

9 I have the right to have those who are dear to me close by when I need them.

The health care facility will permit and encourage a parent to stay with me and accompany and support me during the procedures. The facility will involve my parents/guardians in all aspects of my care and keep them informed about my illness (Articles 9, 31). This is an important aspect of any child- and family-centred care (Article 3) and will help minimize my fear and anxiety.

10 I have the right to play and learn even if I am receiving care.

I have the right to education (Article 28) aimed at developing my personality and abilities, both mental and physical and preparing me to become a responsible member of a free society. I have a right to education that develops respect for my parents or guardians, for human rights, for the environment and for my cultural and national values and those of others (Article 29). I also have the right to leisure and recreation and to participate freely in cultural and artistic activities (Article 31). I have these rights even when I am receiving care.



11 I need to have my rights fulfilled.

Governments have a responsibility to make the principles and provisions of the Convention widely known, by appropriate and active means, to adults and children alike (Article 42). I need to have my rights fulfilled, but this will not happen without widespread communication and commitment.

True or False?

- 1) The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) gives children the right to express and have their opinions heard regarding decisions that affect them.
- 2) Under the UNCRC, children who are sick have the right to participate in decisions about their treatment.
- 3) The UNCRC allows for traditional practices that may compromise the health of the child, if the practices are an integral part of the family's cultural heritage.
- 4) Under the UNCRC, Canadian governments should take measures to ensure that children have access to information that promotes their health and well-being.

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Canadian Coalition for the Rights of the Children (2002). *Health Care and the United Nations Conventions on the Rights of the Child*. Ottawa: Canadian Coalition for the Rights of Children.

The Rights of the Child in the Health Care System (poster) is available from:

Canadian Institute of Child Health
www.cich.ca

Articles are from the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child



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Dedicated to the health, well-being and rights of all children and youth

Funding provided by Heritage Canada



Canadian Child Care Federation



Canadian Institute of Child Health



Canadian Association of Paediatric Health Centres



Canadian Coalition for the Rights of Children
Coalition canadienne pour les droits des enfants



National Children's Alliance
Alliance nationale pour les enfants

The Rights of the Child

in the Health Care System

In 1980, the Canadian Institute of Child Health (CICH) published the “Rights of the Hospitalized Child” (a poster). This document raised awareness of some issues facing children in the hospital setting. In 1989, the Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) was adopted by the General Assembly of the United Nations. Canada signed and ratified the Convention. This pamphlet presents a revised set of children's rights in relation to the health care system and describes the relevant Article(s) from the UNCRC. The title of the document was changed to reflect recent changes in the health care delivery system. Instead of specifying “hospital”, it now makes reference to the “health care system”.

The Canadian Institute of Child Health believes that respecting the rights of children and youth is crucial to protecting and promoting their health and well-being.

1 I have the right to live and to have my pain and suffering treated, even if I am unable to communicate my need. I have this right regardless of my age, gender or income.

According to Article 6, I have the inherent right to life. According to Article 24, I have the right to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of health. I have the right to receive treatment for illness and rehabilitative services. According to Article 3, my best interests should always be taken into account. It is in my best interests to have my pain and suffering treated.

2 I have the right to be viewed first as a child, then as a patient.

According to Article 3, in all actions concerning me, my best interests shall be the primary consideration. As such, the environment where I receive health care should be child- and family-friendly, minimizing my fear and anxiety. Ideally, I should receive care in a child-specific space, away from areas where adults are receiving care and with child-specific supplies and equipment. Governments have a responsibility to make sure that institutional standards are adequate to meet my specific needs and rights, and that they are respected.

3 I have the right to be treated as an individual with my own abilities, culture and language.

As stated in Article 2, all the rights of the UNCRC apply to all children without exception. I have a right to enjoy my own culture, practice my own religion and speak my own language (Article 30). On the other hand, I have a right to be protected from cultural practices that are detrimental to my health (Article 24). If I have a disability, I have the right to special care and education that will help me achieve self-reliance and enjoy a full life in society (Article 23). These rights are important to me when I receive health care services.

4 I have the right to be afraid and to cry when I feel hurt.

According to Article 12, I have the right to make my views known in decisions that affect me. As I grow up, my views should be taken more and more into account. Expressing fear and crying are sometimes the only way for me to find my voice. I have the right to be heard.

5 I have the right to be safe in an environment that is unfamiliar to me.

The care I receive should be the highest quality attainable. To the extent possible, I should receive health care in my home or my community. I should be admitted to hospital only when this is clearly in my best interests (Articles 9, 24, 25). I have the right to be protected from all abuse, mental and physical violence, neglect and exploitation while under the care of anyone who is responsible for me (Article 19).



6 I have the right to ask questions and receive answers that I can understand.

I have the right to make my views known in decisions that affect me. As I grow up, my views should be taken more and more into account (Article 12). To this end, I must ask questions and receive meaningful answers. Sometimes my parents or guardians may want to protect me from information. As I grow up, my right to information about my health should be increasingly respected. I have the right to express myself and to receive information through any media, including print, art or word of mouth. I have the responsibility to express myself in a way that respects the rights and reputations of other people (Article 13).

7 I have the right to be cared for by people who perceive and meet my needs even though I may be unable to explain what they are.

If my needs are not understood, then my right to have my best interests respected (Article 3) may be compromised. Parents, extended family and guardians may be best equipped to perceive my needs. I have the right to their guidance and direction (Article 5). My rights are interconnected with the obligations of my parents or guardians, who have many important responsibilities in safeguarding my health and well-being and may need other information and support.

8 I have the right to speak for myself when I am able and to have someone speak on my behalf when I am unable.

I have the right to make my views known in decisions that affect me. As I grow up, my views should be taken more and more into account (Article 12). I have the right to express myself and to receive information through any media, including print, art or word of mouth. I have the responsibility to express myself in a way that respects the rights and reputations of other people (Article 13). I have the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion. Governments must respect the rights and duties of my parents or guardians in giving me direction in a manner consistent with my understanding (Article 14).