

AREAS OF FOCUS AND OBJECTIVES **2024 - 2026 Goals and Objectives**

Disability Rights New Jersey (Disability Rights NJ) is NJ's Protection and Advocacy (P&A) agency under Federal law. We advance the human, civil, and legal rights of people with disabilities and promote their self-determination, independence, productivity, and integration into all facets of community life.

Disability Rights NJ's Priorities: Goals and Objective ensure that the needs of historically marginalized populations are served, and the most critical, far-reaching issues are addressed. Through our work under each Goal and Objective we are particularly focusing on individuals and communities experiencing multiple forms of discrimination. Goals and Objectives also assist Disability Rights NJ as it faces a demand for legal representation that often exceeds the resources of the P&A agency.

Disability Rights NJ may provide people with disabilities information and referral, legal representation including self-advocacy assistance, investigation related to allegations of abuse or neglect, systemic legal representation, or other systemic advocacy. Level of legal representation or investigation will depend on a variety of factors including alignment with Goals and Objectives, availability of staff and funding, as well as merits of case.

2024-2026 GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

Priorities: Goals and Objectives in effect through the 2026 fiscal year are listed below. Note: Consistent with federal requirements, Disability Rights NJ seeks public input into the Goals and Objectives each year during our three-year cycle and revises the three-year Goals and Objectives each year to reflect public input and systemic needs.

Comments or questions regarding Disability Rights NJ's current Goals and Objectives should be directed to advocate@disabilityrightsny.org.

Goal 1: Prevent and respond to abuse, neglect, and legal rights violations that we encounter in settings where people with disabilities live or receive services.

- **OBJECTIVE 1:** Educate people with disabilities residing in institutional settings (e.g., state psychiatric hospitals, developmental centers, and nursing homes) and licensed HCBS settings (e.g., group homes and assisted living facilities) on residents' rights (including rights under the federal home and community-based settings rule) and patients' rights and assist them in exercising their rights through targeted self-advocacy assistance, limited legal assistance, and education.
- **OBJECTIVE 2:** Collaborate with stakeholders and educate policymakers regarding people in or at risk of placement in institutional settings (e.g., state psychiatric hospitals, developmental centers, prisons, jails, and nursing homes) and licensed HCBS settings (e.g., group homes and assisted living facilities) on residents' rights (including the federal home and community-based settings rule) and patients' rights.
- **OBJECTIVE 3:** Prevent and respond to abuse, neglect, or exploitation through targeted monitoring at institutional and community settings. Educate people with disabilities residing in institutional and community settings about Disability Rights NJ and our services through monitoring.
- **OBJECTIVE 4:** Prevent and respond to abuse and neglect in youth residential or psychiatric facilities, detention facilities, and facilities licensed by Juvenile Justice Commission and/or licensed by the Department of Children and Families through targeted investigations and monitoring including providing rights-based education for youth with disabilities.
- **OBJECTIVE 5:** Respond to allegations of abuse, neglect, exploitation, or unexplained deaths of people with disabilities in institutions and licensed settings through referrals to licensing or oversight agencies, individual advocacy, and primary or secondary investigations.
- **OBJECTIVE 6:** Continue to address abuse, neglect, and barriers to discharge for patients at state psychiatric hospitals through monitoring, investigations, and systemic litigation.
- **OBJECTIVE 7:** Represent the interests of people with intellectual and developmental disabilities who have a State Bureau of Guardianship Services (BGS) guardian in end-of-life consultations, as required by state regulation.
- **OBJECTIVE 8:** Ensure that beneficiaries of Social Security and Supplemental Security Income are not subject to abuse, neglect, or financial exploitation by representative payees through the Social Security Administrative review process, referrals, education, and outreach.
- **OBJECTIVE 9:** Educate people with disabilities residing in carceral settings (e.g. jails and prisons) or "special" units in institutional settings (e.g. the Special Treatment Unit) on their rights in those settings and assist them in exercising their rights through targeted self-advocacy assistance, limited legal assistance, and education.
- **OBJECTIVE 10:** Collaborate with stakeholders, educate policy makers, and engage in systemic advocacy regarding people with disabilities in New Jersey's designated behavioral health units in New Jersey nursing homes.

Goal 2: Ensure that people with disabilities can live and work in the community by accessing equitable person-centered services, supports, and resources.

A. Employment

- **OBJECTIVE 1:** Ensure equitable access to Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) services for VR applicants and clients by providing self-advocacy assistance, limited legal assistance, and extended legal assistance as well as education emphasizing individual plan for employment (IPE) development, informed choice, and access to appeal rights. Educate policymakers about access to VR services and engage in systemic advocacy including participation in State Rehabilitation Councils.
- **OBJECTIVE 2:** Increase awareness of the Client Assistance Program (CAP) and Protection and Advocacy for Beneficiaries of Social Security (PABSS) through outreach about CAP and PABSS to Vocational Rehabilitation constituencies, , including VR clients and prospective VR clients, VR agencies and staff, and other stakeholders.
- **OBJECTIVE 3:** Advocate for an end to subminimum wage and for equitable access to competitive, integrated employment for people with disabilities, especially people with complex medical, physical, and behavioral needs, through a public report and systemic advocacy.
- **OBJECTIVE 4:** Promote the right to reasonable accommodations in the workplace for employees with disabilities, with a focus on beneficiaries of SSI and/or SSDI, by providing information and referral and education including self-advocacy materials.
- **OBJECTIVE 5:** Provide self-advocacy assistance to Social Security beneficiaries currently working or seeking employment regarding work-related overpayments, as well as information and referral regarding non-work related Social Security overpayments.

B. Home and Community Based Settings, Services and Supports

- **OBJECTIVE 1:** Increase the ability of youth with disabilities eligible for the Children’s System of Care (CSOC) and other Medicaid services to access home and community-based services and supports through self-advocacy assistance, limited and extended legal assistance, education, collaborations with stakeholders, and systemic advocacy.
- **OBJECTIVE 2:** Provide self-advocacy assistance, limited legal assistance, and education to adults with disabilities with respect to denial, reduction, limited authorization, or termination of Medicaid home and community-based services, including personal care assistance and waiver services. Engage in systemic advocacy to ensure that Medicaid programs and rights for adults with disabilities are fully implemented consistent with federal law.
- **OBJECTIVE 3:** Provide person-centered information about Medicaid eligibility with a focus on Medicaid waiver programs, as well as self-advocacy assistance, limited legal assistance, extended legal assistance, and education for people with disabilities who receive Medicaid home and community-based services and supports or who are seeking to receive these services,

who are being terminated from Medicaid. Engage in systemic advocacy including educating policy makers regarding systemic due process problems.

- **OBJECTIVE 4:** Provide self-advocacy assistance and education with respect to denial, reduction, or termination of state-funded TBI or state-funded personal care assistance services to people with traumatic brain injury as well as educate stakeholders and policy makers on service and support needs of people with TBI.
- **OBJECTIVE 5:** Provide self-advocacy assistance, limited legal assistance, and education with respect to the denial, reduction, or termination of Medicaid private duty nursing (PDN) services to both youth and adults. Engage in systemic advocacy including a public report regarding accessing Medicaid Private Duty Nursing.
- **OBJECTIVE 6:** Provide self-advocacy assistance, limited legal assistance, extended legal assistance, outreach, and education to move institutionalized adults with disabilities (e.g. state psychiatric hospitals, developmental centers, and nursing homes) to the most integrated residential settings to promote home and community-based services consistent with the Supreme Court's Olmstead decision.
- **OBJECTIVE 7:** Identify institutionalized adults with disabilities and, in particular, those with mental health disabilities, IDD, and TBI in or at risk of institutionalization in state psychiatric hospitals, developmental centers, and nursing homes to educate state partners and other stakeholders regarding rights-based access to home and community-based services to move these individuals to the most integrated settings consistent with the Supreme Court's Olmstead decision.
- **OBJECTIVE 8:** Provide self-advocacy assistance to people with disabilities with respect to home and community-based services delivered through the Division of Mental Health and Addiction Services. Educate policymakers and engage in collaborations to ensure the delivery of evidence-based mental health services and supports.

C. Housing

- **OBJECTIVE 1:** Advocate for affordable, accessible housing and supportive housing for people with disabilities that align with delivery system of community-based services and supports through collaborations and education of policymakers.
- **OBJECTIVE 2:** Provide information and referral, and education including self-advocacy materials to people with disabilities about their rights to reasonable accommodations in housing.

D. Transportation

- **OBJECTIVE 1:** Provide information and referral regarding Medicaid non-emergency medical transportation provided by Modivcare as well as advocate effective state oversight of Medicaid non-emergency medical transportation provided by Modivcare.
- **OBJECTIVE 2:** Engage in collaborations and systemic advocacy regarding accessible transportation for people with disabilities including Accesslink, NJTIP, NJ Transit, and county-

based transportation. Provide information and referral regarding accessible transportation for people with disabilities.

E. Education and Transition Services for Youth

- **OBJECTIVE 1:** Promote student involvement in accessing pre-employment transition services (ETS) and transition services from the vocational rehabilitation agencies and school districts by providing self-advocacy assistance, limited legal assistance, and education to students with disabilities between the ages of 14-22. Engage in systemic advocacy and collaborations with stakeholders to ensure youth have timely access to transition services while in school and through VR agencies.
- **OBJECTIVE 2:** Ensure that youth in Mercer and Essex Counties who are experiencing school-based discipline or are involved in the youth-justice system receive appropriate educational school-based services and supports in the least restrictive environment as well as Medicaid, and CSOC/PerformCare services and supports through information and referral, self-advocacy assistance, limited legal assistance, extended legal assistance, and education.
- **OBJECTIVE 3:** Provide information and referral to students with disabilities and their families regarding educational rights under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). Provide self-advocacy assistance to students with disabilities and their families regarding educational rights under IDEA who meet income eligibility of 300 percent of the federal poverty level with a focus on students who reside in previously identified Abbott districts [\(hyper-link\)](#).
- **OBJECTIVE 4:** Educate policymakers regarding issues related to education and transition services for youth with disabilities with a focus on IDEA and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act.

F. Healthcare

- **OBJECTIVE 1:** Ensure access to Medicaid healthcare services and providers for people with disabilities through stakeholder collaborations, educating policymakers, and systemic advocacy regarding the integration of behavioral health into Medicaid managed care.
- **OBJECTIVE 2:** Provide information and referral on Medicare eligibility and services as well as non-HCBS Medicaid services (e.g., dental services, prescription medication).

G. Voting

- **OBJECTIVE 1:** Assist voters with disabilities in accessing the right to vote through a disability voter hotline, education, outreach, and collaborations with other voter advocacy organizations.
- **OBJECTIVE 2:** Educate state and local policymakers about the barriers to voting that people with disabilities experience and advocate the removal of those barriers.

H. Public Accommodations

- **OBJECTIVE 1:** Educate people with disabilities about their rights to reasonable accommodations in places of public accommodation through information and referral education including self-advocacy materials, and systemic advocacy with state agencies.

I. Assistive Technology

- **OBJECTIVE 1:** Provide information and referral, self-advocacy assistance, limited legal assistance, and education to access assistive technology through Medicaid, IDEA, Rehabilitation Act, and Medicare.
- **OBJECTIVE 2:** Advocate for access to assistive technology through collaboration with partners and educating policymakers.

Goal 3: Promote self-determination for people with disabilities by eliminating unnecessary guardianships and advancing supported decision making.

- **OBJECTIVE 1:** Educate people with disabilities, their families, policy makers and key stakeholders about the use of supported decision-making as an alternative to unnecessary guardianships in New Jersey.
- **OBJECTIVE 2:** Educate policy makers and engage in systemic advocacy to reform New Jersey's guardianship system.
- **OBJECTIVE 3:** Provide legal assistance to people with disabilities subject to guardianship who are seeking to restore their capacity, modify their guardianship, or challenge a guardian's decision.
- **OBJECTIVE 4:** Issue a public report on the state of guardianship practices in New Jersey.