Part 4: What are my rights with a support worker?
Words to Know in Part 4
Birth control

Medication that makes it so you can’t get pregnant as long as you keep taking it.

Consent

When a person says they want to do something. One way to consent is to tell someone you want to do something. Another way is to say “okay” when someone asks if you want to do something.
Culture

The way people live their lives. Culture is also the things people believe, and the history a group of people has. Culture can also include things like the language or languages you speak, the foods you eat, the religion you practice, and the things you do for fun.

Dignity of risk

The idea that you have the right to take risks, even if those risks might end badly.
Discrimination

When someone treats you badly based on who you are.

Privacy

The idea that you get to decide who gets to know things about your personal life, like your gender, sexuality, or relationships.

Pronouns

Words like *he* and *she*. We use pronouns to talk about a person without using their name.
What are my rights with a support worker?

You also have all the rights from Part 2 when you have a support worker!

Support workers should always respect you.

They should always support your rights.

Support workers shouldn’t make you feel bad about yourself.
They shouldn’t **discriminate** against you.

They shouldn’t make you feel bad for being LGBTQ+.

Here are some more rights that you have when you have a support worker:
You have the right to tell your support worker how you want them to support you in places like:

- A doctor appointment
- Running errands, like going to the bank
- Hanging out with friends
For example:

Morgan has a support worker.

Morgan needs to go to the bank to fill out some paperwork.

Morgan says to her support worker, “I want you to come with me. But don’t try to help me unless I ask you.”

The support worker says “okay!”
You have the right to have your support worker come with you when you go to the doctor.

You have the right to do this even if you are going to the doctor for things like:

• Sexual health care

• Transition-related health care

If you want or need your support worker there, they should come with you.
They should respect you at the appointment.

They shouldn’t talk over you at the appointment.

They shouldn’t complain that they have to be there.

They shouldn’t make you feel bad about needing them there.
For example:

Hanna is a transgender woman. She is going to the doctor to get a prescription for hormones.

Hanna brings her support worker with her.

Hanna’s support worker listens to the doctor at the appointment.

They help Hanna when she wants to ask questions.
The support worker doesn’t complain about being at the appointment.

They don’t make fun of Hanna for needing them there.

They don’t make fun of Hanna’s gender.

The support worker respects Hanna.
But you don’t have to bring your support worker to doctor appointments.

If you want to go to doctor appointments alone, your support worker should respect that.

They should let you go to doctor appointments alone.
For example:

Janice has a doctor appointment.

Janice’s support worker will drive Janice to the appointment.

But Janice wants to go into the appointment by herself.

Janice tells her support worker, “I want to go into my appointment by myself. You don’t need to come in with me.”
Janice’s support worker says “okay!”

Janice’s support worker respects Janice’s decision.
Sometimes, you might need help taking medication.

This is especially true if you are transgender or non-binary and taking hormones.

If you need help with your medication, you have the right to get help from your support worker.

Your support worker should help you with your medication.
If your support worker needs help to give you your medication safely, you have the right to teach them how to. If you can’t teach them, you have the right to have them learn how.

Your support worker should always let you have access to your medication.
For example:

Jared is a transgender man.

Jared takes testosterone, a hormone.

Jared takes testosterone by giving himself shots.

Jared wants his support worker to help give him the shots.
The support worker doesn’t know how to give Jared the testosterone shots. They are worried they will hurt Jared.

So Jared’s support worker takes a class on how to give shots properly. They learn how to give shots. Now, they can help give Jared his shots.
You have the right to have support workers respect your privacy.

This can look like 2 different ways.

The first way is that you have privacy from your support workers.

You don’t have to tell your support workers everything.

You should be able to have privacy from your support workers when they are in your home.
Your support workers should respect the things in your home.

If you tell your support worker not to go somewhere in your home, they should stay out of those places.

And your support workers shouldn’t look through your things without you saying it’s okay.
For example:

Nina is a lesbian. She has a girlfriend.

Nina and her girlfriend have been texting each other.

Nina doesn’t want her support worker to know she has a girlfriend.

So she doesn’t tell her support worker about her girlfriend.
She also doesn’t want her support worker finding the texts from her girlfriend.

So Nina tells her support worker “I don’t want you to look at my phone unless I say it’s okay.”

The support worker says “Okay!”

Nina’s support worker respects Nina’s privacy.
The second way is that support workers shouldn’t tell other people your personal business.

They should only talk about you with other people in ways that you say are okay.

For example, if you want support at a doctors’ visit, you can tell your support worker it’s okay to talk about your health with your doctor.

That doesn’t mean it’s okay for your support worker to talk to your doctor about other private things.
Your support workers should have discretion about what they tell other people.

Discretion is the ability to keep a secret.
For example:

Kian is gay. He has a boyfriend.

Kian’s support worker has met his boyfriend.

Kian’s support worker is talking to Kian’s family.

They are talking about Kian coming to visit his family.
Kian’s support worker doesn’t tell Kian’s family about Kian’s boyfriend.

Kian’s support worker respects Kian’s privacy.
Here is another example:

Marta is pansexual. She has a girlfriend, Jamaica.

Marta is in the hospital. She has had an emergency.

Marta’s support worker is talking to Marta’s doctor.

Marta’s doctor asks, “Who should I talk to because Marta is in the hospital?”
Marta’s support worker says “You should talk to her girlfriend, Jamaica.”

Marta’s support worker only tells the doctor about Jamaica because the doctor needs to know.
You have the right to privacy around your money and bank accounts.

Your support worker should let you spend your money how you want.

They shouldn’t stop you from spending money, unless you ask them to.
They shouldn’t ask a lot of questions about how you spend your money.

If you wanted to spend money on sexual things, like condoms, they should help you do that.
You have the right to get help from your support worker to be part of your community.

If you are LGBTQ+, you might want to go to LGBTQ+ community events.

You have the right to bring your support worker with you.

Your support worker shouldn’t act weird about going to the event.
Even if your support worker isn’t LGBTQ+, they should still support you.

That’s their job.
For example:

Ruben is bisexual.

He wants to go to a pride parade.

Ruben asks his support worker, “Will you take me to the pride parade?”
His support worker says “Okay!”

Ruben’s support worker respects his right to go to community events.
If you want to go on dates with other people, you have the right to get help from a support worker to go on dates.

You have the right to decide whether you want the support worker to stay with you during the date.

If your support worker stays with you during the date, they should be polite.

They should only help as much as you need them to help.
They shouldn’t talk over you.

They shouldn’t tell your date your private business.
For example:

Malak is going on a date.

She needs her support worker to drive her to the date.

But she doesn’t want her support worker to stay with her during the date.

So she tells her support worker they can go home and come back to pick her up later.
The support worker says “okay!”

They respect Malak’s privacy.
Here is another example:

Caleb is going on a date.

Caleb needs support during their date.

So they ask their support worker to come with them.

During the date, Caleb’s support worker sits quietly off to the side.
The support worker helps Caleb when they need help.

The support worker doesn’t speak over Caleb.

The support worker doesn’t talk about Caleb’s private business.

The support worker respects Caleb’s privacy.
You might want to use dating apps. Dating apps are websites where you can meet people to go on dates with.

You have the right to get help from a support worker to use dating apps.
For example:

LiAnn is bisexual. She wants to find a girlfriend.

LiAnn wants to use a dating app for LGBTQ+ women.

But LiAnn isn’t sure how to.

She asks her support worker for help.
The support worker shows LiAnn how to use the dating app.

They help LiAnn write about herself.

They help LiAnn set up a profile on the dating app.

The support worker respects LiAnn.
Sometimes, it can be hard to know if people on dating apps are safe people.

You have the right to have your support worker help you figure out if someone is safe, if you want that help.

For example:

Mark is flirting with Joe on a dating app. It is going well.

Then, Joe asks Mark for money.
Mark doesn’t know what to do.

So he asks his support worker, “I need some help. Should I give Joe money?”

Mark’s support worker says, “It is up to you. But people on dating apps should not ask you for money.”

Mark thinks about this. He decides to stop talking to Joe.
You have the right to have your support worker help you be safe when going on dates, if you want that help.

You have the right to have your support worker help you come up with a plan of how you will keep yourself safe on dates, if you want that help.
But your support worker shouldn’t say you can’t use a dating app because they think it’s not safe.

They shouldn’t say you can’t go on a date because they think it’s not safe.

They shouldn’t say you must need help because you are LGBTQ+.

And they shouldn’t say you must need help because you have a disability.
Your support worker should only help you with making a plan if you want that help.
You have the right to make your own decisions, even if your support worker disagrees.

You have the right to make your own decisions, even if those decisions might end badly.

This right is called **dignity of risk**.

Dignity of risk means that you have the right to take risks, even if those risks might end badly.
Your support worker shouldn’t stop you from taking risks just because they don’t agree.

Your support worker could explain to you why they don’t agree with a risk.

They could offer you other choices that they think are less risky.

But they still need to let you make your own decisions.

They still need to let you do what you think is best.
You have the right to spend the night with someone you are dating or having sex with if you both want to.

This can be going to the person’s house.

Or it can be inviting the person over to your house.

You have this right even when you have a support worker with you.
For example:

Marita has a support worker at her house all day and all night.

Marita wants to have her girlfriend spend the night at her house.

Marita talks to her support worker about this.

Marita says, “I just want you to know my girlfriend will be spending the night tonight.”
Marita’s support worker says “okay!”

Marita’s support worker respects Marita’s choices.
You have the right to have sex with other \textit{consenting} adults.

You have the right to ask your support worker to help you get ready to have sex.
For example:

Allie uses a wheelchair because of their disability.

Their disability makes it hard to get dressed or undressed.

So they have a support worker to help them get dressed or undressed.

Allie’s support worker also helps them get in or out of their wheelchair.
Allie wants to have sex with their boyfriend.

They need help to get undressed.

They need help to get in bed.

Allie’s support worker helps them get undressed.

The support worker helps them get into bed.
Then the support worker leaves Allie and their boyfriend alone.

The support worker lets Allie and their boyfriend have sex in private.
You have the right to have your support worker help you with things you need to do to have sex with someone else.

But you should never do sexual things with your support worker.

Your support worker should never ask you to do sexual things with them.

If a support worker asks you to do sexual things, you can tell someone and get a different support worker.
We already talked about that you have the right to have children.

If you have children, you should have the right to get help to take care of them from your support worker.
For example:

Zizzy is disabled. She has a baby.

Zizzy needs support to take care of her baby.

Zizzy’s support worker helps her take care of her baby.

Her support worker helps her wash her baby’s clothes and feed her baby.
Zizzy’s support worker treats Zizzy and her baby with respect.
Sometimes, support workers can’t or won’t help take care of children.

Their agency, or the state, has rules about what support workers can and can’t help with.

If there are rules that stop your support worker from helping you take care of children, those rules are wrong.

Parenting is a part of life for many people with disabilities.
We should be able to get support for parenting.
We already talked about that you have the right to have safe sex.

You have the right to get safer sex supplies, like condoms and lubricant.

You have the right to get **birth control**. Birth control is medication that makes it so you can’t get pregnant as long as you keep taking it.

You have the right to have your support worker help you with all these things.

You have the right to ask your support worker questions about how to use these things.
For example:

Connor wants to go to the store to buy condoms.

He needs help getting to the store. And he needs help not getting lost at the store.

So Connor asks his support worker for help.

Connor’s support worker takes him to the store.
The support worker helps Connor buy condoms.

The support worker doesn’t judge Connor.

They don’t make fun of him.

The support worker treats Connor with respect.
Some people use AAC because they cannot speak.

AAC can be things like:

• Pointing to pictures on an iPad

• Using a letterboard to spell out words

• Typing messages on a keyboard
If you are an AAC user, you have the right to get help putting words to talk about sex and dating into your device.

Your support worker should help you with this if you ask.
For example:

Tameka is an AAC user.

She uses an AAC device with lots of symbols on it.

Tameka can’t read. She needs someone to help her put words in her device.

Tameka has a girlfriend. She wants to be able to talk to her girlfriend about dating and sex.
So Tameka’s support worker helps her put words about dating and sex into her device.

The support worker respects Tameka’s rights.
You have the right to talk about the people you date using the words you choose.

Your support workers should use the words you tell them, like *boyfriend* or *girlfriend*, when they talk about the people you date.

They shouldn’t use other words, like *just friends*, to talk about the people you date.
For example:

Amir is gay. He has a boyfriend, Ben.

Amir calls Ben his boyfriend.

Amir wants other people to call Ben his boyfriend.

But Amir’s support worker doesn’t like that Amir is gay.
Amir’s support worker doesn’t say that Ben is Amir’s boyfriend.

Instead, Amir’s support worker says that Ben and Amir are “just friends.”

Amir’s support worker does not respect Amir’s rights.
Your support worker might not always agree with your choices.

They might make different choices if they were in your situation.

But they should still support you.

They should still respect your choices.

They should still help you do the things you choose.
If you need help making a choice, your support worker can help you.

They could talk about different choices you could make.

But you should still be the one making the choice.

Remember, you are in control of your life!

Your support worker is there to help you.
They don’t get to make choices for you.

If they make choices for you, you’re not in control.

You can read our toolkit, “Who’s in Control?”, to learn more about being in control of your services.
What does respect look like?

Respect can look a lot of different ways.

Some different ways support workers can respect you are:

• Being aware of the cultures you come from.

**Culture** is the way people live their lives.
Culture is also the things people believe, and the history a group of people has.

Culture can also include things like the language or languages you speak, the foods you eat, the religion you practice, and the things you do for fun.

People with intellectual disabilities have a culture. LGBTQ+ people have a culture.

Sometimes you and your support person will be from different cultures.
This is a good thing.

We can respect each other’s cultures.

Support workers shouldn’t try to force their own culture on you.

They should know how their culture might affect their work with you.

They should make sure their culture doesn’t get in the way of working with you.
• Asking you what respect looks like for you.

Different people have different ideas about what respect looks like for them.

What respect looks like for you might not look like what other people think respect looks like for them.

• Supporting you in the things you do.

• Asking if you want to try new things.
• Listening when you have something to say.

• Understanding if you need some time alone.

• Letting you know it’s okay to ask for help.

• Asking if it’s okay to touch you if they need to touch you.

• Saying nice things about you or to you.
• Getting to know your friends and family, if you want them to.

• Respecting and using your name and pronouns.

• Understanding that sometimes people’s names and pronouns can change.

• Listening when you say no.

• Paying attention to you when you need it.
• Giving you the help you need, like help cooking or going to the bathroom, when you need it.

• Doing things you ask them, like cleaning up the house, when you ask them to.

• Being on time when they’re working with you.

• Letting you know that they are going to be late.

• Treating you like an adult.
• Letting you speak for yourself when you want to.

• Respecting your privacy and not sharing information about you.

• Helping you when you are out in the community.

• Helping you find community events you want to go to.

• Letting you dress how you want.
• Helping you get the medical care you need.

• Answering your questions. Or, if they don’t know the answer, helping you find ways to answer the question.

• Helping you go on dates if you want to.

• Being respectful when you have people (like partners or friends) over.
• Speaking up when someone else treats you badly. Or, if you don’t want your support worker to speak up, helping you speak up for yourself.

• Asking how you want them to help instead of just assuming what help you need.

• Learning about the communities you belong to, like the LGBTQ+ community.
What does it look like when you aren’t respected?

Just like respect can look a lot of different ways, so can someone not respecting you. Here are some ways that a support worker not respecting you can look:

• Hitting, punching, or kicking you.

• Touching you in ways you don’t want to be touched.
• Saying mean things about you or to you.

• Telling you that you can’t talk to your friends or family.

• Calling you by the wrong name or pronouns.

• Mispronouncing your name on purpose.

• Calling you by a name you don’t want.
• Telling you your name or pronouns are “too hard to remember.”

• Telling other people what names you used to go by but don’t anymore.

• Refusing to be around you unless you do things you don’t want to do.

• Asking to borrow your money or things you own.

• Forcing you to hang out with them.
• Not listening when you tell them no.

• Ignoring you.

• Refusing to give you help with things you need help with, like making food or going to the bathroom.

• Not doing things you ask them to, like cleaning up around the house.

• Being late when they are supposed to be working without telling you.
• Getting upset when you ask them to do something.

• Speaking over or for you when you don’t want them to.

• Telling other people personal details that you don’t want people to know.

• Treating you like a little kid.

• Acting like helping you is a really big burden.
• Telling you that being LGBTQ+ is wrong or against their religion.

• Trying to make you dress or act in ways you don’t want to.

• Not helping you with medical care you ask them to help with.

• Not letting you go on dates if you want to.

• Not helping you on dates if you ask for help.
• Not letting you have people (like partners or friends) over when they are helping you.

• Saying things that discriminate against you or someone else. For example, saying that it is wrong to be gay.

• Using stereotypes. A stereotype is when someone thinks everyone in a group acts the same way. For example, telling you that because you are a woman, you must wear a dress.
• Assuming what help you need instead of asking first.
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