

CECY Monthly Call – September 8, 2016

“Disability Rights California and Employment: What We Do and How We Do It”

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1.0 hours

>> I think we should get started. It's about almost five minutes after 10, and I want to make sure that we have a chance not only to hear from Debra Jorgensen but also have a chance to ask any questions.

So we are very fortunate today to have one of our own present to us. Debra Jorgensen, who you all know from CECY, is the Managing Attorney of the San Diego office for Disability Rights California.

As we were talking prior to her presentation today, she has a long history and commitment to employment law dating from when – even when she was in law school and doing related work. Also of note I think as we listen to the presentation is Debra's perspective on employment for people with disabilities and that it really is grounded in the fundamental values of how we all feel about the value and

importance of work in our daily lives, and that the transition for youth with disabilities should be no different for those children than it is for typical children. So they should face the same delays and challenges of being prepared and assisted and supported as they make that leap from school to work.

Debra said today that she will pepper her presentation with her own personal experience. So I'm not going to provide any other background. I'll let Debra speak for herself. But welcome, Debra, and I'm going to turn it over to you now to tell us about Disability Rights California and the specific focus on employment-related work. So thank you.

>> Of course. Thank you for inviting me to talk to everybody. And I think it's probably a timely conversation to have, you know, now that CECY is kind of wrapping up. And I think it's mutual to everybody to know more about our organization and to know, you know, the type of cases that we can take.

So – so can everybody see my presentation? I want to double check. Okay. Because I keep getting notes that say I have lost connectivity and that it kind of blanks in and out. But I, you know, just holler if something is not working.

>> Debra, you're going to need to say what you're looking at. Because there are several people – we know Catherine Campisi and Linda O'Neil are not on the Adobe Connect. So you will need to walk people through what's on the screen as you go through your presentation.

>> I'm trying to get on right now. So I'll be on, but there may be others.

>> Yeah.

>> So the materials I'm going to use are actually – are our annual report from 2015, which I think is kind of a nice overview of our organization and what we do and how we do it. And then I'm also going to talk about our advocacy service plan, which is a very in depth plan – you know, basically our project plan for what we want to do with all of our resources each year.

So they are both available, available on our website. So that's what I am going to follow. And I'll be reading this from those reports, and then also just adding to that, you know, from, from additional information.

So I'll talk through everything that I'm referencing on the screen.

So just to give you a little bit of background, Disability Rights California, we are a nonprofit organization. So we are a private nonprofit. We were created by the government in 1978 to protect the rights of people with disabilities.

Our mission is to advocate, educate, investigate, and litigate to advance the rights of Californians with disabilities. According to – so federal law mandates that every state in the country have a protection and advocacy system.

And DRC is California's protection and advocacy system. So – and in fact our name – I'm sure most of you, some of you knew us before we were DRC. We were called Protection and Advocacy. And, you know, Protection and Advocacy organizations look different across the United States.

Some states have their Protection and Advocacy system is kind of like an arm of the state. But we were created to be private nonprofit back in 1978, and we stayed that way since then.

Our federal mandate is to protect and advocate for people with disabilities. And that's meaningful because we – probably the part of DRC that doesn't really overlap with employment much is our investigatory duties under the law to go into facilities and make sure that people with disabilities are free from abuse and neglect. And I'll talk a little bit more, just a little bit more about that in a few pages.

We have a – so the whole protection and advocacy system for every single state. We have kind of a national umbrella organization that's called the National Disability Rights Network. They do lots of policy work. Anytime something comes down from the federal level, they are training all the P and A's what it means and what our obligations are to enforce it.

And NDRN was really the agency that sparked the competitive integrated employment push many years ago. And it's something that DRC took very seriously, and we wanted to incorporate it into our advocacy plan at that point in time. And we have done that, and you will see that more when we go through the advocacy plan in a little bit.

The next – flipping down to page three, this is our Executive Director, Catherine Blakemore. She has been with us for many years. She is an amazing advocate. She actually just won the Lauren Miller award for like lifetime commitment to civil rights issues from the state bar, and she is going to be recognized later this month

at the annual meeting. So that's a – just, you know, she embodies the work that we do. And she is a wonderful leader.

And so some of her words I think are very poignant, because she really sympathizes what we do and really fights to end discrimination, stop abuse, and advocate for critical services for people.

When – you know, she talked a little bit in her year in review here about the Olmstead decision that came down from the Supreme Court about 15 years ago which decided that people with disabilities could not be unnecessarily segregated in institutions.

And we continued to make that mandate a reality. We continued to do lots of work in the institutionalization, you know. We have been instrumental in helping developmental people leave developmental centers and go into the community. And we continue to do that work.

And I think, Olivia, you were the one that I first heard kind of use the phrase that really the work with competitive integration is like phase two of the institutionalization. So, you know, we are going to pull people out and pull them into the community for their day-to-day living. But now we also need to pull them into the day-to-day activities, that everybody else does, which includes employment.

So we are charged with – every single employee in our agency is a mandated adult dependent – if there's an adult dependent who is a person with a disability who is basically dependent on a system or, you know, an entity for their safety and well-being, we are required to record if there's any kind of neglect or abuse on behalf of that person.

So that's a huge charge. Because anytime we get a call from the agency saying, you know, my son has been in an institution, and I think he is being abused, we have to like stop everything we do, file a

report, and that goes to our investigations unit to pick up the ones that need to be looked at more closely.

Along with this mandate is also, we are – protection and advocacy systems have a very broad access to go into facilities and monitor and look for abuse and neglect. So we have a very, you know, broad mandate to be able to go in and do that kind of work.

Go down to page four. This says how we make a difference. And so one the things I want to explain is that we have lots of different ways that we can help people and fulfill our mission. And that includes representing clients at hearings, filing lawsuits, providing material, information, training, and referrals to people, promoting self advocacy, trying to educate people how to advocate for themselves.

We do advocacy for public policy changes, we have a whole separate unit in Sacramento that just works on public policy and communication with the public, and we conduct investigations and monitoring – monitor service delivery throughout the disability system.

And – you know, we don't have the statistics in this annual report. We used to always report it. But a majority of our – we handle over 25,000 cases a year, which is huge. But a majority of those cases are at a lower level of service. That doesn't mean that we are litigating 25,000 times. What that means is that we are – we always try to resolve disputes at the lowest level possible.

So if somebody comes up and says – you know, they are a pretty good self advocate, and they say here's my situation, we might say, look. We are going to give you some really good resources. We have tons of publications on our website that are just full of good information. Go, you know, take those steps. And then if you really

still get a denial, come back to us and we will see if we can represent you.

And so we do a lot of just counsel, advice, educating people, having people go out and self advocate. And then, you know, we try to negotiate. We try to hold meetings and get things resolved more easily. You know, we really only litigate when we have to. And it's the majority of cases of those 25,000 are somewhere below the litigation level.

So then in – I like the annual report, because it's really focused on – you know, examples of the cases that we have got involved with and the type of results we have gotten for people. And it goes through kind of a whole realm of the subject areas that DRC can assist with.

So one of the those areas is – and it's listed on page four – is discrimination. So discrimination people with disabilities face in almost any context. Trying to – you know, trying to get services through public agencies, through private companies. That charge is very broad. Our discrimination work is probably the bulk of the work that we do in a legal unit.

But it also includes employment discrimination. So once a person with a disability is employed, the types of discrimination that people face in not being given reasonable accommodations or, you know, having various problems with their employer. So that's included here.

So going back to the – I mean, let me pause for a second. Does anybody have questions or comments or anything so far? It still feels weird to me to talk to a computer. Ha ha.

>> It feels like a blank slate a little bit. I can appreciate the challenge. But you know that we are listening, and I think you're setting the stage very aptly for us to understand the work. So, thank you.

>> Okay. And if anybody – I'm happy to take – just interrupt, I'm happy to take questions along the way. So just shout out if you want me to stop and go back to something.

So just scrolling through – I'm not going to go through all of the vignettes and the stories here, but I more just wanted to know you the breadth of the work that we do. So under the kind of larger heading of discrimination, we work on, you know, parking issues, transportation, service animal issues, housing issues. Like that's – housing has become really the bulk of – affordable housing for people, like on section eight waivers and that kind of thing.

We just settled a lawsuit with the city of Los Angeles and a piece of litigation that we were involved in that commits \$200 million to affordable accessible housing in the city of Los Angeles. So that's, that's huge.

Those types of systemic cases is really where we are trying to focus more and more of our energy. We really want to – you know, we help individuals on a daily basis. But when we can have a larger systemic impact, that's really – we tend to focus lots of our resources on those types of cases.

Going through the – so page six is actually a story about employment. So in this case obviously the DRC client who we took the case to hearing and ordered the department of rehabilitation to

make modifications for this individual's van so that he could actually continue to get to and from work.

So this was not a situation of, you know, an individual with intellectual and developmental disabilities, but our – you know, our cap advocate at work, they represent clients across a whole spectrum, not just our IDD.

So community integration is another kind of large, you know, heading. Lots of work in terms of benefits and benefits like Medi-Cal, managed care Medi-Cal, in-home support services, nursing waiver services. All that stuff falls under what we call community integration. And the reason we call it that is because these individuals who qualify for these services, if they did not have these services in the community, they would be in an institution. And our work is always focus on getting people out of institutions, into the community, with the supports that we needed, which is almost always a less expensive route than putting people in institutions.

So one of the cases – and I want to bring this up, because I think it's a pretty inspirational story. So this is – this involves – because I used to do a lot of work for benefits as well. And this involves a young man who came to us when his – and he has a very severe form of muscular dystrophy.

He – by the time he came to us as a client, he was only able to move one finger out of his whole body. So he was – you know, had a trach, he was on a ventilator and had lived like this for many many years.

When the EPSDT program which covers children, in terms of healthcare for children, were not phased out when he turned 21, his

nursing hours were basically cut in half when he moved into adult Medi-Cal programs.

And so we went to hearing, he went to hearing actually himself. He did not get a favorable decision, and then we filed a lawsuit on his behalf to try to get him the nursing services that he needed.

When he lost the services, he was actually a student at UCLA. And he had to drop out of school and move home so that his mother could provide, voluntarily, all the – basically nursing care that he needed that had been cut.

We were involved with that case, and then his younger brother, who had the same type of very debilitating muscular dystrophy, had – basically was in the same situation as him – was then phasing out of the EPSDT program at the age of 21. And the state was similarly going to cut the hours about in half for him as well. And the state's function was that the mother should be able to pick up all 24 hour care for two boys who needed basically 24/7 monitoring, suctioning, just to stay alive.

And at this point, the mother wasn't sleeping. She – you just can't imagine. She had the rooms next to each other, but she was – you know, not being a trained nurse, basically responsible for keeping these two boys alive, you know, just herself, all night long.

And so we got involved. We went to hearing on behalf of – I handled the hearing on behalf of the younger brother. We got a favorable decision. The profits with the Medi-Cal decisions is that once in ALJ, an administrative judge makes the decision, then the director of the health – DHDS – sorry, I don't know what the acronym is missing me – but the health – healthcare services department, that

director can basically reverse or change the decision in any way that that person wants to.

So in anticipation of that person, you know, changing that, we actually filed a federal lawsuit to keep the services that the younger brother had in place. And we were able to settle with the state, you know, pretty quickly. And both boys now have 24/7 nursing services. And that has allowed the older brother – went to UC San Diego, got his political science degree last summer, and just started law school in – about a month ago.

And – and so just watching him progress and do the things that he is capable of doing, it's very meaningful work. That's how essential the community integration and other benefits can be. Because you need things like nursing care services and in-home support services, to have those things in place in order for people to get out into the community and work and go to school and achieve – and live up to their potential.

So that's an example of how the work we do in one group, like community integration, really intersects with the employment work as well.

Let's see. I'm going to keep going through. So I'm still going through the annual report, we are on page eight, to talk more about some of our work getting in-home support services for people. Another thing that is about, moving somebody out of the developmental center into her own apartment.

We have an example of a woman who needed to be out from under a conservatorship, because it was very difficult for her to

function in that conservatorship. So we were able to move her out of that conservatorship and set up the supports that she needed.

We also do work – I'm on page 10 now of our annual report – we also do work with special education. So, you know, historically that has been where we really focused – that's where we have done like our transition work. So, you know, individuals in the school system who needed transition services, that's where we were doing that work. We have kind of moved that work now over to our employment-focused group.

But this group still does work on transition issues. And sometimes it's in the context of kind of a larger systemic case – so we do lots of special education. We do, you know, housing. We do quite a bit of housing work now. Sorry. I don't why this keeps saying – I'm off? Okay. I'm back.

And then we do a lot of work – and this is kind of a newer thing that we are doing – a lot of work in jails and prisons, and making sure that the ADA is enforced in those settings. So we do a lot of – we use a lot of our access authority to go in and look at conditions and make sure that people are receiving what they need to in terms of – people with disabilities are getting the supports that they need even inside jails and prisons. So these stories are about that.

We also work with, you know, in much of our litigation we work with pro bono law firms, who will partner with us and provide legal resources. We also have, you know, lots of attorneys and other people – you know, college graduates that just want to come and work for us, and we have a lot of volunteer staff as well.

We have about 220 employees statewide. And we are – our main hub is in Sacramento, and that's where we have kind of our executive– and other units. And then we have bay area office, we have our Los Angeles office, our San Diego offices -- that's where I am -- and then also a satellite office in Fresno.

So then there are some stories here about abuse and neglect. These are stories where, you know, people were being like, you know, unnecessarily restrained in hospitals. So we came in and were able to say – you know, do an investigative report in some situations, get them into the community.

We have – as I mentioned before, like our legislative unit that tracks legislation we support or oppose or go neutral on many bills affecting people with disabilities. So that's a public unit we have within Sacramento.

We also have a federal grant that is focused on voting rights and voting access for people with disabilities. So we kind of recently hired more people on that team, and we are really beefing up our efforts to get people with disabilities to the polls for November. So there are some good stories about that.

We continue to do work on our mental health team. You know, the parity laws, where mental health commissions need to be provided by private insurance companies to the same degree that physical healthcare is provided. So we are monitoring that.

We also have – we have – you know, our mission is really focused also on education and encouraging people to self advocate, we focus a lot of our – quite a few resources on sending advocates around the state to do that kind of training.

So we have a special program, like a peer self advocacy program, where these individuals will go into different groups and work with them on the issues that are meaningful, that bring in some of our attorneys to talk about subject matter if there are certain issues that the group wants to hear about.

So that's a really neat program, and just really helping people in a pure setting to advocate for themselves and learn about their rights.

We have a huge focus on reaching out to underserved communities. And we continue to have very kind of bold goals about how, you know, we really want our services that we provide for the community to reflect the census data in terms of numbers throughout the state of California. So we kind of look at it regionally and look at it statewide, and we are always making efforts to get out to groups where we don't have enough clientele. So we do lots of outreach.

Let's see. Almost to the end of the annual report. The last two pages are just kind of interesting in terms of some of the facts about our agency. This is on page 19. So the number of people we served in 2015, the majority of them – 11,551 – are individuals with developmental disabilities.

Another about 1,600 have physical and sensory difficulties. So we served over 25,000 people, which means we assisted them at some level of service. And we were able to field somewhere – you know, a half a million of calls about legal problems and get people referrals and resources that they needed if we couldn't help them.

The number of people educated, talking about our outreach effort. So the 2015 year, we had 807 trainings and outreach events throughout the state of California. And we trained or educated over

40,000 people. So we really do get out to the communities and are always, always – I mean, if you have folks in your networks and you need trainings on certain issues, please, you know, reach out to us. Because that's what we are here to do. That's one of our main focuses.

Number of people who benefited from online resources – so, you know, not surprisingly, people more and more access our website. So we have like three quarters of a million website visits. And actual publications downloaded from our site was close to a quarter of a million.

So we are – you know, we are working hard. You know, we have got our hands in lots of different places. And I – you know, I really believed in the mission and the vision that we have, and I think we do a pretty good job of serving people.

The last page of the annual report is some of our fiscal – some of our fiscal data, and that is kind of where our revenue support comes from. And the majority of it comes from seven different federal grants that we receive. And this goes along with this mandate, right? Where the protection and advocacy system for the state of California, and we get different types of grants that serve different types of communities –

So, we also have contracts through the state of California. Our office of client's rights advocates are stationed at all the twenty-one regional centers, and they provide advocacy services for regional center clients. So that's a state contract.

We also have, through the department of state hospitals, we also have contracts to have advocates in every single state hospital.

So you know, OCRA, our office of clients rights advocates, then the OPR, which are office of patients' rights, are kind of their own separate entity. But they are all under the umbrella of DRC.

We have like fire walls between the different agencies. But we are able to, you know, collaborate in very meaningful ways to try to protect and serve the people that come through the various systems.

Some of our revenue comes from the state bar, California state bar through an equal access trust account. And some comes through program income on the trust account held by attorneys throughout the state. And we get them income through that.

And those are really focused on serving underserved communities. So that's, that's the funding that really gets us out there doing our outreach and really representing the clients from those underserved communities.

So – and then this is our expenses, and then we did have some left over money from last year. And as a side note, we have been restructuring our whole agency to move from a regional-based model of services – so before if it was somebody like, the San Diego office would cover San Diego County, Orange County, Riverside, and imperial.

So if anybody called us from those places, it would get funneled through the legal office, which is where we would access the attorneys and, you know, work our cases and that kind of thing.

So now we have changed our whole business model so that we are providing services across – by subject matter. So we have, you know, an employment team who just focus on employment, and we will take clients from anywhere across the state of California.

So that also entailed changing our intake system. Because we used to do it regionally, and now we do it statewide. And that's actually been my kind of pet project over the last nine months, was basically, you know, changing that system from a regional-based system to a statewide basis.

And we have kind of successfully been in that statewide intake mode since July, over the summer. And things are working pretty well. So we are still working on our restructuring.

So I'm going to pause there for a minute, because I want to get a different document up. But does anybody have any questions, comments?

No? Okay.

All right. Let me go over to –

>> Debra, this is Gina. I have a question.

>> Uh-huh.

>> How – I know – let's say for instance I live in Los Angeles, and there are a couple different nonprofit organizations that also – it does seem like what they do kind of crosses over with Disability Rights California. So they – there is disability focus and possible litigation.

So I guess my question is statewide organization's regional offices, how do you or don't you interact with other organizations that may have some intersecting mission purpose ?

>> Yeah. Thanks for that question.

Yes, we work with – we are on the same page. We are very much, you know, interested in working cooperatively with other agencies that are focused on the same population. And there are times when that relationship is more of like a referral relationship.

You know, we know we can't – we don't have the resources to do something, and we will try to get a person to an agency that we think might help the resource.

But yeah, we work jointly with many different firms. You know, we do amicus briefs, which is kind of like a – called like a friend of the court brief. And so in any kind of very systemic, impactful decisions that are in the process of being decided by a judge, it can be federal court or state court, sometimes we'll join with many of those organizations and file what's called an amicus brief and basically say here's the –, here's some educational on the law judge, we think, and some perspective that we think you should have.

And so we do that work collaboratively with them. We file lawsuits, you know, with groups, with other groups sometimes. But yeah, we work very collaboratively with other groups.

>> Thank you.

>> Yeah, and just to come to explain here, protection and advocacy system, by federal mandate, is supposed to be a provider of last resort.

So what that means is we really are – our number one focus is to represent people who have no other possibility of representation. So that could mean there are no other attorneys out, there are no other agencies that will even do that kind of work, which is the case in a lot of – most of what we do, we don't get attorney's fees from it.

So therefore, there are no private attorneys that would do that kind of work. So if the private bar handles it or the person has like an advocate or somebody that can already help them – you know, we are going to explore those other options for people. And really our

mandate is to help the people who – really are a provider of last resort. And we help the people that have no other possibility.

So – and there are some other organizations, too, that have – every legal service like a legal service agency or other agencies that focus on disability rights, I mean, they all kind of get their funding from different places. They have different program requirements.

So sometimes there's a great intersection, and other times, you know – you know, I mean a good example has been like eviction cases. So kind of historically, I think we are starting to take more eviction cases now. But historically, that was something that like – had done.

But they may not always have the expertise on disability issues to do that work. So what we have always done in the past is say, you know, contact legal aid. But if that attorney from legal aid needs technical assistance from a disability issue, we are happy to provide that.

So sometimes the level of service we provide is really technical assistance to attorneys who are willing to take the case but need more education on the disability side of the law.

>> Debra, this is Catherine Campisi. Can you talk a little bit about the client assistance program for department of rehabilitation clients, which it would be preparation for work. I don't know if people know that it can serve that function.

>> Sure. Sure.

So, I mean, 2012 we kind of became the client assistance program for the state of California. And it was – you know, at that

time we set up offices throughout the state of California. We knew the clientele we needed to serve.

So if anybody who is a client of DOR or trying to become a client of DOR, so they can go to our cap advocates and, you know, basically if they are having trouble getting services or becoming eligible or anything like that, we can assist them.

And in fact, you know, Catherine, some of the vignettes I want to give involve DOR and our client assistance program. And really a lot of the work that we do individually that kind of informs the policy things that we bring, that Andy and I bring to CECY, really trickles up from the clients that we get from our client assistance program, who, you know, some of them are trying to access services from both DOR and regional center, and they just need help navigating things.

So I'll talk about a couple case scenarios where we have been successful in helping people, specifically with competitive integrated employment.

>> Great. Thanks.

>> Okay.

Any other questions?

Okay. So I'm going to switch now to – this is our advocacy plan. We do a large kind of overhaul of our plan every five years. Because the basic goals and the types of cases that we want to take – you know, we have to change with the times.

And so, you know, whereas probably our last advocacy service plan before 2013 didn't have much about employment, you will see in this one employment is sprinkled everywhere.

And so this – this is our guiding principle. This document is so meaningful. The first thing I give to new employees is our advocacy plan. It's all in there – to tell people exactly what we do, exactly what we don't do, exactly how we, you know, screen cases, how we fit the calls and the situations we get into our plan for what we feel are the most pressing issues for people with disabilities.

And this is our – so we have a five-year plan, and then every year we have objectives and specific things that we want to do. It's like our work plan for what we want to do for that year. This is our plan from this last year, and we are in the process of creating and editing and finalizing the one-year plan for next year.

So this is an agency-wide process. We get together, we collect data, we have a public comment period for 45 days. We incorporate all the – you know, information and suggestions we get from the community, and we actually like run numbers to see, like, you know, for everyone that commented on employment, what were the subcategories in employment works that were the most important to people.

So we will actually – when the attorneys come around and create these objectives, we are really looking at all of that data in making sure that we serve in the community in the way that they want to be served.

So, you know, sometimes when people call us and that's just not one of our priorities right now, and they get really upset – you know, it's part of what we have to do as an agency to conserve our resources. We can't do everything in all cases. We have to have a mechanism for choosing what is less important. And, you know, we

really do – since we take so much information in to make these plans, we know that it is based on what the community really wants. It's not necessarily what every individual wants, but collectively it is what the community has told us that they want.

So this is the – and then next – at the end of next year, because you see the advocacy – the five-year plan is 2013-2017. So then next year we will start the process of our next five-year plan, which is an even bigger process. So anyway, this is where it all starts.

So one of the – we are responding to – when we create these plans, we are really responding to changes in our environment and in the environment nationally and at the state level and locally. And the commitment during this five-year period was that DRC would redouble its efforts to protect and advance the rights of Californians with disabilities.

And we would use all of our advocacy tools to ensure that people can live in barrier-free communities of their choice with the services that they need to be successful. To stop abuse, no matter when or where it occurs. To increase employment opportunities with competitive wages. To maintain access to businesses and services available to the general public. And to provide up-to-date knowledge and tools so that people with disabilities can be equal, passionate, and full participants in society.

So as you can see, I'm kind of reading from a segment from page three of the advocacy plan. You know, employment really became a very – very big issue for us and something that we really knew we needed to focus a lot of time and energy on.

Page four talks about our vision for the work that we do. So envision a barrier-free, inclusive, diverse world that values each individual and their voice. In this world all people with disabilities enjoy the power of equal rights and opportunities, independence, and freedom from abuse, neglect, and discrimination.

So that's our vision. I have already talked to you about our mission, but that's involved – you know, educating and providing people with disabilities with dignity and equality, independence, and freedom.

So those are – so then we get to kind of our main advocacy plan principles. And these are the principles that guide our legislative work, that guide the work we do through all of our outreach, that guides all the legal work that we do.

So these are – you know, one of the major topics is increasing access to employment. So that was integrated environment. So that was one of our main, main proposals for the five-year period.

So looking forward to – this document on page seven talks about what we do, so just gives examples of the types of things that we do and the different levels of service, as I described above. You hear some examples of the things we can help with. And we really already went through this in the annual report, so I don't want to spend a lot of time on this. I want to hone in at this point on the employment side.

There are some things that we don't have resources to help with. So generally we will not represent in criminal law, family law, bankruptcy, or workers comp proceedings. We don't file personal injury lawsuits. We don't help people fill out social security forms.

We do help people once they are on social security to – you know, if there's any kind of barrier to work created by something that happened with social security administration, we will intervene and try to assist.

We do not assist people to get guardianships or conservatorships. And we don't handle issues that are unrelated to an individual disability. And we really focus on the issues that were outlined in our advocacy plan when we say "yes" or "no" to people.

The section talks about who we help. So this – who we help depends on the federal grant that we use to help people. And I'll talk more about that at the very end.

The next page, 11, this is how you can get help. This gives the numbers to each of our regional offices. As I was saying before, we just restructured our – the way we do intakes. So now our 800 number, which is the same as it's been, the 776-5746, is actually dedicated solely to intake.

So if you have clients or have people that call that number, but they really don't have a legal issue, they just want to talk to somebody in the regional office, they can get forwarded to somebody in the regional offices. But we have kind of, now, where we used to answer the phone, one person with everybody, we kind of have like two buckets now. So we have our intake bucket, which is everything that comes through as a legal issue, and then calling the regional offices for pretty much anything else that you would need.

And we have lots of things going back and forth right now. So this is just, you know, part of our education back to the community, is that this 800 number is now exclusively for intake.

I'm going to go forward to page 20, which outlines our main impact areas. So the areas where we decided we are going to focus are on access and discrimination issues, community integration, employment, mental health, youth – which includes special education – and peer and self advocacy. So those are our major, major areas that we are focused on.

And then what this advocacy service plan does, it goes into great, great detail about the specific work that we are going to do in each area. So I'm going to flip through to the – to the – well, and employment is kind of sprinkled through several of these impact areas. So for instance, under access and discrimination, we have a specific goal to address discrimination in employment. So that's one of our specific directives. So that's where we would kind of – that is where we house that discrimination word.

Some of the – so then we get to community integration. And like I talked about before with the example of the case that I had handled some time back – you know, sometimes you see overlap between – if a person doesn't have adequate nursing and IHSS hours, they may not be able to get out to the community to actually work.

So sometimes we have to address the benefits side of it on – through our community integration team. You know, and then that allows the person to have the support and training to go out and look for – and participate in employment.

I'm going to keep going through here and get to what we – what used to be called employment is now called our work incentive team. And it – now I'm on page 33 of the advocacy service plan.

So our work incentives team, our vision statement for this team is, we envision a world where people with disabilities have the opportunity to engage in integrated employment with competitive wages and benefits. People with disabilities will receive the supports and reasonable accommodations they need to enable them to enter and remain in the workforce.

So this is our vision for the group. Our first goal is increased access to integrated competitive employment. At the time we wrote this, I think we were still calling it ICE. But, you know, now it's CIE, so I think that's a better term for it.

I'll give you some – I'd like to just kind of give you a couple – read a couple case scenarios from – you know, from this last year where we have really, you know, fulfilled this goal.

So one example was a youth who in her kind of training, school program – she's been folding pizza boxes and rolling silverware. And she really didn't want to do that.

Her goal was to become an assistant in an office, like a file clerk. And so we advocated with the regional center to revise her ICP, the goal of competitive integrated employment. We also were able to advocate with DOR to get customized employment funded. And so she is basically in training right now, and they are in the phase where they are trying to match her with an employer.

So that was, you know, one example of somebody who moved from like a group supported employment structure, really wasn't what she wanted to be doing, and then having to go through the process of getting IPP modified with the regional center and getting the support

in place through the department of rehabilitation. So that's one example.

I have a couple others. So one –

>> Debra? I just want to flag you that we only have a few more minutes. So perhaps you kind of want to bullet a couple things that you think are most critical and kind of help us with a wrap up take away of what you would like people to know as we move forward in terms of DRC as a resource.

>> Okay. Yeah. I'm sorry, I wasn't – thank you for the time check.

So I'll just kind of finish flagging in the plan. Maybe I won't go through the – sorry for the background noise, but I can certainly circulate some of those if people are interested in the communications we have been involved in. Some of them involved, you know, people who were in sheltered workshops and didn't want to be there, and we were able to work with both the regional center and DOR to get them out in the community with the services that they needed.

And we continue to work on the transition, transition cases as well. So this is where we – so under the work incentives goal, goal two is where we do all our CAP work. So advocate for the rights of individuals seeking and receiving the Rehab Act funded services.

And then we also do work with, under our – the HABS grant, which is specifically for beneficiaries of social security. So we advocate for, you know, anything that's a barrier to employment involving social security. We can help clients with that.

The goal four talks about kind of the transition services that we continue to be involved in. And then kind of a newer part of our program is that we have the work incentives and planning assistance unit for three counties in California: San Diego, Riverside, and Imperial. And so we are now the work up program – we have a staff who are the work up program for those three counties.

So we are doing a lot of good work with the actual – you know, how to get people secure in their benefits while they are working side of it.

So that's more or less – that sums up really what we do that focuses on employment. I'm happy to take questions in the last few minutes that we have. But please know that you can always – you know, we have kind of what's called like attorney of the day. So if you are a professional and you're calling up about something a little more systemic, or you want to have training set up, I mean, feel free to reach out to me or, you know, anybody on our work incentives team.

But, you know, I'm happy to be the first kind of contact for that. And, you know, we are happy to do trainings, we are happy to do outreach to different communities. And we are always available to take cases. But we really – we need the person with the disability to actually contact us, or somebody who is kind of authorized to speak on their behalf.

So sometimes when we get calls from like providers who want us to work with their clients, we will need the client themselves to contact us. Because our mandate is to serve the people with disabilities, and

we really can't serve people who are not authorized to speak on that person's behalf.

Are there any more questions? Like would people want to, to get kind of specifics of work that we have done specifically on CIE in the last year?

>> I think it would be terrific if you want to forward that information to Rachel. She can distribute it to the group. I think people would be very interested, I know that I would be, to hear some of the specifics.

>> Okay.

>> I think you ended well with us, so that people know that it's critical that the – that you are an information resource. But to actually get services or the attention of an attorney requires the individual themselves to contact you, and that depending on where you – it sounds like there are variations across the state in terms of some of what is available through DRC in terms of the advocacy employment or benefits planning opportunities, and that they would look towards that individual office to find out what they specifically offer.

However, you could go through any of the doors, and if it's not that office, another office might assist you. Is that accurate? Or is it regionally specific?

>> No, it's not regionally specific any more. It's more like statewide team. So – but you have to kind of, you know, if you are going to have a lawsuit, you've got to have an attorney somewhere near where the person is. So, you know, we still have options locally, but we can bring things to the team, you know, in terms of what we can take and what we can't.

And just to emphasize, too, so the WIPA programs are throughout the state of California. We have –

>> Oh, they are.

>> Okay. Okay great.

>> Yeah. You know, DRC only has one grant down here in the south, and that's all that, you know – they only allow one agency – you know, one agency can only hold one grant in the whole state. So those other, you know, those other WIPA programs throughout the state of California – and I think they are just like a really under-utilized opportunity for people.

And oh, I should mention too, youth with disabilities, particularly IDD, are a target population of the WIPA program across the United States. So they really, really, really want the WIPA that is working with youth who are preparing work and navigating the whole, how do I, you know, maintain the benefits I need and move into employment.

They can walk through all of that, and they give very specific plans about what the person needs to do at what period of time. It's actually quite – it's really good work, and it's very helpful to people that want to go into employment. You know, especially if you are already working with DOR.

Now DOR, I know, has their own work incentives, you know, folks too. But, you know, if that doesn't work out or if they don't get what they need or, you know, they are going to be having their DOR case closed, then they can still come to the WIPA program also.

>> Well, thank you. Well, I think we are going to wrap things up. I think I speak on behalf of everybody that this has been a really informative opportunity to learn more about DRC. Just when you

think you're familiar, there's new layers. We look forward to any additional information that you might provide to us.

On a personal professional note, I'm thrilled that DRC is our federal partner, along with the state council and our other fellow UCEDDs. And thank you for – I mean, Andy is not on the call today, but he is – he has been the lead, along with Catherine Campisi, for our policy work. And we are very grateful and appreciative for all the work that you have done on behalf of advancing policy in California.