



Disability Rights Louisiana Report to the Louisiana Developmental Disabilities Council for January 2026

Program Updates

DRLA's Client Assistance Program (CAP) helps people with disabilities who are receiving or applying for services from Louisiana Rehabilitation Services (LRS) and American Indian Rehabilitation Services (AIRS) to understand all their benefits and rights under the Rehabilitation Act of 1973. CAP may assist consumers and applicants in pursuing legal, administrative or other appropriate avenues to protect their rights. The CAP program is currently assisting 31 in obtaining, maintaining, and advocating for appropriate vocational rehabilitation services. One of CAP's clients has a visual impairment, and was attending an out-of-state training program that was funded by LRS, in which she was learning computer skills necessary for her career. She contacted us when she was removed from in-person classes on campus, and sent home to perform online classes instead. She lost an entire month of education due to computer and internet connection issues. CAP staff successfully advocated for the client to be returned to on-campus studies.

In DRLA's Community Living Ombudsmen Program (CLOP), trained advocates, who are known as ombudsmen, advocate for the people with developmental disabilities who live in state-licensed, privately-run group homes (ICFs/DD) across the state, in order to ensure their rights are protected and they are free from abuse or neglect. Currently there are 473 publicly funded, privately run ICF/DD facilities housing 3,869 individuals with developmental disabilities across the state. In the second quarter of the 2025 grant year (7/1/25-6/30/26), CLOP ombudsmen made 421 visits to these facilities, receiving 279 requests for assistance, and they took action on all of the 279 requests. As a result of these actions during the quarter, ICF/DD residents had involuntary discharges prevented; had opportunities to visit with family; received appropriate medical care; received updates on their Waiver status; received information on



their rights; received improved personal care; and received improvements to the physical environment.

In one circumstance, an ombudsman learned that a group home resident was taken to the hospital via ambulance without any staff. When the ombudsman arrived at the emergency room, the doctor said that the resident was ready for discharge, but no group home staff was present, and the group home staff were not answering or returning calls. When staff finally showed up, an incident occurred where the resident reopened a wound on her hand, which caused extensive bleeding. The ombudsman learned while there that the resident had been brought to the ER a month earlier with the hand wound, and it had required surgery. In total this resident was sent to the ER 8 times in 2025. The ombudsman reported this and other issues with the group home to Louisiana Department of Health's Health Standards Section, which investigated and found the group home in violation of licensing standards. The group home will now need to create and implement a corrective action plan.

In another situation, an ombudsman became aware that one group home resident had not visited with family in years. With the support of CLOP ombudsman, the resident was able to attend Christmas dinner with all her siblings. She was very happy about being able to spend Christmas with her family, and getting Christmas gifts.

DRLA's Supported Independent Living Advocacy Program (SILAP) serves individuals with developmental disabilities who are receiving OCDD waiver services and supports in order to live in their homes in the community. SILAP provides free services to persons residing in supported independent living environments in the State of Louisiana Human Services Districts I, II, and X, which encompass the greater New Orleans and Baton Rouge areas. As of December 2025, the SILAP program was assisting 23 people with obtaining and maintaining appropriate and necessary supports so that they can remain in the community on their waivers. SILAP advocates assisted clients in switching Support Coordination agencies, obtaining a new service provider, securing housing, relocating to a better living environment, and assisting clients in connecting with their families over the holidays.



One SILAP client had to urgently move apartments in order to avoid homelessness. The SILAP advocate ensured that the providers helped the client obtain a new apartment and lease, and that the human services agency secured emergency funds to pay a mover. Unfortunately, the movers left early and did not move many of the client's items, putting him at risk of having to give up his personal belongings. The SILAP advocate participated in numerous phone calls to the responsible agencies, which resulted in the movers returning the next day to complete the job.

DRLA's Financial Access Inclusion and Resources program (FAIR) provides financial coaching and case management services to assist formerly incarcerated people with disabilities in overcoming employment and resource barriers, in order to achieve long term financial security. Our services are holistic and are centered around the individual needs of people with disabilities, who may require additional supports and services to successfully reenter their communities after incarceration.

Between January 1, 2025 and December 31, 2025, FAIR provided financial coaching and case management to 68 active clients. Of those active clients 40 or 62% have been employed, and 35 or 51% were employed for 90 days or more. Recently, a FAIR case manager assisted a client in obtaining a job with a trucking company that is covering his CDL training. At the same time, he will obtain his first-ever driver's license. When he finishes the training, he will be CDL-certified and expects to earn \$4,000 every 2 weeks, according to the company. Another FAIR case manager assisted one client in applying for and being accepted into culinary school. The same case manager assisted another client, who was facing eviction, with finding safe and affordable housing into which the client was able to move on New Year's Eve.