



**DISABILITY
LAW
CENTER**
Utah's Protection and Advocacy Agency

PRESS RELEASE

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DISABILITY LAW CENTER HELPS CHILD GAIN INDEPENDENCE

Joseph Digiovanna III is a 12 year-old who lives with his family in Ivins, Utah in Washington County. Joseph was born with muscular dystrophy and is not able to walk. Until recently he was unable to get around because the wheelchair that he uses was broken. With the help of the Disability Law Center (DLC), Utah's Protection and Advocacy organization for people with disabilities, Joseph has received a power wheelchair that offers him independence. Joseph can now get around in his community independently.

Joseph's family applied for a power wheelchair through Medicaid over six months ago. The requested wheelchair was denied because Medicaid felt that it was too expensive. The wheelchair is a medical necessity for Joseph, not a luxury item. It allows him to sit-up and to move around his home and his community. The DLC's Assistive Technology team took his case in September and filed a request for an administrative hearing with the Utah Medicaid program to challenge the denial. If specialized equipment like Joseph's wheelchair is requested, thoroughly evaluated and recommended by medical professionals, the Utah Medicaid program must pay for its purchase. After six months of negotiating the DLC got Joseph the wheelchair he needed.

"My new wheelchair has given me the freedom to play with kids my age and do the things I love to do," said Joseph Digiovanna.

Assistive technology is a very broad term. For some, like Joseph, it is an expensive wheelchair, but for others it might be an adaptive keyboard for the computer, a communication device or something as simple as a speaker phone. The DLC offers free services to people with disabilities who apply for assistive technology through Medicaid, Medicare and private insurance programs, but are denied.

The DLC assists many Southern Utahns with disabilities like Joseph obtain the assistive technology they need to work, study, parent, play – to become fully integrated and contributing members of society.

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