Part 5: What can you do if a support worker doesn’t respect your rights?
Words to Know in Part 5
Complaint

When you tell someone else at the support person’s agency that the support person has done something wrong.

Hotline

A phone number that you can call or text to get help.
Lawsuit

When you take another person to court. You tell the court how the person hurt you. Then you ask the court to tell the other person what to do.

Mandated reporter

People, like doctors or therapists, who have to tell the police or Adult Protective Services if they think you are being hurt.
Protection and Advocacy organizations (P&As)

Legal groups that help advocate for the rights of people with disabilities. There is a P&A in every U.S. state, territory, and in Washington, D.C.
What can you do if a support worker doesn’t respect your rights?

If you want to tell someone

You could tell your support worker that they didn’t respect you.

Tell them very clearly how they didn’t respect you.

Tell them how it makes you feel.

Be specific.
For example:

Amelia’s support worker does not respect her.

Amelia’s support worker makes fun of Amelia for being bisexual.

This makes Amelia feel bad.

Amelia tells her support worker, “I don’t like it when you make fun of my sexuality. It makes me feel like you don’t care about who I am.”
Amelia is specific.

She tells the support worker exactly how she feels.
You could ask someone else for help.

This could be someone like:

- A friend
- A romantic partner
- A family member
- Another self-advocate you know
• A doctor or therapist.

Keep in mind that most doctors and therapists are **mandated reporters**. That means that they have to tell the police or Adult Protective Services if they think you are being hurt.
For example:

Jodee’s support worker doesn’t respect Jodee.

They call Jodee mean names.

Jodee wants to tell his support worker to stop.

But Jodee is scared to tell his support worker.
So Jodee talks to his friend, Mark.

Mark gives Jodee advice about how to talk to his support worker.

That makes Jodee feel better.

Now, he feels okay talking to his support worker.
Here is an example of telling a mandated reporter:

Luka’s support worker doesn’t respect Luka.

They keep teasing Luka because Luka is gay.

Luka wants to tell her support worker to stop.

So Luka asks her doctor for advice.
Luka’s doctor says, “Just so you know, I’m a mandated reporter. That means I have to tell the police or Adult Protective Services if I think someone is hurting you.”

Luka thinks about this.

Luka decides she still wants to tell her doctor.

The doctor gives Luka advice on how to talk to her support worker.
You could call or text a hotline.

A **hotline** is a phone number that you can call or text to get help.

There are many hotlines for LGBTQ+ people.
For example:

Trina is a lesbian.

Trina has a support worker.

Her support worker is not LGBTQ+. Her support worker is straight and cisgender. Her support worker doesn’t know a lot about the LGBTQ+ community.

Trina feels like her support worker doesn’t understand her.
Trina wants advice about talking to her support worker about the LGBTQ+ community.

So Trina calls a hotline for LGBTQ+ people.

She talks to one of the people who works at the hotline.

The person at the hotline gives Trina advice on how to talk to her support worker.
You could call your state’s protection and advocacy organization (P&A).

P&As are legal groups that help advocate for the rights of people with disabilities.

You can find your P&A here: [www.ndrn.org/ndrn-member-agencies.html](http://www.ndrn.org/ndrn-member-agencies.html).
For example:

Desi is gay and transgender. They have a support worker.

Desi’s support person hurts them very badly.

The support worker doesn’t let Desi leave their house.

They hit Desi if Desi does something wrong.
Desi’s support worker calls Desi mean names because they are gay and transgender.

Desi is scared of their support worker.

Desi gets help from a friend to call their P&A.

The P&A helps Desi talk to the agency the support worker works for.
They help Desi get a new support worker.
You could file a complaint

A **complaint** is when you tell someone else at the person’s agency that the person has done something wrong.
For example:

Amanda is bisexual.

She has a support person helping her all day.

She wants to go on a date with her girlfriend.

Her support person doesn’t want to go with them.
The support person says being bisexual is wrong.

Amanda can file a complaint with the agency her support person works for.

She can talk to other people at the agency about what happened.

She can ask for a new support worker.
If your support worker doesn’t respect you, you could file a complaint with their agency.

You could ask for a new support worker.
In really bad cases, you could file a lawsuit.

A **lawsuit** is when you take the other person to court.

You tell the court how the person hurt you.

Then you ask the court to tell the other person what to do.
You should try other things before filing a lawsuit.

You could try talking to the person before you file a lawsuit.

If you don’t want to talk to them, you could try filing a complaint first.
If you don’t want to tell someone

That’s okay! Sometimes people don’t want to tell anyone about not being respected.

Here are some things you could do instead:

You could write about it in a journal or diary.

You could make a plan for what you will say if you do want to tell someone.
You could do things to take care of yourself.

There are many ways to take care of yourself.

We will talk about them in the next section.
For example:

Harry is having trouble with his support worker.

Harry’s support worker is always late to work.

Harry doesn’t want to talk to anyone about it.

So Harry writes down how he feels.
He keeps track of when his support worker is late.

Harry does the best he can to care for himself.
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