

KNOW YOUR LEGAL RIGHTS!

By Janice D. M. Mitchell, Ed.D.



In today's litigious society, citizens fill the halls of justice with civil suits for a variety of reasons, some frivolous—have you seen court TV lately?

Then there are cases that are very serious because one citizen has infringed upon another citizen's private or civil rights. What are the legalities involved in such situations? They may occur in the workplace, on the street, at school, in the neighborhood, at the grocery store or in your own home or family.

These situations can happen, and they often happen to deaf and hard of hearing people. How well do you know the legal issues that face you?

Educate Yourself!

The law is there to protect and serve. As a deaf and hard of hearing community member, you must continue to research your right to access for yourself and your fellow members.

Legislating about/for “difference” is not new to our society. You must stay informed. Thomas Jefferson said, and I paraphrase, “The price of liberty is vigilance. ‘Difference’ requires that one stay informed about one's rights, yet act in ways that do not strip another individual or group of theirs.” Equity is defined and interpreted as: taking away a right another has enjoyed, making it possible to share that right with another who has not had it. Quite the contrary is true in this writer's opinion, i.e., through equity comes social justice, and, through shared acts of equal justice, comes equality. Equal access is one such primary equity issue.

Learn With DCMP Media

The Described and Captioned Media Program (DCMP) provides free-loan captioned media addressing many disciplines for all age groups. There are 20+ titles on deafness-related legal issues: adoption, violence against women with disabilities, sexual harassment, alternative law enforcement to prisons, accommodation and the ADA in the workplace, and workplace conduct for employer and employee.

Some titles available for free loan:

THE 3R'S FOR SPECIAL EDUCATION: RIGHTS, RESOURCES AND RESULTS

Professionals in the special education field and parents address the stages of the special education system, laws concerning a child's rights, the design of the IEP, how to prepare for school meetings, and planning for the future. Gives specific recommendations and strategies for resolving educational disputes and explains advocates and legal aid available. Also lists national organizations parents can contact for resources, information and advice.

BILL OF RIGHTS

Raises questions and concerns about three amendments to the Bill of Rights. Relates First Amendment issues of free speech to pornography, lyrics, and flag burning. The Second Amendment, the right to bear arms, struggles with questions about gun control. The Fourth Amendment, search and seizure, copes with personal privacy concerns. This flexible document continues to be interpreted as issues are raised and our society changes.

THE AMERICANS WITH DISABILITIES ACT: IS IT WORKING?

In this segment of "The NewsHour" with Jim Lehrer, correspondent Spencer Michaels speaks with Larry Paradis, executive director of Disability Rights Advocates, about the importance of litigation in pressuring communities to comply with the 1990 Americans with Disabilities Act. But are such legal actions actually undermining support for the ADA? Presents other points of view.

Contact Us!

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