

## [Script for phone calls to TDs]

It is best to ring the TDs' offices in Leinster House. See contact details below. It is simply a matter of ringing the number and asking for your relevant elected official. If you prefer to contact your TD at the local advice clinic you can do that too. *This script is only meant to be a guide for your conversation.*

### **Leinster House Address**

You can send letters to all TDs to Dáil Éireann, Leinster House, Dublin 2.

### **Leinster House Main Switch Board**

Dáil Éireann LoCall: 1890 337 889

(outside of Dublin only)

from within Dublin: (01) 618-3000

**Oireachtas Website:** [www.irlgov.ie](http://www.irlgov.ie)

"Hello, my name is *insert your name*, may I speak with Deputy *insert elected official's name*?, (Whether you are speaking to a secretary or the elected official, the following script will work)

I am from your constituency and am very concerned that

**[Insert specific concerns in your own community, or use your experience as an example of your concern, related to the monthly question(s)]**

I am from your constituency and I am calling to express my concern about the lack of clarity in Irish law about informed consent to mental health treatment i.e. that no treatment shall be given to a patient without his or her informed consent. This is a human rights issue.

During a debate in the Seanad on the Private Members' Mental Health (Involuntary Procedures) (Amendment) Bill 2008, on 25 June, it was recommended that the issue of informed consent to treatment be discussed further in the Oireachtas Joint Committee on Health and Children and that the Committee hold a hearing on the issue. While this debate focussed on Electro Convulsive Therapy, I believe that the Oireachtas Committee should undertake a review of the wider area of informed consent to treatment within Ireland's mental health system, including the legal protections for people not involuntarily admitted to in-patient care. This review should have full regard to the international human rights treaties to which Ireland is a party.

Free and informed consent should form the basis of all mental health treatment. For instance, Principle 11 of the 1991 United Nations Principles for the Protection of Persons with Mental Illness sets out the general principle that "no treatment shall be given to a

patient without his or her informed consent". So, where a person has the capacity to give or withhold informed consent to a treatment, such consent is required.

Of course, legal protections regarding informed consent need to be underpinned and complemented by legislation defining legal capacity. The Government's Legislation Programme announced in September 2007, indicates that the Mental Capacity Bill is due for publication in 2008. This needs to be published and enacted as a matter of utmost priority.

**[Insert specific concerns in your own experience or community related to the monthly question(s)]**

I would be grateful for an answer to the following questions:

Will you urge the Oireachtas Joint Committee on Health and Children to undertake a review of the area of informed consent to treatment within Ireland's mental health system?

Will you urge the Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform to ensure that the Mental Capacity Bill will be published as soon as possible during the Autumn Oireachtas session, and enacted as a matter of priority?

I am calling on you to discuss this issue with your party colleagues and raise it with the Minister for Health and Children and the Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform.

It is critical that the rights of people with mental health difficulties are respected.