

Systems Change Attorney

Company Name: Disability Rights Iowa (www.driowa.org)

Job Title: Systems Change Attorney

Location: 666 Walnut Street, Suite 1440
Des Moines, IA 50309

Opening Date: October 28, 2021

Closing Date: January 3rd, 2022

Starting Date: February, 2022

Supervisor: Legal Director and Executive Director

Salary: Depends on Experience; Exempt

Agency Description: Disability Rights Iowa (DRI) is a well-established, innovative, legally based non-profit organization dedicated to advancing the rights of Iowans with disabilities. DRI is the federally mandated Protection and Advocacy agency (P&A) for individuals with disabilities and/or mental illness in Iowa. DRI works to achieve equality and justice for people with disabilities through quality representation, advocacy, investigations of abuse and neglect, peer/self-advocacy services, community partnerships, regulatory advocacy work, education and outreach. DRI strives to pursue litigation and advocacy that addresses current pressing needs of the Disability Community, proactively identifies future needs and constructs innovative solutions that continue to expand the human and legal rights of individuals with disabilities. DRI's legal work includes individual and impact litigation. For more information, go to www.driowa.org.

Disability Rights Iowa is committed to creating a diverse workforce to strengthen our organization and is proud to be an Equal Opportunity Employer. We strive to have a workforce that represents the communities we serve.

Benefits: DRI offers a comprehensive benefit plan for eligible employees. Benefits include health insurance, dental insurance, basic life, short-term and long-term disability insurance, a 403(b) retirement plan, and flexible spending accounts. Flexible spending accounts feature reimbursement for both medical and dependent care.

Time-off: DRI offers a generous holiday time off, paid sick time and vacation accrual package to full-time employees.

Systems Change Attorney Job Description: Disability Rights Iowa is seeking a passionate and civil-rights experienced attorney to lead impact litigation efforts by the agency in pursuit of justice and systemic change consistent with DRI's vision and mission on behalf of individuals with disabilities in Iowa. We invite applications from attorneys who have a demonstrated commitment to disability and civil rights and who are passionate about engaging in innovative litigation and policy advocacy in federal and state court and courts of appeal. The Systems Change Attorney

works closely with the Executive Director and Legal Director and collaborates with the entire DRI Team on system change issues and priorities. The attorney must be an experienced litigator. Relocating to DRI's Offices in Des Moines, Iowa is required. DRI is currently working a hybrid work schedule, with a split between in-office and remote work days.

Job Responsibilities:

1. Identify system change litigation issues and collaborate with DRI's Legal Director and Teams to bring affirmative and impact litigation.
2. Coordinates with the Legal Director, Executive Director, and other DRI team members to develop and utilize a variety of strategies to accomplish system change, including legal, policy and administrative challenges to systems unresponsive to client needs as well as educating of policymakers, monitoring or investigations and collaborative advocacy.
3. Investigate, develop, and litigate individual and class disability civil rights cases in federal and state courts. This includes conducting factual and legal research, participating with litigation teams potentially with multiple co-counsel, interviewing clients and potential witnesses, writing demand letters, drafting pleadings and briefs, conducting discovery, arguing motions, trying cases in court, handling appeals and amicus briefs, and negotiating settlements.
4. Work in effective collaboration with counsel from other firms and organizations to make maximum use of combined resources to best serve DRI clients. This may include developing strategic partnerships with attorneys in private practice who can support the legal advocacy work of DRI.
5. Assist in planning and executing DRI goals and objectives including long-range planning, legislative education and advocacy, and public and media relations. Participate in meetings as needed.
6. Assist the Legal Director in mentoring and modeling of trial practice skills and serve as a resource on professional responsibility and ethical issues for DRI attorneys and advocates.
7. Participates in organizational events, maintains working relationship with other attorneys in public legal service and private practice, as well as relevant state and national advocacy organizations to enhance the visibility of the organization and further the rights of individuals with disabilities.
8. Represent the perspective of DRI and people with disabilities on task forces, policy groups, coalitions, and similar bodies.
9. Travel statewide and within U.S.
10. Other responsibilities as assigned by the Executive Director or the Legal Director.

Required Qualifications:

The requirements listed below are representative of the knowledge, skill, and/or ability required.

1. Juris Doctorate Degree from an accredited law school.
2. Admitted to, or eligible for admission to, the Iowa State Bar, the United States District Courts for District of Iowa, and U.S. Court of Appeals for the 8th Circuit. .
3. At least 5 years of litigation experience in state and federal courts or equivalent relevant systemic impact experience.
4. Ability to represent individuals in complex cases, including class action lawsuits, and to formulate and implement sophisticated legal strategies.
5. Demonstrated commitment to lawyering in the public interest.
6. Demonstrated ability to take a lead role in case planning and litigation management.
7. Self-motivated and committed to disability rights and civil liberties advocacy in accordance with DRI's mission.
8. Excellent writing and analytical skills.
9. Ability to work cooperatively on a variety of projects with lawyers, other staff members, and diverse community organizations and coalitions.
10. Ability to communicate effectively in legal and non-legal settings with a wide range of individuals and organizations.

Desirable Qualifications:

1. Passion for litigation and utilizing litigation to improve the lives of individuals with disabilities.
2. Experience in disability law, including but not limited to Medicaid, special education, The Americans with Disabilities Act and/or other federal or state laws impacting people with disabilities.
3. Experience as a person with a disability or as a member of a nondominant cultural group, or experience working with or living with persons with disabilities or within a nondominant cultural community.
4. Demonstrate understanding of disability rights values in daily work (self-determination, person-centered services, informed consent, equal opportunity, independence and inclusion.)

Equal Opportunity Employer

Disability Rights Iowa is an Equal Opportunities Employer. It is the policy of DRI to prohibit discrimination and harassment of any type and to afford equal employment opportunities to employees and applicants, without regard to race, color, ethnicity, ancestry, religion, age, sex, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity/expression, pregnancy, medical condition or genetic information, veteran status, national origin, disability, marital or other protected status.

Disability Rights Iowa values diversity. Individuals with disabilities, people of color, LGBTQIA+ individuals and others who contribute to staff diversity are especially encouraged to apply.

DRI is committed to providing reasonable accommodations to qualified individuals with disabilities who are applicants or employees. Applicants interested in seeking reasonable accommodations for the application process please contact Katie Vande Vorde, Operations Manager, Disability Rights Iowa kvandevorde@driowa.org.

How to Apply:

E-mail cover letter, resume, and writing sample to:

Katie Vande Vorde, Operations Manager, Disability Rights Iowa kvandevorde@driowa.org.

No phone calls please.