



## **DISABILITY RIGHTS CONNECTICUT** *Connecticut's protection and advocacy system*

### **2022 FOCUS AREAS AND OBJECTIVES**

**Our focus areas are the goals we work on every day to achieve full equality and justice for people with disabilities. We have to establish priorities because, after we address abuse and neglect issues, we do not have the resources necessary to tackle all of the issues facing people with disabilities at one time.**

**Through extensive public input and our work with clients, constituents and DRCT's PAIMI Advisory Council, we identify problems that are widespread or pose the greatest threat to the independence and safety of people with disabilities. Then we develop priorities to address those problems with the funding we receive. Our focus areas in 2022 are:**

- **Abuse and Neglect**
- **Healthcare**
- **Education**
- **Employment**
- **Individual Rights**
- **Opportunities to Live in the Community**

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## **ABUSE AND NEGLECT**

**DRCT will decrease exposure to abuse and neglect, seclusion and/or restraint (including chemical restraint) and improve compliance with protected rights of people with disabilities.**

*Objective 1:* Investigate and remediate abuse and neglect of individuals with disabilities who are in nursing, correctional, juvenile justice, public and private psychiatric facilities, ICF-IDDs, schools, and other facilities or who reside in a community residential setting.

*Objective 2:* Conduct periodic monitoring to expose and remediate unidentified instances of abuse/neglect by a service provider of people with disabilities.

*Objective 3:* Conduct periodic outreach to individuals residing in facilities to inform them of their rights.

*Objective 4:* Respond to abuse and neglect allegations and patient's rights violations of people with disabilities living in facilities or in the community in order to identify systemic issues to effect change in practice, policy, rule or law.

*Objective 5:* Engage in systemic advocacy to eliminate solitary confinement and in-cell shackling and other restraints of persons with mental health disabilities incarcerated by the Connecticut Department of Corrections.

*Objective 6:* Engage in systemic reform advocacy to ensure that individuals committed to Whiting Forensic Hospital receive all of the treatment, recreational, leisure activities and rights to which they are entitled under the consent decree in *Roe v. Hogan*.

*Objective 7:* Strengthen oversight of representative payees by performing onsite reviews of payee performance, on behalf of the Social Security Administration (SSA).

*Objective 8:* Represent individuals in involuntary medication proceedings in Connecticut and engage in systemic reform advocacy to ensure that such individuals receive due process protections before they are involuntarily medicated.

*Objective 9:* Conduct periodic facility monitoring to promote voter registration and participation for people with disabilities.

## HEALTHCARE

**DRCT will advocate for people with disabilities to have timely access to the health and mental health care that they need.**

*Objective 1:* Provide self-advocacy assistance, systemic and limited individual legal advocacy to people with disabilities to ensure that they have timely access to medically necessary medical and mental health care that is free from discriminatory limitations and restrictions on access to care.

*Objective 2:* Provide self-advocacy assistance and systemic advocacy to advocate that individuals eligible for Medicaid have timely and necessary access to medical transportation.

*Objective 3:* provide self-advocacy assistance, limited individual advocacy, and systemic legal representation to peoples being denied effective communication in healthcare settings.

*Objective 4:* Provide self-advocacy assistance, limited individual advocacy, and systemic advocacy to ensure that people have timely access to wheelchairs, communication devices and other assistive technology and durable medical equipment that they need to live and participate in the community.

*Objective 5:* Ensure, through systemic advocacy, that Medicaid-eligible children and youth with behavioral health disabilities receive all medically necessary home-based services to remain in the community.

*Objective 6:* Conduct community engagement, self-advocacy assistance, and individual advocacy to individuals with disabilities in need of reasonable accommodations/modifications to obtain the COVID 19 vaccine.

*Objective 7:* Engage in systemic advocacy to ensure access to health care providers who are free from, and whose employers are free from, any financial incentives to deny or restrict access to care, or to lower the cost of care.

## EDUCATION

**DRCT will advocate that students with disabilities are afforded inclusive, nondiscriminatory educational services necessary for success in post-secondary or work environments.**

*Objective 1:* Consistent with the A.R. Ruling, DRCT will ensure that students with disabilities remain eligible for special education services under IDEA until the age of 22.

*Objective 2:* Provide self-advocacy assistance and limited individual advocacy that supports systemic reform, and systemic advocacy to ensure that students ages 14 to 22 with disabilities have appropriate transition and vocational services under IDEA.

*Objective 3:* Provide information and referral, self-advocacy assistance, limited individual advocacy that supports systemic reform advocacy to those including, but not limited to, those who are SSI/SSDI recipients, and systemic advocacy to assist students who are eligible for but are denied accommodations in post-secondary education settings.

*Objective 4:* Provide self-advocacy assistance, limited individual advocacy that supports systemic reform advocacy, and systemic advocacy to ensure that preschool, elementary, and secondary students are not suspended, expelled, arrested, and/or otherwise pushed out of their neighborhood school as a result of behavior relating to their disabilities and instead receive school-based mental health and other behavioral services in order to receive equal educational opportunities in the most integrated setting within their local education agency.

## EMPLOYMENT

**DRCT will promote independent living, competitive integrated employment, and access to the state Vocational Rehabilitation programs.**

*Objective 1:* Provide self-advocacy assistance, limited individual advocacy that supports systemic reform, and systemic advocacy to individuals applying for or determined ineligible for state vocational programs.

*Objective 2:* Provide self-advocacy assistance, limited individual advocacy that supports systemic reform, and systemic advocacy for clients of a state vocational system where necessary to advance a client's desired employment goal.

*Objective 3:* Provide self-advocacy assistance, limited individual advocacy that supports systemic reform, and systemic advocacy regarding requesting reasonable accommodations to obtain/maintain employment.

*Objective 4:* Provide self-advocacy assistance, limited individual advocacy that supports systemic reform, and systemic advocacy for clients of a state vocational system to pursue and obtain competitive integrated employment, including customized employment and individual supported employment, and avoid segregated and/or sub minimum wage employment.

## INDIVIDUAL RIGHTS

**DRCT will address barriers to full participation and independent living for people with disabilities by ensuring access to services and programs from government and public accommodations.**

*Objective 1:* Educate policymakers, judges and the public and provide advocacy and legal representation when needed to create Supported Decision-Making plans for people with disabilities.

*Objective 2:* Promote voter participation of people with disabilities and address systemic disability-related barriers regarding voting in Connecticut.

*Objective 3:* Provide self-advocacy assistance and systemic advocacy to ensure that people with communication disabilities have access to law enforcement.

*Objective 4:* Provide self-advocacy assistance and systemic advocacy to advocate for people with disabilities denied reasonable accommodations/modifications in public housing.

*Objective 5:* Challenge discrimination to eliminate barriers to physical accessibility in public and private entities for people with disabilities.

## OPPORTUNITIES TO LIVE IN THE COMMUNITY

**DRCT will advocate for people with disabilities to have opportunities and the necessary services and supports to live, remain, and participate in the life of the community.**

*Objective 1:* Provide self-advocacy assistance, limited individual advocacy, and systemic advocacy on behalf of individuals with disabilities to receive services in the community that they need in order to successfully transition from living in an institutional setting to the community and/or avoid institutionalization.

*Objective 2:* Engage in systemic advocacy to advocate that individuals committed to the psychiatric security review board (PSRB) are not unnecessarily segregated and receive reasonable modifications in order to have opportunities to live in the most integrated settings to meet their needs.

*Objective 3:* Provide self-advocacy assistance, limited individual advocacy and systemic advocacy to ensure that individuals with disabilities residing in institutions, or who are at risk of institutionalization, receive information sufficient to make an informed choice whether to move to the community or remain in the institution.

*Objective 4:* Engage in advocacy to prevent the imposition of financial risk of contracted providers or entities such that they have any financial incentives to deny or restrict access to care and services.

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Thank you for your interest and support. If you have any questions or concerns, please contact Deborah Dorfman, DRCT Executive Director, at [deborah.dorfman@disrightsct.org](mailto:deborah.dorfman@disrightsct.org)