



2024 Goals, Priorities & Strategic Objectives

As Approved by the Board of Directors September 8, 2023

Vision: Disability Rights Florida envisions an inclusive world that provides equal opportunity for individuals with disabilities to freely participate in a society with equity, dignity and respect.

Mission: Disability Rights Florida advocates, educates, investigates, and litigates to protect and advance the rights, dignity, equal opportunities, self-determination and choices for all people with disabilities.

Equal Opportunity and Community Inclusion

Goal 1: Challenge Barriers to Equal Opportunity and Community Inclusion

Vision Statements	Focus Issues
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Students with disabilities, including very young children, will receive Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE) in the least restrictive environment and appropriate early intervention services.¹	<ul style="list-style-type: none">EducationVocational training

¹ A Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE) means the provision of education and related services to all students between the ages of 3 and 21, without cost to the person with a disability or his or her parents or guardians, except for fees equally imposed on nondisabled persons or their parents or guardians. To be appropriate, education programs for students with disabilities must be specially designed to meet their individual needs to the same extent that the needs of nondisabled students are met. An appropriate education may include specially designed regular or special education instruction and related supplementary aids and services to accommodate the unique needs of individuals with disabilities.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People with disabilities who want to work will have the opportunity to engage in competitive integrated employment through vocational training, access to assistive technology, and reasonable accommodations from employers. • People with disabilities will have access to affordable accessible and integrated homes or apartments where they choose to live. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Work-related barriers ▪ Housing
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Priorities

- 1.1 **Free and appropriate public education.** Intervene on behalf of students with disabilities² to secure Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE) in the least restrictive environment, and appropriate early intervention services.
- 1.2 **Inappropriate discipline and restraint in public education.** Intervene on behalf of students with disabilities who are inappropriately disciplined, restrained, secluded, suspended, expelled, arrested, or involuntarily committed under the Baker Act.
- 1.3 **Vocational training and work-related barriers.** Intervene on behalf of people with disabilities, including transition-aged students with disabilities, who face barriers to securing appropriate vocational services, barriers to reasonable accommodations from employers, and other work-related barriers.
- 1.4 **Fair housing and housing-related accommodations.** Intervene on behalf of people with disabilities who face barriers accessing fair housing and housing-related accommodations.
- 1.5 **Funding for housing.** Advocate for increased funding for housing for people with disabilities that is safe, accessible, integrated, and affordable.
- 1.6 **Rights education for families and professionals.** Provide education on the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), and the Rehabilitation Act for families, personnel in school districts, and personnel at the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation and Division of Blind Services.

² Students with Individualized Education Plans (IEPs), 504 Plans, or Individual Family Support Plans (IFSPs)

Strategic Objectives

- Increase outreach on FAPE issues to students with disabilities in underserved populations². [1.1.1]
- Intervene for young offenders with disabilities confined in Florida corrections facilities who had an individualized education plan before their incarceration to secure FAPE in the least restrictive environment. [1.1.2]
- Increase access to vocational services for people with disabilities in underserved populations³. [1.3.1]
- Intervene for people with disabilities who were displaced by Hurricane Ian to shelters or other temporary housing to ensure appropriate accommodations and services for transition back to permanent housing. [1.4.1]

³ Florida's underserved populations include racial and ethnic minority backgrounds, people or communities of low income, people with limited English proficiency, people from underserved geographic areas (rural or urban), immigrants, and those identifying as LGBTQIA+.

Self-Determination and Transition to Independence/ Community Living

Goal 2: Support the Right of Self-Determination and Transition to Independence/Community Living

Vision Statements	Focus Issues
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students with disabilities leave school prepared for life as adults in the community. • People with disabilities are not subject to unnecessary guardianships. • People with disabilities who live in institutional settings are provided with services needed to transition from institutions to community settings. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Transition to adulthood ▪ Supported decision making. ▪ Self-determination ▪ Transition from institutions to community

Priorities

- 2.1 **Transition to adulthood.** Intervene on behalf of transition-aged students with disabilities⁴ to obtain appropriate transition services from their school district, and to secure reasonable accommodations in post-secondary settings.
- 2.2 **Supported Decision Making.** Advocate for the statewide implementation of Supported Decision Making (SDM) as an alternative to guardianship and provide education on the use of SDM as an alternative to guardianship.
- 2.3 **Education on self-determination and transition-to-independence.** Provide education on self-determination and the transition-to-independence process for families, personnel in school districts and post-secondary settings, and personnel at the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation and Division of Blind Services.

⁴ Students with Individualized Education Plans (IEPs), 504 Plans, or Individual Family Support Plans (IFSPs).

2.4 **Transition from institutions to community.** Advocate for people with disabilities to transition from institutions⁵ to the community.

Strategic Objective

- Increase outreach and education on the transition-to-independence process to transition-aged students with disabilities and families from underserved populations⁶. [2.1.1]

⁵ State Mental Health Treatment Facilities, Baker Act Receiving Facilities, prisons and Juvenile Justice facilities, and other institutional settings.

⁶ Florida's underserved populations include racial and ethnic minority backgrounds, people or communities of low income, people with limited English proficiency, identified rural or urban settings, immigrants, and those identifying as LGBTQIA+.

Access to Community-Based Supports and Services

Goal 3: Improve Access to Community-Based Supports and Services

Vision Statements	Focus Issues
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People with disabilities will have access to appropriate community-based services to allow them to live in the community with their choice of necessary supports and services. • People with disabilities, including those who have complex medical or behavioral needs, will be able to avoid institutionalization through access to the services and supports they may need to allow them to continue to live in the community and as independently as possible. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Community-based services ▪ Medically necessary healthcare ▪ Long-term care services ▪ Mental health services

Priorities

- 3.1 **Healthcare and community-based services.** Intervene on behalf of people with disabilities for access to medically necessary healthcare and other appropriate community-based services.
- 3.2 **Funding for community-based services.** Advocate for increased funding for community-based services to support people with disabilities living in the community.
- 3.3 **Alternatives to institutionalization.** Advocate for state policies that provide alternatives to institutionalization.
- 3.4 **Education on availability of community supports.** Educate policy makers on the impact of proposed legislation, rules, or policies that would decrease the availability of community supports and increase the risk of institutionalization for people with disabilities.

Strategic Objective

- Expand community-based services for children with a dual diagnosis of IDD and mental health conditions, particularly those with intense behaviors, unnecessarily housed in institutional settings. [3.2.1]

Access to Public Programs/Services

Goal 4: Improve Access to Public Programs/Services

Vision Statements	Focus Issues
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• People with disabilities will have equal access to public accommodations and services, including medical providers and services.• People with disabilities will be able to fully participate in the electoral process.• People with disabilities will have full and equal access to public and private transportation systems.• People with disabilities will have access to government buildings, programs, and services.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Public accommodations▪ Government services including emergency services/shelters▪ Voting▪ Transportation

Priorities

- 4.1 **Accessible public accommodations and services.** Intervene on behalf of people with disabilities for access to public accommodations and services, including medical providers and services.
- 4.2 **Accessible government services/programs.** Intervene on behalf of people with disabilities for access to government services and programs.
- 4.3 **Accessible disaster planning and recovery services.** Intervene on behalf of people with disabilities for access to disaster planning and recovery services that are appropriate, accessible, and equivalent to services received by others.
- 4.4 **Accessible voting.** Advocate for the expansion of accessible voting and polling places for people with disabilities.
- 4.5 **Accessible public and private transportation.** Advocate for people with disabilities to have full access to safe, reliable, and accessible public and private transportation systems consistent with federal and state anti-discrimination laws and policies.

Strategic Objective

- Identify web-site accessibility barriers to voters with disabilities and advocate with local Supervisors of Elections to eliminate those barriers before the 2024 election cycle. [4.4.1]

Abuse, Neglect and Rights Violations

Goal 5: Protect People with Disabilities in the Community, Institutions, and other Facilities from Abuse, Neglect, and Rights Violations

Vision Statements	Focus Issues
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People with disabilities residing in or receiving services/support or other treatment from institutions or facilities are protected from abuse, neglect, or rights violations. • People with disabilities who reside in institutions or facilities receive education about their rights and self-advocacy. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ People with disabilities residing in institutions or facilities, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Group homes; ICF/DDs; assisted living facilities; state mental health treatment facilities; Baker Act receiving facilities; prisons, jails and Juvenile Justice facilities; facilities that specialize in caring for people with Traumatic and Acquired Brain Injuries; PRTFs and RTFs; and other congregate living settings.

Priorities

- 5.1 **Abuse/neglect or rights violations (claims).** Investigate claims of abuse/neglect or rights violations of people with disabilities residing in or receiving services/support or other treatment from institutions or facilities.
- 5.2 **Abuse/neglect or rights violations (monitoring).** Prevent abuse neglect or rights violations of people with disabilities through periodic monitoring of institutions or facilities.
- 5.3 **Abuse/neglect or rights violations (institutional intake).** Maintain dedicated intake systems for people in institutional settings.
- 5.4 **Education on abuse/neglect or rights violations.** Conduct education, training and outreach to people with disabilities residing in institutions or facilities to educate them about their rights and self-advocacy.

Strategic Objective

- Complete Court-ordered monitoring of the state prison system’s obligation to provide adequate care and treatment to inmates housed in prison inpatient mental health units. [5.2.1]

Public Awareness and Policy Change

Goal 6: Build Awareness of Rights of People with Disabilities & Educate Policy Makers

Vision Statements	Focus Issues
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People with disabilities especially those in underserved populations, will understand the laws protecting their rights. • People with disabilities will have an accurate understanding of the services provided by DRF to secure their rights. • People with disabilities will enhance their self-advocacy skills through access to DRF training and advocacy materials. • People with disabilities will participate in advocacy and policy making to address major systemic issues that directly impact the lives of people with disabilities. • Policy makers and stakeholders understand the laws protecting the rights of people with disabilities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Rights Awareness ▪ Role of DRF in securing rights for people with disabilities ▪ Self-advocacy ▪ Education of policy makers

Priorities

- 6.1 **Outreach/education on rights.** Expand outreach and education, especially to underserved populations, to increase understanding of the rights of people with disabilities.
- 6.2 **Public awareness of DRF services.** Expand public awareness, especially to underserved populations, of DRF services and advocacy efforts.
- 6.3 **Information and referral.** Educate people with disabilities on the availability of community resources by providing information and referral through DRF's intake process.
- 6.4 **Self-advocacy.** Educate people with disabilities on effective self-advocacy skills.

6.5 **Evolving issues.** Implement a public policy agenda in response to critical and evolving issues using input and participation from people with disabilities and other stakeholders.

6.6 **Education for policymakers on rights.** Educate policymakers, organizations, and advocates on legislation and regulations that impact the rights of people with disabilities.

Strategic Objectives

- Increase use of DRF services by people with disabilities in underserved populations, especially those in rural areas. [6.1.1]
- Increase promotion of DRF self-advocacy materials to underserved populations. [6.4.1]