

Disability Rights California 2017 Annual Report



STORIES OF...
**DETERMINATION
& IMPACT**
2017 ANNUAL REPORT



Disability
Rights
California

CELEBRATING **40 YEARS** OF ADVANCING AN
INCLUSIVE AND BARRIER-FREE CALIFORNIA



Who we are

Disability Rights California (DRC) is a non-profit organization created in 1978 to protect the rights of people with disabilities.

Our mission is to advocate, educate, investigate, and litigate to advance the rights, dignity, equal opportunities, and choices for all people with disabilities.

A letter from our leadership

Disability Rights California stands for the principles of equality, dignity, independence, and freedom for people with disabilities. For 40 years, we have fought against discrimination. DRC knows the importance of joining with individuals and communities to work toward a just nation that values each person. We will keep fighting for the inclusion of people with disabilities into communities of their choice. We will continue advocating against the commitment of people to institutions and their disproportionate placement in jails, where, too often, they do not receive the services they need. Through our efforts, we will eliminate racial and cultural disparities in services. DRC will fight to secure access to affordable and accessible

housing and preserve health care and long-term services for the millions of people whose lives depend on them.

As we embark on our 40th anniversary, we are proud of our dedicated staff and the perseverance of our clients. Together, we work to challenge barriers to services and attitudes that foster stigma and discrimination. Join us in celebrating our achievements. More importantly, help us advance a proactive agenda for all people with disabilities. This agenda will promote the power of equal rights and opportunity, dignity, choice, independence, and freedom from abuse, neglect, and discrimination.

Our voices matter now more than ever!



Catherine Blakemore
Executive Director



Jennifer Restle
Board President

Stop abuse and improve quality care



Protecting the rights of prisoners with disabilities

We are working to improve how prisoners with disabilities are treated in jails and juvenile halls. Our work includes making sure they receive appropriate medical and mental health treatment and are not abused. For example, we are representing Santa Barbara County Jail prisoners in a federal class-action lawsuit. We claim conditions at the jail do not meet minimum standards under the U.S. Constitution and federal law. According to prisoners, the jail fails to provide basic mental health and medical care, overuses and misuses solitary confinement, and provides inhumane, unsanitary, and unsafe living conditions. “This is a system with critical problems that have not been addressed for a long time,” said Aaron Fischer, DRC litigation counsel. “These issues put people with disabilities at risk of harm every day.”

Allen, an inmate with a mental health disability, was often isolated and did not have access to basic mental health care at Sacramento County Jail. Civil Rights Fellow Tifanei Ressler-Moyer contacted the county on Allen’s behalf and asked that he receive adequate time out of his cell, a chance to shower, and immediate confidential visits with his psychiatrist. “Over time, solitary confinement causes a person’s mental health to deteriorate. We’re

glad that we were able to intervene so he could be as safe as possible,” said Ressler-Moyer.

The county took action in response to DRC’s advocacy. Allen wrote to DRC, thanking Ressler-Moyer for addressing the harmful jail conditions that were affecting his well-being.



Doctor ignores conservator instructions and issues Do Not Resuscitate order

As the conservator for Joshua, Eliza, a lifelong friend, asked doctors to do everything to resuscitate him if he went into cardiac or respiratory arrest. Instead, Joshua’s doctor issued a Do Not Resuscitate (DNR) order. Leslie Morrison and Katie Matthews, from DRC’s Investigations Unit, launched an investigation. “DRC slowed the whole process down. Hospital staff changed their tune, and I got time to make decisions,” said Eliza.

The hospital rescinded the DNR and restored the order to provide all resuscitation procedures to keep Joshua alive. They worked with Eliza to prepare Joshua for transfer to a long-term care facility to recover. DRC worked with the hospital to train all of its doctors on California law regarding medical decision-making.



Office of Patients' Rights stops hospital from secluding patient

A patient at a state hospital was restrained and placed in seclusion. Soon after, a hearing on whether to force the patient to take medications was scheduled. Doctors, hearing officers, and DRC advocates held the hearing in the hallway. The patient was secluded in a room with hospital staff and police officers on standby because they considered the patient dangerous. DRC's California Office of Patients' Rights staff advocated that the patient didn't meet the criteria for being considered dangerous, which is a criteria to involuntarily medicate a person. The hearing panel decided that the patient did not meet the criteria for dangerousness but did meet the criteria for lack of capacity to make decisions about mental health treatment. As a result, the hearing panel reconsidered the patient's placement in seclusion for dangerousness.

Stop discrimination, eliminate stigma, and protect civil rights

Protecting Santa Cruz's peer mental health drop-in center

The Mental Health Client Action Network (MHCAN) is a peer-to-peer drop-in center for individuals with mental health disabilities, started by mental health peers including DRC's former board president, Sylvia Caras. After receiving complaints from neighbors, the City of Santa Cruz threatened to revoke the center's use permit. MHCAN contacted DRC. Attorney Deborah Gettleman helped the MHCAN board. As a result, the city agreed on a use permit that worked for both parties. Under the current permit, MHCAN can

operate and even expand the number of peers it serves. Finally, MHCAN introduced a neighborhood liaison program to improve relationships with the neighbors and educate them about the center's important work.

Governor signs DRC-sponsored access bill

Gov. Jerry Brown signed a DRC-sponsored bill (AB 1379) to increase funding that California cities and counties receive to train building inspectors about disability access laws. Trained inspectors help businesses follow disability access requirements. "When inspectors review a business' building plans for new construction and renovations, they help businesses not only comply with the law, but make it easier for more people with disabilities to enjoy public places like restaurants," said Evelyn Abouhassan, senior legislative advocate.

End segregation. Increase community living options so people can live and fully participate in barrier-free communities of their choice with services and supports they need to survive

Boy returns home after years in the hospital

Manuel is a 12-year-old boy with a developmental disability. He spent nearly three years in mental health hospitals and residential treatment centers, both within and outside of California. He spent his days in an enclosed hospital bed. Facing yet another out-of-state placement, Manuel's family contacted DRC. Managing Attorney Will Leiner helped Manuel's family negotiate a plan with the regional center to both improve his conditions in the hospital and prevent an out-of-state placement. Manuel now lives close to his friends and family, where he receives community-based services uniquely designed to meet his needs.



Woman wins the right to live with her family

Lindsey (pictured below) is a 60-year-old woman with multiple disabilities who is happy living at home with her sister. She enjoys arts and crafts, music, and watching shows about traveling and food. Lindsey requires simple directions to complete everyday tasks. Her sister asked the county for protective supervision through the In Home Supportive Services (IHSS) program. This is a service for people with mental health disabilities who need around the clock observation to keep them safe from injuries, hazards or accidents.

The county denied her application, saying Lindsey was self- directing because she could follow simple commands. DRC Attorney Ali Nicolette filed a lawsuit in Superior Court, appealing the denial, and successfully argued that Lindsey needed protective supervision to remain safely at home.

The judge awarded Lindsey retroactive protective supervision going back three years. DRC's advocacy means Lindsey can remain at home with her sister and in her community with friends and family. "Winning this case was more than exciting – it was a lifesaver for Lindsey and me," said Lindsey's sister. "Having protective supervision means Lindsey can live with me rather than live in an institution. Winning this case gave Lindsey and me a new life."

Respect the autonomy, preferences, and choices of people with disabilities so they can be equal, passionate, and full participants in society



DRC makes Berkeley all-mail election accessible to voters who cannot read and mark a paper ballot

The City of Berkeley was going to hold an entirely vote- by-mail election. Sharon, a blind voter, called DRC, concerned she could not vote independently and privately with a paper ballot. DRC contacted the Alameda County Registrar of Voters' office and asked that it provide an accessible voting system.

The registrar got a system for its office and for Berkeley City Hall. "The county's willingness to change its practice and set up accessible voting systems in city hall allows voters with disabilities to vote privately and independently in special elections important to their community," said Fred Nisen (pictured left), DRC supervising attorney.

Protect and advance basic human rights to health care, housing, and education



Homeless people, many with disabilities, sue City of San Diego over unfair ticketing

Valerie Grischy was a licensed chiropractor with a successful career until she was in a serious car accident in 2009. Now, her only income is SSI benefits. “When I saw I got less than \$900 a month on disability, I knew I could either pay rent or pay for other necessities I need to live – but not both,” Grischy said. “So, I used my back pay from SSI to get an RV.”

Valerie is one of DRC’s clients in a class-action lawsuit against the city. It challenges enforcement of ordinances banning nighttime RV parking and vehicle habitation that unfairly target homeless people, many with disabilities.

“Issuing multiple citations and impounding their vehicles when they can’t pay the fine does not solve anything. The real solution is to provide permanent affordable and accessible housing,” said Ann Menasche (pictured below), DRC senior attorney.



Donald goes to school

Donald is a young man who has autism. His nonpublic school did not allow him to attend school because of behaviors. He lost three weeks of instruction with no services from the district. Celeste Palmer, clients' rights advocate, reviewed Donald's records and helped prepare a California Department of Education compliance complaint against the district.

"Donald's mother only speaks Spanish and her many requests for help from the school district were ignored until she contacted us. I'm glad we could help." –Celeste Palmer

The department ordered that Donald return to school. He also received 70 hours of individual tutoring as well as speech and language therapy.

Ensure access to government benefits, transportation, and employment opportunities with competitive wages

DRC helps dreams come true for Deaf clients in Fresno

For more than a decade, members of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing community in Fresno had difficulty getting crucial vocational services from the California Department of Rehabilitation (DOR). DOR denied support to help them get jobs like truck driver and computer programmer. Members of DRC's Multicultural Affairs Unit teamed up with the Deaf and Hard of Hearing Service Center in Fresno to conduct an employment forum where members of the community shared their concerns and received information about their rights.

After the forum, Client Assistance Program Advocate Lisa Navarro and Supervising Attorney Sarah Isaacs represented eight individuals in negotiations with the DOR. As a result, DOR agreed to support their employment goals. The plans include vocational training, transportation, and equipment. "DRC's help assisted greatly when I thought I was stuck and could not move forward. I am truly grateful for everything they have done for me," said Andrew Barker. Isaacs and DRC Executive Director Catherine Blakemore also met with senior administrators at the DOR to

address systemic issues, and they agreed to address longstanding concerns.



Young woman realizes college dream

Irene Short (pictured below) knows how to go after her goals. She was the first student with autism recruited to the varsity cheer squad at Hollywood High School. She was on the Inclusive Sports Track & Field Team all four years and won dozens of gold medals. After high school, she needed help entering college to fulfill her dream of working in film production.

Irene's mother, Cheryl Green, asked Carmen Varela, DRC advocate, to help her get Department of Rehabilitation (DOR) services for Irene. DOR services will help Irene attend a two-year program that includes training in her chosen field, independent living skills, and pre-employment transition services, including self-advocacy training and counseling on post-secondary options. "My goal for my daughter is to have her live a full life on her own with competitive integrated employment in the career of her dreams," Cheryl said. "Carmen Varela lived this vision with me, and because of her, Irene has a very bright future."

When Irene completes the program, she expects to transfer to the UCLA Pathway program and study film production.

Increase access to culturally and language competent services that value disability, diversity, culture, and ethnicity of each individual. Ensure that all services are accessible to people with disabilities



Advocates are interviewed by Chinese radio network

“Sound of Hope,” the first Chinese public radio network, interviewed DRC advocates about the services we provide. Zoey Trinh, a DRC client, joined Britnee Gillespie, clients’ rights advocate (pictured below). Zoey described how DRC helped her advocate for her aunt and cousin who have intellectual disabilities. They were about to lose their rent subsidies and support services that allowed them to live at home. Britnee intervened and got the services restored. DRC is reaching out to inform individuals with disabilities about how to access the services and supports they need.

The program aired on the network’s four stations in Los Angeles and San Francisco, reaching an estimated 350,000 people.

Woman wins right to receive services in her native language

Gabriella lost her job and her kids and was homeless due to a psychiatric disability. She entered a transitional living facility in Sacramento and joined DRC’s Peer Self-Advocacy (PSA) group.

As a Spanish speaker, Gabriella had problems communicating with her caseworker. When it was time for her to leave the facility, the caseworker filled out the discharge paperwork for her because they did not have the documents in Spanish.

Gabriella did not understand what she was signing. Facility staff was supposed to give her medication for a month, but she found she only had enough for three days.

Leslie Napper and Senobia Pichardo, PSA advocates, provided Gabriella with training about her medication rights and her right to receive services and information in a language she understood. Gabriella plans to file a complaint against the facility.

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BARRIER-FREE CALIFORNIA

2017 At A Glance

Disability Rights California Statement of Activities.
Fiscal Year Ended Sept. 30, 2016

Revenue and Support

Federal Government \$11,953,819
State of California \$8,638,643
California State Bar \$2,893,265
Program Income/Attorney Fees \$620,881
Miscellaneous Income \$146,150
Donations \$15,135
Total Revenue \$24,267,893

Expenses

Program Services \$21,645,589
General and Administrative \$2,482,035
Total Expenses \$24,127,624

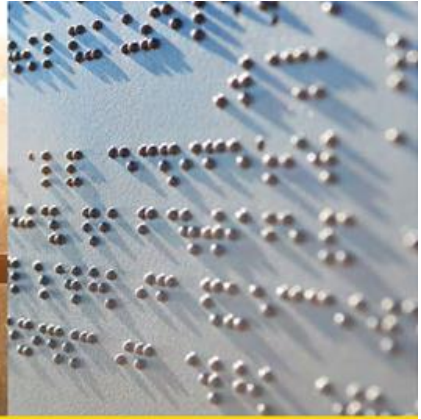
Change in net assets \$140,269



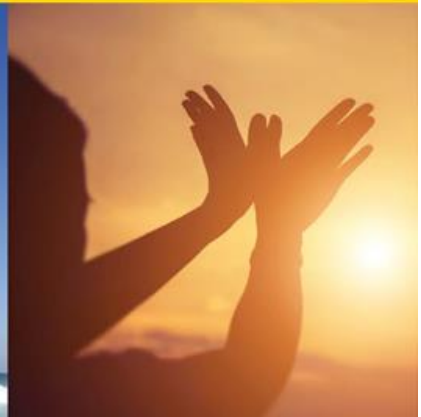
Disability Rights California 2017 Board Members

Standing: Judy Mark, Charles Ehrlich, David Oster, Donna Duarte, Scott Keller, Pamela Romano, Elizabeth Gomez, Diana Nelson, Herb Anderson, Ralph Black, Dennis Wall, Jeff Thom

Kneeling: Jennifer Restle, Richard Krzyzanowski



DISABILITY RIGHTS CALIFORNIA



DRC STAFF
CONDUCTED
1,225
OUTREACHES & TRAININGS,
IMPACTING NEARLY
83,000
PEOPLE.




OUR STAFF
SERVED
24,000+
INDIVIDUALS
AND...

drc
FAST
FACTS

OUR STAFF DEVELOPED,
UPDATED OR REVISED
40
PUBLICATIONS AND
TRANSLATED 35
INTO AT LEAST ONE
OTHER LANGUAGE.



IN FISCAL YEAR
2017,
DRC STAFF OBTAINED
\$5 million
IN ECONOMIC BENEFITS
FOR CLIENTS.



IMPACTED
ALMOST
607,688
MORE THROUGH
OUR SYSTEMIC
LITIGATION.



Thank you to our pro bono partners and volunteers.

Bonett Fairbourn Friedman & Balint Campins Benhan Baker

CREEC

Fish & Richardson

King & Spalding

McDermott Will & Emery Morrison Foerrester

National Center on Homelessness and Poverty

Relman, Dane & Colfax Scott Dreher

Shawna L. Parks Skadden Arps

DRC receives funding from a variety of sources. For a complete list of funders, go to <http://www.disabilityrightsca.org/pod/list-of-funding-grants-and-contracts>.



Please donate to help DRC celebrate its 40 years of advocacy.

Disability Rights California, 1831 K St., Sacramento, CA 95811-4114

Donate via credit/debit card by calling 800.776.5746 or online at www.disabilityrightsca.org/about/donate.htm.

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www.disabilityrightsca.org

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