

THE DISABILITY RIGHTS CENTER OF THE VIRGIN ISLANDS



# ANNUAL REPORT 2022



## MISSION STATEMENT

Advance the legal rights of people with disabilities, support and empower families and provide training and information that promotes the overall health and educational development of children and youth.

## EMERGING FROM THE PANDEMIC BUBBLE

In 2022, after two years of pandemic restrictions and virtual everything, DRCVI prudently entered the arena of in-person community outreach. Our version of a new "normal" now requires a hybrid offering of services from virtual trainings to in-person appointments to tele-referrals. Life has changed for all of us and helped us realize the strength of our resiliency as a community and identify the gaps we must tackle with vigor. Mental health remains at the forefront of our priorities, as do accessible spaces for all of us to navigate, and prioritizing our children's health and individual progress.

We are proud of all we have accomplished and look forward to another year to expand our reach to new individuals and families across the V.I.



## PARENT TRAINING & INFORMATION CENTER

The Disability Rights Center is the only Parent Training and Information Center (PTI) in the U.S. Virgin Islands and is part of a network of almost 100 PTIs and Community Parent Resource Centers (CPRCs) across the U.S. and the territories. Our focus includes:

- Working with families of infants, toddlers, children, and youth with disabilities, birth to 26
- Helping parents participate effectively in their children's education and development
- Partnering with professionals and policy makers to improve outcomes for all children with disabilities

## WORKING WITH FAMILIES & YOUTH

In 2022, we continued to create and build relationships with local organizations in the community. Our partnership with the Tutu Park Mall blossomed and we were able to effectively reach our community through collaborative events and onsite parent training. We also worked on strengthening our relationship with the Virgin Islands Department of Education's Department of Special Education, to effectively educate our community as we address the stigma around students with disabilities and special education.



As a Protection and Advocacy agency, we worked to assist several parents and students with their educational concerns. One of these concerns led to a Due Process Hearing where compensatory education was awarded.

## CONTINUING OUR WORK FOR A MORE INCLUSIVE COMMUNITY

DRCVI partnered with local stakeholder organizations and agencies to present twenty-six (26) workshops and trainings. Partners included: the Small Business Development Center, USVI Economic Development Authority, V.I. University Center for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities, the Territorial ADA Coordinator's Office, V.I. Department of Labor, V.I. Department of Human Services – Vocational Rehabilitation Program, Island Therapy Solutions, and the Northeast ADA Center.

Workshops covered the following topics: workforce development, employment accommodations for workers with disabilities, transition and career development, engaging persons with disabilities in the employment process, best practices for recruiting people with disabilities, Long Covid rights and resources, and employment rights and responsibilities in the work place. The training sessions were created to provide useful information to persons who are interested in finding a job, keeping a job, starting their own business or how to support employees.

## MONITOR LOCAL RESIDENTIAL FACILITIES

DRCVI, as authorized by law, is the protection and advocacy agency responsible for conducting monitoring visits at residential facilities in the U.S. Virgin Islands. This ensures that clients receive appropriate care and treatment and are not subject to abuse or neglect. DRCVI's legal staff conducted a hybrid of in-person and virtual monitoring visits at 17 local facilities in 2022.

## GETTING OUT IN THE COMMUNITY

We enjoyed seeing the smiling faces of our V.I. community at events on all three islands! Our team shared information and resources and distributed some fun little gifts at the following events:

- St. Croix Agrifest (same place every year, first tent on the right from the Centerline entrance)
- Disaster Preparedness Expos on St. Croix and St. Thomas
- Back to School at Tutu Park Mall
- Conference for the Aging St. John
- Hosted Voter Registration events with the Virgin Islands Board of Elections and AARP V.I. on St. Croix and St. Thomas.

## MEDIA OUTREACH



DRCVI continues to expand its effort to share information with our community by way of traditional media and digital media. DRCVI produced and presented its weekly Ability Radio program on WLDV 107.9 FM "Da Vybe" every weekend.

Stay tuned for an all new Ability Radio format and station in 2023!

DRCVI in collaboration with WTJX, Channel 12, the Territory's Public Broadcasting Service (PBS) wrapped Season 2 of its monthly television program, *Able to Raise*. The program featured interviews from V.I. culture bearers and changemakers, disability rights advocates and activists, artists and filmmakers.



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The contents of this report are solely the responsibility of DRCVI and do not necessarily represent the official view of any of these agencies.

DRCVI is an equal opportunity employer and service provider.



**DISABILITY RIGHTS**

CENTER OF THE VIRGIN ISLANDS

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