DISABILITY JUSTICE

FOCUS AREAS | 2026-27

Disability Justice is a small organization with a broad mission: to protect people with disabilities from discrimination, abuse, and neglect. We monitor facilities, investigate mistreatment, and educate Coloradans about their rights. Our advocates and attorneys work not only to enact laws but also to enforce them.

Since our funds are limited, we focus on specific areas. Those areas, outlined below, are the product of community conversations throughout the year.

PLEASE NOTE: We cannot guarantee services or legal representation to everyone — even if a request falls within a focus area. (Learn more about our criteria for representation.)

INDIVIDUAL SERVICES

Our individual work often drives systemic reform. We focus on people with disabilities who:

1. Face death, serious bodily injury, or severe psychological harm in a jail, prison, psychiatric hospital, detention or commitment center, youth residential facility, residential school, host home, group home, regional center, substance-use treatment facility, or shelter.
2. Are subjected to disability-based discrimination in Community Corrections.
3. Are unnecessarily confined to a nursing home.
4. Want to modify or terminate their own guardianship. (We do not help people obtain or maintain guardianship over someone else.)
5. Cannot get the help they need from the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation or a Center for Independent Living.
6. Lack a free appropriate public education in a facility school or a Division of Youth Services center.
7. Are restrained or secluded in a public K-12 school.
8. Encounter disability-based discrimination (other than termination or failure to hire) in a non-federal workplace, because of an employer's policy.

9. Receive Social Security benefits, including SSI and SSDI, and face workplace harassment, retaliation, a lack of reasonable accommodations, failure to hire, termination, or other barriers to employment, including those involving transportation or housing.
10. Do not get the home- or community-based services or other supports they need because a state-designated Case Management Agency fails to respond or presents unreasonable delays.
11. Do not receive a timely final agency decision in response to a Medicaid appeal.
12. Are denied equal access to health care because a facility fails to provide accommodations, communication aids, or accessible equipment. (This excludes nursing homes, home care, pharmacies, transport, and insurance, as well as disputes about medical choices or quality of care.)
13. Face barriers when seeking reasonable accommodations or modifications in public housing or large rental complexes.
14. Encounter inaccessible sidewalks and other barriers to transportation (excluding ride-share issues).
15. Encounter barriers to voting or voter registration.

Disability Justice aids individuals in two other ways:

- The Social Security Administration directs us to protect designated beneficiaries from misconduct by representative payees.
- In 2026, we launched a pilot project to help people with disabilities obtain accommodations in the Pueblo County Court system.

SYSTEMIC REFORM

We focus much of our work on systemic reform — exposing widespread violations and taking legal action to stop them. Instead of fielding individual requests in these areas, we pursue litigation and the enforcement of settlement agreements.

Among other priorities, we press state and federal authorities to:

1. Strengthen the oversight of K-12 schools, including student discipline practices.
2. Deliver a robust range of Medicaid benefits, in accordance with network adequacy and parity laws and with the needs of Colorado's diverse and growing population.
3. Provide young people with intensive behavioral health services (A.A. v. Bimestefer).

4. End the unlawful incarceration of children in juvenile detention centers after courts have already ordered their release (Isaac N. et al. v. Polis et al.).
5. Secure the rights of people in civil commitment, including the right to live and receive treatment in the least restrictive environment.
6. Uphold the rights of people with disabilities in jails, prisons, and state hospitals, including those who are d/Deaf or hard-of-hearing (Center for Legal Advocacy v. Colorado Department of Corrections) and those awaiting competency restoration (Center for Legal Advocacy v. Marshall).