



**Developmental
Disabilities
Planning Council**

Plain Language Edition

**Proud and Supported:
Rights and Respect**

Proud and Supported: Rights and Respect

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ASAN thanks all our focus group editors for their time and effort.

To Start

Everyone deserves to be treated well! Everyone deserves to be treated with respect.

You deserve to be treated well! You deserve to be treated with respect!

LGBTQ+ people deserve to be treated with respect, just like everyone else! If you are LGBTQ+, you deserve to be treated with respect! It can be hard when someone doesn't respect you. This guide will help you figure out what to do if that happens.

This guide will answer questions like:

- What are my rights?
- What are my legal rights?
- Why is fighting for rights important?
- What court cases protect my rights?
- What does it look like when a support worker respects me?
- What does it look like when a support worker doesn't respect me?
- What can I do if my support worker isn't respecting me?
- How can I take care of myself?

This guide will talk about some things that can be upsetting. It will talk about abuse and violence. We talk about abuse and violence in the sections "What does it look like when you aren't respected?" and "If someone isn't respecting you, you could do a few things." It is okay to take a break if you need to. It is okay to skip these sections if you need to.

What are my rights?

You have rights because you are human. You don't have to earn your rights. Other people should respect your rights.

Some rights are legal rights. That means there are laws saying you have those rights. Other rights don't have laws. We will talk about both kinds of rights in this guide.

There are many different rights you have as an LGBTQ+ person with a disability. Everyone has these rights. But these rights are extra important when you are an LGBTQ+ person with a disability.

You have the right to be treated with respect. You have the right to be treated with respect at work and school. You have the right to be treated with respect by your support staff.

Sometimes, people don't treat you fairly. When this happens, it can be discrimination. **Discrimination** is when someone treats you badly based on who you are. Discrimination is wrong. You have the right to not have to deal with discrimination.

You have the right to be safe. You have the right to be safe from other people hurting you. You have this right no matter your gender or sexuality.

You have the right to decide who you are. You have the right to pick what name you go by. You have the right to decide what words you want people to call you, like whether you want someone to call you a woman or a man. You have the right to decide your own gender. You have the right to decide your own sexuality. You have the right to change your mind about your gender or sexuality. Nobody should try to tell you who you are. Nobody should try to change your gender or sexuality.

You have the right to try different things. You have the right to try out different names. You have the right to try different words you want people to call you.

People might try to change your gender or sexuality. They might send you to a doctor or therapist to try to change your gender or sexuality. This is called **conversion therapy**. Conversion therapy is wrong. Conversion therapy does not work. You have the right to not have to do conversion therapy.

You have the right to be in charge of your own body. You have the right to decide who touches you. You have the right to decide how you want to be touched. You have the right to tell someone to stop touching you.

You have the right to have people talk about you with respect. This can be talking about:

- Your gender
- Your sexuality
- Your body

You have the right to learn about genders and sexualities. You have the right to learn about safer sex and relationships. You have the right to ask questions. You have the right to get help with answering your questions if you need help. You have the right to have this information given to you in a way you can understand.

You have the right to say “no” to something you don’t want. You have the right to say “yes” to something you do want.

You have the right to privacy. **Privacy** means you decide who gets to know about your gender, sexuality, relationships, and anything else in your life.

You have the right to make choices about relationships, sex, sexuality, and gender.

You have the right to tell other people about your gender and sexuality if you want to. You have the right to not tell other people about your gender and sexuality if you don't want to. You have the right to decide when you tell other people about your gender or sexuality. You have the right to decide who you tell about your gender or sexuality. You have the right to decide how you tell other people about your gender or sexuality.

You have the right to wear the clothes you want to. You have the right to wear the accessories, like shoes or makeup, that you want to. You have the right to style your hair like you want to. You have the right to look any way you want. You have the right to look like any gender you want. You have the right to be taught how to do things like put on makeup or style your hair.

You have the right to have relationships with other consenting adults.

Consent is 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. But if you say no or that you don't want to do something, you don't give consent. If someone makes you do something even though you don't want to, you don't consent.

For example:

Jacob and Andy are in a relationship. Jacob asks, "Andy, do you want to kiss me?" Andy says, "Yes, I want to kiss you." Andy consents to giving Jacob a kiss.

Lisa and Gina are also in a relationship. Lisa asks, "Gina, do you want to have sex tonight?" Gina says, "No, I don't want to have sex tonight." Lisa says, "Okay, we don't have to." Gina does not give consent to having sex with Lisa. Lisa respects that Gina does not consent.

You have the right to have sex with other consenting adults. 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 sex that makes you and your partner or partners feel good.

You have the right to get married. You have the right to have children. You have the right to start a family.

You have the right to be who you are around other people.

You have the right to get health care related to sex, gender, and sexuality. This can be healthcare like:

- Sexual health care, like getting tested for sexually transmitted infections (germs you can get from having sex with other people)
- Transition-related health care if you are transgender or non-binary. This could be like taking hormones or having surgery to make your body look more like you want it to look.
- Health care to make sure your sexual parts are healthy.

You have the right to make your own decisions about your health care.

You have the right to say who can make health care decisions for you if you can't make decisions, like if you are unconscious.

You have the right to change your name and gender marker on your identification. **Identification** is things like a driver's license, passport, or Medicaid card. A **gender marker** is a letter on your identification that tells people if you are male, female, or something else. Some states let you have a non-binary gender marker on your identification. A **non-binary gender maker** is a letter on your identification, like X or N, that tells people you are non-binary. Other states do not let you have a non-binary gender marker on your identification.

You have the right to have other people use the name and pronouns you want them to use for you. **Pronouns** are words like *he* and *she*. We use pronouns to talk about a person without using their name. You have the right to tell other people the name and pronouns you want them to use for you. You have the right to ask them to use a different name than the one on your identification.

For example:

Andy's full name is Andrew. The name on his identification, like his driver's license, is Andrew. But Andy doesn't like the name Andrew. He wants to be called Andy. Andy asks his support worker to call him Andy, not Andrew. Andy's support worker says "okay!" Andy's support worker respects the name Andy wants to go by.

You have the right to use different pronouns than the ones people might think you want. Someone else might think you want to use certain pronouns because of the gender marker on your identification. But you can always correct them. Other people should be respectful if you correct them about your name or pronouns.

For example:

Giselle uses they/them pronouns. Giselle's identification says Giselle is female. So a lot of people call Giselle she and her. Giselle doesn't like this. Giselle tells their support worker "I want you to call me they and them." Giselle's support worker says "okay!" Giselle's support worker respects Giselle's pronouns.

You have the right to tell someone if a person is not respecting your rights.

There are other rights you might have. It depends on which state you live in. To find out more about your rights, you can go to <https://www.lgbtmap.org/>. That is a website that tells you about different rights you might have. The website isn't written in plain language. It can be hard to understand sometimes. You might want to find someone you trust to help you read the website. They can help you learn more about your rights.

We have to fight for our rights!

The rights in Part 2 are rights that everyone should have. But discrimination happens. Sometimes, someone's rights are taken away because they are LGBTQ+. Sometimes, people's rights are taken away because they are disabled. This is wrong!

Some types of discrimination are against the law. Other types of discrimination are not against the law. It also depends which state you live in. Some states say many types of discrimination are against the law. Other states say only a few types of discrimination are against the law.

The LGBTQ+ community fought for the right to get married. We fought for the right to tell other people about who we are. We fought for the right to not be treated badly for being LGBTQ+.

We are still fighting for bans on conversion therapy.

When you are a child, you don't have some of the rights we talked about. Children usually don't have the right to:

- Make medical decisions for themselves
- Get married

When you are under guardianship, you lose some of the rights we talked about. This is wrong! When you are under guardianship, you can lose the right to:

- Get married
- Make medical decisions for yourself
- Have sex with people

Guardianship gets used to control disabled people. When someone has a guardian, the guardian can decide what the person can and can't do. If the person is LGBTQ+, the guardian could decide to send the person to conversion therapy. The guardian could decide the person isn't allowed to go on dates. The guardian could decide the person isn't allowed to buy certain things, like condoms or lubricant. Guardianship is always wrong.

There are better ways to help people than guardianship. Some people need help making decisions. But they still don't need a guardian. They could use **supported decision-making**. Supported decision-making is a way to make decisions. A person with a disability chooses someone to help them understand or communicate a decision. That person is called their supporter. The person with a disability can still make their own decision. But they have help from their supporter. You can learn more about supported decision-making [in our toolkit about it](#).

We all need to keep fighting for our rights. One way to fight is to speak up. Another way is to call your elected representatives. Another way is to create a group with other LGBTQ+ people. Another way is to talk about discrimination when it happens.

Court cases that protect your rights

There are a few cases that protect your rights as an LGBTQ+ person with disabilities. All of these cases were decided by the Supreme Court. The **Supreme Court** is the highest court in the United States. They have the final say on laws in the United States. The Supreme Court decided these cases. So, you have these rights anywhere in the United States.

The court cases are:

- Griswold v. Connecticut: A court case that says you have the right to get birth control.
- Lawrence v. Texas: A court case that says you have the right to have sex with other consenting adults.
- Olmstead v. L.C.: A court case that says you have the right to live in the community.
- Obergefell v. Hodges: A court case that says you have the right to marry another consenting adult.
- Bostock v. Clayton County: A court case that says you have the right to not be discriminated against for being LGBTQ+ at work.

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 trans 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 doctor's 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. 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.

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.

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 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 computer

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.

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.

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.

Self-Care

It can be hard when someone doesn't respect you. You might feel bad about yourself. Remember, it is never your fault that someone doesn't respect you. If you feel bad about yourself, here are some things you can do to make yourself feel better.

Find someone who cares about you. Ask to talk to them about how you feel.

This could be:

- A friend.
- A romantic partner.
- A family member.
- Another self-advocate you know.

Take time to rest and relax. Do things that make you happy. These are different for everyone, but some examples are:

- Making art.
- Playing with pets.
- Learning interesting things.
- Watching TV shows and movies.

Make a plan for how you will care for yourself. Think about things like what and when you will eat. Think about how you'll make sure to get enough sleep. Think about who you can ask for help.

Join a Rainbow Support Group. A **Rainbow Support Group** is a group for LGBTQ+ people with intellectual or developmental disabilities. You can meet other people like you in a Rainbow Support Group. You can talk about your life in a Rainbow Support Group.

Words to Know

Birth control

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

Complaint

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

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.

Conversion therapy

When someone sends you to a doctor or therapist to try and change your gender or sexuality.

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.

Gender marker

A letter on your identification that tells people if you are male, female, or something else.

Hotline

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

Identification

Things that say who you are, like a driver's license, passport, or Medicaid card.

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.

Non-binary gender marker

A letter on your identification, like X or N, that tells people you are non-binary.

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.

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..

Rainbow Support Group

A group for LGBTQ+ people with intellectual or developmental disabilities.

Supported decision-making

A way to make decisions. A person with a disability chooses someone to help them understand or communicate a decision. That person is called their supporter. The person with a disability can still make their own decision. But they have help from their supporter.

Supreme Court

The highest court in the United States. They have the final say on laws in the United States.