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Top Disability Advocates Call on Feds to Deepen Probe of Colorado Department of Corrections

Disability Law Colorado Cites “Systemic Failures,” “Pattern of Violations”

DENVER, CO — Disability Law Colorado (DLC), the state’s federally mandated Protection and Advocacy agency, called on the U.S. Department of Justice today to focus its probe of the Colorado corrections system.

The federal investigation — which was announced on Monday — will examine conditions in the Colorado Department of Corrections as well as the Colorado Division of Youth Services. Among the allegations: inadequate medical care, excessive use of force, and insufficient nutrition.

Disability Law Colorado has long raised such concerns. The agency filed formal complaints with the Department of Justice in 2022 and 2023, citing “a pattern and practice of violating the rights of people with disabilities.”

“For years, we have documented systemic failures within the Department of Corrections that harm individuals with disabilities,” said **DLC Senior Attorney Meghan Baker**, JD, MSW. She pointed to specific practices at odds both with federal law and with the concept of rehabilitation.

“Rather than provide appropriate care, the department relies on harmful practices such as prolonged seclusion and the use of four-point clinical restraints,” Baker said. “These practices do not rehabilitate — they often worsen existing disabilities and create more barriers to successful reentry into the community.”

Disability Law Colorado supports federal oversight as an important step toward accountability. While DLC opposes the administration’s cuts to Medicaid and attacks on civil rights, the agency flagged the treatment of inmates as an appropriate priority.

“Colorado’s prison system has routinely failed to appropriately assess and screen people upon intake — especially those with disabilities,” Baker said. “That has led to improper classification, unsafe housing, and denial of necessary accommodations.”

For media inquiries or to schedule an interview with Meghan Baker, please contact **DLC Communications Manager Felix Ortiz**.

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***Disability Law Colorado** is a nonprofit civil rights organization, authorized by federal law to combat discrimination, abuse, and neglect. We aim to make Colorado the best place in America for people with disabilities to thrive. For more information, visit disabilitylawco.org.*