



# Exchange

*“Protecting the Rights of Persons With Disabilities”*



## LaKeisha’s Journey to Independence

### *The Impact of Assistive Technology*

For many, Assistive Technology (AT) plays a vital role in their life. Recently, Disability Rights Michigan (DRM) visited LaKeisha Cammon, a former client, at her home. DRM was able to successfully advocate for LaKeisha so she could obtain the AT and in-home supports necessary to leave a nursing home and once again live independently in the community.

#### **You first got in touch with Disability Rights Michigan for assistance getting a speech generating device and power wheelchair. How do those devices assist you in day-to-day life?**

My speech-generating device (SGD) is my lifeline to the world. I use it for much more than vocally communicating with the people around me. I use it for texting and emails. I even have a smart light, I turn on and off, by communicating to my ALEXA device through my SGD. My goal is to get more smart products, I can control myself, to increase my independence as much as possible.

#### **Why is living independently important to you?**

Living independently allows me to have more control over my life and my surroundings. My home is my home. It is my own creation - my space and responsibly. This gives me the greatest sense of independence. I pay the bills and I keep it clean, with help of course. I also have control over my own money again, which is very important to me.

Living in a nursing home had me feeling helpless, hopeless, and depressed. There was nothing to look forward to. In my own home people see I do exist. People know I am inside of this house. In a nursing home I was easily forgotten by the outside world.

#### **You have been able to secure employment. Tell us more about your job.**

I am a freelance writer. I do contract work where I write business advertisements that are heard on radio and podcasts or seen on TV and social media sites. I love it. I’ve always loved writing and this job challenges me to be creative.

Freelance writing is a great career for me because it can easily be done from home.

#### **How do you view the role of Assistive Technology (AT) in your life?**

Assistive technology is the key to my independence. I would not be able to communicate without AT or work without the assistance of my HeadMouse, Dwell Clicker, and wheelchair. This technology allows me to independently operate my computer and gives me mobility. And there is so much more technology available that could improve my independence far beyond what it is right now. Who knows, maybe one day AT will give me the ability to drive a van.

If you or someone you know has questions related to assistive technology, please contact DRM at 1.800.288.5923. All calls are free and confidential.

*~LaKeisha Cammon  
Assistive Technology needs to become more affordable and accessible to everyone with a disability.*

# Motion for Class Certification Filed in Children's Mental Health Lawsuit

In April 2022, Disability Rights Michigan (DRM), The National Health Law Program, Mantese Honigman, P.C., and John Conway, P.C. filed a motion seeking to certify a class consisting of tens of thousands of Michigan children with disabilities who need, but are not receiving, intensive home and community-based Medicaid services. The lawsuit seeks to expand access to community-based mental and behavioral health services for children in Michigan. Plaintiffs filed their First Amended Complaint in February, which added multiple new class representatives from across the state.

“The motion for class certification is a major procedural step toward protecting the rights of children with mental and behavioral health needs in Michigan,” said Nick Gable, Senior Attorney at DRM. “Class certification will ensure that all children who need these services, as opposed to just the named Plaintiffs, benefit from a favorable outcome in the lawsuit.”

Visit our website to learn more about DRM's Children's Mental Health Lawsuit:

<https://www.drmich.org/stories/childrens-mental-health-lawsuit/>



## Transition: Prep for Success

We need your input. DRM is launching a campaign aimed at addressing Transition: School to Work/Adult Life, the process of planning for work or further schooling after high school graduation.

DRM has the advocacy knowledge but needs to know what information people are looking for. DRM will do its best to answer questions and provide transition guidance during the campaign!

Send us a message via [Facebook](#) or email us at [rhuddleston@drmich.org](mailto:rhuddleston@drmich.org).



## One By One, We Get Stronger


Are you unable to leave your home to get the Covid-19 vaccine or booster? Let us help. Our team of advocates are working to make sure individuals with disabilities have access to care.

We have helped over 100 Michigan homebound residents or those living in AFCs get vaccinated. Our advocates have scheduled over 200 referrals for the vaccine to be administered.

Our team continues to collaborate with statewide agencies and community-based organizations to identify gaps in service and ensure equal access to care.

Our services are FREE and CONFIDENTIAL.

Visit our website to learn more about the COVID-19 vaccine and how we can help: [www.drmich.org/vaccineadvocacy](http://www.drmich.org/vaccineadvocacy)



## Revised Guidance MDE Office of Special Education

The Michigan Department of Education Office of Special (MDE OSE) has issued a revised **Guidance for Timeline for Initial Evaluations**.

In it, MDE-OSE states that a parent's verbal request for evaluation should not be ignored.

*“Either a parent of a child or a public agency may request an initial evaluation when a student is suspected of having a disability. Requests for an initial evaluation are submitted to district personnel. **When a request is verbally made, the district must support the parent in documenting this request. Failure to acknowledge a verbal request could result in a violation of child find.**”*

The school district has a proactive obligation to locate, identify, and evaluate students with disabilities, known as “Child Find.” MDE’s guidance points out that a failure to respond to a parent’s verbal requests may contribute to MDE finding that the district’s child find processes are not adequate.

When a school violates the law or fails to do something the law requires, you may file a complaint. Sometimes, you may be able to resolve the complaint informally; other times you may have to file a formal complaint.

A formal state complaint must be written, signed, and sent to the Michigan Department of Education (MDE) and your school district. You can file a complaint up to one year after the problem occurs. The complaint must contain information about the problem you are having and the laws you think have been broken. If the MDE finds the district did not comply with the law, they will order the school to correct its noncompliance.

## DRM Advocacy Hints

### Evaluation Request

- We recommend you always put your evaluation request in writing. A *written request* for evaluations starts evaluation timelines and reduces the chance that your request will be forgotten or misunderstood.
- Make sure the written request goes to the principal of the building where your child attends, and to the special education administrator. You can include your child’s teacher, too.
- An email counts as a written request.
- Ask for a response, and if you do not receive one, follow up.

### Complaint Process

- If the district staff fail to respond to your requests to evaluate your child, you may file a complaint.
- If you have submitted written requests, include information about them, including copies of the requests, if possible.
- You can also include information about verbal requests you have made, including:
  - Names of staff who have ignored repeated verbal requests.
  - Concrete information about repeated verbal requests, including the number of times you have asked for evaluations, if known.
  - The dates and circumstances that prompted you to make these requests (as much information as you can remember).

If you have additional questions about this guidance or how to file a state complaint, please call Disability Rights Michigan. Our services are free and confidential. Download our free Advocate’s Guide to learn more (<https://www.drmich.org/resources/special-education/>).



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## Disability Rights Michigan (DRM)

4095 Legacy Parkway  
Lansing, MI 48911-4264

Telephone 517.487.1755

**TOLL FREE:**

**800.288.5923**

Fax: 517.487.0827



<http://www.drmich.org>

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

Michelle Roberts  
*Executive Director*

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