

Indiana Protection and Advocacy Services Commission
2012 - 2013 Biennial Budget
Agency Overview
August 2010

Description of Agency Programs and Functions

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, which 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, 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 more than seven thousand Hoosiers with disabilities and their families and has represented hundreds of 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
- ✓ Over 5,000 individuals with disabilities and their families benefited from IPAS information and referral services
- ✓ Over 500 individuals’ disability rights were protected by IPAS representation
- ✓ Over 65,000 Hoosiers gained information about disability rights and IPAS services through the dissemination of IPAS publications, speaking engagements and information booths at conferences
- ✓ Deaths related to the use of seclusion and restraint continue to be investigated

- ✓ 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 in 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 website 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 website www.in.gov/ipas recorded over 500,000 hits last year

Among the challenges for the future are:

- ✓ Continuing to search for and implement effective methods of outreach to underserved groups such as individuals who are African American, Latino, Native American, and/or homeless with disabilities
- ✓ 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

(Once again, these are largely defined by the federal grants)

- 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, including specifically strengthening the state's oversight of the use of seclusion and restraint in public schools of children 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

New Special Initiatives

IPAS is entirely funded by federal grants. A new federal grant program can be established without much 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. At the present time, there is some indication that Congress may authorize another grant for protection and advocacy for special education students. At this time, the likelihood of this occurring and the size of any such grant are not known. Funding for the eight federal grants which IPAS currently administers appears to be solid, in spite of difficult economic times. Over the years during which IPAS has administered these grants, most have in fact increased from one year to the next. So if history is any guide, future funding for IPAS programs appears to be stable.

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. Going into the federal fiscal year 2011, beginning Oct. 1, 2010, IPAS anticipates having a carryover of federal grant funds from FFY 2010 of around \$800,000.

Performance Metrics

IPAS services, customers we serve, and the outcomes achieved on behalf of our clients are entirely unique in the state’s governmental system. As a result, discussions with the Governmental Efficiency and Financial Planning Division focused on the customer satisfaction assessment effort which IPAS has had in place for over ten years. Specifically, the performance measure selected as an indicator of success was maintaining or exceeding 85% affirmative responses from those who respond, to the question, “Would you contact IPAS again if you have another disability rights concern in the future”? IPAS reports annually on this measure based on the federal fiscal year.

Conclusion

Indiana Protection and Advocacy Services has been pleased to serve Hoosiers with disabilities and their families over the past 32 years through the use of federal grants. IPAS is grateful for the assistance and cooperation of the State Budget Agency, Department of Administration, and other state agencies, as we perform this important work on behalf of individuals with disabilities. IPAS is not requesting any state appropriated funds but does request approval to make use of all the federal grant funds which may be available to it during the coming biennium. IPAS looks forward to the next biennium and another two years of dedicated service on behalf of Hoosiers with disabilities and their families.