NEBRASKA INCLUSIVE EDUCATION LAY ADVOCACY PROJECT

October 21, 2026

Dear Applicant:
We invite you to apply for the Inclusive Education Lay Advocacy Project training course beginning on February 9, 2027. This project was developed by Disability Rights Nebraska, the protection and advocacy system that protects the rights of Nebraskans with disabilities. As part of its commitment to helping all children in Nebraska have the benefit of knowledgeable and effective advocates, Disability Rights Nebraska is proud to invite you to apply for the Inclusive Education Lay Advocacy Project.

This is the Fourteenth training for the Inclusive Education Lay Advocacy project. You will be joining a cohort of other trained advocates across Nebraska. We are excited to continue developing this project to support the children and families in Nebraska who seek assistance in working with their school districts to secure the most effective education that will enable them to enter adulthood prepared to take their places in their communities. We spent several years listening to families and students talk about their educational needs and have developed a training curriculum that will arm advocates with the skills they need to assist.

You are receiving this letter because you have inquired about this project and/or you were referred to Disability Rights Nebraska by one of your peers. Information outlining the project and expectations follows. If you are interested, please apply at Registration.

INCLUSIVE EDUCATION LAY ADVOCACY OBJECTIVES

- To enable concerned Nebraskans to master information and negotiate systems in order to help secure educational opportunities that are a civil right and legal mandate for students with disabilities
- To provide trainees with the best information on complex issues surrounding Nebraska's educational system to raise competency levels of people advocating on behalf of students with disabilities
- To present professional speakers who educate trainees and give the project a hands-on, in-depth view
- To develop long-standing relationships between concerned Nebraskans and parents
- To understand how social roles lead to a full life

WHO SHOULD APPLY?

- People with disabilities or people with family members who have disabilities
- Nebraskans who receive no financial support from a school district or State Board of Education
- People of all ethnic and cultural backgrounds
- People who have a passion and time to lend for advocating for others

WHAT YOU CAN EXPECT

Participants will attend online sessions, view presentation recordings, and complete homework between sessions to prepare for the presentations. The first few sessions will introduce participants to foundational concepts, while later sessions will shift focus to the skill-building necessary to advocate for students with disabilities, including IEP practice.

This training utilizes Google Classroom and Zoom. Individuals will need access to a computer, Internet, and Google Chrome in order to participate effectively in the training. For additional details about the training dates and content, see the attached Fall 2026 Training Schedule.

WHAT WE EXPECT

- Each participant is expected to attend all sessions. Attendance is the single most important expectation of a participant.
- Each participant will complete all homework assignments designed to prepare participants for each session. This includes watching expert presentations prior to their sessions and answering some questions in the google classroom to ensure a robust discussion of the session topic.
- Upon completion of training, each participant agrees to be available for at least one year to assist families of a student other than their own and/or impact the educational system in a significant manner.

FREE TRAINING MATERIALS

- Each participant will receive a variety of materials and resources, including Wright's Law From Emotions to Advocacy.
- Each participant will receive a total of thirty-five (35) hours of training from top-notch professionals, including twenty-five (25) hours of direct on-line instruction and 10 hours of recorded instruction from experts on the topic.
- Participants will have priority access for Technical Assistance from a Disability Rights Nebraska attorney.

SESSION TOPICS

(Additional topics will be determined)

- Social Role Valorization
- Advocacy Strategies when working with families, private professionals, and the School System
- Transition Issues
- Communication and the School
- Understanding School Thinking and Culture
- Inclusion
- Knowledge of the Law
- Venues for Resolution, including:
  - How to write effective letters
  - Nebraska State Complaints
  - Mediation
  - Nebraska Due Process Hearings

> *"Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it is the only thing that ever has.*
>
> – MARGARET MEAD

DEADLINE

Applications received by Monday, February 8, 2027, will be most welcome. You can find the application form at Information. Alternate formats of this application are available per request.

SELECTION PROCESS

Applications will be reviewed to ensure eligibility requirements are met. All applicants will be notified of selection by email.

The Inclusive Education Lay Advocacy Project is not just another training class. It creates an advocacy community between graduates and speakers that does not end with graduation from the training. Feel free to share this letter and the application with others who may be interested.

Disability Rights Nebraska is delighted to invite you to apply for this training and hope that you will join us. Please do not hesitate to call us with any questions about the project or the commitment expected of you. We look forward to meeting you.

Pat Cottingham, Ed.D
Inclusive Education Lay Advocacy Project Coordinator