



# DISABILITY RIGHTS MISSISSIPPI

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Protection and Advocacy for Individuals with Disabilities

## Annual Report

October 1, 2009 – September 30, 2010

## Agency Accomplishments

During fiscal year 2010, Disability Rights Mississippi (DRMS) diversified the types of individual cases handled, increased involvement in systemic advocacy on behalf of people with disabilities, streamlined its intake system, improved outreach and public visibility, and became a source of reliable information about disability-related issues in Mississippi.

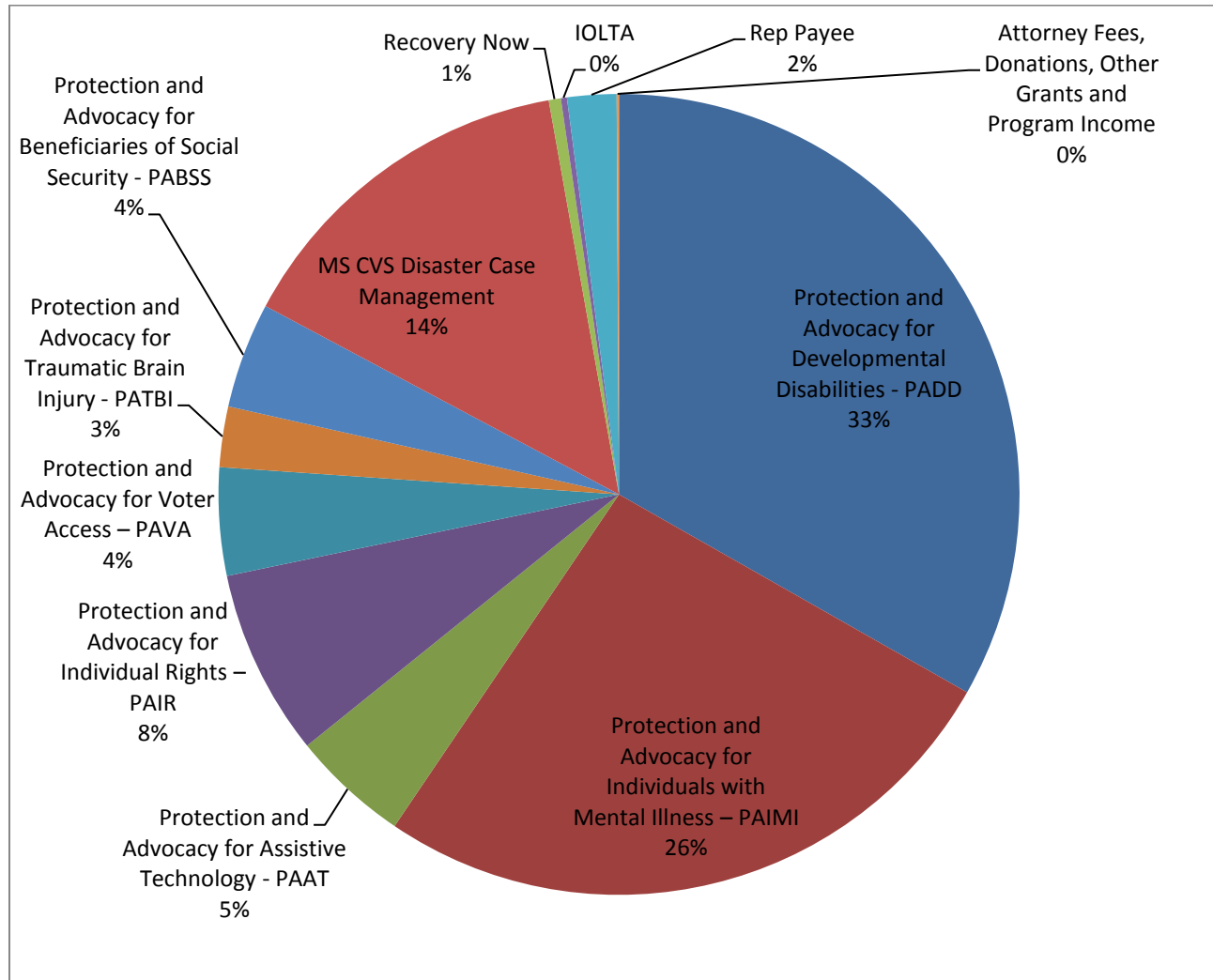
Census figures indicate that approximately 20% of Mississippi's residents, or 600,000 people, have disabilities. In 2010, DRMS represented clients with a variety of disabilities and issues in four hundred forty-six (446) cases. It provided one thousand forty-one (1041) instances of information and/or referral to callers. DRMS also trained an estimated 3,321 people and provided information via outreach to 9,271. Approximately 14,793 copies of agency publications were sent. An estimated 28,639 people were impacted through systems advocacy and class action litigation.

Governance was improved by amending the DRMS by-laws to increase the size of the board, and recruiting several energetic new members. Board members remained involved in budgetary and policy oversight, and provided insightful direction into the completion of goals set out in a March 2009 interim plan. During the next fiscal year, the Board will develop a strategic plan and will become more involved in fundraising. Both the Board and the PAIMI Advisory Council actively participated in setting priorities for FY 2010 and FY 2011.

## Finances

DRMS began the year with carryover funding that enabled it to spend slightly more on services than revenues received during the fiscal year. Sources of revenue included eight federally funded protection and advocacy programs, the MCVS Katrina Case Management program, and a Mississippi Bar Association IOLTA grant.

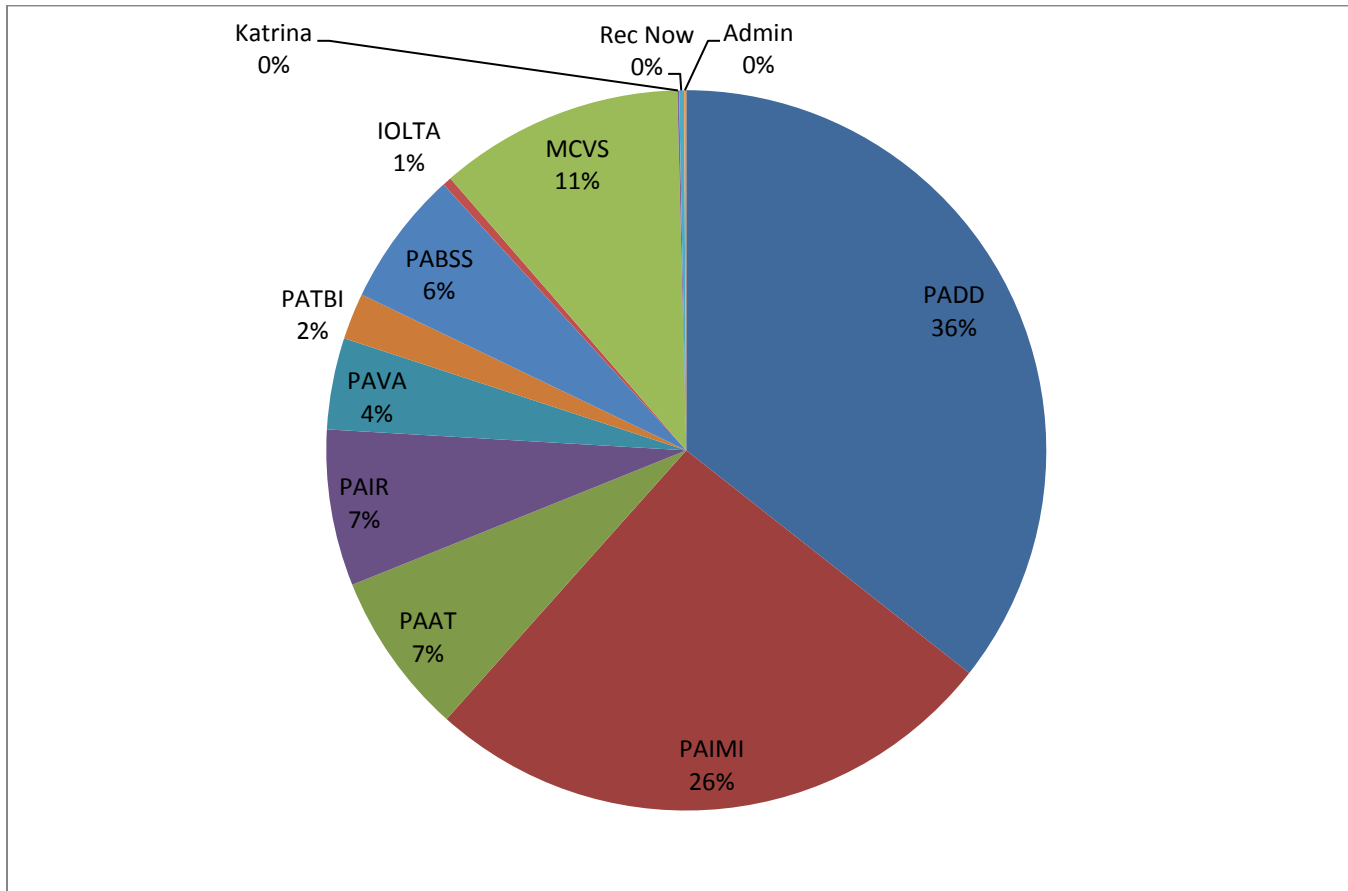
## 2010 Revenues by Source



**Total 2010 Revenues**

**\$2,045,343**

## 2010 Expenses by Program



**Total 2010 Expenses**

**\$2,068,727**

## Program Highlights

This year, Disability Rights Mississippi ended one program and added two new programs. Others continued to diversify the issues they tackle, and to undertake more systemic advocacy.

### **Katrina Case Management (MCVS)**

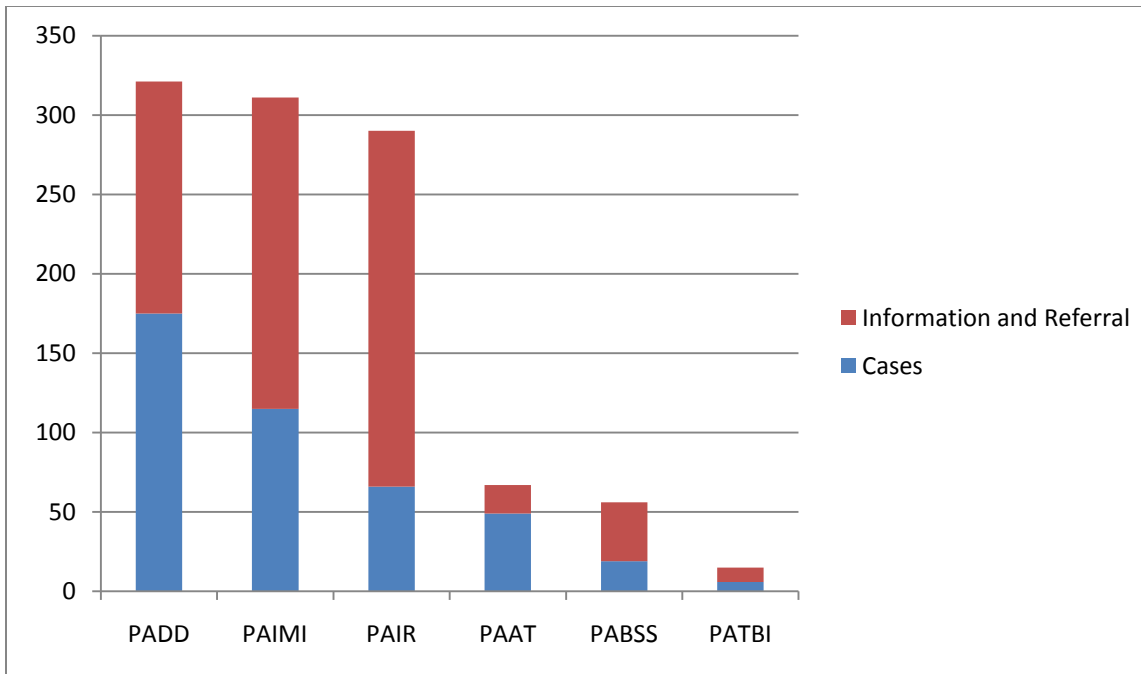
The Katrina case management program ended in June 2010 after serving people with disabilities needing recovery assistance on the Mississippi Gulf Coast for almost five years. This program gained consistently high marks for its case management work on behalf of these individuals.

### **New: Interest on Lawyers Trust Account (IOLTA)**

DRMS was awarded funds from the Mississippi Bar Association's "legal services to the poor" IOLTA program to serve students with mild disabilities with education issues. In recent years, DRMS funding to assist such students was too low to serve all in need; with the additional funding, all such students with priority issues can be served by DRMS's trained education advocates. This project runs from August 1, 2010 through July 31, 2011.

### **New: Representative Payee Project**

DRMS signed a five year subcontract with the National Disability Rights Network (NDRN) to monitor assigned entities which serve as both employers and representative payees of persons with disabilities. The start-up involved intense training for several key staff on how to assess workplace safety and determine whether living or working conditions are substandard. During this fiscal year, two (2) in-depth reviews were conducted and reported upon. The Social Security Administration is expected to follow up on any major problems discovered that impact its programs.



### **Breakdown of cases and I&R for federal programs during FY 2010.**

#### **Ongoing Federal program highlights**

In addition to the case and systems advocacy activities detailed below, the following program based activities were achieved:

- The Protection and Advocacy for Individuals with Development Disabilities (PADD) program created an ongoing partnership with DD network agencies and published a joint newsletter.
- The Protection and Advocacy for individuals with Mental Illness (PAIMI) program continued to have a strong, involved Advisory Council which actively participated in planning and priority setting.

- The Protection and Advocacy for Individual Rights (PAIR) Program continued to work collaboratively with other programs to ensure the best return on the limited resources it has to serve a large population.
- The Protection and Advocacy for Assistive Technology (PAAT) program provided comprehensive training to staff on assistive technology issues and Medicaid program funding for devices and services.
- The Protection and Advocacy for Traumatic Brain Injury (PATBI) program collaborated with the Traumatic Brain Injury Association and others who serve individuals with Traumatic Brain Injury.
- The Protection and Advocacy for Beneficiaries of Social Security (PABSS) program continued extensive outreach about its services.
- The Protection and Advocacy for Voting Rights (PAVA) program amended the intake screening process to collect information and offer assistance in voter registration and developed a closer relationship with the Secretary of State's office.

## **Issue Team Highlights**

DRMS staff members are organized into issue teams to better serve all clients regardless of their disabilities or eligibility categories. Each team is co-led by a Managing Attorney and a Senior Advocate, and they coordinate all work related to their teams' issues. Below are some general highlights about their accomplishments during fiscal year 2010.

### **Education Team**

- Filed a comprehensive class complaint with the Mississippi Department of Education regarding Jackson Public Schools' systemic failures to address the needs of students with emotional and behavioral disabilities.

- Obtained Office of Civil Rights investigations and findings of non-compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act by the Okalona school district
- Incorporated education about voting rights and issues for individuals with disabilities throughout all other work, including education transition.

### **Community Team**

- With the U.S. Department of Justice, which intervened in the case, negotiated a settlement with the City of Jackson regarding the accessibility of its public transit system. Long term improvements to the paratransit and regular fixed route services were agreed to. An independent monitor will oversee implementation.
- Obtained Office of Civil Rights investigations and findings of non-compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act by the City of Louise.
- Challenged restrictive Medicaid policies regarding number of personal care hours available under the independent living waiver via a complaint to the Office of Civil Rights.
- Provided outreach and training about the PABSS program throughout the state.
- Initiated efforts to increase the number of employment networks in Mississippi.
- Incorporated education about voting rights and issues for individuals with disabilities throughout all other work, including people in the general community.
- Continued to collaborate with the Secretary of State and all county election clerks to insure knowledge and full implementation of laws related to accessible polling places and accommodations to the needs of voters with disabilities.
- Maintained a hotline number during elections to provide assistance to citizens who had questions about the voting process.



- Incorporated awareness regarding the 2010 Census Count in an effort for individuals with disabilities to feel more at ease with the process, supporting the goal of having every voice count as we strive for stronger communities.
- Investigated abused in personal care homes statewide. Issued a preliminary report mid-year, obtained better cooperation and enforcement from responsible state agencies, assisted several individual home residents, and had several home owners removed from being representative payees.

### **Facilities Team**

- Continued to visit all state facilities for individuals with intellectual disabilities to monitor conditions, investigate concerns, and assist with transitions to less restrictive environments.
- Continued to monitor conditions in state psychiatric facilities and club houses. Solved problems and investigated allegations of mistreatment or rights violations.
- Monitored facilities and assessed residents' needs for assistive technology; advocated to secure that technology.
- Visited nursing homes and trained staff to identify residents with Traumatic Brain Injury.
- Incorporated education about voting rights and issues for individuals with disabilities throughout all other work, including outreach to facility residents.

### **Systems Transformation Project**

- Successfully assisted a teen in transitioning from a regional center for people with intellectual disabilities to her mother's home with appropriate supports.
- Gathered stories and drafted a report on costs, quality of life issues for people with disabilities in various settings.