Career Opportunity

Title: Education Advocate (0.5 FTE) and Representative Payee Advocate (0.5 FTE) – two half time or one full-time employees.

Supervisor: Supervising Advocate or other designee of the Executive Director

FLSA Status: Non-exempt

Schedule Hours: During normal business hours, may work outside of normal hours.

Travel: Some travel required.

Salary: $53,500-60,000 (full time), commensurate with experience.

Benefits Include: Employer paid 403(b) contribution, health, dental, vision care, life insurance, long-term care insurance and vacation/sick leave. Additional voluntary employee paid benefits are also available.

About our work

Disability Rights Montana (DRM) is part of the federally mandated protection and advocacy (P&A) system established by Congress in 1975 after the discovery of widespread abuse of people with disabilities. DRM is an independent nonprofit organization whose mission is to protect and advocate the civil, legal, and human rights of Montanans with every type of disability.

DRM is a mission driven law-based advocacy organization whose staff includes both attorneys and non-attorney professional advocates with deep knowledge about the rights of people with disabilities and the service programs available to support them. The organization employs a blend of investigatory action, individual representation, educational outreach, and systems advocacy so that children and adults with disabilities may have a full opportunity to live with dignity in the community of their choice, free from discrimination and abuse. Staff attorneys can and do take legal action to enforce the rights of Montanans with disabilities and to effect systems change impacting large populations. Disability Rights Montana has a current staff of seventeen positions filled by passionate individuals who care about each other and those we serve.

Position Descriptions

Disability Rights Montana is looking for some great people who are passionate about disability rights to fill the following (1) full-time or (2) part-time positions:
½ Time Education Advocate

DRM believes that full participation in community life, meaningful choice, and self-determination by people with disabilities begins with a high-quality K-12 education which meets each individual’s needs. Our Education Unit works to ensure that school-age children and youth with disabilities are provided a high-quality elementary and secondary education through age 21 that meets their individual needs in safe and fully integrated learning environments.

The Education Advocate plays a crucial role in ensuring students with disabilities receive a free appropriate public education without discrimination in Montana’s K-12 public schools by providing client intake, information, resources, support, and advocacy to students with disabilities and their families.

The ideal candidate has experience in a human services field and/or with the special education system and a demonstrated ability to effectively advocate for People with Disabilities and their supporters. Experience with IEPs, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act is preferred, however DRM will also provide on-the-job training in this area. The Education Advocate reports to a Supervising Advocate and works as part of DRM’s Education Unit, which is supervised by an Education Attorney.

Essential Functions

- Provide support and advocacy to individuals with disabilities and their supporters, ensuring they have access to necessary resources and services.
- Collaborate with internal colleagues and external stakeholders to advance DRM’s mission, priorities, objectives, and values.
- Effectively advocate for the rights of students with disabilities under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), and other laws.
- Conduct client intake, assessment, and follow-up to ensure individual needs are addressed effectively.
- Work alongside advocates, legal professionals, and cross-functional teams to achieve positive outcomes for our clients.
- Interview people with disabilities, guardians, and other third parties.
- Explain and apply rules, regulations, policies, and procedures.
- Review and analyze educational and other types of records.
- Write case notes and develop summaries detailing observations and findings as well as conclusions and recommendations.
- Engage daily in professional verbal and written communication.
- Engage daily in sustained attention to detail.
- Maintain exemplary professional behavior and adhere to grant, legal, ethical, and policy requirements at all times.
- Maintain knowledge of current statutes, regulations, and policies affecting persons with disabilities.
- Maintain knowledge of community resources.
Required Qualifications

- The applicant must possess the following minimum qualifying education and experience:
  - Three years of qualifying experience; or a bachelor’s degree and no qualifying experience, but willingness and ability to assume responsibilities through on the job training. Qualifying education may be in the social or human services, public health, civil rights, criminal justice, law or other related field. Qualifying experience must be documented and exemplary and may be in social or human services, investigative work, public health, civil rights, the law or a related field.
- Experience reviewing records including educational, medical, financial, legal, or business documents.
- Ability to perform thorough and accurate research, analyze complex problems, develop creative solutions, and communicate them effectively.
- Ability to maintain thorough and complete records.
- Strong organizational skills.
- Ability to maintain confidentiality and to deal effectively with and negotiate through confrontational situations and possible stressful interactions.
- Demonstrated ability to communicate effectively, both orally and in writing.
- Strong interpersonal, relationship-building and collaboration skills to be able to work well with individuals inside and outside DRM.
- Ability to work independently with appropriate supervision.

Preferred Qualifications

- Experience conducting investigations, including drafting requests for information, conducting interviews, and other methods of research.
- Personal or professional experience working with people with disabilities.
- Advocacy experience in either social or human service, government, public interest, legal or health care environment.
- Knowledge of social services systems.
- Knowledge of laws, rights, and services as they pertain to individuals with disabilities.

½ time Representative Payee Advocate

A representative payee is a person or organization appointed to receive the Social Security or SSI benefits for anyone who can’t manage or direct the management of his or her benefits. A payee’s main duties are to use the benefits to pay for the current and future needs of the beneficiary, and properly save any benefits not needed to meet current needs. A payee must also keep records of expenses and provide accounting to the Social Security Administration when requested.

In March 2018, Congress passed legislation to increase oversight and protection for some of our nation’s most vulnerable citizens. The bill, called the Strengthening Protections for Social Security Beneficiaries Act (H.R. 4547), increased independent oversight of the Social Security Administration’s Representative Payee Program. Under this program, DRM conducts organizational and individual representative payee reviews as assigned by the Social Security Administration. The Representative Payee Advocate conducts these reviews on DRM’s behalf.
The ideal candidate has a background in finance, accounting, or other job experience that includes the review of financial information and a demonstrated ability to effectively advocate for People with Disabilities and their supporters. DRM will provide on-the-job training. The Representative Payee Advocate reports to a Supervising Advocate or other designee of the Executive Director. This position requires maintenance of an ongoing clearance by the Social Security Administration.

**Essential Functions**
- Provide support and advocacy to individuals with disabilities and their supporters, ensuring they have access to necessary resources and services.
- Conduct client intake, assessment, and follow-up to ensure individual needs are addressed effectively.
- Work alongside advocates, legal professionals, and cross-functional teams to achieve positive outcomes for our clients.
- Conduct confidential reviews of representative payees.
- Interview people with disabilities, guardians, and other third parties.
- Explain and apply rules, regulations, policies, and procedures.
- Review and analyze medical, financial, legal, and other types of records.
- Write detailed case notes and develop investigative summaries detailing observations and findings, and conclusions and recommendations. Recommendations may include referrals to other Montana regulatory or investigatory agencies, if necessary.
- Engage daily in professional verbal and written communication.
- Engage daily in sustained attention to detail.
- Maintain knowledge of current statutes, regulations, and policies affecting persons with disabilities.
- Maintain knowledge of community resources.

**Required Qualifications**
The applicant must possess the following minimum qualifying education and experience:

- Bachelor’s degree
- Experience reviewing records including medical, financial, legal, and business documents.
- Three years of qualifying accounting, financial or auditing experience or a human services field with programmatic accounting or program recipient payments tracking; or a bachelor’s degree in a relevant field and no qualifying experience, but willingness and ability to assume responsibilities through on the job training.
- Ability to perform thorough and accurate research, analyze complex problems, develop creative solutions, and communicate them effectively.
- Ability to maintain thorough and complete records.
- Strong organizational skills.
- Ability to maintain confidentiality and to deal effectively with and negotiate through confrontational situations and possible stressful interactions.
- Demonstrated ability to communicate effectively, both orally and in writing.
- Strong interpersonal, relationship-building and collaboration skills to be able to work well with individuals inside and outside DRM.
Ability to work independently with appropriate supervision.

Preferred Qualifications
- Experience conducting investigations, including drafting requests for information, conducting interviews, and other methods of research.
- Personal or professional experience working with people with disabilities.
- Advocacy experience in either social or human service, government, public interest, legal or health care environment.
- Knowledge of social services systems.
- Knowledge of laws, rights, and services as they pertain to individuals with disabilities.

Scheduling flexibility available

The positions above are each ½ time positions but could be filled by two half-time employees or one full-time employee who splits their time between both roles. DRM’s comprehensive benefits package is pro-rated for part-time employees.

How to apply

Any offer of employment is conditional upon successfully passing a background check.

Disability Rights Montana is an Equal Opportunity Employer committed to building a diverse team and strongly encourages applications from candidates with life experience with disability, candidates of color, and other candidates with diverse identities.

Please submit your resume and letter of interest to Katherine Murfitt, Director of Finance and Administration at katherine@disabilityrightsmt.org. The position is open until filled.