



October 1, 2024 - September 30, 2025

Dear Maryland Division of Rehabilitation Services participants, staff and stakeholders,

As another year swiftly comes to a close, the Maryland Client Assistance Program (CAP) is pleased to reflect on a year marked by meaningful advocacy, expanded outreach, and strengthened partnerships. In the Federal Fiscal Year 2025 (October 1, 2024 – September 30, 2025), CAP provided **Information and Referral services to over 800 individuals**, helping to give the knowledge and resources needed to navigate services throughout the state. Additionally, **CAP offered direct advocacy support to more than 100 individuals**, supporting them to overcome barriers and move closer to their goals.

Building on last year's success, CAP continued its **"Chat with CAP"** sessions—an initiative designed to foster collaboration and open dialogue with staff from the Division of Rehabilitation Services (DORS) and the Office of Blindness and Vision Services (OBVS). This year, CAP expanded these sessions beyond the vocational teams to include community members and partners, offering virtual introductions to CAP staff and reviewing the services CAP provides.

On a national level, Maryland CAP actively participated in monthly Community of Practice meetings hosted by the National Disability Rights Network (NDRN). These sessions provided valuable opportunities to connect with CAP and Protection & Advocacy programs across the country, share best practices, and gain insights into emerging challenges and solutions in the field of vocational rehabilitation.

We are excited to share the accomplishments outlined in the report below and extend our appreciation to the clients that we are here to support and our partners at DORS, OBVS and the Centers for Independent Living (CILs). Please contact us if you have questions or want to learn more about CAP. We can be reached at 410-554-9361 or cap.dors@maryland.gov.

Sincerely,

Marla Friedman

Marla Friedman, MS
Client Assistant Program Director
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Jhoselin Beltran Contreras

Jhoselin Beltran Contreras, MA
Client Assistant Program Specialist
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Purpose

The Client Assistance Program (CAP) is a federally funded program that provides information, advice, and advocacy to Marylanders with disabilities who are applying for or receiving services from:

- Division of Rehabilitation Services (DORS)
- Office for Blindness and Vision Services (OBVS); and
- Centers for Independent Living (CILs)

CAP is mandated to **resolve issues at the lowest possible level**, which includes information and referral and support with self-advocacy. In this fiscal year, CAP provided over 800 instances of these services which include providing information about Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) programs, CAP, Independent Living (IL) services, Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), and general referral to community resources. CAP also serves as a member of Maryland State Rehabilitation Council (MSRC).

CAP Team

Marla Friedman – Client Assistance Program Director

Marla Friedman brings over 20 years of experience in the Vocational Rehabilitation field to her role as Director of Maryland CAP. Throughout her career, she has served in a variety of roles—including Transition Specialist and Vocational Manager—gaining a broad perspective on the needs and challenges faced by individuals with disabilities seeking employment support.

Since joining CAP in May 2023, Marla has focused on fostering collaboration and ensuring that individuals across Maryland have access to the resources and advocacy they need. She remains actively involved in statewide efforts to improve services, participating in the Maryland State Rehabilitation Council (MSRC) and regularly attending meetings with the State Independent Living Council (SILC) to stay informed and engaged with community needs.

Marla is committed to supporting inclusive, person-centered services and values the partnerships that help make meaningful progress possible.

Jhoselin Beltran Contreras – Client Assistance Program Specialist

Jhoselin Beltran Contreras is a dedicated advocate with experience supporting individuals with disabilities. She joined the Maryland Client Assistance Program (CAP) as a CAP Specialist in November 2023, bringing empathy, insight, and a strong commitment to service. Prior to joining CAP, she served as the Assistant Ombudsman for Special Education in Washington, D.C., where she worked to ensure families understood their educational rights and fostered effective communication between schools and families.

In May 2024, Jhoselin became a member of the National Disability Rights Network (NDRN) Advocacy Working Group (AWG), contributing to national efforts to strengthen the Protection and Advocacy (P&A) and CAP networks and helping ensure Maryland CAP remains connected to broader advocacy initiatives and emerging best practices. As a Spanish speaker, Jhoselin plays a key role in helping CAP better serve Maryland's diverse communities by ensuring language is never a barrier to accessing support.

CAP Satisfaction Survey

A total of 22 CAP surveys were completed this year. On a scale of 1 - 5, 5 being the best, CAP received a 5.0 to the question, "Overall, how satisfied were you with CAP?". CAP appreciates all feedback, and comments are welcomed to help the CAP team to know what is and isn't working. Some responses to the question, "Anything you would like us to know about the services you were provided?" included:

- My daughter and I are very thankful for the support of CAP, and the outstanding services of the CAP Team, Jhoselin Contreras and Marla Friedman.
- Done with sensitivity and professionalism.
- We can't thank her enough. We are forever grateful to her. She is very professional and always eager to assist even outside working hours
- Jhoselin Contreras was extremely helpful. She went above and beyond to help me in a timely manner. She told me she would call me back and I assumed I wouldn't hear from her in a timely manner. After I signed the release form, she spoke on my son's behalf and got everything situated with him.
- Marla was super helpful time and time again. I'm so appreciative.
- I'm thankful for the support I received. Marla was very helpful, responsive, and clear throughout the whole process. She made things less stressful and helped me understand what to do next. I appreciate everything.
- Ms. Jhoselin really fought for me and it's much appreciative.
- Mrs. Friedman promptly and kindly took care of my request and her support and mediation is expected to bring tangible outcomes to the better.
- This was a long process and each communication I felt I could be honest and supported. I know I am particular. It is part of my brain disorder. Many people avoid me or turn me off. Ms. Contreras did not.

Outreach and Training

- CAP participated in the Division of Rehabilitation Services (DORS) Quality Rehabilitation Training (QRT) on two occasions. Information regarding CAP was presented to the new employees of the Division of Rehabilitation Services. The CAP team reviewed the structure and the purpose of CAP, when consumers should be informed about CAP, as well as the statistics associated with the end of year reporting by CAP. In addition, the CAP staff attempted to answer all the new counselors' questions regarding the CAP. The new counselors and the CAP staff worked through several hypothetical situations involving clients and the concerns they raised about services throughout the Division that helped the new counselors develop a better understanding of how the CAP works.
- "Chat with CAP" sessions were offered throughout the year for DORS staff members to meet with the CAP staff. These sessions allowed counselors to learn about CAP, ask any questions they may have about CAP's role, and reminded them when to share information about CAP with participants.

- This year CAP created “Chat with CAP” for the community. These were virtual informational sessions for CAP staff to introduce the team, give a brief overview of DORS and CILs, discuss the purpose and support that CAP may provide, and provide time for questions and answers (not individual cases). Three sessions were offered. The participants mainly included clients of DORS and parents of DORS clients.
- CAP presented at two Public Meetings. CAP was introduced and able to present a brief overview of services and when and how to reach CAP.
- The CAP met with two of the Centers for Independent Living (CILs) to make introductions and learn more about each CIL. CAP met with the Executive Director of one CIL and with the other presented to several staff members.
- CAP presented to the Intake Specialist team at Disability Rights Maryland and the Protection & Advocacy for Beneficiaries of Social Security team. CAP gave an overview of CAP's purpose and examples of when people call CAP. DRM gave CAP information about their services as well.
- CAP met with the Montgomery County Employment Support Group three times during the year. The first time CAP joined to share information about CAP, services found within the state, and areas they have been working to address systemically. The group shared input about their experiences working with DORS and ways CAP may be able to support improving services within the state. CAP returned to meet with group to discuss systemic concerns and how to try to address them. At the third meeting, the Program Manager of Quality Assurance, Policy & Planning from the Division of Rehabilitation Services joined to hear and address concerns.
- CAP held a virtual meeting with the New Americans Initiative Coordinator at the Maryland Department of Labor. During the session, each agency outlined their roles and discussed how they support their respective communities. The meeting concluded with an exchange of resources and CAP subscribing to the New Americans newsletter.
- CAP participated in seven Maryland State Rehabilitation Council (MSRC) meetings this year. This included a few sub-committee meetings and a day-long planning retreat.
- CAP attended several meetings throughout the year of the Statewide Independent Living Council (SILC) Outcomes to gain insight into the support that the SILC and CILs offer throughout the state and to give input as appropriate.

Information and Referral

Information regarding the vocational rehabilitation (VR) program	658
Information regarding independent living programs	12
Information regarding Title I of the ADA	13
Other information provided	110
Information regarding CAP	9
Total I&R services provided	802

Demographics

Gender:

- **48** Female
- **50** Male
- **3** Unknown

Age:

- **10** up to 18
- **26** age 19-24
- **25** age 25-40
- **39** age 41-64
- **1** age 65+

Primary disabling condition of individuals served:

CAP serves individuals with a broad variety of disabilities, many of whom have multiple disabilities. Only primary disabilities are tracked for Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA) reporting, using RSA specified categories. Common disabilities included: Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD)/Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), Autism Spectrum Disorder, Blindness, Deafness, Intellectual Disability, Mental Illness, Orthopedic Impairments and Specific Learning Disabilities.

Problem Areas

Communication problems between client and VR Counselor	75
Conflict about VR services provided	13
Related to VR application/eligibility process	7
Related to assignment to order of selection priority category	6
Related to IPE development/implementation	8
Individual Requests Information	5
Related to independent living services	1
Other Rehabilitation Act-related problems	2

Reasons for Closures

All issues resolved in the individual's favor	95
Some issues resolved in the individual's favor	3
CAP determines VR/CIL position/decision was appropriate	1
Individual's case lacks legal merit (inappropriate for CAP interventions)	1
Individual not responsive/cooperative with CAP	2
Other: Support provided and client stopped contact with CAP	1