



Media Alert

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Smith to Lead State's Protection and Advocacy Agency

(RALEIGH, N.C.) On Tuesday, the Disability Rights North Carolina board of directors announced the appointment of **Vicki Smith** as executive director of the state's Protection and Advocacy agency, effective November 26, 2007. As the state's P&A agency, Disability Rights North Carolina protects the legal rights of people with disabilities through individual and systems advocacy.



"After a national search, the board chose Vicki because she exhibits the ideals and the vision that Disability Rights North Carolina has for its future," said board chair Greg McGrew. "I know the organization and the people we serve will embrace her leadership as we move forward."

Smith first came to North Carolina as a consultant to the P&A redesignation process. In May 2007, Gov. Mike Easley redesignated Disability Rights North Carolina (formerly Carolina Legal Assistance) as the state's P&A agency, effective July 2. Smith worked closely with the Governor's Office and federal officials to ensure a smooth transfer of advocacy services from the Governor's Advocacy Council for Persons with Disabilities to Disability Rights North Carolina. As part of that process, Smith traveled around the state meeting with disability groups to ensure their involvement in the new P&A agency.

"I am excited about working with the disability community of North Carolina and the board and staff of Disability Rights North Carolina to improve the quality of life of North Carolinians with disabilities," said Smith. "I believe that this P&A agency will make a critical difference, upholding the fundamental rights of people with disabilities to live free from harm in the communities of their choice with the opportunity to participate fully and equally in society."

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Smith has been associated with P&A systems for more than 20 years, having first worked as the executive director of the West Virginia P&A agency and later as the deputy director of the National Association of Protection and Advocacy Systems, where she coordinated training and technical assistance to P&A agencies around the country. In 2001, Smith formed a consulting firm, Disability Advocacy Training and Technical Assistance (Dat²a), where she developed a competency-based curriculum for governance of P&A agencies.

Smith has extensive experience working with groups that include broad-based representation of individuals with different abilities including those with cognitive disabilities, hearing and visual impairments, and mental illness. She has served on the board of directors of a variety of nonprofits, most recently as the treasurer for the Northern West Virginia Center for Independent Living. Smith has a Masters in Early Childhood Early Intervention and taught special education for 13 years in rural West Virginia.

Disability Rights North Carolina is a nonprofit organization established to protect the civil and legal rights of people with disabilities in North Carolina. The organization works to protect children and adults with disabilities from abuse, neglect and exploitation and ensure their basic civil and human rights, including education, housing, treatment and access to public facilities. Disability Rights North Carolina is part of the nationwide system of Protection and Advocacy organizations established by federal law. It is the designated Protection and Advocacy agency for the state of North Carolina.

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