

# YOUR RIGHTS TO HEALTHCARE UNDER THE LAW

## IF YOU OR SOMEONE YOU KNOW HAS DISABILITIES: KNOW YOUR RIGHTS TO MEDICAL CARE – COVID-19

People with many different kinds of physical and mental conditions have legal rights. There are disability laws that cover you when you go to get medical care. The doctors and hospitals have to help you unless it would be dangerous to do so.

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This means:

- You can get medical care like everybody else. No one can deny you emergency care (like a ventilator) just because of your disability.
  - You can bring a family member or other helper with you unless they are also sick.
  - You can have a family member or other helper by phone if the hospital or doctor's office says that only patients can be in the COVID treatment areas. If they do not let you use a phone, you can tell them you need them to make an accommodation in their policy.
  - You can bring a service animal with you most of the time.
  - You can bring your own stuff like a ventilator or wheelchair.
  - You can bring a communication device, such as an iPad or a speech-generating device.
  - You can get the kind of communication you need. If you are Deaf, you can get ASL interpreting, CART, a Cued Speech transliterator, or other communication supports. You can get papers in Braille, large print, or in a computer file. You can get information in simple words.
  - You can get information in another language. You can get an interpreter.
  - You can get help with follow-up care and services.
  - You can write what you want for your care and the phone number of a family member or other helper on your body using a marker.
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**If you have a problem with a doctor or hospital during COVID-19, call Disability Rights Tennessee at 1-800-342-1660 or go to <https://www.disabilityrightstn.org/get-help>**

Under the **Americans with Disabilities Act** and other laws, you cannot be treated badly just because you have a disability, someone in your family has a disability, or because someone thinks you have a disability. You can ask for changes you need for your disability. You have a right to medical care unless you do not want the care. The hospital and doctors should give you medical care unless doing that would not keep you alive.

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**Sources:** Disability Rights Education & Defense Fund (DREDF) - *Know Your Disability Healthcare Rights:* <https://dredf.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/DREDF-Know-Your-Rights-COVID-19-03-27-2020-English-Spanish.pdf>

**Self-Advocates Becoming Empowered (SABE)** - *A Statement of Common Principles on Life-Sustaining Care and Treatment of People with Disabilities*  
<https://www.sabeusa.org/meet-sabe/policy-statements/life-sustaining-care/>

**Sondra Solovay and Brandie Sendziak, #NoBodyIsDisposable Coalition** - *#NoBodyIsDisposable Know Your Rights Guide to Surviving COVID-19 Triage Protocols:* [https://docs.google.com/document/d/1td5Uq2R\\_ivBLzPzamng41T89nLD1UetHzS-9tGr1fsk/edit](https://docs.google.com/document/d/1td5Uq2R_ivBLzPzamng41T89nLD1UetHzS-9tGr1fsk/edit)