

Disability Rights Nebraska

Protection and Advocacy for People with Disabilities



OUR VISION FOR THE FUTURE

Nebraskans with disabilities, especially those who are most vulnerable, will be free from harm and able to exercise the same rights, opportunities and choices available to all citizens in order to live fully integrated and culturally valued lives.

Disability Rights Nebraska is a private, nonprofit 501(c)(3) organization chosen to provide protection and advocacy services in Nebraska. We are the only organization with a mandate that allows us to pursue legal and/or other remedies to protect and advocate for the rights of Nebraskans with disabilities. For the past 40 years we have been a powerful voice on behalf of vulnerable people with disabilities, winning significant victories to prevent abuse and neglect, expand mental health and community services, ensure access to special education, and facilitate effective state-wide programs in citizen advocacy and self-advocacy.

We work with a wide range of individuals and organizations to advocate for the legal and human rights of more than 250,000 Nebraskans who have:

- Intellectual or developmental disabilities
- Mental illnesses or emotional impairments
- Physical or sensory disabilities
- Learning disabilities
- Brain injuries

This includes people who:

- Need assistive technology
- Have been abused, neglected, or exploited
- Receive disability income benefits and want to return to work
- Question whether their disability can affect their right to vote

Our advocacy efforts are focused on people with disabilities who live, learn, or work in isolated, segregated, or congregated settings. We use a combination of the following advocacy strategies to protect those who are most vulnerable:

Legal Advocacy. We stand with people who have disabilities when their civil and human rights are denied. We are *legal advocates* who provide advice and representation to eligible persons whose cases meet our priorities. We have the authority to conduct monitoring visits, and we have access to all facilities where people with disabilities live.

Public Policy Advocacy. We analyze changes to state and federal laws and regulations related to our mission, and we educate policy makers about their impact on people with disabilities.

Self-Advocacy. We provide the tools – information, education, referral sources – for people with disabilities and their families and friends to be self-advocates. We support building strong, stable organizations that are controlled and directed by individuals with disabilities and inspire people to set their own course.

Advocacy Education and Awareness. We provide information and education that builds awareness and understanding about inclusion and seeks to reduce prejudice, discrimination and other barriers faced by people with disabilities.

Values-Based Programs. We support local, independently operated Citizen Advocacy offices that establish one-to-one matches between ordinary citizens and vulnerable people in their communities who have a disability. Citizen Advocates are asked to look out for the rights and interests of the person with a disability as if they were their own.

We are governed by a twelve-member volunteer Board of Directors, and we receive on-going input from our volunteer Advisory Council and Stakeholder Groups. Many members of our Board of Directors, Advisory Council and Stakeholder Groups either have a disability or have a family member with a disability and provide advice based on their lived experiences. Our staff are dedicated to the ideals of the disability rights movement and devote their energies to support and defend the rights of people with disabilities.

Unfortunately, the demand for free legal and advocacy services to address disability-related legal issues is far greater than the resources we have available. To make the most of these resources, each year we develop priority areas to serve individuals with disabilities who fit into specific federal program eligibility guidelines. You can find more information about our priority areas and case selection criteria on our webpage: www.disabilityrightsnebraska.org

Disability Rights Nebraska

134 South 13 Street, Suite 600, Lincoln, NE 68508

Phone: (402) 474-3183 | Fax: (402) 474-3274

Or in western Nebraska

1517 Broadway, Suite 101

Scottsbluff, NE 69361

Cell: 308-631-5367

Toll Free: (800) 422-6691

You can contact us via email: info@disabilityrightsnebraska.org



Disability Rights Nebraska is a proud member of Give Nebraska. Learn more at www.GiveNebraska.org.

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