



Disability Rights Iowa

LEGAL PROTECTION AND ADVOCACY

Staff Attorney

Company Name: Disability Rights Iowa

Job Title: Staff Attorney – Special Education

Office Location: 606 Walnut Street, Suite 2220, Des Moines, Iowa 50309

Opening Date: June 12, 2026

Closing Date: For earliest consideration apply by: June 29, 2026

Available: July 2026

Job Type: Full-time, One-year exempt position in Des Moines, Iowa; please note, this position is funded with a one-year grant through June 30, 2027. There is a possibility of extension based on the renewal of grant funding.

Supervision: Legal Director

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 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.

Salary/Benefits: Please Note: This position is funded with a one-year grant through June 30, 2027. There is a possibility of extension based on the renewal of grant funding. Current salary level is \$60,000. Non-entry level salaries depend on experience. 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 generous holiday time off, paid sick time and vacation accrual package to full-time employees.

Staff Attorney -Special Education Job Description: DRI is seeking a passionate civil rights attorney to protect and advance the educational rights of students with disabilities pursuant to the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, and the Americans with Disabilities Act. The staff attorney will provide legal advocacy to students subject to exclusionary disciplinary measures based on their disability to ensure their rights under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act and Section 504 are enforced. The Disability Rights Staff Attorney will be responsible for providing legal service to clients with disabilities in special education issues, including advice, negotiation, representation in administrative hearings, litigation in state and federal court, and administrative and policy advocacy in accordance with program priorities and case handling policies. The Disability Rights Staff Attorney will handle multiple cases and advocacy projects with appropriate supervision depending on experience including leading individual client litigation, administrative practice, appellate advocacy, technical assistance, systemic advocacy, outreach, training, and policy advocacy.

Job Responsibilities:

- Provides legal service to students with disabilities on IDEA and/or Section 504 due process rights related to a Manifestation Determination Meeting.
- Provide legal service to students with disabilities to students who have been subjected to exclusionary disciplinary measures such as a shortened school day, restraint, seclusion, or inappropriate use of School Resource Officers or Police, to ensure students receive appropriate behavioral supports and services in the least restrictive environment.
- Provides legal service to students with disabilities including advice, negotiation, mediation, filing due process and representation in administrative hearings, litigation in state and federal court, administrative and policy advocacy.
- Participates in litigation with support from the Legal Director, on statewide impact activity including institutional and group litigation and policy advocacy beneficial to students with disabilities.
- Conduct investigations and monitoring in conjunction with other attorneys and advocate(s), as needed.
- Engages and conducts outreach activities that increase the capacity of students with disabilities to be self-advocates.
- Educate policy makers on special education and disability-related education issues.
- Write organized and concise public reports, reports to other oversight and enforcement agencies, and internal reports regarding findings, conclusions and recommendations resulting from investigations or monitoring activities.
- Conduct and prepare regular trainings on the rights of students with disabilities and on the protection and advocacy services available from DRI.

- Represent DRI on councils, commissions, work groups, and stakeholder groups, as assigned by supervisor.
- Work in conjunction with other DRI staff on planning and developing agency priorities, goals, and objectives.
- Work in conjunction with other DRI staff in preparing annual program and performance reports, as assigned.
- Travel throughout the state of Iowa as needed to conduct investigations, monitoring and provide advocacy.
- Maintain thorough and complete records, including DAD (case management database) and client files.
- Use Microsoft Office software suite.
- Other duties as assigned.

Minimum Qualifications:

- J.D. degree from an accredited law school.
- 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.
- 1-3 years of experience as a legal intern, law clerk, or licensed attorney.
- Strong and effective writing, verbal and negotiating communication skills, including the ability to do so in a concise manner, even when doing so regarding complex issues.
- Strong organizational skills.
- Experience in public speaking and developing effective presentations.
- Excellent interpersonal, relationship-building and collaboration skills to be able to work with others inside and outside of the organization.
- Ability to analyze complex problems and develop creative solutions.
- Ability to conceptualize and develop initial and ongoing case strategies.
- Ability to remain impartial when conducting investigations.
- Ability to stay calm and relaxed when working with individuals who may be in a crisis.
- Ability to be flexible to changing work assignments and processes.

- Ability to maintain confidentiality.
- Ability to conduct self in a professional manner.
- Ability to maintain thorough and complete records, including DAD and client files.
- Ability to work independently with appropriate supervision.

Desirable Qualifications:

- Passion for advocacy and utilizing litigation to improve the lives of individuals with disabilities.
- Experience in disability law, including but not limited to special education, Medicaid, the Americans with Disabilities Act and/or other federal or state laws impacting people with disabilities.
- Demonstrate understanding of disability rights values in daily work (self- determination, person-centered services, informed consent, equal opportunity, independence, and inclusion.)

Equal Opportunity Employer

DRI 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.

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 Director at kvandevorde@driowa.org.

Applications Process: Please send cover letter, resume, writing sample and three professional references to DRI Legal Director, Cyndy Miller, at apply@DRIlowa.org. No telephone calls please.