



Disability Rights Iowa

LEGAL PROTECTION AND ADVOCACY

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Disability Rights Iowa Announces Changes in Leadership

After nearly a decade of protecting and advocating for the rights of Iowans with disabilities, Jane Hudson is retiring as the executive director of Disability Rights Iowa on June 17, 2021. Catherine Johnson will be starting on June 15, 2021.

Disability Rights Iowa, a non-profit law firm, is the federally mandated protection and advocacy system for all Iowans with disabilities, including Iowans with significant mental health issues. DRI's mission is to advance and protect the rights of Iowans with disabilities and/or mental illness to dignity, equality, integration, self-determination and appropriate supports and services. DRI's attorneys and advocates carry out this mission by, among other things, providing legal representation to individuals and groups, investigating allegations of abuse and neglect, monitoring facilities for safety and compliance, providing information/education/referrals, providing benefits planning services and educating law makers. For more information about DRI, go to www.driowa.org.

Ms. Hudson, a native Michigander, has been devoted to protecting and advocating for individuals with disabilities all her life. Her work has ranged from interning in schools for the blind and deaf in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania and Toledo, Ohio to working as a disability rights attorney for the Arizona Center for Public Interest, the Maricopa County Attorney's Civil Division, and the National Disability Rights Network. DRI has thrived since Ms. Hudson took over as its executive director in 2012, building a strong dedicated staff and ensuring that DRI is financially stable. "I am most proud of the way that DRI provides compassionate and effective individual legally-based advocacy, while simultaneously working on systemic change." Says Ms. Hudson.

Ms. Johnson received her undergraduate and law degrees from the University of Iowa. Among other things, she worked as the Assistant Dean of Students at St. Louis University School of Law, the Director of Student Legal Services at the University of Iowa, and a disability rights attorney at Disability Rights Kansas. Before becoming the executive director of DRI, she was the Director of the ADA Resource Center for Equity and Accessibility at the University of Kansas. Ms. Johnson says; "I am excited to be joining the great team at DRI. It is a true honor to continue Jane Hudson's legacy of disability rights advocacy. I look forward to meeting partners, building relationships and expanding DRI's impact on disability justice." Board President Tiffany Dodd agrees, saying "Ms. Johnson will build on the strong foundation built by Ms. Hudson and continue her commitment to disability justice."

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