STATEMENT OF PRIORITIES, OBJECTIVES, AND CASE SELECTION CRITERIA
CHILDREN AND ADULTS WITH PSYCHIATRIC DISABILITIES 2024

THE MISSION of Disability Rights DC at University Legal Services (DRDC) is to ensure that District of Columbia residents with disabilities have the legal rights to which they are entitled, including the right to be free from harm, the right to individual choice, and the right to full inclusion in the community.

The following priorities and objectives reflect DRDC’s mission:

1. Assist individuals with leaving institutions, advocate for greater consumer choice, address rights violations and engage in systemic advocacy to reduce the District’s reliance on institution-based and/or segregated services for adults diagnosed with significant mental illness and children diagnosed with serious emotional disturbance.
   a. Represent 10 adult consumers with significant mental illness in inpatient, residential facilities and correctional facilities and advocate for them to live in the least restrictive setting appropriate to meet their needs.
   b. Represent 18 adult consumers with significant mental illness living in the community in their efforts to obtain appropriate, individualized mental health services, including interagency care coordination, and quality housing, address rights violations and enforce their right to access existing programs, housing, governmental services and public accommodations.
   c. Represent 4 children and youth up to age 21 with serious emotional disturbance in accessing appropriate, individualized, coordinated mental health services, educational services and supports in the community.
   d. Provide self advocacy assistance to 5 adult consumers with significant mental illness in institutions and in the community so they can advocate for their rights and for services and supports.

2. Monitor, investigate, and advocate against improper seclusion, restraint, and medication and other abusive and neglectful conduct in institutions where D.C. residents with significant mental illness receive mental health services or seek to receive mental health services.
   a. Investigate on behalf of 10 consumers with significant mental illness who have been improperly secluded, restrained, medicated, or otherwise been abused or neglected.
b. Through advocacy, including the Department of Behavioral Health grievance procedures, represent 7 consumers with significant mental illness to address rights violations in institutions.

3. Conduct outreach and education to individuals with significant mental illness and serious emotional disturbance, family members, the government, court-appointed guardians, community members and service providers about individual rights and ways to reduce reliance on institution-based and segregated mental health services.
   a. Conduct 8 outreach, monitoring, and education sessions for children and youth with serious emotional disturbance and staff at local psychiatric hospitals and juvenile detention centers.
   b. Conduct 12 outreach, monitoring, and education sessions for adult consumers with significant mental illness and staff, including front-line staff, at hospitals that accept involuntarily committed patients, at nursing facilities, at community programs supporting people with serious mental illness and for community members and stakeholders, including Spanish-speaking and LGBTQ+ communities about the rights of people with mental illness.
   c. Conduct 10 monitoring, outreach, and education sessions for adults with significant mental illness in the D.C. Jail.
   d. Conduct 5 outreach and education sessions at community residential facilities serving adults with significant mental illness.
   e. Conduct 2 outreach and education efforts in the community to promote inclusion and quality secondary transition services for children and youth with serious emotional disturbance in District of Columbia Public Schools and Public Charter Schools, and to educate parents and children about their educational rights and improve services.

4. Develop strategies to promote autonomy and self-direction for individuals with significant mental illness who have been appointed a guardian or are at risk of having a guardian appointed.
   a. Provide 2 education sessions to mental health consumers with significant mental illness, family members, and the community about the right of mental health consumers to make their own decisions and options for substitute decision-making and supported decision-making and coordinate with advocacy groups to advocate for alternatives to guardianship.
   b. Advocate for alternatives to guardianship by representing 5 adults with significant mental illness who need powers of attorney, advance directives, and/or supported decision-making agreements to ensure their maximum autonomy.

5. Represent prospective class members in MJ v. District of Columbia to promote their rights under Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and the Medicaid statute to intensive community-based mental health services so that that District children and youth
with serious emotional disturbance can thrive in their community and are not institutionalized.

a. Litigate the claims of class members with serious emotional disturbance in MJ v. District of Columbia and prepare and respond to motions filed by the defendants.

CASE SELECTION CRITERIA

DRDC accepts cases, as resources allow, for individuals:

1. Who have a significant mental illness or serious emotional impairments; AND

2. Whose complaints fall within the above listed priorities; AND

3. Who are residents of the District of Columbia.

GRIEVANCE POLICY

While Disability Rights DC (DRDC) at University Legal Services (ULS) recognizes that every situation is important, please note that case acceptance is dependent upon available resources, including staff time. If your case is not accepted and you wish to file a grievance, please submit your grievance in writing to ULS’ Executive Director. Current clients may also submit a grievance to the Executive Director about the quality of DRDC’s representation and regarding a decision to close a case. In addition, an individual who receives mental health or other services, his/her family members or representatives may also submit a grievance regarding DRDC’s advocacy on behalf of people with disabilities and role as the DC protection and advocacy program. If requested, an individual may lodge an oral grievance with a DRDC staff member who shall put the grievance in writing and submit it to the Executive Director. The Executive Director may be reached at:

Jane Brown, Executive Director
University Legal Services
220 I Street, N.E., Suite 130
Washington, D.C. 20002
(202) 547-0198 Phone
(202) 547-2662 Fax
(202) 547-2657 TTY
jbrown@uls-dc.org

The Executive Director shall respond in writing within thirty (30) days of receipt of a grievance from any client or prospective client, or community member who has an interest in the operation of the protection and advocacy program.

A grievant may appeal the Executive Director’s decision to the ULS Board of Directors within ten (10) days of the written decision of the Executive Director. The decision of the ULS Board
of Directors shall be final and not subject to further appeal or review. Client confidentiality shall be maintained.

The Executive Director shall report grievances to the Board of Directors annually.