

Disability Rights Connecticut to Focus on Six Priorities in 2022 - Problems Adversely Impacting People with Disabilities That Are Most Widespread, Pose Greatest Risk

*Areas of Focus: Abuse and Neglect, Healthcare, Education, Employment,
Individual Rights and Opportunities to Live in the Community*

Disability Rights Connecticut, an independent statewide non-profit organization which advocates for the human, civil, and legal rights of people with disabilities in Connecticut, has announced six areas of priority focus for 2022.

The six, described as current problems that have a significant adverse impact on people with disabilities and/or are the most widespread, have been identified by the organization's leadership, and plans are underway to tackle them in earnest in the coming year, building on past work. They are: Abuse and Neglect, Healthcare, Education, Employment, Individual Rights and Opportunities to Live in the Community.

"Through extensive public input and our work with clients, constituents, and our [PAIMI Advisory Council](#), we identify problems that are widespread or pose the greatest threat to the independence or safety of people with disabilities. Then we develop priorities to address those problems," explained Deborah Dorfman, Executive Director of [Disability Rights Connecticut](#). "Our focus areas are the goals we work on every day to achieve full equality and justice for people with disabilities."

DRCT's mission is to advocate, educate, investigate and pursue legal, administrative, and other appropriate remedies to advance and protect the civil rights of individuals with disabilities to participate equally and fully in all facets of community life in Connecticut. DRCT is the Protection & Advocacy System for Connecticut, having replaced the state Office of Protection & Advocacy for Persons with Disabilities in 2017.

DRCT has outlined a series of objectives in each of the six priority areas, which will provide direction and clear goals for the organization, in their efforts throughout the year.

For example, in regards to Abuse and Neglect, DRCT's goal is to decrease exposure to abuse and neglect, seclusion and/or restraint (including chemical restraint) and improve compliance with protected rights of people with disabilities. In that effort, nine objectives have been developed, including

In the area of healthcare, DRCT "will advocate for people with disabilities to have timely access to the health and mental health care that they need." Among the seven objectives identified are ensuring that individuals with disabilities "have timely access to medically necessary medical and mental health care that is free from discriminatory limitations and restrictions on access to care."

DRCT also will undertake efforts to assure that people with disabilities receive “reasonable accommodations or modifications to obtain the COVID 19 vaccine.”

In the area of education, DRCT “will advocate that students with disabilities are afforded inclusive, nondiscriminatory educational services necessary for success in post-secondary or work environments. Among the objectives is supporting “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.”

Recently released federal and state data indicate that individuals with disabilities, particularly students of color with disabilities, have been referred to law enforcement at a significantly higher rate than the overall student population.

“In this area, we’re focusing on kids with mental health disabilities, intellectual and developmental disabilities, and traumatic brain injuries who tend to be the ones who are most often pushed out of neighborhood schools,” Dorfman said. “Schools and District should use trained professionals – rather than police – and provide school-based behavioral health services to support children with disabilities who are having behavioral issues related to their disability at school.”

DRCT will also prioritize promoting independent living, competitive integrated employment, and access to the state Vocational Rehabilitation programs, and “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.”

DRCT also plans to continue its strong advocacy for people with disabilities “to have opportunities and the necessary services and supports to live, remain, and participate in the life of the community.”

The full list of DRCT priorities and objectives for 2022 is available on the DRCT website, www.disrightsct.org. Disability Rights Connecticut is an independent statewide non-profit organization which advocates for the human, civil, and legal rights of people with disabilities in Connecticut.

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