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Virginia Advocacy Group to Monitor Immigration Facilities

Federal officials announced this week that organizations like the disAbility Law Center of Virginia have the authority to monitor conditions and treatment in immigration facilities if those facilities have residents with disabilities. The Office of Refugee Resettlement, in a memorandum dated July 16, 2018, confirmed that the dLCV and similar organizations are entitled to full access to protect any individual with a disability from abuse, neglect or any other violation of rights.

The disAbility Law Center of Virginia is part of a nationwide network of organizations known as "Protection and Advocacy systems," designed to offer an array of education and legal representation services to people with disabilities and to combat abuse and neglect in both governmentally operated and privately operated facilities. Protection and Advocacy organizations act under the authority of federal law and have the right to unaccompanied access to facilities and residents, as well as access to resident records under certain conditions.

The July 16, 2018 notice from the Director of the Office of Refugee Resettlement confirmed that dLCV and organizations like it may inspect, view and photograph areas used by the residents. dLCV must conduct its visits so as to minimize interference with facility programs.

As soon as the notice was issued, the disability rights watchdog agency notified the Shenandoah Valley Juvenile Center of its plan to meet with young people being detained there, and to observe conditions and treatment at the institution. dLCV visited the facility in Staunton, Virginia on July 16, 2018 and has plans for several subsequent visits in the coming weeks.

"The leadership of the Shenandoah Valley Juvenile Center has been cooperative and supportive of our involvement," said Colleen Miller, the executive director of dLCV. "We are especially grateful that the Director of ORR clarified our authority to conduct these inspections."

dLCV is a nonprofit organization that serves as the Commonwealth's designated protection and advocacy system. dLCV's mission is to fight abuse and neglect and to encourage people with disabilities to have choice, independence, and inclusion in all aspect of life.

For more information about the disAbility Law Center, visit www.dLCV.org

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