

## 2013 Program Report Card: Case Advocacy Services (OPA)

*Quality of Life Result:* The civil and human rights of all Connecticut residents are respected and protected.

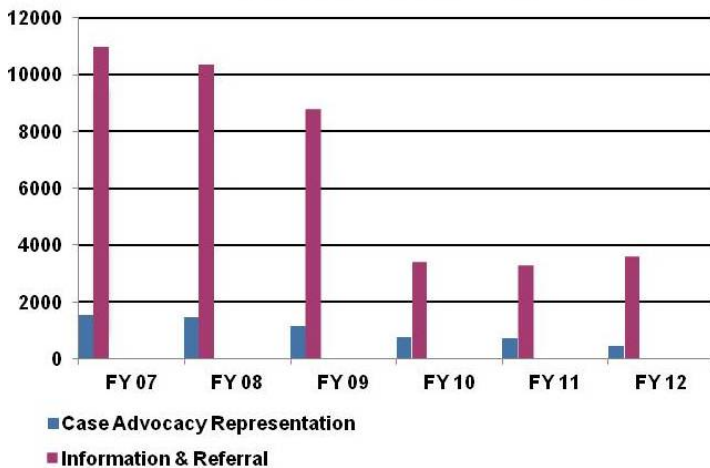
*Contribution to the Result:* Connecticut residents with disabilities have a place to turn to for help when they experience discrimination, abusive treatment or problems accessing relevant, respectful services.

Program Expenditures	State Funding	Federal Funding	Other Funding	Total Funding
Actual FY 12	\$702,249	\$657,431	0	\$1,359,680
Estimated FY 13	\$674,080	\$673,578	0	\$1,347,658

*Partners:* State and federal agencies and organizations serving people with disabilities, including the U.S. Departments of Justice and Education, and the following state agencies: DPH, DSS, SDE, DDS, DMHAS, DOT, DMV, DOL, DCF, CDHI, CHRO, BESB, and DOC; licensing and oversight bodies; state and national disability advocacy organizations including the National Disability Rights Network (the national umbrella organization for Protection & Advocacy Systems), and Connecticut's non-profit legal services organizations.

**How Much Did We Do?** The number of people served by Case Advocacy Services annually.

What level of service did people receive?



**Story behind the baseline:** Most people contacting OPA receive short-term problem-solving assistance (Information & Referral). A smaller number receive Case Advocacy Representation from staff advocates, or, in some cases from agency attorneys. Decisions about accepting cases for representation are based on both program mandates and annual

priorities which are established by the Advocacy Board. Beginning in FY 2010, there was a significant reduction in I&R requests reported. Some of this was due to increased utilization of the agency's improved web-based resource guides; a lot was due to not renewing contracts with regional I&R sub-contractors (due to lack of funding). Reductions in the numbers of people receiving case advocacy representation reflect the loss of staff advocate positions due to various funding cuts.

**Trend:** ▼

**How Well Did We Do It?** Because many people contacting OPA are facing deadlines for things like evictions, special education meetings, fair hearings, etc., we measure the time that elapses between receipt of an initial request for assistance and our response as an indicator of how well we are doing this work. I&R calls are expected to be returned within 24 hours; decisions about requests for case representation may require review of documents or additional information. In almost all cases correspondence is generated summarizing information provided or notifying the requestor of a decision on a request for representation. (In some cases, however, it is more appropriate and more timely to contact individuals by phone, in person, or by another means.)

**Trend Going in Right Direction?** ▲ Yes; ▼ No; ◀▶ Flat/ No Trend

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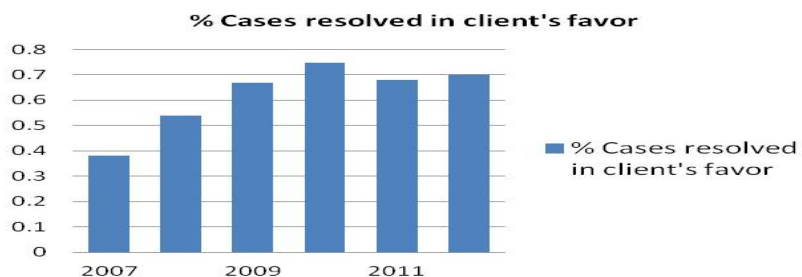
*Quality of Life Result:* The civil and human rights of all Connecticut residents are respected and protected.

**In 2012 OPA committed to develop a way to track the timeliness of decisions. Specifically, we started to track how long it took from initial contact with OPA to when clients were informed whether OPA would take on their case. This year, we have also begun to track I&R response time**

**Story behind the baseline:** As indicated in the 2012 RBA report card, OPA has just begun collecting this data. We are still working to generate this graph. In 2012 187 cases went to case review and it took an average of 16.5 days for case review decisions to be made. This number is misleading—93 of the cases were decided in 10 or fewer days and in many cases, the decision was made the same day. When we are contacted about special education issues, OPA advocates had requested copies of student records and reviewed the records before taking the case to case review. This delayed our response time significantly. Now advocates are bringing situations to case review right away, and if needed the Case Review Team advises the advocate to gather more information. Sometimes a situation is clear enough that the Case Review Team can tell an advocate to go ahead and begin work on a case.

**Trend:** too soon to tell

**Is Anyone Better Off?** The percentage of cases where issues are resolved partially or fully in the client's favor.



**Story behind the baseline:** "Issues resolved partially or fully in the client's favor" can be measured using our case management database. Each client has an Advocacy Plan which spells out how the case will flow and what OPA will do. OPA opened 431 cases and closed 252. Of the closed cases, 176 were resolved in the client's favor. The cases that remain open typically either were opened late in the year or involve a very high level of intervention.

**Trend:** ◀▶ The trend may be leveling off. From a low of 38% in 2007 to a high of 75% in 2010, the success rate increased substantially.

**Proposed Actions to Turn the Curve:** OPA was unable to develop special education clinics as originally planned. OPA was successful in hiring an attorney who has expertise in special education, but not until the first half of SFY 13. This will free up other legal resources to focus on other issues at no additional cost.

**Data Development Agenda:** As indicated in the 2012 RBA report card, OPA has developed a tool to capture the data for measure number 2--the time it takes from initial contact with OPA to when the individual seeking assistance is notified as to the decision made at Case Review on whether to provide Case Advocacy Services. This year OPA has also begun tracking response time for Information and Referral Services. OPA has a stated expectation to respond to calls, e-mails and other contacts within 24 hours.