



December 28, 2013

Arkansas Governor's Developmental  
Disabilities Council  
5800 W. 10<sup>th</sup> , Suite 805  
Little Rock, AR 72204

Re: 2012 National Survey of Abuse of People with Disabilities  
*First Report: Victims and Their Families Speak Out*

Dear Council Members and Staff:

We are sending you a printed copy of the First Report to come out of the 2012 National Survey. Some 7,289 people responded to this survey, making it the largest collection of data ever gathered about the abuse of people with disabilities.

The findings and recommendations in this report give us a blueprint for action, suggesting steps that can be taken by agencies such as yours to advocate for improvements in the reporting of suspected abuse cases as well as the investigation and prosecution of such cases. Improvements also need to be made in getting therapy and other services and compensation to victims.

State Councils on Developmental Disabilities play a unique and important role in ensuring that children and adults with developmental disabilities receive equal justice and equal services. Not only are State Councils charged with advocating for people with developmental disabilities, they also have authority to monitor the programs, policies, and activities of generic agencies to make sure they are providing adequate services to the I/DD community and that they are accommodating the special needs of this community by adapting to those needs.

Abuse victims who have developmental and intellectual disabilities do have special needs. Unfortunately, we lack sufficient information at this time to know whether county agencies such as CPS, APS, district attorneys, and county sheriffs are handling these special needs cases in an effective manner. Do they have training programs and materials for such cases, and if so, are those programs working well? Are staff members of these agencies equipped to process abuse cases involving victims with intellectual and developmental disabilities? We just do not know.

## *Disability and Abuse Project*

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We are encouraging State Councils in all 50 states to read this report, study the findings, and evaluate how to implement the recommendations. A good first step would be to distribute a copy of the report to Council members and to make the report and its recommendations an agenda item at an upcoming Council meeting. Perhaps you would like to invite me and the report author to attend that meeting to discuss actions the Council might take to help improve the situation for abuse victims with developmental disabilities.

These victims deserve equal justice and equal services. Generic agencies at the state and local levels of government, and ancillary nonprofit organizations, are more likely to improve their response mechanisms if they know that someone is monitoring their performance. A State Council is the most appropriate statewide agency with authority to do such monitoring.

As an advocacy agency with monitoring authority, your agency can do what no other agency is equipped to do – advocate strongly for victims with developmental disabilities to ensure that they are receiving equal justice and equal services. Coordination and networking are strategies that will stimulate needed reforms. Your agency, for example, could invite the State Department of Justice and the State District Attorneys Association and other agencies at the state and local level to work together to make equal justice and equal services for these victims a reality.

We are eager to partner with the your agency to evaluate and update its 5-year plan and to devise projects that will address the special needs of abuse victims with intellectual and developmental disabilities.

We look forward to receiving your response and to collaborating with you in ways that will benefit abuse victims and their families.

Very truly yours,



Nora J. Baladerian, Ph.D.  
Executive Director

p.s. More information about the survey, the report, and recommendations can be found at our website: [www.disabilityandabuse.org/survey](http://www.disabilityandabuse.org/survey)