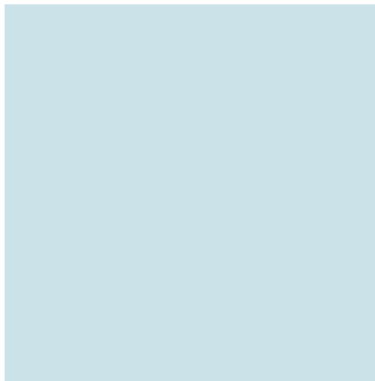


# 2025 Annual Impact Report



## Disability Rights Iowa



# Disability Rights Iowa (DRI) Provides Assistance in the Following Board Approved Areas of Focus:

## Keeping Iowans with Disabilities Safe

Disability Rights Iowa protects people with disabilities from abuse and neglect in facilities, institutions, home and community-based settings, youth facilities, and organizational representative payees, among others.

## Civil Rights

DRI ensures that Iowans with disabilities have access to government services, programs, and activities under Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act.

## Community Living

DRI ensures that Individuals with disabilities receive services in the most integrated setting.



## DRI's Impact During the 2025 Fiscal Year

10/1/2024-09/30/2025

**+2,000**

Iowans requested services and received information and referral, self-advocacy assistance, or full legal representation.

**+6,000**

Iowans with disabilities were impacted by DRI led monitorings and financial reviews.

**+7,000**

DRI provided information and education to over 7,000 Iowans with disabilities through outreach, presentations, and training events.

**DRI completed**

**74/99**

DRI provided assistance to Iowans with disabilities in 74 of Iowa's 99 counties.

**18**

monitorings. Advocates visited facilities, congregate care settings and home and community-based settings where Iowans with disabilities reside and/or received services

**DRI completed**

**52**

financial reviews of individual organizations serving as Organizational Representative Payees.

In 2025, DRI staff shared how DRI's Federal Protection and Advocacy Programs empower them to advocate on behalf of their clients. Some of these stories are shared below; the QR codes will direct you to the videos on our YouTube account. The stories and quotes from DRI's clients are illustrative of DRI's impact in their lives and in Iowa's Disability Community.



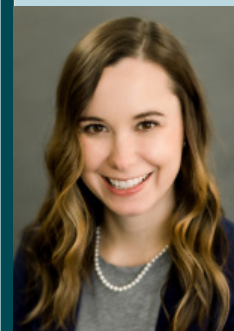
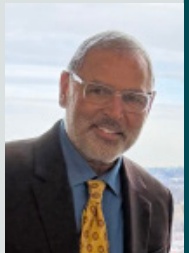
**“I won, I won, I won – I had trouble believing it – I have freedom now because of DRI's help.”**

For over 20 years, Ms. Thomas' mother was her legal guardian. But, Ms. Thomas didn't believe she needed one. She had her own apartment, she shopped for her own groceries, she took care of her own needs, and she had a job. So, she asked DRI for help in changing her guardianship. She shared "many people with disabilities have a guardianship and it's not fair." After taking the case, DRI provided legal representation that ended the guardianship. After the judge made their decision, she jumped for joy.



Learn more about DRI's advocacy for Protected Persons under Guardianships and Conservatorships from DRI Attorney, Greg Bal, here:

<https://youtu.be/v4JRvLpfPUw>



DRI attorney, Emily Ehlers provides legal advocacy for Iowans with disabilities in all of DRI's Areas of Focus. Her work ensures that clients receive vital assistive technology, respite hours for caregivers, and medical care that allows individuals to live and work in the community of their choice. Emily's work is vital for the protection of the rights of Iowans with disabilities.

**“As an attorney, I know how important it is to stand up and fight for my clients and their rights.”**

<https://youtu.be/FPqjPfczmz7E>



After NW's employer unexpectedly decided to terminate her longstanding employment accommodation, NW contacted DRI for help. The abrupt termination of her accommodation created financial, personal, mental health and employment crises for NW. NW shared that her accommodation "was necessary to remain employed." DRI was able to secure the continuation of her accommodation. NW shared that without DRI's assistance, she would have lost this job, her professional status, and her income.

**“I felt empowered by DRI. Losing my job would have been devastating for me and my entire family. Because of DRI, I am successful in my job and able to provide for my family.”**

# The Power of The National Protection and Advocacy System

Robert F. Kennedy was one of the early advocates against the abuse and neglect happening in institutions. In 1965, he likened the treatment of people with disabilities and their living conditions with a snake pit.



**I think that ... we have a situation that borders on a snake pit, and that the children live in filth, that many of our fellow citizens are suffering tremendously because lack of attention, lack of imagination, lack of adequate manpower.**



**-Senator Robert F. Kennedy**



Willowbrook State School postcard  
New York Public Library

Seven years after RFK's statement, Geraldo Rivera released an expose of Willowbrook, the institution mentioned by Kennedy, on ABC News. This report triggered the creation of the National Protection and Advocacy System by Congress in 1975. The National Protection & Advocacy System (P&A) investigates abuse and neglect, monitors facilities, and provides legally based advocacy in all 57 states and territories.

In 1984, DRI became the P&A for the state of Iowa. For over 41 years, DRI has worked to protect Iowans from abuse and neglect in facilities like Willowbrook. Recently, DRI helped Iowans with disabilities move from Glenwood Resource Center, an Institution in Iowa, into their chosen communities. The State of Iowa officially closed Glenwood Resource Center in 2024.



Glenwood Resource Center (KSFY)  
By KCRG Staff



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**Visit our Website:**  
[driowa.org](http://driowa.org)

**Phone:**  
515.278.2502

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**Our Address:**  
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Suite 2220  
Des Moines, IA  
50309

**Additional Resources:** <https://disabilityrightsiowa.org/annual-report-2025/>