



Easy to Read

What are my rights during criminal proceedings?





MENTAL
HEALTH
PERSPECTIVES

Who wrote this document?

We are an organization.

Our name is Mental Health Perspectives.



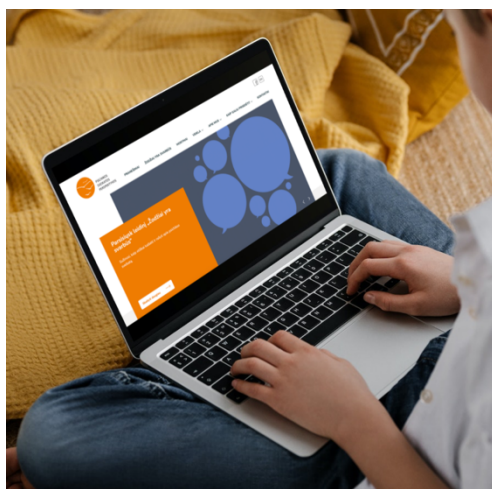
Our work is to:

- help people with disabilities,
- conduct research,
- reduce discrimination.

Discrimination happens when a person is treated badly by other people.

For example,

someone treats a person with a disability badly because they have a disability.



How to contact us?

Our website:

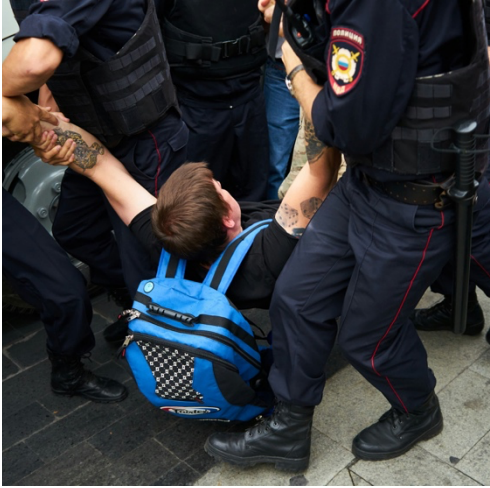
www.perspektyvos.org

You can write us an email .

Our email address:

vilnius@perspektyvos.org

Why is it important to know your rights?



People with disabilities might find it harder to get help from the justice system.

This includes when they are:

- victims,
- witnesses,
- or defendants.



For example, when talking to:

- police,
- lawyers,
- and judges

people with disabilities might find it hard to understand legal terms.



The United Nations wrote rules to help people with disabilities.

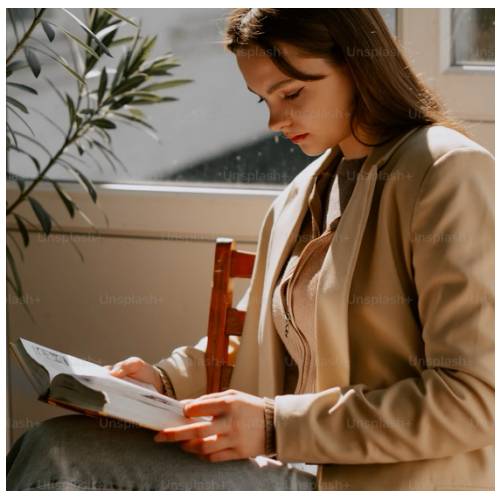
These rules are called the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.



Countries in the European Union have agreed to follow these rules.

The rules say that people with disabilities should get the same help as everyone else in the justice system.

There are countries in the European Union that do not do much to help people with intellectual or mental disabilities.



In Lithuania, we made a guide for:

- police,
- lawyers,
- judges,
- and other professionals.

In the guide, we wrote how to better help people with disabilities during criminal proceedings.

In this document, we talk about the rights people with disabilities have during criminal proceedings.

What happens during criminal proceedings?



Criminal procedure is a set of rules that tell people what to do if other people behave badly. For example, what to do if one person hits another person.



Criminal proceedings begin when the police find out that someone has behaved badly. For example,

- you can call the police and tell them that someone behaved badly,
- the police can see that a person is behaving badly.



Police can detain a person who is behaving badly. Detain means that the police will tell the person where to go. For example, go to the police station.

What happens to people detained by the police?



In the police station,
police officers ask people questions.

This is called a police interview.

For example, the police may ask:

- where a person went,
- what someone was doing.



People with disabilities

sometimes talk to the police.

For example, when:

- a police officer says that a person with a disability behaved badly,
- a police officer asks a person with a disability to tell them about another person who behaved badly.

Who can help?



If police officers say they need to speak with you, you can ask for help.

For example, you can ask to call a lawyer.

If you do not have a lawyer, you can ask for legal aid.



A lawyer is a person who knows the law very well.

A lawyer can help people:

- answer police questions,
- fill out police documents,
- explain what happens next.

Sometimes a person interviewed by the police may have to go to court.

We call these people defendants.

What happens in a court?



A court is a place where judges make important decisions.

For example, judges can decide if someone broke the law.

The law is a set of rules, which all people must follow.



In court, judges listen to what people have to say about what happened.

For example:

- the defendant,
- the lawyers,
- the witnesses,
- the police officer.



Judges also listen to the prosecutors.

Prosecutors are people who know the law very well.

Prosecutors collect evidence from the police, for the court to decide if the person behaved badly.

A prosecutors' job is to prove that the defendant behaved badly.

What to do in court?



People with disabilities have rights in court.

For example, people with disabilities can:

- have a free lawyer,
- be heard by a judge,
- ask questions,
- ask for help getting to court,
- tell what happened in an easy-to-do way. For example, write what happened.



In court, people with disabilities can get help from:

- their lawyer,
- a social worker,
- a friend,
- a family member,
- another person they trust.



If you need to go to court,

you can ask that people in court:

- speak slowly,
- give you more time to read information,
- give you easy-to-read information.

What are my rights during criminal proceedings?



There are no clear steps to find out if a person with a disability needs special help in court.

This means help might be missed or given too late.

People with disabilities should be able to ask for a support person to be with them in court.



Information given to people with disabilities in court should be simple and clear.

The court should help the person to communicate.

For example,
allow them to write instead of speaking.

Court buildings should be easy to use.



Lawyers should meet with people with disabilities before going to court to help them understand what will happen.



Courts should make sure the process is not scary for people with disabilities. For example, by changing how things look or feel in the courtroom.



If you need help, it's important to tell your lawyer or the people who work in the court.

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Document validated by Inclusion Ireland.

Images:

www.unfold.com

www.pexels.com/photo

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