

What should governments do?

- **Consultation:** Consult persons with disabilities and the organizations representing them, on all reforms and policies
- **Legal framework:** Ensure that the legal system protects the rights to freedom of expression and information for all people without discrimination, including persons with disabilities.
- **Accessible formats:** Ensure that government information is accessible in a range of formats responding to the diverse needs of people with disabilities – particularly people who are separated from their families and put in residential institutions because of their disabilities, or who are at risk of losing their legal capacity because of their disabilities.
- **Proactive dissemination:** Proactively disseminate reliable and accurate information relevant for persons with disability to achieve their rights
- **Budgets:** Ensure that government budgets give a clear account of expenditure on disability.
- **Data:** Ensure that accurate, reliable and comprehensive data relating to both disabilities and the full achievement of human rights by people with disabilities are collected, disaggregated and maintained in an organised and systematic manner.



ARTICLE 19

DEFENDING FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION AND INFORMATION

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Disability and Information

What are your rights?



Why is the Right to Information relevant to persons with disability?

Persons with disabilities need access to information if they are to take part in society, change political systems, and address long histories of political and economic exclusion, because many still face attitudinal and environmental barriers to participation in many areas of life.

In order to challenge these barriers, persons with disabilities need to take action for their civil and political rights. They need to make strong arguments for change, based on information about their situation.

But many persons with disabilities are not able to access the information they need because it is not provided in accessible formats.

And when access to information is based on informal social and political networks, relatively powerless people – such as many people with disabilities – do not have easy access to information that could help bring about change.



What are your rights under International Law?

Persons with disabilities should be able to exercise the same rights to freedom of expression and information as other people and through all forms of communication of their choice.

According to the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights*, everyone has the right to freedom of expression and information – without discrimination.

The UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) also protects freedom of expression and the right to information. Article 21 says that states should “take all appropriate measures to ensure that persons with disabilities can exercise the right to freedom of expression and opinion, including the freedom to seek, receive and impart information and ideas on an equal basis with others and through all forms of communication of their choice”



Your rights include:

- “Providing information intended for the general public to persons with disabilities in accessible formats and technologies appropriate to different kinds of disabilities in a timely manner and without additional cost;”
- “Accepting and facilitating the use of sign languages, Braille, augmentative and alternative communication, and all other accessible means, modes and formats of communication of their choice by persons with disabilities in official interactions;”
- “Urging private entities that provide services to the general public, including through the Internet, to provide information and services in accessible and usable formats for persons with disabilities”
- “Encouraging the mass media, including providers of information through the Internet, to make their services accessible to persons with disabilities”
- “Recognizing and promoting the use of sign languages.”



What if the government doesn't have the information we need?

In order to monitor the implementation of policies, you might need access to certain information that the government doesn't already collect, like statistics related to disability. Previously under international law, you only had the right to information that is already held by governments. But Article 31 of the CRPD obliges states to collect information and statistics on the implementation of disability rights. Access to this information could help disability rights organisations monitor implementation of policies.

