



# Disability Rights Iowa

LEGAL PROTECTION AND ADVOCACY

## Executive Director

### Des Moines, Iowa

**Disability Rights Iowa (DRI) seeks an Executive Director to lead our dynamic advocacy organization as we continue our mission to identify and eliminate the barriers that Iowans with disabilities of all ages face in exercising their civil, legal and human rights. The Executive Director will lead the organization as we work toward an improved quality of life for Iowans with disabilities, their families and our community as a whole.**

### About Disability Rights Iowa

Disability Rights Iowa (DRI) is a well-established, innovative, statewide not-for-profit organization dedicated to advancing the rights of Iowans with disabilities, including Iowans with mental illness. DRI works to achieve fairness and justice for people with disabilities through quality legal representation, advocacy, investigations of abuse and neglect, peer/self-advocacy services, community partnerships, legislative and regulatory advocacy work, education and outreach. DRI's legal work includes individual advocacy, systemic advocacy, and impact litigation. DRI is the federally-mandated protection and advocacy agency for Iowans with disabilities. For more information, go to [www.driowa.org](http://www.driowa.org).

DRI provides services to individuals throughout Iowa from offices located in downtown Des Moines, Iowa's capital city. DRI has 20 person staff, including 8 attorneys (one of whom is the Legal Director) and a budget of approximately \$1.7 million. The Executive Director reports to and serves at the pleasure of DRI's 15-member Board of Directors.

Over the past year, DRI successfully protected and advocated for the rights of Iowans with disabilities, by, among other things:

- Winning a class action lawsuit challenging the unconstitutional treatment of youth at a state-operated juvenile facility;
- Appealing denials of community supports and services for Medicaid managed care members;
- Terminating or modifying overly-restrictive guardianships and conservatorships;
- Safeguarding the rights of special education students: and
- Ensuring that Iowa's presidential preference caucuses were accessible to Iowans with disabilities.

## **Role of the Executive Director**

The Executive Director will facilitate and provide leadership to further DRI's development, mission and status as an integral part of Iowa's disability, civil rights and social justice communities. The Executive Director will communicate DRI's understanding of the issues faced by the disability community, and expand DRI's vision and ability to resolve those issues. More specifically, the Executive Director's duties include policy and advocacy leadership to the disability community and for the staff, oversight of administrative, human resources, and financial operations of the organization while building the public profile and funding base of the organization. The Executive Director must demonstrate a commitment to the mission of advancing the rights of people with disabilities, dynamic, entrepreneurial leadership skills and strong non-profit management experience.

## **High Priority Responsibilities of the Executive Director**

### ***Articulates and implements a strategic vision and leadership for DRI***

1. Updates vision and long-term strategic plan, including identifying resources needed to accomplish the plan.
2. Clearly communicates vision to internal and external stakeholders. Develops DRI's annual Board-approved areas of focus (priorities) which will guide DRI's decisions about the individual and systemic advocacy and legal work that DRI will undertake each year.
3. Motivates and inspires staff to work collaboratively toward implementing DRI's vision, plans and areas of focus as adopted by the Board of Directors.
4. Demonstrates commitment to increasing cultural competency and works to promote understanding about the experiences of Iowan's with disabilities.
5. Assumes a position of leadership for DRI within the disability, civil rights, social justice and other key stakeholder communities.
6. Cultivates a strong working relationship with the Board of Directors through provision of materials for each meeting and effective and responsive engagement with all members at and between quarterly Board meetings.
7. Assists the Board of Directors in its development of knowledge and skills to make decisions about DRI's plans and areas of focus and in carrying out the Board's responsibilities.
8. Ensures agency compliance with all applicable federal and state laws, and requirements of funding agencies.

### ***Increases the Visibility of DRI in Iowa and the Disability Community***

1. Serves as an active spokesperson for DRI through personal contact with state and national public interest, legal and disability organizations.

2. Promotes effective working relationships and intersectional work with advocacy groups, government officials, public interest and civil rights organizations and other organizations serving individuals with disabilities.
3. Develops and coordinates strong traditional and social media presence for DRI.
4. Monitors activities of state legislature, educates legislative policy makers on issues affecting lowans with disabilities and provides testimony on disability-related issues at the request of legislators.
5. Creates and carries out public events, training and outreach to highlight and share DRI's work.

***Manages and Develops Advocacy and Legal Work of DRI staff***

1. Identifies systemic projects to improve the lives of lowans with disabilities and provide leadership to achieve project goals.
2. Supervises development of goals and objectives for all programs and annual performance reports.
3. Creates an internal infrastructure for DRI staff to effectively carry out DRI's work.
4. Develops skills and knowledge of staff by:
  - a. Creating internal and external training opportunities;
  - b. Collaborating with other agencies and law firms on systemic and individual cases;
  - c. Creating and developing internal and external leadership opportunities for staff; and
  - d. In conjunction with legal director, providing regular feedback to staff on legal and advocacy issues so that they can continuously improve their knowledge and skills.
5. Manages personnel, including hiring, assignment and evaluation of staff, compensation and benefits, and promotion or termination of staff, as appropriate.
6. Develops a diverse workforce to effectively serve unrepresented and underrepresented lowans with disabilities.
7. Develops and implements internal policies and procedures so that personnel decisions are administered fairly and effectively.

***Maintains, increases and diversifies funding resources and provides strong stewardship of financial resources***

1. Assures adequate resources are available to accomplish the mission of DRI, including increasing donations and attorney fee awards.
2. Researches, identifies, applies for and implements grants.
3. Explores new donor cultivation and stewardship opportunities, identifies and pursues the potential to broaden and diversify the funding base beyond the current funding sources.
4. Ensures the financial stability and integrity of DRI by supervising the activities of DRI's Finance Director, which include, but are not limited to:
  - a. Engaging in long-term fiscal planning to provide for the fiscal stability of the organization;
  - b. Developing annual budgets that reflect long-term fiscal goals;
  - c. Maintaining the financial integrity of DRI, through the annual audit process and the establishment of internal controls;

- d. Overseeing and ensuring that all reporting and compliance requirements are met for each funding source;
- e. Providing regular updates to the Board of Directors of fiscal status and highlights fiscal issues that may require the Board's attention;
- f. Drafting and negotiating all contracts on behalf of DRI, both internal and external;
- g. Timely paying staff and vendors;
- h. Developing financially-related human resource policies; and
- i. Ensuring that DRI has 21<sup>st</sup> Century technology to effectively carry out its work.

### **Ideal Candidate Would Have**

- Strong commitment to advancing the rights of persons with disabilities and to the mission of DRI.
- Comprehensive understanding of public policy issues and processes involving the rights of individuals with disabilities and the ability to recognize and lead DRI in addressing emerging issues.
- Juris Doctor degree from an accredited law school.
- If an attorney, ability to practice before state and federal courts in Iowa and Iowa State Bar membership or intent to obtain such licensure and to join state bar within six months of being hired.
- An inclusive, visionary and transparent leadership style with demonstrated experience in thinking strategically and in effectively inspiring and leveraging staff, Board members and partners toward greater impact, who functions as both a team leader and member.
- Strong interpersonal skills that demonstrate trust, respect, collegiality, inclusivity and flexibility, thereby creating a positive working environment with staff, Board, Advisory Council and community partners.
- Deep understanding of intersectionality (how multiple aspects of other identities intersect, influence one another and compound to create unique experience for individuals with disabilities) and commitment to addressing the issues Iowans with disabilities face as a result.
- Demonstrated experience working with organizations and individuals with diverse perspectives, including staff, partner agencies, the public, elected and appointed officials, and consumers of services.
- Demonstrated ability and a desire to develop and expand the resources of DRI, including marketing, branding and private fundraising.
- Outstanding oral and written communication skills, as well as experience with print, broadcast and social media.
- A minimum of seven years of experience with disability and civil rights laws and issues as well as history and experience with and understanding of the full range of options for and approaches to advocacy.
- A minimum of seven years of experience in leading and managing a complex organization including setting strategic vision, implementing business plans, and managing personnel, overseeing finances and internal control systems, and fostering good relationships with a Board of Directors and external stakeholders.
- Willingness to locate or relocate in Greater Des Moines area.

## **Application Process**

Interested candidates must submit a letter of application explaining their interest in the position and the experience they believe demonstrates their ability to contribute to the future of DRI, a resume and a list of three professional references, including their contact information. References should include: someone who supervised you, someone you supervised and an additional person. Applicants are also asked to submit a short (1-3 pages) description of some activity they have undertaken involving issues of rights of persons with disabilities.

Applications should be submitted by email to: [board@driowa.org](mailto:board@driowa.org)

Applications received until the position is filled. To receive full consideration, please submit your application by January 19, 2021.

The successful candidate is expected to start approximately June 1, 2021. Salary is generous and commensurate with experience. The organization provides excellent benefits.

Applications will be handled in a confidential manner.

Questions regarding the application process should be directed to:

Katie VandeVorde

DRI Operations Manager

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

## **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 encourages candidates with disabilities, women, persons of color and others who represent distinct linguistic or cultural communities to apply.

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Approved 11-2-2020