ABOUT DISABILITY RIGHTS TENNESSEE (DRT)

DRT is a nonprofit legal services organization dedicated to protecting the rights of Tennesseans with disabilities. DRT is the designated federal Protection & Advocacy System for people with disabilities in Tennessee.

TBI ADVOCACY SUMMARY

During FY 2015, DRT received 59 requests for information and referral services from individuals with TBI and provided direct advocacy services in 11 instances. Those services included investigations of alleged abuse and neglect, special education advocacy on behalf of K-12 students with TBI, and advocacy on behalf of individuals with TBI experiencing employment discrimination. DRT also monitors institutions and community facilities in order to protect the rights of residents. In FY 2015, DRT monitored 12 facilities that had residents with TBI, impacting over 1,500 individuals.

Case Example 1: Health Care

DRT advocated for a 34-year-old Caucasian male diagnosed with a TBI living in a state prison to receive appropriate medical treatment. For two years our client was denied necessary surgery for a broken ventricular pump installed in his skull that removed excess spinal fluid from the brain and relieved pressure on the optic nerve. During this time, our client complained of extreme headaches and vision loss due to his untreated condition. DRT investigated and found evidence to support our client’s complaint. DRT contacted prison administrators and medical directors and requested that the client be immediately evaluated and provided adequate medical treatment for his disability related issues. The prison system responded by moving the client to a specialized medical facility, beginning a more effective medication plan, and investigating surgical options.

Case Example 2: Special Education

A school was not addressing the 504 plan for a 10-year-old Caucasian male student. Our client’s parent stated that the school did not honor her request for a psycho-education evaluation and reported that the school did not want to evaluate him. The parent reported that the failure to implement the 504 plan prevented her son from attending his elective classes (art, PE, library, music). DRT provided assistance to ensure that the 504 implementation included staff communicating and providing academic data to our client’s parent as they were working through the Response to Instruction Intervention process. DRT assisted in revising client’s 504 plan to include small group, extra time for assignments and tests, oral re-test on tests, proximity control, a weekly agenda folder, and repeat directions when requested. An Individual Health Plan was developed with the school nurse that included physical interventions for head safety and addressed concerns with cyclic vomiting. With DRT’s intervention, our client has a 504 plan that meets his unique needs, contains methods of evaluation so that progress can be determined and enables him access to the complete educational setting.

TRAINING ACTIVITIES

DRT staff presented 12 trainings related to TBI which were attended by over 1,000 individuals, including the 26th Annual Brain Injury Association of Tennessee Conference. The conference was a collaborative effort between DRT, Tennessee State Traumatic Brain Injury Program, and the Brain Injury Association of Tennessee. The keynote speaker, Chris Nowinski, former WWE Wrestler and co-founder and executive director of the Sports Legacy Institute, focused on reducing sports concussion injuries through education, policy and research. The conference also featured topics such as special needs trusts, speech language therapy after brain injury, and music therapy. Approximately 160 individuals with TBI, natural supports, service providers and vendors attended the one-day event.