

DISABILITY RIGHTS NEBRASKA

# Annual Report 2019

PROTECTION AND ADVOCACY  
FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES






## OUR MISSION

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.



## 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.



## SUCCESS STORIES

### **Inclusive Education**

Disability Rights Nebraska completed the first Inclusive Education Lay Advocate training. Nine lay advocates completed the training and are prepared to help families effectively navigate educational systems to secure inclusive educational opportunities for students with disabilities.



### **Systemic Advocacy**

We work to not only right the wrongs that people with disabilities experience, but to transform the system that contributes to the problem. We reached a settlement agreement with Lincoln Regional Center that calls for changes in operating procedures and ensures future patients will not be denied preventative services and timely medical care.

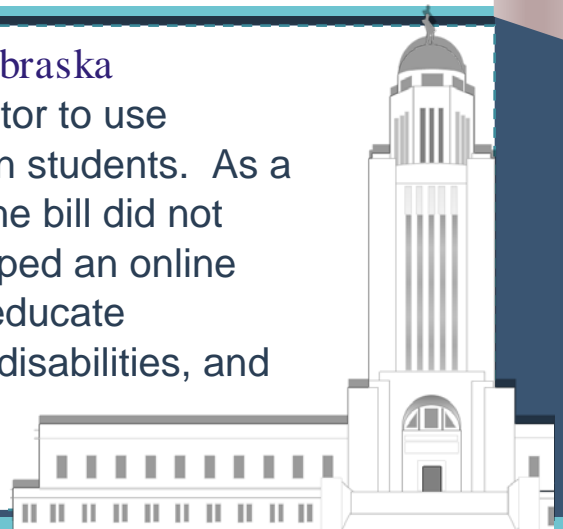
### **Social Security Benefits**

Our PABSS attorney presented on social security benefits at the Intercultural Senior Center. The presentation was conducted in seven languages: Karen, Nepalese, Karenni, Arabic, Spanish, Burmese, and English. The PABSS attorney covered SSI, SSDI, SSR, Medicaid and Medicare in the presentation.

# PUBLIC POLICY ADVOCACY

## Restraint and Seclusion in Nebraska

LB147 allowed a teacher or administrator to use physical contact or physical restraint on students. As a result of our strong advocacy efforts, the bill did not advance past General File. We developed an online media kit and website section to help educate policymakers, parents of children with disabilities, and advocates on the issues of seclusion/restraint in schools.



## Accessibility in Western Nebraska

In Western Nebraska, our Community Outreach Disability Advocate worked with organizations to improve accessibility in Gering and Scottsbluff communities. In Gering, staff worked closely with the city planner to ensure accessibility of several different locations in the area, including the City Plaza. A new feature of the plaza is its accessible year-round public bathrooms, which are especially important because most businesses in the vicinity do not have accessible bathrooms. We also worked with the City of Scottsbluff, the Scottsbluff City Council, and the Active Living Advisory Committee on accessibility projects. We worked with the Active Living Advisory Committee to add 8 audible crosswalk signals on two busy streets. Staff also worked with the Scottsbluff City Administrator and the Head of the Streets Department to repaint and add accessible parking spaces downtown. In both Western Nebraskan towns, these accessibility improvements will allow people with disabilities to be more involved in their communities.

## CITIZEN ADVOCACY

Citizen Advocacy builds long-lasting, even lifelong relationships between ordinary citizens and people with disabilities who are highly vulnerable. Citizen advocates encourage ordinary citizens to defend and represent the rights and interests of people with disabilities on a one-on-one basis. We continued documenting long-term Citizen Advocacy relationships that have had an impact in the community, like Lauren and Delores's story.

Citizen advocate Lauren Stevens tells the story of her and her family's 40-year relationship with Delores, a woman with an intellectual disability. She shares stories about Delores's love of singing, shopping, and sharing cake with friends, and the impact the relationship had on everyone involved.

For the whole story, visit the Disability Rights Nebraska YouTube Channel!



## Facilities Monitoring

Legal advocacy staff conducted fifteen on-site visits to monitor conditions in assisted living facilities. Staff conducted a three-day monitoring visit during the spring along with two U.S. Department of Justice attorneys in the civil rights division and a representative of the Mental Health Association of Nebraska.

Staff continued to monitor the work of the LR 296 committee on assisted living facilities. Staff maintained monthly monitoring visits to Beatrice State Development Center and Lincoln Regional Center.

# HIGHLIGHTS BY THE NUMBERS

**768 Service Requests for FY 2019**

A person may have more than one service request

**709 were Information and Referrals**



**7,648**

Publications distributed by mail and through public venues

**666**

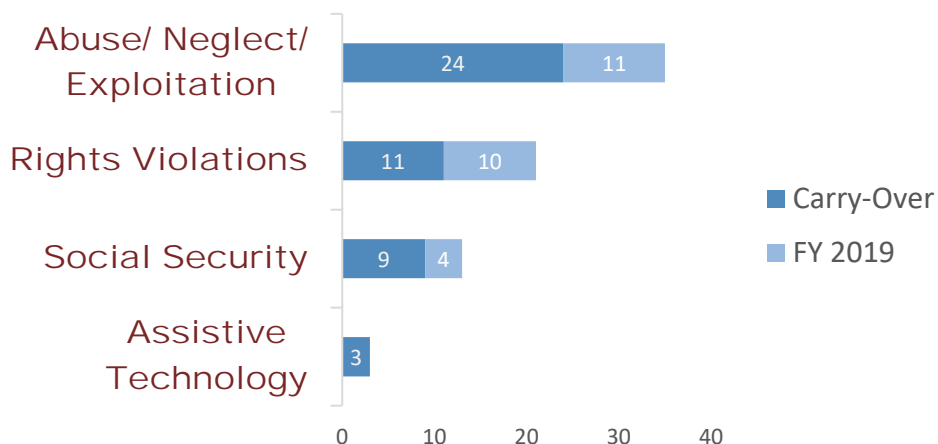
Spanish Publications distributed by mail and through public

**1,284**



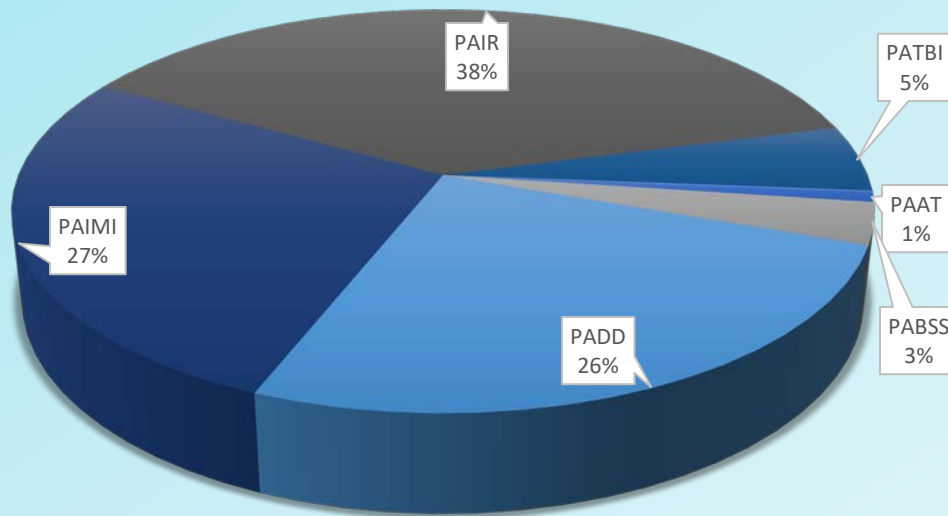
**Individuals who received rights and advocacy training**

## 72 TOTAL CASES



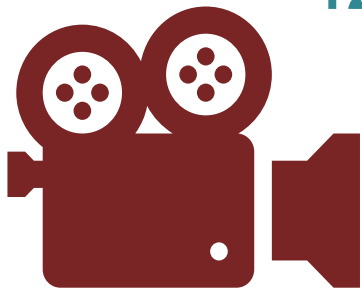


## People Served



■ PAAT ■ PABSS ■ PADD ■ PAIMI ■ PAIR ■ PATBI ■ PAVA

## MEDIA BY THE NUMBERS



**14,992 visitors to our website**

**12 new blog entries posted**

**28 newspaper articles**

**3 radio appearances**

**14 video vignettes**

**413 followers on Twitter**

**1,356 followers on Facebook**

# Advocacy for People Who are Deaf and Hard of Hearing

The Legislature passed LB15, the Children of Nebraska Hearing Aid Act, which has the potential to benefit nearly 1400 children with hearing disabilities in Nebraska. We worked with our public policy intern from UNL and connected her with the senator who proposed the bill. She helped educate the senator and other policymakers about LB15 and provided testimony at the hearing. She also wrote a blog article about the legislation's benefits for our website. Insurance plans will now be required to pay up to \$3000 of the cost of hearing aids for children under the age of 19. This will significantly improve educational outcomes, employment opportunities, and inclusion in the community for children who are deaf or hard of hearing.

LB248 also passed which changed Terminology relating to persons with hearing disabilities from “hearing impaired” to “deaf or hard of hearing” in Nebraska statutes. People who are deaf or hard of hearing represent about 90,000 Nebraskans, and this change in terminology will help achieve a better understanding and more respect for people with hearing disabilities.



Senator Carol Blood  
and Olivia Versaw,  
Public Policy Intern



# Education and Outreach

## Lincoln Police Department

Disability Rights Nebraska conducted a presentation series at the Lincoln Police Department Training Facility. The series covered a variety of disability-related topics, such as general information about our agency, a history of disability in the United States, and service animals vs. emotional support animals. The presentations reached 325 officers from the Lincoln Police Department. We were able to provide local law enforcement with the perspective of eligible individuals and educate officers on the challenges eligible individuals encounter. This was a way to establish rapport with local law enforcement.

## Social Role Valorization



The 12<sup>th</sup> Social Role Valorization workshop was held at Nebraska Wesleyan University. Fifty-two individuals attended this workshop that presents the common life experiences of people who are marginalized and devalued in our society, and strategies that can be used to support people with disabilities to become valued members of the community.

### **U.S. Department of Health and Human Services**

**PADD:** Protection and Advocacy for Persons with Developmental Disabilities

**PAIMI:** Protection and Advocacy for Individuals with Mental Illness

**PAVA:** Protection and Advocacy for Voting Access

**PATBI:** Protection and Advocacy for Persons with Traumatic Brain Injury

**PAAT:** Protection and Advocacy for Assistive Technology

### **U.S. Department of Education**

**PAIR:** Protection and Advocacy for Individual Rights

### **U.S. Social Security Administration**

**PABSS:** Protection and Advocacy for Beneficiaries of Social Security

**PABRP:** Representative Payees of Social Security

### **State of Nebraska**

Department of Health and Human Services, Division of Public Health



## FINANCIAL FILE

### Support and Revenue

US Dept of Health & Human Services	\$	910,601
US Dept of Education	\$	184,248
US Social Security Administration	\$	154,584
NE Dept of Health & Human Services	\$	484,750
Nebraska Association of Area Agencies on Aging	\$	5,714
Developmental Disabilities Council	\$	6,584
Woods Charitable Foundation	\$	40,000
Community Engagement Table	\$	5,000
Nebraska Commission on Public Advocacy	\$	1,208
Monroe-Meyer Institute	\$	7,576
Other Local Grants	\$	7,550
Donations, Interest & Other Income	\$	26,598
<b>Total Revenue</b>	<b>\$</b>	<b>1,834,413</b>

### Expenses

Salaries & Benefits	\$	951,500
Operating Expenses	\$	149,940
Travel Expenses	\$	18,813
Educational Expenses	\$	62,032
Contractual Services	\$	45,770
Citizen Advocacy Support	\$	310,601
<b>Total Program Services Expenses</b>	<b>\$</b>	<b>1,538,656</b>

### Fundraising

\$ 28,906

### Management & Administration

\$ 285,935

### Total Support Services Expenses

\$ 314,841

### Total Support and Revenue

\$ 1,834,413

### Less Total Expenses

\$ 1,853,497

### Change in Net Assets

\$ (19,084)

### Net Assets, beginning of year

\$ 155,560

### Net Assets, end of year

\$ 136,476



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Protection and  
Advocacy for People  
with Disabilities

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