

**Advocacy Center of Louisiana**  
**Report to the DD Council**  
**December 2018**

We are very sad to report the passing of our colleague David Gallegos. David was an extraordinary advocate and a friend to all of us at the Advocacy Center. We will miss him greatly.

**Updates and Reports on Advocacy Center Initiatives**

**Voting Rights of People with Disabilities**

Over the course of the November general and December run-off election days, Advocacy Center staff surveyed over 90% of the polling places in Orleans Parish. Though many polling places were accessible to people with mobility impairments, we found problems ranging from non-compliant parking to inaccessible paths of travel to poorly marked accessible entrances. We will be communicating with the City Council and the Clerk of Court regarding our findings.

Staffers monitored and responded to an election-day hotline on November 6, open from 6 a.m. to 8 p.m.

**Louisiana Mental Health Coalition**

Advocacy Center is proud to be a founding partner in the Louisiana Mental Health Coalition (LMHC). LMHC is organized around three core principles: 1. People with mental health needs should have access to sufficient community-based services and treatment such that they can live an integrated and independent life; 2. People with mental health needs should have access to high-quality care and treatment; 3. People with mental health needs have the right to participate in treatment decisions and care. LMHC is a statewide coalition. We are having four regional convenings in early 2019 at which we hope to gain insights from people with lived experience, advocates, providers, and family members regarding what is needed in their communities, so that the coalition can develop responsive policy priorities for 2019 and beyond. The convenings will be held on January 23 in New Orleans (morning) and Hammond (afternoon), January 29 in Opelousas and February 7 in Shreveport. We will be circulating information as we get closer to the convening dates; if you have questions or need further information, please contact Susan Meyers at [smeyers@advocacyla.org](mailto:smeyers@advocacyla.org) or 504-208-4681.

## **Investigation into Robinswood School**

The Advocacy Center's Community Living Ombudsman Program (CLOP) program staff have been working with the Louisiana Attorney General's (AG) Medicaid Fraud Unit in an investigation involving allegations of the rape of a resident by a staff member at Robinswood School in Lake Charles. The AG's office began the investigation following a routine CLOP visit to Robinswood in January of this year which uncovered the facts relating to the incident. CLOP continued to work with the AG to build a case for almost a year.

On October 1, 2018, members of the Medicaid Fraud Control Unit contacted the Lake Charles Police Department to request locating and apprehending a suspect, who was wanted or the first-degree rape of the resident. On November 29, 2018, the AG brought indictments to the Grand Jury and the Grand Jury handed down indictments charging the staff member with 1<sup>st</sup> degree Rape and three Robinswood Administrators with Obstruction of Justice, Failure to Report, and Accessory After the Fact (1st Degree Rape). Following the indictments, the Assistant Attorney General prosecuting the case sent the following email to the CLOP ombudsman who worked on the case with her.

Thank you, Christy, again. We wouldn't have gotten this far without you and the Advocacy Center. This is just the beginning of this one but we are hoping that we are in a good position to have a satisfactory resolution.

We are most excited to continue our collaboration not only in your area but in all of the CLOP districts.

We are ready and willing to investigate and prosecute these cases once we have permission from the local jurisdiction. If you are satisfied so far, please spread the word that we are an available resource/tool in protecting our most vulnerable citizens.

## **Tellis v. LeBlanc**

Advocacy Center continues to work on a case involving conditions and treatment of people with developmental and mental health disabilities at David Wade Correctional Center. We are partnering with the MacArthur Justice Center and the Louisiana ACLU on the case. Advocacy Center recently intervened as a plaintiff in the case, which alleges that people with disabilities do not receive appropriate treatment for their disability related needs and are discriminated against on the basis of disability. The case is currently pending in the Western District of Louisiana.