

Strategic Plan 2018 - 2022

Introduction

In 2018, DRC celebrates its 40th Anniversary. We are proud of the difference our work has made, and encouraged by the progress made towards a more inclusive and barrier free world. Our new mission statement is “Advocate, educate, investigate, and litigate to advance the rights, dignity, equal opportunities, and choices for all people with disabilities.” It not only defines what we do but also reminds us there is still work to be done to achieve equality and justice.

Today we face healthcare changes and attacks against the Americans with Disabilities Act. Resistance continues against adequate home and community-based services so people can avoid more expensive institutionalization. Investigations reveal abuses and neglect in jails and juvenile halls, as well as schools and state and community institutions. People with disabilities still have to fight for their autonomy, preferences and choices. Access to public benefits, transportation, housing and employment requires attention to make sure the gains made in prior years remain. We have work to do in order to increase access to accessible, culturally and language competent services.

Our Strategic Plan identifies eight goals that focus our work on preventing abuse and neglect; ending discrimination and segregation; respecting the autonomy and choices of people with disabilities; and, advancing basic rights to health care, housing, and education. To achieve these goals, we are committed to working creatively and using all of our advocacy tools so people can live in barrier-free communities of their choice with the services they need to be successful.

Vision Statement

We envision a barrier-free, inclusive, diverse world that values each individual and their voice. In this world, all people with disabilities enjoy the power of equal rights and opportunities; freedom from abuse, neglect, and discrimination; dignity; and respect for their choices based on their own goals and values.

Mission Statement

Disability Rights California advocates, educates, investigates, and litigates to advance the rights, dignity, equal opportunities, and choices for all people with disabilities.

Organizational Goals, Initiatives and Objectives

Goal 1: Expand awareness of our work.

Initiative: Reach new and diverse audiences.

2018 Objectives:

Objective 1: Hire an additional deaf advocate.

Objective 2: Increase our internal capacity to serve individuals from California's diverse ethnic and language communities.

Objective 3: Continue our efforts to make all of our documents accessible and translate our self-advocacy materials into 11 threshold languages and ASL, and ensure our materials are understandable.

Objective 4: DRC's Board will lead DRC's 40th anniversary celebration focused on celebrating 40 successes over 40 weeks as a way of increasing visibility about DRC.

Objective 5: DRC's Board will work with staff to identify specific ways they can be effective DRC ambassadors and participate in outreach.

Objective 6: DRC's Board Legislation Committee will help advance our legislative platform and will discuss the best ways to achieve that outcome.

Goal 2: Use innovative ways to communicate our messages and results.

Initiative: Increase our use of innovative methods and tools for communicating with the community about important disability issues and DRC's advocacy to address them.

2018 Objectives:

Objective 1: Complete redesign of our website so it is useable by mobile devices, is a model for accessibility and creates easy access to our resources, including packaging our advocacy materials in different ways on our website.

Objective 2: Increase the creativity and cohesiveness of how we describe the results we achieve across all programs and advocacy strategies.

Objective 3: Develop eight short videos to provide practical self-advocacy information that are accessible to all Californians with disabilities.

Objective 4: A new Board Committee will work with staff to identify new and innovative ways to communicate our messages, and evaluate the effectiveness of these approaches.

Goal 3: Enhance Board and staff diversity; and foster a culture of diverse experiences, opinion, and perspectives.

Initiative: Our Board and staff will reflect the diversity of California including the wealth of experiences and perspectives. We will foster a culture that welcomes a variety of perspectives and uses these contributions as strengths.

2018 Objectives:

Objective 1: As Board vacancies occur, recruit individuals from diverse disability and ethnic and language and cultural communities so that the Board composition reflects the diversity of California.

Objective 2: Employ a diverse staff with the goal providing accessible and culturally and linguistically competent services with staff who reflect the disability and ethnic and language diversity of California.

Objective 3: Implement the principles we advocate in our workplace by being a model employer for people with disabilities.

Objective 4: Continue staff diversity training.

Objective 5: Provide diversity training for Board members, which looks at layers of diversity within communities to tell broader experiences.

Objective 6: Create opportunities for Board members to share their knowledge and experience with the rest of the Board.

Objective 7: Incorporate techniques such as ice breakers into structured time to foster a more connected and engaged Board that values a multiplicity of perspectives.

Objective 8: Hold trainings as opportunities to further the Board's knowledge and understanding of the diverse communities that compose California.

Goal 4: Provide excellent client services.

Initiative: We will combine proven methods with creative and innovative strategies to provide services of value to and effective for our clients.

Objective 1: Increase the number of individuals with disabilities or their family members from diverse ethnic communities who make an initial request for assistance.

Objective 2: Improve the efficiency and effectiveness of our short-term advocacy assistance including helping people understand what they can expect to receive from DRC and providing better connections to other sources of assistance.

Objective 3: Expand methods of obtaining client feedback about all DRC services.

Objective 4: Increase private attorney involvement in our advocacy work by increasing the number of cases in which we have pro bono counsel.

Goal 5: Employee excellence.

Initiative: We strive to attract and retain a high performing workforce by having competitive salaries and benefits, and creating an organizational culture that provides professional development and promotional opportunities that support employees' goals.

Objective 1: Continue to integrate our compensation and benefit principles and explore other compensation strategies that will positively impact our ability to attract and retain a high performing workforce.

Objective 2: Increase professional developmental opportunities and include a professional development plan in each staff member's annual evaluation; hold an All Staff Training in conjunction with our 40th Anniversary; and provide ongoing training for supervisors and managers.

Objective 3: Provide staff with the tools and resources they need for high quality work.

Objective 4: Identify new ways to acknowledge, reward and promote staff successes and identify media strategies to promote the work of our staff.

Objective 5: Create a culture that supports a healthy work-life balance and engagement and fun in the workplace.

Goal 6: Diverse and sustainable resources.

Initiative: Ensure adequate resources from diverse sources so we can achieve great advocacy outcomes and support employee excellence.

Objective 1: Maintain and expand our core funding including working with the state bar to measure the impacts achieved with increased Equal Access funding.

Objective 2: Increase attorney fees and generate \$500,000 in fees.

Objective 3: Increase donations from the disability community, law firms, clients, our vendors and the public.

Objective 4: Identify criteria and process for pursuing grant opportunities. Apply for grant opportunities that are consistent with our mission and allow DRC to sustain or expand its services.

Objective 5: Increase web-based donations and make our donation page more current and topical. Use our 40th Anniversary celebrations as a primary way we raise funds in 2018 with a focus on securing sponsors for each of the 40 weeks.

Goal 7: Prepare today for tomorrow.

Initiative: We are future-focused to address the changing social, cultural, financial, political, and legal climates.

Objective 1: Improve contingency planning in the areas of financial, emergency preparedness, and IT security by completing our Disaster Recovery Plan, developing and providing training to staff regarding IT security.

Objective 2: Develop a plan to identify and preserve specialized knowledge, skills and abilities.

Objective 3: Evaluate our administrative services including consideration of service standards, staffing ratios by function, system and technological functions that will increase efficiency and develop a plan to address the evaluation outcomes.

What We Do

1. Advocate for people with disabilities.
2. Provide culturally appropriate services.
3. Tell people about their disability-related rights.
4. Train people about rights and give them information and tools to be their own advocate.
5. Investigate and address reports of abuse or neglect.
6. Make policy changes to benefit many.
7. Provide legal help on issues we prioritize and have the resources to work on.
8. Help state psychiatric hospital residents.
9. Provide clients' rights advocacy for regional center clients.
10. Bring impact litigation and act as amicus curiae.

Who We Help

Disability Rights California helps Californians with disabilities. You may get DRC services on a disability related issue if you:

- Have an intellectual and developmental disability
- Are a regional center client
- Have a mental health disability
- Are a resident of a state psychiatric hospital
- Have a physical, learning, or sensory disability
- Have a traumatic brain injury
- Need access to technology that may help you live a fuller, more independent life
- Receive SSI or SSDI and need help keeping your benefits when you return to work
- Receive or want to receive Department of Vocational Rehabilitation services
- Have questions about your right to vote

To decide if we can represent you directly, we look at

- The merits of your case
- Your ability to advocate for yourself
- Other advocacy sources you can use
- Whether your problem is a DRC priority
- If DRC has resources to help

If we decide that we cannot help you and you disagree, you can file a grievance. See here for grievance forms:

<http://www.disabilityrightsca.org/connect/whom.htm>. If you want more information about our services or a grievance, you may call (800) 776-5746 or contact us by email at grievance@disabilityrightsca.org.

Examples of Problems We Can Help With

Disability Rights California helps people solve disability-related problems. DRC can help you with problems like:

- Rights to basic support, personal care, therapy and health care such as Home Supportive Services (IHSS) and Medi-Cal
- Discrimination in housing, transportation, employment and access to public and private programs and services
- Abuse, neglect and rights violations
- Services and supports in the least restrictive environment, dignity, privacy, choice and other basic rights
- Special education
- Access to vocational rehabilitation services
- Mental health and support services
- Regional center eligibility and services
- Voter registration, accessible vote casting and voting places
- Access to technology – like communication devices and power wheelchairs

Disability Rights California Cannot Help With

- Issues not in our Advocacy Goals, Initiatives and Objectives
- Criminal law, family law, or bankruptcy courts or worker's compensation proceedings
- Personal injury lawsuits
- Filling out Social Security forms
- Getting guardianships or conservatorships
- Issues not related to a disability

How to Get Help

To ask Disability Rights California a legal question related to your disability, please call:

1-800-776-5746 (Voice)

1-800-719-5798 (TTY)

or fill out our request for assistance form

(https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSdyXXQrOfa_AtpPa-3jviisj4Pdcl5bB1qpicZL0GEr4TXGew/viewform).

If you are a regional center client, you may ask for help from the Office of Clients' Rights Advocacy (OCRA).

Office of Clients' Rights Advocacy

1-800-390-7032 (Voice Northern California)

1-866-833-6712 (Voice Southern California)

916-504-5820 (Voice Sacramento)

1-877-669-6023 (TTY)

If you are a resident at a state psychiatric hospital, you may ask for help from the California Office of Patients' Rights (COPR).

California Office of Patients' Rights

916-504-5811 (Voice)

For information about our work on state bills and budget you may call

Legislation Unit

916-504-5800 (Voice)

For information about our media and communications work you may call

Communications/Media

916 504 5938 (Voice)

1-800-719-5798 (TTY)

For information about our self-advocacy work, you may call

Peer Self-Advocacy Unit

916-504-5800 (Voice)

1-800-719-5798 (TTY)

Advocacy Principles

Our advocacy will be zealous, dedicated, effective, creative, innovative and daring.

We will take on issues of importance to the disability community even when the outcome is uncertain.

We will integrate a variety of advocacy approaches in all of our work, including self-advocacy, legal, non-legal, media, public policy, legislative and investigatory.

We value diversity. Our staff should reflect the ethnic, language, disability and demographic diversity of California: rural, age, sexual orientation, a range of different life experiences that reflect the disability community.

Our advocacy efforts will affirmatively address the needs of traditionally underserved and under-represented communities through partnership with such communities.

Our advocacy will be of high quality regardless of the type of service, the nature of the problem or who the client is. We will be honest, prepared, truthful and informed.

All staff is expected to contribute and their contributions will be valued and respected.

When representing individuals:

- We will do what the client wants – not what we or others think is best.
- We will be honest about our limitations, values, resources and the likely outcome.
- The client chooses the outcome and the method of achieving the outcome and the client's choices will be treated with respect.
- The client actively participates in every stage of the process.

Goals and Initiatives

Disability Rights California has identified the following areas in which we plan to have positive impact over the next five-year period:

Goal 1. Stop abuse, no matter where and when it occurs. Improve quality of care.

Initiative 1: End abusive practices such as solitary confinement, pepper spray, and sexual abuse and neglect of individuals with disabilities in county jails and juvenile halls.

Initiative 2: End abuse, neglect and victimization of people with disabilities and improve response by abuse response system.

Initiative 3: Stop criminalization of and improve interactions between individuals with disabilities and law enforcement and the criminal justice system.

Initiative 4: Reform the use of seclusion and restraint. End their use in schools and reduce the use of seclusion and restraint in facilities including state hospitals, community hospitals, and other settings.

Goal 2. Stop discrimination, eliminate stigma, and protect civil rights.

Initiative 1: Protect the civil rights of individuals with disabilities living in facilities.

Initiative 2: Humanize disabilities and provide positive portrayals of people with disabilities as a way to stop stigma.

Initiative 3: Challenge disability discrimination by public entities and private service providers.

Goal 3. End segregation. Increase community living options so people can live and fully participate in barrier-free communities of their choice with the services and supports they need to thrive.

Initiative 1: Ensure successful transition of individuals with disabilities from restrictive living arrangements to the community.

Initiative 2: Ensure individuals with disabilities have the support they need to remain in their homes.

Goal 4. Respect the autonomy, preferences, and choices of people with disabilities so they can be equal, passionate, and full participants in society.

Initiative 1: Protect the autonomy rights of individuals with disabilities.

Initiative 2: Reduce the use of conservatorships.

Initiative 3: Ensure individuals with disabilities can make choices and participate in society.

Goal 5. Protect and advance basic human rights to health care, housing, and education.

Initiative 1: Ensure that individuals with disabilities have access to affordable health care and other benefits.

Initiative 2: Increase access to affordable, accessible, safe housing.

Initiative 3: Protect the fundamental right to education in the least restrictive environment and access to higher education.

Goal 6. Ensure access to government benefits, transportation, and employment opportunities with competitive wages.

Initiative 1: Increase people with disabilities' knowledge of and access to public benefit programs.

Initiative 2: Increase access to transportation including ride sharing, paratransit, and transportation in rural areas.

Initiative 3: Increase employment for individuals with disabilities and access to employment services and supports.

Goal 7. Increase access to culturally and language competent services that value disability, diversity, culture, and ethnicity of each individual. Ensure that all services are accessible to people with disabilities.

Initiative 1: Ensure people with disabilities have access to information and services that are culturally and disability competent and in their native language, including American Sign Language.

Initiative 2: Promote DRC services to underserved communities, including immigrants with disabilities.

Goal 8. Ensure access to up-to-date knowledge and tools and advocate so individuals with disabilities can be effective self-advocates and access courts, administrative agencies, and legal services to defend and enforce their rights.

Initiative 1: Revise and update publications to reflect changes in the law.

Initiative 2: Educate people about their rights and teach them how to be effective self-advocates for what they need and ensure that individuals with disabilities have access to the legal system.

We develop annual objectives under each initiative. If you want a copy of the annual objectives please contact info@disabilityrightsca.org.

DRC Funding

Disability Rights California receives funds from federal and state agencies, the State Bar of California, foundations and private donations.

Here is information to help you understand the titles of the federal grants and state funds identified in the Goals and Objectives:

Federal Funding

PADD: Disability Rights California is the agency in California responsible for protecting and advocating for the rights of people with intellectual and developmental disabilities under the federal Developmentally Disabled Assistance and Bill of Rights Act of 1978 (PADD).

PAIMI: The Protection and Advocacy for Individuals with Mental Illness Act of 1986 (PAIMI) extended Disability Rights California's mandate to people with psychiatric disabilities.

PAIR: The Protection and Advocacy of Individual Rights Act of 1992 (PAIR) extended Disability Rights California's mandate to people with physical, learning and sensory disabilities.

PAAT: Disability Rights California receives funds under the Protection and Advocacy for Assistive Technology (PAAT) Act to increase access to assistive devices, services and equipment.

PABSS: Under the Protection and Advocacy for Beneficiaries of Social Security (PABSS) Act, we provide advocacy assistance to Social Security Disability, Supplemental Security Income (SSI) or Medicare beneficiaries about employment related issues.

PATBI: Protection & Advocacy for Individuals with Traumatic Brain Injury (PATBI) advocates so people with traumatic brain injuries receive appropriate services and supports in the community.

PAVA: Part of the Help America Vote Act of 2002 (HAVA) was the Protection and Advocacy for Voting Access (PAVA) program. PAVA works for full participation in the electoral process for people with disabilities, including registering to vote, casting a vote and accessing polling places.

CAP: Disability Rights California provides services under the Client Assistance Program (CAP) to provide information and assistance to individuals seeking or receiving services under the Rehabilitation Act, including help pursuing administrative, legal and other remedies to protect their rights.

WIPA: Disability Rights California receives funding from the Social Security Administration to assist recipients of Social Security Benefits to plan their benefits so they can successfully return to work.

State Contracts

Disability Rights California receives funds from the State Bar under the Equal Access Fund, the Interest on Lawyers Trust Account (IOLTA) program, and the Bank Community Stabilization and Reinvestment Grant to provide services to indigent Californians with disabilities.

Disability Rights California provides services under contracts with the Department of State Hospitals (California Office of Patients' Rights, "COPR") and with the Department of Developmental Services (Office of Clients' Rights Advocacy, "OCRA").