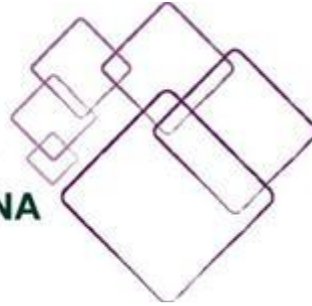


DISABILITY RIGHTS **NORTH CAROLINA**

Champions for Equality and Justice



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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DRNC Files Suit to Enforce Access Rights

Raleigh, NC-

Today, the Protection and Advocacy agency for North Carolina, Disability Rights North Carolina (DRNC), filed a federal lawsuit against the Wake County Board of Education and its Director of Special Education Services, Robert Sturey, in order to gain access to a classroom in which abuse is alleged to have occurred and to obtain the names and contact information for parent and guardians of students in a self-contained classroom for children with autism. This court action is in furtherance of DRNC's investigation into allegations that school staff improperly restrained children in the class, including a claim that one of these children was placed in handcuffs.

The Autism Society of North Carolina (ASNC) supports fully the right of DRNC to investigate these allegations, including its right to obtain contact information for the parents of the children in the classroom, and to interview students, staff and school administrators concerning these claims. "This is a situation which requires an independent investigation to ensure that children with disabilities are not being improperly restrained," said Tracey Sheriff, the Interim Executive Director of ASNC. "The treatment of children with autism that has been raised by these allegations should be regarded with utmost seriousness, and should be investigated accordingly."

DRNC, as North Carolina's federally designated Protection and Advocacy agency, is charged with the duty to investigate complaints of abuse and neglect of children and others with disabilities. "We are disappointed that the Wake County Public School System has chosen to hinder DRNC's efforts, and call upon the Superintendent and the School Board to resolve this matter by pledging their cooperation with DRNC's investigation," stated Vicki Smith, Executive Director of DRNC.

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Disability Rights North Carolina is the state's federally mandated protection and advocacy system for people with disabilities. One of the P&A's primary federal mandates is to protect and advocate against the abuse and neglect of people with disabilities.