
Missouri Proclamation of Equal Rights for People with Disabilities as Members of Society*

Introduction

The establishment of the “Missouri Proclamation of Equal Rights for People with Disabilities as Members of Society” began after the *UMKC Institute for Human Development* Consumer Advisory Leadership Team (CALT) identified the need for an overall disability rights statement to guide state practice, policy, and legislative discussions. CALT reviewed existing statements from around the nation to build from, and invited multiple stakeholder organizations from across Missouri to participate in the writing and editing process. The statewide group met three times over the course of a year and reviewed existing statements, identified a model document*, and developed the Proclamation. Below is the resulting recommended language. For a way to share your comments on the document and to see a list of participating organizations, please see page 4.

PREAMBLE

We believe all persons, **including people with disabilities**, are whole human beings, regardless of ability, mobility, expression, communication, intelligence, accommodations, strengths, independence, or support needs. All human beings should be able to grow and develop to their full potential. The human and civil rights of all people must be honored, protected, communicated, and enforced. We believe and affirm that all people should have freedom and power to direct their own lives with determination, dignity, and meaningful choice.

Section I: WE BELIEVE and AFFIRM that all human beings, including people with disabilities, have the basic right to live free from abuse, neglect, and exploitation in their homes, jobs and communities. As such:

1. People should not have to tolerate physical, mental, financial, emotional or sexual exploitation, bullying or abuse. People deserve freedom from situations or systems where these issues have become commonplace or are ignored.
2. People’s money and resources must be safe, secure, and under their control and/or direction.
3. People must be free from discrimination, whether based on hate, fear, pity or good intentions. Discrimination is determined by the effect an action has on a person’s life, whether the intent of the action was to discriminate or not.
4. People must be free from attitudes, beliefs, and perceptions communicated by others, which diminish their self-worth and standing in society.

* Originally based on the *Washington Proclamation for the Dignity and Rights of All Human Beings*

Section II: WE BELIEVE and AFFIRM that all people, including those with disabilities, have the right to live free from the oppression of:

1. Systems that isolate people from the community, whether in rural or urban settings.
2. Supports that control them and their environment, or fail to recognize that they are in charge of their own lives.
3. The fear that they will be denied treatment or services, abandoned, or left to die, because the circumstances of their existence are deemed too costly, too difficult, or simply not important.
4. End of life decisions and advance directives made without their consent.
5. Placement in situations and institutions, regardless of location, that isolate, control, and segregate them, including housing, employment, and education that does not support autonomy and community life.
6. Labels that separate, devalue, or dehumanize people.
7. Systems that impose or deny services without meaningful participation by those affected by the services.
8. Parents, guardians, professionals, or others who make decisions that ignore or disregard the decisions of people with disabilities, compromising their wishes, perspectives, and input in the process, thereby altering their self-determined course as human beings.
9. Medical discrimination that devalues them through:
 - a. Laws, policies, and practices that assume certain people do not deserve medical treatment to improve or sustain their lives.
 - b. Medical decisions that deny or force medical treatment without the affected person's involvement and consent, because it is presumed they do not understand or know what is best for themselves.
 - c. Treatment that alters or controls people for the convenience of others, society, or any system, without their explicit consent.

Section III: WE BELIEVE and AFFIRM that all people, including those with disabilities, have the freedom to lead a meaningful life, in which:

1. Each person has his or her own name and identity and is acknowledged as a unique individual.
2. People are presumed to be competent.
3. People have the right to grow intellectually, sexually, physically, spiritually, and socially to their full potential, without pressure to alter how they speak, feel, think, or move.
4. People exercise the right to choose their relationships: the people with whom they spend their time, share personal details, or are intimate.

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5. People are the primary drivers of their own life choices and decisions, and their right to make decisions for themselves, with or without assistance, is respected, encouraged, and supported.
 6. People have the right to fail. Risk is acceptable, even when it results in a person not being successful. The outcomes of people's choices should not affect their value as human beings.
 7. People have the right to learn, grow, and have equal access to inclusive education that prepares them to enter the working world and participate fully in their communities. We reject the notion that people are on predetermined paths because they have a disability.
 8. People have the right to learn and grow through the pursuit of life-long learning opportunities.
 9. People are inspired by others' high expectations for them, helping them strive to become all they can be. Limited, or no expectations, restricts people's growth, advances stereotypes, and leads to labeled incompetence and poverty, instead of self-determined lives.
 10. People pursue careers that provide economic stability and freedom, where they can be promoted, form positive work relationships, and receive employment supports that protect and promote their autonomy.
 11. People direct and/or control their own finances, consistent with their personal ambitions and responsibilities.
 12. People have access to technology, which includes assistive technology that increases their ability to access information, and gives them the ability to interact as equal participants in their communities.

Section IV: WHEREAS all of the above rights are recognized, honored and practiced, we endeavor to create and uphold opportunities that:

1. Promote the health and well-being of all people.
2. Support people to fully, meaningfully, and productively participate in civic, cultural, political, economic, and social life, regardless of communication style, mobility, race, nation of origin, religion, age, gender, sexual orientation, intelligence, accommodations, strengths, independence, support needs, and ability.
3. Presume competence and uphold high expectations.
4. Support and never abandon those who struggle and seek assistance, no matter how difficult.
5. Promote respect for each other, even in conflict.

Comment on the Proclamation

To share your comments on the wording of the Proclamation, please use the link below:

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/MO-DisabilityRights>

Participating Organizations

Representatives of the following organizations participated in all or part of the development of the rights statement. Group and individual feedback was solicited through the entirety of the process, including multiple versions of the statement. Their participation does not imply they agree with everything in the Proclamation at this time.

ARC of Missouri

Governor's Council on Disability

Heartland Self-advocacy Resource Network (HSRN)

Missouri Association of County Developmental Disabilities Services (MACDDS)

Missouri Association of People Supporting Employment Now (MO-APSE)

Missouri Association of Rehabilitation Facilities (MARF)

Missouri Department of Mental Health – Division of Developmental Disabilities (DMH)

Missouri Developmental Disabilities Council (MODDC)

Missouri Protection and Advocacy (MO P&A)

Missouri Self-Determination Association (MoSDA)

Missouri TASH

People First of Missouri (PFMO)

Self-Advocates Becoming Empowered (SABE)

Services for Independent Living (SIL)

University of Missouri-Kansas City (UMKC) Institute for Human Development (IHD)

UMKC IHD Consumer Advisory Leadership Team (CALT)