



Civil Rights Attorney
Fulltime and Exempt Employee
Reports to the Core Services Supervisor and Director of Advocacy

Disability Rights Montana (DRM) seeks an attorney to educate individuals with disabilities about their legal rights and self-advocacy strategies. The attorney will also advocate for individuals and groups who are disenfranchised, abused, neglected, or are subject to other civil rights violations. This is an entry level attorney position and will not have a primary focus on litigation, but DRM is committed to developing new civil rights attorneys and expects the attorney to grow in this role through mentorship, training, and increasing involvement in individual and systemic litigation and other advocacy strategies under the supervision of experienced civil rights attorneys.

DRM is a legal-advocacy organization advancing the civil rights of people with disabilities and as such understands the importance and contribution of employees with lived experience. People with disabilities, Black, Indigenous, and people of color, and LGBTQ+ people often not only have all the skills to fulfil positions at DRM, but also invaluable lived experiences we need to properly serve our community. If you identify with any of these groups, you are particularly encouraged to apply. Disabilities include, but are not limited to, mental health conditions, physical and sensory disabilities, learning and intellectual disabilities, brain injuries, and chronic health conditions.

JOB OVERVIEW

All attorneys and advocates at Disability Rights Montana work daily to advance the civil and human rights of people with disabilities. We appreciate that a right on paper is meaningless. Rights only exist when they influence and change the actions of real people running state agencies, business owners, landlords, etc. People with disabilities face various forms of oppression every day, and there are not nearly enough attorneys to file lawsuits every time someone violates their rights. Our Core Services unit is designed to address this gap in resources by providing brief services to people who need help turning their real-world problems into actionable legal problems. This civil rights attorney will help people across Montana understand their rights and how to enforce those rights. This self-advocacy assistance and other short term legal assistance allows people to access the power of the law where the legal profession as a whole falls short in providing means to enforce those rights.

When not providing these short-term services to individuals across Montana, this civil rights attorney will assist in addressing systemic forms of oppression that the office is tackling. This includes fighting voter suppression and promoting voter registration and engagement and addressing abuse, neglect, and other civil rights violations of disabled Montanans.

DRM is a vibrant hub of passionate, dedicated, and skilled advocates and we welcome your unique contribution to our team. We protect and advance the civil rights of all disabled Montanans. We are not a think-tank, we take action. The federal government has given us unique authority and mandates to: monitor any facilities in which people with disabilities are served, including prisons, hospitals, nursing homes, and homeless shelters; access confidential health, school, and personnel records to investigate abuse and neglect; litigate and engage in other legal advocacy to protect the rights of individuals and groups of people with disabilities; educate people with disabilities about their rights and how to use them; and educate policy makers about how their decisions impact our community. We do this to champion the rights of all Montanans with disabilities, ensuring they live freely, with respect and dignity, in the community of their choice.

I. ESSENTIAL DUTIES/FUNCTIONS

- a. Provide short term self-advocacy assistance.
- b. Effectively utilize a variety of litigation and non-litigation strategies to achieve client and organizational objectives.
- c. With training, mentorship, and coaching, support individual and systemic litigation with increasing case responsibilities over time.
- d. Employ multimodal advocacy approaches to protect and advance the rights of Montanans with disabilities.
- e. Analyze complex problems and develop creative solutions to advocate for clients and the organization's mission.
- f. Effectively utilize legal writing to prepare briefs, memoranda, letters, and other documents.
- g. Communicate effectively with co-workers, clients, service providers, government actors, and those who oppress the people we serve.
- h. Research statutes and regulations and analyze their applicability to cases.
- i. Utilize mediation and negotiation to advocate for clients at administrative hearings, meetings and conferences.
- j. Maintain complete and accurate records; prepare memoranda case reports, and data system entries; maintain the security of confidential records.
- k. Develop professional knowledge and expertise in the assigned duties through work on projects led by others, professional enrichment, research, reading and analysis of materials.
- l. Other duties may be assigned as necessary to effectively carry out the mission of the organization.

II. COMPETENCIES

- a. Excellent legal written and oral communication skills appropriate to level of experience.
- b. Customer/Client Focus

- c. Communication Proficiency
- d. Collaboration and Flexibility Skills
- e. Detailed Oriented, Accurate, and Timely in Producing Work Product
- f. Ability to Complete Assignments with Interruptions
- g. Ability to Comprehend Legal Documents
- h. Problem Solving/Analysis
- i. Maintain Confidentiality
- j. Time Management
- k. Proficient with Microsoft 365 products and services (e.g., Teams, SharePoint, Excel, Word, PowerPoint, Outlook)

III. STANDARDS OF CONDUCT AND PRACTICE

As an attorney, this position has access to highly sensitive information. As such they are expected to maintain professional standards of conduct and practice in the workplace and in the performance of the duties of this position. It is a minimum requirement of this position to adhere to the following standards:

- a. Montana Rules of Professional Conduct governing attorneys and law firms
- b. Professional standards or ethical codes of conduct of the employee's own profession.
- c. National Disability Rights Network (NDRN) Standards for Advocacy Programs.
- d. Policies and Procedures, including the Standards of Conduct, adopted by the Board of Directors and Management of Disability Rights Montana.

IV. LINES OF AUTHORITY

The Civil Rights Attorney for Core Services works with other members of the Core Services unit and the rest of the agency. As such they report to the Director of Core Services, as well as the Director of Advocacy who oversees the entire advocacy team, of which Core Services is a subunit. This position has no supervisory responsibility.

V. WORK ENVIRONMENT

- a. This job operates in a professional office environment. This role routinely uses standard office equipment such as computers, phones, photocopiers, filing cabinets and fax machines.
- b. Work a standard workweek, 8:30 am–5:00 pm with a half hour off for unpaid lunch (unless an alternative schedule is approved), but must be willing to work evenings, weekends, or extended hours when necessary – for example, if providing services in person in other parts of the state and travel is necessary.

- c. Attorneys are responsible for maintaining a reasonably ambitious workload and keeping their supervisor(s) informed when there is insufficient work to perform and when there is a risk that work will not be completed on a timely basis.

VI. PHYSICAL DEMANDS

- a. Continuous sitting, standing, or laying to use a computer, and use of a computer keyboard or other computer interface technology.
- b. Occasional movement around the office.
- c. Infrequent movement between agency offices, vehicles and other locations.

VII. TRAVEL

Infrequent local, out-of-area, and overnight travel may be required for this position.

VIII. EDUCATION/EXPERIENCE

- a. 0-3 years of experience as a lawyer. A Juris Doctorate and licensure as a lawyer in Montana is required within 6 months of hiring.
- b. DRM will provide all the necessary training to succeed in this position and continue to advance as a civil rights lawyer going forward. DRM is enthusiastic about considering anyone with the right skills and encourages individuals to apply even if they believe they may not completely meet all described qualities of a top candidate.
- c. The attorney will work with people who have disabilities that impact their ability to communicate or process information, and it is important to have experience in communicating and building a rapport with people who have various communication styles and ways of processing information.

IX. BACKGROUND CHECK

- a. This position will involve unsupervised contact with vulnerable adults and children and interaction with personally identifiable information.
- b. DRM conducts background checks of conviction and arrest records on final candidates prior to extending offers. The hiring process will be conducted in compliance with federal, state, and local law. Applicants will be provided an opportunity to explain and correct background information. A criminal background does not automatically eliminate candidates from consideration. If a criminal background exists, the nature of the offense will be considered in the context of the essential functions of the position. Some roles may require

additional background investigations to comply with federal clearance requirements.

ABOUT DISABILITY RIGHTS MONTANA (DRM)

DRM is a private nonprofit organization that advances the dignity, equality, and self-determination of people with disabilities. We are wholly independent; we do not work for either the federal or state government. The federal government has, however, given us funds and special authority to protect the rights of people with disabilities in Montana. We use that money and power to pursue justice on matters related to human and legal rights. Our Board of Directors sets the priorities of our work in consultation with an advisory council and input from the community to ensure we are accountable to the needs of Montanans with disabilities.

More information about our priorities can be found here:

<https://disabilityrightsmt.org/priorities/>

DRM is an equal opportunity employer. We value a diverse workforce and an inclusive culture. DRM encourages applications from all qualified individuals, including individuals of all races, colors, religions, genders, sexual orientations, gender identities or expressions, ages, national origins, marital statuses, disabilities, and veteran status backgrounds.

For information about us, please visit: <http://www.disabilityrightsmt.org>.

HIRING PROCESS

Please send a cover letter and resume to Katherine Murfitt, DRM's Director of Finance and Administration, by emailing katherine@disabilityrightsmt.org.

DRM is committed to promoting universal accessibility and fairness in our interview process. At least three business days before an interview, DRM will tell applicants the names, pronouns, and titles of DRM interviewers and will provide the interview questions, which will be the same for all applicants. We know that other efforts to make our process more accessible may be needed based on individual needs and we will provide reasonable accommodations for any portion of the application or interview process. You can request them by contacting Katherine Murfitt, DRM's Director of Finance and Administration, by emailing katherine@disabilityrightsmt.org. If you are not sure if you would benefit from an accommodation, you can review the Job Accommodations Network (JAN) website, which provides many ideas about possible accommodations that have worked for others, and you are more than welcome to call Katherine to discuss ideas you have or what we have done in the past. JAN is located here: <https://askjan.org/soar.cfm>.

Submissions will be reviewed on a rolling basis and will be accepted until the position is filled. The first review of applications will take place on February 14, 2024, with the hope of contacting selected applicants that week and starting interviews the following week. Applicants

will only be contacted if they are selected for an interview. The interview process will include two rounds of interviews. If selected as a finalist, DRM may ask the applicant for contacts to verify previous employment.

- Position Title: Attorney
- Company Name: Disability Rights Montana (DRM)
- Location: Helena
- Posted: January 4, 2024
- Education and Experience required: 0-3 years experience, Juris Doctorate and admission to practice in Montana within 6 months of hiring.
- Job Category: Attorney
- Job Type: Full-time, Exempt
- Salary: \$62,000-68,000
- Benefits: Employer paid 403(b) contribution, health, dental, vision care, life insurance, long-term care insurance, vacation and sick leave. Additional voluntary employee paid benefits are also available.