



DISABILITY RIGHTS NEW YORK

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Disability Rights New York Seeks Preliminary Injunction in Federal Lawsuit against Service Provider for Failure to Comply with Requests by DRNY to Investigate Allegations of Abuse and Neglect

Albany, NY February 19, 2016 – Disability Rights New York (“DRNY”) filed suit against Northern Rivers Family Services, Inc., John Henley, Chief Executive Officer of Northern Rivers Family Services, and Northeast Parent and Child Society, Inc., for illegally denying DRNY access to a residential treatment center and the records of DRNY clients who were residents of this facility. The lawsuit was filed in the United States District for the Northern District of New York.

DRNY is New York State’s designated Protection and Advocacy System (“P&A”). Congress empowered P&A agencies with statutory authority to investigate allegations of abuse and neglect involving persons with disabilities. DRNY also has monitoring authority to access facilities in order to prevent future incidents of abuse and neglect in residential settings.

Despite multiple allegations of abuse and neglect involving youth with disabilities, Northern Rivers Family Services has consistently refused to provide DRNY with access to client records nor access to the residential treatment center to monitor the health and safety of other residents.

Congress created the P&A System after news reports exposed the horrific conceptions at New York State’s Willowbrook School, a residential program for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities. Congress demanded that each state created an independent oversight agency to monitor that care provided to people with disabilities and to protect and advocate for their rights.

“Northern Rivers Family Services obstruction of DRNY’s authority to investigate complaints of abuse and neglect places children within this program at risk of harm.” said Timothy A. Clune, Esq., Executive Director DRNY. “DRNY must be given the access mandated by federal law to monitor the care of children at this facility and to investigate complaints of abuse and neglect of all children within the care of Northern Rivers Family Services.”