

Update/progress on Advocacy Center initiatives

1. Executive Director. Chris Rodriguez joined AC's staff as its Executive Director on September 1, 2018. Mr. Rodriguez is originally from Houston Texas, where his dedication to the lives of those who have disabilities started with his older brother. He graduated from the University of California Berkley with a degree in political science, and received a Master of Public Policy from the University of Texas in Austin. Mr. Rodriguez has been the Director of Chapter Services for the Arc of Texas, the Director of Government Affairs and Media Relations for the Michigan Protection and Advocacy Services, and most recently served in Washington DC as the Director of Public Policy for the National Disability Institute and the Director of the National Able Resource Center.

2. Representative Payee Program

A new program has been assigned to protection and advocacy agencies around the country. The program will involve investigating representative payees for beneficiaries of SSI and SSDI, to ensure that the payee is acting in the interest of the beneficiary and that abuse or neglect of the beneficiary is not occurring. Most of the payees will be designated for investigation by the Social Security Administration, but the Advocacy Center will be able to select payees as well.

We have received a partial list from SSA of the payees who have been assigned for investigation. Investigators are undergoing training and clearance requirements, and investigations will begin shortly.

2. Client Assistance Program

The Client Assistance Program (CAP) is Advocacy Center's program that helps people in Louisiana navigate the Louisiana Rehabilitation Services (LRS) system. CAP is seeking support from community partners to increase awareness of the CAP program among transition students, parents, teachers, other professionals and the general public. CAP recently received information on the number of transition and Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS) from LRS. There are currently 3,671 Pre-ETS students receiving services and 1,415 receiving traditional transition services. CAP has only received a handful of requests from Pre-ETS or transition students this year. Given the number of transition students receiving services, we are concerned CAP is not receiving more requests for help from CAP. If you know of someone receiving Pre-ETS or transition services who could benefit from assistance from CAP, please have the person call the Advocacy Center at 800-960-7705. If you know of groups that could benefit from further information on CAP or outreach opportunities, please contact David Gallegos at dgallegos@advocacyla.org.

3. Voting – Upcoming Elections

November 6, 2018: Open Primary / Congressional Election

- October 9: Deadline to register to vote in person or by mail
- October 16: Deadline to register online through geauxvote.com
- October 23-30: Early voting (excluding Sunday, October 28)
- November 2, 4:30 p.m.: Deadline to request an absentee ballot by mail
- November 5, 4:30 p.m.: Deadline for mailed absentee ballot to be received by registrar of voters

December 8, 2018: Open General / Congressional Election

- November 7: Deadline to register to vote in person or by mail
- November 17: Deadline to register online through geauxvote.com
- November 24-December 1: Early voting (excluding Sunday, November 25)
- December 4, 4:30 p.m.: Deadline to request an absentee ballot by mail
- December 7, 4:30 p.m.: Deadline for mailed absentee ballot to be received by registrar of voters

Advocacy Center will be conducting outreach and training to people with disabilities living in the community, in ICF/DDs, and in psychiatric facilities. If you would like to receive voting information from Advocacy Center or schedule a training, please contact Susan Meyers at smeyers@advocacyla.org or 800-960-7705, ext. 138. If you know someone who is experiencing barriers to exercising voting rights, please have the person call us at 800-960-7705.

4. U.S. v. Louisiana – Settlement Agreement regarding Individuals with Serious Mental Illness.

We continue to meet regularly with LDH regarding the implementation of the settlement agreement regarding individuals with serious mental illness living in nursing homes. We will be closely monitoring implementation of the settlement agreement in the coming years.