

DISABILITY & AGING RIGHTS



DEVELOPED BY EQUIP FOR EQUALITY UNDER A GRANT PROVIDED BY THE ILLINOIS DEPARTMENT ON AGING



PERSONAL DECISION MAKING

Self-Advocacy for People with Mental Illness

You have many rights as a person with mental illness. One of the most effective ways to protect your rights is to learn and practice self-advocacy. Developing strong self-advocacy skills allows you to be a more effective participant in decisions that affect your life. Being a more effective self-advocate will help you to protect your rights and achieve maximum independence.

This fact sheet will discuss what self-advocacy is and provide you with ways you can learn how to effectively advocate for yourself. This fact sheet also includes a list of resources that provide legal and self-advocacy assistance.

What self-advocacy is

Self-advocacy is the ability to speak up for yourself about the things that are important to you.

Self-advocacy includes understanding your needs and strengths, learning how to get information, knowing your rights, making your own decisions about important issues affecting you, and reaching out to others for support and help when you need it.

The following are ways you can practice self-advocacy to protect and advance your rights and your goals.

Educate yourself

Learn about your mental illness, available treatments and the consequences of those treatments.

Learn about Advance Directives, including a Power of Attorney for Health Care and a Mental Health Treatment Preference Declaration.

Learn about your rights before, during and after hospitalization by reading Equip for Equality's Mental Health fact sheets.

Contact Equip for Equality (EFE), the Illinois Guardianship and Advocacy Commission (IL-GAC) or the Consumer Advocate/Recovery Specialist in a state mental health facility if you believe your rights have been violated.

Learn whether the facility has a grievance procedure and, if it does, learn how to file a grievance.



Get organized and get it in writing

Keep copies of admission forms, consent forms, records, evaluations, progress reports, notes from meetings, Powers of Attorney and other Advance Directives.

Keep all papers together and in order.

Have the most recent papers at the front of a file, in a binder or drawer.

Review your file frequently.

Read correspondence

Make sure to read every letter from a therapist, doctor, mental health facility, attorney or the court. There may be limited time to take action.

If you need help understanding correspondence you receive, contact someone you trust to help you.

Attend educational sessions and trainings on mental health issues

Gather information and network with other people dealing with mental health issues.

Consider attending workshops offered by Equip for Equality's Training Institute, such as Disability Rights under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), Employment Discrimination, Guardianship, Special Education, and the Federal Ticket-to-Work Program.

Find a co-advocate

If admitted to a mental health facility, you have the right to contact at least two people to inform them of your situation, and you have the right to designate a person or agency to be notified when the facility has restricted your rights.

Choose someone you trust, such as a close friend, spouse, partner or other family member, who can offer support and keep an eye out for your well-being.

Have your trusted co-advocate help monitor reactions to drugs, behaviors and the treatment you receive.

Communicate

Communicate regularly with your co-advocate, doctor, mental health facility staff members and others directly involved in your mental health treatment.

Legal and Advocacy Assistance Resources

Illinois Guardianship & Advocacy Commission

Investigates alleged rights violations against people with disabilities. Information, referral and legal representation in mental health court hearings.

1-866-274-8023

1-866-333-3362 (TTY)

www.state.il.us/igac/cominfo.html

Equip for Equality Inc.

Advances the civil rights of people with disabilities through legal services, public policy, monitoring, training and self-advocacy assistance.

Northeastern Region/Main Office

(Chicago, IL)

1-312-341-0022 or **1-800-537-2632**

1-312-541-7544 or **1-312-541-1413** (Fax)

1-800-610-2779 (TTY)

Northwestern Region

(Moline, IL)

1-309-786-6868 or **1-800-758-6869**

1-309-797-8710 (Fax)

1-800-610-2779 (TTY)

Central Region

(Springfield, IL)

1-217-544-0464 or **1-800-758-0464**

1-217-523-0720 (Fax)

1-800-610-2779 (TTY)

Southern Region

(Carbondale, IL)

1-618-457-7930 or **1-800-758-0559**

1-618-457-7985 (Fax)

1-800-610-2779 (TTY)

www.equipforequality.org



Chicago Bar Association Lawyer Referral Service

Refers callers to attorneys in Chicago and surrounding suburbs. \$30 referral fee. Referrals also made via website.

1-312-554-2001

1-312-554-2054 (Fax)

1-312-554-2055 (TTY)

www.chicagobar.org - Look under CBA Services, Lawyer Referral Service

Mandel Legal Aid Clinic

Provides legal counseling and representation to people with mental illness, advocacy for the rights of people with mental illness and selected criminal/juvenile defense representation.

University of Chicago

1-773-702-9611

1-773-702-2063 (Fax)

www.law.uchicago.edu/clinics/mandel

Legal Assistance Foundation of Metropolitan Chicago

Free legal counseling and advocacy on behalf of low-income Chicago residents, including people with disabilities.

1-312-341-1070

1-312-341-1041 (Fax)

1-866-801-0505 (TTY)

www.lafchicago.org

Coordinated Advice and Referral Program for Legal Services (CARPLS)

CARPLS is a legal assistance hotline that provides advice and referrals to low-income residents of Cook County. Staffed directly by attorneys. Provides legal referrals.

1-312-738-9200

Fax: **1-312-223-1522** (Fax)

info@carpls.org

www.carpls.org

Center For Disability & Elder Law

Free legal services for low-income seniors and people with disabilities in Cook County.

1-312-376-1880

1-312-376-1885 (Fax)

1-312-908-8705 (TTY)

info@cdelaw.org

www.cdelaw.org

Prairie State Legal Services

Assistance for low-income people and those over the age of 60 with civil matters such as debt collection, disability, family law, health insurance, housing discrimination, living wills, powers of attorney, SSI and unemployment. Nine field offices in northern Illinois. Information about field offices is available. Services are free but income eligibility will apply.

1-815-965-2134

1-815-965-1081 (Fax)

1-815-965-5114 (TTY)

www.pslegal.org



Land of Lincoln Legal Assistance Foundation

Provides free legal assistance to low-income residents living in southern and central Illinois (serving 65 counties). Offices are located in Alton, Carbondale, Champaign, East St. Louis and Springfield. Handles the following types of legal issues: Medicaid/Medicare, wills/estates, consumer, landlord/tenant, real estate/foreclosure, special education, orders of protection, divorce and child custody. Financial eligibility applies but no fee required.

Administrative Office

(East St. Louis, IL)
1-618-398-0574
1-618-398-0681 (Fax)
www.lollaf.org

Illinois State Bar Association Lawyerfinder

Provides a lawyer referral service to speak with qualified attorneys in various fields.

1-800-922-8757
www.illinoislawyerfinder.com

Illinois Department of Human Rights

The Illinois Department of Human Rights investigates charges of discrimination on the basis of race, sex, national origin, ancestry, age, marital status, unfavorable military discharge, physical and mental disabilities, and family status. Offices are located in Chicago, Marion and Springfield. The department's mediation program is available to mediate employment charges filed in the Chicago office.

Chicago Office

1-312-814-6200
1-312-814-1436 (Fax)
1-866-740-3953 (TTY)

Marion Office

1-618-993-7463
1-618-993-7464 (Fax)
1-866-740-3953 (TTY)

Springfield Office

1-217-785-5100
1-217-785-5106 (Fax)
1-866-740-3953 (TTY)

www.state.il.us/dhr ■



Equip for Equality

20 North Michigan Avenue
Suite 300
Chicago, IL 60602

www.equipforequality.org
1-800-537-2632
1-800-610-2779 (TTY)

Illinois Department on Aging

One Natural Resources Way
Suite 100
Springfield, IL 62702-1271

Senior HelpLine:

1-800-252-8966
1-888-206-1327 (TTY)
www.illinois.gov/aging

The Illinois Department on Aging does not discriminate in admission to programs or treatment of employment in programs or activities in compliance with appropriate State and Federal statutes. If you feel like you have been discriminated against, call the Senior HelpLine at 1-800-252-8966, 1-888-206-1327 (TTY).