



## Protection and Advocacy for Individuals with Mental Illness Program (PAIMI)

- Since 1986, the Protection and Advocacy (P&A) System in every state and territory (<http://www.ndrn.org/en/ndrn-member-agencies.html>) has worked through the PAIMI program to protect the human and civil rights of individuals with serious mental health conditions. Collectively, the P&A agencies are the largest provider of legal advocacy services for persons with disabilities in the United States.
- The PAIMI program has been very successful protecting and advocating for the human and civil rights of people with serious mental health conditions, as well as investigating reports of abuse and neglect in places that either provide care or treat individuals with serious mental health conditions.
  - In Fiscal Year 2012, the P&As served 10,838 individuals and closed 12,968 complaints concerning: abuse (2947); neglect (2598), and civil rights violations (7,423).
  - In addition, P&As performed systemic advocacy for 24,145,211 individuals; responded to 35,493 requests for information and referral services, and participated in education and training activities attended by 134,967 persons such as individuals with serious mental health conditions, their family members, state mental health administrators and planners, public health personnel, state and local policymakers, law enforcement personnel, educators, and other professionals in the field of social services and advocacy.
  - In FY 2012 P&As used 12,930 intervention strategies to address client complaints. These intervention strategies included: 6,204 short term assistance; 1,978 abuse/neglect investigations; 1,547 negotiations / investigations; 3,035 technical assistance; 404 administrative remedies; and, 411 legal remedies. P&A systems view the use of legal and judicial interventions to resolve a client complaint as the strategy of last resort (about 3 percent of the time is the intervention strategy a legal remedy).
- Both government rating systems, like the Program Assessment Rating Tool (PART), and independent studies, like from the Human Services Research Institute, have found the PAIMI program to be effective and having a major impact on protecting the rights of persons with serious mental health conditions.

## Examples of PAIMI Work

- The P&A came in contact with a thirty year old man who has been institutionalized most of his life. The PAIMI staff met with the young man, members of his treatment team and community treatment providers to create a discharge plan designed with his specific needs in mind. The client went apartment hunting and signed a lease on a new apartment. He has been able to live in the community with the needed supports because of the assistance of the P&A.
- The P&A was contacted by the male residents of a board and care facility alleging that the facility was financially exploiting them through improper use of their funds. The residents alleged that the facility staff kept their money, and that they were not given copies of their ledgers to see how much money they had saved, or how much money they had spent for their personal needs. The PAIMI advocate investigated the claims and met with the facility administrator regarding their policies and procedures for maintaining the resident's funds. The administrator agreed to changes in their policies and procedures. The residents reported immediate improvements in access to their monetary funds. The advocate continued to visit the facility and found that these improvements have continued.
- As a result of legal intervention by the P&A, a client with serious mental health conditions whose employment was illegally terminated was reinstated. The client was a 25 year old woman who had an excellent work record and several promotions with her company over the course of four years. During her fifth year of employment, she experienced difficulties with her mental health that rendered her unable to work, so she began to receive short term disability benefits. When she and her doctor confirmed that she was ready to return to work she applied for an open position with her former employer. She was told there were no open positions, although there were positions open for which the client was well qualified. The P&A attorney filed a charge of discrimination with the state human rights commission. After the charge was filed the parties negotiated the client's return to work. The client is now working with benefits. The client is relieved to be back at work since she is a single parent of a young child and she supports herself and her family with her income.
- The P&A worked with an 11 year old girl with severe Obsessive Compulsive Disorder (OCD) and a co-occurring intellectual disability. She was receiving intensive rehabilitative mental health services to address certain difficult behaviors she demonstrates as a result of her OCD. Her parents received a decision from the state that her mental health services provided for under Medicaid were being reduced because the girl has co-occurring conditions. PAIMI staff represented her at an administrative hearing and successfully argued that the services were focused on rehabilitative mental and behavioral health. As a result of the P&A's representation, the girl was able to maintain all of her service hours.