



FINAL
Areas of Focus
Fiscal Year 2025

Disability Rights Arizona (DRAZ) is the federally designated Protection and Advocacy System for the State of Arizona. DRAZ's mission is to assist Arizonans with disabilities to promote and protect their legal rights to independence, justice, and equality. Protection and Advocacy agencies throughout the United States work towards ensuring that the human and civil rights of persons with disabilities are protected. DRAZ represents individuals and classes of individuals in negotiations, administrative proceedings, alternative dispute resolution, and litigation. DRAZ develops and provides legal rights information, conducts virtual and in-person outreach and training, and provides self-advocacy materials. DRAZ conducts virtual and in-person monitoring and investigates allegations of abuse and neglect involving facilities serving people with disabilities.

The demand for free legal and advocacy services to address disability-related legal issues is far greater than DRAZ's resources. To make the most of the available resources, each year DRAZ develops areas of focus to serve individuals with disabilities who fit into specific federal program eligibility guidelines.

DRAZ considers the following factors in deciding whether it can provide legal and advocacy services:

Case Selection Factors that Apply to All Programs

1. The prospective client must meet the program eligibility guidelines.
2. The legal problems must fall within an area of focus and objective for services.
3. DRAZ only provides legal services to address legal issues that:

- a. relate to an individual's disability,
 - b. may be resolved by DRAZ's legal and advocacy staff, and
 - c. are supported by the facts and the law.
4. The matter does not fall primarily into any of the following practice areas: Bankruptcy, Criminal Law, Family Law, Consumer Law, Identity Theft, Malpractice, Mortgage Foreclosure, Personal Injury, Property, Social Security Eligibility Determination or Appeals, Court-Ordered Treatment (unless related to [abuse](#) or [neglect](#)), Appointment of Guardian or Conservator. DRAZ may consult with attorneys representing clients with disabilities about disability and disability discrimination issues that may arise in these cases.
5. Individuals whose legal problems present opportunities to address systemic and policy issues that will likely help a class of individuals with disabilities will receive priority for litigation or other types of systemic advocacy to address the gap in access to justice for as many as possible.
6. DRAZ generally does not provide legal and advocacy services to individuals who are represented by counsel or have engaged other advocates, except in cases where co-counseling arrangements are desirable for litigation or another systemic advocacy.
7. Individuals from under resourced, underserved or unserved communities or geographic regions will receive priority for representation, outreach, and virtual or in-person training.
8. Individuals whose legal problems present opportunities to collaborate with other public interest legal and community organizations representing persons in other protected groups (e.g. race, color, gender, gender identity, national origin, or immigration status).
9. Even if an individual's legal issue meets the other factors, services depend upon the availability of DRAZ staff and resources, especially where DRAZ is pursuing systemic activities that require significant resources.

Protection and Advocacy for Individuals with Mental Illness – PAIMI

The Protection and Advocacy for Individuals with Mental Illness (PAIMI) grant was established by Congress in 1986. PAIMI agencies, such as DRAZ, are mandated to protect and advocate for the rights of individuals with significant mental illness. The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, Center for Mental Health Services oversees the PAIMI program.

The following PAIMI focus areas and objectives will be followed in accordance with our Case Selection Factors during FY 2025 (October 1, 2024 through September 30, 2025).

PAIMI FOCUS AREA #1:

Reduce incidences of abuse, neglect, and rights violations of individuals with significant mental illness residing in locked or unlocked facilities.

Description: Individuals with significant mental illness residing in locked or unlocked treatment facilities or other supportive residential treatment settings providing mental health services will be educated about their rights, and DRAZ will advocate for the rights of these individuals.

Objectives:

- 1.1 DRAZ staff will conduct at least two (2) investigations into allegations of the abuse or neglect of Arizonans with significant mental illness in a variety of placement settings and when appropriate, make recommendations for corrective action, preventative measures, and policy modifications through letters of concern and/or public reports.
- 1.2 DRAZ staff will conduct at least eight (8) in-person or virtual monitoring visits to the Arizona State Hospital, and at least eight (8) in-person or virtual monitoring visits of locked treatment facilities, unlocked treatment facilities, group homes or other residential settings, with three (3) of these in-person or virtual monitoring visits conducted in underserved or rural areas.

- 1.3 DRAZ staff will continue to participate in the class action lawsuit *Jensen v. Thornell*, including, but not limited to, representing DRAZ in monitoring visits, briefing, and hearings, as necessary related the Court's Order and Permanent Injunction in this case concerning individuals with significant mental illness incarcerated in Arizona's state-operated prisons.
- 1.4 Provide legal representation or advocacy in at least two (2) appeals, grievances, or other legal or administrative proceedings regarding rights violations, inadequate discharge planning, or inappropriate mental health services for persons with significant mental illness residing in locked or unlocked treatment facilities or other supportive residential treatment settings.
- 1.5 Provide timely and accurate rights information to individuals with significant mental illness about how to effectively self-advocate.
- 1.6 Provide at least two (2) in-person or virtual presentations to individuals with significant mental illness about their rights concerning the individualized treatment and/or discharge planning process.
- 1.7 Attend at least three (3) Independent Oversight Committee in-person or virtual meetings to provide independent oversight and review of allegations and reports of abuse, neglect, and/or rights violations of persons with significant mental illness who reside in Arizona.

PAIMI FOCUS AREA #2:

Ensure an adequate network of appropriate mental health care services for individuals with significant mental illness at risk of institutionalization.

Description: Individuals with significant mental illness at risk of institutionalization may be eligible for community-based services that permit an individual to address their mental health needs, obtain or maintain a stable living situation, and enjoy independence.

Objectives:

- 2.1 In at least two (2) matters, provide individual or systemic advocacy regarding unlawful or inappropriate eligibility determinations, or the delay or denial of appropriate mental health care services, including but not limited to: behavioral health crisis services, telehealth services, non-emergency medical transportation, residential and community-based services, or medication management services for individuals with significant mental illness. Within this objective, DRAZ will give priority to cases where the denial of appropriate mental health care services arises from an inadequate provider network and/or the provider network's failure to provide reasonable modifications, access to facilities, or auxiliary aids and services for people living with significant mental illness.
- 2.2 Provide timely and accurate rights information to individuals with significant mental illness regarding filing appeals, grievances, and quality of care complaints, court-ordered evaluation and treatment, eligibility for SMI designation, and/or obtaining second opinions.
- 2.3 Conduct at least two (2) in-person or virtual outreach or training events for individuals with significant mental illness, families, and other affected groups.

PAIMI FOCUS AREA #3:

Assist individuals with significant mental illness living in the community to understand their right to be free from discrimination in employment, education, housing, and public services and accommodations, and to take steps to secure those rights.

Description: Individuals with significant mental illness have the right to be free from disability discrimination in employment, housing, and public entities and accommodations.

Objectives:

- 3.1 Provide direct legal and advocacy services, and/or systemic advocacy, in matters involving an individual with significant mental illness who has experienced discrimination in any of the following areas:
- Imposition of unlawful disability-related question(s) by a public accommodation, public entity, or employer.
 - Failure to provide a reasonable accommodation in employment or other discriminatory employment practices.
 - Failure to provide a reasonable accommodation in education or other discriminatory education practices, including failure to provide appropriate educational services.
 - Failure of a public entity or public accommodation to provide reasonable modifications to rules and policies, including but not limited to modifications for service animals.
 - Discriminatory housing practices, including denial of reasonable accommodations and modifications, that prevent or burden people with significant mental illness from living in the housing of their choice.
 - Denial of reasonable modifications for justice-involved individuals with significant mental illness in law enforcement interaction, and criminal justice and other court or administrative proceedings, including denial of services in the most integrated setting possible.
- 3.2 Provide timely and accurate disability rights information on employment, housing, education, and public services and accommodations to provide individuals with significant mental illness the tools to secure their rights.
- 3.3 Conduct at least two (2) in-person or virtual outreach or training events for individuals with significant mental illness, families, and other affected groups.

Protection and Advocacy for Persons with Developmental Disabilities – PADD

The Developmental Disabilities Assistance and Bill of Rights Act of 1975 created the Protection and Advocacy for Persons with Developmental Disabilities (PADD) program. As a PADD program, DRAZ must take legal, administrative, and other appropriate actions to protect and advocate for the rights of individuals living with developmental disabilities under federal and state laws. The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Administration, Administration for Community Living oversees the PADD program.

The following PADD focus areas and objectives will be followed in accordance with our Case Selection Factors during FY 2025 (October 1, 2024 through September 30, 2025).

PADD FOCUS AREA #1:

Ensure that individuals with developmental disabilities are free from abuse and neglect and have appropriate safeguards to ensure their legal rights are protected.

Objectives:

- 1.1 Conduct investigations of alleged abuse or neglect related to incidents of suspicious death, restraint and seclusion, and physical or sexual assault of Arizonans with developmental disabilities in a variety of placement settings, and when appropriate, make recommendations for corrective action, preventive measures, and policy modifications through letters of concern and/or public reports. Within this objective, DRAZ will give priority to cases in which there are systemic problems that may result in additional incidents if uncorrected.
- 1.2 Utilize a monitoring protocol to conduct in-person or virtual monitoring visits of at least three (3) select state-run and/or state-contracted facilities.

- 1.3 Provide timely and accurate rights information about reporting abuse and neglect to responsible agencies, and in-person or virtual legal rights training sessions.

PADD FOCUS AREA #2:

Ensure an adequate network of appropriate healthcare services for individuals with developmental disabilities who are Medicaid or Medicare beneficiaries, and increase access by individuals with developmental disabilities who are Medicaid or Medicare beneficiaries to medical services, programs, and facilities.

Objectives:

- 2.1 Provide individual or systemic advocacy concerning: denials of services due to an inadequate provider network; denials of disability-related eligibility; denials, terminations, or reductions to medically necessary services such as therapies, medical supplies, durable medical equipment, and/or in-home supports; and issues related to non-emergency medical transportation. Within this objective, the DRAZ will give priority to cases with systemic issues that may result in additional inappropriate denials if uncorrected.
- 2.2 Provide timely and accurate rights information on healthcare services to provide individuals the tools to secure their rights, and in-person or virtual legal rights training sessions.

PADD FOCUS AREA #3:

Assist individuals with developmental disabilities to understand their right to be free from discrimination in employment, housing, public services and accommodations, and voting, and to take steps to secure those rights.

Objectives:

- 3.1 Provide direct legal and advocacy services, and/or undertake systemic advocacy, in matters involving individuals with

developmental disabilities who have experienced discrimination in any of the following areas:

- Imposition of unlawful disability-related question(s) by a public accommodation, public entity, or employer.
- Failure to provide a reasonable accommodation in employment, or other discriminatory employment practices.
- Failure of a public entity or public accommodation to provide reasonable modifications to rules and policies, including but not limited to modifications for service animals and/or auxiliary aids and services, such as ASL interpreters or braille copies.
- Discriminatory housing practices, including the denial of reasonable accommodations and modifications, that burden or prevent people with developmental disabilities from living in the housing of their choice.
- Denial of reasonable modifications and/or auxiliary aids and services for justice-involved individuals with developmental disabilities in law enforcement interaction, and criminal justice proceedings and other court or administrative proceedings, including denial of services in the most integrated setting possible.

- 3.2 Provide timely and accurate disability rights information on employment, housing, public services and accommodations, and voting to provide individuals the tools to secure their rights, and in-person or virtual legal rights training sessions.

PADD FOCUS AREA #4:

Ensure that students with developmental disabilities have access to appropriate special education services under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act.

Objectives:

- 4.1 Provide individual advocacy to students who have been deprived a free appropriate public education (FAPE) due to any of the following:

- Failure to identify the student as a child who needs special education, particularly when the student is at risk of being denied appropriate accommodations, placement, and services, or is at risk of long-term discipline or removal.
 - Failure to implement special education and related services, particularly when the failure is due to arbitrary limitations on models of delivery of services, staffing, or policy.
 - Lack of appropriate and comprehensive transition services.
 - Denial of FAPE due to inappropriate or excessive discipline, restraint or seclusion, or other removal from the educational environment because of disability-related behaviors.
 - Disability-related abuse, neglect, or harassment.
- 4.2 Represent or assist students with developmental disabilities or their special education parents in filing and/or resolving administrative complaints with the U.S. Department of Education (Office for Civil Rights, Office of Special Education Programs, or Family Policy Compliance Office), the Arizona Department of Education, the Bureau of Indian Education, or other appropriate administrative agencies, concerning substantive violations by any educational agency.
- 4.3 Engage in activities to systemically advocate for students with developmental disabilities, including: drafting amicus briefs; monitoring proposed state legislation, Department of Education and other relevant state agency guidance, and relevant proposed rule changes to the Arizona Administrative Code and court rules of proceeding; providing written comments and/or feedback as necessary to educate the Department, other state agencies, and policymakers about the effects of such changes.
- 4.4 Provide timely and accurate rights information on special education to provide individuals the tools to secure their rights, and in-person or virtual legal rights training sessions.

PADD FOCUS AREA #5:

Collaborate with the DD Network (Developmental Disabilities Planning Council (DDPC), the Sonoran University Center of Excellence in Developmental Disabilities (UCEDD) and the Northern Arizona University Institute for Human Development (IHD)), and engage in collaborative outreach and systemic advocacy with entities and organizations in the community serving individuals with developmental disabilities.

Objectives:

- 5.1 Participate on DD related Councils, and on the Advisory Councils for the DDPC, the Sonoran UCEDD, and IHD. Participate on the Arizona Developmental Disabilities Advisory Council (DDAC).
- 5.2 Collaborate with the DD Network and stakeholders on state and federal public policy issues impacting children and adults with developmental disabilities, and educating policymakers on these issues.
- 5.3 Collaborate with the DD Network and organizations serving individuals with developmental disabilities on activities related to outreach and advocacy in underserved communities, including, but not limited to, the annual African American Conference on Disabilities.
- 5.4 Collaborate with the DD Network and organizations serving individuals with developmental disabilities on activities related to outreach and education concerning supported decision-making and alternatives to guardianship in Arizona.

Protection and Advocacy for Individual Rights – PAIR

In 1993, Congress established the Protection and Advocacy for Individual Rights (PAIR) program. PAIR is a federal program under the Rehabilitation Act of 1993. As a PAIR agency, DRAZ must protect and advocate for the legal and human rights of people with disabilities who do not meet the eligibility criteria for the following grants:

- the Protection and Advocacy for Persons with Developmental Disabilities (PADD),
- the Protection and Advocacy for Individuals with Mental Illness (PAIMI), and
- the Client Assistance Program (CAP).

The Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services (OSERS), Rehabilitation Services Administration oversees the federal PAIR program.

The following PAIR focus areas and objectives will be followed in accordance with our Case Selection Factors during FY 2025 (October 1, 2024 through September 30, 2025).

PAIR FOCUS AREA #1:

Ensure that individuals with disabilities (who do not meet the criteria for developmental disability or mental illness) are free from abuse and neglect and have appropriate safeguards to ensure their legal rights are protected.

Description: Individuals with disabilities residing in facilities or other supportive residential settings will be educated about their rights to be free from abuse and neglect, and DRAZ will advocate for the rights of these individuals.

Objectives:

- 1.1 Conduct investigations of alleged abuse or neglect related to incidents of suspicious death, restraint and seclusion, and physical or sexual assault of Arizonans with disabilities in a variety of placement settings, and when appropriate, make

recommendations for corrective action, preventive measures, and policy modifications through letters of concern and/or public reports. Within this objective, DRAZ will give priority to cases in which there are systemic problems that may result in additional incidents if uncorrected.

- 1.2 Utilize a monitoring protocol to conduct in-person or virtual monitoring visits at a variety of placement settings, such as nursing homes, assisted living facilities, or rehabilitation centers.
- 1.3 Provide timely and accurate information about reporting abuse and neglect to responsible agencies, and in-person and virtual legal rights training sessions.

PAIR FOCUS AREA #2:

Ensure an adequate network of appropriate healthcare services for individuals with disabilities who are Medicaid or Medicare beneficiaries, and increase access by individuals with disabilities who are Medicaid or Medicare beneficiaries to medical services, programs, and facilities.

Description: For many individuals with disabilities, access to healthcare services is often the key to living independently at home and in their communities. Often, healthcare facilities deny the healthcare services necessary for individuals with disabilities to be as healthy as possible. Individuals with disabilities encounter physical barriers, and the denial of reasonable modifications and auxiliary aids and services needed to participate fully in healthcare decisions and live as independently as possible.

Objectives:

- 2.1 Provide technical assistance or direct representation, and/or engage in systemic advocacy, to address issues related to: denial of services due to an inadequate provider network, disability-related eligibility for services, non-emergency medical transportation, the provision of medically necessary services,

reasonable modifications, auxiliary aids and services, and/or removal of physical and architectural barriers at medical treatment facilities, including doctor's offices, hospitals, and health treatment centers.

- 2.2 Provide timely and accurate rights information on healthcare services to provide individuals the tools to secure their rights, and in-person or virtual legal rights training sessions.

PAIR FOCUS AREA #3:

Assist individuals with disabilities (who do not qualify as a person with a developmental disability or mental illness) living in the community to know their right to be free from discrimination in employment, housing, public services and accommodations, and voting, and to take steps to secure those rights.

Description: Individuals with disabilities have the right to be free from disability discrimination in employment, housing, public services and accommodations, and voting.

Objectives:

- 3.1 Provide direct legal or advocacy services, and/or undertake systemic advocacy, in matters involving an individual with disabilities who has experienced discrimination in any of the following areas:
 - Imposition of unlawful disability-related question(s) by a public accommodation, public entity, or employer.
 - Failure of employers to provide a reasonable accommodation in employment, or other discriminatory employment practices.
 - Failure of a public entity or public accommodation to provide reasonable modifications to rules and policies, including but not limited to the modifications for service animals and/or auxiliary aids and services, and voting access.
 - Discriminatory housing practices, including the denial of reasonable accommodations and modifications, that prevent

or burden people with disabilities from living in the housing of their choice.

- Denial of reasonable modifications and/or auxiliary aids and services for justice-involved individuals with disabilities in law enforcement interaction, and criminal justice and other court or administrative proceedings, including denial of services in the most integrated setting possible.

3.2 Provide timely and accurate disability rights information on employment, housing, public services and accommodations, and voting to provide individuals the tools to secure their rights, and in-person or virtual legal rights training sessions.

Other Federal Grant Programs

The following focus areas and objectives will be followed in accordance with our Case Selection Factors during FY 2025 (October 1, 2024 through September 30, 2025) for the following grants:

Client Assistance Program – CAP

The Client Assistance Program (CAP) is authorized under the 1984 Amendments to the Rehabilitation Act of 1973. CAP ensures that Arizona's Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) Program assists individuals with disabilities to receive the services they require to become successfully employed. CAP services include referral services, creation and dissemination of self-advocacy materials, direct advocacy services, representation in the appeal process, such as administrative reviews, mediation, fair hearings and reconsideration requests, and systems advocacy.

CAP FOCUS AREA #1:

Assist clients and applicants of the Arizona's Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) Program and other Rehabilitation Services Administration Programs in addressing conflicts relating to eligibility, denial, or unreasonable delay of necessary VR services for successful employment.

Objectives:

- 1.1 Provide technical assistance, direct representation, and engage in systemic advocacy to address conflicts relating to eligibility, denial, or unreasonable delay of necessary VR services for successful employment based on:
 - arbitrary or absolute limitations on services;
 - failure to make exceptions to policies based on individual rehabilitation needs and disability-related needs;
 - unlawful state policies in conflict with federal law;
 - inadequate VR services for self-employment, customized

- employment, and supported employment;
- relegation of clients to employment outcomes that do not reflect their interests, capabilities, and preferences;
- discrimination in services by state VR vendors; and/or
- staffing issues, lack of training, or lack of contract providers.

Protection and Advocacy for Assistive Technology – PAAT

Protection and Advocacy for Assistive Technology (PAAT) was reauthorized as part of the Assistive Technology Act of 2004. DRAZ's PAAT work focuses on information and referral services, short-term and technical assistance, and individual representation to ensure children and adults with disabilities live more productive and independent lives.

PAAT FOCUS AREA #1:

Ensure that children and adults with disabilities can get access to critically needed assistive technology in a variety of settings – at school, home, work, and in the community.

Objectives:

- 1.1 Provide individual representation and/or systemic advocacy to ensure that children and adults with disabilities can get access to critically needed assistive technology in a variety of settings, including at school, home, work, and in the community.
- 1.2 Participate in the *Parsons v. Acadia Healthcare Company, Inc., Sierra Tucson LLC, and Sierra Tucson, Inc.* lawsuit challenging the failure to ensure effective communication by not providing necessary assistive technology, among other things, at an inpatient and residential behavioral health treatment program.

Protection and Advocacy for Beneficiaries of Social Security – PABSS

Protection and Advocacy for Beneficiaries of Social Security (PABSS) services are authorized under the Ticket to Work and Work Incentives Improvement Act of 1999. DRAZ’s PABSS program provides information and referral, education, and in-person and virtual training, technical assistance, and individual representation to Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) beneficiaries and Supplemental Security Income (SSI) recipients who are experiencing barriers to employment.

The following PABSS focus areas and objectives will be followed in accordance with our Case Selection Factors during FY 2025 (October 1, 2024 through September 30, 2025).

PABSS FOCUS AREA #1:

Assist individuals who receive SSDI or SSI to address a barrier to employment. Barriers to employment include 1) disability-related employment discrimination, 2) provision or implementation of appropriate Vocational Rehabilitation services through the Arizona Rehabilitation Services Administration or Employment Networks, 3) discrimination in housing, transportation, post-secondary education, or 4) denial of necessary Assistive Technology or medically necessary services through AHCCCS, ALTCS, or Medicare.

Objectives:

1.1 PABSS Services

Protection and Advocacy for Individuals with Traumatic Brain Injury – PATBI

The Protection and Advocacy for Individuals with Traumatic Brain Injury (PATBI) program was created by Congress as part of the Children’s Health Act of 2000. DRAZ’s PATBI work focuses on self-advocacy information,

short-term and technical assistance, and individual representation to advocate on an individual and systemic level to effect changes in systems providing care and services for persons with TBI.

PATBI FOCUS AREA #1:

Ensure that persons with TBI and their family members are educated about their rights, can get access to self-advocacy information on their rights, and can enforce those rights.

Objectives:

1.1 PATBI Services

- Provide individual representation and/or systemic advocacy concerning persons with TBI on disability-related legal matters including healthcare, housing, employment and related services, and access to public entities and public accommodations;
- Collaborate with community partners to provide self-advocacy information and training to persons with TBI and their families.

Protection and Advocacy for Voting Assistance – PAVA

The Protection and Advocacy for Voting Assistance (PAVA) program was created in 2002 when Congress passed the Help America Vote Act to ensure that persons with disabilities can cast a private and independent vote. DRAZ's PAVA work focuses on ensuring that people with disabilities have equal access to all aspects of the electoral process.

PAVA FOCUS AREA #1:

Ensuring full access to the electoral process for persons with disabilities in registering to vote, casting a vote, and accessing a polling place.

Objectives:

1.1 PAVA Services

- Increase voter registration for Arizonans with disabilities;
- Increase voter participation (e.g., casting a ballot) for Arizonans with disabilities;
- Increase voter education opportunities for Arizonans with disabilities;
- Work with election officials to address the electoral needs of Arizonans with disabilities; and
- Protect the rights of Arizonans with disabilities to ensure full access to the electoral process.