

Indiana Protection and Advocacy Services Commission
2014-2015 Biennial Budget
Agency Overview
July 2012

Description of Agency Programs and Functions

The Indiana Protection and Advocacy Services (IPAS) Commission is an independent state agency whose mission is “To protect and promote the rights of individuals with disabilities through empowerment and advocacy”. IPAS is entirely funded through federal grants and receives no state appropriated funds. Currently, IPAS administers eight federal grant programs that provide funding for IPAS to carry out its mission on behalf of individuals with disabilities. IPAS provides services state-wide, with thirty-one staff and four regional offices, in addition to the Indianapolis central office. IPAS provides a continuum of advocacy services for individuals with disabilities, including training and education, information and referral, representation by non-attorney advocates and representation by legal counsel. IPAS employs a variety of intervention strategies when representing individuals with disabilities, including negotiation and alternate dispute resolution methods such as mediation, administrative due process procedures and litigation. Most of IPAS’ cases are resolved via negotiation or mediation, with relatively few requiring legal action, a record of which IPAS is proud. During the past two years, IPAS has provided helpful information and referral services to three thousand seven hundred and forty-five Hoosiers with disabilities and their families and has represented eleven hundred and eight individuals with disabilities in matters concerning their disability rights.

IPAS’ federal grants define the types of activities which may be carried out under each grant. As a result, the accomplishments achieved and the challenges faced by IPAS fall within the parameters established by the federal grants.

Among the major accomplishments achieved during the last two years were:

- ✓ The positive impact which IPAS services had on the lives of Hoosiers with disabilities and their families
- ✓ Nearly four thousand individuals with disabilities and their families benefited from IPAS information and referral services
- ✓ Over eleven hundred individuals’ disability rights were protected by IPAS representation
- ✓ Over sixty five thousand Hoosiers gained information about disability rights and IPAS services through the dissemination of IPAS publications, speaking engagements and information booths at conferences

- ✓ Police officers from a wide variety of communities benefited from Crisis Intervention Training, sponsored by IPAS in collaboration with the Indiana Alliance for the Mentally Ill, which is aimed at improving police response to incidents involving individuals with mental illness and diversion of these individuals from the traditional criminal justice system
- ✓ In collaboration with the Secretary of State's Office and the Governor's Council for Persons with Disabilities, IPAS continues to play a central role in assuring access to voting places for persons with disabilities
- ✓ IPAS has assisted the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation and the Social Security Administration in implementing the "Ticket to Work" program to assist disabled social security beneficiaries in getting the training they need to return to work
- ✓ IPAS has developed an excellent web site which is accessible for individuals with disabilities and serves as a valuable resource for persons with disabilities to learn about disability rights and IPAS services. The IPAS web site www.in.gov/ipas recorded over 500,000 hits last year.
- ✓ IPAS created a Facebook page to provide an additional portal for Hoosiers to gain information about disability rights and IPAS services
- ✓ IPAS continues to provide advocacy services to help protect residents of state operated facilities from abuse and neglect and to assist them in exercising other rights

Among the challenges for the future are:

- ✓ Continuing to search for and implement effective methods of outreach to underserved groups such as individuals in the African American, Latino, Native American and homeless populations with disabilities
- ✓ Continue to work to inform more Hoosiers about IPAS services and assist more individuals through IPAS representation
- ✓ Continuing to search for and implement improved methods of increasing utilization of the "Ticket to Work" program for Hoosiers with disabilities
- ✓ Continuing to search for and implement ways of improving the state's investigation of abuse and neglect in state operated facilities
- ✓ Continuing to search for and implement ways to protect access to services for persons with disabilities in a climate of dwindling resources

Agency Objectives for the next Biennium

- Continue and improve outreach to the public and underserved groups concerning disability rights and IPAS services
- Reduce or eliminate the abuse and neglect of individuals with disabilities
- Provide timely and accurate information and referral services for individuals with disabilities and their families
- Increase awareness and empowerment through the provision of training and technical assistance to individuals with disabilities and their families about disability rights and the exercise of these rights
- To reduce or eliminate the denial of rights and discrimination due to a mental illness diagnosis
- Assure physical, program and service access through compliance with the Americans With Disabilities Act and the Fair Housing Act
- Continue to identify barriers which prevent individuals with disabilities from living lives as independently as possible as fully participating members of their communities

Performance Metrics

IPAS has been assessing the satisfaction of our customers with our services for well over a decade. This has been true for both individuals receiving information and referral services, as well as those who received representation by an IPAS advocate or attorney. The metric, which has been established with the Office of Management and Budget, was set to reach a goal of 87% affirmative responses from those served that indicated they would contact IPAS again, should they have a new disability rights concern. For 2010, we achieved 89% affirmative responses, and for 2011, we achieved 96% affirmative responses.

New Special Initiatives

IPAS is entirely funded by federal grants. A new federal grant program can be established with little notice to IPAS. Often, the agency which acts as the “protection and advocacy system” in each state is designated to administer new grants. In Indiana, this is IPAS. Funding for the eight federal grants that IPAS currently administers appears to be solid, in spite of difficult economic times. During the years IPAS has administered these grants, the grant funding has increased from one year to the next. So if history is any guide, future funding for IPAS programs appears to be solid.

Carry-over of Federal Grants

Federal grant funds which are unexpended at the end of the grant period remain with the federal government and do not revert to the state general fund. The federal grants administered by IPAS permit two years to obligate the funds and a third year to pay the funds out. If funds are not obligated by the end of the second year, IPAS loses access to the funds, and Indiana loses the benefits associated with them. Currently, IPAS has a large carryforward of federal grant funds, which needs to be reduced over time. As a result, IPAS needs to develop a two year budget which permits increased spending compared to the current Biennium.

Conclusion

Indiana Protection and Advocacy Services has been pleased to serve Hoosiers with disabilities and their families over the past thirty-five years through the use of federal grants. IPAS is grateful for the assistance and cooperation of the State Budget Agency, the Department of Administration and other state agencies, as we perform this important work on behalf of individuals with disabilities. IPAS looks forward to the next Biennium and another two years of dedicated service on behalf of Hoosiers with disabilities and their families.