



## Respecting Rights: A project at ARCH Disability Law Centre

### Shared Learning Forum

*Jessica Field* - Community Outreach and Education  
Coordinator  
*Sarah J* – Self-Advocate and Respecting Rights Member  
ARCH Disability Law Centre

February, 23rd 2024





# Presenters

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Sarah J: Self-Advocate and Respecting Rights Member



Jessica Field: Community Outreach and Education Coordinator



# Today's Discussion Topics

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1. About ARCH
2. What is Respecting Rights?
3. Our Team!
4. Stop Light Cards!
5. Past Projects and Initiatives
6. Current Projects and Initiatives
7. Why this Work is Important
8. What is next for Respecting Rights?
9. How to get Involved
10. Questions



# 1. About ARCH

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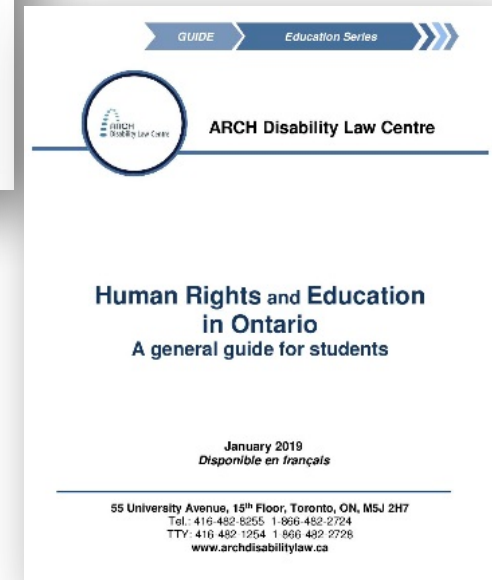
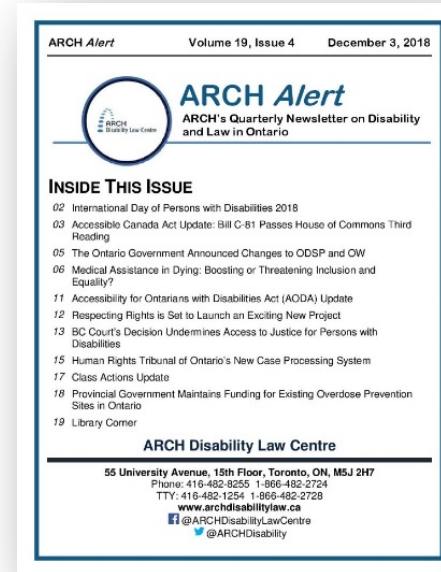
- ARCH Disability Law Centre is a disability rights legal clinic located in Toronto, Ontario.
- ARCH is dedicated to defending and advancing the equality rights, entitlements, fundamental freedoms and inclusion of low-income persons with disabilities across Ontario.
- ARCH is primarily funded by Legal Aid Ontario.

More information about ARCH at: [www.archdisabilitylaw.ca](http://www.archdisabilitylaw.ca)



# ARCH Services

- Test Case Litigation
- Public Legal Education
- ARCH Alert
- Publications
- Summary Advice and Referral Service





## 2. What is Respecting Rights?

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- Respecting Rights is a rights education project at ARCH Disability Law Centre, led by people with disabilities
- We work in a TRIPLE SCOOP way – with lawyers, self-advocates, and advocacy staff
- We offer legal rights educational workshops, monthly and quarterly meetings for self-advocates
- Occasionally, we also engage in Accessible law reform work



# Respecting Rights Video

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<https://youtu.be/meZNjnNK1K8?si=veIO874fl79LCINS>



# 3. Our Team!







## 4. Stop Light Cards!





## 5. Past Projects and Initiatives

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- Time for Change Music Video
- My Voice, My Choice Phase I
- Get Connected Campaign
- 5 Things Campaign
- Accessible Land Acknowledgement



# Time for Change Music Video

- During the pandemic, Respecting Rights brought 23 self advocates together over Zoom to create a powerful message they want to share with the world. They worked with a musician, producer and graphic designer to record what human rights mean to them
- Respecting Rights and self-advocates also created sets of questions for people to reflect on after watching the video, calling them Time for Change: A Discussion Guide
- These sets of questions are specifically created for different groups in the networks that support persons labeled with intellectual disabilities such as family and support staff



## Time For Change Music Video Discussion Guide Questions For Developmental Services & Other Staff

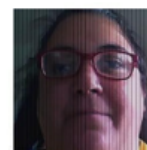


**Victoria says: "Everyone has the right to participate in society."**

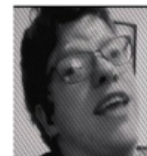
**Question:** What specific advocacy efforts have you made to reduce barriers to societal participation with someone you support?  
Did you include the person with a disability in advocating?



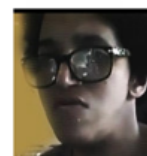
**James says: "Under the law we have the right to accessible information. This means communication in ways that we can understand."** **Question:** Does your organization regularly give information in plain language? For example, are there complaint mechanisms in plain language for persons with disabilities to understand?



**Judy says: "Making decisions about what's important to me helps me be more independent and in charge of my life."** **Question:** Could you describe a time when you supported a person to make a decision about what was important to them? Describe accommodations you put in place to support someone in making decisions.



**Alicia says: "The Convention says that people with disabilities should have the same opportunities as everyone else."** **Question:** Talk about a time when you supported a person to have the same opportunities as everyone else. What specific actions did you have to complete to make sure the opportunity was available & accessible?



**Marissa says: "Everyone has a strong and powerful voice somewhere. We just need a chance to be heard."** **Question:** Can you share an example of a time when you helped a person's voice to be heard. What did you do to support their voice being heard?



# Time for Change Music Video

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[https://youtu.be/AU4C5uY0\\_Ss?si=buf8FhdMVmf3Aj1](https://youtu.be/AU4C5uY0_Ss?si=buf8FhdMVmf3Aj1)

# My Voice, My Choice (MVMC) Phase I

- After the Huronia Class Action Law Suit, leftover funding was available for new projects. Respecting Rights is grateful to have been chosen to receive this funding
- We committed to using it to help improve lives of people with disabilities. We wanted to help people with disabilities learn about their right to make decisions
- We did a series of workshops that self-advocates lead with support of lawyers and social workers in 3 areas of Ontario: Western (London), Central (Toronto), and Eastern (Ottawa)





# My Voice, My Choice (MVMC) Phase I

- Self advocates decided on topics that were most important to talk about and we created our workshops based on these topics:
  - Relationship Decision-making rights
  - Money Decision-making rights
  - Health care Decision-making rights
  - Daily living Decision-making rights
- We decided to study how our work helps people with intellectual disabilities learn about decision making rights
- We used some of the funding to have Eviance Evaluate the MVMC Phase I Project. Self-advocates completed surveys after each session, and a group of self-advocates was interviewed by Eviance evaluators and the end of the project as part of the evaluation process

Was it boring? Interesting? Or was it in between ... just so-so?

a. Boring
  b. In between. So-so.
  c. Interesting

2. What did you like most about today's session?

*I loved feeling important and needed with my friends*

6. Did you learn anything new?

a. No. Not really
  b. Yes

7. If yes, what are one or two things you learned that are important to you?

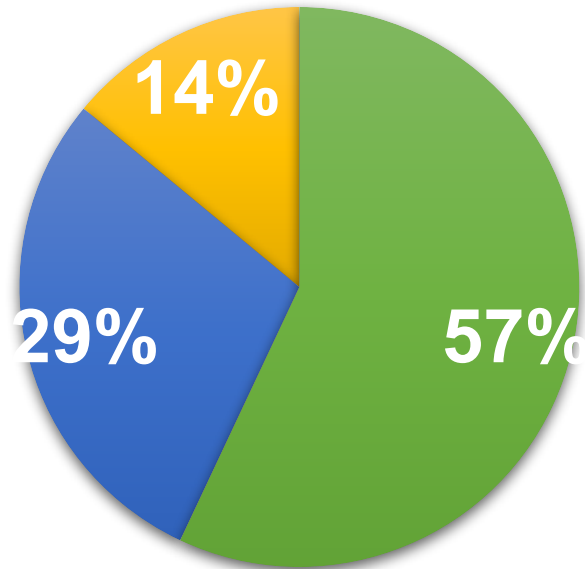
~~I~~ *I can make my own Decisions even with my parents.*

*we get to choose who we have relationships ~~with~~ with.*



# My Voice, My Choice (MVMC) Phase I Evaluation

Confidence to Advocate



- A lot more confident
- a little more confident
- No change
- 



## Research Questions

I. Is it possible to create **supported decision-making circles** for people labelled with an intellectual disability?

II. Have people learned any **new information** or skills from the Respecting Rights workshops?

III. Do the Respecting Rights workshops about supported decision-making **help people**?

IV. Do the Respecting Rights workshops help people to be **more involved** in decisions about their life?



# Get Connected Campaign

- During the COVID-19 pandemic, the Passport Funding Program made changes to their eligible expenses to include internet and technology such as computers and tablets in an effort to help people with disabilities stay connected to family and friends
- Respecting Rights learned from self advocates that purchasing these devices was not enough to get them connected because many people receiving services in developmental services require support to learn how to use devices and get online, so the gap was/is still there.
- Many of the self-advocates we spoke to felt left behind or isolated as a result, and felt like their mental health and wellbeing is suffering as a result.

Respecting Rights

Posts About Videos More ▾

Respecting Rights  
Sep 2, 2020 · 🌐

👉 During COVID-19, let's do better at helping people with intellectual disabilities get online to connect safely with friends and family and participate in virtual activities. Here's how!

💙 If you know someone with a disability who is not being supported to get online, let them know that they can call ARCH for free, confidential legal advice. ARCH's contact information can be found at [www.archdisabilitylaw.ca/contact](http://www.archdisabilitylaw.ca/contact)

💜 Learn more about our GET CONNECTED! campaign at [www.archdisabilitylaw.ca/initiatives/respecting-rights/get-connected](http://www.archdisabilitylaw.ca/initiatives/respecting-rights/get-connected)

**How you can help people with disabilities get online:**

**ADVOCATE** to make sure that people have internet service and access to devices that can connect to the internet.

**SUPPORT** people to learn how to use the device as best as they can. It might take some practice. Remember, everyone has the right to learn.

**RESPECT** privacy while on video calls. Do your best to help people have calls in a private place where they can talk comfortably with their friends or family.





# Get Connected Campaign

- We believe that internet access is essential during COVID-19 and beyond, in order to stay connected to loved ones, to participate in our communities, and to improve our mental health and wellbeing.
- We launched the campaign in August 2020 and encouraged people who work at Developmental Services Agencies to make internet access a priority for people who need it.
- We asked that agencies provide opportunities for people to access the internet, and assist them in learning how to use their devices so that they can maintain their important connections.



Respecting Rights

Aug 25, 2020 · 🌐

Today we are launching our GET CONNECTED! campaign to advocate for support to people with intellectual disabilities across Ontario to get online during times of social distancing!



Find our Press Release here (this is not in plain language, but we have other things coming up - stay tuned!): [www.archdisabilitylaw.ca/initiatives/respecting-rights/resources](http://www.archdisabilitylaw.ca/initiatives/respecting-rights/resources)



archdisabilitylaw.ca

Respecting Rights Resources



# 5 Things Campaign

- When Respecting Rights heard about the proposed Developmental Services reform that the Ministry of Children, Community & Social Services says it is embarking on, self-advocates gathered across Ontario to discuss changes in December 2020.
- Respecting Rights brought 9 self-advocacy groups together to send off a letter to the MCCSS to remind the government that self-advocates are asking to be involved in the changes to Developmental Services.
- Letters were sent to the Ministry on December 31, 2020 by Respecting Rights and ARCH about the proposed changes to Developmental Services.
- On April 8, 2021, Respecting Rights launched the 5 Things Campaign.



## 5 Things to make Developmental Services Better



### People's Voices Need to Be Heard

The government should learn from self-advocates by having regular accessible and supported meetings with them.  
Self-Advocates must be part of helping to make developmental services better.



### Making Complaints Accessible

People who use developmental services need a safe, accessible way to complain when there is a problem with their services.  
Complaints should make services better.



### Same Rights for Everyone

Everyone who uses developmental services should have the same rights.  
Rights in developmental services should be written in a law so everyone has to follow them.



### Better Staff Training

Developmental services staff need better training about legal rights for people with disabilities.



### Accessible Technology

If the government decides to use technology in developmental services, it must be accessible and in plain language.  
People must be given supports to use it.

For more information  
[www.archdisabilitylawcentre.ca/respectingrights](http://www.archdisabilitylawcentre.ca/respectingrights)

# 5 Things Campaign

- A network of self-advocates who participated in Respecting Rights workshops identified 5 key priorities they want changed in Developmental Services. These include: **people's voices need to be heard, making complaints must be accessible, the same rights should be available for everyone, better staff training, and accessible technology.**
- In May 2021, members of Respecting Rights met with high-level policymakers at MCCSS together with ARCH staff. The Respecting Rights members shared their living experiences that related to and motivated the five recommendations for changes to the law. The policymakers listened to these stories and engaged with the Respecting Rights members. Respecting Rights is hopeful that this meeting may start an ongoing conversation about how developmental services law should change.



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# Accessible Land Acknowledgement Work

- When Respecting Rights heard about the unmarked graves being found at residential schools, self-advocates wanted to make a land acknowledgement that was accessible and in plain language that honored Indigenous peoples.
- Self-advocates worked together with Community Living Six Nations to learn about what “reconciliation” means and the importance of creating a **meaningful** and **intentional** land acknowledgement.
- Respecting Rights was able to share this journey of creating a land acknowledgement in September 2022 at the Speaking Out Conference.






## 6. Current Projects and Initiatives

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- Coffee and Advocacy Monthly Meetings
- Provincial Quarterly Meetings
- Free Legal Rights Education Workshops



# Coffee and Advocacy Monthly Meetings





Join Respecting Rights for

**Coffee and Advocacy!**

Date: Friday February 23<sup>rd</sup> 2024  
Time: 2:00pm to 3:00pm

A monthly Zoom drop in meeting for self-advocates in Toronto to discuss issues that are important to them and to make meaningful connections with other self-advocates

Contact Jessica Field for more information:  
[jessica.field@arch.clcj.ca](mailto:jessica.field@arch.clcj.ca)



- This initiative is funded by the City of Toronto, and offered to people labelled with intellectual disabilities in the Greater Toronto Area
- We offer these meetings both in person and on Zoom
- These peer-support meetings are facilitated primarily by Respecting Rights members and the discussion topics are chosen by meeting participants
- We work with an ARCH Lawyer and a student lawyer who attend the meetings and who educate participants on what the law says about the topic(s) of discussion
- We follow-up each meeting by creating plain language pamphlets or information sheets to distribute to meeting participants



# An Example of a Coffee and Advocacy Brochure



## Coffee and Advocacy

A monthly Zoom drop in meeting for self-advocates in Toronto to discuss issues that are important to them and to make meaningful connections with other self-advocates



Respecting Rights is a project of ARCH. It is focused on rights for people labelled with intellectual disabilities. Self-advocates, lawyers and advocacy staff work together on rights issues in Ontario.

<http://www.archdisabilitylaw.ca/>

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ARCH Disability Law Centre  
55 University Avenue, 15th Floor Toronto,  
ON M5J-2H7

## Respecting Rights Toronto



### Coffee and Advocacy Monthly Meetings




### December 13th 2022 meeting

*Topic: Handling Changes in our Lives*

For example:

- Changes with relationships
- Changes in living situation
- Changes with staff
- Changes with jobs, volunteer work



### We talked about how change can be hard

- Sometimes change in our routine can make us upset
- Sometimes it is frustrating having to meet new staff
- Sometimes starting a new job or volunteer opportunity can be scary


### And how change can be positive

- Change can teach us new skills
- Change helps us to learn and grow
- Meeting new people can bring us new opportunities

### We talked about the different types of people in our lives that can give us support

Such as:

- From friends, family, or romantic relationships
- From professionals such as staff or therapists/counsellors
- From our bosses or other people at work or volunteer jobs





## Provincial Quarterly Meetings



### Ontario Self-advocates!

Join us for a new quarterly Virtual Meeting to learn what Respecting Rights is working on.

Respecting Rights is a project at ARCH Disability Law Centre led by persons with disabilities.

Respecting Rights has been leading rights education workshops for persons with disabilities and their support networks for over 10 years in Ontario. We do advocacy workshops, and work with ARCH lawyers to make the laws better for persons with disabilities in Ontario.

Respecting Rights invites self-advocates across the province to meet on Zoom throughout the year to talk about our rights education work.

Dates are:

**Wednesday March 2 2:30pm—4:30pm**

**Wednesday June 1 2:30pm—4:30pm**

**Wednesday September 7 2:30pm—4:30pm**

**Wednesday December 7 2:30pm—4:30pm**

**You are welcome to bring a support person with you.**

**Contact Jessica Field for more information**

[jessica.field@arch.clcj.ca](mailto:jessica.field@arch.clcj.ca)

- These meetings are offered every 3 months in December, March, June and September for self-advocates across Ontario
- The purpose of these meetings is for Respecting Rights to give updates on our rights education work
- Beginning in March, we will have a lawyer and law student join our quarterly meetings to help create content and help educate participants on what the law says about the rights of people labelled with an intellectual disability





## Free Legal Rights Education Workshops

- Respecting Rights collaborates with developmental service agencies across Ontario to deliver accessible legal rights education workshops to people labelled with an intellectual disability
- Our workshops focus on the right to make decisions in different areas of your life (money management, healthcare, relationships)
- We use a variety of techniques when teaching such as using plain language, music, role plays and meaningful discussions where people are encouraged to share their experiences





## 7. Why This Work is Important

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- Historically, the rights of people with disabilities have been stripped away from them
- Today, we still hear stories from self-advocates who say that they feel like they don't have the opportunity to make choices in their lives
- The work we do is important because teaching people with disabilities about their rights gives them the knowledge, confidence and skills to advocate for themselves and their needs.

**Let's hear from Sarah J on why she thinks the work we do is important**

**"It's important for people to learn about their rights because everyone needs to know that they have a voice, and it's important that they feel like they are not being silenced."**

- SARAH J, RESPECTING RIGHTS MEMBER



## 8. What is Next for Respecting Rights

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- Continue to offer monthly and quarterly meetings for self-advocates
- Grow Respecting Rights self-advocate's team
- Continue to collaborate with Developmental Service agencies to offer free legal rights education workshops
- Continue with accessible law reform work and trying to meet with the government to make positive change within Developmental Services

A hand holding a red marker is shown writing the words "What's Next?" in a large, bold, black, handwritten font on a white surface. A red underline is drawn beneath the text.

**What's Next?**



## 9. How to get Involved

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- Visit Our Website and Facebook page
- Host a coffee and Advocacy Meeting
- Host a 6 week legal rights education workshop
- Help the people you support learn about and get connected to ARCH and respecting rights





## 10. Questions

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# Thank you!

Please complete our Workshop Survey:

<https://bit.ly/3JVNBKi>

Veillez remplir notre enquête sur les ateliers:

<https://bit.ly/44H7Lzv>

The information provided in this presentation does not constitute legal advice. Consult a lawyer or paralegal if you need legal advice on a specific issue. Information is current as of the date indicated.

**Jessica Field**

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Coordinator**

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