

Disability Rights Nebraska

Protection and Advocacy for People with Disabilities

CITIZEN ADVOCACY FACT SHEET

NEBRASKA ROOTS:

- In 1967, the Governor of Nebraska, appalled at the conditions in state institutions for persons with mental retardation, convened a Citizen's Study Committee on Mental Retardation.
- It is in the work of this Committee that Citizen Advocacy received first expression.
- The world's first Citizen Advocacy program was started in Lincoln in 1970.
- Citizen Advocacy is now worldwide with programs in the United States, Canada, Europe, Australia, and New Zealand.

WHAT CITIZEN ADVOCACY IS ABOUT:

- Building long-lasting relationships between ordinary citizens (unpaid and independent of the human service system) and people with a developmental disability. Many of the relationships established through Citizen Advocacy last a lifetime.
- Encouraging ordinary citizens to defend and represent the rights and interests of people with disabilities on a one-on-one basis.
- Relying on the talents and skills of ordinary citizens to solve problems rather than always looking to professionals or experts for answers.
- Offering opportunities for action:
 - Advocates have tapped their own networks to find competitive jobs for their partner.
 - Advocates play a crucial role in keeping people out of institutions or in moving people from institutions to places to live within the community.
 - Advocates have attended education or service plan meetings to vigorously represent their partner's rights and interests.
- Building community by encouraging advocates to share their family, church, and neighborhood community with their partner.

CITIZEN ADVOCACY PROGRAMS IN NEBRASKA

January 2023

BUFFALO COUNTY CITIZEN ADVOCACY, INC.

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GRAND ISLAND CITIZEN ADVOCACY, INC.

123 North Locust, Suite L101
Grand Island, NE 68801
(308) 385-5542
Coordinator: Danielle Helzer
coordinator@gicitizenadvocacy.org
www.gicitizenadvocacy.org

LINCOLN CITIZEN ADVOCACY, INC.

PO Box 84345
Lincoln, NE 68501
(402) 540-7769
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NORTH PLATTE CITIZEN ADVOCACY, INC.

P.O. Box 281
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North Platte, NE. 69103-0281
(308) 532-0670
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HEARTLAND CITIZEN ADVOCACY, INC.

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www.heartlandcitizenadvocacy.org

SUPPORTING A STATEWIDE CITIZEN ADVOCACY NETWORK

Disability Rights Nebraska has made a commitment to fostering and supporting Citizen Advocacy in Nebraska for over forty-one years. Funding is provided for the direct operation of local Citizen Advocacy programs and a program of ongoing training, technical assistance and consultation to local Citizen Advocacy offices.

Operational Funding for Local Citizen Advocacy Offices:

Operational funding for the five local Citizen Advocacy programs (Buffalo County Citizen Advocacy, Inc.; Grand Island Citizen Advocacy, Inc.; Lincoln Citizen Advocacy, Inc.; North Platte Citizen Advocacy, Inc.; and Heartland Citizen Advocacy, Inc. in Omaha) is allocated by the Nebraska Legislature and appropriated to the Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services. The Department contracts with Disability Rights Nebraska for a total of \$555,039 annually for the operation and support of Citizen Advocacy. Each State fiscal year Disability Rights Nebraska, Inc. enters into a contract for the operation of each local office (\$78,000.00) for a total allocation of \$390,000.00.

Training, Technical Assistance and Consultation Services:

Through a combination of state and federal funds, Disability Rights Nebraska provides local Citizen Advocacy programs the following training, technical assistance and consultation services:

- Intensive new coordinator training that includes a comprehensive orientation to the principles and practices of Citizen Advocacy and ongoing education on the key office activities, including participation in value based educational programs and serving on an external evaluation of a Citizen Advocacy program located outside Nebraska.
- Ongoing phone and in-person support to established coordinators with a focus on activities related to the identification, initiation and support of Citizen Advocacy relationships.
- Annual retreats and quarterly coordinator meetings which provide ongoing opportunities for coordinators and board members to deepen their understanding of the Citizen Advocacy principles and practices resulting in increased effectiveness and efficiency.
- Opportunities for coordinators and board members to study and learn about Citizen Advocacy from people who work with Citizen Advocacy programs that maintain high standards and have a reputation for excellence.
- Opportunities for reflection and evaluation of the work that is done in the form of an internal Relationship Review every 12 months.
- Funding external evaluations (peer review process) of each local program every 24 to 36 months or sooner if there are concerns about the program's fidelity to the principles and practices of Citizen Advocacy.

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<https://www.disabilityrightsnebraska.org/what-we-do/citizen-advocacy>