



Disability Rights Connecticut Connecticut's Protection and Advocacy System

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DRCT's 2024 PRIORITIES 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 public input and our work with clients, we identify problems that are widespread or pose the greatest threat to the independence of people with disabilities. Then we develop priorities to address those problems with the funding we receive.

ABUSE AND NEGLECT

DRCT will work to combat 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 potential systemic abuse and neglect of individuals with disabilities including people who are in nursing homes, residential care homes, group homes, 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 identify and address instances of abuse/neglect by a service provider of people with disabilities.

Objective 3: Conduct in-person and virtual outreach and community engagement to people with disabilities to educate and inform them of their rights as well as promote self-advocacy related to combating abuse and neglect.

Objective 4: Respond to systemic abuse and neglect allegations and patients' rights violations of people with disabilities living in facilities or in the community in order to effect change in practice, policy, rule, and/or law on issues including, but not limited to insufficient due process protections in the civil commitment process.

Objective 5: Engage in systemic reform advocacy to eliminate in-cell shackling and further punitive restraints of persons with mental health disabilities incarcerated by the Connecticut Department of Corrections.

Objective 6: Engage in systemic advocacy to ensure that people with disabilities have access to services in Connecticut, including Connecticut's protective services systems, to avoid and remediate abuse and neglect.

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 a limited number of adults and children in involuntary medication and/or electro-convulsive proceedings in Connecticut in cases where such representation is likely to result in systemic change to ensure that such individuals receive due process protections before they are involuntarily medicated or subject to electro-convulsive therapy.

HEALTHCARE

DRCT will advocate for people with disabilities to have timely and equitable 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 and equitable 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 policy advocacy on behalf of people being denied effective communication in healthcare settings.

Objective 3: Provide self-advocacy assistance, limited individual advocacy, and systemic advocacy to ensure that people have timely access including, but not limited to: wheelchairs, communication devices and other assistive technology, and durable medical equipment that they need to live and participate in the community.

Objective 4: Ensure, through systemic advocacy, that Medicaid-eligible children and youth with behavioral health disabilities receive all medically necessary home-based and community services to remain in the community.

Objective 5: 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.

Objective 6: Conduct in-person and virtual outreach and community engagement to people with disabilities to educate and inform them of their rights as well as promote self-advocacy related to access to healthcare. DRCT will hold a limited number of law clinics to provide assistance to individuals with disabilities to fill out administrative complaints regarding discrimination with respect to access to healthcare.

EDUCATION

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

Objective 1: Engage in systemic reform advocacy through the *A.R.* class action lawsuit.

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 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 health 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.

Objective 5: Provide counsel and advice, short-term assistance, and self-advocacy assistance to students and families of students with disabilities on issues related to their special education and/or disability accommodation needs in a Disability Rights Connecticut's statewide special education clinic.

Objective 6: Conduct in-person and virtual outreach and community engagement to people with disabilities to educate and inform them of their rights as well as to promote self-advocacy related to access to inclusive, nondiscriminatory educational services.

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: Conduct in-person and virtual outreach and community engagement to people with disabilities to educate and inform them of their rights as well as to promote self-advocacy assistance related to requesting disability-related accommodations needed to maintain and/or preserve 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, public agencies and their staff, and the public and provide advocacy through DRCT's new Supported Decision-Making legal clinic when needed to create Supported Decision-Making plans for people with disabilities, including, but not limited to individuals transitioning to adulthood.

Objective 2: Promote voter participation of people with disabilities through the provision of counsel and advice, short-term assistance, and self-advocacy assistance at periodic voting rights legal clinics and periodic facility monitoring and address systemic disability-related barriers regarding voting in Connecticut.

Objective 3: Provide self-advocacy assistance and education to ensure that people with communication disabilities have access to law enforcement, emergency services, and the courts.

Objective 4: Conduct in-person and virtual outreach and community engagement to people with disabilities to educate and inform them of their rights as well as to promote self-advocacy related to full participation and independent living.

Objective 5: Provide self-advocacy assistance and systemic advocacy to 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 community.

Objective 1: Provide self-advocacy assistance, limited individual advocacy, and systemic advocacy on behalf of individuals with disabilities including, but not limited to, individuals with disabilities residing in state and privately-operated facilities, individuals with disabilities transitioning or released from correctional facilities, half-way houses, recovery and addiction treatment centers, and other institutions, 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: 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 3: Conduct in-person and virtual outreach and community engagement to people with disabilities to educate and inform them of their rights as well as to promote self-advocacy related to opportunities, services and supports to live, remain, and fully participate in the community.

HOUSING

DRCT will advocate for people with disabilities facing discrimination in housing.

Objective 1: DRCT will participate in limited housing clinics to provide individuals with disabilities with counsel and advice, short-term advocacy, and self-advocacy assistance to combat disability discrimination, including but not limited to, obtaining reasonable modifications and/or accommodations in housing.

Objective 2: Provide self-advocacy assistance to people with disabilities denied reasonable accommodations/modifications in public and private housing.

Objective 3: Conduct in-person and virtual outreach and community engagement to people with disabilities to educate and inform them of their rights as well as to promote self-advocacy related to the right to be free from disability discrimination in housing.

Thank you for your interest and support. If you have any questions or concerns about this announcement, please contact Deborah Dorfman, Executive Director at deborah.dorfman@disrightsct.org