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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**

Wednesday September 18, 2019

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Disability Rights Center - New Hampshire

**Access to Services Clarified for People with Developmental Disabilities Ages 18-21**

Disability Rights Center - New Hampshire (DRC-NH) commends the NH Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) for actively undertaking efforts to ensure that all area agencies understand their obligation to fund developmental disability services, including home and community-based services (HCBS), for individuals with developmental disabilities who are not yet 21 but who have graduated or exited school.

The law providing full funding for developmental disability services DOES NOT require that a person be of a certain age to receive services.

Despite frequent confusion around this issue, DHHS agrees with DRC-NH's interpretation of the law and is working with the area agencies and the New Hampshire Department of Education to ensure that this requirement is understood and properly implemented so that services are made available to all qualifying individuals regardless of age.

"In my conversations with people with disabilities, families, and advocates across the state, I've regularly heard confusion and misinformation regarding the rights of 18 to 21-year-olds to access these critical services," said Stephanie Patrick, DRC-NH's Executive Director. "I'm pleased that the state has clarified its obligation to provide these services and is educating families and stakeholders."

If you or someone you know has left school and are told that services are not available until age 21 or are otherwise experiencing difficulties applying for and securing developmental disability services, please call DRC-NH to speak with an attorney.

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DRC-NH is New Hampshire's designated Protection and Advocacy system and is dedicated to eliminating barriers existing in New Hampshire to the full and equal enjoyment of civil and other legal rights by people with disabilities. More information about DRC-NH can be found at <http://www.drcnh.org>.