

# **ANNUAL REPORT FY2024**



**Safeguarding the rights of persons with disabilities**

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**Sonni Choi Williams, Esq., Chairman**

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## **Executive Director's Message**

### **Dr. Mary L. Milano, Esq.**

As the Executive Director of IGAC, I am pleased to submit the FY24 Agency Annual Report. The data summarized in this annual report will only share the work of the Commission in numbers. What it doesn't share are the unique circumstances under which clients come to the Commission and then the many efforts by Commission staff to protect client rights, to ensure client needs are met, to educate the public and disability service providers alike on disability rights, and to ultimately improve the lives of persons with disabilities.

Each Commission program uniquely serves persons with disabilities in ways that no other agency can. The Office of State Guardian is the largest public guardianship program in the nation serving almost 5,000 individuals while also providing public education on adult guardianship. The Legal Advocacy Service represents both children and adults with mental health needs in involuntary admission and treatment proceedings serving more than 8,000 individuals every year while also assisting individuals with establishing advanced directives as a least restrictive alternative to guardianship. The Human Rights Authority investigates hundreds of complaints of disability rights violations every year impacting thousands of persons with disabilities. The Special Education Initiative, a collaboration between the Human Rights Authority and the Legal Advocacy Service, assists hundreds of Illinois families with special education questions, concerns, and, in some cases, mediation and due process.

The Commissioners, staff and volunteers are committed to safeguarding the rights of persons with disabilities and possess unique expertise to carry out the Commission's mission and mandates.

I am proud to share this Annual Report as testimony to the Commission's work.

Dr. Mary L. Milano

## Agency Overview

The Illinois Guardianship and Advocacy Commission safeguards the rights of persons with disabilities by providing public guardianship services, legal representation, and a process to investigate alleged disability rights violations. The Commission was established by the Guardianship and Advocacy Act of 1979 (20 ILCS 3955/1 et seq.) and is governed by eleven Commissioners appointed by the Governor for three-year terms of office. Each Commissioner's selection reflects representation of a particular expertise, consistent with the Commission's mission to serve persons with disabilities.

The Commission carries out its mandates through the work of three primary programs, which receive support from a team of staff with expertise in areas that encapsulate the mission and vision of work for the citizens of Illinois.

- **Human Rights Authority (HRA)**
- **Legal Advocacy Services (LAS)**
- **Office of State Guardian (OSG)**

### OUR VISION

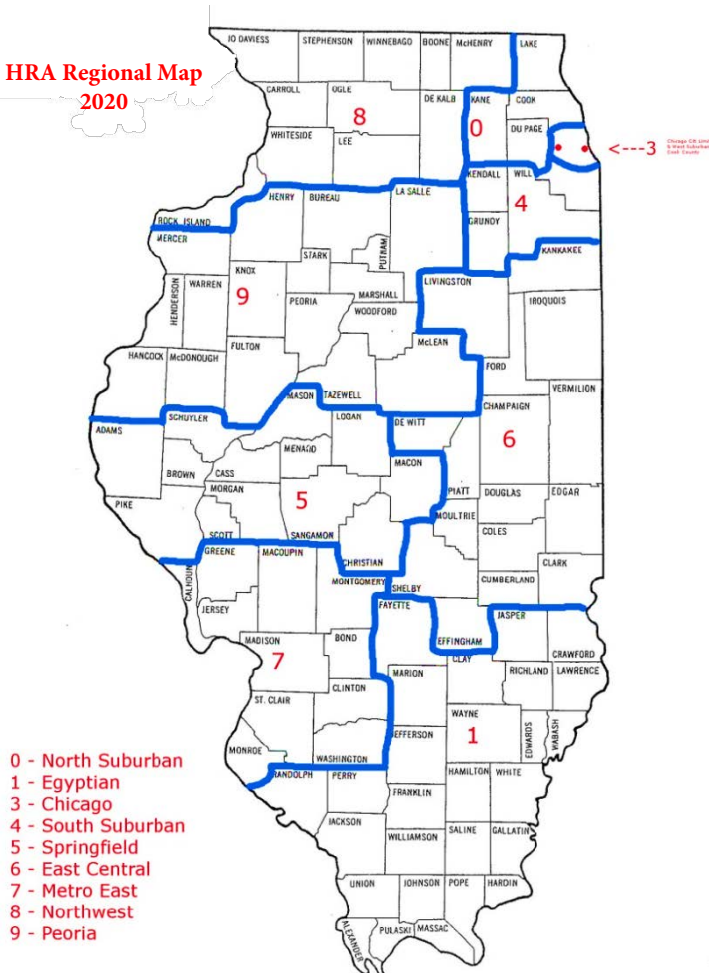
Ensure access to necessary guardianship and advocacy services for Illinois' citizens with disabilities with commitment to quality service provision by way of well- trained professional staff, dedication to public awareness of disability issues, advocacy for legislation and processes that have positive impacts on the agency, its services and its clients.

### OUR MISSION

To safeguard the rights of persons with disabilities by providing public guardianship services, legal representation, and processes to investigate alleged rights violations.

- 410 cases handled
- 226 intakes
- 1,383 volunteer hours
- 151,552 persons with disabilities impacted by HRA recommendations.
- 95% of recommendations implemented by service providers.
- \$9 Average cost per person with disabilities impacted.

**HRA Regional Map  
2020**



*The Human Rights Authority investigates allegations of rights violations committed by both public and private entities that serve children and adults with disabilities. Through its investigations and negotiated case outcomes, the Authority advocates for systemic changes to provider policies, procedures and practices that improve disability rights protections. Comprised of nine regional panels, located across the State, the Authority engages Illinois' citizens who serve, voluntarily, as members on the panels. Each region is staffed by a coordinator and nine volunteer members (81 total volunteers); each panel consists of three members who are service provider representatives and the remaining six members are consumers, family members or concerned citizens. The Authority provides a confidential and knowledgeable resource to refer complaints of disability rights protections and offers service providing agencies an objective means of resolving complaints without costly litigation. HRA findings are publicly released and can be accessed through the Commission website.*



## Legal Advocacy Service (LAS)

- 9,303 cases handled
- 10,161 clients served
- 799 hearings
- 8,850 petitions
- 34 new appeals
- 12 appeals based on merit
- 17 appeals handled at the trial level
- 852 requests for information, referrals, or assistance
- 467 Lee-Wesley Consent Decree referrals
- 626 requests for assistance with advanced directives
- 42 special education trainings attended

Cost per case handled	\$ 258.00
Cost per client served	\$ 236.00

Private sector cost for equivalent service hours (in thousands)	\$8,776.0
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Percentage the program costs the state when compared to private sector rates	27%
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*The Legal Advocacy Service was created so that eligible children and adults could obtain legal advice and representation to protect and enforce their rights guaranteed by Illinois' mental health laws. LAS attorneys provide needed assistance to persons with disabilities in a variety of settings: mental health facilities, residential programs, community placements and nursing homes. Issues addressed include but are not limited to: involuntary admission to and treatment in hospitals, discharge from hospitalization, adequate treatment, refusal of unwanted services and confidentiality of mental health records. Illinois courts often appoint LAS to represent persons with disabilities. Many cases result in published opinions which educate other mental health law attorneys, shape the manner in which future hearings are conducted and create precedents for future court decisions. The Legal Advocacy Service provides assistance to thousands of individuals with disabilities each year. This assistance takes the form of information, referrals and legal representation in court hearings and administrative proceedings.*



## Office of State Guardian (OSG)

- 4,760 guardianships handled
- 7,678 total clients served
- 106 Average caseload per Person Representative
- 46 Average caseload per Estate Representative
- 57 Average Hybrid Caseload (person and estate)
- 104 Highest regional case load
- 3,875 intakes (information plus pending appointments)
- 29,456 medical and other consent activities
- 4,671 after-hours on-call consents, inquiries, and referrals

Cost per client served            \$1,175.00

*The Office of State Guardian is the largest public guardianship agency of its kind in the United States with cases located in 94 out of 102 Illinois Counties. The purpose of adult guardianship is to provide substitute decision making for medical treatment, medication, residential placement, money management and direct care planning. Appointed by the court, OSG is responsible for the affairs of nearly 5400 wards and serves over 10,000 clients annually who have a wide range of disabilities including chronic mental illness, developmental disabilities, age-related disabilities or profound illnesses. In addition, OSG manages over \$3 million of its wards' assets, ensuring appropriate expenditures and investments of their funds. Many wards live in community settings for persons with mental illness or developmental disabilities, others live in nursing homes or State operated institutions throughout the State. The expertise of OSG allows it to monitor and advocate for appropriated medical and rehabilitative services unique to each disability and each client.*



## Special Education Initiative

*The Special Education Initiative is a collaboration of the Human Rights Authority and the Legal Advocacy Service created to help families navigate special education through training, advocacy and legal support. Primary goals include:*

- 1. Provide training and information to Illinois students, families and community members about special education.*
- 2. Provide direct special education advocacy to Illinois students and their families.*

### **Fiscal 2024 Data**

- 165 persons trained on special education laws and rights
- 345 individuals served
- 61 outreach events attended
- 99% case resolution





## Cross Divisional Projects

*Cross Divisional Projects pertain to overarching Commission efforts and projects that encompass all programmatic functions of the agency: the Office of State Guardian, the Legal Advocacy Service, the Human Rights Authority and the Special Education Initiative. Primary goals focused on staff development, outreach activities and publications, Office of State Guardian wards eligible for restoration and quantitative data on persons with disabilities in Illinois who may need Commission services.*

### **Fiscal Year 2024 Data**

- 447 internal trainings for Commission Staff
- 1,111 out reach activities and publications
- 45 individuals eligible for rights restoration



## 2024 Fiscal Summary

<b>FUND</b>	<b>Enacted Appropriations</b>	<b>Appropriations After Transfers</b>	<b>Expenditures</b>	<b>Lapse</b>
<b>GRF Fund</b>	<b>\$13,450,000</b>	<b>\$13,450,000</b>	<b>\$13,449,987</b>	<b>\$13</b>
<b>GAC Fund</b>	<b>\$2,997,900</b>	<b>\$2,997,900</b>	<b>\$1,580,697</b>	<b>\$1,417,203</b>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$16,447,900</b>	<b>\$16,447,900</b>	<b>\$15,030,684</b>	<b>\$1,417,216</b>

Details of the expenditures by category are as follows:

<b>Category of Expenditure</b>	<b>GRF</b>	<b>GAC Fund</b>
<b>Payroll</b>	<b>\$12,716,002</b>	<b>\$97,237</b>
<b>Contractual</b>	<b>\$593,898</b>	<b>\$1,160,862</b>
<b>Travel</b>		<b>\$119,255</b>
<b>Printing</b>		<b>\$5,871</b>
<b>Commodities</b>		<b>\$9,716</b>
<b>Equipment</b>		<b>\$4,874</b>
<b>Telecom</b>	<b>\$140,086</b>	<b>\$176,684</b>
<b>Auto</b>		<b>\$6,198</b>
<b>Total Expenditure by Fund</b>	<b>\$13,449,987</b>	<b>\$1,580,697</b>



## **Commissioners**

**Sonni Choi Williams, Esq., Chairman**

**Garvin G. Ambrose, Esq.**  
Chief of Staff, Cook County State's Attorney

**Paula Basta**  
Director, Il. Department on Aging

**Representative William Q. Davis**  
30<sup>th</sup> District

**Donald J. Dew**  
President / CEO  
Habilitative Systems, Inc. (HSI)

**Kathryn E. Eisenhart, Esq.**

**Mariel Hamer-Sinclair**  
Associate Director of Program and Policy, ICDD

**Mary Kennelly**  
Educator

**Representative Bob Morgan**  
58<sup>th</sup> District

**Senator Julie Morrison**  
Democrat, 29<sup>th</sup> District

**Ava George Stewart, Esq.**



## Organizational Structure

