



DEPARTMENT OF DEVELOPMENTAL SERVICES

OFFICE OF HUMAN RIGHTS

I. Values and Principles

It is the policy of the Department of Developmental Services to seek to affirm, promote, and protect the rights of the Commonwealth's citizens with developmental disabilities. The denial of any individual's rights, whether it occurs because of ignorance, misinformation, or malice, is unacceptable.

This policy provides everyone in the DDS system with a basic framework for understanding the rights of the Commonwealth's citizens with developmental disabilities. When these principles are followed people's lives will be more complete and vital and they will not be subjected to abuse and mistreatment.

Three key principles guide and inform this policy.

1. Respect for every individual.
2. Education and support for every individual and those that support them to enable them to understand their rights and that exercising their rights involves the responsibility to consider the rights of other persons.
3. Freedom and the power for individuals to express their wishes and to exercise their rights, including those individuals for whom a guardian has been appointed. For those individuals who have difficulty with such expression, it is even more important that those that support them strive to understand their actions and behaviors.

II. Purpose and Scope

The Department of Developmental Services is committed to the affirmation, promotion, and protection of the rights of the Commonwealth's citizens with developmental disabilities. This policy is a statement of the human rights of these individuals. People with developmental disabilities have the same constitutional rights as other citizens including equal protection and due process under the law.

This policy is intended to assure respect for the human rights and dignity of people with developmental disabilities. Employees of the Department, employees of agencies under contract to the Department, and every person who is otherwise engaged in the provision of DDS services or supports is individually responsible for affirming, promoting, and protecting human rights in a manner consistent with this policy.

III. Statement of Human Rights

The Department expressly adopts each of the following statements in furtherance of the goal of respecting the human rights and dignity of the Commonwealth's citizens with developmental disabilities.

1. **Dignity.** Individuals have the right to be treated with respect, including respect for ethnic and cultural diversity.
2. **Self-determination.** Individuals must have the opportunity to make meaningful choices and to make informed decisions about their lives. Informed decision-making includes the right to decide to take reasonable risks. It also requires adequate support to help the individual understand and weigh the risks and benefits of their decisions, as needed.
3. **Communication.** Individuals have the right to communicate with others and to fully express themselves. Individuals should have access to the assistance necessary to communicate, including access to adaptive equipment, to alternative hearing and communication devices, to postal services, and to reasonable access to and assistance in using the telephone.
4. **Relationships.** Individuals have the right to visit others and to receive visitors, including the right to have friendships and intimate relationships with mutually consenting adults.
5. **Privacy.** Individuals have the right to privacy. This includes privacy during care of personal needs, privacy in communication, privacy in visits, privacy in one's home and personal space, and confidentiality of personal information.
6. **Personal Safety.** Individuals have the right to feel safe and the right to be free from harm or abuse.
7. **Personal Property.** Individuals have the right to obtain, keep, use, and dispose of personal possessions.
8. **Education, Employment, and Compensation.** Individuals have the right to equal access to opportunities for education and for employment. Individuals who are employed have the right to be fairly compensated for the work that they do.
9. **Community Membership.** Individuals have the right to expect services and supports to be provided in a manner that promotes their ability to live in the least restrictive and most typical settings appropriate to them. Supports and services should encourage and maintain meaningful community membership. As members of a community, all individuals have a responsibility to respect other people and to exercise their rights with due regard for the rights of other members of the community.