have listened when Ella spoke up for herself. Ella called her supervisor's boss and told her what happened. Her supervisor's boss made sure that Ella got to speak to any new staff before they came to her apartment.

Advocating for Yourself: Your Life Plan

- ★ **Life Plan** is a plan written down and kept in your records. It tells your agency what your goals and dreams are. It also tells your agency what they should do to support you in trying to make your goals and dreams happen.
- ★ At least once every year, your agency will have a meeting called a Life Plan meeting. This is the meeting where they write the Life Plan. You, your care manager, and representatives from your program(s) will always be there.
- ★ You can invite anyone you want to your Life Plan meeting. You can invite your friends, your family, any staff you want, or any other people you trust. You have the right to run your own meeting and to talk about anything you want.
- ★ It's good to invite people to your Life Plan meeting who will support you in speaking up for yourself. Having more people at your meeting can help you make the changes you want.
- ★ Your Life Plan meeting is about you. People should talk to you about what you think and feel. They shouldn't ignore you and talk to each other.
- ★ You will tell people at the Life Plan meeting what goals you want to work on. Once a goal is written down in your Life Plan, your agency **must** help you work towards meeting that goal.
- ★ Between Life Plan meetings, you have the right to look at or ask for changes to your Life Plan.
- ★ Your Life Plan should have the most important goals that you have for your life. These goals are called **Personal Outcome Measures (POMs)**.

Life Plan: It is a document that tells about you, your goals and dreams, and what your agency must do to support you.

Your Care Manager will support you in finding the services that are right for you, writing and checking on your Life Plan, and making sure you are happy with the way things are going. Your Care Manager is a good person to talk to if you are having a problem.



Advocating for Yourself: Your Life Plan



You will tell people at the Life Plan meeting what your goals are. These goals are your **Personal Outcome Measures**. Once a goal is written down in your Life Plan, your agency **must** help you try to achieve that goal.

For example:

- Jamal's goal is to learn to cook. His agency **must** help him try to learn to cook. They could take him to cooking classes, help him pick out cookbooks, and have staff work with him on cooking.
- Shawna's goal is to go horseback riding. Her agency **must** help her try to go horseback riding. They could help her look up places where she can ride a horse, help her save money to pay for horseback rides, and take her to go horseback riding.
- Alex's goal is to move out of his group home into an apartment of his own. His agency **must** help him try to move out into an apartment of his own. They could sign him up on a list to get an apartment of his own, help him pick what neighborhood he would like to live in, and help him learn skills to take care of his apartment.
- Tanya's goal is to find a girlfriend. Her agency **must** help her try to find a girlfriend. Her agency could help her learn about dating and relationships, support her in going places to meet new women, and help her use online dating websites.



Your care manager will document your goals and personal information in the Life Plan. You have the right to review your Life Plan and confirm that the information is accurate and true.



Ask to read your Life Plan or have it read to you. If you agree with what the Life Plan says, you can sign it.



If you don't like what your Life Plan says, you can decide not to sign it until it says what you want.



You **never** have to sign your Life Plan if you don't want to.

Speaking up for yourself:

★ Joey's Story

I'm a very active guy. I like to do a lot of different things, like go to church, act in a theater group, and write. The group home I live in wouldn't let me go do the things I wanted to do. They said they didn't have enough staff to take me. I didn't think that was right, so I tried to change it.

When I had my Life Plan meeting, I told my staff that I needed to be able to go to the activities I wanted to. They still said they didn't have enough staff. After the meeting, I wrote a letter to the Justice Center, telling them what was happening. They called my group home, and we set up another meeting about my concerns.

I invited lots of people to the meeting. I invited my friends, my care manager, and staff who support me. I also talked to the director of my program. She came to the meeting too. The meeting was a big success. My residence agreed to get enough staff so I could do the things I wanted to.

I was persistent, and I stood up for what I wanted and needed. It took a lot of meetings and time, but I got what I needed for my life. If problems happen again, I will keep speaking up for my rights. I will tell my care manager about it. I will contact the

Justice Center and have another big meeting if I need to. I will never stop speaking up for myself!



Speaking up for yourself: Changing the world

You have the **right** to try to make changes in the world.



You can work to change things in your neighborhood, city, state, or country.



You can try to change the ways laws work, the way money is spent, or the way people think.



You have the **responsibility** to work with other people if you want to make changes.

Changing the World



You have the right to try and make changes not just in your own life, but in the world.



For Example:

- Some people want to change the “Marriage Penalty,” a law that says people on Social Security get less money when they get married.
- Some people want to stop people from saying the “R-word” when talking about people with developmental disabilities



There are lots of ways to make changes in the world. These include voting, talking to your legislator, going to a protest or march, and working with an organization.



Voting is a way to have your say about who is in charge and what the laws are. There is a section on pages 13 and 14 about voting.



Legislators are the people elected to make laws. You can tell them your opinion about what kind of laws they should make. You can find out who your legislators are and how to contact them at the website <http://www.usa.gov/Contact/Elected.shtml>. If a lot of people talk to a legislator about the same issue, they might change their opinion and try to change the law.



There are groups of people working together to make changes for people with developmental disabilities. One group in New York State is called **Self Advocates of New York State** or **SANYS** for short. SANYS works with people to become advocates for change in their own lives, and to work together with others to make changes in the world. If you would like to get involved, you can call them at 212-627-2104.



If you need support to vote, find or read information, go to meetings, or make phone calls, you have the **right** to get the help you need.