ADVOCATING FOR...
EQUALITY, DIGNITY, INDEPENDENCE & FREEDOM

DISABILITY RIGHTS CALIFORNIA (DRC) is a nonprofit organization founded in 1978 to protect the rights of people with disabilities. Our mission is to advocate, educate, investigate and litigate to advance the rights of Californians with disabilities.

Please donate to help DRC advocate for equality, dignity, independence and freedom.

Disability Rights California, 1831 K St., Sacramento, CA 95811-4114
Or, donate via credit/debit card by calling 800.776.5746 or online at www.disabilityrightsca.org/about/donate.htm.

Disability Rights California is funded by a variety of sources. For a complete list of funders, go to www.disabilityrightsca.org/Documents/ListofGrantsAndContracts.html.
2016 Board of Directors

Thank you to our pro bono partners and volunteer attorneys.

What We Stand For – What We Fight For
Advocating for equality, dignity, independence and freedom

DISABILITY RIGHTS CALIFORNIA, founded on the principles of equality, dignity, independence and freedom of people with disabilities, for nearly 40 years has fought to end abuse and neglect, stop discrimination and ensure access to services that allow Californians with disabilities to be included in the mainstream of society. Last year was no exception. In every aspect of our work – from releasing a major report calling on the state to hold nursing homes accountable for resident deaths to helping a young man move from a facility into his family’s home – achieving these qualities of life for our clients is at the forefront of our work.

We know that these basic human rights face challenges in the year ahead. We will build upon our advocacy successes and fight for what we stand for – equality, dignity, independence and freedom for Californians with disabilities. We hope that you will join us.

Catherine Blakemore
Executive Director

Diana Nelson
Board President

Disability Rights California 2016 board members, pictured from left, clockwise: Herb Anderson, chair; Chuck Ehrlich; Diana Honig; Pam Romano; Judy Mark, secretary; Elizabeth Gomez; David Oster; Angela Van Ostran; Jennifer Restle, chief financial officer, and Camille (dog); and Diana Nelson (center), president. Not pictured: Debra Cosby, Suzette Lin and Jane Zerbi.
2016 AT A GLANCE

DISABILITY RIGHTS CALIFORNIA STATEMENT OF ACTIVITIES
Fiscal Year Ended September 30, 2016

REVENUE AND SUPPORT
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State of California 8,039,094
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Program Income/Attorney Fees 1,825,425
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OUR CLIENT STORIES...
Support allows young woman to attend college

Getting an education is very important to Christina Rocha. However, she had problems pursuing her goal to attend college. She needs a personal attendant to help her manage the bus and navigate the campus. The regional center did not give her the number of attendant hours she needed.

In spite of numerous challenges, Christina did not give up. DRC clients’ rights advocate Hannah Liddell helped her get the services she needed to live a full and independent life, including going to college. “She has strong goals for herself and knows how to get the supports she needs to meet them,” said Hannah. “She’s one of my favorite clients.”

Christina also faced challenges obtaining funding through the Department of Rehabilitation to pay for tuition, books and supplies. Carmen Varela, advocate with the Client Assistance Program, negotiated reimbursement for all of her out-of-pocket expenses.

Christina attends California State University Los Angeles and plans to work with children who have terminal illnesses. DRC’s board of directors honored her with a Client Recognition Award at its September 2016 meeting.
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“We fought hard for this, and I believe this change will make access to services much easier for our clients who are deaf and rely on Social Security benefits,” said DRC attorney Deborah Gettleman.

“This change makes me feel so good,” Louis said. “I don’t have to spend the whole day there anymore. I had an appointment in less than 20 minutes the last time I went to the office. Without DRC’s help, this would not have happened. Many deaf people rely on Social Security and so this change impacts all of their lives.”

DRC report finds the state must hold nursing homes accountable for resident deaths

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The report cited the case of Alejandro Reynolds, a 30-year-old man with paraplegia, who died after bleeding uncontrollably from a massive pressure sore. DRC found his death was the direct result of negligent care that should have led to the most severe Class AA citation. Instead, the state issued the second-level Class A. The top citation would have meant CDPH would have revoked or suspended the facility’s license after a second resident died from staff neglect.

DRC made a number of recommendations, including issuing a new level of citation when staff conduct directly relates to a resident’s death. We are pleased that, after reviewing the report, the CDPH agreed to provide the public with more information about nursing home citations and resident deaths on its website. DRC is looking into legislation that would add a new citation classification whenever a death occurs.
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“When I was restrained, I got many scratches and bruises because I was held down,” Stuart said. “I had scratches on my chin because I was trying to scoot away.”

“We are deeply troubled that any California school district uses dangerous restraint practices, and we look forward to ensuring these practices are eliminated in all California schools,” said DRC attorney Suge Lee.

According to the settlement, the district is required to sever all contracts with schools that use prone restraints; create a way to monitor such practices; and hire an expert to teach staff positive behavior interventions.

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The agreement requires the state to invest in a $10 million system that allows IHSS clients to approve timesheets independently over the telephone. They can also choose to receive the information in accessible alternative formats. "Before we had this program, I didn’t feel comfortable signing documents I could not read," Xiomara said. "Now, it’s so much easier to verify timesheets."

DRC attorney Elizabeth Zirker is pleased with the settlement results. "I hope that as technology improves, the state will continue to expand access to public programs."

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Today, he enjoys living in his own apartment. He attends a day program and has a girlfriend.
**FREEDOM**

Young man happier after he moves home

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Zachary received DRC’s Client Recognition Award at the December 2016 board meeting. In presenting the honor, Todd said, “Zachary’s transition to the community was successful because his mother did not give up and was always available to make sure her son’s rights were enforced.”

**DIGNITY**

UCLA student helps others with mental health disabilities

Taylor Tabbut knows the challenges students with mental health disabilities face, including stigma and discrimination. As president of National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) on Campus UCLA, she made it her mission to change that. “I’m trying to create an environment where people treat others with compassion and understand their differences.”

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DRC attorney Fred Nisen worked with the Los Angeles County Registrar of Voters in Norwalk, which provided a mock polling place and allowed its staff to participate as extras. There were more than a thousand views on YouTube, and the California Secretary of State featured the video on its department website.
A new state hospital resident told staff he wanted to vote. His letters of conservatorship indicated he had the legal right to cast his ballot. However, the deadline to register was just two days away. He did not have time to do it by mail, and he could not register in person since he was in a state facility. DRC staff advocated to have his social worker help him register online. He met the deadline and exercised his right to vote.

Humberto Silva was excited about starting his career in education following his graduation from UC Davis. He applied to be a substitute para-educator (assist the teacher in the classroom) at an elementary school. As part of the application process, he had to submit to a fitness for duty examination. Although Humberto passed the exam, the doctor noted that he had a visual impairment. “I didn’t believe it would affect my work, and I met all of the required qualifications for the position,” he said. However, the district rejected his application.

DRC wrote a letter to the school district explaining that by rejecting Humberto, it was discriminating against someone because of a disability under state and federal law. The district reversed its decision and hired him.

Governor signs DRC bill extending protection from discrimination to workers with disabilities

Gov. Jerry Brown signed a bill into law extending discrimination and harassment laws to employees who work in sheltered workshops and rehabilitation facilities. Previously, these employees did not have protections against discrimination based on race, age, religion or gender. DRC sponsored the bill co-authored by San Diego Assemblywoman Lorena Gonzalez.

“People who are employed in a sheltered workshop should be treated the same as individuals working in any other setting,” said Evelyn Abouhassan, DRC senior legislative advocate.

The bill became law January 1, 2017. Now, sheltered workshop employees can file a complaint with the state Department of Fair Employment and Housing.

“Extending these important protections is the fair thing to do.”
“Real Work for Real Pay”

William Jew worked in a sheltered workshop earning less than $6 a week. He knew he was capable of working in the community and getting a job that would help him support his family. DRC advocate Rebecca Hoyt helped him do that, and today, he enjoys his maintenance job at a Sam’s Club. William is one example of how DRC helps people with disabilities receive a competitive wage at jobs that employ people without disabilities.

DRC also collaborated with three state agencies to develop policies so more people with disabilities can work in the community rather than in sheltered workshops. The draft five-year blueprint, “Employing Individuals with Intellectual Disabilities and Developmental Disabilities in California – Real Work for Real Pay in the Real World,” was released in November 2016. By March 2019, the state will not place anyone else in a sheltered workshop and will move those who are still there to jobs in the community.

“We worked closely with the California Departments of Education, Rehabilitation, and Developmental Services as they created a plan to improve services for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities that lead to real jobs in the community,” said DRC Deputy Director Andrew Mudryk. “We are pleased the state is committed to helping people achieve their employment goals.”

Protecting the rights of prisoners with disabilities

DRC used its federally mandated access to monitor five county jails and juvenile facilities last year. We worked to protect the rights of prisoners with disabilities by meeting with clients who had limited access to advocates and toured areas seldom seen by outsiders.

In some cases, DRC’s advocacy produced quick results. In Sonoma County, we saw that some of the jail’s involuntary medication procedures denied prisoners required mental health treatment as well as their legal rights. DRC demonstrated that to involuntarily medicate clients legally, they had to provide services in an appropriate mental health facility, not the jail, and could only give medications for a limited time.

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We know that these basic human rights face challenges in the year ahead. We will build upon our advocacy successes and fight for what we stand for – equality, dignity, independence and freedom for Californians with disabilities. We hope that you will join us.

CATHERINE BLAKEMORE
Executive Director

DIANA NELSON
Board President
ADVOCATING FOR...

EQUALITY, DIGNITY, INDEPENDENCE & FREEDOM

DISABILITY RIGHTS CALIFORNIA (DRC) is a nonprofit organization founded in 1978 to protect the rights of people with disabilities. Our mission is to advocate, educate, investigate and litigate to advance the rights of Californians with disabilities.

Please donate to help DRC advocate for equality, dignity, independence and freedom.

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

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

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