

WHAT IS DISABILITY RIGHTS MARYLAND (DRM)?

- **Disability Rights Maryland (DRM)** is Maryland's Protection and Advocacy Agency for people with disabilities.
- DRM is an independent, nonprofit law firm. We do not charge for our services. We are **NOT** part of the hospitals or RICAs.
- We monitor, investigate and work to prevent cases of abuse, neglect or rights violations in programs that serve individuals with mental illness.
- Meetings with DRM are private and confidential, unless you or your guardian give permission to share information.



WHAT CAN DRM DO?

- We can help make sure you are safe by **advocating for changes** to your environment, treatment, and staff response to you.
- We can **give you advice** about your rights.
- We can give you tools and resources to help you advocate for yourself.
- We can provide individual representation in cases involving abuse, neglect or rights violations for all residents and patients in state psychiatric facilities and RICAs.
- We work on systemic improvements to the care, treatment, and safety of youth and adults in psychiatric facilities.



CONTACT US

Disability Rights Maryland
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Website: disabilityrightsmd.org



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KNOW YOUR RIGHTS: Sexual Abuse

Empowering Adults and Youth in Maryland's State Psychiatric Facilities and RICAs

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WHAT ARE YOUR RIGHTS?

- **Upon your admission**, the facility should make sure you are safe, your needs are being met, and you are protected from sexual abuse and other harm.
- **Within 5 days of your admission**, your treatment team should do a Risk Assessment, and if needed, develop a Protection Plan to address your safety needs.
- Your treatment team must **regularly** update your Risk Assessment, Protection Plan and Individual Plan of Care.
- If you have experienced sexual abuse, your treatment team **must review your plan** and address your needs and safety.
- When addressing your needs, **your treatment team should consider:**
 - › Room assignment
 - › Activities and programs with others
 - › Supervision needs
 - › Group or individual counseling and;
 - › Providing you education on personal safety
- Your treatment team **must listen to your opinions** about your plan.
- **You have the right to feel safe!**
- **You have the right** to be treated humanely always, and particularly while your complaint is being investigated and addressed.



WHAT IS SEXUAL ABUSE?

SEXUAL ABUSE INCLUDES:

- Unwanted sexual contact from another resident;
- Being forced or pressured by another resident to perform a sexual act;
- Being harmed or threatened by a resident to get you to perform a sexual act; and
- ANY sexual contact with staff.

SEXUAL ABUSE COMPLAINTS

- **You have the right** to have your sexual abuse complaint reported and responded to appropriately.
- Depending on the type of sexual abuse complaint, who investigates can vary. The complaint could be investigated by the facility police, outside police or your treatment team.
- **Staff must immediately report all sexual abuse of residents** after they see it happen, you tell them it happened to you or another resident, or they have reason to believe it happened to a resident.
- The facility must report all sexual abuse complaints to DRM **within two business days** of the complaint.
- **Staff and the facility cannot decide to ignore or fail to timely report your complaint to DRM** even if they think you may have consented to the sexual contact, they don't believe you, or the complaint doesn't seem accurate.

HOW CAN DRM HELP?

In order to advocate for your protection from sexual abuse, **DRM MAY ASK FOR YOUR**

PERMISSION TO:

- Investigate your sexual abuse complaint;
- Review the facility's response to your complaint;
- Work with your treatment team to develop additional safety measures you want; and
- Advocate for you to receive trauma-informed care and services.



THINGS TO CONSIDER

- Did you know multiple studies have shown that people with mental illness are especially vulnerable to victimization?
- Have you reported sexual abuse in the facility recently and you feel like staff did not respond appropriately?
- Do you have any other **questions about your rights** in the facility?
- Want to **share your concerns** about the facility?
- **If you feel like the facility and staff have not responded to your complaint appropriately, please contact us.**

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