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| **FY 2021** |  |
| **P&A** | **PAVA Narratives** |
| AR | An individual with a physical disability who utilized accessible parking spaces requested assistance from DRA with architectural accessibility issues at a county courthouse where she voted. A PAVA advocate discussed the particular issues with the client, then called several county and local officials to have the accessible aisle of a van parking space at the county courthouse re-striped. DRA staff confirmed that the parking space at issue was re-striped to meet ADA guidelines. |
| AZ | The Arizona Center for Disability Law’s (ACDL) Protection and Advocacy for Voter Access (PAVA) Program works to ensure that Arizonans with disabilities have an opportunity to cast a private and independent vote, and have full access to the electoral process in registering to vote, casting a vote, and accessing polling places. ACDL has developed collaborative, educational, enforcement, and best practice-based strategies to achieve our goal of ensuring full access to the electoral process. During Fiscal Year 2021, ACDL’s PAVA activities focused on the following on behalf of Arizonans with disabilities: increasing voter registration, increasing voter participation, increasing voter education opportunities, working with election officials to address the electoral needs of Arizonans with disabilities, protecting the rights of Arizonans with disabilities to ensure full access to the electoral process, and engaging in a GoVoter survey project. Further details concerning these activities are included below.   ACDL Collaborates within the Community to Increase Voter Registration of People with Disabilities   ACDL collaborated with several disability organizations to conduct voter rights trainings and voter registration drives activities in FY 2021. During our efforts, we identified several barriers that significantly impacted this project. The COVID-19 pandemic continues to have a significant negative impact on in-person voter registration. In-person voter registration activities have historically been the most effective way to reach out to potential voters with disabilities to increase registration.   ACDL is part of the Arizona Disability Voter Coalition (AzDVC), which is a statewide partnership of individuals, stakeholders and organizations that work together to improve access to the electoral process for Arizonans with disabilities. AzDVC has incorporated the above six projects and works in collaboration with ACDL on achieving this shared goal of voter access for Arizonans with disabilities. The following are organizational members of AzDVC: ACDL, Citizens Clean Elections Commission, The Arc of Arizona, Southern Arizona Association for the Visual Impaired, Southwest Institute for Families and Children, Self-Advocates Becoming Empowered, Arizona Commission for the Deaf and the Hard of Hearing, Arizona Developmental Disabilities Planning Council, Arizona Association of Providers for People with Disabilities, Direct Advocacy & Resource Center, People First of Arizona, and others. The AzDVC met in March and August 2021 to coordinate efforts and activities in furtherance of enhancing the experience of voters with disabilities in Arizona.   ACDL and AzDVC coalition partners conducted several voter registration activities on National Voter Registration Day and during National Disability Voter Registration Week. Among the activities conducted included a voting rights training by an ACDL attorney that included an overview of Arizona’s new voting-related laws, and provided participants with best practice strategies for people with disabilities to ensure access to the electoral process. Another organization participating in disability voter registration activities included the Arizona Department of Developmental Disabilities (DDD). DDD sent out more than 30,000 emails to its members and families to encourage them to register and vote. The Arizona Association of Providers for People with Disabilities (AAPDD) is Arizona’s largest consortium of developmental disabilities provider agencies, and made available voter registration information to all members with the consortium. Arizona Citizens Clean Elections, our independent Elections Commission, supported our efforts by providing logistics and resources.    ACDL Works to Identify Barriers and Increase Voter Participation Among Voters with Disabilities in Arizona   In FY 2021, ACDL collaborated with our AzDVC partners to identify barriers that impact the ability of a person with a disability to cast a private and independent vote in Arizona. Among the barriers identified were the need for various reasonable accommodations in the voting process to ensure full and equitable access.   ACDL has reached out to state agencies and disability service provider agencies to inform them of their responsibilities to provide reasonable accommodations if needed, to ensure access to voting for Arizonans with disabilities. These accommodations may include assisting the person to update their voter registration, providing accessible transportation to the polls, and more.   ACDL Conducts Trainings and Works to Increase Voter Education Opportunities for Arizonans with Disabilities   In ACDL's efforts to provide statewide voting rights trainings to Arizonans with disabilities, we worked in collaboration with several disability organizations to conduct a number of virtual trainings on voting rights in FY 2021. The trainings and curriculums were designed and implemented to meet the needs of various disability stakeholder groups, including persons with intellectual/developmental disabilities. Some of the organizations ACDL partnered with to provide voter rights trainings included: Diverse Ability Incorporated, Youth Leadership Forum of Arizona, the University of Arizona Disability Cultural Center, Arizona Department of Developmental Disabilities, and more.   Each of the four trainings ACDL conducted in June and July 2021 provided a basic overview of voting rights and provided detailed information on voting options and requesting accommodations to access the polls during the COVID-19 pandemic. American Sign Language interpreting and Closed Captioning were provided during all trainings. Collectively the trainings reached over 75 voters and prospective voters with disabilities in Arizona.   ACDL also conducted voting rights trainings at Direct Advocacy & Resource Center (the independent living center for southern Arizona), a meeting of a local chapter of the National Federal for the Blind, the University of Arizona Disability Resource Center, and the Arizona’s Developmental Disabilities Advisory Council (DDAC) Public Forum. These trainings collectively reached over 96 individuals.   ACDL Works with Election Officials to Address the Electoral Needs of Arizonans with Disabilities   ACDL and our Disability Voter Coalition (AzDVC) partners worked very hard to build a working relationship with Arizona election officials at every level in the state. We have established a positive working relationship with the Arizona Secretary of State’s office and the majority of the County Recorders and Elections Departments throughout the state. Below is a summary of some of the activities ACDL conducted in FY 2021 to further its work in this area.   During the fiscal year, ACDL and our AzDVC partners held meetings to discuss, develop and implement projects to improve access to the electoral process for Arizonans with disabilities. The majority of these meetings were attended by elections officials from the Secretary of State’s Office, and County Recorders Offices and Elections Departments. These meetings provided the disability community and elections officials with an opportunity to engage directly to discuss and resolve issues regarding access to the electoral process for voters with disabilities.   Additionally in May 2021, ACDL and AzDVC partners met with the newly-elected Pima County Recorder and her team to discuss meeting the needs of voters with disabilities in Pima County, and to establish a working relationship with the office. As a result of the positive working relationship ACDL and its AzDVC partners have with election officials in the state, an AzDVC partner provided extensive feedback and recommendations on improving the accessibility of the official’s website at the request of one election official. Additionally, based on our working relationship, in June 2021, the Arizona Secretary of State’s Office invited ACDL to review and provide comments to the Arizona Elections Procedures Manual (Manual) concerning accommodating voters with disabilities. ACDL provided the requested feedback concerning the Manual to help improve the accessibility of elections held in Arizona.   ACDL also hosted its 10th Annual African American Conference on Disabilities in February 2021, in virtual format for the first time, and were honored to have Commissioner Thomas Hicks from the U.S. Election Assistance Commission as a keynote speaker for the closing session of the conference to speak about the critical importance of voting for the disability, and all, communities. The session had 293 Zoom participants, and 544 viewed through Facebook.   ACDL Protects the Rights of Arizonans with Disabilities to Ensure Full Access to the Electoral Process   In FY 2021, ACDL undertook a variety of activities aimed at protecting the rights of Arizonans with disabilities to cast a private and independent vote. One such activity was the voting hotline that ACDL operates during city, county, state, and federal elections to assist callers in resolving access issues on Election Days, and ensuring every voter has an opportunity to cast a private and independent vote. ACDL operates the voting hotline during the hours the polls are open on Election Days. On the November 2020 General Election, ACDL fielded a total of 41 calls, and was able to work with election officials in Pima County to address and resolve an accessibility barrier at a polling location through temporary remediation measures.   ACDL also provides assistance related to voting issues and representation in the enforcement of the Help America Vote Act of 2002, and other civil rights laws protecting the right to vote for people with disabilities.   ACDL Collaborates on GoVoter Survey Project   ACDL, in collaboration with Self Advocates Becoming Empowered (SABE), conducted a GoVoter Survey Project to hear from Arizonans with disabilities regarding their voting experience in the November 2020 General Election. The goal of the survey was to obtain feedback from voters with disabilities and to provide the information and recommendations to election officials on improving access to the voting experience.   ACDL conducted outreach activities to more than 30 disability organizations, including state agencies, to encourage them to support the survey and mail it to all to their constituents. Between November-December 2020, ACDL and SABE sent out over 120 emails to individuals and organizations prompting them to share and complete the survey. The survey was ultimately completed by 56 individuals and the data was utilized in a training that was attended by several election officials from various levels, including the Secretary of State’s Office and various County Recorders Offices and Elections Departments.   ACDL also updated our voter education training curriculum for persons with disabilities based on data reported from the GoVoter experience survey results, to ensure the most current information and barriers are addressed in the trainings. |
| CT | DRCT major sponsor of the Candidate Forum held on October 7, 2020. DRCT assisted in preparing for the forum including preparing a flyer, a PAVA website page with recorded event and candidate booklet. DRCT staff also worked with its community partners at the forum to facilitate the forum and to sponsor part of the forum using PAVA funds. |
| HI | In FY21, PAVA embarked on its broadest most-comprehensive effort to reach the entire disability community and its un- and underserved segments, which was largely successful. The 2020 elections marked the State of Hawaii’s full migration to a mail-in ballot system. Generally, the mail-in voting system met with approval by our disabled population. However, there were some challenges. To address these challenges, PAVA continued the comprehensive three-prong campaign initiated in the FY20 primary election:  1. Voter Registration: Every applicant for HDRC services, regardless of whether their case was accepted or not, received a follow phone call to inform each individual of their right to vote, along with the offer of PAVA’s registration assistance. COVID-19 restrictions hampered typical in-person outreach efforts, however we were able to provide PAVA information at our community vaccination clinics, via Facebook and our website. Advocates continued to work with high schools and community colleges as well for PAVA outreach. At last count, over 140 individuals with disabilities who may have never registered to vote were registered through PAVA’s efforts.   PAVA’s voter registration campaign continues to the present, where each week’s telephone and email applicants for services are called to ask if (1) they are able to access the voter registration process, and (2) whether they would like PAVA to assist them with voter registration.  2. Media Campaign. For the 2020 primary and general elections, PAVA enlisted multiple media resources for voter education and specifically targeted our disabled and underserved populations. In a first time effort, HDRC produced a video for social media highlighting how HDRC could assist with the registration process, emphasizing that “your vote counts”. Our PAVA educational video was produced both in English and Tagalog and captioned for the deaf/hard of hearing. The social media results exceeded our expectations with over 35,000 Facebook “likes”! The same messages of “you have the right to register and vote” and “your vote counts” was recorded as a public service announcement for public television. Newspaper ads were placed in the major daily newspapers for each island to offer PAVA’s assistance with registration and voting, and similar messages were advertised on local radio stations, translated into Chuuk, Tagalog and Ilocano. Various PAVA staff were also offered informational/PSA spots on local television news shows, public television, and numerous top-rated radio shows.   3. Enforcing Accessibility to the Mail-In Ballot. PAVA’s third emphasis was to monitor the newly-instituted mail-in balloting system to ensure its access to people with disabilities. Many of the accessibility issues that arose and corresponding advocacy goals and objectives were incorporated as part of PAVA’s Systems Cases (see narrative below).     PAVA Systems Cases: Accessible Mail-In Voting and Monitoring Access to Polling Places.   The State of Hawaii’s move to a mail-in balloting system meant that traditional precinct polling sites were closed and replaced with a limited number of “Voting Service Centers (VSCs).” PAVA applied the same standard of accessibility to evaluate the new VSCs and the mail-in ballot process as well as the on-line alternatives.   Issues and accessibility concerns arose during the November 2020 General Election. On Oahu, individuals who either missed the mail-in registration deadline or desired to vote in-person were forced to drive to the only two polling places that remained open. Voters with disabilities had to take public transportation like TheBus or TheHandi-Van and travel a considerable distance outside of their neighborhood, only to experience hours-long lines on Election Day. Individuals with disabilities appeared to be disproportionately impacted. The offer of same-day registration and voting also overburdened the voter confirmation staff and computers, and contributed to the lengthy delays for in-person voters. To address these issues, PAVA is working with state and county elections offices for expanded PSCs for the next election.   Additionally, voters with blindness and low vision were directed to the Office of Elections websites for online voter registration or alternate ballots. Some of the online forms and web text used were not accessible to blind/low vision voters who attempted to use their reading machines. PAVA reported these issues to the Office of Elections, a temporary fix was found, and a more permanent solution is under discussion.  When voters expressed concern whether their mail-in ballots would be received timely and counted, the Office of Elections implemented a system of drop boxes strategically positioned around Oahu. Similar drop boxes were instituted in a more limited fashion on the neighbor islands. PAVA received a few complaints about the lack of drop box accessibility to the blind (due to the lack of Braille signage) and to the mobility impaired (due to the positioning of the slots on the drop boxes and/or the overall lack of convenience of some drop box locations). PAVA reported these issues to the Office of Elections and will collaborate with them to enhance drop box accessibility in future elections.   PAVA’s systems cases have in past years generated favorable conditions and accessibility for voters with disabilities. However, the systems case to monitor polling places will be closed due to its limited applicability in the current voting environment.   Case Example: D.S.  D.S. is a 59-year Oahu male who is blind and could not fully access the mail-in voting system. The new mail-in ballot required the voter to sign a specific area on the outside of the privacy envelope before it is placed in the mailing envelope. For blind voters, there were no braille or physical identifying marks to indicate where to sign. Incorrectly signed privacy envelopes would be rejected. D.S. attempted to resolve the issue with the Office of Elections prior to the 2020 primary election, and when he was unable to do so, he contacted PAVA. A PAVA Advocate worked with D.S., other members of the blind community, and the Office of Elections to design accessible privacy envelopes for future blind/low vision voters. |
| ID | FY21 PAVA Activities Project Summary  In FY21, DRI staff conducted the following activities in regards to the November 2020 general election:  - Developed a new, updated TA letter to send to callers re voting issues with information, referrals and resources specific to the Nov. 2020 gen election, including info on voter registration and ways in which to cast a ballot in the Nov. 2020 election in Idaho;  - Provided information on voting rights, voter registration and voting options as an outreach to THRIVE for them to use in a training for young adults with disabilities who participate in their program at the Meridian YMCA;  - In-person early voting location monitors at 4 early voting locations (Ada County (2) and Bannock and Bingham Counties);  - Met, consulted with other stakeholder agencies such as the Independent Living Centers, NW ADA Center, and League of Women Voters to discuss/address transportation barriers for voters with disabilities. Information gathered from these meetings on transportation options for voters with disabilities in Idaho was then incorporated into DRI’s 2020 General Election newsletter which was widely distributed amongst stakeholder groups and published on the DRI website;  - Provided Idaho AT Advisory Council with an update on issues/concerns related to voting/voting technology for persons with disabilities for their October 2020 meeting;  - Presented at the SILC Quarterly Business meeting in October 2020 on rights of voters with disabilities and updates for the 2020 November election;  - Provided an attorney consult to the Chief Civil Deputy Prosecuting Attorney for Latah County on accommodations for persons who can’t wear a face covering at the polling place for their elections clerk. DRI staff provided them with resources and analysis on this topic as well as DOJ press release on the topic;  - Consulted with stakeholder agencies such as SILC, NW ADA Center, and the National Fed of the Blind of Idaho on COVID safety concerns for voters with disabilities after it was reported that COVID outbreaks had occurred in early voting locations where masks, social distancing, etc. were not being mandated. DRI staff attempted to bring this to the attention of the Secretary of State who refused to issue any sort of orders with such requirements for county clerks to implement, leaving it up to each individual county clerk to decide how to implement the recent CDC guidance for polling locations. Frustrated with this lack of initiative, DRI staff spoke with a Channel 6 news reporter who was interested in doing a story on this as well as voting barriers for persons with disabilities during COVID and also connected the reporter with individuals to interview – to ultimately bring public awareness to this issue so that voters with disabilities could be informed and make safe choices regarding how to vote in the Nov 2020 election;  - Emailed all 44 county clerks to share updated CDC guidance for voting locations and to encourage them to implement such measures to ensure the safety of Idaho voters, including those with disabilities during early voting and on election day;  - Created, published and distributed copies of a 2020 General Election Newsletter (see attached), with information on the 2020 general election, including transportation options, voting rights for persons with disabilities, voting options, deadlines, COVID safety tips, and hotline info. The newsletter was provided to the state independent living center, all other independent living centers, the NW ADA Center, the Idaho League of Women Voters, the Idaho AT Project, ICDVI, and was published to the DRI website.  - Collaborated with Idaho Women Lawyers and University of Idaho Law student volunteers who agreed to conduct in-person election day monitoring in various location in Canyon County – DRI Director of Legal & Advocacy Services provided them with polling place accessibility checklists and then encouraged them to call DRI on election day to immediately report any concerns. A volunteer contacted DRI on election day to report accessibility issues at a polling place location including the need including the need for better curbside voting signage; lack of accessible voting booth inside the location; lack of staffing to monitor the curbside voting; and an overall lack of COVID protocols being followed. DRI PAVA attorney then called and reported the concerns to the Elections Supervisor for the county who indicated she would immediately contact the staff at the polling location and get the issues resolved as soon as possible. Thanks to this collaboration, thousands of voters in this precinct were provided with more accessible and more COVID-friendly voting options.  - Hosted a voter hotline on election day, Nov. 3, 2020, from 8 AM- 8 PM in order to answer all voter-related calls on election day;  - And as a result of DRI's collaboration with various stakeholders during the ADA30 Celebration, DRI became a member of an on-going committee called Idaho Voting Coalition, to discuss various voting accessibility concerns, issues, ways in which to help increase voter turnout within the disability community. DRI, the ILCs, the Idaho Access Project, and the NW ADA Center are members of this Coalition. |
| MA | Priority 1: DLC will support self-advocates to ensure people with developmental disabilities know about their voting rights and have access to voting.      DLC, in collaboration with members of the DD Council, continues to participate on the Self-Advocates Becoming Empowered (SABE) Advisory Council and contribute input on their GoVoter Project initiative. During FY2021, extensive work was done on the REV UP MA Project. This work was conducted under the PAVA program and will be reported to ACL under the PAVA PPR.         Priority 2: DLC will support self-advocates who are examining the benefits of supported decision making (SDM) as an alternative to guardianship.      Massachusetts Advocates Standing Strong (MASS) has been leading a task force on Supported Decision Making. MASS has used the task force to explore the types of laws and policies available, nationwide, that if implemented, can help persons with developmental disabilities in MA make more of their own decisions. As a result of the Task Force’s efforts, legislation was filed this year to establish a supported decision-making option for individuals with I/DD and other disabilities. MASS, DLC, ICI, the Shriver Center, the Center for Public Representation and the Harvard Project on Disability collaborated on educating self-advocates on supported decision- making.   As with the prior year, DLC continued to actively participate on the MA Supported Decision Making (SDM) Task Force during FY2021. DLC provided advocacy guidance and support to MASS members on the proposed SDM bill. While COVID-19 did slow down the process, DLC has remained behind the scenes supporting self-advocates in their role of educating the public and the MA legislative body on SDM and how SDM can provide self-advocates with the autonomy that they are missing when placed under guardianship. Some of this work is conducted using non-federal funds. |
| MD | PAVA staff adjusted to reviewing the placement and location of ‘ballot boxes’ for the 2020 General Election. PAVA staff received twelve complaints from community members regarding the placement of ballot boxes in inaccessible locations. While PAVA staff successfully resolved complaints by contacting state and local board of elections, there appeared to be a lack of guidance regarding the placement of ballot boxes. PAVA staff will be asking the State Board of Elections on any guidance or direction that has been provided to local board of elections regarding placement and location of ballot boxes.  As part of continuing efforts to ensure access to accessible voting systems, DRM has collaborated with NFB to advocate for increased usage of accessible ballot marking devices (BMDs). DRM and NFB successfully advocated to increase the minimum number of voters that use the BMD from two voter per precinct, which was the policy from 2016-18, to 5 voters per precinct. After reviewing the results from the 2020 special elections it is clear that the policy change was not enough to ensure the rights of disabled voters. In 2020, precincts still reported underutilization of the BMDs. This compromises the privacy of persons with disabilities ballot choices. Consequently, DRM will continue to advocate for the Maryland General Assembly to require the SBE to address these issues and propose possible solutions to increase ballot secrecy. |
| MD | PAVA staff conducted virtual voter outreach and “Know Your Rights” presentations. PAVA staff tailored the presentation to its audience presenting live using a PowerPoint Presentation, recording presentation for future dissemination, and attending open forum telephone conversations. These events were designed to reach a cross disability audience that was geographically diverse with the state attendees includes people with disabilities, voting rights advocates, and processionals that work with people with disabilities. Over 200, people logged into at least one of DRM’s presentation. The presentations were hosted by Centers for Independent Living, support groups, and professional. |
| MD | PAVA Staff participated in an election rights ‘boiler room’ on Election Night 2020 with other state civil rights organizations, including the ACLU, Common Cause, PIRG, and others. As area experts, PAVA provided technical assistance to state and local boards of election to remedy inaccessibility issues at polling locations. |
| MD | PAVA staff responded to inquires from State and local board of elections regarding the placement of ballot boxes and ensuring that such placement is accessible. |
| MI | In response to a request to assist in staffing the Michigan Legal Rapid Response Team, set up to answer questions and ensure legal rights were enforced during the November 2020 election, two DRM attorneys participated in answering questions, addressing concerns, and staffing an election day hotline. The work included voter protection activities such as staffing the call-in center (a Michigan hotline accepting calls about voting rights), including questions related to requiring voter ID, allowing voting when the voter did not receive an absentee ballot, and questions related to poll watchers and poll challengers.  DRM attorneys received training and a protocol was developed for routing election-related calls to select staff including the attorneys assigned to work on the election protection hotline on election day.  (Project 105378, 100% PAVA)  PAVA performance measure: 1,000,000 (number of registered voters in Michigan with disabilities, according to the School of Management and Labor Relations for Rutgers University).  DRM Advances Voting Rights According to Dr. Lisa Schur and Douglas Kruse, professors at the School of Management and Labor Relations for Rutgers University, voter turnout surged among citizens with disabilities in 2020, as it did in 2018. Their turnout increased by 5.9 points relative to the 2016 general election, which was slightly more than the 5.3 point increase among citizens without disabilities. 795,000 people with disabilities in Michigan reported voting in the November 2020 elections. DRM engaged in a number of PAVA activities to encourage voters with disabilities to participate in the electoral process and guarantee their right to vote.   DRM Handles Voting Concerns of Individuals  • A caller wanted to know if her employer had the right to require “proof” of voting if given time off to vote. We provided information from the Michigan voting website that employers are not required to grant leave time and encouraged her to contact her union or ask for what “proof” is acceptable. (SR#2120989) • A mother (guardian) contacted us on behalf of her son through the “Request Help” form online. Guardian was told by county clerk’s office she could not use her guardianship paperwork to sign for her son’s vote. She wanted the clerk to provide legal documentation stating rule. We told her the clerk was correct but is still responsible for creating an acceptable response when her son votes (dot, checkmark, etc.). DRM advocate strongly encouraged early voting. (SR#2120730) • A caller (voter engagement specialist) from a voter hotline called seeking information to assisting voters with disabilities on getting rides to the polls. We provided caller with a list of vendors providing free to low-cost rides to drop boxes or polls on election day. (SR#2117593) • The resident of a psychiatric hospital called because they did not receive their absentee ballot after filling out an application. DRM advocate suggested resident call their local clerk’s office and provided clerks phone number via mail. (SR#2116485)  • A caller requested information on state law/statue that allows her son with a DD Guardianship to vote after he received an application for a mail-in absentee ballot. We provided caller with citations from the U.S. federal laws that assure access to voting for individuals with disabilities. (SR#2115559) • DRM was contacted by a caller who was unable to vote with the accessible voting machine, having to vote by paper ballot with no privacy. In addition to the inaccessible voting machine the caller was injured while existing the polling location. Client was ultimately able to retain an attorney for her personal injuries. DRM advocates continued to investigate the polling place accessibility. (SR#2124860)  PAVA performance measure: 6 individual clients assisted.  DRM Promotes Voter Registration and Engages in Online Outreach  DRM continued to leverage its high number of information and referral calls by including in is Client Satisfaction Survey an invitation to request voter registration information. In FY 2021 DRM sent out 28 voter registration packets as requested by eligible callers. (Project#98687) PAVA performance measure: 28 (number of eligible clients who received voter registration information).  DRM engaged in extensive social media coverage on voting rights and voter engagement, reaching 8,120 through its nonpartisan information postings.  During FY20, DRM created an online Facebook group called “Voting with Disabilities in Michigan” (VDM). This group was a collaboration with the Bureau of Elections, the Brain Injury Association of Michigan, Michigan Disability Rights Coalition, Michigan Developmental Disabilities Council (DD Council), and Michigan State University Usability/Accessibility Research and Consulting. The group received 121 “likes” during FY21 and reached 2,130 people. The VDM group and Facebook page is still active.   VDM conducted two voting webinars in collaboration with the DD Council.  • October 5, 2020: 5 panel members who were individuals with disabilities, spoke on their personal experiences voting and why it’s important for people with disabilities to vote. • October 7, 2020: 3 panel experts answered questions regarding voting rights. Two members of the DRM staff participated as panel experts.  The webinars reached a total of 1,176 individuals and 17 people combined joined the webinars as they were live. These webinars are still available to watch on the VDM Facebook page. (Project#105379)  During FY21 a total of 156 individuals visited the DRM “Voting Resources” page on the www.drmich.org website throughout FY21.   PAVA performance measure: 1,193 (based on the number of individuals reached by webinars).  DRM Provides Resources to Adults with Disabilities  Dr. Lisa Schur and Douglas Kruse’s research suggests that in addition to difficulty voting, voter turnout is explained by lower levels of political recruitment and lower feelings of political efficacy. Toward that end, DRM created informational tools aimed at helping voter with disabilities gain access to nonpartisan information.   In quarter 4 of FY20 DRM developed and disseminated candidate questionnaires to all candidates for federal offices in Michigan (President, U.S. Senate, and 14 U.S. House races). These questionnaires included questions developed by people with disabilities. DRM received complete responses from 5 House races and reported the answers on the agency Facebook page (reaching 122 people) and the agency website, impacting 710,000 people. (\*Average congressional district size is 710,000 people (2010 US Census). Multiply by 5 districts. Divide by 5 (incidence of disability). (Project#104404)  PAVA performance measure: 31,164 (unique users recorded as interacting with the DRM website).  DRM co-sponsored the statewide Election Protection Program to provide a centralized, reliable source of election information to Michigan voters, including voters with disabilities. The Program website included FAQs on voter registration, voting at home, and access to voting on Election Day. The Program’s Rapid Response hotline handled over 7,000 calls in Q1. DRM staff helped draft and edit website content, participated in issue-related conference calls, and provided volunteer attorneys to staff the hotline. (Project#105379)  DRM participated in the Progress Michigan Public Education & Communications Work Group. The group met throughout the year, but increased meeting to once a week from October 1 – November 4 to discuss specific voting needs identified by partner advocacy groups on the call. Based on that information, the work group created 27 “hot topic” posts for dissemination throughout the partner social media channels. DRM is still an active member in this work group. (Project#105379)  DRM Collaborated with Election Officials on Training Tools and Voter Outreach  Throughout FY20 DRM participated in two statewide elections commissions on cybersecurity and election modernization. As a result of these commissions DRM has been able to build a rapport with members of the Michigan Secretary of State.  This year, DRM was invited to participate in the Michigan Secretary of State (SOS) Community Roundtable discussion with Jocelyn Benson. There were a total of 28 individuals on this virtual call including 5 from Secretary Benson’s office. The Secretary and her team discussed what the department is currently doing to make voting more accessible and the upcoming redistricting that Michigan is currently facing. During the meeting it was mentioned the department was creating a series of instructional videos for election workers. DRM reached out to SOS members on the call and offered to assist in the creation of those videos.  The SOS did reach out to DRM and asked for assistance in creating voting scrips for clerks and election workers. As a result of their request DRM drafted 10 scripts through a collaboration with clerks, election staff, advocacy partners, MSU, and voter assist terminal vendors (Election Source). The SOS is still reviewing the scripts and is hopeful the vides will be done by the November 2021 election. (Project#105378)  Video Summary: 1. Voter Assist Terminal Vendors – 9 Scripts Total • Dominion (3 scripts) • ES&S (3 scripts) • Hart (3 scripts)  Three scripts were created for each vendor with the following topics  • Machine Overview • At the Polling Place • Voter Assistance  2. Assisting voters with disability at the polling place. This script was created to provide clerks and election workers with an introduction to sensitivity training on election day.  DRM Participated in State-level Policy Work  According to the Brennan Center for Justice between January 1 and June 21, 17 states enacted 28 new laws that restrict access to the vote. In addition to potential legislation making it harder for individuals to vote, there is the potential undermine the voting process.   DRM monitored meetings and recommendations from state legislative elections committees, co-wrote policy education letters to legislators, submitted written comments explaining the impact federal policy and state laws have on individuals with disabilities, and reviewed testimony on House Bill 5288 regarding the elimination of electronic signatures as the author claims this will have no impact on people with disabilities. (Project#105375) |
| MN | In FY2021 MDLC completed forty-three monitoring visits through virtual means because of the Covid-19 pandemic and state-wide restrictions. MDLC did not limit its monitoring activity in FY 2021 to any one type of facility or service. Instead, the facilities visited covered residential and day programs that varied in size and were located across the state. These facilities included a variety of residential facilities that serve adults and children. No health, safety or rights issues were noted. PADD staff will continue to monitor such facilities in FY 2022 and provide both individual and systems advocacy on these issues.   Also, in FY2021, MDLC began examining potential racial disparities in nursing homes. MDLC conducted research into utilization rates by race and, during certain monitoring visits, inquired on racial differences in the population of nursing home residents.   For MDLC’s PAVA polling place monitoring activities in FY 2021, we conducted polling place surveys of 134 separate locations during Minnesota’s November 3 11, 2020 general election. These polling place visits resulted in nearly 400 areas of accessibility concern that we, according to our protocol, informed the Secretary of State. We estimate that those areas of concern could negatively impact over 9800 voters with disabilities. We calculated this number by multiplying the number of polling place visits by the average number of eligible voters in the precincts (1500) and then multiplying that number by the estimated percentage of registered voters with disabilities (23%) and finally multiplying that number by 20% to account for those voters with disabilities who are blind, deaf or have physical impairments and therefore who may need assistance need assistance at the polling place. As in the past, DLC trains volunteers to help us to conduct monitoring visits.   We list a total of 147 visits (43 monitoring and 134 polling place).   Please note that our performance measurements do not line up completely with the Goal and Priorities. We have corrected that issue with revisions to the FY22 Goals and Priorities. We can provide further explanation upon request. Activities for this Goal apply to PADD, PAAT, PATBI and PAVA. |
| MN | A forty-four-year-old Native American male?with a spinal cord injury, missing extremities,?and severe pressure wounds contacted?MDLC for assistance?securing a power standing?wheelchair to prevent neglect of care for the wounds and eliminate a potential of harm caused by transfers. The?initial?request was made by our client?via Medical Assistance?through Medica, his managed care provider.?The nature of our client’s pressure wounds have required multiple surgeries and skin grafts.?Complications from burn injuries limit?where future skin grafts can be taken resulting in?the surgeons’ inability to repair his wounds. Our client?had been using a separate standing device as part of his therapy to prevent pressure wounds and the?prevention of contractures. However, due to?changes in his medical condition, his staff were no longer able to help him in and out of the separate standing device. The standing feature would replace the separate standing device and eliminate the need for staff to do an unsafe transfer into a separate standing device.?The standing feature would?also?aid in?relieving?pressure?and prevent?future?pressure wounds. Medica approved a new power wheelchair and multiple accessories but denied the standing feature and related equipment, seat elevator, and LED lighting package. MDLC represented?our client?at an administrative hearing and received a favorable decision for?all?the requested items.??   A fifty-nine-year-old African American male with a brain injury?who receives waivered services?filed an appeal after his request for additional waivered services was denied. The client reported a gradual reduction in services over several years?which resulted in him not receiving necessary help with homemaking tasks and his basic living needs were being neglected.?The client also reports a reduction in mobility which hinders his ability to complete daily living tasks.?MDLC advocated for the client to receive additional supports to?fulfill neglected needs?with cooking, cleaning, grocery shopping and other related homemaking tasks.?The case manager authorized additional hours of homemaking per week. The client accepted the offer and canceled the appeal hearing.??   A fifty-nine-year-old group home resident with?a?brain injury had adverse reactions?to medications, causing significant?gait issues and?fall risks. His adult foster care provider did not think it could address?his needs?adequately and moved to demit him due to safety concerns?and the?sites’?inability to keep him safe.?The client's gait problems and fall risks were resolved prior to appeal hearing. However, the?provider argued his behaviors had worsened and?they?still intended to demit him based on behavioral concerns.??MDLC?argued that the reasons for the initial demission notice were no longer?current,?and the provider did not adequately address the behaviors or issue a new demission notice related to behaviors.?During the hearing the?Judge?ruled?in client's favor and ordered the provider to reverse its demission notice.?   PADD staff continues to participate on a state legislatively created work group?administered by the Minnesota Department of Education (MDE) and is charged with addressing the use of physical holds/restraints and seclusion on students with developmental disabilities. The group continues to examine data on restrictive procedure use and?discussing strategies to eliminate seclusion and reduce the use of restraints.?The work in this group significantly?changed?in?nature?due?to?the?Covid 19?related?closure?of?schools?as?well?as?the?death?of George Floyd and the resulting social unrest.??In FY2021,?MDLC advocated for more attention to be paid to the racial dynamics of mostly white staff restraining/secluding mostly non-white students as well as the?roles of school resource officers in the school environment. The Workgroup reviewed and reported the number of schools using PBIS prevention measures and school’s quarterly holding data. It reported that COVID-19 and the prevalence of distance learning reduced the occurrences of physical holds overall. MDLC staff also participated in the restrictive procedure research and review subgroup. The subgroup’s task was to collect, compile and consider relevant information from academic or public agency sources for the Workgroup to consider with Action 1 pertaining to the presence of SROs related to the use of restrictive procedures. MDLC’s advocacy, in conjunction with the ???advocacy of other groups, resulted in MDE addressing these issues in smaller workgroups, developing ??? strategies to assist students and staff, and revising its annual report to include these issues.?We estimate that of the approximately 3500 students who experienced restraint or seclusion, 1200 of them have an I/DD or TBI.   Policy work that focuses on abuse and neglect issues include our participation on task forces/working groups, including: the 1. statewide network of the Working Interdisciplinary Network of Guardianship Stakeholders (focusing on training and less restrictive guardianship/conservatorship options), 2. Students not Suspensions (alternatives to K-12 school suspensions/discipline), and, for example, 4. The state’s Restrictive Procedures Task Force (reducing restraint and seclusion in K-12 public schools). Also, we believe that our participation on work groups relating to the overall of the waiver system works to prevent abuse and neglect as well as access to needed health care.   Our individual case advocacy is supported by and informs our work with monitoring, outreach/presentations, educating policy makers, systemic litigation, collaborations, and other systemic activities. Those related efforts are described further in the respective sections of this report. We list 1200 people as a conservative estimate of those impacted by our work to reduce abuse and neglect.   Please note that our performance measurements do not line up completely with the Goal and Priorities. We have corrected that issue with revisions to the FY22 Goals and Priorities. We can provide further explanation upon request. Activities for this Goal apply to PADD, PAAT, PATBI and PAVA. |
| MN | Individual Case Narrative: A fifty-seven-year-old female?with a Multiple Sclerosis diagnosis?contacted MDLC to assist her with?getting a?Medicaid matter?resolved.?The client is on?Medicare?and Medical Assistance. She receives benefits through a Medica managed care plan.?The client?requested?a Group 4 power standing?wheelchair?with a seat elevator, specialized?joystick, and LED light package.?The request, submitted by Allina Home Medical,?was denied by Medica?due to lack of standing protocol. The client needs the chair to stand. She lives at home alone and cannot stand by herself.?MDLC filed an appeal.?Medica approved the seat elevator but denied the standing feature, joystick, and LED light kit. MDLC represented?the client?at an administrative hearing on the denial of those items. Following?our client’s?testimony, Medica agreed to?authorize?the standing feature and joystick but continued to deny the LED light kit. MDLC helped?our client?pursue?HCBS CADI waiver funding for the LED light kit. The light kit request?was approved. However, in the end, the manufacturer agreed to provide the light kit at no charge. MDLC withdrew the appeal.?The client?received the wheelchair in December 2020 with the standing feature, joystick, and light kit.?In addition,?she?also received?training in how to operate the wheelchair so she can live independently in the community.   Policy Work: For the past four years, Minnesota has been working on a multi-phase overhaul of the state’s home and community-based waiver programs. PADD staff have devoted significant time at each step to ensure that the interests of PADD-eligible clients are well understood and incorporated in the changes being implemented and planned. Previously, the Minnesota Department of Human Services (DHS) submitted waiver amendments consolidating and creating new waiver services with the goals of simplifying and unifying waiver services and service options across all waivers. In FY21, PADD staff continued to follow up with conversations with DHS staff aimed at preserving client service options and rights. As before, these communications led directly to modifications and clarifications in the proposed amendments that better identified and incorporated client choice and continuity of care and services as basic program principles. This systemic advocacy is ongoing and expected to continue over the next two-plus years as Minnesota seeks to consolidate its four disability waivers into two and to develop a universal, individualized service budgeting process. Other policy work involves DLC staff participation on task forces/working groups, including: the 1. statewide network of the Working Interdisciplinary Network of Guardianship Stakeholders (focusing on training and less restrictive guardianship/conservatorship options), 2. Assistive Living Work Group (AL licensing changes and other issues), 3. Students not Suspensions (alternatives to K-12 school suspensions/discipline), 4. state’s Restrictive Procedures Task Force (reducing restraint and seclusion in K-12 public schools), 5. Early Intensive Developmental and Behavioral Interventions (increase awareness and effectiveness of this state health care option), 6. Minnesota Department of Health Advisory Committee, and 7. Minnesota Autism Council. On these task forces/working groups, DLC staff work to identify issues, recommendations and strategies to promote independent living and decrease discrimination.   Our individual case advocacy is supported by and informs our work with monitoring, outreach/presentations, educating policy makers, systemic litigation, collaborations, and other systemic activities. Those related efforts are described further in the respective sections of this report. Conservatively, we estimate these collective efforts advanced the rights of more than 30,000 people. That estimate is based on a subset of the number of people with I/DD who receive waivered services from the State plus other people with TBI and users of Assistive Technology who are likely to benefit from these efforts.   Please note that our performance measurements do not line up completely with the Goal and Priorities. We have corrected that issue with revisions to the FY22 Goals and Priorities. We can provide further explanation upon request. Activities for this Goal apply to PADD, PAAT, PATBI and PAVA. |
| MN | MDLC conducted 58 total training/presentation and outreach events for our PADD, PAAT, PATBI and PAVA work, reaching approximately 8500 individuals. The far majority of these events were conducted virtually due to the Covid-19 pandemic. We continued to focus on underserved or unserved populations in the determination of the location of these events and participated in 14 events with this focus.   More specifically, during our virtual PADD training and outreach events, we participated in 48 events that reached an estimated 8000 individuals and their family members. Ten events (including ones to parents of special education students, a Sudanese group, and to attendees of a Minneapolis event) targeted diverse communities. During our PADD training and outreach events, we made our materials (brochures, factsheets or other resources) electronically or in person to all participants.   For our PAAT work, we participated in 17 events that reached an estimated 1300 individuals and their family members. Five events (including ones to rural communities, diverse law student population and local libraries in metro areas) targeted diverse communities. During our PAAT training and outreach events, we made our materials (brochures, factsheets or other resources) electronically or in person to all participants.   For our PATBI work, we participated in 33 events that reached an estimated 6000   individuals and their family members. Ten events (including ones to a Somali group and a local YMCA) targeted diverse communities. During our PATBI training and outreach events, we made our materials (brochures, factsheets or other resources) electronically or in person to all participants.   Lastly, for our PAVA work, we participated in 39 events that reached an estimated 7000 individuals and their family members. Ten events (including ones to tribal communities and high school transition age students) targeted diverse communities. During our PAVA training and outreach events, we made our materials (brochures, factsheets or other resources) electronically to all participants.   We note that MDLC staff members provided materials and information for multiple areas of our services at the same outreach event so the number of people we reached listed above overlap significantly. For example, during some outreach or exhibitions, MDLC staff provided materials and information about our PAVA work and our PATBI work. The individuals we reached are included in both the summaries for PAVA and PATBI. We commonly bring information about the broad range of MDLC services to these events. However, there are times where we do specific events for only one or two grants (e.g. only PAVA or only PATBI and PAVA).   We also note that estimated total of 8500 attendees includes the estimated total of 2500 attendees listed below in Goal 4, Priority 2.   MDLC also maintained eight factsheets on Covid-19 rights related issues. These are located on lawhelpmn.org.   Please note that our performance measurements do not line up completely with the Goal and Priorities. We have corrected that issue with revisions to the FY22 Goals and Priorities. We can provide further explanation upon request. Activities for this Goal apply to PADD, PAAT, PATBI and PAVA. Activities for this Goal apply to PADD, PAAT, PATBI and PAVA. |
| MN | Our policy work involves DLC staff participation on task forces/working groups, including: the 1. statewide network of the Working Interdisciplinary Network of Guardianship Stakeholders (focusing on training and less restrictive guardianship/conservatorship options), 2. Assistive Living Work Group (AL licensing changes and other issues), 3. Students not Suspensions (alternatives to K-12 school suspensions/discipline), 4. state’s Restrictive Procedures Task Force (reducing restraint and seclusion in K-12 public schools), 5. Early Intensive Developmental and Behavioral Interventions (increase awareness and effectiveness of this state health care option), 6. Minnesota Department of Health Advisory Committee, and 7. Minnesota Autism Council. On these task forces/working groups, DLC staff work to identify issues, recommendations and strategies to promote independent living and decrease discrimination.   Our individual case advocacy is supported by and informs our work with monitoring, outreach/presentations, educating policy makers, systemic litigation, collaborations, and other systemic activities. Those related efforts are described further in the respective sections of this report. Conservatively, we estimate these collective efforts advanced the rights of more than 30,000 people. That estimate is based on a subset of the number of people with I/DD who receive waivered services from the State plus other people with TBI and users of Assistive Technology who are likely to benefit from these efforts.   Please note that our performance measurements do not line up completely with the Goal and Priorities. We have corrected that issue with revisions to the FY22 Goals and Priorities. We can provide further explanation upon request. Activities for this Goal apply to PADD, PAAT, PATBI and PAVA. |
| MN | Individual Case Narrative: A fifty-seven-year-old female?with a Multiple Sclerosis diagnosis?contacted MDLC to assist her with?getting a?Medicaid matter?resolved.?The client is on?Medicare?and Medical Assistance. She receives benefits through a Medica managed care plan.?The client?requested?a Group 4 power standing?wheelchair?with a seat elevator, specialized?joystick, and LED light package.?The request, submitted by Allina Home Medical,?was denied by Medica?due to lack of standing protocol. The client needs the chair to stand. She lives at home alone and cannot stand by herself.?MDLC filed an appeal.?Medica approved the seat elevator but denied the standing feature, joystick, and LED light kit. MDLC represented?the client?at an administrative hearing on the denial of those items. Following?our client’s?testimony, Medica agreed to?authorize?the standing feature and joystick but continued to deny the LED light kit. MDLC helped?our client?pursue?HCBS CADI waiver funding for the LED light kit. The light kit request?was approved. However, in the end, the manufacturer agreed to provide the light kit at no charge. MDLC withdrew the appeal.?The client?received the wheelchair in December 2020 with the standing feature, joystick, and light kit.?In addition,?she?also received?training in how to operate the wheelchair.??   Policy Work: For the past four years, Minnesota has been working on a multi-phase overhaul of the state’s home and community-based waiver programs. PADD staff have devoted significant time at each step to ensure that the interests of PADD-eligible clients are well understood and incorporated in the changes being implemented and planned. Previously, the Minnesota Department of Human Services (DHS) submitted waiver amendments consolidating and creating new waiver services with the goals of simplifying and unifying waiver services and service options across all waivers. In FY21, PADD staff continued to follow up with conversations with DHS staff aimed at preserving client service options and rights. As before, these communications led directly to modifications and clarifications in the proposed amendments that better identified and incorporated client choice and continuity of care and services as basic program principles. This systemic advocacy is ongoing and expected to continue over the next two-plus years as Minnesota seeks to consolidate its four disability waivers into two and to develop a universal, individualized service budgeting process. Other policy work involves DLC staff participation on task forces/working groups, including: the 1. statewide network of the Working Interdisciplinary Network of Guardianship Stakeholders (focusing on training and less restrictive guardianship/conservatorship options), 2. Assistive Living Work Group (AL licensing changes and other issues), 3. Students not Suspensions (alternatives to K-12 school suspensions/discipline), 4. state’s Restrictive Procedures Task Force (reducing restraint and seclusion in K-12 public schools), 5. Early Intensive Developmental and Behavioral Interventions (increase awareness and effectiveness of this state health care option), 6. Minnesota Department of Health Advisory Committee, and 7. Minnesota Autism Council. On these task forces/working groups, DLC staff work to identify issues, recommendations and strategies to promote independent living and decrease discrimination.   Our individual case advocacy is supported by and informs our work with monitoring, outreach/presentations, educating policy makers, systemic litigation, collaborations, and other systemic activities. Those related efforts are described further in the respective sections of this report. Conservatively, we estimate these collective efforts advanced the rights of more than 30,000 people. That estimate is based on a subset of the number of people with I/DD who receive waivered services from the State plus other people with TBI and users of Assistive Technology who are likely to benefit from these efforts.   Please note that our performance measurements do not line up completely with the Goal and Priorities. We have corrected that issue with revisions to the FY22 Goals and Priorities. We can provide further explanation upon request. Activities for this Goal apply to PADD, PAAT, PATBI and PAVA. |
| MN | A 47-year-old?female with a brain injury lives in a customized living setting where staff are present 24 hours a day seven days a week. The client has 4 hours each day of independence time in the community. The client requested alone time in her apartment. MDLC advocated for the client to have alone time during the day and discontinuation of overnight supervision. After several conversations with the case manager and the client’s guardian the service provider agreed and implemented the changes. Our client reports that the changes are in place and that she is pleased with the outcome.  MDLC continues to successfully litigate Murphy v. Harpstead, a certified class action against the state of Minnesota regarding their treatment of individuals with disabilities who are unnecessarily segregated in corporate foster care facilities. The class consists of at least 800 people, 200 of whom are PAIR eligible clients. At the close of FY19, a U.S. Federal District Court granted Plaintiffs Motion for Partial Summary Judgement, declared that the policies and practices of the Minnesota Department of Human Services (DHS) are violating their constitutionally protected due process rights, and denying Defendant’s Motion to Summary Judgment.   Due to delays caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, discovery was reopened in the matter to gather facts regarding activities that have occurred since the close of the original discovery period in 2018.During FY21, the parties engaged in significant written discovery involving the production of hundreds of thousands of pages of documents, and motion practice related to those issues. Depositions and supplemental expert reports will occur in the first have of FY22, with a trial date set for May 2022.   The Plaintiffs’ goal remains for the state or the state to put a system in place that allows individuals with disabilities to live where they want, like everyone else, and in the most integrated setting appropriate to their needs. MDLC has enlisted two private law firms to co-counsel with the P&A on this class action pro bono.   During FY2021 MDLC collaborated with the National Federation for the Blind to advocate for absentee ballots to have accessible formats. MDLC demanded the Minnesota Secretary of State ensure accessibility and threatened legal action. The ballots were made accessible in FY2021 and in time for the 2020 general election. This was a significant advancement in ensuring individuals with print disabilities were able to exercise their right to vote.   Our individual case advocacy is supported by and informs our work with monitoring, outreach/presentations, educating policy makers, systemic litigation, collaborations, and other systemic activities. Those related efforts are described further in the respective sections of this report.   Please note that our performance measurements do not line up completely with the Goal and Priorities. We have corrected that issue with revisions to the FY22 Goals and Priorities. We can provide further explanation upon request. Activities for this Goal apply to PADD, PAAT, PATBI and PAVA. |
| MN | In FY 21, MDLC filed a class action lawsuit against the state of Minnesota that challenges the state’s special education age-out definition. Currently Minnesota law ends special education eligible for transition-age students on July 1 of the year in which a student turns 21. MDLC asserts that this law is contrary to federal law which permits eligibility through age 21 and denies transition age students up to a year of critical transition services that would help them obtain transition services, employment supports, and opportunities for competitive integrated employment. We estimate that over 3000 students with I/DD and TBI would benefit from this lawsuit.   MDLC staff assisted a 19-year-old student who was receiving special education transition age services from the school district. Due to the Covid-19 restrictions, the student was not able to receive in-person services and remote or virtual services were not helpful due to the student’s disabilities. As the pandemic restrictions eased, MDLC staff worked with the parents and the student in reviewing records and determining the level of services that would benefit the students. MDLC attended a conciliation conference and successfully negotiated a return-to-in-person services plan consisting of 4 days a week of in-school, in person services. These services include transition age services that can assist the student in employment supports and options.   Please note that our performance measurements do not line up completely with the Goal and Priorities. We have corrected that issue with revisions to the FY22 Goals and Priorities. We can provide further explanation upon request. Activities for this Goal apply to PADD, PAAT, PATBI and PAVA. |
| MN | PADD staff continues to participate on a state legislatively created work group?administered by the Minnesota Department of Education (MDE) and is charged with addressing the use of physical holds/restraints and seclusion on students with developmental disabilities. The group continues to examine data on restrictive procedure use and?discussing strategies to eliminate seclusion and reduce the use of restraints.?The work in this group significantly?changed?in?nature?due?to?the?Covid 19?related?closure?of?schools?as?well?as?the?death?of George Floyd and the resulting social unrest.??In FY2021,?MDLC advocated for more attention to be paid to the racial dynamics of mostly white staff restraining/secluding mostly non-white students as well as the?roles of school resource officers in the school environment. The Workgroup reviewed and reported the number of schools using PBIS prevention measures and school’s quarterly holding data. It reported that COVID-19 and the prevalence of distance learning reduced the occurrences of physical holds overall. MDLC staff also participated in the restrictive procedure research and review subgroup. The subgroup’s task was to collect, compile and consider relevant information from academic or public agency sources for the Workgroup to consider with Action 1 pertaining to the presence of SROs related to the use of restrictive procedures. MDLC’s advocacy, in conjunction with the ???advocacy of other groups, resulted in MDE addressing these issues in smaller workgroups, developing ??? strategies to assist students and staff, and revising its annual report to include these issues.?We estimate that of the approximately 3500 students who experienced restraint or seclusion, 1200 of them have an I/DD or TBI.   MDLC also participated on a task force (Solutions not Suspensions) to address Pre-K-12 student discipline issues and educated policy makers about the urgent need for the State and school districts to create an entitlement for “Recovery Services” for students with disabilities who were negatively impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic limitations on special education services.   In FY 21, MDLC filed a class action lawsuit against the state of Minnesota that challenges the state’s special education age-out definition. Currently Minnesota law ends special education eligible for transition-age students on July 1 of the year in which a student turns 21. MDLC asserts that this law is contrary to federal law which permits eligibility through age 21 and denies transition age students up to a year of critical transition services that would help them obtain transition services, employment supports, and opportunities for competitive integrated employment. We estimate that over 3000 students with I/DD and TBI would benefit from this lawsuit.    Please note that our performance measurements do not line up completely with the Goal and Priorities. We have corrected that issue with revisions to the FY22 Goals and Priorities. We can provide further explanation upon request. Activities for this Goal apply to PADD, PAAT, PATBI and PAVA. |
| MN | DLC assisted a 10-year-old student with Cerebral Palsy and a significantly compromised immune system. The student was not able to access in person school services during Covid. ?School kept on reducing virtual and in-person services despite the student’s obvious need. ?MDLC investigated, obtained records, consulted with parent and intervened with district by negotiating with the school’s attorney, attending an IEP team meeting, and threatening legal action. District responded by offering some additional services, but not enough. ?MDLC helped parent file an administrative complaint with the Minnesota Department of Education. MDE agreed with the parent’s position and ordered the district to provide compensatory education services for the student and otherwise address other legal violations.   MDLC participated on a task force (Solutions not Suspensions) to address Pre-K-12 student discipline issues, on a Restrictive Procedures work group (described above) and educated policy makers about the urgent need for the State and school districts to create an entitlement for “Recovery Services” for students with disabilities who were negatively impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic limitations on special education services.   Our individual case advocacy is supported by and informs our work with monitoring, outreach/presentations, educating policy makers, systemic litigation, collaborations, and other systemic activities. Those related efforts are described further in the respective sections of this report.   Please note that our performance measurements do not line up completely with the Goal and Priorities. We have corrected that issue with revisions to the FY22 Goals and Priorities. We can provide further explanation upon request. Activities for this Goal apply to PADD, PAAT, PATBI and PAVA. |
| MN | MDLC conducted 26 outreach and presentation events to a variety of groups. Topics included: special education during the pandemic, working with VRS, sp ed and vocational rehabilitation services, civil rights of youth, work incentives, reasonable accommodations, voting rights for age-eligible youth, waiver employment services, and MDLC services. Five of the 26 events that focused on populations of color. We estimate that these events reached over 2500 youth, families, and providers.   We note that the estimated total of 2500 attendees here is included in and not additional to the 8500 attendees listed above in Goal 4, Priority 1.   MDLC also maintained factsheets on Covid-19 special education rights related issue. This is located on lawhelpmn.org.   Please note that our performance measurements do not line up completely with the Goal and Priorities. We have corrected that issue with revisions to the FY22 Goals and Priorities. We can provide further explanation upon request. Activities for this Goal apply to PADD, PAAT, PATBI and PAVA. |
| MO | Missouri Protection & Advocacy Services PAVA Annual Report Fiscal Year 2021 October 1, 2020, through September 30, 2021  AREA ONE: To ensure full participation in the electoral process for individuals with disabilities. Activities may include, but are not limited to, registering to vote, casting a vote, and accessing polling places:  In the weeks leading up to the November 2020 General Election, Mo P&A attorneys received reports that election authorities for Saint Louis County and Kansas City planned to limit curbside voting to select locations for in-person voting on Election Day. Saint Louis County also planned to eliminate curbside voting for in-person absentee voting before Election Day. Mo P&A partnered with the Missouri Voter Protection Coalition to demand that the two election authorities make curbside voting available to absentee and Election Day voters at all polling places. On October 29, 2020, Saint Louis County agreed to offer curbside voting at all satellite locations for absentee voting. The following day, Kansas City agreed to offer curbside voting at all polling places in compliance with state and federal law. The expanded voting access for thousands of voters with disabilities in the two largest jurisdictions in the state.  Less than one week before Election Day 2020, a Kansas City voter with a disability requested assistance from Mo P&A to determine the status of her request for an absentee ballot. After learning that the election authority had not received the voter’s request, Mo P&A and the voter discussed additional options for her to complete her ballot. Mo P&A connected the voter with The Whole Person, which assisted her with transportation to the polling place on Election Day.   Similar to the Kansas City voter, a voter in Butler County was unable to submit a request for inclusion on the “permanently disabled” list before the applicable deadline. Mo P&A ensured that the election authority received his request for subsequent elections and relayed information on in-person absentee voting options to the voter.   After Election Day, Mo P&A confirmed that the voters in Kansas City and Butler County successfully completed their ballots in person.   “Area Two” details Mo P&A’s efforts with the Election Protection hotline.   AREA TWO: To provide education, training, and assistance to individuals with disabilities that will promote their participation in the electoral process. Activities may include, but are not limited to education regarding voter registration, providing individuals with disabilities information regarding their legal rights that pertain to voting, and providing assistance to individuals with disabilities in accessing the polls on Election Day:  Several Mo P&A attorneys joined the Litigation/Legal Rapid Response team for the Election Protection hotline on Election Day, November 3, 2020. Attorneys fielded calls from voters across the state and provided technical assistance to resolve access issues in Saint Charles County and Kansas City. This was the first time that Election Protection operated remotely without a central command center. Attorneys received training on Our Vote Live to “take tickets” for callers with voting access complaints.   From February through July 2021, Mo P&A collaborated with People First of Saint Joseph to develop a voter education presentation for self-advocates, as part of the Self-Advocates Becoming Empowered (“SABE”) Go Voter Project. During three Zoom sessions on August 19, 24 and 25, Mo P&A and People First of Saint Joseph presented to around 20 self-advocates and direct service providers from across the state, on topics including voter registration, accessible voting options, and learning about candidates and issues. People First of Saint Joseph received a small stipend for its completion of the Go Voter program.  From March through September 2021, Mo P&A assisted National Federation of the Blind of Missouri (“NFB”) in drafting a complaint regarding the lack of accessible voting options at polling places across the state. NFB submitted the complaint to the U.S. Department of Justice (“DOJ”) on September 30, 2021. The preparation of the 11-page complaint consisted of two meetings with DOJ attorneys and several drafts circulated among blind voters who had experienced barriers to casting independent and secret ballots in the past. Mo P&A assisted NFB in editing the narratives provided by dozens of voters and confirmed receipt of the complaint by DOJ. As of September 30, 2021, DOJ had not responded to the complaint.   After receiving a request in August 2021, Mo P&A distributed over 50 additional Vote at Home brochures to Delta Center for Independent Living in Saint Charles County.  From July through September 2021, Mo P&A contacted several centers for independent living and other service providers, including Paraquad, The Whole Person, and Arc of Saint Louis, to assess the need for ballot assistance for voters with disabilities and the impact of restrictions placed on ballot assistance by state law. This outreach should lay a foundation for Mo P&A’s future initiative to improve access to ballot assistance for voters with disabilities.  As of September 30, 2021, Mo P&A, the Missouri Developmental Disabilities Council, and the UMKC Institute for Human Development were partnering to develop a statewide voter education program for 2022. This program will also include direct support for voters who require assistance registering to vote, locating transportation on Election Day, and/or completing their ballots.    AREA THREE: Participate in advocacy and education efforts revolving around HAVA implementation efforts in their State or Territory. Activities may include, but are not limited to participation on HAVA State Planning Committee, subcommittee or coalition efforts regarding the State Plan, and review, advocacy, and education concerning the enactment of HAVA State Legislation.  As a part of the outreach and education noted in “Area Two,” Mo P&A educated a large number of voters with disabilities on the enactment of HAVA and the means to access its complaint process.   As part of the case noted in “Area Two,” Mo P&A advised the National Federation of the Blind of Missouri (“NFB”) on HAVA requirements and the nature of the HAVA complaint process. NFB ultimately chose to submit its complaint to the U.S. Department of Justice rather than through the Secretary of State’s HAVA complaint portal.  Mo P&A also discussed the availability of electronic voting systems in accordance with HAVA during interactions with election authorities described in “Area Four.”   AREA FOUR: Training and education of election officials, poll workers, and election volunteers regarding the rights of voters with disabilities and best practices in working with individuals with disabilities. Activities may include, but are not limited to providing training, and participating in the development of training education programs for election officials and poll workers.  From June through September 2021, Mo P&A partnered with the Missouri Developmental Disabilities Council (“DD Council”) to engage with election authorities and educate them regarding common barriers that affect the rights of voters with disabilities. Mo P&A and the DD Council discussed key accessibility concerns with election authorities from Greene and Boone Counties on June 14, 2021. The concerns included the tendency of poll workers to inappropriately “gatekeep” when responding to accommodation requests from voters with disabilities.   As a result of the meeting, Mo P&A and the DD Council began developing a short presentation on “Accessible Voting for Individuals with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities” for a wider audience of election authorities. On September 9, 2021, Mo P&A and the DD Council made its presentation to dozens of election authorities at the Missouri Association of County Clerks and Election Authorities Annual Conference. Mo P&A also received survey results from about 10 election authorities on their perception of voting access issues in their jurisdictions. Several election authorities indicated an interest in collaborating with Mo P&A to improve access for voters with disabilities.   AREA FIVE: To assist individuals with disabilities in filing complaints under the State-Based administrative grievance procedure required by HAVA and represent individuals in any hearing that may be held regarding the compliant.  During the cases noted in “Area Two,” Mo P&A continued to educate individuals with disabilities and service providers about the HAVA Elections Complaint Form and the procedure for filing a complaint. Mo P&A monitored client calls and applications to identify potential systemic issues involving HAVA.    AREA SIX: To provide assistance to States and other Governmental entities regarding the physical accessibility of polling places. Activities may include, but are not limited to surveying polling places, identifying potential modifications to make specific polling places accessible, and developing criteria for identifying polling places:  From February through March 2021, Mo P&A assisted the Saint Louis City Board of the Election Commissioners (“the Board”) in developing a survey instrument to evaluate its polling places for compliance with the physical accessibility requirements of the ADA. Because the survey instrument was a component of a Settlement Agreement between the Board and the U.S. Department of Justice (“DOJ”), Mo P&A responded to edits suggested by DOJ to develop a final 30-page survey instrument in June 2021 for the Board to use in evaluating over 100 polling places. Mo P&A also tested versions of the survey instrument at five polling places in Saint Louis City from March through July 2021 and shared the results with the Board.  In August 2021, Mo P&A contacted the Nodaway County Clerk’s Office regarding its request for signage informing voters of curbside voting options at polling places. Mo P&A provided the clerk with an electronic version of the curbside voting sign developed by Mo P&A in 2018 so that the clerk’s office could print and distribute to all of its 19 polling places.   AREA SEVEN: To obtain training and technical assistance on voting issues, including education  regarding accessible voting equipment and systems. Once educated, the information may be used to inform others of the availability of accessible voting equipment and its use.  Throughout late 2020 and 2021, Mo P&A participated in weekly Zoom meetings for the Missouri Voter Protection Coalition to learn about a broad range of concerns affecting voting access and to collaborate with stakeholders to address those concerns. By participating in the meetings, Mo P&A was able to follow developments in proposed legislation for photo ID requirements at the polls, which would have disproportionately impacted voters with disabilities. This provided Mo P&A with valuable insights when conducting the outreach noted in the previous areas.  Mo P&A attended continuing education sessions related to voting access at the NDRN Annual Conference on May 21 and 25, 2021. Topics included voting litigation opportunities for people with disabilities and data from 2020 on the voting experience for people with disabilities.  As part of the partnership noted in “Area Six,” Mo P&A and the Saint Louis City Board of Election Commissioners attended training sessions arranged by DOJ and conducted by an ADA architect on August 24 and 25, 2021. After one day in a classroom setting and another day of field training, Mo P&A gained all of the knowledge and skills necessary to properly measure the accessibility of polling places. |
| ND | P&A worked in concert with the ND Secretary of State's Office, the ND Assoc. for the Blind, and other disability-related groups to change the absentee voting process for individuals who are blind or with visual impairments. This issue came to light during the July 2020 primary election, when COVID-19 caused the closure of most voting precincts in ND and paper absentee ballots became the option for most citizens. P&A advocated for individuals with disabilities to have an alternative option, to schedule appointments with county auditors to go to the county location for to use the Express Vote machine. Unfortunately, this was not an effective solution for individuals who are blind or with visual impairments that did not have transportation. Through direct collaboration, prior to and during the 2021 Legislative Session, a section of HB 1253 was written to address a change in ND law and the absentee voting process through the following language:    Any voter who is blind, visually impaired, or print disabled qualified elector living with a disability that prevents the elector from reading or marking the ballot without assistance and who wishes to cast an absentee ballot may mark the electronic ballot by electronic means. The voter then shall deposit the ballot electronically on the secure server that is used by covered voters as defined in section 16.1 - 07 - 18. Upon system notification that a ballot has been left by a qualified voter, an election official shall print the ballot, place the ballot in a secrecy envelope, attach the absent voter's application for the ballot, and securely store the enveloped ballot and the application with all the other absentee ballots. When the absentee ballot election board meets to process and count absentee ballots, the ballot from the covered voter must be transferred onto a paper ballot and tabulated with all the other valid absent voters' ballots.  This process is the same as the one being used by military members serving out-of-the-country. P&A's PAVA Coordinator testified in support of this section of the bill along with a retired P&A Advocate who is legally blind. HB 1253 passed both Houses and was signed by the Governor. |
| ND | Prior to the primary election in July of 2020, P&A produced a YouTube video demonstrating how to use the Express Vote, an accessible voting machine. It is shared through P&A's website at: https://www.ndpanda.org/resources/publications-and-videos. During FY 2021, there were more than 600 views.  Prior to the general election, a mailing was sent out to a total of 14,574 individuals with disabilities and related stakeholders. The packet included a cover letter and several PAVA produced items: a voting bookmark with information about using the Express Vote and voting by mail; a pocket guide with information about accessible voting options, identification requirements, etc.; and voting stickers. Recipients included long-term care facility residents (9,137), self-advocates (114), recovery centers (175), individuals with disabilities supported by I/DD providers (2,146), Vocational Rehabilitation clients (2,215), advocacy organizations (16), community living services (216), mental health providers (160), Human Service Centers (200), and others (155).   PAVA contributed voting items to youth with disabilities who participated in a "Embrace Your Disability" conference in FY 2021. A total of 200 different voting pieces (red "vote" pens and "vote" flag sticky note pads) were distributed.   Prior to the general election, PAVA had custom-made "vote" masks sewn and distributed to 500 individuals of disability-related groups including the State Council on Developmental Disabilities, I/DD and other service providers, and self-advocacy groups for people with disabilities, etc. The goal was to encourage voting and to provide protection from the pandemic for those who chose to go to the polls. A significant number of recipients expressed gratitude for the masks they received.  P&A’s website had a dedicated page called VOTE ND for the 2020 election. It contained information on where and how to vote as well as ID requirements. It also had information on accessible voting, including a link to P&A’s YouTube video on how to use Express Vote. Links to the Secretary of State’s election website were also included. For FY 2021, the page views for VOTE ND were approximately 374. |
| ND | In ND, P&A partners with the ND Secretary of State elections division staff and the ND Association of Counties to coordinate effective electoral processes. This includes collaborative work with county auditors and election staff to ensure equal access to voting for all ND citizens with disabilities.  P&A closely tracked 14 voting-related bills during the 2021 Legislative Session. While some were more directly related to people with disabilities than others, any bill can be amended, so it is imperative that all bills are monitored. Of these bills, 12 failed and two were passed into law.   P&A has a distribution group with more than 400 recipients that receive emails specific to disability-related legislative activities, State and federal policy initiatives, and education/training opportunities. During FY 2021 a total of 288 emails were distributed, most of which went out just prior to and during the 2021 Legislative Session. Information included legislative bills specific to voting. Many of these individuals and organizations forwarded these communications on to others.   P&A tracked 183 disability-related legislative bills and study resolutions during the 2021 Legislative Session. As mentioned above, 14 of these were related to voting. An organized table of this information called the Disability-Related Legislative GRID was sent out to P&A's listserv at least twice/week during the 2021 Legislative Session (January - April 2021). The GRID included: bill number with a hyperlink to the actual bill, fiscal note, short description of the bill, legislative committee to which the bill was assigned, date/time of the hearing, committee action including hyperlinks to any amendments, floor action, Governor's action; and a link to the final engrossed bill if passed.   During the 2021 Legislative Session, P&A also sponsored virtual Legislative Working Committee meetings each Friday afternoon and Saturday morning. Many individuals and organizations were represented and routinely involved including people with disabilities, family members, State agencies, advocacy organizations, service providers, and Legislators. Participation in the Friday afternoon meetings ranged between 16 and 51. The Saturday morning meetings usually involved more people with disabilities and families, as well as an engaged Legislator. Nine to 17 people participated in each of these meetings. Discussion topics included many of the legislative bills being tracked. Often discussed items included voting legislation. The PAVA Coordinator presented on this topic a number of times, explaining the bills in participant-friendly language, and answering questions. |
| NM | Need: NMGA paragraph  Financial Exploitation Task Force (FETF) DRNM participated in the FETF from its creation in early spring of 2020. As planned, the FETF developed both criminal and civil statutory proposals presented during the 2021 legislative session. Despite bipartisan support in early committee assignments, both bills died without a vote in the Senate Judiciary Committee. The FETF continues meeting and strategizing on a path forward to secure the protections still much needed for adults vulnerable to financial exploitation.  Guardianship Training   DRNM’s legal director presented a training titled “Guardianships: what you need to know” to 12 participants at the NM governor's online "Inspire AIR: Advocate, Innovate, Renew,” conference, as requested by the NM Public Education Department.  NM House Bill 234:   With the passage of adult guardianship reforms in House Bill 234, the New Mexico Supreme Court has formed the statutorily required Working Interdisciplinary Network of Guardianship Stakeholders (WINGS). DRNM is represented by our legal director. The WINGS group held our first meeting on September 9, 2021 with our next meeting set for November 30. DRNM is committed to helping the group develop deeper reforms to honor the civil rights of people facing guardianship.  New Mexico Guardianship Association (NMGA)   DRNM has been a presence on the Board of the NMGA for several years, and the only voice representing the self-determination rights of protected persons in this statewide organization of guardians. DRNM uses this platform to advocate for the least restrictive forms of substitute decision making, including   PAVA   DRNM's Voting team sent letters to the New Mexico County Clerk’s offices outlining the services DRNM can provide to the counties, including surveying of polling sites, trainings and providing guidance and information on the standards set forth by the Help America Vote Act and the Americans with Disabilities Act. Making voting sites accessible can impact approximately 325,008 New Mexicans.    DRNM voting team worked with the Secretary of State’s office to create a task force dedicated to reviewing and updating their web page to make it more accessible. We worked with the National Federation for the Blind, NM Commission for the Blind and the task force to update the absentee ballot process for individuals with visual impairment. This include rewriting the instruction sheet for casting and returning the ballot, rewording the emails sent to individuals when they request an absentee ballot for the visually impaired and the email they get with their ballot. We redesigned the web page for requesting absentee ballots to make it more accessible for screen readers and user friendly. This has the potential to impact 70,000 New Mexicans according to the statistics from the National Federation for the Blind. https://www.afb.org/research-and-initiatives/statistics/state-specific-stats/new-mexico#2019    DRNM voting team worked with two counties under contract with the DOJ to improve accessibility for polling sites. This included surveying over 30 sites and working with the county officials to find either permanent or temporary remediation to the accessibility issues we found. We also provided a report of our finding for each site.    DRNM voting team provided trainings on voter accessibility and disability awareness for all of the county clerks at the New Mexico Secretary of State’s Election school. We provided trainings for poll workers in Santa Fe County and worked with Sandoval County to create their ADA training for their poll workers.    DRNM Voting team worked with several counties to survey their polling sites and provide feedback on temporary or permanent remediation to ensure they meet the ADA standards used by the Department of Justice. We provided a report for each site surveyed.   Case examples   A DRNM Attorney worked with a client to contact the Social Security Administration (SSA) and resolve issues with the client’s representative payee. After reviewing the additional documentation we provided, SSA confirmed that the client does not need a rep. payee and will begin receiving his Supplemental Security Income payments directly again.    DRNM achieved a very successful result in a guardianship transfer in Albuquerque’s Second Judicial District. A man under a guardianship had difficulties communicating with his corporate guardian of over twenty years. He disagreed with many of the guardian’s decisions, especially about his finances and general freedom. The client and his family also felt that the guardian’s attitude and behavior were insulting. After initial guardianship transfer efforts failed because of funding and contractual issues at the Office of Guardianship (OOG), a DRNM attorney got creative and submitted an application with OOG for the assignment of a new guardian, and paved the way to have a new corporate guardian named relatively quickly. We then filed a motion to transfer that guardianship to the proposed successor guardian. When the court granted the motion, the client fulfilled his desire to move to a new apartment and is really enjoying his new guardian and life arrangements. He is now very optimistic about his future; he told his sister, “It’s gonna be a great year for me.” |
| NY | DRNY’s PAVA and CAP programs came together to host a series of presentations to NYS’s public university system, SUNY/CUNY. We worked directly with students and the Student Disabilities Services Offices to share information about our services, and available resources for students with disabilities. We hosted four virtual trainings and connected with 13 SUNY/CUNY students with disabilities. - SUNY Old Westbury  - SUNY Albany  - SUNY Potsdam - Schenectady Community College |
| NY | We created six podcasts about voting access in NYS, all publicly available on our YouTube Channel and through Apple Podcasts:   - Cast Your Vote: American Association of People with Disabilities (10/14/20): We hosted a conversation with Rachita Singh, AAPD REV Up and Communications Coordinator, and Lillian Aluri, NYU Vote 2020 Fellow, to discuss the importance of voting and its relationship to AAPD’s mission and advocacy work. This podcast informed the community about the importance of engaging the disability population in the voting process, getting people with disabilities registered to vote, and the other advocacy work of AAPD and NYU Vote. It is available here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=h-LYq\_IPMuM   - Cast Your Vote: National Down Syndrome Society (10/21/20): We hosted a conversation with Charlotte Woodward, Community Outreach Associate at National Down Syndrome Society, to discuss importance of voting and its relationship to the NDSS mission statement and advocacy work. It is available here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KPMyRqMG8og&t=1s   - Cast Your Vote: Self Advocacy Association of NYS (10/28/20): We hosted a conversation with with BJ Stasio, SANYS President, and Shameka Andrews, Community Outreach Coordinator at SANYS, to discuss the importance of voting and how voting is a big part of the SANYS mission and advocacy work. It is available here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GqcyOt1u3QM   – Voting Access During the 2020 Election (11/25/20): Our PAVA team discussed voting accessibility and its advocacy during the 2020 election. The program is available here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EVG3BrPmG9E&t=426s   – NYC Rank Choice Voting (2/8/21): We hosted a conversation with Allie Swatek, Director of Policy and Research and NYC Campaign Finance Board. Allie discusses RCV, how it works, and CFB’s outreach to educate NYC voters about this voting method. It is available here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UruBNwEO4Pc&t=602s   – Independent Perspectives, In Depth (6/30/21): We joined a conversation with Western New York Independent Living to talk about voting and the other services DRNY provides. This podcast is available here: http://wnyil.org/Public-Relations/Podcasts/Independent-Perspective-In-Depth/Disability-Rights-New-York |
| OH | PAAT: 1. The client's mother contacted DRO for assistance with getting needed assistive technology for her son from a Medicaid managed care provider. DRO provided information to the mother on standards for requesting AT from Medicaid and guidance on the type of documentation to provide at the hearing. The client's mother provided the information suggested by DRO documenting the need for AT and the managed care provider granted the request for AT at the hearing.   PADD: 1. The Supreme Court of Ohio created a comprehensive toolkit for probate courts who are addressing guardianship issues for individuals with I/DD. DRO provided input and editing to the toolkit to ensure that a wide range of information was included and that all less restrictive options were fully explained.  2. The client's mother contacted DRO with concerns that the client's IEP team had made a last minute decision to grant her a regular diploma and exit her from special education services. The parent and client wanted the client to continue to receive special education services. DRO provided technical assistance on transition requirements and helped the client and parent develop talking points for an upcoming IEP meeting. The parent and client were able to attend IEP meeting and successfully advocate for client to defer her diploma in order to continue to receive transition services.  3. The client's father contacted Disability Rights Ohio with a concern that client was being excluded from summer programming offered by her school district because of her disability and that the criteria to get into this program was inherently discriminatory. DRO provided TA on equal access under Section 504 and contacted the school district on the client's behalf to negotiate a resolution. The district agreed to let client participate in the summer program with appropriate supports after DRO's contact. The family was pleased that client was able to participate in the summer programming.   PATBI: 1. The client contacted DRO with questions about starting a non-profit. The client wanted to know how starting the non-profit would affect his benefits with his SSDI, and Medicaid. DRO provided the client with information regarding starting a non-profit as well as referrals regarding his benefits. The client reported that he received the information he needed to move forward with his non-profit.  PAVA: 1. Client was hospitalized well before the election and had properly requested an absentee ballot. Even so, the board of elections failed to deliver an absentee ballot to client timely. As a result, hospital staff contacted DRO the day before the election and requested assistance securing a ballot for client. DRO worked with the county board of elections' absentee supervisor to have a ballot issued to client. Client received his ballot on election day and was able to complete it. A board employee then took client's completed ballot back to the board of elections, meaning client was able to vote in the election.  2. Client has neuropathy in both legs, diabetes, kidney disease, history of back surgeries. As a result of his disabilities, he cannot stand in line for long periods because his legs go out and he falls down. He also cannot sit in his chair for long periods due to neuropathy. There were long lines at the polls with long wait times. The client asked DRO for help with curb-side voting. With client’s permission DRO contacted the county board of elections to gather information about any specific processes for curbside voting and provided this information to the client. |
| OH | PAAT: A. Monitor a Variety of Facilities and Other Regulated Entities - DRO conducted remote monitoring activities at a rehabilitation center. The monitoring activity focused on all aspects of care, including the physical environment, use of assistive technology, quality of care provided to patients, programming and overall quality of life. DRO also examined the facility's COVID protocols and safety-related issues. DRO discovered that the facility had a large COVID outbreak; the Ohio Department of Health was heavily involved with this facility to address issues with infection control. DRO reviewed the measures the facility put in place regarding infection control as well as all other aspects of the facility. DRO noted a few minor issues, and followed up with facility leadership to remedy them.   B. Abuse & Neglect Investigations - Disability Rights Ohio has received multiple reports from incarcerated Deaf individuals at one Ohio prison, who report several issues with the assistive technology provided to them by the prison. For example, inmates who rely on video phones reported unequal access because other inmates are able to make phone calls from prison-provided tablets at any time. However, the prison only has three video phones and one TTY for Deaf and hearing impaired individuals, and often there is a long wait to use those phones. Additionally, the video phones are not in a private location and conversations are monitored by prison staff’s physical presence – this is not true for inmates who can use their tablets to make calls. Inmates also cannot access the video phones if they have “tickets” due to movement restrictions – this rule is not applicable to inmates who can use tablets.  Another issue reported to DRO is that captioning on the prison-provided tablets is limited. Only about 1/3 of movies have captioning – movies most recently added to the tablets had none. Some individuals paid for movies that said had closed captioning, but did not. They have not received refunds for those purchases.  Finally, the incarcerated individuals reported a lack of training for prison staff on how to communicate with individuals who are Deaf or hard of hearing. This lack of training is leading to disciplinary or safety issues for the inmates. One client reported that when he was being taken to the medical unit, the corrections officers told the client to walk ahead of them. The client did not know where he was going and tried to communicate to the corrections officers that he could not hear their directions. The corrections officers were armed at the time and the client reported being afraid that he would be shot because the corrections officers might mistake his communication for defiance.  DRO is addressing these matters with the Ohio Department of Rehabilitation and Corrections and evaluating options to address the systemic issues.   C. Redress Barriers Caused by Ineffective Communication in Jails and Prisons - Client is Deaf and currently incarcerated in prison. The client reported that several months ago, his hearing aids stopped working, and he turned them over to the facility for repair. Several months passed and he had not received an update or repaired hearing aids. Client asked DRO to advocate on his behalf. DRO contacted counsel for ODRC and requested both an update and that Client receive working hearing aids. Approximately one week later, ODRC confirmed that Client's hearing aids were sent out for repair under warranty, but they could not be repaired. Client was seen by audiology on the day DRO contacted ODRC, and new hearing aids have been ordered.  PADD: A. Monitor a Variety of Facilities and Other Regulated Entities - 1. This year, DRO engaged in extensive monitoring activities in ICFs. The focus of those activities was to ensure people have the information they need about exit waivers and are connected to resources to make an informed choice about exit waivers and transitioning from private ICFs to community settings. DRO advocates monitored 19 ICFs and spoke with numerous individuals to identify whether they had ever received information about exit waivers or options counseling and to provide the informaiton if they had not received it and wanted it. DRO also spoke with individuals' guardians to provide more information about the client's community living options. In some instances, when the guardian supported a community placement, DRO was able to  facilitate the exit waiver process. For example, DRO's Abuse and Neglect Team met with one individual in an ICF who expressed interest in an exit waiver. A member of DRO's Civil Rights and Community Integration team assisted the individual and his guardian with the exit waiver process 2. DRO advocates monitored a state-operated developmental center virtually. DRO met with the leadership team, spoke with direct care staff, facilities managers, administrator, nurses and others. DRO also toured the facility (virtually), including several buildings that are dedicated to recreation. Finally, DRO met with several clients to interview them about their experience. DRO found this facility to be maintaining a clean environment, to be providing a robust activities calendar (during the one-hour tour, we saw four separate activities being conducted with a high level of engagement) and to be providing a high level of care. We received much positive feedback from the residents, including “Staff are very good. I like my stay here.” “I feel safe with staff.” One resident interviewed remarked that they enjoyed that they went on hikes and had scavenger hunts. Another resident remarked that they enjoyed making crafts. When asked if staff treat them with dignity and respect, one resident reported, “They’re all good. All these people are good to me”. We provided this positive feedback to leadership. DRO found no outstanding items for follow up for this facility.   B. Abuse & Neglect Investigations - 1. DRO investigated the death of an individual who left a day program without staff knowing and was subsequently hit by a car on the highway. DRO reviewed extensive records, including police reports, incident reports, supervision plans and training records. The individual was to receive one-to-one supervision because of a past incident. As a result of the incident, the day program retrained its staff regarding supervision and disciplined/terminated staff involved in the incident. DRO also followed up with law enforcement regarding criminal charges.  2. DRO received a report from a client at a developmental center about an incident involving staff abuse. An interview was conducted with client regarding the incident. After receiving consent, DRO reviewed records related to the incident and was unable to find evidence of abuse by staff. DRO spoke to the client about the formal grievance process and assisted him with filing one with his program manager. DRO also called the developmental center to ensure they followed up on the grievance. Client stated he was happy with the outcome of the grievance and had no additional concerns.  3. DRO investigated trends and patterns of alleged abuse regarding a specific employee of a state-operated developmental center. DRO reviewed all reports of incidents involving this employee, documents related to the disciplinary actions against the alleged perpetrator, historical evidence of trends of allegations against this employee, and conducted multiple interviews with the victims via video call. DRO met with staff, leadership, and legal counsel and asked that this staff person be removed from direct care of individuals for whom allegations had been documented. The developmental center declined to remove the individual because of protections provided by the employees' union. DRO expressed concern about possible trauma that the victims may be experiencing if in proximity to the employee. The developmental center agreed to put in place a long-term plan to conduct trauma timelines for the individuals and provide appropriate treatment. DRO conducts regular visits to the developmental center to ensure the safety of the residents.  PATBI: A. Monitor a Variety of Facilities and Other Regulated Entities - DRO conducted a virtual monitoring at an adult residential care facility that serves individuals with traumatic brain injury and mental illness. DRO met with the facility director and owner to go over the questionnaire about their facility and covid-19 protocols. DRO took a virtual tour of the home and noted items of concern related to safety issues; cords hanging down, dirty bath mats, obstructions in doorways. Overall, residents reported positive experience living there and had no concerns. The facility responded in a timely manner to follow-up letter and sent pictures with the corrections that they made.   B. Abuse & Neglect Investigations - The client's mother contacted DRO when her son died in prison under suspicious circumstances. DRO reviewed records, including third-party investigative records, video, and the Coroner's Report. DRO also conducted numerous meetings with Ohio Department of Rehabilitation and Corrections to provide access authority information and to advocate for the client. DRO also provided the client's mother with an attorney referral. As a result of this case, DRO uncovered a systemic issue at the prison and continues to work with ODRC to remedy the concern identified.    C. Redress barriers to mental health care caused by COVID-19 in jails and prisons - After receiving reports of inadequate health care at one of Ohio's largest jails, DRO launched a 20-month investigation into the jail's practices and services. This jail located in one of Ohio's largest urban cities holds a large number of racial minorities. Over the course of the investigation, DRO conducted interviews with over 160 incarcerated individuals, reviewed numerous records, conducted multiple site visits, and met several times with jail officials. The results of DRO's investigation culminated in a public report issued in January 2021 that detailed key findings, including: a lack of access to adequate medical care; a lack of access to meaningful mental health care; staff shortages and a culture of misconduct and abuse; and an inaccessible facility. DRO also found that the jail has not met several obligations under Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act. Many of the issues described in the report, including those related to medical and mental health care and the physical facility, may be the result of the jail's failure to meet Title II requirements. Throughout the investigation, DRO has advocated with jail officials to make widespread, systemic changes in the facility. While the jail has made some improvements in the areas of healthcare, DRO continues to explore strategic approaches to the issues, including focusing on improving preventive practices such as diversion programs and increases in community supports to reduce levels of incarceration altogether.  PAVA: A. Monitor a Variety of Facilities and Other Regulated Entities - 1. DRO completed a virtual monitoring at a state-operated developmental center. The purpose of the visit was to ensure that the DC is providing rights education and protection, with a focus on voting rights. A virtual tour was completed on one of their cohort units and DRO met with facility administration. Interviews were completed with residents, who had positive things to say about their stay at the DC. DRO continued to work with the facility to provide ongoing information on residents' voting rights.  2. DRO completed a virtual monitoring visit of a state-operated psychiatric hospital to monitor compliance with health and safety obligations and to provide information to the residents about their rights on a variety of topics, including voting rights. DRO met with facility leadership and residents regarding the quality of care provided. DRO provided information to the residents about the P&A system and voting. DRO did not have concerns about the care provided to the residents at this psychiatric hospital. |
| OH | PAVA: A. Targeted voting outreach - Prior to the November 2020 presidential election, DRO conducted state-wide outreach to educate people with disabilities on their voting rights. DRO employees were divided in teams with each team responsible for certain categories of facilities (e.g. residential treatment centers, psychiatric hospitals, DD facilities, and nursing facilities). DRO created written materials that were provided in advance to the residents of the facilities and DRO conducted each presentation virtually in compliance with COVID-19 guidance. Each outreach team also recorded presentations that were then sent to facilities who did not have the technology to support a virtual presentation. DRO also provided time to each facility so that residents could call and speak privately with DRO staff if they had questions. DRO offered a survey to the facilities after each presentation and received overwhelmingly positive feedback on the outreach project.  B. Systemic and individual voting advocacy - 1. Client was unexpectedly hospitalized after the statutory deadline to request an absentee ballot. Disability Rights Ohio worked with hospital staff to submit an absentee ballot request to the county board of elections on client's behalf.  2. The client had stage 4 cancer and could not stand in the long lines at her polling location. She contacted DRO for assistance with curbside voting. DRO provided information on curbside voting, reasonable accommodations, and offered to reach out to board of elections for client. The client went to the polls and reported that she was able to vote curbside without issue. The client was grateful to DRO for the information.  3. DRO conducted targeted outreach to individuals in public and private psychiatric facilities on voting rights. The purpose of the outreach was to provide information to individuals and hospital staff about the voting rights of people who are unexpectedly hospitalized just before or on Election Day. DRO also created materials to be distributed to hospital patients and assisted hospital staff in creating plans to help unexpectedly hospitalized patients vote on Election Day.  4. DRO staff participated in a panel with advocates from the Ohio Voter Rights Coalition at the League of Women Voters Bicentennial conference. The training focused on the rights of voters with disabilities and tips for how to advocate for them.  C. Voter hotline for November 2020 general election - We operated a voter hotline for the November 2020 general election. We received a number of calls from people in psychiatric hospitals who needed to use a special process that requires personal delivery of their ballots by county elections officials or other accommodations. This has been a recurring issue in Ohio, as many of these voters need DRO’s advocacy to ensure the process works properly, especially for those hospitalized outside of their county of residence. We were able to advocate for four voters to get their ballots on Election Day. Other voters, unfortunately, did not ultimately receive their ballots, either because of failures in the system or late submission of the ballot request or because they were not admitted to the hospital within the statutory time frame. This advocacy will inform our future advocacy with the Ohio Secretary of Ohio to ensure voters in hospitals have equal access to cast a ballot. We also provided information and guidance through our hotline to six people who wanted information on how to vote curbside outside of their polling location. This was a popular accommodation, as many people voting in person on Election Day were nevertheless fearful of voting indoors because of the risks of the COVID-19 pandemic.  D. Evaluate impact of COVID-19 on the electoral process - We are finalizing a public report describing the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on access to the electoral system for voters with disabilities. The Ohio Secretary of State and county boards of elections implemented new measures to accommodate voters during the state of emergency, but challenges—many of them are longstanding and precede the pandemic—remain. Our report is based on our work on individual requests for advocacy, advice, or information, both through our hotline on Election Day and throughout the fiscal year; our systemic advocacy on a number of issues to expand opportunities for voters with disabilities and to ensure equal access; and other collaborations with other voting rights groups in Ohio. Additionally, DRO's outreach to voters in a number of settings helped us learn about various obstacles individuals face.  Our report is focused on four major area where systemic barriers exist—people unexpectedly hospitalized before Election Day, voters in nursing facilities and other institutional settings, voters who need to vote curbside, and voters with vision impairments who need to use the remote absentee ballot marking tool-- and includes recommendations for change in these systems. We plan to engage with the Ohio Secretary of State and also the county boards of elections first. |
| OK | ODLC’s 2021 PAVA work continues to include efforts to make our election process safe and accessible during the COVID-19 Pandemic. Even in light of the continuing COVID-19 Pandemic, the Oklahoma legislature chose to end the special provision put in place in 2020 and reinstated the requirement for absentee ballots to be notarized. ODLC conducted a public awareness campaign to ensure voters were aware of the return of the notarization requirement. ODLC also used our social media and website to offer notarization services through both our Tulsa and Oklahoma City offices. We continued to publicize our Voter Hotline as a resource for information on changing voter requirements. |
| PR | PAVA advocates worked hard to solve the controversies in the electoral process. As part of the process PAVA had to ask for Court help to achieve accessibility for a blind elector of Bayamon Municipality. The case was filled by a blind elector in Bayamon that requested Braille as an option to vote in General Election. After requesting an injunction in the court, PAVA client received Braille in his Polling Place in Bayamon.  Another case that we received, was about accessibility in PIB of Caguas Municipality. This case was solved in October 2020 before General Election. PIB in Caguas with the help of Caguas Municipality agree to use a nearest parking lot. Also, as a special accommodation PAVA advocates agree with PIB staff to create a temporary space for disabled in front of the sidewalk of the location.   The third case was about registration process of a young 18-year-old lady with problems in her immune system that denies her to move out of her house. Due Covid 19, registration officials initially deny the registration process, fortunately, with PAVA advocate the elector register and vote. After General Elections we confirmed that she can vote with Advance Vote Option (Vote by Mail).  The fourth case was about registration process of a disabled of 63-year-old with obesity problems. He wanted to register to vote but he was unable to move to the Permanent Inscription Board (PIB) due obesity problems. He asked PAVA assist to make the registration process. After several procedures with Permanent Inscription Board (PIB), including calls, letters and meetings, PIB officials agree to register with his Real ID, that was also a result of PAVA advocate’s help. With PAVA advocacy the client can cast his vote independently in Early Voting mode, Vote at Home. |
| PR | Most of the technical assistance provided by PAVA advocates, were to SEC staff, including SEC Presidency, Political Parties Commissioners, Advance and Absentee Board officials, Education and Training Officials and Press Release Officials. PAVA advocates gave technical assistance in different issues: 1. Vote by Phone 2. Braille templates 3. Polling Place Accessibility 4. PIB Accessibility 5. PIB obligated to compliance with Act 297 of 2018 (express line for persons with disabilities) 6. Education and Training election officials 7. Advance and Absentee Vote for Electors with Disabilities, including new alternatives to deal with COVID Pandemic 8. Curb-side Voting 9. Vote by Mail 10. Vote in Hospital 11. Vote at Home Technical assistances to SEC officials improve compliance with our Objective of having an accessible, secretly and independently electoral process. |
| PR | This fiscal year we offered information and referral services to 94 individuals with disabilities to individuals about their rights. The majority we’re received near the General Election held on November and the Special Election called Act to Create a Congressional Delegation of Puerto Rico held on May 16, 2021. Electors with disabilities ask information about the following topics: 1. Polling Places accessibilities 2. Registrations issues 3. Vote by Phone information 4. Advance and Absentee Voting   On October 31, 2020, PAVA Advocates, create a hot line (787) 945-2116 to provide last minute information for disabled electors prior General Elections. As a results of this effort PAVA Advocates gave I/R services to 65 individuals. The majority ask information of: 1. Polling Places location 2. Advance Vote complaints like, that the Vote by Mail did not arrive, 3. Complaints of Vote at Home, that the officials did not arrive to collect the vote 4. Information about advance vote in polling places (October 31, 2021) for certain persons including persons with disabilities 5. Long lines 6. Failure in electronic voting equipment’s   Example of I/R On September 29, 2020, a client with disabilities call Puerto Rico P&A, to ask for information about Vote in Hospitals. She was worried, because she was in the hospital and wants to cast her vote. PAVA Advocates oriented her about Early Voting Options including Vote in Hospitals. If she stays in the hospital in General Election, she needs to ask the service to the nurse and polling workers will complete the process. If she is out of the Hospital but have problems to arrives to her assigned polling place, she can ask for Early Voting option of Vote at Home or Vote by Mail. With all the information needed, the voter can decide the option of early voting in the next Election Process.  The performance measure of this objective: People with disabilities are better able to participate fully in the electoral process, People with disabilities receiving information, technical assistance and referral services. With each information distributed, persons with disabilities increase their knowledge to achieves self-advocates.  \* Underserved/Unserved/Minorities Targeted? -Yes, we impact underserved minorities with some I/R services provides to individuals with disabilities, which know us by the Radio Program, media efforts and the implementation of a hot line. |
| PR | As part of our Strategic Plan for the main election process, the General Elections, held in November 2020, PAVA advocates seek to have accessible polling places. PAVA Advocates, in Election year, selected a sample of polling places and inspected them to verify their accessibility and compliance with HAVA. In each monitory we can check physical accessibility, and the compliance of Section 301-3-b of HAVA, in Puerto Rico Vote by Phone equipment. These ocular inspections give us also the opportunity to educate the facilities employees, about PAVA provisions and accessibility awareness. In each polling place inspected, PAVA’s advocates recommends to the persons in charge of the facility, an Accessible Voting Center with an accessible route. To be an Accessible Voting Center, it must have a reserved parking for persons with disabilities. This parking must be next to the accessible entrance of the polling place. All the paths must be full accessible, in order to give independence for voters with disabilities in the whole process.  After each ocular inspection, if PAVA Advocates find any accessibility problem, we sent a writing report to SEC. In these reports for example, if PAVA advocates found a step in the entrance, we inform to SEC, so they can provide portable ramps.  The performance measure of this objective: Public and private places/services made more accessible. PAVA inspected surveying polling places to monitor any failure in the electoral process. In General Election and the Special election on May 2021, PAVA advocates performed 69 ocular inspections to polling places. This activity helps to determinate if the facility is the correct one for next election process, in terms of physical accessibility. If the polling place is accessible, electors with disabilities are better able to participate fully in the electoral process.  Polling Places visited in the fiscal year 2021 by PAVA Advocates:  Early Voting October 31, 2020 1. Fine Arts School in Humacao Municipality 2. Florencia García School in Las Piedras Municipality  3. Miguel Such School in San Juan Municipality 4. Meraldo Carazo School in Trujillo Alto Municipality  General Elections November 3, 2020 1. November 3, 2020 - Agapito Flores School 2. November 3, 2020 - Multiples Services Center in Punta Santiago 3. November 3, 2020 - Victor Rincón School 4. November 3, 2020 - Carmen Pilar Santos School 5. November 3, 2020 - Fine Arts School in Humacao 6. November 3, 2020 - Ana Roque School 7. November 3, 2020 - Florencio García School 8. November 3, 2020 - Jose Celso Alegría School 9. November 3, 2020 - Francisco Felice School 10. November 3, 2020 - Angel Sandin School 11. November 3, 2020 - Villa Capri School 12. November 3, 2020 - Isaac Rosario School 13. November 3, 2020 - Basilio Millán School 14. November 3, 2020 - Agustin Stahl School 15. November 3, 2020 - Jose Robles Otero School 16. November 3, 2020 - Violanta Jimenez School 17. November 3, 2020 - Dr. Modesto Rivera School 18. November 3, 2020 - Luz América Calderón School 19. November 3, 2020 - Reverendo Felix Castro School 20. November 3, 2020 - Julia de Burgos School 21. November 3, 2020 - Luis Muñoz Rivera School (Hatillo) 22. November 3, 2020 - Luis Muñoz Rivera School (Quebradillas) 23. November 3, 2020 - Padre Anibal Reyes School  24. November 3, 2020 - Ramon Avila School 25. November 3, 2020 - Timoteo Delgado School 26. November 3, 2020 - Honorio Hernández School 27. November 3, 2020 - Lorenzo Coballes Gandía School 28. November 3, 2020 - Ramon Saavedra School 29. November 3, 2020 - Juan Alejo de Arizmendi School 30. November 3, 2020 - Head Start in Charcas 31. November 3, 2020 - Eladio Tirado School 32. November 3, 2020 - Juana Rosario Carrero School 33. November 3, 2020 - Martin Hernández School 34. November 3, 2020 - Lydia Meléndez School 35. November 3, 2020 - Anselmo Villarubia School 36. November 3, 2020 - Reverendo Padre Pablo Gutierrez School 37. November 3, 2020 - Rafael Milán Padró Park 38. November 3, 2020 - José Witito García School 39. November 3, 2020 - Luis Negrón López School 40. November 3, 2020 - Blanca Malaret School 41. November 3, 2020 - Comunal Center in San Isidro 42. November 3, 2020 - Catalina Morales School 43. November 3, 2020 - Manuel González Melo School 44. November 3, 2020 - Juan Ruiz Pedroza School 45. November 3, 2020 - Maestro Gandía School 46. November 3, 2020 - Manuel García Pérez School 47. November 3, 2020 - Comunal Center in Jaguey 48. November 3, 2020 - José De Diego School  49. November 3, 2020 - Ana M. Javariz School 50. November 3, 2020 - Benito Cerezo Vázquez School 51. November 3, 2020 - Esther Feliciano Mendoza School 52. November 3, 2020 -Juan Suarez Peregrina School 53. November 3, 2020 - Conchita Igartua School  54. November 3, 2020 - School Dr. Pila School  55. November 3, 2020 - Ramon Marín School  56. November 3, 2020 - Andrés Grillazca School  Special Election May 2021 1. May 7, 2021 - Jose Calzada Ferrer School 2. May 7, 2021 - Angel P. Millán School 3. May 7, 2021 - Jesus T. Pinero School 4. May 7, 2021 - Angel Prisco Fuentes School 5. May 16, 2021 - Mariano Abril School 6. May 16, 2021 - Lino Padro School 7. May 16, 2021 - Meraldo Carazo School 8. May 16, 2021 - José de Diego Ecologic School 9. May 16, 2021 - Rafael Hernández School   PAVA Advocates performs 69 inspections to 69 polling places across Puerto Rico. The purpose was to verify accessibility in the polling places and verify the availability of Vote by Phone equipment as an alternative to comply with HAVA Section 301-3-b. Unfortunately, of the 69 polling places, just two of them have Vote by Phone equipment, properly installed and ready for use. PAVA Advocates helps polling workers in the other 67 polling places to install the Vote by Phone equipment’s. This finding was mentioned to SEC Presidency, and we ask for solutions, in June 2021 meeting with SEC President. The President establish that the problem was that political parties don’t educate their polling workers. PAVA have been available for political parties to help them in education efforts toward polling workers.  \*Underserved/Unserved/Minorities Targeted? X Yes, In each monitory we impacted underserved communities, all voters of the polling place are impact by this objective. |
| PR | The Permanent Inscriptions Boards (PIB’s) are the place where the voters go to make all the registration process. This is the place where persons with disabilities come to request accessible voting, in the Accessible Voting College (AVC). For this reason, it should be accessible of any physical barrier.  After the economic crisis in PR, to reduce budget expenses, SEC established a plan to reduce the number of PIB’s. Some of the PIB’s were consolidated, others are moving to state facilities. In FY 2020 PAVA Advocates inspected 15 Permanent Inscriptions Boards (PIB’s), before November General Elections. On October 2020, PAVA Advocates inspected 3 additional locations in Caguas, Arecibo and Toa Baja Municipalities in order to eliminate the any physical barrier. PIB´s are the physical locations to register to vote. In each Permanent Inscription Board visited, we orientated inscription officials about accessibility and equal treatment of persons with disabilities in the electoral environment.  The performance measure of this objective: Registering people with disabilities to vote, Public and private places/services made more accessible and People with disabilities are better able to participate fully in the electoral process. If each PIB´s is accessible, persons with disabilities will have the opportunity to register in the election and further participates in the electoral process. With these Projects People with disabilities are better able to participate fully in the electoral process.  \*Underserved/Unserved/Minorities Targeted? X Yes  The PIB´s serves all the voters with disabilities, including persons with disabilities with lower poverty levels. These persons need to make the registration process, to ask for the Accessible Voting Center, and to cast their vote in the polling place.  \*\*Total estimated number of electors with disabilities possible impacted by this Objective: 23,095. Registering people with disabilities to vote. 1. Electors who voted in November General Elections in Caguas Municipality: 47,081 \* 0.216 (21.6%) = 10,170  Estimated electors with disabilities in Caguas – 10,170 2. Electors who voted in in November General Elections in Toa Baja Municipality: 26,624 \* 0.216 (21.6%) = 5,751  Estimated electors with disabilities in Toa Baja – 5,751 3. Electors who voted in in November General Elections in Arecibo Municipality: 33,211 \* 0.216 (21.6%) = 7,174  Estimated electors with disabilities in Arecibo – 7,174  \*21.6% of persons with disabilities according to the Census 2019 estimates. |
| PR | As we established in the objective, compliance depends on the SEC, if it selected the new Integrated Service Centers. At the time of writing this report, the only one that was named as the Integrated Services Center is in Las Marías Municipality located in the central region of Puerto Rico. We don't know if this one will continue to be part of the new Integrated Services Center according to the relocation process expressed in the New Electoral Law of 2020. Despite that, we inspect it and verify that this facility meets the accessibility requirements for voters with disabilities. Because we had concerns about the location of these new Integrated Service Centers, during the fiscal year after the General Election, PAVA held several meetings with SEC officials to inquire about those Integrated Service Centers. We were told that the Commission is working hard to comply with the order of the law, of having selected before the summer of 2022. We expect the facilities to be selected by the summer of 2022, and the goal will be rescheduled for the next fiscal year.  \*Underserved/Unserved/Minorities Targeted? X Yes -In each monitory we served underserved minorities, all Integrated Services Center served all electors. |
| PR | Due the COVID 19 Pandemic PAVA, had to innovate to educate our main target, electors with disabilities, and polling workers. On August 19, 2020, PAVA begins a radio program named Accessible Vote 2020 that was aired in WIPR 940AM all Wednesday at 2pm thru 3pm until General Elections. All media efforts will be described in 3.3 Objective.  On October 29, 2021, PAVA Coordinator offered an Electoral Accessibility workshop to 6 professionals and volunteer staff and support from the Institute for Development Deficiencies, including relatives of voters with disabilities. In it, we discuss issues such as the HAVA Law, the PAVA Program, self-advocacy skills for electoral matters, electoral accessibility, among others. The evaluation of the workshop was excellent and questions about accessibility in the electoral process were answered.  On March 26, 2021, PAVA Advocates offers a training to nine (9) members of one of the biggest NGO in Puerto Rico who works directly with persons with developmental and intellectual disabilities, “Asociación Mayagüezana de Personas con Impedimentos”. Another training was offered by PAVA Advocates to 17 NUC University professionals. This kind of trainings gave information of PAVA provisions including special accommodations and early voting options for electors with disabilities.   The performance measure of this objective: People with disabilities trained to become active participants in making decisions that affect their lives, Education and training of people with disabilities on their voting rights. Despite the purposes of this priority is to educate persons with disabilities, we include general public, and who´s can spread the information among family or relatives with disabilities. In each training and outreach efforts, PAVA advocates promote the existing accessibility tools available in the electoral process.  Meanwhile, PAVA advocates worked directly with the SEC officials, including the President giving them the information about the rights of persons with disabilities in the voting process. As we established above, we innovate, using media in historical proportions to impact disabled communities, polling workers, unit coordinators, registration officials and general public. This Projects contributes to reach our goal of an accessible election, guarantee the secretly and independence for electors with disabilities in all the process.   With these Projects People with disabilities are better able to participate fully in the electoral process. |
| PR | PAVA advocates were ready to offer trainings with SEC officials to high school students with developmental and intellectual disabilities or other disabilities, about voting rights for disabled electors and information about the electoral process, but COVID 19 stop it. As part of our Strategic Plan, PAVA advocates want to target new voters. PAVA Advocates, jointed efforts with SEC Education and Training Office to educate high school students at special education schools. To empower high schools’ students and to encourage them to participate in the election process, PAVA advocates try to offer trainings and workshops. Unfortunately, COVID 19 begins in March 2020, we we’re ready to start the trainings in April, but we can’t do it. To disseminate information as we established above, we use media efforts to impacts students and educate them about: registration process, special accommodations available for electors with disabilities, voting rights, among other, to educate them with self-advocacy tools. |
| PR | PAVA had his own Radio Program As we reported las year, PAVA had his own Program named Accessible Vote 2020, where we offer information of the electoral process and HAVA Act. In terms of this report, we will inform the Radio Programs aired until September 30, 2021. The Program was held on October 7, 14, 21, and 28, 2020. We understand that this 4 Radio Programs can impact an estimate of 10,000 persons each Program. For a total of 40,000 individuals including persons with disabilities, and another general public. Using the estimate of 21.6%, the impact can be almost 8,640 persons with disabilities. As we established above, we produce our own Radio Program called Accessible Vote 2020, in this fiscal year we presented 4 shows, each one aired every Wednesday at 2pm thru 3pm in WIPR 940am. Each Program have different sections: 1. Accessible Rights for disabled electors – where we described and explained importance laws regarding the rights of electors with disabilities, including HAVA Act and ADA, among others. 2. Accessible Vote 2020 Answer your question – where we answer questions and doubts that we receive in the week. This was a direct advocacy for individuals who requested it. 3. History of Electoral Accessibility in Puerto Rico – where a blind advocate of our agency explains his experience and the advances of accessibility in the electoral process in Puerto Rico, since the beginning where blind and disabled can’t vote independently until HAVA and Vote by Phone. 4. Electoral School – where we explain the audience how to cast their vote and the electoral provisions provides by HAVA. We participate in another 17 radio interviews in different radio stations, including: 1. Six (6) in Radio WISA 1390 AM, Isabela, we an estimate audience of 10,000 in the west area (October 9, 20, 23, 30, 2020, November 2, 2020, and May 14, 2021). Using the estimate of 21.6%, the impact can be almost 12,960 persons with disabilities. 2. One (1) in WAPA Radio 680AM, we an estimate audience of 25,000 island wide (October 26, 2020) Using the estimate of 21.6%, the impact can be almost 5,400 persons with disabilities. 3. Four (4) in Radio Victoria 840AM, we an estimate audience of 10,000 in the east area. Using the estimate of 21.6%, the impact can be almost 8,640 persons with disabilities. Radio Victoria 840am.  4. Two (2) in Radio Oro 92.5FM, we an estimate audience of 50,000 island wide (October 24, 31, 2020) Using the estimate of 21.6%, the impact can be almost 21,600 persons with disabilities. 5. Two (2) in Radio WASA 850AM, Aguadilla, we an estimate audience of 10,000 in the west area (October 29, 2020, March 16, 2021) Using the estimate of 21.6%, the impact can be almost 4,320 persons with disabilities. 6. One (1) in Radio 810AM, the number 1 Program in prime time 6pm Fuego Cruzado we an estimate audience of 25,000 island wide (October 28, 2020) Using the estimate of 21.6%, the impact can be almost 5,400 persons with disabilities. 7. One (1) in Radio WABA 1330AM, Yauco, we an estimate audience of 10,000 in the south area (October 26, 2020) Using the estimate of 21.6%, the impact can be almost 2,160 persons with disabilities. In each interview performed, PAVA Coordinator covered the following: 1. HAVA Act and the importance of accessibility for electors with disabilities. 2. PAVA Program achievements 3. Accessibility options and alternatives for electors with disabilities, who want to participate in the voting process. 4. Special Accommodations in the Accessible Voting Center (AVC). 5. Sensitivity towards persons with disabilities in an electoral environment. 6. Information about the registration process. 7. Requirement of Vote by Phone to comply with HAVA section 301 (3b)  With outreach activities PAVA advocates spread the message of the Program, the importance of having an accessible electoral process, where electors with disabilities can cast their vote secretly and with independence. This year in Puerto Rico due COVID 19 Pandemic we must use media to disseminate PAVA provisions. We participated in 21 radio programs, impacting an estimate of 66,960 electors with disabilities.  We had been covered on written press including TV, Radio and Internet, 40 of them are reported with Internet links, the majority in Spanish, a few in English.   1. On October 28, 2020. General Elections. In order to educate electors with disabilities about voting accessibility and other important voting issues, PAVA Coordinator in collaboration with SER of Puerto Rico (Top Non-Profit organization of rehabilitation services) prepare and release a video that was aired in social media like Facebook  a) https://www.facebook.com/DPIPRinfo/posts/2434335250201803 2. On October 30, 2020, General Elections. PAVA Coordinator sent a press release announcing the creation of a hot-line for electors with disabilities.  a) https://www.primerahora.com/noticias/gobierno-politica/notas/crean-linea-para-que-personas-con-diversidad-funcional-denuncien-violaciones-durante-elecciones/ b) https://www.metro.pr/pr/noticias/2020/10/30/establecen-linea-denunciar-violaciones-derechos-electores-impedimentos.html c) https://www.foronoticioso.com/fn/la-defensoria-de-las-personas-con-impedimentos-implementa-el-787-945-2116-para-denunciar-violaciones-a-los-derechos-de-los-electores-con-impedimentos/ d) https://radioacromatica.com/index.php/2020/10/30/la-defensoria-de-las-personas-con-impedimentos-implementa-el-787-945-2116-para-denunciar-violaciones-a-los-derechos-de-los-electores-con-impedimentos/ 3. On October 31, 2020. General Elections. In a press conference PAVA Coordinator denounce publicly possible violations of accessibility in the electoral process, specifically about the elimination of Braille templates and Vote by Phone option to compliance with HAVA Section 301-3b. a) https://diariodepuertorico.com/2020/10/31/alegan-cee-incumple-con-derechos-para-personas-con-impedimentos-en-proceso-electoral/ b) https://www.elnuevodia.com/noticias/politica/notas/denuncian-fallas-de-acceso-a-electores-con-diversidad-funcional/ c) https://www.foronoticioso.com/fn/denuncian-falla-la-cee-en-proveer-acceso-al-voto-por-telefono-y-papeletas-en-braille-a-las-personas-con-impedimentos/ d) https://www.elforodepuertorico.com/alegan-cee-incumple-con-derechos-para-personas-con-impedimentos-en-proceso-electoral/ e) https://newstral.com/es/article/es/1163144998/alegan-cee-incumple-con-derechos-para-personas-con-impedimentos-en-proceso-electoral f) https://www.telemundopr.com/noticias/puerto-rico/denuncian-cee-falla-en-proveer-accesos-a-las-personas-con-impedimentos/2144972/?amp g) https://www.notiuno.com/elecciones\_2020/alegan-cee-incumple-con-derechos-para-personas-con-impedimentos-en-proceso-electoral/article\_bbf1dc44-1bba-11eb-94c7-fb98491d76e6.html h) https://radioisla.tv/alegan-cee-incumple-con-derechos-para-personas-con-impedimentos-en-proceso-electoral1/ i) https://www.metro.pr/pr/noticias/2020/10/31/denuncian-falta-papeletas-braille-voto-adelantado-personas-ciegas.html j) https://lavozdigitalpr.com/2020/10/31/implementan-linea-telefonica-para-denunciar-violaciones-a-los-derechos-de-electores-con-impedimentos/ k) https://www.tunoticiapr.com/noticias-locales/468115420--Alegan-CEE-incumple-con-derechos-para-personas-con-impedimentos-en-proceso-electoral- l) https://www.noticel.com/elecciones/top-stories/20201101/activan-medidas-correctivas-en-la-cee/  4. On November 2, 2020, General Elections. PAVA Coordinator held a press conference in SEC Operations Center, covered by all main TV stations in Puerto Rico, Univision, Telemundo, WIPR. In the press conference we denounce lack of Vote by Phone in last electoral process and also the publication of the agreement of PAVA and SEC that obligated poll workers to open and installed Vote by Phone in each polling place at the beginning of the Election Day, with the purpose to show availability of the System. November 2, 2020  a) https://www.elnuevodia.com/noticias/politica/notas/denuncian-violaciones-a-los-derechos-de-las-personas-con-discapacidad-durante-la-votacion/ b) https://www.elnuevodia.com/noticias/politica/notas/surge-acuerdo-para-que-este-disponible-el-voto-por-telefono/ c) https://www.primerahora.com/noticias/puerto-rico/notas/vigilantes-ante-escollos-con-acceso-para-electores-con-discapacidades/ d) https://www.hechoencalifornia1010.com/denuncian-violaciones-a-los-derechos-de-las-personas-con-discapacidad-durante-la-votacion/ e) https://españamadrid.com/es/surge-acuerdo-para-que-este-disponible-el-voto-por-telefono-147909.html f) https://www.metro.pr/pr/noticias/2020/11/02/cee-se-expone-a-serias-demandas-federales-denuncia-la-defensoria-personas-con-impedimentos.html g) https://www.periodicolaperla.com/defensoria-de-personas-con-impedimentos-denuncia-a-la-cee-por-incumplir/ h) https://www.noticel.com/ahora/elecciones/top-stories/20201102/denuncian-problemas-en-votacion-de-personas-con-impedimentos/ i) https://www.elvocero.com/politica/para-largo-la-jornada-electoral/article\_f13a9cf4-1d88-11eb-be8b-2397e2688911.html j) https://www.pressreader.com/puerto-rico/el-nuevo-dia1/20201103/281638192716701   Another written press effort that we can inform was a report in a newspaper “La Isla Oeste” named Accessible Vote for Persons with Disabilities. La Isla Oeste is a west region newspaper with an estimate of 72,490 subscribers. Using the estimate of 21.6%, the impact can be almost 15,658 persons with disabilities.  Special Election 1. On May 16, 2021, due the Special Election to create the Congressional Delegation of Puerto Rico, PAVA Coordinator sent press releases denouncing the same problems of General Elections, lack of Braille Templates and Vote by Phone a) https://www.primerahora.com/noticias/gobierno-politica/notas/advierten-que-faltaria-accesibilidad-para-personas-con-diversidad-funcional-en-la-eleccion-del-domingo/ b) https://www.metro.pr/pr/noticias/2021/05/14/alertan-sobre-posible-falta-de-accesibilidad-a-personas-con-impedimentos-en-eleccion-especial.html c) https://radioisla.tv/advierten-posible-falta-de-accesibilidad-para-las-personas-con-impedimentos-en-evento-electoral-del-domingo/ d) https://teleonce.com/noticias/politica/advierten-posible-falta-de-accesibilidad-para-las-personas-con-impedimentos-en-eleccion-del-domingo/ e) https://www.elvocero.com/gobierno/alertan-sobre-posible-falta-de-accesibilidad-para-personas-con-impedimentos-en-evento-electoral/article\_4a702d36-b585-11eb-b0d4-638d8bcb1eb2.html f) https://laislaoeste.com/denuncian-falta-de-accesibilidad-en-evento-electoral-del-domingo/ g) https://www.univision.com/local/puerto-rico-wlii/politica-puerto-rico/posible-falta-accesibilidad-personas-con-impedimentos-elecciones-cabilderos-estadidad h) https://www.metro.pr/pr/noticias/2021/05/16/electores-ciegos-no-contaran-con-voto-por-telefono-en-el-evento-electoral-de-hoy.html i) https://esnoticiapr.com/ciegos-no-podran-votar-por-telefono/ j) https://precision.com.do/en-alerta-para-defender-derechos-de-impedidos-en-eleccion-para-escoger-delegados-por-la-estadidad/ k) https://www.noticel.com/ahora/top-stories/20210527/imperativo-tener-mayor-accesibilidad-para-votantes-con-impedimentos/ l) https://www.elvocero.com/gobierno/debate-entre-la-experiencia-y-el-write-in/article\_36cf8bd8-b6ba-11eb-816f-fb13b00346b2.html  Example of news release with quotes of PAVA Coordinator related with Early Voting in Polling Places:  PAVA denounce lack of access to Vote by Telephone and shortage of ballots in Braille  PAVA’s Director, Gabriel Esterrich, denounced the breach of SEC on Saturday Early Voting, after monitoring the polling stations of the following municipalities of San Juan, Trujillo Alto, Sabana Grande, Isabela, Aguada, Moca and Las Piedras. In these monitoring it was evidenced that in the early voting colleges the installation of the Vote by Phone equipment was not found, neither template in Braille for blind electors.  “Only the magnifying glass was shown, and when requested. We have also observed accessibility issues, as well as a lack of accessible parking and voting locations. We are reporting this breach of the State Elections Commission (SEC) with the federal law 'Help America Vote Act', and we are informing the media so that people with disabilities can claim their rights”, "Tuesday's process has to be accessible to all citizens and our mission is to scrupulously comply with state and federal laws and regulations." PAVA Coordinator, Gabriel Esterrich, reported the need to comply with the 'Help America Voting Act' of 2002.  "This Act provides for accessible, secret and independent voting for voters with disabilities. There is no room for mistakes, the process must be fully accessible for voters with disabilities," said Esterrich. In the follow-up carried out in the primaries last August by our staff, "the lack of the 'Vote by Phone' system was found, which is of great importance in the process." We confirmed that they sent the briefcase with the equipment to the Permanent Registration Boards (PIB's), when it should have been sent to the electoral colleges”, said Esterrich.  Last Minute Outreach for General Elections:  On October 27, 2020, PAVA Coordinator sent a press release to general media to announce the practice of Vote by Phone. This practice encourages electors to participate in the process using this special accommodation in compliance with HAVA.  On October 31, 2020, PAVA Advocates performed monitories to Polling Places in the Early Voting Event, PAVA Coordinator denounced the lack of compliance of HAVA; in all polling places samples advocates don’t find Vote by Phone option for disabled community.   In social media like Facebook, all TV, radio and written press reports were copied to add outreach of PAVA efforts. Example of Facebook outreach efforts:  On March 25, 2021, PAVA Legal Advisor sent a promotion on the Advance Vote deadline of March 27, 2021, for the May 16 presidential delegation event. It was disclosed on the agency's social networks including Facebook. This type of promotion is important so that voters with disabilities have the information of deadlines and can vote and report if they need any accommodation to vote.  We also have a web page www.dpi.pr.gov where we have information about PAVA and had 19,644 hits this fiscal year. As we established above due COVID 19, PAVA advocates, used media instead of services fairs and paper brochures used in previous years, to disseminate the information. In each outreach efforts, PAVA advocates explained the importance of giving the specials accommodations to persons with intellectual developmental disabilities and persons with other disabilities in the electoral process, PAVA provisions, HAVA and ADA Act, among other information to developed self-advocacy skills. The purpose of the different interventions in the media is to educate future voters about:  1. Rights of persons with disabilities,  2. The voting process,  3. The accessibility of the polling places and the AVC 4. The alternative Vote at Home, where a designated Board representing the political parties let persons with mobility disabilities cast the vote in their home, dates before the Election Day 5. The alternative Vote in Hospital, where SEC designated a Board representing the political parties let people hospitalized cast their vote in the hospital’s room. 6. The alternative of Vote by Phone System. The performance measure of this objective: Education and training of people with disabilities on their voting rights. The importance of this priority is to educate general public, who´s can spread the information among family or relatives with disabilities. This objective impacts all electors with disabilities. When you used almost all the media in several times, some of them in prime time, you can estimate that all electors with disabilities receive the information. The estimate based in the Census 2019 is 21.6%, Electors that vote in General Elections 2020 was 1,284,630 \* 0.216% = 277,480 |
| PR | PAVA Advocates performs 7 workshops to improve transportation services to disabled electors that need transportations services for registration and voting.  1. On September 16, 2021, from 8am to 12pm and 1pm to 4pm, we carried out two accessible transportation trainings where 14 and 8 drivers respectively from the Metropolitan Bus Authority participated. All said they were pleased with the workshop. They learned with empathy by performing the exercise of being with equipment such as wheelchairs, walkers, canes, waiting for the bus. The effect of not going down the ramp, not putting on seat belts, and not leaving people with disabilities on a stable and safe surface was shown.  2. On September 30, 2021, from 8am to 12pm and 1pm to 4pm, we carried out two accessible transportation trainings where 13 and 8 drivers respectively from the Metropolitan Bus Authority participated. All said they were pleased with the workshop. They learned with empathy by performing the exercise of being with equipment such as wheelchairs, walkers, canes, waiting for the bus. The effect of not going down the ramp, not putting on seat belts, and not leaving people with disabilities on a stable and safe surface was shown.  3. On August 12, 2021, using Teams platforms, PAVA Advocates gave accessible transportation training to 21 drivers from Municipality of Aguada. 4. On May 7, 2021, PAVA Advocates using the Teams platform held an Accessible Transportation workshop for 16 drivers of the Transportation System of the Municipality of Caguas. Questions about transportation of people and voters with disabilities were answered. 5. As part of the plan with Cidra Municipality, to improve services of transportation for persons with disabilities, PAIR Advocates gave a training of Accessible Transportation to 32 employees of the Municipality, including drivers of the Municipal Transportation System. Twelve of them identified themselves as persons with disabilities. |
| PR | PAVA advocates provided recommendations and planning strategies for the electoral process that take into consideration the special needs of people with disabilities, having telephone and virtual meetings with policy makers (due Covid 19 Pandemic). As we educated Policy Makers, we make system advocacy on behalf electors with disabilities. Activities to Engage Policy-makers:  1. As we mentioned previously, PAVA created a Radio Program, called Accessible Vote 2020. This Program encouraged the participation of the candidates for governor in the Program. As part of efforts to engage candidates, PAVA Defenders conducted several phone calls and online meetings with candidate staff. The communications were made on October 6, 7, 8, 16 and 20. The result was the participation of Eliezer Molina, an independent candidate in our Radio Program. The other candidates, due calendar reasons, could not participate in the Program; our communication efforts made it possible for all the candidates' staff to know the importance of the disabled community in the government's agenda.  2. On October 13, 2020, PAVA advocates and legal staff had a virtual meeting with the SEC President and the alternate President to seek solutions for blind voters, one of whom requested Braille templates as a special adaptation. Unfortunately, the result of this meeting was an impasse, and our Legal Staff had no alternative but to go to the Court, requesting an injunction appeal. Days before the General Election, the Judge announced that his decision favored the Braille option for our client.  3. On October 30, 2020, days before the General Election, PAVA Coordinator met with SEC President at the General Operations Center. At this meeting, the Director of the PAVA, reached the agreement of Voting by Telephone, the briefcase must be ready at the beginning of the General Elections early in the morning, giving the disabled the opportunity to use the System (Voting by Telephone) in compliance with article 301. -3-b of HAVA.  4. After the general election, the PAVA Advocates conducted a survey among callers to the hotline.  1. From February until May 2021, PAVA Coordinator, had several telephones individual meetings with the Electoral Commissioners of the Active Political Parties, New Progressive Party (NPP), Democratic Popular Parties (DPP), Citizen Victorious Movement (CVM) and the Independence Puerto Rican Party (IPP). In all meetings the purpose was to improve accessibility in the electoral process and to denounce the lack of compliance of HAVA Section 301-3-b A. On February 11 and 23, 2021, PAVA Coordinator have meetings with Electoral Commissioner Citizen Victorious Movement (CVM)  B. On February 21, 2021, and March 23, PAVA Coordinator have meetings with Electoral Commissioner of the Democratic Popular Parties (DPP)  C. On February 23 and on March 3, 2021, PAVA Coordinator have meetings with Electoral Commissioner of the Independence Puerto Rican Party (IPP). D. On March 16 and 25, 2021 PAVA Coordinator have meetings with Electoral Commissioner of the New Progressive Party (NPP).  2. On June 22, 2021, PAVA Coordinator and advocates, had a meeting with the President of the SEC, and with the Alternate President. At this meeting we discussed the following matters: A. The findings of the Monitoring carried out in both the 2020 Primary and the 2020 General Elections. B. We informed of the polling places we have visited that have barriers. C. SEC agreed that you would send us the Inspection Sheet used by the Local Commissioners for the certification of the Voting Centers. Then PAVA will check if it meets the requirements for accessibility. D. The designation of an SEC Liaison with our Office was agreed. E. The reactivation of the HAVA Advisory Board Committee was agreed.  3. As part of the agreements reached on June 2021 meeting with the President and Alternate President of the State Elections Commission, PAVA Advocates reviewed the Check Sheet used by Local Commissioners to certify polling places. PAVA Advocates, sent to SEC President Office, the document´s evaluation and offered recommendations to improve accessibility. The Office of the President of the SEC informed us in a written communication that they will accept them. This activity helps make voting centers more accessible to voters with disabilities in the future.  The main achievement was that with all these meetings finally in FY 2022, with our advocate efforts, SEC reactivate HAVA Advisory Committee, and their subcommittees and the first meeting will be in November 2021.   \*\*This objective impacts all electors with disabilities. When you advocate with the Commission, you advocate for all electors with disabilities. The estimate based in the Census 2019 is 21.6% of the Electors that vote in General Elections 2020 1,284,630 \* 0.216% = 277,480 |
| SC | The PAVA Coordinator visited three counties and advised on polling place accessibility. Two reports were written and shared with the counties and the state election commission. Many of the recommendations were adopted. |
| SC | PAVA Coordinator served as a liason between county election staff and the DOJ in questions about polling place accessibility, most often to remedy some part of the DOJ checklist that was unclear or seemed redundant. |
| SC | DRSC conducted the requisite meetings of the Disability Voting Coalition and presented them with opportunities to engage with PAVA programming. |
| SD | DRSD Staff advocated for voter registration to be included in IEP transition planning while participating in IEP Transition meetings. One student was of voting age and was provided with a voter registration form, information on how to vote, and disability voting rights.   DRSD PAVA Lead collaborated with Communication Services for the Deaf (CSD) to incorporate DRSD-created slides into a Power Point presentation on transition under IDEA. CSD staff utilized slides on disability voting rights and electoral participation when providing training to deaf students and special education teachers on transition. |
| SD | DRSD Staff participate in State HAVA board meetings and Board of Elections meetings ensuring the rights of individuals with disabilities are included in discussions related to the electoral process.   DRSD PAVA Lead worked with the Secretary of State's office to provide information to crisis shelters on how to assist individuals with absentee voting while maintaining victim’s safety.  DRSD staff provided proponent testimony during a Legislative hearing, allowing for individuals who have a protection order, or are receiving crisis shelter services, to have their names excluded from public inspection or copying of voter registration lists.   DRSD PAVA Lead collaborated with Communication Services for the Deaf (CSD) to incorporate DRSD created slides into a Power Point presentation on transition under IDEA. CSD staff utilized slides on disability voting rights and electoral participation when providing training to deaf students and special education teachers on transition.   DRSD PAVA continued to serve on the South Dakota State Independent Living Council (SILC). PAVA staff participated in quarterly SILC meetings to discuss the activities and services provided by the state’s two independent living service agencies. SILC participants ensure the services provided by the agencies are conducted as stated in the State Plan for Independent Living. PAVA staff also participates in two SILC committees, which focus on Advocacy/Interagency Collaboration and Assistive Technology/Home Modifications Adaptive Devices. PAVA staff ensure voting rights and election participation are included in discussions regarding independent living skills and transition services planning.   Intake staff asked all new callers if they were registered to vote. If callers indicated they were not, a voter registration packet would be offered and sent if requested. Voter registration packets included a South Dakota Voter Registration form, "Voting, Everything You Need to Know" DRSD voting brochure, voting rights wallet card, DRSD phone wallet, and PAVA Lead business card.   DRSD staff received a request for additional voting rights information from a community behavioral health hospital to be shared with individuals receiving services to replace depleted informational brochures provided from a previous outreach activity.   DRSD Partners in Policymaking (PIP) program provides continuing education classes for past PIP graduates during the final yearly session/graduation held in April. PAVA staff was scheduled to provide training on voting rights, registering to vote, and the importance of voting and participating in the electoral process by being an election worker during a continuing education session. PAVA staff was unable to provide this training because continuing education sessions were cancelled due to continued concerns regarding COVID-19. |
| SD | South Dakota Codified Law requires all election changes to be done legislatively. The South Dakota Board of Elections proposes election law changes through the Secretary of State's office to the legislature to be considered as bills. DRSD Executive Director and PAVA Lead met with the Secretary of State’s office and South Dakota Board of Elections to discuss concerns regarding the inaccessibility of South Dakota’s absentee ballots for individuals with print disabilities. A request was made by the board to provide information on how other states make their absentee ballots accessible for individuals with print disabilities. Information regarding other state’s incorporating individuals with disabilities under the UOCAVA system was shared with the Board of Elections. |
| SD | DRSD established Goal VII, Miscellaneous, for FY 2021 to strike a balance between its topical goal areas and the need to be able to efficiently record activities into the DAD system. Priority 7.2 is where DRSD recorded all non-case activity (projects) except for monitoring and investigations. Many of these activities are described elsewhere in this PPR, such as in the "Description of P&A Operations" and the "Collaborations" sections. The following are examples of activities under 7.2 that are not discussed in other sections of this PPR.  Education/Training  DRSD conducts numerous training activities throughout the year, many of which are multi-program efforts in order to combine expertise and offer well-developed education and training opportunities across our state. Some examples are as follows:  1) Disability Rights South Dakota’s Adult Team worked throughout the year to provide rights education and training to individuals being served at the South Dakota Developmental Center (SDDC) in Redfield, SD. These visits were largely virtual as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, until the middle of the year when changing safety guidelines allowed Advocates to visit the premises in-person. Education efforts covered various rights issues, such as abuse and neglect, community access, access to education, voting rights, guardianship issues, and employment. The training was provided via zoom and in-person utilizing a jeopardy-style trivia game, posing questions and expounding on answers with rights information and abuse and neglect prevention education. Various other tactile games and activities were utilized to engage participants in a dynamic way with the information being provided. The purpose of these efforts was to ensure access to the P&A and educate individuals on abuse, neglect, and rights advocacy.   2) The DRSD Operations Director gave a training presentation to attendees of the South Dakota Conference on Developmental Disabilities. Topics covered included Disability Rights South Dakota services and programs, individual rights, and guardianship issues. Educational materials were disseminated. Approximately 25 individuals attended the presentation, including disability professionals, individuals with disabilities, and their families.   3) Throughout the year, a Disability Rights South Dakota Advocate provided new hire training to staff at a Central South Dakota Community Support Provider. Education centered on Disability Rights South Dakota’s mission and the programs and services provided by the agency, and also addressed abuse, neglect, and rights violations.   4) For the 29th consecutive year, Disability Rights South Dakota provided a six-month self-advocacy training course for individuals with disabilities and their families, as well as their support staff and advocates. Partners in Policymaking is an annual extensive training program that teaches self-advocacy skills, legislative knowledge, and provides networking opportunities for individuals with disabilities and those who support them. Partners in Policymaking (PIP) also teaches its participants where and how to obtain services, focusing on education, community inclusion, housing, Social Security, and abuse and neglect. Participants learn about disability-centered history, specifically focusing on rights and person-first language and systemic change. 16 participants graduated in 2021, which was a smaller class than usual due to the Covid-19 pandemic. The community inclusion, development of skills, and the use of those skills will continue over the lifetime of the graduates. South Dakota’s Partners in Policymaking class was the ONLY class in the nation that met in-person for the training last year, with staff enforcing extensive safety measures and taking various precautions to keep attendees safe for this important training.  5) DRSD staff presented an hour-long training to inform attendees about the rights of individuals with disabilities when they present negative behaviors caused by those disabilities. The training focused on behaviors in daycare, school, and employment, and the protections for behaviors under the ADA, IDEA, and other employment laws. Staff informed attendees about individual rights under applicable laws and strategies that might help reduce negative behaviors in the future. Attendees left with a better understanding of protections for behaviors and the importance of addressing behaviors as they arise.  DRSD PADD staff conducted in-person training for Bridging South Dakota (built as a collaboration between SD Network Against Family Violence and Sexual Assault, and Communication Services for the Deaf) to provide information and assistance to individuals with disabilities, staff at crisis shelters, staff at victim services agencies, first responders, and disability services agency staff regarding the intersection of sexual assault/domestic violence and individuals with disabilities. As a result of the training, disability services agencies gained knowledge of Bridging South Dakota, victims services agencies, and how to work with an individual who discloses an assault. Crisis shelters gained knowledge of disability etiquette, accessibility issues, service animal education, and were taught strategies to work with individuals with disabilities who have experienced trauma.   There are four agencies which provide Conflict Free Case Management for individuals with Developmental Disabilities (DD) and Intellectual Disabilities (ID) in South Dakota. DRSD PADD staff conducted a mass email outreach to 18 Conflict Free Case Managers (CFCM) at all four facilities to ensure individuals with disabilities who are victims and survivors of sexual assault are aware of and able to access assistance from victim services agencies. Information was provided to CFCMs on Bridging South Dakota (BSD) regarding BSD Liaisons and the intersection of DD/ID and Sexual Assault services. As such, Conflict Free Case Managers gained knowledge of and information on victim services and programs.  PATBI staff presented information to directors of shelters for victims of intimate partner violence. The presentation was done via virtual platform and included information on the prevalence of traumatic brain injury in incidents of intimate partner violence. Information was also provided on the importance of screening for the presence of undiagnosed traumatic brain injuries. Being aware of this could impact on the type of services that are provided to the individual who is seeking assistance from the shelters. A Power Point presentation was used to provide information on what a traumatic brain injury is and the impact it can have on a person.   Other Systemic Activities  PADD, PAAT, PATBI, and PAVA staff served on several boards and committees that impact individuals with disabilities, their families, and those who support them. Many of these efforts are listed under the Collaborations section of this report. Some additional boards and committees are as follows: PADD participated on the Minnehaha County JDAI Partnership Committee, the Minnehaha County Facility Inspection Team, the Supporting Families Community of Practice, the Dyslexia Stakeholders Committee, and the Employment First Work Group. PADD and PATBI participated on the SD DOE Data Drill-Down Stakeholder Session. PADD, PAAT, and PATBI participated on the South Dakota Advisory Panel for Children with Disabilities and the Interagency Transition Council. PADD, PAAT, PATBI, and PAVA participated on the Disability Awareness and Accessibility Review Board, and the DRSD Legal Director serves on the State Bar of South Dakota CLE Committee, the State Bar of South Dakota Legal Services Committee, and the Dakota Plains Legal Services Board.   Some specific examples of boards and committees, and their impact on the communities we serve, are as follows: PADD staff served on the Lifespan Respite Care Coalition, an ongoing 3-year project which proposes to build an infrastructure for a sustainable, evidence-based lifespan respite care program accessible to caregivers. PADD, PAAT, and PATBI staff served on the South Dakota Advisory Panel for Children with Disabilities to provide input and direction to the South Dakota Department of Education on issues involving special education, specifically working to close the gap that exists between schools and families as a result of poor communication methods and practices between schools and parents of students with disabilities.  PATBI staff participated in a workgroup whose purpose was the creation of a traumatic brain injury Medicaid waiver supported by the State of South Dakota. The workgroup’s efforts involved planning and creating a survey that was sent out to professionals in the state who provide services to individuals who have suffered a traumatic brain injury. An additional survey for caregivers and individuals who have suffered a traumatic brain injury was also discussed. The group consisted of disability advocates, healthcare professionals, personal care professionals, family members, and individuals who have suffered a traumatic brain injury.   PATBI staff sat on the board of directors for the Brain Injury Alliance of South Dakota. In addition to assisting individuals who have suffered a traumatic brain injury, the primary focus of the BIASD was to provide input into the efforts taking place to create a Medicaid waiver in the state of South Dakota for people who have suffered a traumatic brain injury.  DRSD provided comments in support of proposed rule changes within the SD Department of Social Services which would allow for tele-health services in instances where such supports can be effectively provided. These supports had been implemented as a result of COVID precautions. The Department elected to make the option available by Rule because of their effectiveness and accessibility. DRSD similarly provided comments to the SD Department of Human Services regarding changes to be made to the HOPE Waiver.   DRSD PATBI staff participated in 9 systemic projects to PRTF facilities in the state. The purpose of the projects was to increase awareness regarding the benefits of screening for undiagnosed traumatic brain injuries in youth receiving services from the PRTF facility. If the possibility of an undiagnosed traumatic brain injury exists, then treatment programs can be created that take that possibility into consideration and as a result could become more effective and beneficial to the child who is receiving the services.   SDCL 12-19-9.1 requires South Dakota County Auditors, or their representative, to go into any nursing facility, assisted living center, or hospital which has multiple (5 or more) absentee ballot requests to conduct onsite absentee voting at the facility during general elections. To ensure safety of their residents during COVID-19 Pandemic, South Dakota nursing facilities stopped allowing individuals who were not staff to access their facilities. DRSD PAVA and PAIR programs collaborated calling nursing facilities to ensure residents were able to exercise their right to vote. DRSD staff provided information to nursing facility staff regarding conducting absentee voting and provided suggestions on ways a County Auditor could conduct absentee voting safely. DRSD staff contacted 103 facilities which fall under SDCL 12-19-9.1, determining upon follow-up that a total of 1,855 individuals were able to vote via absentee ballot. |
| VT | DRVT staff conducted 15 polling place accessibility surveys this fiscal year, discussed issues relating to accommodating, produced written report to the town with any ADA violations, and discussed findings with Town Clerk to educate on accessibility issues. The aforementioned DRVT work on polling place accessibility surveys and the collaboration with our SOS and town clerks are examples of the work DRVT did with Vermont and local voting officials. Regarding accessibility surveys, DRVT staff continued to work with local officials to identify effective remedies to inadequacies identified by the access surveys.  DRVT worked with the VT SOS office for a PAVA Focus Group project conducting focus groups involving individuals with disabilities to collect information regarding the voting experiences of individuals with disabilities and use that information to identify and address barriers to voting for people with disabilities throughout Vermont. DRVT staff had several email, telephone, and zoom consultations with SOS Elections Division staff prior to the August Primary Election and leading up the November General Election to help develop and disseminate accessible voting materials and remedy issues of concern regarding new voting processes as a result of COVID-19.  DRVT staff created and distributed a Non-Partisan Voter's Guide for People with Disabilities, providing information and education on voting rights, electoral processes, and candidates running for office to individuals with disabilities and the general public throughout Vermont. DRVT also collaborated with Vermont Department of Corrections to have our Voter’s Guide electronically downloaded on the tablets that prisoners use, so the Voter’s Guide was electronically distributed to every prisoner who had a tablet; this is the first time we have attempted this method of distribution within the prisons.  DRVT Senior Investigator collaborated with a University of Vermont Political Science student who was working on project of tracking incarcerated resident voting in Vermont for the 2020 general election. Discussed methods used in collecting voting data and provided student with more accurate data from DRVT on the number of prisoners we assisted with registering to vote and obtaining absentee ballots.  July 2021 DRVT Senior Investigator spoke with Staff Attorney of the Disability Rights D.C. office regarding DRVT’s HAVA work in the prisons, i.e., outreach, registration, and accommodations.  DRVT staff also attended trainings, including but not limited to:  1. The Leadership Conference” Facebook Live discussion, including NDRN and DRPA speakers regarding to barriers to the ballot facing voters with disabilities; 2. “Elections 2020: Wrap Up?” |
| WI | Litigation  Mark Jefferson and the Republican Party of Wisconsin v. Dane County, Wisconsin and Scott McDonnell in his official capacity as Dane County Clerk. 2020 AP 557-OA:  Intervened in original jurisdiction case to Supreme Court of Wisconsin regarding definition of indefinite confinement and its application to people with disabilities, particularly during COVID.   Democratic National Committee et., al., v. Marge Bostelmann et., al., 2020 CV 249: One of several plaintiffs in federal case requesting injunctive relief regarding accommodations in early and absentee voting rules to account for COVID problems and concerns for November 2020 election.   Priority 1: Prevent discrimination against people with IDD and other disabilities in rationing and other policies related to the COVID-19 pandemic. (PADD, PAAT, PATBI, PAVA)  State Disaster Medical Advisory Committee-Subcommittee on Vaccine Distribution: DRW represented the interests of people with IDD (and other disabilities) on this subcommittee which determined the order of priority for initial distribution of COVID-19 vaccine. The subcommittee met in open meeting via Zoom twice a week from October 2020 through Mid-January of 2021. In between meetings we reviewed data, available CDC and ACIP guidance, and proposals for vaccine distribution in other states. Our proposals for distribution were subject to public comment and the issue generated more than 5000 public comments. The DRW representative personally reviewed the 600-plus comments that related to which phase of distribution would include people with health conditions that placed them at greater risk for bad outcomes from COVID. This group was essentially the client group we were representing on the subcommittee. We were able to convince the subcommittee to prioritize one subgroup of this population-people who were enrolled in the state’s HCBS programs. This resulted in some 30,000+ people with IDD and 40,000+ people with physical disabilities (including TBI) getting access to vaccine months before the general public.   Case 1: Represented state DD Center resident with multiple severe developmental disabilities (including hypothermia) who was nonverbal, nonambulatory, and in need of total care in an informal request for an accommodation from a Hospital policy prohibiting visitors during COVID 19. Client was hospitalized for COVID-19, and was in need of a round-the-clock supporter while in the hospital because of a complete inability to communicate needs, level of pain, or discomfort, in ways that could be recognized by unfamiliar caregivers. Accommodation request was made under the ADA and Rehab Act in anticipation of possible litigation if it was denied. Hospital granted request and allowed client's mom/guardian to act as a supporter for her child while they were an inpatient at the hospital. The client's inability to communicate or use the call system due to disability were the major factors in the Hospital's decision to grant relief from the policy.  Case 2: Represented woman with mild IDD who was adamant that she wanted to be vaccinated against COVID against her guardians. She and her mother (with whom she lived) had both had COVID and she did not want to get it again. Co-guardians (ward’s siblings) were reluctant, and one was anti-vaccine. Spoke with and communicated in writing to guardians on their duty to seek appropriate preventative care for their ward regardless of their personal beliefs on COVID vaccination. Noted that failure to secure vaccine could be construed as medical neglect of ward and failure to implement the clear and rational preference of ward was contrary to ward’s best interest and grounds for removal. Guardians agreed to arrange for ward to be vaccinated and she was vaccinated.    Priority 2: Ensure students with disabilities are provided with a Free Appropriate Public Education during school closures and in the virtual learning environment (PADD, PAAT, PATBI)  COVID Fact Sheets: Created Facts Sheets with Frequently Asked Questions on 2 subjects: Masks in Schools, and Children with Disabilities in Schools During COVID-19. Collected FAQ's from advocates were receiving from clients; researched to answer them; and make recommendations. Sent fact sheets to parents who called DRW with questions about their child's special education rights during pandemic. Also posted them to our website.   Case Examples:  DRW assisted numerous families who struggled with pandemic protocols in getting special education for their children. These ranged from students who, due to their disabilities, were unable to wear masks in classrooms where they were required to students who were especially vulnerable who needed others to wear masks where they were not required. We helped students who were repeatedly sent home due to COVID protocol violations as an excuse to not have to address the students’ behavior issues.  We also helped students who were learning virtually but who had poor internet access and were being marked truant. We helped students get virtual education who were unable to attend in person due to their disabilities and we helped students obtain in person services when they could not benefit from virtual education. As indicated above, we developed a fact sheet for parents that included questions and answers as well as links to numerous resources.  Case Example: DRW represented a boy with significant developmental delays who could not benefit from virtual education. His school district offered only virtual services. We filed a complaint with the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction (DPI) (the State Education Agency). The DPI found that the district was not providing a Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE). We represented the family in a mediation and negotiated a resolution as to how he would be compensated for his loss of services.   Priority 3: Ensure people with disabilities' access to the right to vote during the COVID-19 pandemic. (PADD, PATBI, PAAT) During the reporting period, the following statewide elections were held:  • The November 2020 Presidential election • Spring Primary: February 16, 2021 • Spring Election: April 6, 2021   Throughout the reporting period, the voting rights and access for Wisconsinites with disabilities continued to be impacted by the pandemic, due to the heightened vulnerability to COVID of many people with disabilities, especially those living in congregate settings.   Concern about COVID 19 led to an increase in absentee voting, as many were reluctant or unable to vote at their polling place. Social distancing also reduced opportunities for DRW to provide in person assistance with voter registration, photo ID requirements, and education about voter rights and resources. DRW recalibrated our PAVA work, to include additional outreach and training strategies to protect the rights of people with disabilities during the pandemic, as noted below.   This work was done in partnership with:  • The Wisconsin Disability Vote Coalition (DVC), a cross disability coalition that includes disability and aging agencies, and self advocates, coordinated by DRW and the Wisconsin Board for People with Developmental Disabilities. Key partners include the eight Independent Living Centers, WI Council of the Blind and Visually Impaired, Greater Wisconsin Agency on Aging, People First Wisconsin, Souls to the Polls, ALAS, NAMI Wisconsin and affiliates, the League of Women Voters WI, and All Voting Is Local. The Coalition also had strong partnerships with provider agencies.  • Wisconsin Department of Health Services. DHS provided public health guidance during the pandemic and state government, included guidance on safe voting practices. They partner with us on dissemination of our trainings, videos, and fact sheets. We also partnered with the Wisconsin Departments of Transportation and Corrections.  • Wisconsin Election Commission, the state government body that administers Wisconsin elections.  • City of Milwaukee Election Commission, and other municipal clerks  • Service providers for people with disabilities including those in residential settings.  • Wisconsin Voting Rights Coalition. A coalition of voting rights, civil rights, and advocacy agencies that emerged in response to the challenges of voting during the pandemic. The coalition included non-profits around the state who shared a commitment to voting rights, including several agencies that had a focus on supporting communities of color.  We identified the following priorities related to COVID-19:  • Ensure people with disabilities access to the right to vote during the COVID-19 pandemic and advocate for safe voting policies.  • Provide training and support materials for service providers, including direct care providers and care facilities, to support their members to safely assert their voting rights during the pandemic, and in the absence of Special Voting Deputies at residential facilities.   • In collaboration with the Wisconsin Election Commission (WEC), provide clerks and other local election workers with the training and supplies needed to safely conduct elections during the pandemic.   Activities to support these priorities included the following:  • Provided COVID related testimony and recommendations to the Wisconsin Election Commission four times to address voting rights, accessibility, disability related accommodations, and public health concerns during the pandemic. DRW provided ongoing consultation to/ and with WEC staff on a regular basis.   Voting in care facilities continued to be an area of particular concern given the high vulnerability of residents to COVID 19 and restrictions on outsiders entering care facilities. DRW worked with WEC to provide input on WEC training and reference materials to facility staff, and also partnered on providing virtual trainings that were offered to facility staff. Training videos were also available on the Disability Vote Coalition web site.  Planned polling place accessibility audits to be conducted by WEC and DRW were cancelled due to the pandemic. DRW worked with WEC to develop other strategies to address accessibility. This included updating the DRW Accessibility Checklist which is posted on the WEC website and distributed to clerks; provision of free accessibility supplies such as signature guides, van accessible parking signs, wireless doorbells for curbside voting, and curbside voting signage; guidance on Wisconsin’s requirements for curbside voting; info about absentee voting and drop boxes; and input on training content for poll workers and clerks. DRW and other disability advocates were speakers for the WEC webinar for municipal clerks on Polling Place Set-up, which addressed a range of accessibility and accommodation issues. While the webinar took place on September 30, 2020, a video recording was posted on the WEC website, and many clerks and election workers accessed it in October in advance of the November election. In addition to the live webinar, there have been 937 views of the video.   • DRW also addressed accessibility concerns by partnering with the League of Women Voters of Wisconsin Election Observation Program. We provided input on accessibility concerns to be included in the survey tool used by election observers, including criteria related to polling place accessibility, status of accessible voting machines, and curbside voting. We provided technical assistance to observers who identified concerns on election day and helped to elevate issues to the Wisconsin Election Commission as needed.   • DRW served on the Wisconsin Safe and Healthy Voting Project Committee to provide a disability perspective in support of efforts to ensure safe voting practices during COVID including providing PPE for workers, training on safe practices, and provision of curbside voting and absentee drop boxes.  • In advance of the November election and on election day, the DRW Voter Hotline continued to receive calls for assistance from voters with disabilities, family members and providers who were concerned about voting safely during COVID. A high percentage of contacts requested assistance with absentee voting.   We assisted voters with disabilities who had COVID specific concerns. This included assistance with how to access curb-side voting; assisting voters to file complaints regarding concerns about poll workers who would not wear masks; and assisting voters who were home bound or in hospital due to COVID with requesting an absentee ballot and providing volunteers to deliver the ballot, and have it witnessed and returned. We also assisted a voter with a disability and her husband who lived in a township that was holding in person caucus to determine candidates for the spring election and did not require masks. The voter was ultimately denied a virtual option, although other accommodations were offered.  The Milwaukee Election Commission had included DRW Voter Hotline information on several mailings to the community, which contributed to a higher call volume from Milwaukee, Wisconsin’s most diverse community.   • Developed and/or updated 11 voting fact sheets to support voters with participation in the 2021 elections. Ten of the fact sheets are available in Spanish. A number of the fact sheets included information about safe voting during the pandemic, and the frequent COVID related changes in voting. We also continued to promote our video trainings on voting developed earlier in 2020, which addressed safe voting during the pandemic. Materials were available on the Disability Vote Coalition website, Facebook page, and mailed at no charge to community members and agencies, as requested. We used new methods to distribute materials – for example, our “Make Your Plan to Vote” factsheet was included in food boxes distributed by the Hunger Task Force and by an independent living center in October 2020.  • Provided regular posting on the Disability Vote Coalition and DRW Facebook pages that promoted safe voting during the pandemic, including information about absentee voting, drop boxes, curbside voting, and tips for voting safely in person.   • Since in-person trainings and outreach events could not be offered during the pandemic, we continued to offer virtual training events, and also developed a series of videos about how to vote safely. DRW conducted outreach and training events during the 2021 FY, reaching approximately 2194 people. Prior to the November election, we offered a Lunch and Learn series that included guidance on how to vote safely during the pandemic. A candidate forum for Dept. of Public Instruction Superintendent was held virtually in advance of the April 2021, to allow for safe participation by voters with disabilities.   • Since our ability to directly reach voters was limited by the pandemic, we continued our “Voting in the Time of Pandemic” initiative to reach services providers including Aging and Disability Resource Center staff, long term care providers, residential providers including nursing home staff, and staff at psychiatric and IDD facilities operated by the state of Wisconsin. Because voting was a public health issue, service providers were encouraged to assist their residents and members to vote safely. Providers received our e-newsletters, technical assistance from the DRW Voter Hotline, and could order or download our free resource materials.   • To inform voters and service providers during the pandemic, we increased the frequency and reach of the DVC e-newsletter. During the reporting period, 21 issues were released that provided voting updates, including how to vote safely during the pandemic. The e-newsletter reaches thousands of services providers, community partners, and voters. In addition to the DVC email list (649), the e-newsletters are shared with the Department of Health Services (DHS) listservs (over 11,000 people), the Wisconsin Aging Network, and the Mental Health Task Force / Make It Work Milwaukee listservs (868), BPDD (2500), and shared by other coalition partners.  • COVID-19 increased barriers for people with disabilities to obtain a photo ID for voting at Wisconsin Department of Motor V locations. During much of 2020, DMV offices were closed due to the pandemic and open by appointment only. Limited access to transportation, especially lift equipped transportation, has been an ongoing barrier to obtaining photo ID; the need to isolate during the pandemic further exacerbated transportation barriers. DRW worked with the Dept. of Transportation and the Governor’s office to elevate the need to expand access to options to obtain photo ID. In response to our advocacy, DMV expanded DMV hours in at a number of rural locations, in Milwaukee and in Madison. An additional Madison location was opened that on a bus line and provided better access for people of color and many people with disabilities.   • DRW increased awareness of voting rights and safe voting through media coverage during the pandemic. Two press events were held; nine press statements were released that related to voting and the pandemic, and 24 media stories included DRW perspectives regarding COVID 10 and voting. |
| WI | During the reporting period, the following statewide elections were held: • The November 2020 Presidential election • Spring Primary: February 16, 2021 • Spring Election: April 6, 2021   Throughout the reporting period, DRW’s PAVA work was impacted by the following challenges:  • Voting rights and access for Wisconsinites with disabilities continued to be impacted by the pandemic, due to high vulnerability to COVID of many people with disabilities, especially those living in congregate settings. Concern about COVID 19 led to an increase in absentee voting, as many citizens were reluctant or unable to vote at their polling place.   • Social distancing created additional barriers by eliminating most opportunities for DRW to provide in person assistance with voter registration, photo ID requirements, and education about voter rights and resources, or conduct polling place audits. Finally, the process for voting, especially absentee voting, changed repeatedly as a result of litigation and evolving guidance.   • Following the 2020 election, and unproven allegations of voter fraud, the state legislature considered a number of proposals that had the potential to restrict the voting rights of many disabled voters, and create new barriers.   This narrative will detail how DRW recalibrated our PAVA work, to support voters with disabilities during the pandemic, and to protect their voting rights. This work was done in partnership with:  • The Wisconsin Disability Vote Coalition (DVC), a cross disability coalition that includes disability and aging agencies and self advocates, coordinated by DRW and the Wisconsin Board for People with Developmental Disabilities (BPDD). Key coalition members include the eight Independent Living Centers, WI Council of the Blind and Visually Impaired, Greater Wisconsin Agency on Aging Resources (GWAAR), People First Wisconsin, ALAS, NAMI Wisconsin and affiliates, the League of Women Voters of Wisconsin, Souls to the Polls, and All Voting Is Local. The Coalition also had strong partnerships with provider agencies.  •Wisconsin Department of Health Services (DHS). DHS provided public health guidance during the pandemic, included guidance on safe voting practices. They partnered with us on dissemination of our trainings, videos, and fact sheets. We also partnered with the Wisconsin Departments of Transportation and Corrections.  • Wisconsin Election Commission (WEC), the state government body that administers Wisconsin elections, including DRW’s service on the WEC Accessibility Advisory Committee.  • City of Milwaukee Election Commission, and other municipal clerks  • Service providers for people with disabilities including residential service providers.  • Wisconsin Voting Rights Coalition. A coalition of voting rights, civil rights, and advocacy agencies that emerged in response to the challenges of voting during the pandemic. The coalition included non-profits around the state who share a commitment to voting rights, including several agencies that focus on advancing voting rights for communities of color, and election protection partners. See Coalition partners for a full list.   Priority # 1: Assist voters with disabilities to learn about how to register to vote, cast a ballot, access polling places, and assert their voting rights.    1) Provide direct assistance and education to voters with disabilities regarding voter registration, absentee voting, casting a ballot at their polling place, and voter rights.   DRW Voter Hotline. The DRW Voter Hotline is open year-round. Call volume during the reporting period was highest for the November 2020 election, with lower call volume for the 2021 elections.   A high percentage of calls were about Absentee and Early Voting. Absentee voting related calls addressed confusion about how to request an absentee ballot, struggles with the process for uploading photo ID or lack of photo ID, challenges with the witness requirement, and ballots that were late arriving. We also heard from callers with vision loss who were experiencing challenges with voting due to the lack of an accessible absentee ballot.  For those voting in person, topics included the need for, or denial of accommodations such as curbside voting or assistance with completing a ballot; changes in polling places, long lines, communication challenges, transportation.  We also received questions about guardianship and voting rights.   A number of callers had COVID related concerns. We provided assistance with how to access curb-side voting; assisting voters to file complaints regarding concerns about poll workers who would not wear masks; and assisting voters who were home bound or in hospital due to COVID with requesting an absentee ballot and providing volunteers to deliver ballots, and have them witnessed and returned.   We also assisted a voter with a disability and her husband who lived in a township that was holding in person caucus to determine candidates for the spring election and did not require masks. The voter was ultimately denied a virtual option, although other accommodations were offered.  Transportation was an issue for a number of callers, and we were often able to provide a referral. We offered a new resource on the DVC website “Find a Ride to the Polls” with transportation contacts around the state. This was developed with the support of many partners including Aging and Disability Resource Centers, counties, transportation providers, the Arc Wisconsin, Souls to the Polls, and others. “Find a Ride to the Polls” was available for the November 2020 election (including early voting) and for the April 2021 election. In one case an African American voter with mobility issues had cast a provisional ballot. She needed transportation and an assistant to accompany her to DMV to obtain a photo ID, and to city hall to cure her ballot. We worked with Souls to the Polls to connect her with a volunteer to provide transportation and support – this was the last caller we assisted to cast a ballot for the November 2020 election.   In addition to voters with disabilities, we provided assistance to providers seeking guidance and resources on how to help their members/ residents to vote. DRW received referrals from other voter hotlines, and we worked together with our coalition partners, as well as WEC and local clerks to meet voter needs. In addition, we received referrals from Wisconsin Election Protection and from the network of on site observers coordinated by LWVW.   DRW partnered with the City of Milwaukee to support voters with disabilities. The Milwaukee Election Commission included the DRW Voter Hotline number on postcards that they sent in advance of the election. This resulted in many calls to the voter hotline from voters needing help with absentee ballots, finding their polling places, and questions about curbside voting and photo IDs. This was helpful in expanding our reach to minority voters, as Milwaukee is Wisconsin’s most diverse municipality.  Outreach and Training. DRW conducted outreach and training events during the 2021 FY, reaching approximately 2,194 people, using the Zoom and Facebook live platforms. Prior to the November election, we offered a Lunch and Learn series with topics: Registration and Photo ID, Voting Rights, Taking the SABE Survey, Absentee and Early Voting. Training were also held on the proposed state budget, and legislative proposals that would impact voting rights. Participants were trained on self advocacy tools to share their perspective with policy makers on budget proposals and legislation.   Residential Providers. During the pandemic, DRW worked to protect the voting rights of residents of care facilities. Because of the high vulnerability of residents to COVID 19 and restrictions on outsiders entering care facilities, the WEC did not dispatch Special Voting Deputies to conduct in-person absentee voting. DRW supported this decision, but recommended a menu of alternative options to support voting in care facilities. DRW worked with WEC to provide input on training and reference materials for facility staff, and also partnered on providing virtual trainings that were promoted to facility staff.   People with IDD. DRW and the DVC provided regulates outreach and training on voting rights, guardianship and voting, and making a plan to vote to people with Intellectual and Developmental disabilities through updates to People First Wisconsin, as well as monthly trainings for Living Well participants, a project of the Wisconsin Board for People with Developmental Disabilities. Utilizing monthly or periodic virtual meetings to update self-advocates has empowered them to share this information with the people in their communities, including local People First chapters.   Social media. DRW maintained the fully accessible Wisconsin Disability Vote Coalition website (https://disabilityvote.org/), with continuously updated content. All coalition fact sheets and videos are posted on the website, as is the DVC e-newsletter, policy updates, and current news. DRW continued to have a strong robust social media presence with our Wisconsin Disability Vote Coalition and DRW Facebook pages, and twitter posts. A monthly social calendar is developed with scheduled posts; the calendar is also made available to Coalition members so their agencies can select posts to use on their social media. Topics include information about voter registration, getting a photo ID, requesting and voting with an absentee ballot, finding your polling place, transportation to the polls, and voting rights and accommodations. The most popular posts include our voter spotlights and featured partners, which highlight a voter with a disability or a coalition partner, explaining why voting is important to them. Social media has also been a vehicle for sharing policy updates and opportunities for people with disabilities to share their perspective with their legislators. Our most liked post had video footage of a coalition member with a disability sharing her perspective on how proposed legislation would impact her voting rights.   Our postcard campaign continued with free postcards available in English and Spanish to provide the basics for voters with disabilities about the 2021 elections, as well as our posters featuring voters with disabilities. ADRCs, disability organizations, the Living Well project, and others partnered with us to distribute postcards. 4,900 postcards were mailed, and an additional 15,000 were provided to coalition members to distribute, or shared at community events.   Developed and/or updated eleven voting fact sheets to support voters with participation in the 2020 - 2021 elections. Ten of the fact sheets are available in Spanish. A number of the fact sheets included information about safe voting during the pandemic, and the frequent COVID related changes in voting. We also continued to promote our video trainings on voting developed earlier in 2020, which addressed safe voting during the pandemic. Materials were available on the Disability Vote Coalition website, Facebook page, and mailed at no charge to community members and agencies, as requested. This included our voter toolkit which provides materials to offer a training on voting for people with disabilities. We offered the option to download the toolkit or to order a kit to be printed and mailed. We used new methods to distribute materials – for example, our “Make Your Plan to Vote” factsheet was included in food boxes distributed by the Hunger Task Force and by an independent living center in October 2020.  The fact sheets included the following: • Circuit Court Fact Sheet • Circuit Court Fact Sheet (Spanish) • State Superintendent of Public Instruction Fact Sheet • State Superintendent of Public Instruction Fact Sheet (Spanish) • Residential Service Providers: Resources for Voters with Disabilities (updated) • Election day Accessibility Checklist • Make Your Plan to Vote AD 37 Special Election • Make Your Plan to Vote – 2021 Elections (updated) • Absentee Voting Fact Sheet (updated) • Absentee Voting Fact Sheet -Spanish • Guardianship and Voting- Restoring your Right to Vote • Voting Rights Fact Sheet • Voting Rights Fact Sheet (Spanish) • Voting Registration Fact Sheet • Guardianship and Voting: Restoring Your Right to Vote • Voting In Wisconsin (Spanish) • Voting In Wisconsin (updated)  E-Newsletter. During the reporting period, 21 issues of the DVC e-newsletter were released that provided voting updates and resources. The e-newsletter reaches thousands of services providers, community partners, and voters. In addition to the DVC email list (649), the e-newsletters are shared by the Department of Health Services (DHS) to their listservs (over 11,000 people), the Wisconsin Aging Network, and the Mental Health Task Force / Make It Work Milwaukee listservs (868), BPDD (2500), and by other coalition partners.   2) Work with the Disability Vote Coalition to grow the coalition and increase the number of organizations and individuals around the state working to advance our mission and to engage voters statewide.  The Disability Vote Coalition increased our impact and partnerships this year. Our partnership with the Independent Living Centers expanded, with active participation in the coalition from four CILs; all eight CILs promoted and disseminated our voting resources and trainings. Other new partners included the Wisconsin MS Society, and the My Choice Family Care member advisory committee.  • DRW played a lead role in the Wisconsin Voting Rights Coalition (explained earlier in this narrative), sharing analysis regarding the impact of legislative proposals on voters with disabilities, and providing technical assistance to coalition members on disability related rights and accommodations. This partnership has expanded the number of organizations advocating and educating about disability related voting rights and accommodations, and provided new opportunities to engage with diverse communities.   • Reaching diverse communities. Our partnership with Souls to the Polls allowed us to reach more voters of color. DRW provided technical assistance on disability related voting concerns, and Souls helped to provide transportation for some voters with disabilities and assisted with curbside voting. Outreach to Spanish speaking voters was done in partnership with ALAS (Alianza Latina Aplicando Soluciones) and Voces de la Frontera.   • Increase awareness and usage of the Wisconsin Election Commission complaint process and support voters to make complaints.  We used a variety of strategies to promote options for making a complaint, both informal and formal: social media posts, addressing in trainings, and in several factsheets (FAQ and Voter Rights). We also mentioned the options to make a complaint to Hotline callers. The number of reported complaints to WEC remained low during the reporting period and we will continue our efforts to see that more disabled voters who contact us with a complaint, also report that concern to the WEC. We are often able to help a caller resolve a concern and they may be hesitant or lack interest in pursuing a formal complaint.   For example, one voter contacted DRW because she had been unable to vote in 2021. The voter had called her municipal clerk early in the year. The clerk assured the voter that she was signed up as an indefinitely confined voter; however, the voter’s ballot never arrived. She called the municipal clerk again, but it was too late to get her ballot. DRW staff were able to help the voter sign up as an indefinitely confined voter for future elections and, also, to file an online complaint with WEC. The voter lives in a small town and is very afraid of retaliation over filing the complaint. She expressed that without the support of the DRW voter hotline, she wouldn’t feel comfortable making the complaint.  National Disability Voter Registration Week NDVRW is a national, nonpartisan campaign to register, educate, and prepare voters with disabilities to vote in upcoming elections. Our in-person outreach efforts were limited by continued health concerns due to COVID-19. To promote voter registration, the DVC hosted two virtual events, and offered an online toolkit, including the following:  • Voter Registration Resources Toolkit on the DVC website • Webinar on voter registration for voters with disabilities and allies • Webinar for service providers on how to support their members with voter registration and photo ID  • Proclamation and video from Governor Evers and a press release from Senator Kathy Bernier, chair of the Senate Elections committee • Social media toolkit with NDVRW graphics and Facebook / Zoom background.   3) Provide outreach and education regarding voting rights for individuals under guardianship and the process to petition for restoration of voting rights.   DRW expanded our work in this area, hiring a part-time attorney to serve as our Voting Rights and Guardianship Project Director. The project is underway and includes development of a training and outreach plan to include the legal and social services communities, families, and people with disabilities. We will also develop a plan to provide pro bono representation for individuals seeking to have their rights restored. The project is advancing in collaboration with the Guardianship Support Center, BPDD and other partners.  During the reporting period, DRW and the DVC continued to provide education on guardianship and voting rights through virtual trainings, social media, and dissemination of our fact sheets. DRW Managing Attorney Mitch Hagopian assisted two individuals under guardianship who have lost the right to vote to petition for their right to vote to be restored.   4) Provide resources for voters with disabilities to be informed voters.   On March 4th. DRW and the DVC hosted a State Superintendent of Public Instruction candidate forum. The forum was an opportunity to hear from candidates. Deborah Kerr and Jill Underly about how they would address the needs of students with disabilities. 179 registered for this event, and the recording was made available on our website and you-tube channel. We received 58 questions for the candidates from community members. The forum had live captioning and ASL interpreters. It was live-streamed by WisconsinEye.   We promoted our “Key Questions for Congressional Candidates, and Key Questions for State Candidates” for voters with disabilities to ask the candidates. They were shared on social media, and at virtual trainings.   Virtual trainings and social media posts addressed how to be an informed voter, including use of nonpartisan resources such as the LWV VOTE411 website.  5) Provide resources to educate candidates about the disability vote and priorities for the disability community and engage the grassroots to educate candidates.  In partnership with Survival Coalition of Wisconsin Disability Organizations, DRW and the DVC promoted our publication to educate candidates about disability issues: Issues that Impact People with Disabilities in Wisconsin: Background Papers. The document provided background and policy recommendations to candidates on a wide range of issues includes home and community based long term care, Medicaid, employment, education, mental health, supporting children with disabilities, transportation, voting rights, and workforce. The document was disseminated to people with disabilities, family members, advocates and service providers to share with candidates for office, and also promoted to state legislators.     Priority 2: Improve the accessibility of Wisconsin elections for voters with disabilities.   Voter Experience Surveys. To gather information from voters with disabilities and their allies about their voting experience to inform our advocacy and training, DRW served on the planning committee for the SABE GoVoter Survey and promoted the SABE survey in Wisconsin. In cooperation with The Self-Determination, DRW developed a promotional video to encourage self-advocates to take the SABE survey and how to get help if they need it. Wisconsin collected 86 responses this year, 4th highest in the country. It was more challenging to obtain survey responses this year, since we could not provide in person outreach and assistance due to COVID. DRW also partnered with SABE to present on the survey project at the NDRN conference.   Media. DRW increased awareness of voting rights and accessibility through media coverage. During the reporting period, DRW participated in five press events; eighteen press statements were released, and 59 media stories included DRW/ DVC perspectives regarding voting rights and accessibility, including 26 radio or tv interviews.   1) Engage with legislators to educate and advocate about the voting rights of people with disabilities and increase awareness of barriers. Respond to legislative proposals and advance our policy agenda.  Following the November 2020 presidential election, Wisconsin has been torn apart by attacks on election administration and allegations of fraud. The voting rights of people with disabilities have been a central part of the controversy as some have made allegations of fraud on the voters with disabilities including some who self-certified as indefinitely confined voters, residents of care facilities whose right to vote and cognitive status was challenged, and individuals who relied on assistance from others to complete and./or return their absentee ballot. Over two dozen proposals were circulated in our state legislature to make changes to voting rights, including a number of proposals which would create new barriers for many voters with disabilities, and establish penalties for voters or people trying to help voters.   DRW used the following strategies to educate policymakers and to inform people with disabilities to support them to advocate. Many of these efforts were in partnership with the Disability Vote Coalition and other:  • Meet with state legislators to provide education about the rights of voters with disabilities and increase awareness of barriers.   • DRW provided testimony eleven times for legislative hearings to educate policy makers about the impact of proposed legislation on voters with disabilities and barriers experienced by voters with disabilities.  • DRW was the only disability group and one of only three voting rights groups to be interviewed by the Wisconsin Legislative Audit Bureau for their audit reviewing election administration for the November 2020 election.  • Our April 12th Briefing, “Disability Rights and Voting: A Briefing for Policymakers and Election Officials” was attended by 70 people including a number of state legislators and staff. The Briefing addressed the barriers experienced by many voters with disabilities and provided an overview of federal and state laws that safeguard the rights of voters with disabilities. 28 community agencies co-sponsored the briefing.  • Surveyed people with disabilities, older adults and family members to see how the voting bills would impact their ability to vote. We received 341 responses.  • Social media campaigns including ADA 31 Social Media toolkit with the theme “Honor the ADA – Protect Voter Rights”.   • Two press events were held for the media to hear from people with disabilities and allies about the impact of the voting bills.   • Information about the bills, and training on how people with disabilities could express their option was provided to disability groups. Four virtual trainings were held. Self advocates, family members, and other allies utilized DRW/ DVC training and resource materials to provide testimony at legislative hearings, submit letters to the editor, and speak at press events.   • DRW spoke at a White House convening about the impact of the bills and the strategies used by DVC and DRW to respond. She also shared concerns about the paper ballot mandate in HR 1, and the need to protect the rights of voters who cannot mark, verify, and cast paper ballots privately and independently.   2) Engage in systems advocacy to increase access to Wisconsin DMV locations to improve access to state photo ID for voting for voters with a disability. This includes expanded hours of operation and locations, as well as lack of ADA accessibility at some locations.   DMV sites are the only location for non-drivers to obtain access to a photo ID for voting. A high percentage of Wisconsinites with disabilities are non-drivers, and many experience barriers to obtaining a photo ID for voting. Limited access to transportation, especially lift equipped transportation, has been an ongoing barrier to obtaining photo ID; the need to isolate during the pandemic further exacerbated transportation barriers.   Report on DMV and Voting Rights. DRW and the DVC partnered with All Voting Is Local and the League of Women Voters of Wisconsin on a report about photo ID and access to DMV. “Getting There is Half the Battle: Wisconsin’s Photo ID Law, Access to DMV Services, and the Fight for Our Freedom to Vote.” The report was released on May 26th and highlighted inequities in access to DMV services, and the implications for voting rights. The report included comprehensive recommendations to address barriers and expand access including addressing ADA accessibility concerns and providing language support for non-English speakers. DRW was among the panelists who presented report findings at a May 26th press event and a June 2nd community briefing. We are working with the DVC on a DMV checklist for physical and programmatic accessibility to be shared with DMV in early 2022. The report was also shared with state legislators.   In addition to existing barriers to accessing DMV, COVID-19 increased barriers for people with disabilities to obtain a photo ID. During much of 2020, DMV offices were closed due to the pandemic and open by appointment only. Limited access to transportation, especially lift equipped transportation, has been an ongoing barrier to obtaining photo ID; the need to isolate during the pandemic further exacerbated transportation barriers. DRW worked with the Dept. of Transportation and the Governor’s office to elevate the need to expand access to options to obtain photo ID. In response to our advocacy, DMV expanded DMV hours in at a number of rural locations, in Milwaukee and in Madison. An additional Madison location was opened that on a bus line and provided better access for people of color and many people with disabilities. DOT also included some funding in the proposed state budget for additional DMV locations, however, it was not approved by the State Legislature.  DRW continues to serve on the Non-Driver Advisory Committee recently established by DOT. It has provided a forum to elevate concerns about access accessible transportation, limited access to DMV for photo ID, as well as DMV accessibility concerns.    3) Improve the accessibility of Wisconsin polling places by providing education and resources on accessibility for Wisconsin clerks and poll workers, through partnering with the Wisconsin Election Commission to develop and enhance training and resources.  DRW provided testimony to the Wisconsin Election Commission six times during the reporting period to address voting rights, accessibility, disability related accommodations, use of Special Voting Deputies, certification of voting equipment, and COVID related public health concerns during the reporting period. DRW provided ongoing consultation to/ and with WEC staff on a regular basis.  DRW continues to serve on the WEC Accessibility Advisory Committee which met four times during the reporting period and provided recommendations to the WEC on accessibility concerns. DRW and other committee members participated in testing of accessible voting equipment sessions hosted by the WEC to assess accessibility. DRW provided public comments supporting de-certification of accessible voting equipment that did not meet accessibility standards.   Planned polling place accessibility audits to be conducted by WEC and DRW were cancelled due to the pandemic. DRW worked with WEC to develop other strategies to address accessibility. This included:  • Promoting the DRW Election Day Accessibility Checklist which is posted on the WEC website and distributed to clerks and election inspectors;   • The WEC Accessibility Supply Program, which provided free supplies such as signature guides, van accessible parking signs, wireless doorbells for curbside voting, and curbside voting signage  • Provide input for WEC guidance on Wisconsin’s requirements for curbside voting, and assisting voters who experienced barriers to accessing curbside voting.   • Provide recommendations for absentee voting and drop boxes  • DRW and other disability advocates were speakers for the WEC webinar for municipal clerks on Polling Place Set-up, which addressed a range of accessibility and accommodation issues. While the webinar took place on September 30, 2020, a video recording was posted on the WEC website, and many clerks and election workers accessed it in October in advance of the November election. In addition to the live webinar, there have been 937 views of the video.   • Work with Wisconsin Voting Rights Coalition and Disability Vote Coalition to monitor voting and address rights violations on election day.  DRW was a part of Wisconsin Election Protection efforts, as the designated resource to provide technical assistance on disability related issues. In addition, under the umbrella of the Wisconsin Voting Rights Coalition, the LWV of WI organized a state wide network of election day observers. DRW provided input on the checklist and protocol for observers to assess accessibility and voting rights concerns. We were part of the online group of observers that used an App to report concerns and flag polling place problems and helped with a rapid response strategy. For example, we helped to elevate accessible voting machine concerns and poor curb side voting practices to the WEC so they could follow up directly with clerks allowing problems to be addressed in real time.   • Work with coalition partners and policy makers to provide voters with disabilities to equitable access to absentee voting by implementing an ADA compliant screen reader accessible absentee ballot.   The pandemic elevated Wisconsin’s inequitable access to absentee voting for voters with print disabilities. With the leadership of our coalition partner Wisconsin Council for the Blind and Visually Impaired, DRW continued to educate and advocate for an accessible absentee ballot with the WEC, legislators, voters with disabilities, and our coalition partners about the need to provide equitable access to absentee voting. This equity issue was raised in legislative testimony, and in our interview with the Legislative Audit Bureau for their review of the 2020 election.    4) Improve access to voting for care facility residents including recommendations to strengthen the Special Voting Deputy (SVD) program.  Voting in care facilities continued to be an area of concern given the high vulnerability of residents to COVID 19 and restrictions on outsiders entering care facilities. DRW worked with WEC to provide input on WEC training and reference materials to facility staff, and also partnered on providing virtual trainings that were offered to facility staff. Training videos were also available on the Disability Vote Coalition web site, along with a toolkit with voting related resources for service providers to assist them in supporting their residents with voting. Some residential providers called the DRW Voter Hotline for technical assistance.   In partnership with the Greater Wisconsin Aging Advocacy Resources (GWAAR), we provided policymakers with comprehensive recommendations to address gaps in the Special Voting Deputy program.    5) Recruit poll workers with disabilities to improve the accessibility of Wisconsin elections.  Our efforts to recruit poll workers with disabilities were on hold for most of the reporting period due to concerns about the pandemic and the additional risk for poll workers. As the vaccines became more available, we engaged in some limited efforts to recruit poll workers with disabilities, sharing our video on s |
| WI | PADD, PATBI and PAAT Planning Process  STEP 1: DRW Board conducted virtual listening sessions in conjunction with board meetings during 2021. Notes from those listening sessions were reviewed by the PADD coordinator.  STEP 2: The School & Civil Rights and Community & Institutions teams met virtually in August to review team goals and priorities. Since the teams have multiple funding sources, this process included discussion of, and adoption of, goals and priorities for DRW clients with physical disabilities, mental illness and/or traumatic brain injury in addition to people who have intellectual or developmental disabilities. Discussion of AT issues was woven throughout the meetings. This process involved discussion of data received during the year related to priority areas. Case experience and trends were considered. Following the team meetings, the PADD Coordinator reviewed the notes from the meetings and identified which particular goals and priorities were aimed in whole or in part at people with IDD.   STEP 3: The PADD Coordinator, the PAAT Coordinator, and the PATBI Coordinator reviewed the notes from the listening sessions and team meetings, examined case data derived from DAD, and considered information received during the calendar year from our service on various administrative agency committees and workgroups, including: Long Term Care Council (Department of Health Services-DHS), Children’s Long Term Support Advisory Committee (DHS), IRIS Advisory Committee (DHS) Quarterly Meetings with DHS, PT/OT and SLP providers (DHS), Children with Disabilities in the Child Welfare System Standards and Training Workgroup (DCF), Act 185 Programming Workgroup and Girls Committee, Children and Youth Committee of the Mental Health Council (DHS), Office of Children’s Mental Health’s Collective Impact Executive Council (DHS, DCF, DPI, DOC), Coalition for Expanding School Based Mental Health, and Children Come First Advisory Committee (DHS). The Coordinator then drafted an initial group of PADD Goals and Priorities.  STEP 4: The PATBI and PAAT plans were completed at this time.   STEP 5: The initial draft of the PADD plan was then circulated to all employees who are supported by PADD funding or who regularly work with PADD eligible clients with the support of other funding (Public Policy Director, FCIOP program staff, Victims of Crime Act (VOCA) coordinator, and the SSI Managed Care Program Manager). Their comments were considered and, where appropriate, incorporated into the “Draft PADD SGP” which would be made available to the public for comment.  STEP 6: On October 5, 2021 we presented our “Draft PADD SGP” to the University Center for Excellence, Developmental Disabilities Consumer Advisory Committee. Consensus was that the Draft SGP was good and the committee supported it as written. Individual advisory committee members were also encouraged to comment on the document.  STEP 7: Our “Draft PADD SGP” was formally released for a 48-day public comment period on October 13, 2021. It was posted to our website on that date. The document included instructions for how people could provide comments and the deadline to ensure that their comments would be considered (November 30, 2021). In addition, we sent the document to the Board for People with Developmental Disabilities, the membership of the Survival Coalition (statewide coalition of disability organizations), the Independent Living Centers, The ARC Wisconsin, and Save IRIS. This year we received one comment on our proposed plan.   STEP 8: Presented our Draft PADD SGP to the Board for People with Developmental Disabilities (Wisconsin's CDD) at its November meeting (November 18, 2021). BPDD endorsed the Draft SGP.  STEP 9: Made final changes to Final Draft of our PADD SGP. The major change was to incorporate a new priority into Goal 1 which reflects the collaborative work we will be doing with the BPDD on their Living Well project.   PAVA Planning Process   DRW coordinates the Wisconsin Disability Vote Coalition (DVC), in partnership with the Wisconsin Board for People with Developmental Disabilities (BPDD). It is a large cross-disability coalition that includes people with disabilities, a diverse cross section of disability organizations, aging organizations, and other voting rights groups including League of Women Voters of Wisconsin and All Voting Is Local.  With these partners at the table, we develop a Coalition plan of work, which is incorporated within the DRW PAVA plan, in addition to DRW specific activities. The coalition meets monthly and has an annual planning meeting. In 2021, the planning meeting was held in June via Zoom with 17 participants. In addition to DRW and BPDD, organizations participating in the planning included People First Wisconsin, Independence First, Center for Independent Living of Western Wisconsin, Options for Independent Living, Wisconsin Council of the Blind and Visually Impaired, NAMI Wisconsin, League of Women Voters of Wisconsin, All Voting Is Local, the MS Society, Greater Wisconsin Agency on Aging Resources, Milwaukee County Commission on Aging, and the member advisory council of My Choice Family Care.   There was agreement to continue with the three plan goals we established in 2020, and to update and add to the supporting activities.   As input for our planning process, DRW and the DVC used several surveys:  • Wisconsin Election Protection 2020 Fall Election Report: Report from Non-Partisan Observers of Voting in the November 3, 2020 Presidential Primary and Spring Election • A December 2020 DVC survey of service providers to learn about barriers experienced by voters with disabilities and get feedback on our trainings and resource materials • A May 2021 survey of DVC members to get their concerns and priorities to guide our planning. • Results of Disability Vote coalition surveys conducted regarding voter experiences in August 2018 election, November 2018 election, and April 2020 election.  Calls to the DRW Voter Hotline are an important input for our PAVA plan. We log and track calls and identify concerns barriers reported by callers to guide priorities for the plan. Call volume was high in fall of 2020 because of the Presidential election. It tapered off in 2021 in the absence of national or high profile state elections.   We considered input received through social media from people with disabilities regarding their voting experience and barriers through social media, including the Disability Vote Coalition and DRW Facebook pages.  DRW participates in the Wisconsin Election Commission Accessibility Advisory Committee which has quarterly meetings. Issues and barriers identified by this Committee were used to develop the PAVA priorities and plan.  DRW also receives input for the PAVA plan from other coalitions and committees regarding voter experiences and barriers, and these are used to inform our PAVA plan. These include the Survival Coalition of Wisconsin Disability Organizations, Milwaukee Mental Health Task Force, Wisconsin Council on Mental Health, Shelter and Transitional Housing Task Force, and Aging & Disability Professionals of Wisconsin (ADPAW). Input is also provided from the Wisconsin Department of Health Services including from staff that oversee state psychiatric hospitals, long term care facilities, and other residential providers.  We collaborate on our voting advocacy with organizations representing diverse communities and their perspectives inform our plan. These organizations include the Black Health Coalition of Wisconsin, Alianza Latina Aplicando Soluciones, Souls to the Polls, Parent University, Wisconsin United Coalition of Mutual Assistance Associations (WUCMAA), and Voces de la Frontera.  DRW P & A staff had the opportunity to provide input to the PAVA plan at the annual planning meeting in August. DRW specific goals were included in the plan, including our role in conducting polling place accessibility audits, providing direct advocacy assistance to voters with disabilities, and staffing the DRW Voter Hotline. Planned accessibility audits were not able to move forward due to COVID 19 restrictions. |
| WY | PAVA collaborated with election officials regarding voter identification requirements that are being considered by the Wyoming State Legislature and its possible impact on persons with disabilities who may not possess the necessary paperwork or identification requirements. |