

# Exchange

*“Protecting the Rights of Persons With Disabilities”*

WINTER 2019

MICHIGAN



PROTECTION & ADVOCACY  
SERVICE, INC.

## Michigan Protection & Advocacy Service, Inc. Welcomes New Executive Director

Michigan Protection & Advocacy Service, Inc. (MPAS) is pleased to announce the appointment of Michelle Roberts as the new Executive Director. Roberts replaces Elmer L. Cerano, who is retiring. Currently serving as the agency's Deputy Executive Director, Roberts will begin her tenure on January 1, 2019.

“We are very excited that Michelle Roberts has assumed the role of Executive Director,” says John McCulloch, MPAS Board President. “Michelle brings a combination of energy, compassion, and proven leadership to the challenges of advocating for the rights of individuals with disabilities. The Board recognizes her extensive advocacy background, her 20 years of work within the mental health community, and her strong leadership skills. Michelle is the right person to provide the necessary guidance to the organization.”

Roberts holds two Bachelor of Arts degrees, in Psychology and Social Psychology, from Western Michigan University. She has served in the mental health field as a support coordinator for Community Mental Health, a psychiatric care specialist for a private psychiatric hospital, and a provider running independent living programs for adults with mental illness. In 2002 Roberts joined MPAS as an advocate on the Community and Institutional Rights (CAIR) team. She was promoted to Director of Advocacy in 2005 and has managed in this capacity until her appointment to Deputy Executive Director in 2018.

“I am honored to lead an agency that continues to have such a significant impact on both individuals and communities. I am equally proud to work with staff

who are experts in their fields and passionate about our clients,” said Roberts. “Together, we are stronger, and in this spirit, I will continue to lead MPAS. I look forward to working with the Board, the management team and staff to meet the challenges of the next decade.”



*Michelle Roberts  
Executive Director*

## CMH Access and Eligibility Clarification



MDHHS recently clarified in writing that when a community mental health service program (CMHSP) receives an initial request for services it must conduct an assessment to determine a person's level of need for services, regardless of Medicaid eligibility.

CMHSP's are allowed to prioritize services for individuals without Medicaid to those whose needs are most severe and in emergency situations; however, a CMHSP cannot make this decision without assessing an individual's need for services.

"Individuals have been receiving inaccurate information regarding access to Community Mental Health Services Programs. Thanks to the watchful eye of our MPAS advocates, this issue is now being corrected on a statewide level," says Michelle Roberts, MPAS Executive Director.

If you have been denied an initial assessment after you requested services from a CMHSP, please contact MPAS at (517) 487-1755.

To see a full summary of this clarification and an official letter, stating your rights, from the Bureau of Community Based Services, please visit our newsroom at [www.mpas.org/newsroom](http://www.mpas.org/newsroom).

## Deaf Inmate Litigation Close to Settlement

MPAS and co-counsel have been litigating a class action suit against the Michigan Department of Corrections challenging the failure to provide communication aids to deaf inmates. The parties have negotiated a settlement including:

video relay systems to help inmates communicate with family and friend to the same degree as



other inmates; flashing lights to alert inmates to emergencies; and provisions for securing American Sign language interpreters. The settlement is pending approval by the Federal court.



## New Laws

The Michigan Legislature passed new laws that allow private individuals to receive supports and services in their own homes without having to seek a state facility license. The laws – HB 5505, HB 5506, and HB 6400 – exempt small homes from licensure when the residents live in homes they own or rent and are receiving services overseen by community mental health agencies.



## State approves new funding for services

The Michigan Legislature approved two supplemental budget bills at the end of the 2018 session. The bills included over \$52 million in new state funding for services supporting people with intellectual and developmental disabilities and mental illness. The new funds will pay for a small hourly pay increase for CMH direct care staff, extra money for a PIHP, additional staffing at Caro Center, and grants for school mental health services and mental health pilots.

## Facility Monitoring Addresses Risk of Abuse or Neglect



In addition to numerous client visits, MPAS conducted 12 monitoring visits to facilities housing people with disabilities in the fall of 2018. Facilities visited included all five state psychiatric hospitals, the Huron Valley women's prison, and several child caring institutions.

## MPAS Rolls Out Representative Payee Monitoring Program

MPAS is rolling out a new federally-funded program to monitor organizations that serve as Social Security representative payees. We have hired and trained staff and, in the first quarter, conducted 4 organizational reviews and 15 outreach/training activities. The reviews are assigned by the Social Security Administration, which also receives the monitoring reports.



## MPAS Welcomes Skadden Fellow, Alexis Bailey

*Advocating for Michigan Veterans with Disabilities*

MPAS is pleased to welcome Alexis Bailey, the recipient of a 2018 Skadden Fellowship, to our agency. This prestigious fellowship will allow her to work for two years as a funded public interest attorney for MPAS. Alexis will protect the rights of Michigan veterans with disabilities through direct representation and community education.



“I want to make my home state better for veterans, a population I am a part of and care about deeply,” said Alexis. “There a disconnect between veterans and the resources available to them. There is also an overwhelming unmet need among veterans for affordable legal representation. With this fellowship, I am honored to have the opportunity to work directly with fellow veterans and help to close those gaps.”

If you have any questions regarding veterans with disabilities and their rights, please call MPAS at (517) 487-1755.

## Agencies, Advocates Reorganize Systemic Reform Initiatives

MPAS is involved in several statewide discussions involving state and local government, providers, people with disabilities and their families, and advocates. These discussions include development of crisis mental health centers, expanded access to community-based long-term care, improved outcomes for students with disabilities, and changes to the system which would allow individuals deemed incompetent to state trial in state criminal courts to receive quicker access to restoration services.



## Autonomous Vehicles

Would you ride in a self-driving car? Among MPAS callers, 56% said “yes” in a recent survey. Their most pressing concerns are safety, how to handle a breakdown or other emergency, and affordability.

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Voice/TTY/Language and accommodations available.  
Available in alternative formats upon request.

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Michelle Roberts  
*Executive Director*

*Michigan Protection & Advocacy Service, Inc. is mandated by federal and state law to protect the legal rights of individuals with disabilities in Michigan. MPAS receives part of its funding from the Administration on Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities, the Center for Mental Health Services-Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), the Rehabilitation Services Administration, and the Social Security Administration. This publication is made possible by support from these federal funders. The contents are solely the responsibility of MPAS and do not necessarily represent the official views of the federal agencies listed above. The Exchange is funded by the federal appropriations and grants, 91%; State of Michigan appropriations and grants, 5%; Other, 3%. Total copies 10,309. Total Cost: \$1,200 Cost per issue: .11¢.*