



Nebraska Advocacy Services, *The Center for Disability Rights, Law, and Advocacy*, protects the rights of people with disabilities and serves as an advocate, joining with individuals, to challenge barriers to full participation in our communities. In Nebraska, more than 250,000 men, women, and children have one or more disability.

They include people who:

- Have developmental disabilities
- Have a mental illness or emotional impairment
- Have physical or sensory disabilities
- Have learning disabilities
- Have a traumatic brain injury
- Are elderly and need assistive technology
- Receive disability income benefits and want to return to work
- Have been abused, neglected, or exploited
- Question if their disability can affect their right to vote

The **mission of Nebraska Advocacy Services** is to work with people who have disabilities to secure their rights, enhance their dignity, and advocate for their full participation as citizens. To achieve our mission we use an integrated advocacy approach that includes:

Protection. We stand with people who have disabilities when their civil and human rights are denied. We are *legal advocates* who provide advice and representation to eligible persons whose cases meet our priorities.

Public Education. We provide *information and training* that builds awareness and understanding about some of the barriers faced by people with disabilities.

Empowerment. We give people with disabilities and their families and friends the tools – information, education, referral sources – to be self-advocates. We support the building of strong, stable organizations controlled and directed by individuals with disabilities that empower people to set their own course.

Consultation. We consult with Nebraska communities building citizen advocacy programs. Local, independently operated citizen advocacy offices arrange opportunities for members of a community and citizens with disabilities who may be at risk of abuse or neglect to form meaningful personal relationships.

Policy Advocacy. We analyze, monitor, propose, or recommend changes to state and federal legislation or regulation to support our mission.

Scott has a disability and lives in western Nebraska. He needs assistance with personal finances. His payee, the person appointed by the court to handle his money for him, had not made Scott's mortgage payments for two months; his utilities were also behind and the payee would not respond to his phone calls. With persistence, an advocate from Nebraska Advocacy Services was able to arrange for the payee to resign. A new payee, one chosen by Scott, was then successfully appointed.

Nebraska Advocacy Services (NAS) is a private, nonprofit 501(c)(3) organization. We are the only organization with a mandate in both federal and state law to pursue legal remedies to protect and advocate for the rights of all people with disabilities in Nebraska. NAS has the unique ability and capacity to pursue legal remedies or other advocacy approaches to help assure the rights of people with disabilities in our communities.

For more than twenty-five years, we have been a powerful voice for vulnerable people with disabilities, winning significant victories to prevent abuse and neglect, expand mental health and community services, ensure access to special education, and facilitate effective state-wide programs in citizen and self-advocacy.

We are governed by a fourteen member Board of Directors and work with advisory groups that help guide our programs. All of the members of the Board and advisory groups are volunteers, many of whom have a disability or are a family member of a person with a disability. The people who work at NAS are dedicated to the ideals of the disability rights movement and devote their energies to support and defend the rights of people with disabilities.

Our **Vision Statement** sets the perspective that guides us in all of our efforts. We see a future where all people with disabilities “are valued within their communities, have control over their own lives and have the necessary resources available to experience a life of quality.” Our Board and employees have joined with people who have disabilities to create just such a future.



Linda, a woman with multiple health impairments, was unable to get through the doors of her neighborhood drugstore with her oversized wheelchair. While she was struggling, the store’s employees were very rude and unhelpful. Linda called NAS. Our advocates filed a complaint with the drugstore’s District Manager on our client’s behalf. After the District Manager’s investigation, the drugstore offered Linda a personal apology, agreed to discipline the employees

regarding the store’s responsibilities under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). In addition, the drugstore agreed to provide home delivery of Linda’s medications, and gave her a gift card. Although we engage in issues that have a significant impact on larger systems, such as challenging policies that diminish statewide services for people with disabilities, much of our work involves people like Linda. Her story and many others speak to the heart of Nebraska Advocacy Services as we work to create positive outcomes in the lives of individuals within communities across Nebraska.

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