



Disability Rights Iowa

LEGAL PROTECTION AND ADVOCACY

Welcome
Catherine E. Johnson

My Background



Nothing About Us Without Us

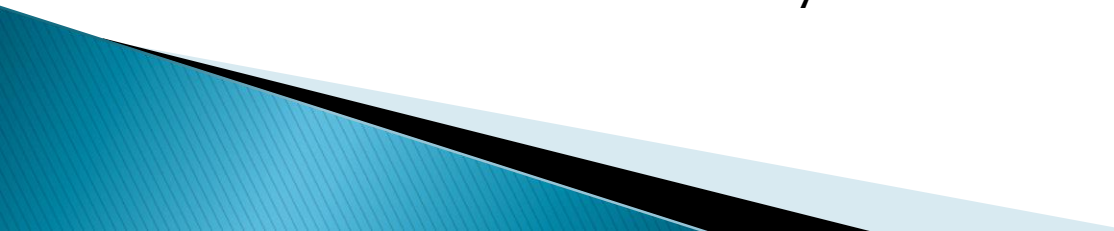
- ▶ Power of Disability Rights Community
 - 61 Million in United States (26%)
 - 1 Billion world wide (1 in 7 individuals)
 - Federal Disability Laws
- ▶ Power of Partnerships
- ▶ Vision for DRI:
 - Recognized leader in Disability Rights Advocacy in the State of Iowa & Nationally recognized as a force in the Disability Rights Community

What is a disability?

Disability: a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities.

- ▶ Disability broadly construed
- ▶ Cancer, diabetes, asthma, respiratory, circulatory,
- ▶ Anxiety, depression, post-traumatic stress disorder, bi-polar disorder.
- ▶ Intellectual disabilities, learning disabilities, dyslexia, Autism,
- ▶ Traumatic Brain Injury,

What is DRI?

- ▶ **Mission: Defend and Promote the Rights of Iowans with Disabilities**
 - ▶ Established in 1984; Iowa's Protection and Advocacy Center
 - ▶ Provide free legal advocacy assistance to Iowans with disabilities in 12 disability rights areas of focus
 - ▶ Monitor and Investigate Facilities
 - ▶ 15 member Board
 - ▶ 12 member PAIMI Advisory Council
- 

DRI provides

- ▶ Education and Empowerment
 - ▶ Direct Individual Legal Advocacy
 - ▶ Outreach and Training
 - ▶ Investigating & Monitoring Facilities
 - ▶ Systems Change Advocacy
 - ▶ Technical Assistance
 - ▶ Benefits Planning Assistance & Representative Payee Oversight
- 

DRI provides assistance

- 1) Resident of Iowa, no income, age, immigration status requirement
- 2) Have a disability
- 3) Have a **disability-related issue**, rights violation, legal problem, etc.
- 4) Issue falls under an ***Area of Focus***

Disability-related issue = An individual discloses to their employer that they have a disability and that they need reasonable accommodations to do the essential functions of their job. The employer responds by firing the employee without giving the situation adequate processing. This person has an issue because of their disability.

Not a disability-related issue = An individual is blind and is getting a divorce. Yes, the individual has a disability, but they are not getting a divorce because of their disability. This person does not have an issue because of their disability. They are a person who has a disability and an issue, not a disability-related issue.

Areas of Focus

Abuse and Neglect

Accessibility

Assistive Technology

Benefits Planning for SSA beneficiaries to work

Community Living

Education

Guardianship Alternatives

Health

Housing

Prisons and Jails

Voting

▶ Who Decides?

▶ Board of Directors

▶ Mental Health Advisory Council

- Using surveys, input from other agencies, family members and individuals with disabilities

Examples of current DRI focus:

Keeping Students with Disabilities in school

Reforming the Juvenile Justice System

Equal access to COVID-19 Vaccines

School Mask Mandate Litigation

Medicaid and Managed Care –

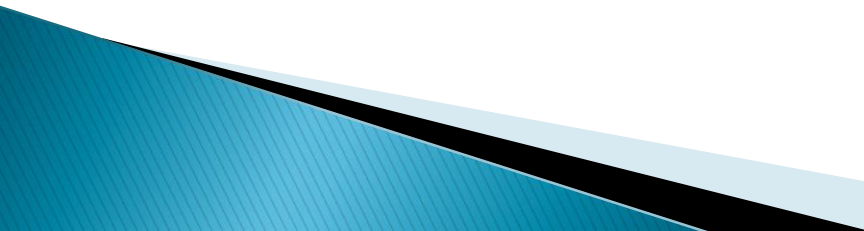
protecting access to long-term services and supports;
improving access to children's behavioral and mental health
services

Abuse and Neglect of Residents at Facilities

Requests for DRI Services

- 1) Call 515-278-2502 ; extension 212; relay 711; OR email vsantosnila@driowa.org
- 2) Make request online on DRI website <https://disabilityrightsiowa.org/online-intake-form/>
 - Bilingual intake specialist responds within 2 business days
 - Attorney/Advocate team reviews eligibility and fit with DRI's areas of focus
 - Legal Director assigns to an attorney or advocate (releases, representation agreements, problem-solving)
- ▶ 3) Professional Inquiries (contact Vanessa @ 515-278-2502 x 212 OR vsantosnila@driowa.org)

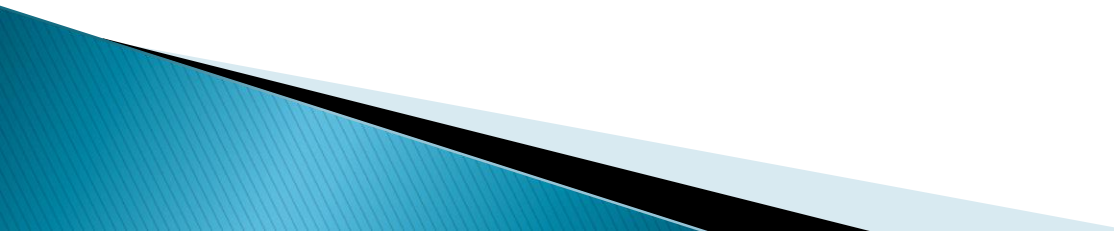
Vision for Growth: DRI recognized in Iowa and Nationally as Leader in Disability Rights Advocacy

- ▶ DRI for All Iowans with Disabilities
 - ▶ Improve or change systems that are failing individuals with disabilities
 - ▶ Protect & advance disability rights
 - ▶ Broaden understanding of disability
 - ▶ Grow community/partnerships with disability rights community throughout Iowa
 - ▶ DRI new role in larger policy discussions
 - ▶ New DRI website; plans for growth
 - ▶ Develop State-wide and National reputation for disability rights advocacy
 - ▶ Expand breath of resources –DRI starting point for disability rights related questions and resources in the state of Iowa
- 

Impact of Vision for DRI

- ▶ Ongoing Virtual and In-person Community programming on timely Disability Rights issues & lived experiences
 - ▶ Two bi-annual Celebration Events: October & May
 - ▶ Expansion of Disability Rights resources and best practices for proactive accessibility on DRI website : <https://disabilityrightsiowa.org>
 - ▶ Increased Social Media presence
 - ▶ Policy role
 - ▶ Changing systems & removing barriers for all Iowans with Disabilities
 - ▶ Partnership with Disability Rights Community
- 

How you can help.....

- ▶ Share your knowledge and expertise on disability rights issues in your community
 - ▶ Participate in our Community Events
 - ▶ Follow us on Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn,
 - ▶ Let us know what disability rights issues are important to you by completing our survey
- 

Guest of Honor

- [Our Website Link](#)

Thank you!!!!
Contact
Disability Rights Iowa

1-800-779-2502

Relay 711

Email: info@DRIowa.org