



“*If there is no struggle, there is no progress.*”  
~ *Frederick Douglass*

### **DRCVI 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.**



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## DISABILITY RIGHTS CENTER OF THE VIRGIN ISLANDS 2018 ANNUAL REPORT TO THE COMMUNITY

### Working for a More Inclusive Community

Driving or traveling while disabled is challenging. An air traveler with a disability was informed by an airline representative that his wheelchair will be sent on a separate flight. His response was, "How would you feel if your legs were delivered separately to your destination?" His remarks quickly prompted the airline company to make the appropriate travel accommodation.

This is just one example of the work of the Disability Rights Center of the Virgin Islands (DRCVI) in advocating for easier access to airplanes, access to airport terminals, buildings, sidewalks, and our beaches.

### Working with Families

DRCVI continues to provide information, training and direct assistance to families of children with disabilities and adults with developmental disabilities. Additionally, DRCVI staff trained professionals such as teachers, paraprofessionals and supervisors on the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, and the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). These trainings were held at residential communities, a public high school, the University of the Virgin Islands, the public libraries, and the office of DRCVI.

### Monitor Residential Facilities

Under federal law, DRCVI as the protection and advocacy agency is authorized to conduct monitoring visits at residential facilities in the U.S. Virgin Islands so that residents receive appropriate care and treatment and are not subject to abuse or neglect. DRCVI legal staff conducted monitoring visits at 26 facilities during 2018.

### Our Mental Health Crisis

DRCVI continues to advocate for the implementation of the 5-year strategic plan to improve the territory's mental health service system. During 2018, the most important accomplishment was the creation of the Behavioral Health Coalition. The work of the coalition has resulted in pursuing grant opportunities for mental health services and entering into negotiations to procure psychiatric health services from established professional health associations.

### Health and Wellness in a Post-Disaster Environment

A federal grant afforded DRCVI the opportunity to address the risks and consequences of the Zika virus. However, our post-disaster environment created additional trauma related experiences that warranted a need to provide additional information on general wellness. In response, DRCVI created and disseminated information in the form of 5,000 postcards, wellness fliers, promotional materials, and Powerpoint presentations on the subject of Zika prevention and how to take better care of ourselves and our loved ones.

2018 brought a remarkable opportunity for the people of the U.S. Virgin Islands to obtain health insurance under the Medicaid program. DRCVI engaged the services of a communications consultant with a health background who coordinated a series of public service announcements that were broadcasted in English and Spanish on 5 local radio stations. These announcements were developed with the assistance of the local Medicaid program to encourage V.I. residents in need of health care coverage to apply.

### Technology at Work

DRCVI expanded its use of technology that included Facebook and podcasts to "get the word out". In 2018, DRCVI had a total of 82,863 hits to its website. In our weekly "Ability Radio" broadcasts, DRCVI reached a potential audience of 104,000 residents per show.



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### DRCVI PRESENTATIONS

DRCVI's focus is to inform the disability community of their legal rights so that individuals will have the information they need to effectively advocate for themselves.

During 2018, the staff of DRCVI presented at over 71 events including:

- ◆ Our "Ability Radio" Programs
- ◆ Mental Health Forums
- ◆ Legislative Hearings
- ◆ Workshops on the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)
- ◆ Community Fairs and Exhibits
- ◆ Film Screenings
- ◆ Sensitivity Training for Election System Poll Workers

