



Restroom Wars

By Raquel Castaneda

We've been hearing a lot of debate about who can use which restroom because of the increased awareness of individuals who are transgender. As with many minority groups, they began to advocate for things they found important, one of the most famous being that of their restroom rights. Their advocacy efforts led to policy change in many stores, public areas, and even laws. But, what does this mean for our loved ones with disabilities who require help in the restroom?

I was reading an article written by a concerned mother in Virginia about how the changes in laws referring to individuals who are transgender using the correct restroom affects her son. Her son is ten years old, has severe autism and needs constant supervision. So, like many other families who have children with disabilities, she has to take her son into the women's restroom for his safety. The article recounts her family's experiences at the local pool and how unaccepting some people were about her son.

The following is quote of an interaction she had at her local pool after a woman got angry about there being a boy in the women's locker room:

*Upon our return the next day, I found a sign posted at the desk which read in all capital letters: "**CHILDREN OVER 6 YEARS OLD MUST USE THE LOCKER-ROOM OF THEIR OWN SEX.**" I ripped that sign off the desk and drove straight over to our community association office and said, "If you don't inform every lifeguard at every pool in Reston, that this is discrimination against the disabled and a violation of federal law, I will have a discrimination lawsuit against the association faster than you can say not happening."*

I feel her frustration! There will always be intolerant and rude people, although, I have never experienced this much negativity.

I have experienced glares and whispered comments when I take my brother into the restroom with me. But I will continuously take my brother into the women's restroom because I value his safety and his comfort over anyone else's comfort. Like this mother put it, "If he

still requires my supervision at age 35 or 65, that's where I am taking him. I refuse to put my son in jeopardy for someone else's comfort."

There are many fears about letting your little ones go to the restroom on their own, but those fears are multiplied when we're talking about someone with disabilities. There is a multitude of reason why letting them go to the bathroom is scary, for example:

1. Predators
2. Getting lost/ Wandering
3. Having Accidents
4. Getting their #1 or #2 everywhere but the toilet!
5. Mean People
6. Inappropriate behavior

The list can go on, but you see my point. Why should we risk any of these things when we know that if we take them into the restroom with us, these things can be avoided. Whether it is the parents, siblings or caretakers of the opposite sex, we need to stand our ground. We will not risk our loved ones' safety for the comfort of others.

To read the full article mentioned follow this link:

<http://www.lgbtqnation.com/2016/04/how-do-the-new-new-bathroom-laws-affect-kids-with-special-needs/3/>

For more on the war of the restrooms follow these links:

http://well.blogs.nytimes.com/2016/05/25/the-other-bathroom-wars/?rref=collection%2Ftimestopic%2FDisabilities&action=click&contentCollection=health®ion=stream&module=stream_unit&version=latest&contentPlacement=9&pgtype=collection&r=0



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