



## Position Profile

# **Executive Director Disability Rights New Jersey Trenton, NJ**

Disability Rights New Jersey seeks a strong and compassionate Executive Director to lead this 24-year old organization that serves as the protection and advocacy system for people with disabilities in New Jersey.

## **The Organization**

For more than 20 years, Disability Rights New Jersey [DRNJ] has served as New Jersey's officially designated protection and advocacy agency, working to promote and defend the rights of New Jersey residents with disabilities. DRNJ's mission is to protect, advocate for and advance the human, civil and legal rights of persons with disabilities in pursuit of a society in which persons with disabilities exercise self-determination and choice, and are treated with dignity and respect. DRNJ's activities are grounded in its belief in the inherent value and worth of all individuals and their right to equality of opportunity and full participation in their communities.

DRNJ:

- Provides individual and systemic advocacy services and legal representation;
- Advises and assists people with disabilities, family members, attorneys and guardians in obtaining and protecting the rights of individuals with disabilities;
- Provides education, training, and technical assistance to people with disabilities, the agencies that serve them, attorneys, professionals, courts and others regarding the rights of individuals with disabilities; and
- Promotes public awareness and recognition of people with disabilities as equally entitled members of society.

DRNJ was founded in 1994, and receives most of its funding from the US Department of Health and Human Services, the US Department of Education and the Social Security Administration. With an annual budget of roughly \$3.6M, DRNJ consists of 30 staff members including attorneys, advocates, intake specialists, administrators, and support personnel. DRNJ is a member of the National Disability Rights Network, the nonprofit membership organization for the Protection & Advocacy agencies and the Client Assistance Programs for individuals with disabilities. Collectively, the Network is the largest provider of legally based advocacy services to people with disabilities in the U.S. DRNJ is governed by a Board of Directors, a majority of whom are persons with disabilities or family members of persons with disabilities. DRNJ also has two legally-mandated advisory councils: PAIMI Advisory and Assistive Technology Advisory. For more information, see [drnj.org](http://drnj.org).

Some programs that DRNJ offers include:

**Protection and Advocacy for Persons with Developmental Disabilities (PADD)** – provides legal assistance and advocacy services to individuals with developmental disabilities.

**Protection and Advocacy for Individuals with Mental Illness (PAIMI)** – provides legal assistance and advocacy services to individuals with mental illness who receive mental health services and who live in residential treatment facilities and in the community.

**The Client Assistance Program (CAP)** – assists individuals with disabilities who are seeking services from federally funded rehabilitation programs,

**And more** – DRNJ offers programs for protection for beneficiaries of Social Security, for individuals with traumatic brain injury, for voter access, for assistive technology, and more.

## **The Position**

The Executive Director will communicate DRNJ's understanding of the challenges faced by our community and expand DRNJ's vision and ability to meet those challenges. Specifically, the Executive Director's duties include policy and advocacy leadership for our community and staff, oversight of the organization's administrative, human resources, and financial operations, and building the organization's public profile and funding base.

## **Leadership Outlook and Near-Term Priorities**

The executive director provides leadership both inside and outside the organization, continually increasing DRNJ's mission impact. Toward these ends, our near-term priorities for the next 12-18 months include:

- Develop an understanding of the organization's business model and the needs of the client populations we serve.
- Become the face and voice of DRNJ.
- Communicate regularly with staff, board, legislators, and partner agencies.
- Understand the NJ state systems that impact our work.
- Strongly advocate for our clients.
- Represent the organization to the National Disability Rights Network.

## **Key Responsibilities**

Reporting to the board of directors, the executive director will provide leadership to the organization and manage its day-to-day affairs. Primary responsibilities include:

- Serves as spokesperson and represents DRNJ to local, state and national advocacy groups.
- Plans, organizes, directs, supervises and evaluates all agency activities, including planning and priority setting, supervising staff, supervising and evaluating programs.
- Oversees human and financial resources of the organization and assures that proper records are maintained and reports are filed.
- Directs the development of new program initiatives.
- Negotiates contractual agreements with governmental contractors and other funding sources.
- Directs the development of proposals for funding of specific projects, new programs and ongoing organizational priorities.
- Consults with the Board of Directors, staff and consumer groups throughout the state as appropriate on financial, program and policy planning.
- Meets regularly with the Board of Directors, management team and agency staff to assess progress toward goals and objectives, identify needs, set priorities, and develop strategies.
- Assures an ongoing public information program to apprise citizens of the services of the agency and the rights of citizens with disabilities.
- Communicates the programs, policies and purpose of the agency to public constituencies, government bodies (executive, legislative, judicial) and staff in a way which will motivate them to support organizational operations, goals and objectives.
- Promotes and maintains effective working relationships with government officials, public and private agency officials, and other such persons involved in direct or indirect service to

citizens with disabilities.

- Assists in the development and promotion of local, state and national services for citizens with disabilities.

### **Experience and Attributes**

Ideal candidates for this position will share our commitment to DRNJ's mission and will bring a variety of experiences and attributes to DRNJ, including:

- Law degree strongly preferred.
- At least ten years' experience in non-profit legal services or advocacy organization, specifically addressing the rights of people with disabilities or civil rights.
- Demonstrated ability to communicate with and advocate for persons with disabilities.
- Demonstrated well-rounded leadership and management experience in an organization with comparable budget and staffing.
- Ability to oversee financial matters and preparation and oversight of annual budgets.
- A fair and equitable leader, who engenders trust, is willing to empower staff and understands the relationship within and among departments in the organization.
- An outcome driven and visionary leader who is willing to delegate responsibility, set guidelines and hold staff accountable.
- Experience supporting a Board in its governance role, foster its ongoing development, engage its members in strategy development and keep it informed.
- Knowledge of public policy issues and experience advocating with state government and the legislature.
- Experience or interest in public policy and ability to testify in front of the state legislature.
- Excellent written and spoken communication skills.
- A strong collaborator with the ability to develop and maintain relationships.
- Ability to work effectively and cooperatively within a team framework that includes transparency, willingness to communicate with staff, and promoting an open environment.
- Demonstrated experience working with and in diverse populations.
- Skills to effectively negotiate through confrontational situations and stressful interactions.
- Willingness to travel and to work evenings and weekends when necessary.

Salary will be competitive and commensurate with experience.

### **Application Process**

To apply, e-mail a cover letter detailing your fit with the requirements of this position, your resume, and your salary requirements for this position to: [DRNJ@raffa.com](mailto:DRNJ@raffa.com) (e-mail applications are required). For other inquiries contact Ginna Goodenow at [ggoodenow@raffa.com](mailto:ggoodenow@raffa.com).

*Disability Rights New Jersey is an equal opportunity employer. Disability Rights New Jersey provides employment to persons regardless of disabilities, race, creed, religion, color, national origin, age, marital status, familial status, sex, sexual orientation, ancestry or disability.*