



The RAISE Center  
National Resources for Advocacy, Independence, Self-determination  
and Employment  
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## Tip Sheet:

### People with Disabilities Can Have a Support Person during Medical Care

Doctors and hospitals were limiting COVID spread by only seeing the patient. People with disabilities were on their own, even if some were unable to communicate with health providers. Some states even denied care to people with disabilities. The NIH (National Institutes of Health) recognized people with disabilities as facing unequal care. This means they are more at risk of worse results. Even before this, advocates/self-advocates fought to allow people with disabilities to have a “support person” if needed.

How can self-advocates and families/caregivers enforce rights for a support person?

- ❖ People with disabilities have healthcare rights (see Resources) under the ADA and ACA. Families and self-advocates can keep a copy of page or link if needed to show staff.
- ❖ For any problems allowing a support person, a complaint can be filed with the OCR.

Families/friends need to say they are a support person for the person with a disability. How this works and why it's important:

- ✓ There are better results for both the doctor and patient when a support person is helping.
- ✓ Besides communication problems, the support person can ask questions about medicine changes, labs, and testing and, if needed, explain it to the person with a disability.
- ✓ This means that anyone with a disability can have their support person with them at any time.

The supporter needs to remind staff that they are not a visitor, but a support person. The support person doesn't have to follow no visitor policies or visiting hours.

Self-advocates and families need to know that there are protections by law so that they can have a support person with them during medical care.

## Resources

[Civil Rights for People with Disabilities](#)

[Office of Civil Rights complaint](#)

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