

# **Disability Law Center of Alaska**

## **FY18 Goals & Priorities**

Specific to:

Protection and Advocacy for Individuals with Developmental Disabilities (PADD)

**FY17:** October 1, 2017 to September 31, 2018

Goals & Priorities guide the work we do each year for people with disabilities in Alaska.

Goals & Priorities are established each year by the Disability Law Center of Alaska (DLC) in response to direction from stakeholders statewide.

### **COMMUNITY DIRECTION:**

According to public input, the Disability Law Center of Alaska should direct its yearly resources toward the following activities in this order:

1. Direct Services
2. System Advocacy
3. Training

### **PRIORITIES & OBJECTIVES:**

DLC does not have the resources to accept every request for advocacy or legal services. With any request for service, including direct services, systemic advocacy, or training, DLC must first consider available resources. This includes:

1. The availability of other individuals or entities to assist with the request (not duplicating services);
2. Adequate financial resources and personnel;
3. The possible positive impact of intervention for the benefit of all people with disabilities.

After those considerations (and, where appropriate, the individual case acceptance factors) are met, DLC turns to the priorities and objectives guide our work for the year.

## **Abuse & Neglect**

Goal A: To reduce the abuse, neglect, and exploitation of people with developmental disabilities (DD) living in residential facilities by ensuring adequate safeguards exist and are followed. This goal is important because people with DD have been and remain a vulnerable population.

### **Priorities:**

- A.1. Investigate complaints of abuse, neglect, exploitation or death of people with DD, prioritizing incidents indicating underlying systemic problems that if uncorrected, may result in additional incidents.
- A.2. Monitor and report on conditions at institutions who serve people with DD.

### **Abuse & Neglect Strategic/Resource Guidance**

- Complaints alleging the following abuse will be prioritized: death, suicide attempts, serious injury, failure to provide medical or mental health treatment, sexual misconduct, seclusion & restraint;
- Complaints originating in facilities with repeated complaints of abuse and neglect will be prioritized;
- DLC will prioritize monitoring facilities in rural hub communities and those facilities where residents have restricted access to communicating with DLC and other advocacy organizations.
- When DLC monitors Department of Juvenile Justice and Department of Corrections' facilities it will check for compliance with the requirements under the Prison Rape Elimination Act.

## **Outreach**

**GOAL B:** Increase rural community awareness regarding the rights of people with DD by conducting trainings and participating in outreach events. This will encourage broad understanding leading toward a more inclusive community.

Priorities:

- B.1. Conduct outreach, intake, and/or, training events statewide to inform people with DD about the services available to them through the P&A.
- B.2. Conduct rights trainings for people with DD.
- B.3. Provide public education regarding the rights of people with DD to ensure broad understanding leading toward a more inclusive community.

### Outreach Strategic/Resource Guidance

Outreach activities may be suspended when caseloads involving direct legal advocacy exceed manageable resource levels.

## **Housing**

**Goal C:** Achieve greater autonomy for people with DD by allowing them to maintain or attain a residence of their choosing. A home of one's own is the cornerstone of independence. However, across the nation, individuals with disabilities face a crisis in the availability of decent, safe, affordable, and accessible housing.

Priority:

- C.1. Provide individual advocacy in select cases to ensure people with DD are provided appropriate community based services resulting in community integration and independence, including the ability to stay in their own home.

## **Community Integration**

Goal D: Increase the community integration of people with DD by protecting their rights to receive appropriate supports and services in the most integrated setting as is mandated under state and federal law. DLC will pursue this goal because many individuals with disabilities encounter barriers which make it difficult to achieve this goal.

Priority:

D.1. Provide individual advocacy in select cases to ensure people with DD have equal opportunity to be a meaningful part of an integrated community.

## **Employment**

Goal E: Improve access to integrated employment for people with DD by protecting them from discriminatory practices. This is important because more than 25 years after the passage of the Americans with Disabilities Act, many employers still engage in employment practices that adversely affect people with disabilities.

Priority:

E.1. Provide individual advocacy in select cases to ensure people with DD have equal opportunity to obtain and maintain work in safe and humane conditions.

### Employment Strategic/Resource Guidance

Assisting individuals with employment related matters may not, in all instances, include court or administrative representation, but may involve the provision of self-advocacy assistance.

If a complaint of employment discrimination is being, or should be, investigated by another agency, such as the Anchorage Equal Rights Commission, the Alaska State Commission on Human Rights, or the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, DLC may delay its own assessment and/or make a referral to the appropriate agency.

## **Priority: Government Benefits**

Goal F: Increase the number of deserving applicants with DD who obtain the benefits to which they are entitled by improving application outcomes and retention of services. This is a goal because financial assistance and support services are vital to living independently within ones' own community.

Priority:

F.1. Assist people with DD in accessing or maintaining government benefits.

### Government Benefits Strategic/Resource Guidance

Assisting individuals in maintaining social security benefits does not include help with overpayment issues.

## **Education**

Goal G: Increase the access of students with DD to a free, appropriate public education in the most integrated settings by improving their opportunities to participate meaningfully in academic and non-academic activities in the least-restrictive environment.

Priority:

G.1. Provide individual advocacy in select cases to ensure people with DD can go to school in safe and humane conditions and receive appropriate educational and related services in most integrated settings. Students with disabilities who are receiving no special education services will be prioritized over students receiving services, although those services may be inadequate.

### Education Strategic/Resource Guidance

Students in rural areas of the state will be prioritized over students in urban settings.