

A Letter from Jane Hudson, Executive Director

Often, when people think of the disability community, they only think of people with physical disabilities. After all, for the longest time, the only symbol for access was a person in a wheelchair. They may also think of only one age group. In fact, when DRI was designated as Iowa's protection and advocacy system more than 40 years ago, it served mostly schoolchildren with developmental disabilities.

As the disability rights movement grew, so did Disability Rights Iowa. Perhaps the biggest change to our community happened when the Americans with Disabilities Act defined a person with a disability as a "person who has a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities, a person who has a history or record of such an impairment, or a person who is perceived by others as having such an impairment."

As the articles in this newsletter demonstrate, DRI's legal advocacy has expanded to serve children and adults with all types of disabilities, including Iowans with mental or behavioral health issues. DRI still represents schoolchildren who have been discriminated against, but its work has grown over the years, and ranges from voting access to Medicaid appeals to the reduction of restraint and seclusion in youth facilities. To learn more, take a look at our current [Board approved priorities](#). If you would like us to consider additional issues, please fill out [this brief survey](#).

Regardless of what our priorities are each year, our vision is that all Iowans with disabilities, regardless of the type of disability, have the opportunity to live, work, and learn in the most integrated settings with the supports they need free of abuse, neglects, stigma, and discrimination.

Jane Hudson