

Release Date: March 8, 2023

Deadline for Comment: May 5, 2023

Comment Submission: By e-mail, telephone, FAX, mail, in person or alternate method

REQUEST FOR PUBLIC COMMENT

Proposed Fiscal Year 2024 Proposed Priorities

Protection & Advocacy System, Inc. ("P&A") is the non-profit corporation authorized by Congress for over 45 years to protect and advocate the civil and human rights of Wyoming's citizens with disabilities. We submit for your comment the following proposed priorities for fiscal year 2024. P&A must set these priorities both because federal law requires it and inherent resource limitations make it necessary. Funding for P&A programs is limited by Congressional appropriations. Not all of the work needing attention can be accomplished. Federal laws require priority-setting in various P&A programs and public comment regarding proposed activities.

Program issues brought by individuals with disabilities, their legal representatives, or in some instances, pursuant to probable cause, must meet criteria of each specific P&A program. All program services are subject to P&A's General Policy on Case Acceptance and other factors, including unmet needs; non-duplication of services; consistency with funding requirements; the degree of compatibility with the P&A mission; potential for positive change affecting more than one person; and agency resources.

While P&A may provide direct legal representation to individual clients, legal issues that are systemic in nature will receive priority. The demand for P&A services far exceeds its resources. The agency must plan its activities in a strategic manner to effectively utilize its limited resources. Therefore, P&A may decline to provide direct advocacy assistance or legal representation in situations where a case may be within its priorities and meet case acceptance criteria.

P&A resolves disputes whenever possible through negotiation, mediation, and exhaustion of administrative remedies, where appropriate, prior to initiating legal action in a Federal or State court.

This document is designed for public comment on the following P&A Programs which set annual priorities.

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| Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities Program | PAIDD |
| Individuals with Mental Illness Program | PAIMI |
| Individual Rights Program | PAIR |
| Assistive Technology Program | PAAT |
| Traumatic Brain Injury Program | PATBI |
| Voter Access Program | PAVA |

The following program goals and objectives are designed to assist persons in institutional settings whose primary purpose is to provide services to persons with disabilities rather than institutions whose primary purpose is educational or correctional. Services will be prioritized at the Wyoming State Hospital and the Wyoming Life Resource Center. As resources allow, services will be provided for persons residing in or receiving services from Home and Community Based Services providers or in community settings. In addition, services will be provided to assist with voting access.

FREEDOM FROM ABUSE AND NEGLECT (PAIR, PAIDD, PATBI, PAAT AND PAIMI)

Priority 1: P&A will improve health and safety for persons at prioritized institutions or in Home and Community Based Services or community settings when facilities or community settings are notified of investigation findings and receive recommendations for correction.

Priority 2: P&A will monitor reports of incidents of suspected abuse, neglect, exploitation or death at prioritized institutions or in Home and Community Based Services or community settings.

Priority 3: P&A will provide individual advocacy or undertake systemic advocacy to enforce rights of persons residing at prioritized institutions.

Priority 4: P&A will provide individual advocacy or undertake systemic advocacy to enforce rights of persons residing in Home and Community Based Services or community settings.

COMMUNITY LIVING (PROGRAMS AS INDICATED BELOW)

Priority 1: P&A will assist with requests involving people with disabilities seeking to live or maintain living in the most integrated setting (PAAT, PAIR, PAIDD, PATBI AND PAIMI).

Priority 2: P&A will assist with prevention of and diversion from unnecessary institutionalization and homelessness (PAAT, PAIR, PAIDD, PATBI AND PAIMI).

Priority 3: P&A will assist with requests involving people with disabilities seeking housing accommodations (PAAT, PAIR, PATBI AND PAIDD).

Priority 4: P&A will assist with requests involving people with disabilities seeking employment accommodations (PAAT, PAIR, PATBI AND PAIDD).

Priority 5: P&A will advocate for community based services as an alternative to unnecessary jailing of persons awaiting transfer to the Wyoming State Hospital (PAIMI, PAIDD, and PATBI).

ACCESSIBILITY (PAAT AND PAIR)

Priority 1: P&A will assist with requests to improve access to assistive technology devices and services throughout the lifespan in prioritized institutions and in Home and Community Based Services or community settings.

Priority 2: P&A will assist with requests to access barrier-free transportation including bus stops, paratransit, ground carrier and air carrier.

SUPPORTED DECISION-MAKING AND ALTERNATIVES TO GUARDIANSHIP (PAIDD, PATBI and PAIR)

Priority 1: P&A will advance supported decision-making and alternatives to guardianship.

Priority 2: P&A will provide individual advocacy or undertake systemic advocacy to expand supported decision-making options in Wyoming.

Priority 3: P&A will provide individual advocacy or undertake systemic advocacy to address legal and constitutional issues involving the Wyoming Guardianship Code.

Priority 4: P&A will provide information and training to advance and support self-advocacy by persons with disabilities who do not have guardians to avoid unnecessary guardianship or unnecessary restriction of rights.

**PAVA WILL ENSURE FULL PARTICIPATION IN THE ELECTORAL PROCESS FOR
INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES
(PAVA)**

Priority 1: PAVA will provide education, training and assistance to individuals with disabilities to promote their participation in the electoral process.

Priority 2: PAVA will provide training and education to election officials, poll workers, and election volunteers regarding the rights of voters with disabilities.

Priority 3: PAVA will participate in advocacy and education efforts to implement the Help America Vote Act in Wyoming.

Priority 4: PAVA will assist and represent individuals with disabilities in election complaints.

Priority 5: PAVA will provide assistance to election officials regarding the physical accessibility of polling places.

Priority 6: PAVA will obtain and disseminate information regarding accessible voting equipment and systems.