



## Disability Rights Iowa: Intake Team and Process



# DRI's Intake Team - Who Are We?

## **Whitney Driscoll: Intake Coordinator**

My background is in legal protection for individuals in institutional settings.

I have my Juris Doctorate from the University of Iowa College of Law.

Whitney is dedicated to upholding the rights of Iowans with disabilities and working to end abuse and neglect.

## **Amber Wallingford: Intake Specialist**

My background is in Community Action and Social Work

I have my Master's in Social Work from the University of Northern Iowa (Go Cats!)

I love being a part of DRI because the disability community is a part of every single community, and I love being a safe space for those struggling to have their voices heard

## **Piper Haugan: Intake Specialist and PAVA Coordinator**

My background is in communication.

I have a degree in journalism and a degree in communicative sciences.

I love connecting individuals with resources that will help them get their needs met.



**Amber Wallingford**



**Piper Haugan**



**Whitney Driscoll**



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# Intake Team Values

- Empathy
- Validation
- Patience
- Trauma-Informed
- Timely

We pride ourselves on respecting the callers and their time. If we cannot accept their case and offer services, we aim to make the interaction worth their time.

**If we cannot offer services our goal is:**

- to make the caller feel heard
- provide information and referrals
- Provide self-advocacy tools





# How DRI Receives Requests for Service



Mail

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



Through Phone

515-278-2502, relay 711

Live intake phone hours: 9 am to 2 pm M/W/F



Through online submission on the website

<https://disabilityrightsiowa.org/online-intake-form/>



Through email

[info@driowa.org](mailto:info@driowa.org)



In Person

In-person intake hours: 9:30 am to 11:30 am and  
12:30 pm to 2 pm M/W/F

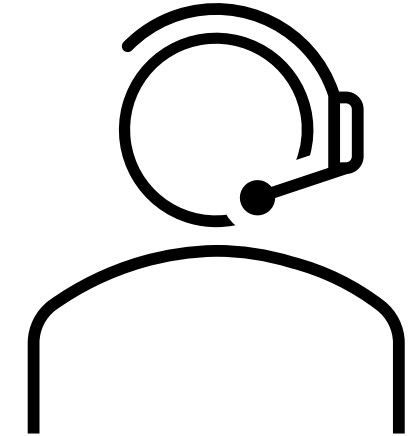
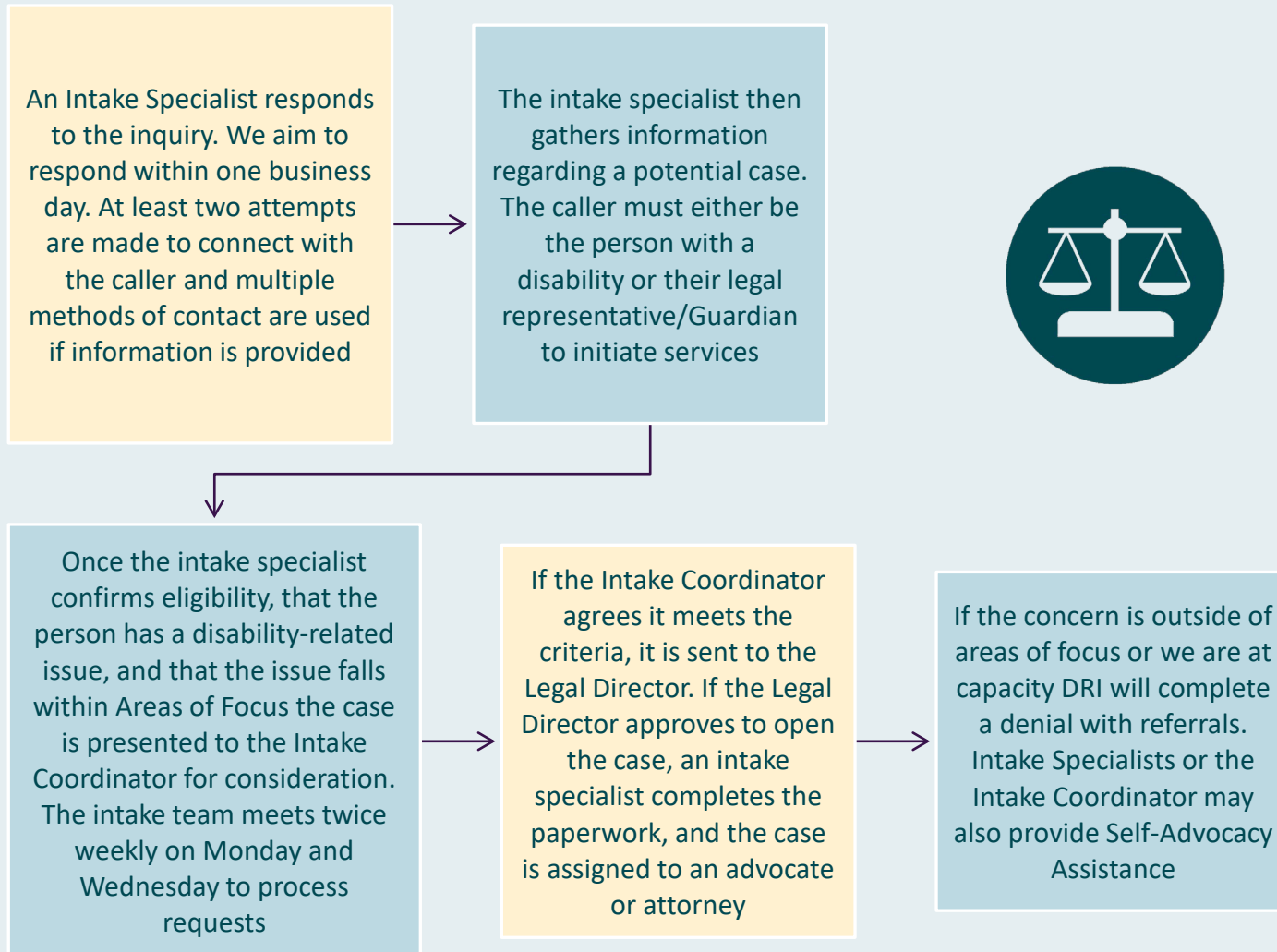


Video Conferencing

Email, write, or call to request



# Intake Process



The process helps ensure that the individual in contact is eligible for DRI's services by confirming grant eligibility, in the scope of the Areas of Focus and the issue falls within DRI's jurisdiction

# How Do We Organize Service Requests?



The Tracker! Every contact that comes through intake is logged in a secure document. This ensures we get back to individuals promptly.



Collects information on whether the request is active, contact methods and basic details about their request, as well as documents how and when DRI intake staff communicated with the caller

Status	Type of Contact	Caller	Phone Number	Email	Relationship	Issue Topic	Issue (basics)	Date Call Came In	Attempt #1	Attempt #1 Date	Attempt #2	Attempt #2 Date	Potential Fund (PADD, PAIMI, etc.)	Status/Action Taken (i.e. taken to intake team and opened as a case; taken to intake team and not opened, referrals given; not taken to intake team and give reason/referrals; message left; follow up call scheduled on [date]; client mailing additional documents; etc.)
			Totals											
Open	Phone	John Smith	(515)555-5555	<a href="mailto:JSmith@gmail.com">JSmith@gmail.com</a>	New	Employment	John called 2/1 and left 2/1/2024	P.C. AW	2/2/2024	Email AW	2/3/2024	PAIMI		2/3 AW spoke to John and went through questions. He is going to send in documentation. Will present at team.
Open														
Open														
Open														
Open														

# The Tracker

# Eliminating Communication Barriers



We have tools to assist DRI in communicating with potential clients from various backgrounds and capacities

## Language Access:

- We utilize professional interpreters for intake communications when the individual communicates in a language other than English
- DRI's website can be easily translated to other languages with a click of a button

## Accommodations:

- We strive to provide communication accommodations for individuals who communicate through:
  - American Sign Language
  - Using Assistive Technology
  - Other communication techniques



# Who Does DRI Serve?

NO income, age, or immigration status requirements

Must be a resident of Iowa OR have an issue in Iowa

Must have a disability

Must have a disability-related issue

Issue must fall within an Area of Focus



# Evaluating Eligibility: How DRI Defines Disability

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

Examples:

- Cancer, diabetes, asthma, respiratory and circulatory conditions
- Anxiety, depression, post-traumatic stress disorder, bipolar disorder
- Intellectual disabilities, learning disabilities, dyslexia, and Autism
- Traumatic Brain Injury



# Defining Disability Related-Issue

**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 who uses a wheelchair is getting into arguments with a landlord over the sound of music playing in their apartment. After many arguments, the landlord wants to evict them. Yes, the individual has a disability, but they are not getting evicted 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.



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# Areas of Focus & Priorities



## Ensuring Accountability of Systems

- Facilities and Congregate Settings
- Home and Community-Based Services
- Rep Payee

## Civil Rights

- Right to Access Government Services and Programs
- Right to Places of Public Accommodation
- Unnecessary Substitute Decision Maker
- Voting

## Community Inclusion

- Community Integration
- Community-Based Support and Services
- Medicaid Services and Supports
- Assistive Technology
- Employment-Reasonable Accommodation
- Benefits Planning
- Employment- Vocations Services and Employment Networks
- Barrier to Employment
- Education Challenging Behaviors





# Examples of Current DRI Areas of Focus

## Ensuring Accountability of Systems

- Investigation of abuse in a mental health hospital
- Investigation of neglect in an HCBS home
- Boys State Training School Class Action
- Reviewing Rep Payees

## Civil Rights

- Termination of Guardianship
- Accessibility of public businesses
- Accessibility of government locations and services
- Voting Rights

## Community Inclusion

- Medicaid Managed Care: Protecting access to long-term services and supports;
- Denial of employment accommodations
- Keeping students with disabilities in schools
- Children's mental health Class Action Lawsuit
- Helping an individual in a facility transition to home and community-based services



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# Intake Team Case Considerations



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What is the legal merit or available remedy for the issue?

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Is the individual or their care network able to self-advocate?

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Are other resources available to help the individual address issue?

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Does our staff have the particular expertise to advocate for the individual's legal issue?

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Do we have the resources to provide services to the individual?

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Are other independent, investigatory authorities available to help the individual address the issue?

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What is the severity of harm to the individual?

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Is there an imminent risk to the individual?

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Could the service request benefit everyone experiencing the same disability rights "system" issue?

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Potential impact of the legal/advocacy issue to affect change beyond the individual requesting services.

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Does the request have the potential to remove systemic barriers for lowans with disabilities?

# Types of Cases DRI Cannot Accept



Divorce, child custody, and adoption	Bankruptcy	Estate planning (wills and trust)	Criminal or juvenile delinquency representation or civil mental health commitment including appeals	Involuntary discharge	Medicaid/Waiver Eligibility
Advocacy to institutionalize	General IEP advocacy	Representing parents with respect to the termination of parental rights	Establishing that a child is in need of assistance	Housing	Tax law, corporate or business law, consumer law, debt-creditor law
Personal injury (other than injuries that arise from abuse and neglect )	Malpractice	Social Security eligibility or appeals	Worker's comp	Civil litigation that does not relate to the legal or civil rights of an individual with a disability	Civil litigation related to ADA Title 1 claims of employment discrimination based on disability in state or federal court
		Initiation of guardianship or conservatorship of a person	Cases involving inmates at a county or state correctional facilities (other than denial of disability-related accommodations)		

# Intake Call Data

Month	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	Avg. Calls P.Mo
January	112	97	85	88	165	109.4
February	125	76	91	129	151	114.4
March	91	82	85	116	162	107.2
April	144	65	68	126	140	108.6
May	115	55	68	156	163	111.4
June	122	86	87	123	130	109.6
July	117	85	104	125	144	115
August	124	88	149	129	162	130.4
September	114	95	135	143	151	127.6
October	166	101	111	207	178	152.6
November	117	113	116	146	149	128.2
December	104	64	88	116	111	96.6
Avg	120.916667	83.916667	98.916667	133.666667	150.5	
Total	1451	1007	1187	1604	1806	

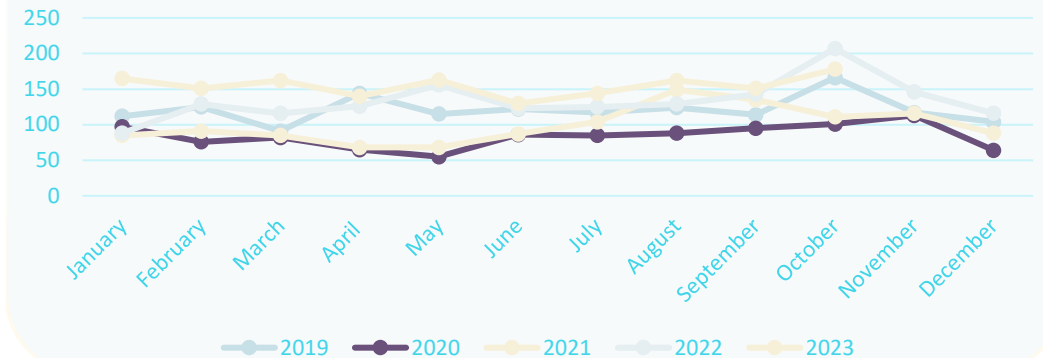
**DRI averages 150 calls per month**

Fall months are our highest call volume consistently

Most of our calls are outside AOFs because of this referrals and empathetic listening is crucial

Employment and Special Education were the most common calls in 2023

## Intake Calls by Month



# Intake Team Challenges

- Callers typically experiencing a crisis
  - Crisis response can affect comprehension and communication ability
- Situations are often time-sensitive and few other resources are available
  - Oftentimes the person is calling multiple resources to help alleviate the situation
  - Frustration and lack of resources can result in people directing their anger at the intake specialist
- Situations are complex
- Issues can be high-stakes
- Large call volume
- Inappropriate Referrals/Inaccurate information provided by outside entities
- Secondary Trauma leads to call burnout



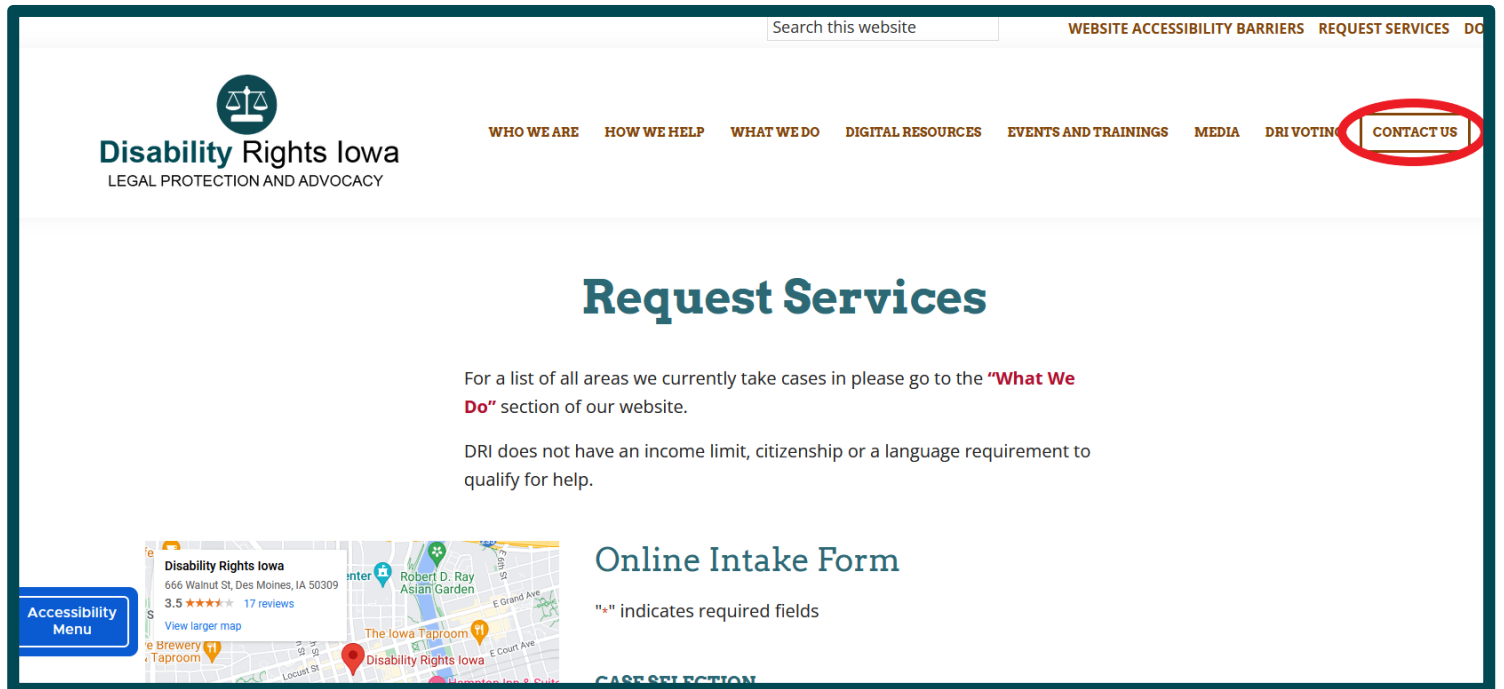
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# Referring Individuals

Most requests come by phone, however many others come through the online submission form on DRI's website

This page is a great resource to direct people to if you want to refer someone to DRI for services

- Has DRI intake hours for different methods of contact
- Allows people 24/7 availability to submit requests for service
- Language toggle available at top of the website





# Questions?

What questions do you have?

If you would like us to do a training or would like DRI materials, please go to the website: <https://disabilityrightsiowa.org/training-request/> or call 515-278-2502

DRI's information one last time

- Phone: 515-278-2502, relay 711
- Email: [info@driowa.org](mailto:info@driowa.org)
- Mail: 666 Walnut St, Suite 1440, Des Moines IA 50309
- Website: <https://disabilityrightsiowa.org>

