

**Report to the Developmental Disabilities Council**  
**From**  
**Advocacy Center**  
**January, 2009**

Although we usually report on major issues or trends, this time we would like to tell you about individual Advocacy Center (AC) Success Stories. Our representation of individuals is a large part of what we do; yet, we don't often talk about it. Here are a few examples:

- Our client is a young woman with mild to moderate MR. Before representation by AC, she lived with her mother and her sister. She had no outside friends or activities. She lived in a house with family and seventeen (17) dogs and (20) cats; the filth was unimaginable. Our client knew that the home was filthy and was not happy living there. She was also very bored and lonely. She reported that she spent the majority of her time "sitting in her room daydreaming". Adult Protective Services became involved because of the condition of the home. Our client did not want any kind of forced protective services or protective order because she still loved her family and her pets and did not want to be separated. AC negotiated placement in a group home very near her family. AC also set up visitation with her family and created a way for our client to have her dog with her at her new home. Our client made friends at the group home and landed a job at a daycare center.
- As an active-duty policeman, our client's leg prosthesis is more along the lines of a bionic machine than most of those purchased by Louisiana Rehabilitation Services (LRS). The prosthesis must stand up to repeated on-foot chases, getting in and out of his patrol car hundreds of times each month and sometimes wading through mud, muck and water.

Of course, this high-end piece of AT comes with a price to match. It costs more than double the maximum suggested by LRS. Our client called the Advocacy Center when his LRS counselor and her supervisor told him LRS would not pay that amount for a new device. Working with the vendor who made his original prosthesis, the Advocacy Center presented the LRS regional manager with an overview of why our client's continued employment (and future advancement) required such expenditure. His request was approved and he is back on patrol and putting miles on his new leg.

- Since graduating from college 7 years ago, our client had worked under a year-to-year contract for a parish school board. He was terminated when school ended in May and spent the summer not knowing if he would have a job in the fall. And, as a contract employee, he did not have benefits and was

not paying into any type of retirement account.

Our client researched numerous vocational possibilities and asked Louisiana Rehabilitation Services (LRS) to pay for him to attend a vocational training program specifically designed for individuals who are blind and interested in working for the federal government. Although it was an out-of-state program, our client felt it was an ideal choice for him.

LRS denied his request based on his current degree and the fact that the school board had typically rehired him each year. They concluded he did not need further training in order to maintain or advance in employment.

Advocacy Center countered this decision by presenting a brief that outlined the uncertain aspects of our client's current year-to-year employment situation, lack of both benefits, and any hope for career advancement. Rehabilitation Services Administration information memos were cited regarding client choice; LRS was also given statistical data from the training program's placement office.

After providing this information to the LRS state office, the original agency decision was reversed and our client received approval to attend the requested program. He now works for the Internal Revenue Services and has a great benefit package and opportunity for advancement.

- Client was barred access to a local festival due to her service animal. AC negotiated with the entity responsible for the festival, and arm of the local government, to secure access in the future for our client and all others accompanied by service animals.
- Client has dyslexia and received accommodations per her individualized Education Plan. The school was not consistently providing the accommodations, and the parents were informed that the child would not receive her accommodations on the LEAP test. Advocacy Center reviewed the documents and met with the parents to explain their rights and to assist with the process of how to obtain the required accommodations. The parents attended a meeting, and the child's accommodations were implemented in class, and were provided during the LEAP test. As a result, the child did pass the LEAP test.
- A nursing home resident received a discharge notice for non-payment. His sister, who has his Power of Attorney, contacted the Advocacy Center. We discovered that the resident's benefits were being garnished by the state of Texas for back child support. The client's ex wife would not agree to lessen the amount of garnishment. AC negotiated with the nursing home administrator who agreed to keep the resident.

- Client with cerebral palsy and scoliosis of the spine is seeking Medicaid coverage for a Universal Grasshopper (DME), a positioning device. He is totally dependent on others for his care. Due to his medical condition, he also suffers from a severely compromised respiratory system, which would be helped if he had the proper bodily support.

Advocacy Center provided technical assistance, strategy, and materials to be used by physician and other professionals to establish medical necessity. As a result of the P&A's assistance, Medicaid approved the purchase of the Universal Grasshopper.