

CAROLINA LEGAL ASSISTANCE, *A Disability Rights Center*



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Carolina Legal Assistance Assumes North Carolina's Protection and Advocacy Responsibilities *New Offices Opening in Raleigh on Glenwood Avenue, Staff Expands*

RALEIGH, NC – Carolina Legal Assistance (CLA) assumes responsibility today for North Carolina's federally funded Protection and Advocacy System. These services were previously provided by the Governor's Advocacy Council for Persons with Disabilities (GACPD), a division of the N.C. Department of Administration. The staff will expand and a new location has been chosen for the delivery of these critically important services.

The change in the agency providing protection and advocacy responsibilities in North Carolina occurred as a result of redesignation of these functions by Governor Easley, following extensive discussions with members of the disability community and after a thorough consultation with the GACPD governing board. CLA is a private, non-profit organization with a volunteer Board of Directors representative of various geographic areas of the State and of individuals and family members of individuals with disabilities. It has provided legal assistance and advocacy services for people with disabilities in North Carolina for over 25 years.

The Role of a Protection and Advocacy Organization (P&A)

All states are federally mandated to have a P&A which have the responsibility for protecting, and advocating for, the rights of people with disabilities and the authority to pursue legal, administrative, and other appropriate remedies or approaches when the rights of such individuals within the state may have been violated. Rights may include eligibility for treatment, services, education, or a change in living arrangements, with particular attention to members of ethnic and racial minority groups. P&As investigate alleged incidents of abuse, neglect and exploitation of individuals with disabilities and are responsible for investigating suspicious deaths throughout the state for people with disabilities in institutions. P&As also provides information and referral to programs and services addressing the needs of individuals with disabilities.

CLA meets all of the requirements of a statewide Protection and Advocacy (P&A) System and shall have all of the powers and duties vested in it by applicable federal statutes and regulations. There will be no charge to any client for P&A services.

Adele Foschia, an executive with many years of non-profit experience, is the interim executive director of CLA while a nationwide search is conducted to fill the position. Mrs. Foschia was most recently the interim executive director of NAMI NC, an agency providing services to people with mental illness in our State. John Rittelmeyer is the Director of Legal Services and has been a practicing attorney in Raleigh for many years. He has previously served as a CLA Board member and Board Chair. Greg McGrew is the current Chairman of the Board of Directors.

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