

**Office of Protection and Advocacy  
For Persons with Disabilities  
Priorities for 2014-2015**

**1. Protect rights, identify barriers, and increase awareness of benefits related to community inclusion of people with disabilities.**

- Working with Advocacy Board and DD Network, educate policymakers and the public regarding barriers to living and working in communities by; 1) conducting and participating in legislative and administrative forums and hearings. (DD)
- Ensure that state and local disaster preparedness planning includes needs of people with disabilities. (AT)
- Continue rights-based advocacy for people who are deaf and hard of hearing, focusing on communications access in health care and law enforcement situations.\* (PAIR)
- Support efforts to improve and expand relevant community mental health services and oppose efforts to establish out-patient commitment and expand other coercive mechanisms.
- Convene a stakeholder group to evaluate Connecticut's Handicapped Parking Statute (C.G.S. §14-253a) and make recommendations for change.

**2. Safeguard the rights of persons with disabilities living in congregate institutions or at risk of institutionalization.**

- Advocate for the rights of people with developmental disabilities, brain injuries, and mental illness who are incarcerated or are at risk of incarceration, and evaluate quality of mental health treatment available to inmates in selected prison environments.\* (PAIR, DD, PAIMI)
- Investigate selected suicides and restraint-related deaths of prisoners and patients in psychiatric hospitals.\* (PAIMI)
- Continue to provide advocacy to residents of Southbury Training School.\* (DD)
- Enforce Patients' Bill of Rights including representation to contest involuntary use of psychotropic medication.\* (PAIMI)
- Conduct interviews of adults involved incidents of restraint and/or seclusion. \* (PAIMI)
- Conduct outreach to residents of long-term care facilities and advocate for appropriate transitioning for those wishing to move to their own homes.\* (PAIMI)

**3. Decrease exposure to abuse and neglect by increasing awareness of factors and dynamics that contribute to them, and by pursuing targeted, collaborative initiatives addressing them.**

- Analyze and publicly report of agency data regarding abuse and neglect.
- Pursue restraint and seclusion data from agencies assigned oversight roles in Public Act 99-210, with an eye towards publishing summary information. (DD, PAIMI)
- Review, investigate and report on deaths of clients of the Department of Developmental

- Services (DDS) and the Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services (DMHAS) where abuse and neglect are suspected to have played a role. (DD, PAIMI)
- Identify problems and pursue corrections related to health care coordination for people who are clients of DMHAS and DDS.

#### **4. Protect educational rights of children with disabilities as mandated by IDEA and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act.**

- Promote appropriate educational opportunities for students with emotional and behavioral disabilities especially when the student is at risk of being subjected to restraint and seclusion.\* (PAIR, DD)
- Represent families where the lack of appropriate programming and supports results in or creates a risk of an education program in a more restrictive setting.\* (PAIR, DD, PAIMI)
- In collaboration with parent organizations, create mechanisms to inform parents and parent groups about the educational rights of their children with disabilities and responsibilities of school systems (e.g. child-find, timely referrals for evaluation, array of relevant program options)
- Support parents of students with disabilities through information and referral services, group trainings, technical assistance and by organizing clinics at which parents and students can review records and develop problem solving strategies. (PAIR, DD).
- Provide advocacy representation for students with disabilities to assist in the development of appropriate transition plans.\* (PAIR, DD)

#### **5. Educate individuals with disabilities about employment rights, support options and mechanisms to address discrimination; build capacity to provide legal representation for people with disabilities who experience employment discrimination.**

- Pursue “Employment First” initiative in Connecticut by collaborating with disability organizations to educate policymakers and representing individuals with disabilities who are being denied real work for real pay. (DD)
- Provide representation for people who have experienced discrimination in employment because of their disabilities.\*(PAIR)
- Educate private providers about alternatives to subminimum wage employment including customized employment.

#### **6. Housing**

- Continue to contest discriminatory housing practices and proposals.\* (PAIR)
- Educate Condominium associations regarding their obligations under the Fair Housing Act.

**7. Increase Awareness Regarding Health Care Rights and Options for People with Disabilities in Connecticut.**

- Continue to focus attention of public and policymakers on the need for health care coordination and standards for people with disabilities, including people living in state hospitals and with minimal supports in community.
- Promote awareness and discussion of restraint/seclusion for children in the mental health system. (PAIMI)
- Support inter-agency initiative to reduce use of restraint and seclusion in state-supported or regulated environments.
- Develop a “toolkit” explaining elements of informed consent.

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