



# DISABILITY RIGHTS NEW YORK

## *Protection & Advocacy and Client Assistance Program Services in the 6<sup>th</sup> 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 6<sup>th</sup> 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 (SSDI) or Supplementary Security Income (SSI), 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 (ILCs), 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 61,369 individuals with disabilities living in the 6<sup>th</sup> Congressional District. DRNY has handled 151 Service Requests for 110 distinct clients. These individuals lived in 19 of the 27 zip codes in the 6<sup>th</sup> Congressional District. Over this 43 month period, DRNY averaged approximately 3.51 Service Requests per month from individuals in this District.

## **Clients by Age**

DRNY has assisted some of the most vulnerable individuals in the 6<sup>th</sup> Congressional District. 10 unique clients were residents of nursing homes, hospitals, correctional facilities, rehabilitation facilities, and youth-focused residential facilities. Of the residents living in the community, 10, or nearly 9.09% of DRNY's unique clients were under 18. According to census data, individuals under 18 account for only 4.84% of civilian, non-institutionalized individuals with a disability in the 6<sup>th</sup> Congressional District. The following table shows that 36.36% 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.

<b>Age Group</b>	<b>Number of Individuals</b>	<b>Percentage of Total</b>
Under 5 Years Old	0	0%
5-9 Years	2	1.82%
10-14	6	5.45%
15-19	7	6.36%
20-24	6	5.45%
25-34	9	8.18%
35-44	12	10.91%
45-54	27	24.55%
55-59	13	11.82%
60-64	11	10.00%
65 or Older	16	14.55%

## 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 6<sup>th</sup> Congressional District with that of DRNY's clients in the 6<sup>th</sup> Congressional District. DRNY does not require demographic information from our clients as a pre-requisite for services, so for 18 clients, race information is incomplete or unavailable, and for 11 clients ethnicity information is incomplete or unavailable.

Race	Estimate	As Percentage	DRNY Clients	As Percentage
Total population	744,562		92	
One race	719,639	96.65%	84	91.30%
White	330,300	44.36%	69	75.00%
Black or African American	32,212	4.33%	13	14.13%
American Indian and Alaska Native	2,407	0.32%	0	0.00%
Asian	300,927	40.42%	2	2.17%
Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander	125	0.02%	0	0.00%
Some other race	53,668	7.21%	0	0.00%
Two or more races	24,923	3.35%	8	8.70%

Hispanic or Latino Origin by Type	6 <sup>th</sup> Congressional District	% of Total	DRNY Clients	% of Total
Total population	744,562		99	
Hispanic or Latino (of any race)	138,234	18.57%	18	18.18%
Not Hispanic or Latino	606,328	81.43%	81	81.82%

## SERVICE REQUESTS

DRNY provided full case services in 84 of the requests for services, 55.63% of the total 151 Service Requests. DRNY provided Information and Referral (I&R) services to the remaining 67 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

7 of DRNY's programs provided case services to at least one constituent in the 6<sup>th</sup> Congressional District.

SR Type	CAP	PAAT	PABSS	PADD	PAIMI	PAIR	PATBI	Grand Total
Case Services	19	4	8	9	3	34	7	84
I & R	5	1	1	10	21	29	0	67
Grand Total	24	5	9	19	24	63	7	151

## Service Request Response Time

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

63 of these were resolved in less than 14 days.

## Areas Covered by Service Requests

- 7 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
- 14 involved housing issues, including housing discrimination
- 13 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
- 19 involved clients seeking assistance with obtaining or maintaining benefits including ACCES-VR services, SSI, SSDI, Medicaid, or other forms of health insurance
- 8 involved healthcare issues including admission, transportation and discharge issues involving residential care or treatment facilities

## Representative Issues

- Assisted client with a Traumatic Brain Injury to be reassessed and properly screened so she could be discharged from a skilled nursing facility to a community setting
- Advocated for a 16 year old with Autism to receive appropriate behavioral supports in his educational setting
- Obtained Access-a-Ride services for a client who was denied unlimited access
- Advocated so a client with a Traumatic Brain Injury could access a housing subsidy from the TBI Waiver program
- Assisted a client with a developmental disability to be discharged from a psychiatric hospital and receive appropriate educational services
- Ensured that a client's housing provider was properly paying portions of client's rent so that the client was not evicted from his supported housing
- Advocated for a client to receive vocational rehabilitation services to meet the client's employment goal

## 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 investigating allegations of abuse and neglect against individual with disabilities. DRNY conducted an investigation of a residential school for students with

disabilities in the 6<sup>th</sup> Congressional District and concluded that students were being neglected. DRNY released a public report following the investigation to notify the public and the residential school of the problematic policies, procedures, and conduct that impact the safety and well-being of students with disabilities. DRNY concluded that there was under-reporting of suspected abuse and neglect at the school and limited knowledge among service recipients about their rights. As a result, a presentation was developed and given to residents to improve and gauge resident's knowledge of their rights and reporting mechanisms.

Another core projects is to ensure that people with disabilities are not deprived of their right to self-determine and exercise decision making. DRNY, in partnership with the Developmental Disabilities Planning Council (DDPC) and the City University of New York Hunter College, has embarked on a five-year pilot to explore Surrogate Decision Making (SDM) as a lesser restrictive alternative to guardianship. SDM is a model that provides people with intellectual and developmental disabilities with the individualized supports and services necessary to make informed decisions about all aspects of everyday living. SDM emphasizes that the majority of individuals with disabilities, even those with the most significant disabilities, have the right and ability to make important decisions impacting their lives.

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 also 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**

New York State is home to nearly 900,000 veterans, many of whom could benefit from the advocacy of the Protection and Advocacy System. 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.

- Conducting free day-long Continuing Legal Education (CLE) courses to educate lawyers, and non-lawyers how to advocate to obtain benefits, prepare claims and appeal decisions for Veterans Benefits
- Conducting 5 outreach events across New York State targeting veterans and collaborating with organizations and group that currently serve veterans

- Attending various military and Veteran Administration (VA) sponsored events including at libraries and VA hospitals
- Connecting with VA Medical Centers, organizations helping homeless and vulnerable veterans and legal service providers dedicated to veteran issues
- Working with and revitalizing veteran coalitions across New York State to identify issues where 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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