



DISABILITY RIGHTS NEW YORK

Protection & Advocacy and Client Assistance Program Services in the 15th Congressional District

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BACKGROUND

Disability Rights New York (DRNY) is the designated organization to provide the federal Protection & Advocacy System and the Client Assistance Program services to New Yorkers with disabilities. This Report provides an overview of the services, from June 1, 2013 to December 31, 2016, that DRNY has provided to individuals with disabilities living in New York's 15th Congressional District. These services are provided pursuant to the following eight federal programs.

Protection & Advocacy for Individuals with Mental Illness

DRNY serves people with a diagnosis of significant mental illness or emotional impairment and prioritizes services to individuals in a facility receiving care and treatment and has the ability to investigate complaints of neglect and abuse.

Protection & Advocacy for Individuals with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities

DRNY serves people with developmental disabilities, including, intellectual disabilities, autism, epilepsy, cerebral palsy and neurological impairments.

Protection & Advocacy of Individual Rights

DRNY serves individuals with disabilities who do not qualify for any other protection and advocacy services. It is not limited to people with a specific disability or facing a certain issue.

Protection & Advocacy for Traumatic Brain Injury

DRNY serves people with a traumatic brain injury (TBI). This includes working to ensure “due process” within the “New York State TBI Waiver” program, and appropriate services to all individuals, including those not participating in the waiver. DRNY provides services to ensure individuals with TBI have access to comprehensive, high quality health care services.

Protection & Advocacy for Voting Access

DRNY helps individuals with disabilities have full participation in the electoral process. DRNY educates, trains and assists individuals with participating in the electoral process. These efforts include ensuring physical accessibility of polling places and informing people about the rights of voters with disabilities.

Protection & Advocacy for Assistive Technology

DRNY helps people with disabilities with services related to assistive technology devices or services. This includes investigating and negotiating access to assistive technology devices, as well as outreach efforts.

Protection & Advocacy for Beneficiaries of Social Security

DRNY serves people with disabilities who receive Social Security Disability Insurance or Supplementary Security Income, and who are trying to return to work, gain employment, or receive certain employment-related training and services. DRNY educates beneficiaries about Social Security's work incentives and provides advice about vocational rehabilitation and employment services.

Client Assistance Program

DRNY assists people with disabilities who have questions or have encountered problems while receiving or applying for vocational rehabilitation (VR) services from state VR agencies. DRNY also advocates for those who receive services from Independent Living Centers, Commission for the Blind, and for those applying for or receiving services from Tribal VR offices.

CLIENTS

The most recent U.S. Census Bureau estimates show that there are 110,096 individuals with disabilities living in the 15th Congressional District. DRNY has handled 222 Service Requests for 173 distinct clients. These individuals lived in 16 of the 16 zip codes in the 15th Congressional District. Over this 43 month period, DRNY averaged 5.16 Service Requests per month from individuals in this District.

Clients by Age

DRNY has assisted some of the most vulnerable individuals in the 15th Congressional District. 19 unique clients were residents of nursing homes, hospitals, correctional facilities, rehabilitation facilities, and youth-focused residential facilities. Of the residents living in the community, 6, or nearly 3.47% of DRNY's unique clients were under 18. According to census data, individuals under 18 account for only 11.35% of civilian, non-institutionalized individuals with a disability in the 15th Congressional District. The following table shows that 28.90% of DRNY's clients are age 55 or older. Demographic information is not required to receive DRNY services, and so we lack age information on 1 individual.

Age Group	Number of Individuals	Percentage of Total
Under 5 Years Old	0	0%
5-9 Years	2	1.16%
10-14	2	1.16%
15-19	8	4.62%
20-24	12	6.94%
25-34	21	12.14%
35-44	32	18.50%
45-54	45	26.01%
55-59	26	15.03%
60-64	16	9.25%
65 or Older	8	4.62%

Clients from Under-Represented Groups

DRNY affirmatively seeks to provide services to historically under-represented groups. The following charts compare race and ethnicity demographics for the entire 15th Congressional District with that of DRNY's clients in the 15th Congressional District. DRNY does not require demographic information from our clients as a pre-requisite for services, so for 38 clients, race information is incomplete or unavailable, and for 15 clients ethnicity information is incomplete or unavailable.

Race	Estimate	As Percentage	DRNY Clients	As Percentage
Total population	762,550		133	
One race	740,436	97.10%	119	89.47%
White	108,156	14.18%	29	21.80%
Black or African American	236,414	31.00%	90	67.67%
American Indian and Alaska Native	3,916	0.51%	0	0.00%
Asian	13,264	1.74%	0	0.00%
Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander	0	0.00%	0	0.00%
Some other race	378,686	49.66%	0	0.00%
Two or more races	22,114	2.90%	14	10.53%

Hispanic or Latino Origin	15 th Congressional District	% of Total	DRNY Clients	% of Total
Total population	762,550		156	
Hispanic or Latino (of any race)	503,654	66.05%	52	33.33%
Not Hispanic or Latino	258,896	33.95%	104	66.67%

SERVICE REQUESTS

DRNY provided full case services in 119 of the requests for services, 53.60% of the total 222 Service Requests. DRNY provided Information and Referral (I&R) services to the remaining 103 requests.

DRNY makes appropriate referrals to other agencies in those matters where the issues are outside DRNY's priorities, or because DRNY lacks the resources to undertake the matter. DRNY will also provide information regarding the clients' rights and available options. These matters vary from consumer financial issues, evictions, or other legal issues that are unrelated to the client's disability.

Service Requests by Program

All 8 of DRNY's programs provided case services to at least one constituent in the 15th Congressional District.

SR Type	CAP	PAAT	PABSS	PADD	PAIMI	PAIR	PATBI	PAVA	Grand Total
Case Services	54	8	7	11	18	21	0	0	119
I & R	13	1	3	9	47	27	2	1	103
Grand Total	67	9	10	20	65	48	2	1	222

Service Request Response Time

61 of these Service Requests were resolved in less than 7 days.

83 of these were resolved in less than 14 days.

Areas Covered by Service Requests

- 6 involved education issues
- 14 involved employment, including discrimination in hiring, unlawful termination, wage and hour issues, and assisting clients with SSI due to employment efforts
- 42 involved housing issues, including housing discrimination
- 8 involved issues of abuse and neglect, including the failure to provide appropriate treatment for mental health or other serious medical problems, inappropriate medication, or physical restraint
- 10 involved clients seeking assistance with obtaining or maintaining benefits including VR services, SSI, SSDI, Medicaid, or other forms of health insurance
- 27 involved healthcare issues including admission, transportation and discharge issues involving residential care or treatment facilities

Representative Issues

- Assisted a client to obtain an accessible parking space in front of her residence
- Assisted a client to obtain a reasonable accommodation at work so that she could maintain her employment
- Advocated for a client to receive vocational rehabilitation funding to attend college
- Assisted a client in a homeless shelter to obtain an accessible room
- Represented a client with an intellectual disability to obtain acceptance into a supported employment program
- Assisted a client who in a temporary employment position and was discriminated against because of his disability to obtain permanent employment
- Assisted a client who was in an inpatient hospital to obtain community housing and employment
- Represented a client in obtaining an accessible apartment
- Assisted a client to obtain vocational rehabilitation funding for culinary training

PROJECTS

In addition to serving clients individually through Service Requests, DRNY operates a number of Projects ranging from ongoing outreach efforts, presentations on specific topics, investigation and monitoring of service providers, and systemic litigation to advance the rights of people with disabilities.

One of DRNY's core projects is the litigation *O'Toole v. Cuomo*. In New York City, about 4,000 adults with mental illness currently reside in adult homes some situated in the 15th Congressional District. Many of these facilities opened upon the closing of state psychiatric hospitals in the aftermath of the Willowbrook consent decree. Under the terms of a settlement, 4,000 class members will be offered the chance to move from the adult homes where the residents live two to a dormitory room and with little privacy and mobility, into supported housing—consisting of scatter-site apartments. One resident has expressed the importance of this settlement: “I had a rent stabilized apartment, and I lost it in the fire. And that led me to being where I am. And I feel stuck...I miss hot chocolate in my microwave. I miss the spoonful of ice cream every now and then from my big fridge that I bought for myself. I miss so many things. I miss cut flowers that I could afford to buy every now and then. There's so many things that I miss. And it's something that I want again. With support, I think I can do that.”

Another one of DRNY's core projects is investigating allegations of abuse and neglect against individuals with disabilities in jail and prison settings. DRNY conducted on-site monitoring and investigations at Riker's Island. DRNY is advocating with the City Departments of Correction and Health and Mental Hygiene to ensure that inmates with mobility devices have access to appropriate and safe mobility aides. DRNY also worked to ensure that services, programs, and activities, are accessible to inmates with mobility, learning, hearing, vision, and other impairments.

DRNY also filed a lawsuit in the Eastern District of New York on behalf of a resident of New York City and a resident of Suffolk County who were deprived access to text 911. Individuals who have disabilities that impair their hearing or communication cannot immediately access 911 services because this District lacks text-to-911 services.

Investigations of Abuse and Neglect

DRNY investigated allegations of abuse and neglect including:

- Physical restraint in schools
- Use of force and solitary confinement in prisons and jails
- Inadequate care in skilled nursing facilities
- Unsanitary conditions and poor care in facilities

Veteran's Issues

As a demonstration of DRNY's ongoing support of veterans, we have several projects designed to engage, support and advocate for service members throughout New York by:

- Offering a free Continuing Legal Education regarding Veterans Benefits, with a focus on training both lawyers and non-lawyer advocates on how to obtain benefits, prepare claims, and appeal unfavorable decisions
- Attending Veterans Resource Fairs at various venues such as libraries and VA hospitals.
- Conducting outreach at law schools
- Working to revitalize the Veterans Coalition in Northeastern New York while also identifying issues that JAG cannot assist

Coalition Building

DRNY is also involved in forging coalitions between agencies on statewide issues like:

- Improving communication between students, families and schools in Special Education
- Ensuring that voter's with disabilities have access to a private accessible vote
- Expanding cultural competency and language access

Systemic Issues

DRNY also identifies and addresses systemic issues such as:

- Sidewalk and street accessibility
- Difficulties faced by individuals transitioning from various state-run facilities back to the community
- Barriers to integrated employment opportunities

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