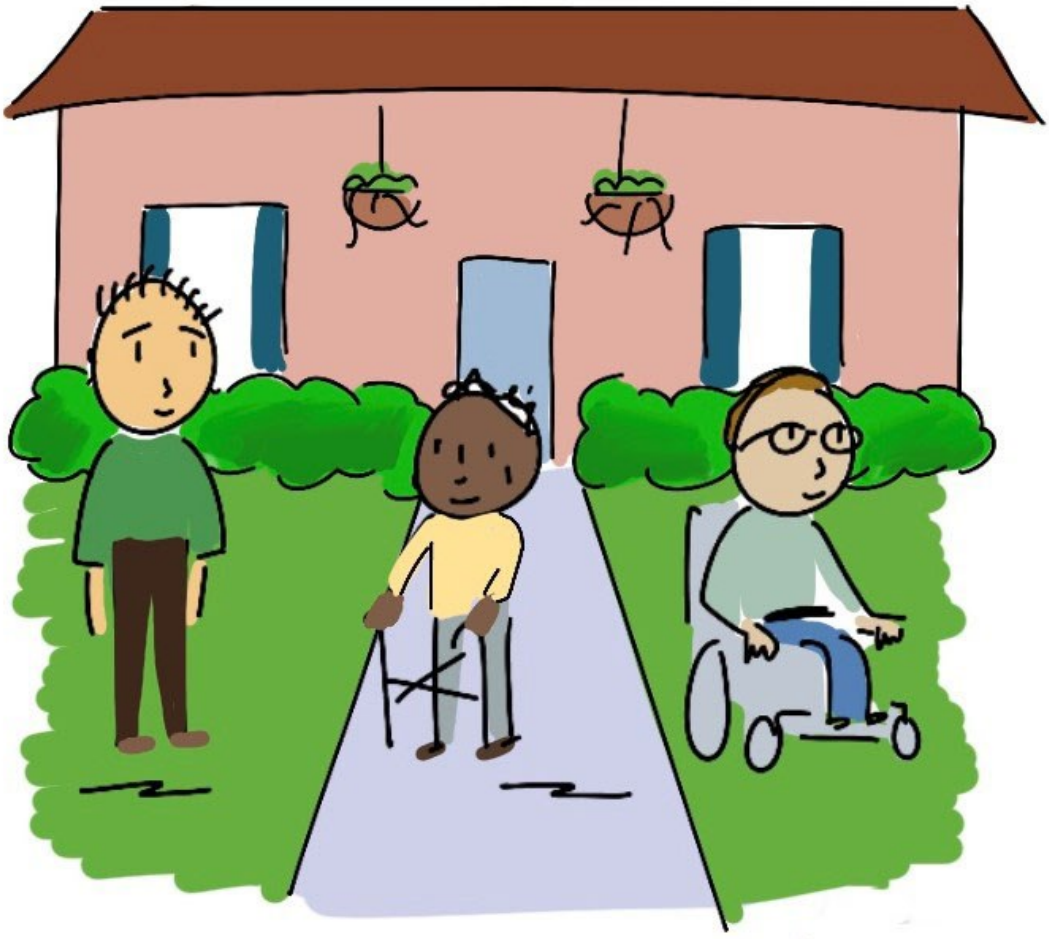
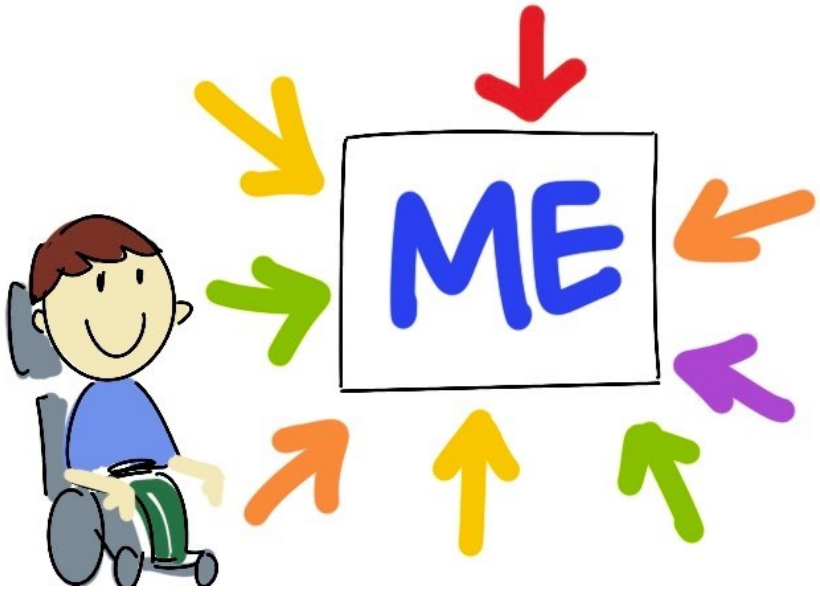


# My Rights

## A workbook for self-advocates

# This workbook belongs to:

_____




**This workbook was created by a partnership between STAR Services and the Minnesota Department of Human Services.**

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# Introduction and Purpose of this Booklet

**I have rights!** Some of these rights are human rights that all people have, and some of these rights are legal rights because I live in the United States. Additionally, if I receive services in my home or the community in the state of Minnesota, I have a set of rights known as the **Service Recipient Rights.**

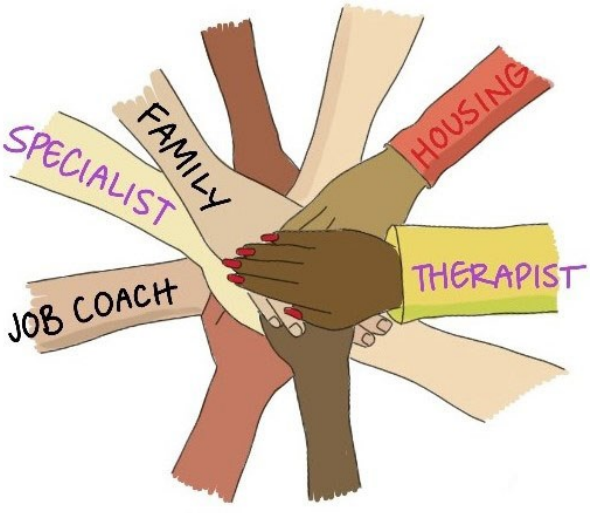
This booklet is a tool to help me identify my rights and advocate for those rights. There is space under each section to write down any questions or concerns I have regarding my rights. At the end of the book is my full list of Service Recipient Rights, as well as a list of resources on who I can contact if I have further questions about my rights or need help advocating for my rights.

# Rights and Responsibilities

**I have responsibilities!** Along with rights, come responsibilities. Your first responsibility is to know your rights and use them! Other responsibilities include things like being safe, being respectful of others, and understanding consequences of choices.

Living in the community, it is also important to remember that others around you also have rights; everyone must work together to respect each other's rights. No one person's rights are more important than another person's rights. When rights conflict, everyone involved must work together on a solution.

In this booklet, after each right is discussed, there is a prompt for you to think about your responsibilities related to that right.




## A Note about "Teams"

Throughout this booklet, you will see the word "team" used frequently. You have the right to choose who is on your team. While you may have a case manager or other paid service providers involved, you may also choose to have family, friends, or coworkers on your team.

# I have the right to **be heard**

- Be asked my opinion
- Decide what services I want, and how I want services to help me
- Make my own decisions
- Make choices– big and small
- Talk about what is working well and what I like
- Share what isn't working for me, or what isn't going well (*example: if I don't like waking up at 8am and would rather sleep in until 9am*)
- Make a complaint or share a concern, and know who I can talk to if my concern is not addressed
- Tell others what I think about my home, my job, my roommate, my services, etc.
- Use alternative communication devices, such as iPads, tablets, communication boards, sign language, recorders, and hearing devices

**What being heard means to me:**

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

**Concerns or feelings I have related to being heard:**

_____

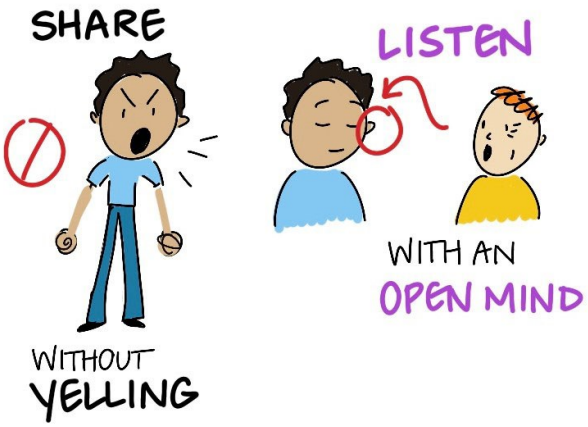
_____

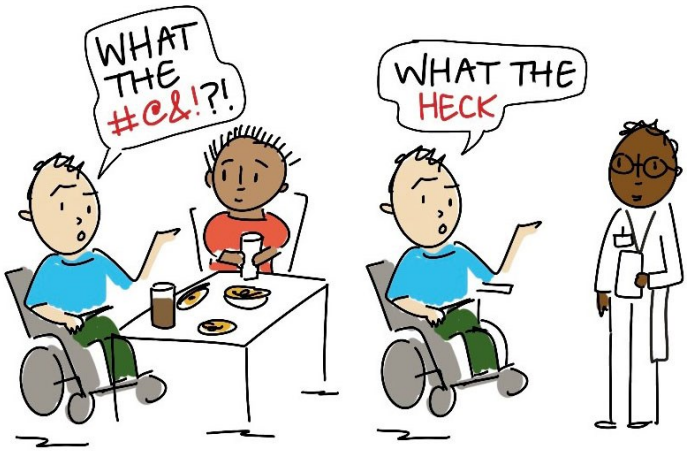
_____

_____

## My **responsibilities** related to being heard:

- Be respectful of others—this means listening to others and having an open mind
- Share without yelling
- Schedule a time to talk when needed
- Keep myself safe - not harm myself to be heard. If someone else is angry or frustrated, choose to talk at another time.
- Be aware of when I should or shouldn't use profanity




**Things I want my team to hear:**

_____

_____

_____

_____

**How I will share these things with my team:**

_____

_____

_____

**When I will share these things with my team:**

_____

_____

_____

## I have the right to **know and direct my services**

- Help select my services and providers
- Help decide what my services will look like
- Give feedback on how my services are going
- Know how my provider can support me and in what areas they can't support me
- Have my preferences respected on how I want services provided
- Know my provider's admission criteria
- Know when and why my provider might need to pause or end my services
- Have my providers work together to support me
- Know how much my services cost
- Know how my services are paid for
- Have staff who are trained and know how to do their job and support me

### Things to think about:

- I know what services I receive — Yes / No
- I know the purpose of each service I receive — Yes / No
- I am able to give feedback on my services — Yes / No
- I know why my providers might need to pause or end my services — Yes / No
- I feel that my providers work together as a team to support me — Yes / No
- I feel like my staff know how to support me — Yes / No
- I know how much my services cost or where I can find out how much they cost — Yes / No

## My **responsibilities** related to my services:

- Ask questions about my services
- Tour and learn about services
- Speak up when I don't like something or want something done a different way
- Follow guidelines if I want to cancel or end services
- Learn the limitations of services I receive
- Think about how I can combine supports from my friends, family, neighbors, volunteers, technology, and paid providers to get the support I need
- _____
- _____

**Here is what I need to know or do to address any "no" answers on the previous page:**

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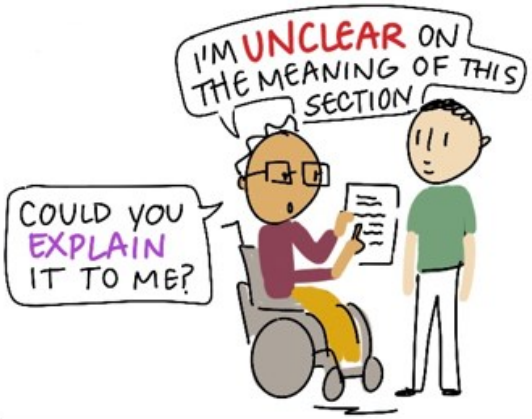



**Questions I have for my case manager or service providers:**

1._____

_____

2. _____

_____

3. _____

_____

## I have the right to **refuse or end my services**

- Decline services at any time for any reason
- Ask for a different provider
- Ask for a different staff from that provider
- Know what other options are available to me
- Know the effect of refusing or ending services
- Receive a written notice if a provider ends services
- Service providers sharing important information to transfer services and meet my preferences

## My **responsibilities** related to refusing or ending services:

- Share my thoughts or feelings
- Understand that if I stop services immediately, I might not have the support I need
- I might need to ask friends or family to help out if I don't have a service provider or haven't planned to switch to a new service provider
- I may need to look for another provider that can better meet my needs with the help of my case manager, family, and friends

- _____
- _____

**Are there services I am currently declining or wanting to end? Why?**

_____

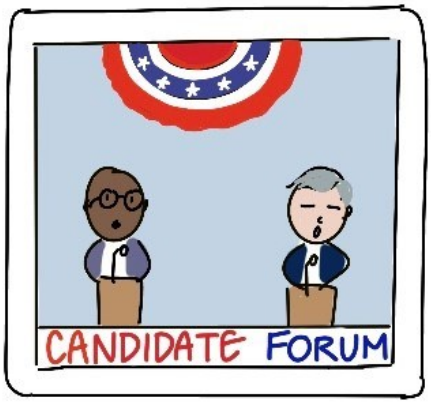
_____

_____

_____

# I have the right to **vote**

- Know what it means to vote
- Receive education on voting
- Be registered to vote
- Have the opportunity to vote - get the support I need to cast my vote or submit an absentee ballot
- Know the issues and the candidates
- Not be influenced by family, friends, or staff
- Participate in advocacy, meet and communicate with elected officials




## My **responsibilities** related to voting:

- Know whether or not I have the right to vote if I am under guardianship
- Make the decision myself on who to vote for
- Register to vote and bring required documentation to the poll
- Respect other people's opinions/decisions if they are different than mine
- _____
- _____

**Questions to think about:**

⇒ **Am I registered to vote?**

Yes No

⇒ **Do I need help registering to vote?**

Yes No

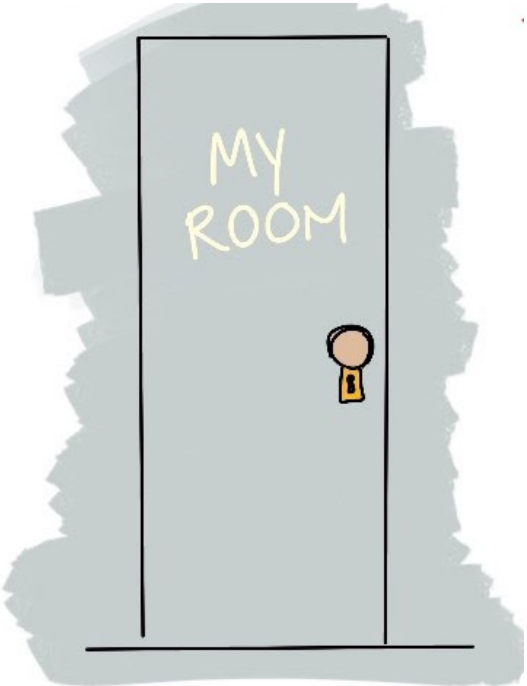
⇒ **If yes, who can help me register?**

_____

# I have the right to **privacy**

**Privacy in regards to my information**

- Have my providers follow privacy laws
- Have my information kept private
- Know what information about me is shared
- Read the information that is kept about me, or have someone read it to me and help me understand it
- Not have my private business shared with others unless I give permission




**Privacy in regards to my space**

- Know where private spaces are located
- Be alone when I want privacy
- Be alone with family or friends
- Decide what I do in private
- Have private conversations
- Lock up my belongings to keep them safe, including a lock on my bedroom door
- Decide who helps me with my personal hygiene if I need support
- Determine how close I want others to be near me (determine my own personal space)

I have the right to **privacy.**

**How I feel that others are respecting my privacy:**

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

**Things I would like to discuss with my team regarding the respect of my privacy:**

_____

_____

_____

_____

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_____

_____

**When and how I will discuss these things with my team:**

_____

_____

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_____

## My **responsibilities** related to privacy:

- Respect other people's privacy
- Avoid eavesdropping on other's private information
- Not getting  into other people's space or things
- Not interfering  with other peoples' lives
- Ensuring my right to privacy does not infringe on others
- _____
  _____
- _____
  _____

**Which responsibility is most challenging for me?**

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

**What is one action step I can take this week to advocate for my own right to privacy or respect another person's privacy?**

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

## I have the right to **be free from abuse or maltreatment**

- Not have anyone hit, kick, pinch, or otherwise hurt me or cause me pain
- Not be yelled at or called hurtful names
- Not be intimidated, or made to feel afraid
- Not be touched by anyone without my permission
- Not be taken advantage of for someone else's gain
- Not have my money or belongings stolen or used by others
- Not be denied food or drinks
- Not be isolated, put in time out, restrained, or forced to stand a certain position
- Not be made to do something against my will
- To say NO to something that makes me uncomfortable
- Have the person doing something that makes me feel uncomfortable stop IMMEDIATELY if I say stop

**If you have ever been the victim of abuse, please know:**

⇒ You are not alone, there is help available

⇒ It is not your fault, no matter what, you do not deserve to be abused or maltreated

⇒ If you are currently being abused, tell someone you trust right away, such as your case manager

⇒ If you would like support for processing the trauma, talk to your case manager or primary care provider about a referral to a therapist or counselor

## My **responsibilities** related to staying safe:

- Know who I can reach out to if ever feel that someone is mistreating or abusing me
- Learn what abuse looks like
- Learn how to be safe and identify unsafe situations
- Speak up if someone ever tries to do something that makes me feel uncomfortable
- _____
- _____

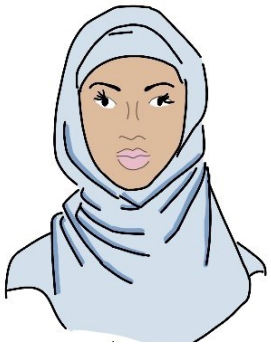
**People I trust whom I can reach out to if I am ever the victim of abuse or maltreatment and their phone numbers:**

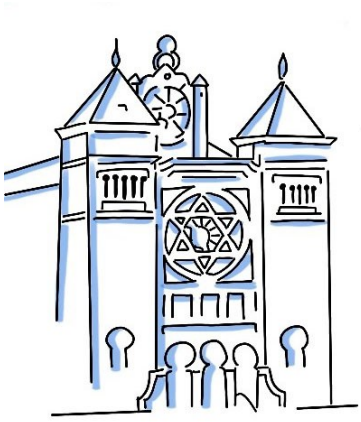
1) _____
2) _____
3) _____
4) _____

**Other thoughts on abuse and safety I would like to discuss with my team:**

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

## I have the right to **observe and practice my own cultural, ethnic, and religious activities**





- Choose my own religious/faith practices
- Exercise my faith by attending church, synagogue, temple, mosque, etc.
- Choose not to believe or participate in spiritual practices
- Wear clothing that aligns with my culture
- Cook food that aligns with my ethnic background
- Not eat food that violates my religious or cultural beliefs
- Be active and take part in my cultural traditions and activities
- Not have others talk negatively about my religion, culture, or ethnic background

## My **responsibilities** related to culture and religion:

- Respect and be aware of others cultures
- Be respectful of others and their spiritual beliefs and practices
- Share how I want to follow my culture and ethnic practices
- Share how I want to follow my religion
- _____
- _____
- _____

Things I want others to know about my cultural, ethnic, and religious practices:

My **Religion**: _____

What practicing my religion looks like for me:

_____

_____

Religious services or communities that are important to me: _____

**To respect my religious beliefs, please:**

⇒ Understand: _____

⇒ Do: _____

⇒ Avoid: _____

**My preferences related to my ethnic and cultural practices:**

Preferences regarding **how I dress:**

_____

Preferences regarding **food**, including what I do and don't eat:

_____

**Holidays** that are important to me:

_____

**Traditions** that are important to me:

_____

_____

**Daily or weekly rituals** that are important to me:

_____

_____

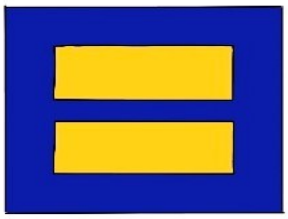
**Anything else** I want others to know about my culture:

_____

_____

## I have the right to **be free from bias and harassment**

- Freedom from being teased or made fun of based on my race, gender, age, disability, spirituality, or sexual orientation
- Be who I am without fear or shame
- Not be treated differently from others because of who I am
- Have the same opportunities as others
- Express myself



### My **responsibilities** related to bias and harassment:

- Avoid harassing others based on their differences
- Report harassment (see resources in the back)
- _____
- _____

**Thoughts on bias and harassment I would like to discuss with my team:**

1_____

_____

2. _____

_____

3._____

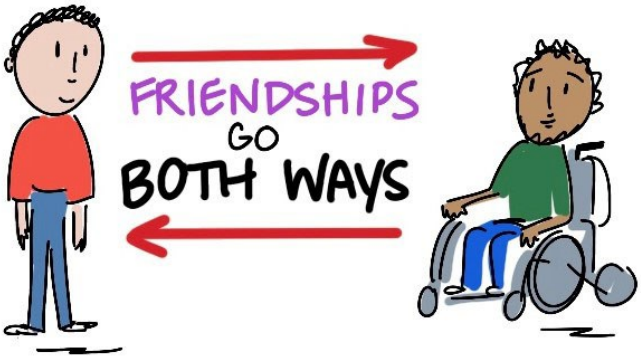
_____

4. _____

_____

## I have the right to **have family and friends**

- Choose my own friends
- Stay in contact with family and friends
- Have time alone in a private place with family and friends
- Have support to maintain or form new relationships with family/friends such as having dinner parties, sending letters or emails, etc.
- Have tools to maintain relationships (such as internet access, a smart phone, tablet, etc. that I can afford)
- Say “no” to my family and friends




## My **responsibilities** related to family and friends:

- Be safe and healthy
- Understand friendships go both ways
- Determine what supports I want or need to meet new people
- _____
- _____

Family and Friends who are important to me:

⇒ _____

⇒ _____

⇒ _____

⇒ _____

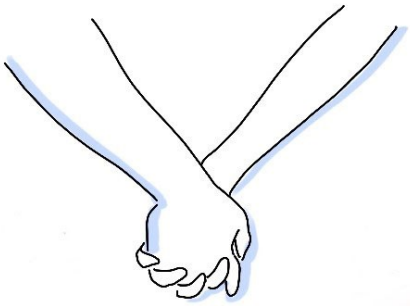
⇒ _____

## I have the right to **intimate relationships**

- Love someone and have a relationship with them if it is consensual (both people agree)
- Spend time alone with people who are important and special to me
- Receive information and education on relationships and sexuality
- Express my sexuality
- Say no at any time
- End a relationship
- Be touched only by people I want to touch me
- Be touched only where I want to be touched
- Not be put down; be safe from abuse

### My **responsibilities** related to intimate relationships:

- Be safe and respectful
- Make sure activities are consensual
- Be safe with technology— be careful who I connect with online and what private information I share
- Share accurate information
- Take my time getting to know someone
- _____
- _____



**Questions or concerns I have regarding my right to intimate relationships:**

1. _____
   _____
2. _____
   _____

## I have the right to **plan my day**

- Choose what I do with my day and how I do it
- Decide when and what I want to eat
- Decide when I want to go to bed or get up
- Decide when I want to take a bath/shower
- Decide where I want to go and who I go with
- Have routines that match my preferences
- Work, volunteer, and/or attend a day program
- Be informed of options including community and recreational events
- Join groups, clubs, or organizations in the community that interest me
- Be an active participant in any activities of groups, clubs, or organizations of which I am a member

## My **responsibilities** related to planning my day:

- Ask questions to explore options in my community
- Know what is expected of me from others in my group or club
- Be on time if others are counting on me
- Share my plans and desired schedule with people who support me
- If I live with others, coordinate schedules as needed (example: shower schedules)
- Be flexible with other people I live with and their preferences - give and take

**Preferences regarding my daily schedule that I want to share with my team:**

⇒ Where I prefer to spend my day: _____

⇒ Whom I prefer to spend time with during the day: _____

⇒ I prefer to wake up around _____:_____ and go to bed around ____:____.

⇒ I prefer to bath/shower in the morning / evening (circle one)

⇒ I tend to be more of a morning person or night person (circle one)

⇒ Other scheduling preferences:

_____

_____

**Community organizations or resources I am interested in learning more about:**

*(May include employment opportunities, volunteer opportunities, book clubs, sports leagues, community gardens, crochet/knitting clubs, art programs, etc. The possibilities are endless!)*

_____

_____

_____

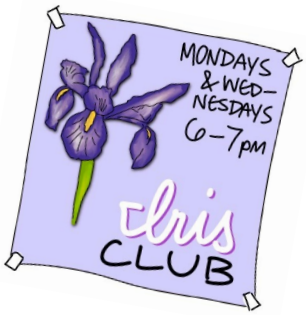
_____

_____

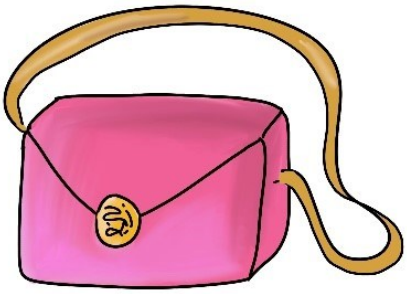
_____

_____

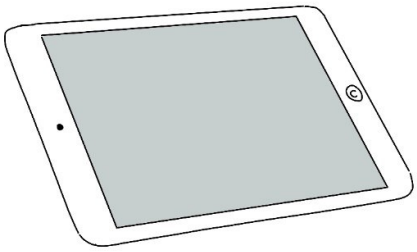
*If you are interested in connecting with others but are not sure where to start, check out the preferences inventory in the back of this booklet.*



# I have the right to **my personal possessions**



- Have things that belong to me
- Keep my belongings where I want
- Access my belongings when I want them
- Not have anyone look through my belongings without my permission
- Not have anyone give away or share my belongings with other people
- Have insurance to protect my belongings if I choose
- Buy things that are important to me
- Have collections
- Choose what items/possessions are in my personal space
- Choose how to decorate



## My **responsibilities** related to my possessions:

- Keep my possessions safe
- Keep space safe for myself and others
- Know my employer's guidelines about personal belongings at my job
- _____
- _____

**Things I want to discuss with my team regarding my right to personal possessions:**

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

## I have the right to **spend and receive money**

- Carry my own money
- Access my money when I need/want it
- Decide how to spend my money
- Receive support with budgeting if I want it
- Save for what is important to me
- Be part of all transactions with my money
- Request account statements and transaction history from my rep-payee, if I have one
- Request a different rep-payee, if I have one

## My **responsibilities** related to spending and receiving money:

- Live within my budget
- Keep my money secure
- Live with my choices - if I choose to spend all my money at one time, I will need to wait until I have more
- Plan and save for big expenses
- Learn how to budget; get support if needed
- _____
- _____

**Questions and concerns I have regarding my right to spend and receive money :**

_____

_____

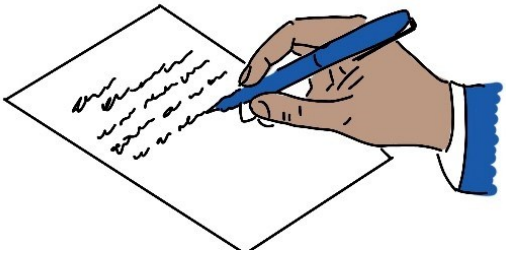
_____

_____

_____

## I have the right to **communicate with others**

- Receive and send mail or email without someone else opening it, reading it, or censoring it
- Access my email, texts, and social media
- Receive support with writing and sending letters, emails, texts, or making phone calls when I ask
- Have contact information for my friends and family
- Know important dates of others so I can reach out to them on birthdays, anniversaries, etc.
- Access a telephone with privacy
- Talk on a telephone with no one else listening
- Have access to assistive devices if necessary



**These are the ways I prefer to communicate with my family and friends:**

- ☐ Mail, letters
- ☐ Emails
- ☐ Phone calls
- ☐ Texts
- ☐ Social Media, including: Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, _____
- ☐ Other forms of communication: _____

**Is there anything keeping me from being able to contact my family and friends as often as I would like?**

_____

_____

_____

**Here are things I would like to discuss with my team to ensure I can contact my family and friends as often as I would like to, using the methods I prefer:**

_____

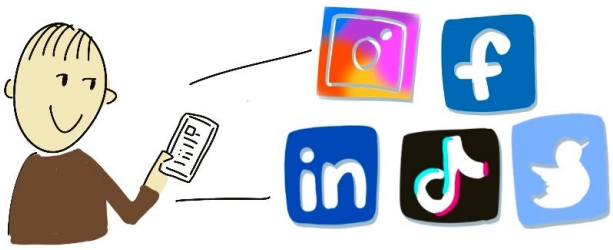
_____

_____

_____

## My **responsibilities** related to communicating with others:

- Be respectful of how I communicate with others
- Be careful what information I share to keep myself safe
- Be careful what I post online
- Respect people's preferences of when and how often I contact them; avoid harassing people



- Learn about common scams and how to be wary - check in with others when I am being asked to do something
- Leave a voicemail if I want a call back
- If I share a phone with others, allow others to use the phone
- If I have my own phone, pay for my phone bill
- If I work, I must follow the rules of my employer
- If there is someone I don't want to communicate with, I need to let others knows so they can support me

**These are responsibilities I might struggle with in this area:**

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

**These are ways my team can support me in this area:**

_____
_____
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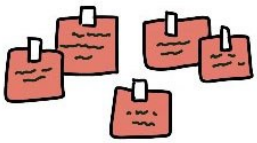
## I have the right to **live where I want to**

- Choose where I live
- Choose who I live with
- Be informed of all my options
- Feel safe where I live
- Privacy in my home
- Live where I can afford
- Have where I live treated as a home and not a place of business (group home)
- Have my concerns heard and addressed if I am unhappy living where I do or with whom I live with
- Receive support if I want to move out of my current home



AREAS FOR
IMPROVEMENT

**Am I happy with my current living situation?**

_____

_____

_____

**Here are things I want to discuss or explore with my team related to my housing options and rights:**

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

## My **responsibilities** related to living where I want to:

- Budget & plan for my needs of home, food, clothing
- Pay my rent and bills on time
- Be respectful of my neighbors
- Keep my space clean and safe
- Participate in the development of house guidelines
- If I live in a licensed setting (such as a group home), cooperate with inspections and licensing checks
- _____
- _____

**These are responsibilities I might struggle with in this area:**

_____

_____

_____

_____

**These are ways my team can support me in this area:**

_____

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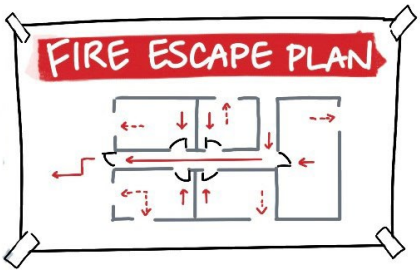
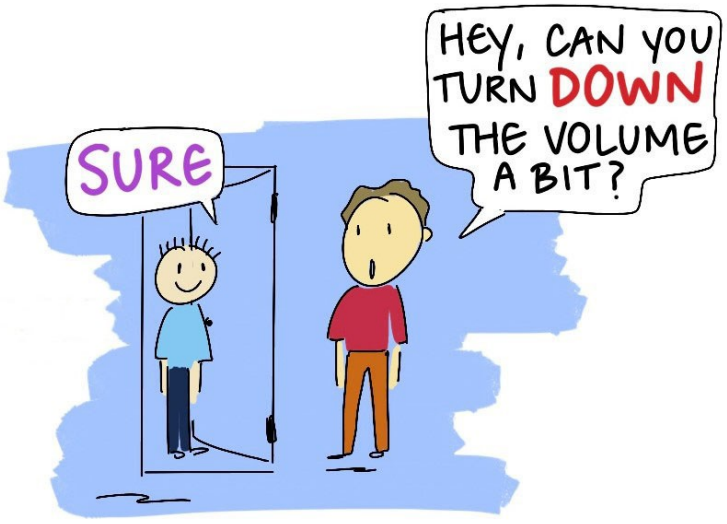
# Additional rights for **residential settings**

If you live in a residential setting (such as a group home or foster care setting), there are **additional rights** you have specific to that setting. These include the rights to:




- **Access the common areas** of the home, including shared living rooms, dining rooms, and the kitchen
- **Access three healthy meals and snacks every day** Some of the money a provider receives for residential services includes money for food
- **Access food and drinkable water at any time** This means if I want a glass of water at 2:00am, I can get a glass of water
- **Determine, with my housemates, any "house guidelines"** to respect everyone's preferences regarding things like visitors and use of common areas. Staff cannot create "house rules" for us.
- **Furnish and decorate my bedroom**. If I want to hang up posters of my favorite band, I can!
- **A clean and safe home**, free from hazards like garbage, mice, or insects
- **A home that follows the State Fire Code**. This includes having a plan to escape in the case of a fire that is known by all who live and work there.



## My **responsibilities** related to living in a residential setting:

- Be respectful of others who live and work in my home
- Participate in required emergency drills (such as fire and tornado drills)
- Do my part to keep my space healthy and sanitary
- _____
- _____

**Is there anything keeping me from enjoying my rights related to living in a licensed setting?**

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

**Here are things I would like to discuss with my team to ensure I have my rights related to living in a licensed setting respected:**

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_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

## I have the right to **make decisions about my life**

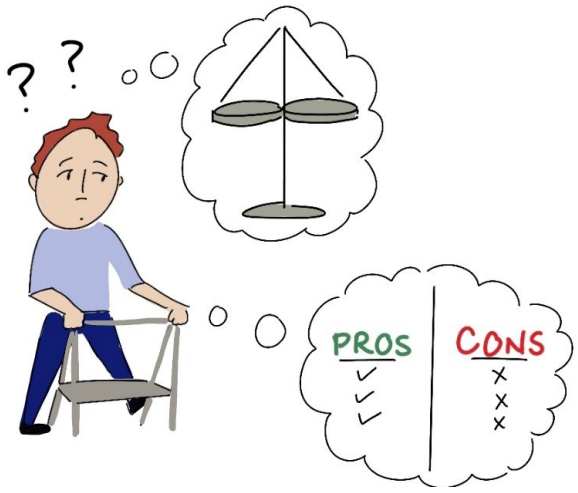
- Choose what I do with my free time
- Do things as often as I like
- Go on vacations
- Explore new activities
- Be supported how I want to be supported
- Be the one to make my decisions about my life or, if I need help, have the people I trust the most help me make decisions
- Have my desires heard and supported, even if some members of my team disagree
- Have someone help advocate for my desires
- Access outside help and support in advocating

**Nothing about me without me**

**How do I feel about "nothing about me without me?" Are there things I want to discuss with my team related to this?**

## My **responsibilities** related to making decisions about my life:

- Consider the health and safety consequences of my decisions
- Share my desires and preferences with my team
- Ask for support from people I trust when needed
- Have money to do things I want to do
- Consider the short and long-term impact of my decisions
- _____
- _____
- _____




**Decisions about my life I am currently thinking about and would like to discuss with my team:**

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## I have the right to **assert my rights**

- Advocate for my rights
- Remind others of my rights
- Have my family or friends advocate on my behalf– including at team meetings if I want
- Have my legal representative (if I have one) advocate for my rights and what is important for me
- Not worry about retaliation by anyone for asserting my rights

## My **responsibilities** related to asserting my rights:

- Know my rights
- Know who to contact if I need help advocating for my rights
- Be respectful of other people's rights
- _____
- _____

**Now that I have reviewed my rights, is there a right I need to assert or ask for support with?**

_____

_____

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_____

## What about **rights modifications?**

In rare situations, certain rights can be modified. A rights modification should only ever be put into place to ensure your **health, safety, and well-being**. Additionally, the following requirements must be met:

- ⇒ Only certain rights can be modified
- ⇒ You (or your legal representative, if you have one) must sign off on the rights modification. You (or your legal representative, if you have one), can end the modification at any time.
- ⇒ There must be a clear reason for the rights modification that is related to keeping you safe and healthy
- ⇒ There must be a way for you to get the right back. The steps must be very clear and easy to measure.
- ⇒ The rights modification must be reviewed by you and your team at least every year
- ⇒ Your service provider must keep clear documentation

**Do you have a formal rights modification? If so, do you know what needs to happen in order for you to regain the right? Write down any questions or concerns you have regarding rights modifications:**

_____

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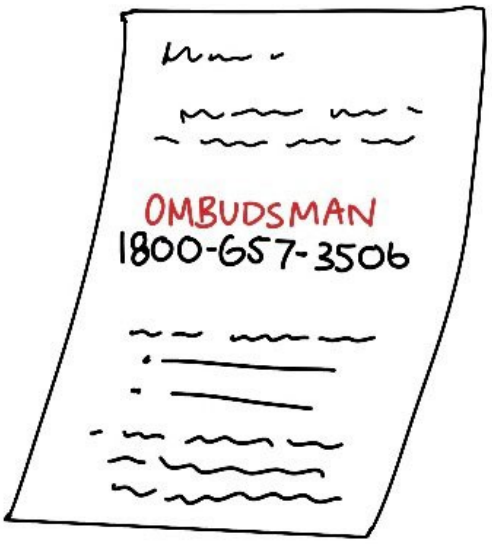
# My Notes Page

***Take a few minutes to review the notes you made throughout this booklet. Use this page to capture the things you want to discuss at your next annual or team meeting:***

# Resources

**Who can I talk to if I have questions about my rights or feel like someone is not respecting my rights?**




There are many people you can reach out to if you have questions about your rights or if you would like help advocating for your rights. This includes:

- **Ombudsman** for Mental Health and Developmental Disabilities:
  - 1-800-657-3506
  - ombudsman.mhdd@state.mn.us
- **Disability Law Center**: mylegalaid.org
- **HOME Line**: homelinemn.org (help for renters)

**I want to learn more about self-advocacy. Are there resources or groups out there I can connect with?**

Yes! A lot of great work is being done in the state of Minnesota to support people with disabilities to advocate for themselves and their rights! Below are just a few:

⇒ **Self Advocacy Online** - selfadvocacyonline.org

⇒ **Disability Hub MN** - disabilityhubmn.org

⇒ **MinnesotaHelp.info** (search for advocacy and self-advocacy agencies)

⇒ **Advocating Change Together (ACT)** (includes information about Self-advocates Minnesota (SAM)) - selfadvocacy.org

⇒ **The Arc** (includes information about People First) – arcminnesota.org

# Glossary

*Below are some terms you may see throughout this booklet and in the Service Recipient Rights that may be new to you or words you don't use in your day to day life.*

**Bias:** treating someone in a way that is unfair because you do or don't like them

**Consensual:** both people agree and are ok with what is happening

**Ethnic:** something related to a culture, nation, or other group of people

**EUMR:** emergency use of manual restraint; when a physical restraint (or hold) is used to keep someone from hurting themselves or someone else.

**Evaluate:** to carefully review and decide the significance, worth or condition of something

**HIPAA:** the law that requires providers to keep your information private and secure

**Harassment:** to annoy or bother someone again and again

**Licensed setting:** a setting that a provider owns. A common type of "licensed setting" is a group home or a Community Residential Setting in Minnesota.

**Modification:** when someone is limiting or not allowing you to have that right fully in place

**Provider:** a person or company that is paid to help and support others by providing a service or services

**PSTP:** Positive Support Transition Plan. This type of plan is created to end the use of prohibited procedures and avoid the emergency use of manual restraint in order to keep someone safe while that person learns new skills.

**Service:** the type of help or support you might receives from a provider

**Terminate:** to end something; in this case, to end services