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## When Will MPAS Represent Me?

The mission of Michigan Protection and Advocacy Service, Inc. is to advance the dignity, equality, self-determination, and expressed choices of individuals with disabilities. MPAS provides information and advocacy to promote, expand, and protect your human and legal rights. We work to fulfill our mission by (1) working toward systemic changes that advance the rights of all people with disabilities and (2) advocating for your individual rights in particular cases that meet our guidelines.

***Due to limited resources, it is not possible for MPAS to provide legal services or direct representation to everyone who calls for assistance.*** MPAS provides several different levels of support and assistance. However, we believe that people with disabilities are their own best advocates. Therefore, when appropriate, MPAS will provide you with information, training, advice, and written materials that can assist you in speaking for yourself.

**MPAS' systemic advocacy work is designed to protect and advance your rights as a person with disabilities so that:**

- You can choose where and with whom you live, and can determine for yourself what supports you need.
- You have equal employment opportunities.
- Communities are accessible and inclusive.
- All children with disabilities are provided a quality education with all supports and accommodations they need to develop marketable skills.
- You are legally protected from abuse, neglect, and exploitation.
- You have equal access to affordable, quality health care.
- You and all other individuals with disabilities fully enjoy the rights, benefits, and privileges the law guarantees you.

### ***Services Provided***

Anyone may call the MPAS Information and Referral Service when they have a rights or advocacy question related to their disability. When appropriate, MPAS will provide you with information, referrals, or short-term technical assistance.

You may be referred for MPAS direct legal representation if you are eligible and if your disability issue falls into one of the agency priorities listed on the following pages. ***MPAS is not, however, able to take every case for direct representation.*** MPAS reserves the right to select cases that:

- agree with the MPAS mission;
- have sound legal merit;
- have the potential for effecting broad policy or systemic change; and
- are consistent with legal ethical standards.

*MPAS will not be able to take your case if you have other advocacy assistance or have the right to appointed counsel.*

We periodically redefine the priority issues that allow us to directly represent you after gaining input from consumers, advocates, and family members. Reviews of disability research, local and national trends, and data analysis also help us determine our priority issues.

### ***Priority Issues Considered for Direct Representation***

#### **Helping individuals with disabilities live in the community of their choice by providing:**

- advocacy within the system and in individual cases to reduce or eliminate disability-based segregation in school;
- individual and systemic advocacy, training and technical assistance, to prevent, reduce or eliminate expulsion or referral of children from school to the juvenile justice or adult correctional systems for disability-related behavior; and
- individual and systemic advocacy to increase the availability of home-based supports in order to reduce the out of home placement of children and adults with mental illness, emotional impairment, or developmental disabilities.

#### **Improving conditions in programs, services, schools, and facilities that serve people with disabilities by providing:**

- advocacy within the system and in individual cases, facility monitoring, training, and technical assistance to ensure that children and adults with disabilities in facilities receive appropriate educational and mental health services; and

systemic advocacy and facility monitoring to ensure that administrative segregation within facilities is used only in accordance with state policy and not as a substitute for mental health or other treatment, and to reduce or eliminate the use of seclusion and restraint in schools, day programs, and other congregate settings.

#### **Ensuring effective discharge planning for people with disabilities by providing:**

- individual and systemic advocacy, facility monitoring, training, and technical assistance to ensure that people with disabilities who are living in facilities receive appropriate discharge planning;

- systemic advocacy to strengthen the accountability of the Recipient Rights system;
- advocacy to veterans with traumatic brain injury by assisting them in accessing appropriate services through all available systems and assisting them in utilizing appeals processes when available and necessary;
- advocacy to ensure that people with disabilities receive the assistive technology required to maintain or increase his or her ability to live independently in the community;
- representation as needed in court and at the administrative hearing level to remedy housing violations that threaten a person with a disability's ability to obtain or remain in independent housing when those violations relate directly to his or her disability;
- representation as needed in court and at the administrative hearing level to remedy housing violations that threaten a person with a disability's ability to obtain or remain in independent housing when those violations relate directly to his or her disability;
- representation when a person with a disability is facing a guardian's abuse or neglect; and
- outreach in Michigan military clinics, medical centers, and veterans' centers to inform veterans with traumatic brain injury of their right to services and of the availability of those services.

### ***Other Programs and Services MPAS Provides***

#### **Voting Program**

MPAS's voting program designs and disseminates materials to train poll workers throughout the state on the requirements of the Help America Vote Act (HAVA). In addition, MPAS will identify and work with local disability advocacy organizations in communities throughout the state to provide education, training, and assistance to individuals with disabilities regarding voter registration, legal rights, and access to polling places.

#### **Employment**

MPAS may assist you to become and remain employed by:

- investigating any complaint of improper or inadequate services provided to you as an SSA beneficiary with a disability by a service provider, employer, or other entity involved in your return-to-work effort (excluding SSA itself);

- providing you with information regarding your employment rights
- providing you, if you are a student with a disability, with information to assist you with the transition issues you face in obtaining employment or pursuing a higher level of educational training; and
- providing you with direct legal representation if you require accommodation to maintain employment if you have an existing accommodation in writing that your employer is not following.

### ***Training Available***

MPAS provides a variety of trainings on many disability-related issues. Please call MPAS at 1.800.288.5923 to inquire about available trainings.