



GEORGIA ADVOCACY
OFFICE • *thegao.org*

The Protection and Advocacy System for People with Disabilities in Georgia

Our Role

We advance the legal, civil & human rights of Georgians with disabilities

The GAO is Georgia's federally mandated protection and advocacy agency, established by the DD Act in 1977. We align our resources, values, and legal commitments to grow a movement of people in Georgia who willingly stand beside — and stand up for — people with disabilities.

Core Belief

People with disabilities are fully equal members of our communities

People with disabilities have the right to self-determination, protection from harm and the opportunity to fully exercise their citizenship and responsibilities.

Priorities

We have four main areas of emphasis

Our highest priority is preventing abuse, neglect, and preventable deaths
We support people with disabilities to access services and supports.
We assist people to fully participate in community life.
We support children to live with permanent, loving families.

Activities

We use a range of remedies to achieve our goals and objectives

Our range of remedies includes individual and systemic advocacy, investigations, support for self-advocacy, negotiation, information and referral, administrative remedies, and when necessary, litigation.

Access

Our access authority is the foundation of our work

We monitor and investigate where people with disabilities live and receive services — like group homes, institutions, or jails — to make sure they're safe and treated with respect. GAO talks with people, reviews records, and investigates concerns about abuse or neglect to protect their rights.

*"Disability justice centers the lives and leadership of [the] most impacted...
and that no body or mind is disposable." - Patricia Berne*

Impact on Georgians*

of Georgians with Disabilities

1,462,500

of Service Requests

714

of Places Monitored

80

732
Information
and referrals
given

155
Representative
payee
investigations
completed

106
Projects
affected
systems
change

10,514 voters
in 82 counties
assisted to
vote

1,462,500
People
impacted by
GAO projects

11,125
People
reached
through
training events

197
Abuse, neglect,
exploitation, rights
violation and death
investigations
completed

"Instead of approaching protection and advocacy as a technical legal problem and approaching it as a cultural and relational problem...the question is in a sense how do we tap into that energy for a beloved community"

~John O'Brien

"I wouldn't have the life that I have now if it hadn't been for the Georgia Advocacy Office. I have a pretty good life again. If not for GAO, I'd still be there rotting in Molina."

~Person Served

"When my daughter lost her nursing benefits, each person at the GAO from the first person I spoke to on the phone to our amazing advocate has been a wonderful support system."

~Parent

*Based on FY24 PPR