National Joint Committee for the Communication Needs of Persons with Severe Disabilities (NJC)

NJC COMMUNICATION BILL OF RIGHTS, 3RD EDITION

People have a fundamental right to communicate in all parts of their lives. These communication rights promote full participation across the lifespan. They include:

1. The right to dignity and respect in all interactions.
2. The right to meaningful communication that is culturally and linguistically appropriate.
3. The right to be addressed directly and not be spoken for or talked about as if not there.
4. The right to receive a response to all communication, even when the desired outcome is not possible.
5. The right to participate across settings as full communication partners.
6. The right to interact socially and to build and keep relationships.
7. The right to be given—and to understand—information about objects, actions, events, and people.
8. The right to ask for or refuse objects, actions, events, and people.
9. The right to express preferences and feelings, make comments, and share opinions.
10. The right to make choices from meaningful options.
11. The right to access services and supports for communication across the lifespan.
12. The right to individualized, working augmentative and alternative communication (AAC) systems and other assistive technology (AT) at all times.

This is the third iteration of the NJC Communication Bill of Rights. The NJC originally developed it to ensure the basic rights of persons with severe disabilities to affect, through communication, the conditions of their existence (NJC, 1992). In 2016, a second version added three more socially focused rights (Brady et al., 2016).

In response to feedback from the NJC Network—a group consisting of family members of people with severe disabilities and professionals—this most recent iteration consolidates and simplifies the wording of the rights so as to make them understandable to all. In a separate guidance document, the NJC provides information about each right. That document also provides strategies and practices for families, caregivers, professionals, and self-advocates as they interact and communicate with persons with severe disabilities (NJC, 2024).

To cite this document:

National Joint Committee for the Communication Needs of Persons with Severe Disabilities. (2024). NJC Communication Bill of Rights (3rd ed.).

https://www.asha.org/njc

References:

Brady, N. C., Bruce, S., Goldman, A., Erickson, K., Mineo, B., Ogletree, B. T., Paul, D., Romski, M. A., Sevcik, R., Siegel, E., Schoonover, J., Snell, M., Sylvester, L., & Wilkinson, K. (2016). Communication services and supports for individuals with severe disabilities: Guidance for assessment and intervention. American Journal on Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities, 121(2), 121–138. https://doi.org/10.1352/1944-7558-121.2.121

National Joint Committee for the Communication Needs of Persons with Severe Disabilities. (1992). Guidelines for meeting the communication needs of persons with severe disabilities. Asha, 34(March, Supp. 7), 1–8.

National Joint Committee for the Communication Needs of Persons with Severe Disabilities. (2024). Communication Bill of Rights (3rd ed.), Guidance for advocacy and practice.

© 2024 National Joint Committee for the Communication Needs of Persons with Severe Disabilities (NJC)

825012