
Rights Review

Promoting Human Rights by providing information and discussion across the DMR community

Newsletter of the DMR Human Rights Advisory Committee
and the DMR Office for Human Rights

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Share Your Accomplishments in the Rights Review

By *Pat Freedman*
Chairperson, DMR Human
Rights Advisory Committee

The work that the Human Rights Advisory Committee (HRAC) does is shaped in large part by the work that human rights advocates do in their local communities. Human rights advocates who work in the community are the “eyes and ears” of the human rights system. The work that community human rights advocates do helps ensure that human rights remain a priority.

The Rights Review grew out of the need for better communication between HRAC and community human rights advocates. Two

years ago HRAC established the need for better communication as one of its priorities because we found that many community human rights advocates had never heard of HRAC. Even if they had heard of HRAC, the community human rights advocates did not have a clear idea of what HRAC did. Many community human rights advocates did not know who the HRAC members were and did not know that they could contact any HRAC member at any time about a human rights issue.

HRAC’s work on this priority issue began with my meeting with community human rights advocates in various

settings. By trying to put a face on the HRAC, we hoped to encourage communication from community human rights advocates.

But my travels throughout the Commonwealth helped me to identify yet another issue – that we need a way that community human rights advocates can share their accomplishments with each other. We need to know of these accomplishments and we need a way to be able to recognize the work that human rights advocates do in every part of the Commonwealth.

What impressed me in my meetings with community human rights advocates was the

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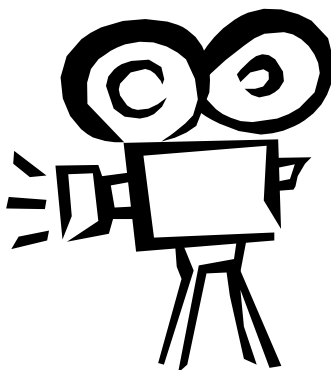
creativity that these advocates used to successfully ensure that human rights were protected. Community human rights advocates knew what the issues were and they often knew how to address those issues successfully. It became very clear to me that sharing the accomplishments of community human rights advocates with people across the Commonwealth was a critical part of ensuring the strength of the human rights system.

Luckily, HRAC was at the same time beginning to realize its goal of establishing a statewide human rights newsletter. We soon began to see that this Newsletter could provide community human rights advocates with a place to share their work with each other.

We hope that every human rights advocate will see the Rights Review as an opportunity to share his or her accomplishments with our whole human rights community. It is through this type of sharing that we will strengthen the entire system.

The Rights Review is a human rights newsletter for everyone. We hope that you will let us know about your accomplishments so that we can share them with you colleagues.

If you have a story that you would like to share, please contact Tom Anzer at DMR. Help make this priority issue another HRAC success.



Teaching Human Rights – One Approach

By *Richard Santucci*,

Executive Director of Career Resources, Inc. and a member of the DMR Human Rights Advisory Committee

Career Resources is a small agency in Haverhill that serves about 120 individuals in residential services, in employment support services and in various individualized support services. We employ around 75 staff members. The task of teaching and reviewing the DMR human rights regulations on an annual basis for all of these folks is a daunting one. We have been utilizing a video produced by a New

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Hampshire based self-advocacy group called “People First”. The video is excellent, utilizing self-advocates to talk about some experiences in which their rights were not protected. There was only one problem. For individuals and staff who have been with Career Resources for a number of years, the prospect of viewing the video for the seventh, or eighth time was not quite as inspiring as the first few times.

Our human rights officer had the idea that we could produce our own video. This seemed like a fine idea. That is because none of us knew how much work it would entail.

To begin the project, we decided to form a planning group. We contacted Massachusetts Advocates Standing Strong, who have an active chapter in our area. They provided several representatives. We also contacted the DMR, and Rich Salandrea, the Regional Human Rights Specialist volunteered to participate. We had a series of meetings to decide what material ought to be covered in the video, and to begin to sketch out the form that the video would take. We decided to write a series of vignettes that would illustrate several of the rights that we identified in our discussions. We would supplement this with narration. The self-advocates helped to prioritize the rights that they

felt most strongly about. We decided that we really wanted the video to take the form of self-advocates teaching staff and other individuals about how they want to be treated, and how they have a right to be treated. We began writing and rehearsing scripts.

We also needed to address the technical aspects of video production. One of our staff members, who had formerly been a newspaper photographer, was a member of the local Access television organization. We were able to enroll two self-advocates and two staff members who live in Haverhill into a class at the studio that would teach them to use the camera equipment. Upon completing the course, all received certificates that authorized them to use the camera equipment, and to book time in the studio. We now had our film crew!

The actual filming has proven to be a lot more difficult than we had imagined. It takes us about 2 hours to film a 1 minute clip. The self-advocates played all of the parts. We had originally thought to include staff members as actors, but the self-advocates wanted the video to be an expression of their voices. They do not need staff to speak for them.

We have found that reading from the teleprompter yields a stiff performance, so we encouraged the actors to ad-lib. However, we did have some important thoughts that we wanted to have expressed, so the actors had to work hard and endure multiple “takes” until we all felt that we had clearly illustrated our major points of emphasis.

We have also had to re-write some scenes to comply with the physical sets that are available to us at the studio. I am sure that the most difficult aspect is still ahead of us, the editing of the all the video footage into coherent scenes.

However the final product comes out, the process has been wonderful. The self-advocates have enjoyed rehearsing the scenes and auditioning for parts during their advocacy meetings. These activities have certainly spurred discussions that are empowering and educational. The staff members who have been involved have had the opportunity to think about issues of human rights from a new perspective.

We are about 75 percent finished with the filming. We anxiously await its completion. We have a group of actors who are anxious to see the finished

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product. Some of us “behind the scenes” people are anxious to conclude this rather lengthy undertaking. Still others are looking forward to an alternative to the same human rights video that they have been watching for years. I hope and believe that this project can help in some small way to empower self-advocates and protect their rights.



(Human Rights Rally in Michigan)



Director's Update

Recruiting

HRC Members

By Thomas C. Anzer,
DMR Director for Human Rights

Human Rights Committees are required by regulation to include a minimum of five members. A minimum of three members must be individuals receiving supports from the Department, or parents, or guardians for, or advocates for such individuals. The committee must also have members with special knowledge to assist in their work. Recruitment for these members with special knowledge, usually referred to as the “professional” members, can be hard to do.

These professional members include: an attorney, law student or paralegal with relevant expertise; a physician, or nurse; and a psychologist or master’s level practitioner with expertise in applied behavior analysis, mental retardation, or other relevant areas. It is because they are people from high demand professional fields that providers often find it difficult to find and keep these professionals for their Human Rights Committees.

Typically, providers work with the families of current, or former residents to develop the “non-professional” members. While this may be a misnomer, as families have

shown time and again, that they have a specialized knowledge that can be extraordinarily useful in assisting the committee with its work, they are a lot more invested in the programming their family members receive and are easier to recruit.

Sometimes providers get lucky and the psychologist on their committee is a former staff of the agency who is not involved in the care of the individuals. Their psychology staff may have a colleague in the field they can recommend to the committee. Sometimes, though, for a range of reasons, their networks aren’t as large as may be necessary.

Roughly two years ago, I asked the Office for Quality Enhancement for numbers on how many committees didn’t have full membership, and the answer was roughly 15%. More often than not, the lawyer and psychologist/master’s level practitioner were the most difficult members to find. HRAC, in the process of reaching out to HRCs has heard these difficulties and would like to be of assistance. Resources for everyone are tight, but the Office for Human Rights may be of assistance in generating potential candidates. We would like to know, however,

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what you think may be helpful to you.

Ideas that have been generated have included making presentations to the Massachusetts Bar Association, and other professional associations in the field of psychology, nursing, psychiatry, and physicians. Human Rights Specialists have also been known to reach out to law schools, etc., looking for people who may be working as paralegals or studying law.

We would like to hear from agency Human Rights Committees, coordinators and administrators, as to what we could do to help you generate potential members. Please write, or call me at:

Tom Anzer
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617-624-7738

Give us your thoughts and ideas on how we could help, or tell us creative tactics that have helped you succeed in recruitment. These requirements are important, as they help HRCs have the expertise to review plans and evaluate presentations by professionals. They can also provide critical insight into the needs of the persons whose rights you are trying to promote and protect. Call or write today

and we will put together a plan for outreach to the professional groups.



“Getting Creative” Sharing Human Rights With Families and Guardians

By *Sue Moriarty*
Human Rights Specialist,
Central Region

An integral part of an effective human rights system is education and knowledge about human rights. Everyone in the human rights system has an interest in seeing that individuals we support and others who support them are educated about human rights, particularly as to how these play out in people’s everyday lives. The DMR Regulations 115 CMR 3.09 inform us that the agency’s human rights committee is responsible to review and monitor “...the means utilized by the provider to inform individuals, staff, guardians and families of the individual’s rights”.

Regulations further call for the Human Rights Officers to inform families of individuals’ rights, and for Human Rights Coordinators to work with the officers in meeting these obligations.

So how do providers inform families and guardians of individuals’ rights? This writer set out to learn about and feature creative ways that providers are doing just that.

My first stop was at Alliance for Resource Management (formerly Mattson Community Services) in Fitchburg. ARM has for the past few years hosted a human rights get together at a local hall, where they invited individuals, staff, local and state politicians, and human rights committee members to enjoy a catered buffet while engaging with the people who make human rights happen. The intent was to show that human rights is much more than a regulation on paper, that it is vital in people’s lives everyday and that it effects all components of services, including budgets, etc. Information available at the gathering was easily understandable and included informative and inspirational material gathered from officer networking meetings, guardianship information, domestic violence resources, etc. Although only the

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guardians on the HRC were invited, it was felt that the information would go through the agency and then back to guardians as well as to the broader community. The gathering also recognized the HRC volunteers with certificates of appreciation. The press attended and took pictures of the officers and HRC. Human Rights Officer photographs were posted for each site (home or work) for easy recognition. Wallet cards were distributed which contained the HRO photograph, name, and the DPPC information and reporting phone number. On an ongoing basis, ARM also takes advantage of teachable moments to assist families and guardians in understanding specific human rights issues.

Next I asked Rehabilitation Resources Inc, out of Sturbridge, to share some ideas about their human rights gatherings. Unfortunately, due to low guardian turnout they have discontinued their gathering and opted instead to send out written human rights information periodically.

The South Valley Residential services in Region II hosts what are called Human Rights Socials for individuals, families, guardians and human rights committee members, and which are attended by the DMR Area Director. They offer a buffet meal, followed by a

short presentation which includes the Area Director and HRC Chairperson presenting information on the value of human rights and appreciating the efforts of the HRC's. This year small groups of people cooperated in a game where they were asked to answer clues about human rights and were given jumbled and color coded letters to spell out the names of the rights as well as due process.

It appears that most agencies send out written information to families and guardians about individual rights. Some agencies provide education through the teachable moment, capitalizing on opportunities which present themselves in order to show how rights play out in everyday life. Other agencies feature human rights newsletters which serve to present information and to keep human rights in the spotlight.

One recurrent issue is the low turnout by families and guardians at human rights events. Putting faces with names does seem to be very important however, and finding ways to piggyback onto other events and to engage guardians and families with human rights committee members, officers and coordinators seems to be very useful.

We would like to hear more about creative ways to inform families and guardians of the individuals' rights. Please let us know what you are doing so that we can share your ideas with others!

SAVE THE DATE:

June 4, 2003

19th Annual DMR Human Rights Conference

Human Rights is Everyone's Job!

Keynote address by *Gerald Provencal*, Executive Director of the Macomb Oakland Regional Center in Mt. Clemens, MI.



Gerald Provencal

***Rights Review* is a product of the DMR Human Rights Advisory Committee (HRAC) and the DMR Office for Human Rights. To reach the newsletter, please contact:**
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Please note: Each issue of Rights Review is reviewed by Senior Staff of DMR to ensure the articles, particularly technical reports, reflect current DMR views. It's truly a product of the DMR community!

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