

DISABILITY RIGHTS NEBRASKA
FY 2018-2022 Strategic Plan

Approved June 10, 2017

I. Who Are The People Disability Rights Nebraska Serves?

Identity: Most of the people with disabilities we represent have been judged by society as having less value than others because their disability is viewed in a negative way which leads to stigma, prejudice, and discrimination in their daily lives. One result of being devalued is that people are not offered the typical opportunities and choices afforded to socially valued citizens, and are often thrust into deep poverty with seemingly no way out. Their days are often spent segregated and isolated from the community in congregate residential facilities, day programs, or sheltered workshops. People who are devalued are often forgotten, have few meaningful personal relationships and are essentially alone in the world. Because they are forgotten, they are at greater risk of rejection, isolation, abandonment, neglect, or abuse; sometimes bringing them near death.

Needs: Most of the vulnerable people with disabilities we represent need protection from harm, abuse, and neglect, as well as to have their rights vigorously defended. The legal and human rights of devalued people with disabilities, as well as their inherent dignity and worth, need to be recognized, promoted, and defended; otherwise society will miss the many gifts, talents, competencies and valued life experiences of people with disabilities. People with disabilities need access to opportunities to grow, learn, pursue gifts, gain competencies and have a variety of relationships including close, enduring relationships where they are missed when not there. Being authentically included in community life requires that people find and become rooted in valued roles in all spheres of life including home and family, work, education, personal relationships, social, recreational, and spiritual. This means that people's life stories need to be lifted up, brought forward, and surrounded by positive images that convey messages of value and respect. If the promise of inclusion in community life is to be real for the people we represent, then they need opportunities and supports to make their own decisions about their lives, have a quality education, have real jobs with a decent income and benefits, have excellent and accessible healthcare, live in their own homes, and become engaged in civic matters.

II. What Is Disability Rights Nebraska?

Disability Rights Nebraska is the federally authorized protection and advocacy system for people with disabilities in the State of Nebraska and administers seven federally funded protection and advocacy programs, making us a truly cross-disability advocacy organization. We are independent of any public or private organization that provides treatment or services to people with disabilities and have the authority to pursue legal, administrative and other appropriate remedies and approaches to protect and advocate for their legal and human rights. Since our founding in 1978 we have used a multi-component approach in our advocacy work that includes *legal advocacy* (representation and assistance), *systems advocacy* (litigation and public policy), *relationship-based advocacy* (Citizen Advocacy) and *self-advocacy*.

Disability Rights Nebraska recognizes the hard life experiences that people have endured and understands the urgency with which the effects of these experiences need to be addressed. To do so we work along-side people who have disabilities to advocate for their rights and to provide opportunities for them to shed the negative role stereotypes of client, charity case, burden, etc. often associated with their lives. Our strong commitment to the inclusion and engagement of people with disabilities in the work we do is reflected in the composition of our board of directors. Our board is made up of a super-majority of people with disabilities and family members, as well as others who interested in protecting and advocating for the rights of people with disabilities.

III. What Is Our Vision And Mission?

The Vision and Mission Statements below serve as a guide to our work and provide the foundation for our FY 2018-2022 Strategic Plan:

VISION STATEMENT: 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.

MISSION STATEMENT: Disability Rights Nebraska uses a combination of legal advocacy, public policy advocacy, Citizen Advocacy, self-advocacy and advocacy education to protect vulnerable people with disabilities, especially those who learn, live or work in isolated, segregated or congregated settings.

IV. Priorities, Images of the Future, Goals and Strategies

PRIORITY 1: Freedom From Harm

Image of the Future: People with disabilities have human and legal rights that protect their health, safety, personal integrity and self-determination. We will protect and advocate for vulnerable people with disabilities, especially those living in segregated, isolated and congregated facilities, to ensure they are free from death, abuse, neglect, and violations of their rights.

Goal 1: Monitor places where people with disabilities who are most in danger of harm live, work, or learn.

Strategies:

- Facility/Program Monitoring
- Targeted Outreach
- Collaborative Partnerships
- Targeted Media Relations
- Public Education and Awareness
- Capacity Building/Resource Development

Goal 2: Investigate and respond to allegations of abuse, neglect or exploitation using a range of remedies to ensure that the most vulnerable people with disabilities are free from harm.

Strategies:

- Investigations
- Direct Legal Representation
- Limited Advocacy
- Information and Referral
- Self-Advocacy Support
- Targeted Media Relations
- Public Education and Awareness
- Public Policy Advocacy
- Capacity Building/Resource Development

Goal 3: Support and sustain a network of local, independent Citizen Advocacy programs to keep vulnerable people free from harm.

Strategies:

- Program Funding
- Training & Technical Assistance
- Funding Safeguards
- Contract Management
- Capacity Building/Resource Development

PRIORITY 2: Most Inclusive Settings

Image of the Future: People with disabilities need access to authentic opportunities in order to be fully included in communities of their choice. We will promote the community inclusion of people with disabilities by advocating for 1) non-segregated, non-isolated, person-centered services and supports, 2) opportunities for people to have culturally valued social roles, and 3) meaningful choices based on a person's interests, desires and wishes.

Goal 1: Advocate for people with disabilities to learn, live and work in the most inclusive settings.

Strategies:

- Educate Self Advocates, Parents, Allies, Professionals and Providers
- Public Policy Advocacy
- Targeted Media Relations
- Public Education and Awareness
- Collaborative Partnerships
- Investigations
- Direct Legal Representation (Including systemic litigation)

- Limited Advocacy
- Information and Referral
- Self-Advocacy Support
- Capacity Building/Grant Writing

Goal 3: Support and sustain a network of local, independent Citizen Advocacy programs to advocate for vulnerable people to live in the most inclusive settings.

Strategies:

- Program Funding
- Training & Technical Assistance
- Funding Safeguards
- Contract Management
- Capacity Building/Resource Development

PRIORITY 3: Engaging People With Disabilities In Advocacy

Image of the Future: People who experience disabilities are the experts when it comes to their lives. We believe in the philosophy of “nothing about us without us” and will stand with people who have disabilities to achieve their hopes, dreams, and things not yet imagined.

Goal 1: Provide people with disabilities opportunities to learn how to be effective advocates and support them in advocating on things that impact their lives.

Strategies:

- Self-Advocacy Education
- Leadership Education
- Systems Advocacy Education
- Public Policy Advocacy
- Collaborative Partnerships
- Media Relations/Public Awareness
- Capacity Building/Resource Development