



### **Agency Accomplishments in FY 2021**

During fiscal year 2020, Disability Rights Mississippi (DRMS) diversified its individual case load, increased involvement in systemic advocacy on behalf of people with disabilities, improved outreach efforts and public awareness, and collaborated with other disability advocacy and service agencies, all in an effort to advance its mission of protecting and advocating for the rights of all Mississippians with disabilities. DRMS represented clients with a variety of disabilities and issues in 232 cases. The agency provided information and referrals hundreds of additional issues. DRMS worked on over 30 projects, ranging from committee participation, trainings and outreach, and systems advocacy. DRMS performed in-depth reviews of representative payees for the Social Security Administration. The DRMS Board remained active in budgetary and policy oversight, approving priorities for the coming fiscal year and a strategic plan for the next three years. The agency welcomed new board members, as well as a number of new staff members. DRMS broadened its reach to the disability community and general public through digital means, including its website and social media channels. The website received over 24,000 visits, while DRMS' Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube channels garnered nearly 4,500 followers/subscribers. Staff attendance at community events was limited due to COVID-19, but DRMS staff performed outreach as able and distributed approximately 5,000 pieces of promotional/educational materials throughout the year. DRMS sponsored six vaccine drives to target people with disabilities who chose to receive a Covid-19 vaccine.

### **Program Highlights**

#### **Protection and Advocacy for Individuals with Developmental Disabilities (PADD)**

- Handled 68 individual cases
- Represented individuals seeking to transition from facilities to the community.
- Continued to visit state and private facilities for individuals with intellectual disabilities to monitor conditions, investigate concerns, and assist with transitions to less restrictive environments.
- Conducted investigations of allegations of abuse and neglect involving people with developmental disabilities.
- Monitored pandemic protocols in facilities and schools. Monitored virtual learning options within the school system.
- Pursued litigation from negligence and abuse.
- Filed several complaints with Mississippi Department of Education which resulted in orders for individual and systemic relief for public school students with disabilities.
- Investigated several incidents of abuse and neglect in a facility.

**Protection and Advocacy for Individuals with Mental Illness (PAIMI)**

- Handled 91 individual cases
- Continued to monitor conditions in state psychiatric facilities.
- Solved problems and investigated allegations of mistreatment or rights violations.
- Investigated unlicensed personal care homes housing individuals with disabilities.
- Provided assistance to people with disabilities incarcerated in jails or prisons.

**Protection and Advocacy for Individual Rights (PAIR)**

- Handled 52 individual cases.
- Handled several cases involving service animals.
- Assisted several students in higher education to get classroom accommodations.

**Protection and Advocacy for Assistive Technology (PAAT)**

- Handled 13 individual cases.
- Represented people with disabilities who are in need of assistive technology
- Assessed the accessibility of jails and prisons in Mississippi.

**Protection and Advocacy for Beneficiaries of Social Security (PABSS)**

- Advocated for the rights of social security beneficiaries seeking to obtain or maintain employment.
- Provided outreach and training about the program throughout the state, with a focus on WIN Job Centers.

**Protection and Advocacy for Traumatic Brain Injury (PATBI)**

- Handled 8 individual cases.
- Advocated for the rights of individuals with TBI to receive services in a more integrated setting.
- Collaborated with Traumatic Brain Injury Association and others who serve individuals with TBI.

**Protection and Advocacy for Voting Rights (PAVA)**

- Incorporated education about voting rights and issues for individuals with disabilities throughout all other work, including education transition, outreach to facility residents, and people in the general community.
- Continued to collaborate with the Secretary of State (SOS) 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, and conducted voter registration activities.
- Responded to requests for information about Mississippi's Voter ID law.

**Representative Payee program**

- Investigated representative payees as assigned by the Social Security Administration.