

Disability Rights Nebraska

Protection and Advocacy for People with Disabilities

ANNUAL REPORT 2018

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

Securing Service Animal Support

After responding to a 3-year-old's drowning in 2015, firefighter/paramedic Rob Ravndal developed post-traumatic stress disorder. As part of his treatment, he was prescribed a service dog in 2017. On Feb. 1, 2018, he acquired Pride, a two-year-old coonhound. Pride is trained to quell Rob's anxiety attacks and help him deal with his symptoms. Unfortunately, Rob's employer was not willing to allow Pride to do his job in supporting Rob's recovery and returning to work. Our Staff Attorney met with the employer and clearly informed them of the laws governing service animals in the work place. Rob was finally able to work with Pride nearby for support.

Respecting Choices

Dillon, a man with an intellectual disability and anxiety disorders, had been living happily in the community and participating in a vocational program when his guardian threatened to move him to another town 100 miles away and have him unnecessarily committed. We talked with Dillon and he told us he wanted to stay where he was. His service providers and counselor verified that he was doing fine, and it would be harmful to uproot him. We went to court with Dillon when it was time for his guardianship hearing. The judge agreed that it was best for him to remain in his community. We proposed the appointment of a temporary replacement guardian. Once that was shown to be working, the judge made the new temporary guardianship permanent. Dillon continues to live and work in the community he's chosen and says he is pleased with the new guardian, who is more respectful of his choices and opinions about his own life.

Social Security

A woman contacted us because she felt her Social Security funds were being improperly managed by her guardian. The concern expanded when the guardian attempted to impose an unnecessary medical procedure upon the woman against her wishes. We partnered with another local civil rights organization and both organizations objected to the procedure, resulting in the guardian withdrawing. The court also eliminated the guardian's authority to handle the woman's money, which eased her concerns.

CITIZEN ADVOCACY

We began documenting long-term Citizen Advocacy relationships that have had an impact in the community, like Mike & Gerry's story.

Mike, who had a disability, received notice he had to attend a meeting about his benefits changing. He was very upset and scared. After meeting Mike and getting to know him, the Citizen Advocacy office connected him with Gerry, who is an accountant in good standing in the community. Gerry went to the meeting with Mike.

Through his association with Gerry, Mike was able to form positive relationships with people who treated him with dignity and respect. Gerry was always present to lend a supportive hand if needed. The relationship lasted over 30 years until Mike's passing a few years ago.

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

Inclusive Education Lay Advocacy Project



“Inclusive Education” is what we want for students with disabilities, and “Lay Advocacy” is how we hope to achieve it.

Disability Rights Nebraska received funding from the Woods Charitable Fund and The Nebraska Planning Council on Developmental Disabilities to start a new project – The Inclusive Education Lay Advocacy Project. The project is based on a similar one developed by the Georgia Advocacy Office.

During our first year, the Project Coordinator conducted nine listening sessions with a total of 35 families in Lincoln and Kearney. The listening sessions were offered in a variety of formats such as large groups, smaller groups and one-to-one conversations. The responses from the listening sessions are an important part of the research component of this project. A brochure was developed to promote awareness of the project.

PUBLIC POLICY ADVOCACY

In FY 2018, Disability Rights Nebraska tracked 7 High Priority Bills, 2 High Priority Resolutions, and 17 Medium Priority Bills.

RESULTS

Six of the bills that Disability Rights Nebraska supported were adopted:

LB 845 LB 1078 LB 1081

LB 1004 LB 296 LB 852

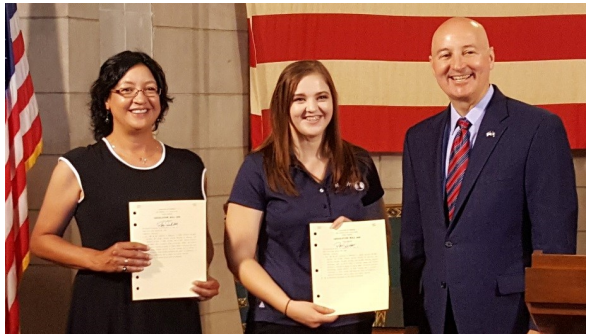


LB 845

Change provisions relating to court proceedings involving family members (SUPPORT)

Senator Briese's office asked us to review the language in a bill regarding disability as a factor in child custody before he introduced it. We suggested the definition of disability found in the Americans with Disabilities Act should be the definition used in LB 845, and the senator agreed.

LB 845 clarifies that, in matters of custody in which one of the parents is a person with a disability, that disability cannot be used to determine custody when the parent with a disability is a capable parent. It also clarifies that the burden of proof is on the party asserting that the other is incapable or less capable of parenting effectively as a result of a disability. The bill was signed into law by the governor on April 23, 2018.



HIGHLIGHTS BY THE NUMBERS

773 Service Requests for Fiscal Year 2018*

699 were information and referrals



10,889 Publications distributed by mail and through public venues

348 Spanish publications distributed by mail and through public venues

448

Individuals who received rights and advocacy training

87 TOTAL CASES

Assistive Technology



Social Security



Rights Violations



Abuse/
Neglect/
Exploitation

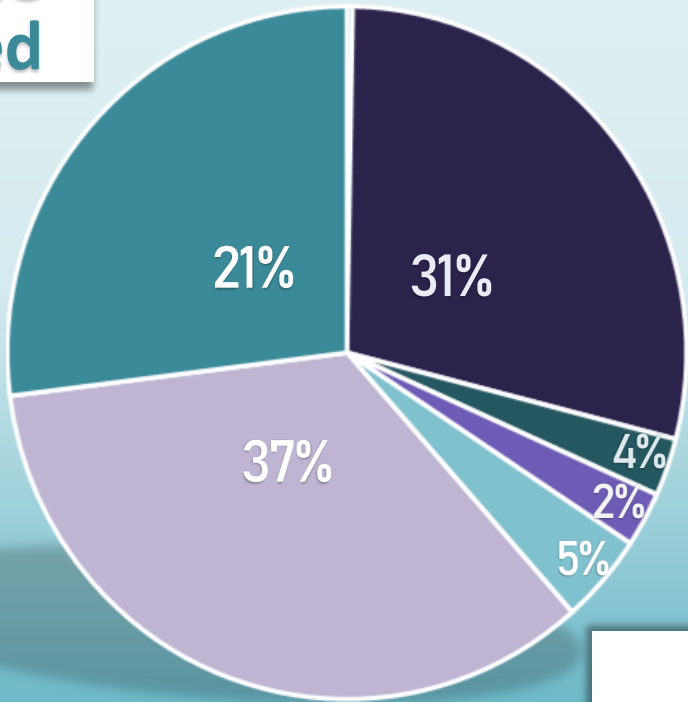


■ Carry-over cases from FY 2017

□ FY 18—Cases opened in FY 2018

* A person may have more than one service request

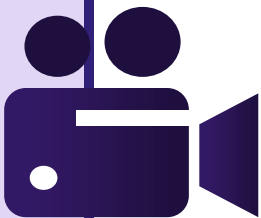
People Served



**FY
2018**

PAVA	PAIMI	PABSS	PAAT	PATBI	PAIR	PADD	Mult.*	Total
1	203	24	14	30	243	138	-8	645

MEDIA BY THE NUMBERS



13,086 visitors to website

28 new blog entries posted

45 newspaper articles

2 radio appearances

3 video vignettes produced

1,144 followers on Facebook

* People who have been provided with information multiple times

ENGAGING PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

Leadership Education

We worked with Developmental Disabilities Network partners to provide advocacy leadership education to people with intellectual/developmental disabilities and their family members. Our staff provided training on the history of intellectual/developmental disability services and on policy change advocacy skills. The seminar was presented in Scottsbluff, Kearney and Omaha to a total of 55 participants.

Self-Advocacy



**Bradley Meurrens and
Shanae Heard**

We offered a paid internship for 10 hours a week for an undergraduate student with disabilities to work as an intern for our public policy program. Our intern did a significant amount of work on obtaining seclusion and restraint policies from local school districts throughout the state.

Our Public Policy Director worked with the Arc of Nebraska and the Statewide Independent Living Council to hire two paid Disability Policy

Specialists. This opportunity will assist People First advocates to gain experience in public policy advocacy for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities.

Voting Rights

We continued our outreach work to inform people with disabilities about their voting rights. We provided information on voting rights at 38 events reaching over 600 people and distributing over 2900 materials .



EDUCATION & OUTREACH

Sharing and Caring Community Resource Event

We partnered with The Lakota Lutheran Center in Scottsbluff to host a Sharing & Caring Resource Workshop. The workshop offered a series of presentations from a resource panel that covered several topics.



Social Role Valorization Workshop



The 11th Social Role Valorization workshop was held at Nebraska Wesleyan University. This introductory three-day workshop 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 REPORT

Support and Revenue

US Dept of Health & Human Services	\$ 916,005
US Dept of Education	\$ 207,022
US Social Security Administration	\$ 110,619
NE Dept of Health & Human Services	\$ 484,750
NE Association of Area Agencies on Aging	\$ 13,420
Developmental Disabilities Council	\$ 10,000
Woods Charitable Foundation	\$ 40,000
Vocational Rehabilitation	\$ 86,709
Nebraska Commission on Public Advocacy	\$ 6,014
Monroe-Meyer Institute	\$ 10,113
Other Local Grants	\$ 21,165
Donations, Interest & Other Income	\$ 14,013
Total Revenue	\$ 1,919,830

Expenses

Salaries & Benefits	\$ 921,343
Operating Expenses	\$ 140,804
Travel Expenses	\$ 18,949
Educational Expenses	\$ 74,318
Contractual Services	\$ 75,892
Citizen Advocacy Support	\$ 318,132
Total Program Services Expenses	\$ 1,549,438

Fundraising	\$ 22,888
Management & Administration	\$ 296,457
Total Support Services Expenses	\$ 319,345

Total Support & Revenue	\$ 1,919,830
Less Total Expenses	\$ 1,868,783
Change in Net Assets	\$ 51,047

Net Assets, beginning of year	\$ 104,513
Net Assets, end of year	\$ 155,560

Board of Directors

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Eric Evans, Chief Executive Officer • Judy Sinner, Fiscal and Human Resources Director • Jillian Ward, Business Operations Coordinator • Angela Kozakiewicz, Administrative Secretary • John Murphy, Values-Based Program Director • Brad Meurrens, Public Policy Director • Patricia Cottingham, Inclusive Education Lay Advocacy Coordinator • Tess Barnes, Program and Media Assistant • Tania Diaz, Legal Services Director • Dianne DeLair, Senior Attorney • Mike Elsken, Attorney • Stephany Pleasant Maness, Attorney • Molly Klocksinn, Case Advocate • Mindy Baird, Community Outreach Disability Advocate • Yorlenny Diaz-Sullivan, Intake Specialist • Karen Masterson, Case Advocate • Pat Nichelson, Legal Assistant • Brianna Duda, Law Clerk • Madison Wurtele, Law Clerk • Sharon Ohmberger, Communications Director • Bassey Arikpo, Videographer

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