

Disability Rights North Carolina
Champions for Equality and Justice

North Carolina's Protection and Advocacy Agency
Providing legally-based advocacy services to people with disabilities
since 2007

Who We Help

All people with disabilities living in North Carolina are eligible to receive assistance from Disability Rights NC. That includes people with:

- Developmental disabilities, including autism
- Mental illness
- Traumatic brain injury
- Physical impairments
- Visual impairments
- Hearing impairments
- Learning disabilities

What We Do

We protect the legal rights of people with disabilities living in North Carolina in a number of ways:

- Provide legal representation to people with disabilities based on annually established target issues;
- Investigate complaints about neglect, abuse, and related deaths in institutions;
- Monitor facilities where people with disabilities live or receive services to detect and address instances of abuse, neglect or exploitation.
- Provide training and support for self-advocacy;
- Educate people with disabilities about their legal rights; and
- Advocate and litigate to make systemic changes to improve the lives of people with disabilities.

What Is a P&A?

The first protection and advocacy (P&A) program was created in 1975 after a series of television reports exposed the deplorable conditions at Willowbrook, a large New York state institution for people with developmental disabilities. Similar concerns about the abuse and neglect in mental health facilities led to the expansion of the P&A system to include people with mental illness. Today, federal law requires every state and US territory to have a P&A program.

Safeguarding the well-being of individuals living in institutions remains a major focus of the work of Disability Rights NC. Over the

years, the scope of P&A work expanded to include protecting the rights of people with all types of disabilities, whether they live in their own home, in a group home, or in an institutional setting. The P&A laws evolved to give us the authority to devote resources to ensure full access to inclusive educational programs, healthcare, accessible housing, transportation, and productive employment opportunities.

Our Access Authority

Congress gave P&As an extraordinary investigative authority. Disability Rights NC has routine access to all individuals with disabilities in facilities providing services. The facility must give us access to all records of individuals with disabilities and other records that are relevant to an investigation. We receive immediate access to all records related to the death of an individual living in a facility, or in cases where we believe there is "probable cause to believe that the health or safety of an individual.

Examples of Recent Work

- Ended the NC Division of Motor Vehicles' (DMV) discrimination against capable, safe drivers who have a physical disability and prompted sweeping reforms to the DMV's Medical Review Program.
- Restored Medicaid benefits to many workers with disabilities after the NC Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) failed to comply with federal law.
- Ended DHHS' institutional bias in the assessment and approval of personal care services by challenging the denials and terminations of Medicaid-funded personal care services provided to tens of thousands of North Carolinians in their homes. Discovered and reported inhumane living conditions and sexual exploitation of an adult care home resident by an employee.
- Stopped the illegal suspension or expulsion of students with disabilities from public schools and ensured the students received educational services designed to support learning.
- Advocated for changes in the way inmates with mental illness are treated, after an investigation into an inmate's unexpected death revealed improper care.

First Nine Years of Advocacy and Outreach by Disability Rights NC

- 3,208 people with disabilities received direct legal and advocacy services.
- Approximately 12,750 people positively impacted through class action litigation.
- 28,136 people received information and referral services after they called seeking assistance.
- 29,788 people received education and information through presentations and outreach activities.
- 100 North Carolina counties served.

- 820 facilities visited.
- 1,697 people living in facilities received advocacy services.

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Se habla español.

Upon request, information is available in alternate formats.

Disability Rights NC is a federally mandated protection and advocacy system with funding from the US Department of Health and Human Services, the US Department of Education, and the Social Security Administration. It is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization.