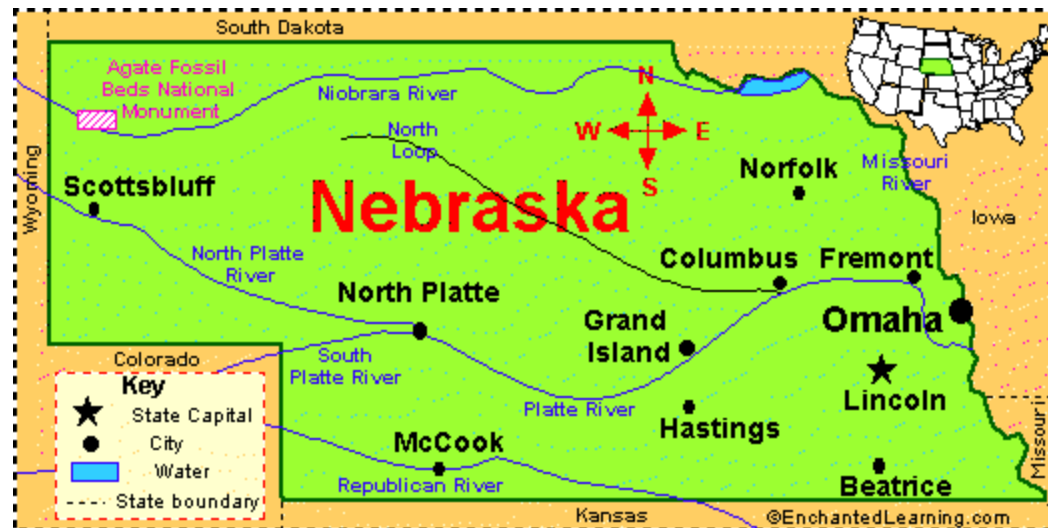


# NEBRASKA SELF-ADVOCACY

ALLIES IN SELF-ADVOCACY SUMMIT · CHICAGO · APRIL · 2012

# NEBRASKA!

- Over 77 thousand square miles (500 miles East to West)
- Only 1.8 million people
- Over half of Nebraskans live in two cities – Lincoln and Omaha
- The average town in Nebraska is 317 people
- People in rural areas often travel for hours to get basic services or supports ... *if* they are even available.



# ***SELF-ADVOCACY GROUPS IN NEBRASKA***

- **People First of Nebraska:** Largest self-advocacy group in the state, annual conference is well-attended
- **ADAPT-NE:** Public demonstrations and press conferences to raise awareness about disability issues
- **Mental Health Association of Nebraska:** A behavioral/mental health service provider organization operated by peer advocates
- **Autism Women's Network:** An autism-led support network for women and girls on the spectrum, but inclusive to all adults with disabilities
- **National Youth Leadership Network:** Self-advocates who are 15-26 years old learn self-advocacy skills

# ***RESOURCES FOR SELF-ADVOCACY***

- People First has a limited budget through the DD Planning Council.
- ADAPT NE has only volunteer resources
- Arc of Nebraska and the Nebraska UCEDD and P&A provide some free advocacy training and supports
- Many organizations with self-advocates on their advisory boards or other committees support their travel & sometimes pay small stipends.
- National Youth Leadership Network is supported by the state Department of Health and Human Services

# ***WHAT IS WORKING IN SELF-ADVOCACY?***

- **Small-scale and local initiatives**
  - Individual People First or Arc Chapters
  - Short-term, grant funded activities
- **Representation on many advisory boards, committees, work groups**
  - Impact is mixed

# ***CHALLENGES AND BARRIERS***

- **Large state with few cities**
  - Many people with disabilities are isolated in small towns and rural farms
- **Almost no Public Funding for Self-Advocacy**
  - Nebraska is a “minimum allotment” state for funding for the Planning Council and P&A - even though costs for getting self-advocates to meetings & events are huge
  - State budget for disability services and supports have been cut every year for the last five years
- **Self-Advocacy organizations are small, uncoordinated, and often socially oriented**

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# ***CHALLENGES AND BARRIERS***

- **Almost all advocacy resources are focused on developing and supporting Parent/Family Advocates**
- **The current state administration is disinterested in participating in dialogue with disability advocates**
  - Privatizing and automating disability services decreases accessibility and service coordination
  - Pouring millions of state dollars into supporting a failed and dangerous state hospital
- **Many professionals are unwilling to listen to and seriously consider the voices of self-advocates**



# ***SELF-ADVOCACY ACHIEVEMENTS***

- **The recent response by people with disabilities and families regarding the proposed Medicaid cuts and institutional bias.**
  - This outpouring of self and family advocates awakened the legislature, who are beginning to take action
- **Peer support services are developing in the mental health community.**
- **There are many great self-advocates in Nebraska who are dedicated and passionate.**
  - There is a genuine interest in the promise of self-advocacy among people with disabilities. They want to make a difference and to be part of something bigger than themselves.

# ***GOALS FOR NEBRASKA SELF-ADVOCACY***

- A network of informed, engaged, and skilled self-advocates across the state who will challenge service professionals and policy makers in order to create a more fair and inclusive community.
- A cross-disability coalition of self-advocacy networks
- State systems (Education, Health, and Disability specific agencies) that support and promote self-advocates.
- Ongoing Leadership development for new self-advocates who are mentored by experienced self-advocates.
- Genuine requests for involvement from agencies and organizations , not just as a token to fill a quota, but to actually influence change for people with disabilities.

# ***THE NEBRASKA STATE SELF-ADVOCACY TEAM***

<b>Team Member</b>	<b>Representation</b>
Christi Crosby, Co-Lead	Self-Advocate & DD Planning Council
Sharon daVanport	Self-Advocate & Autism Women's Network
Kellie Ellerbusch, Co-Lead	Nebraska University Center for Excellence in Disability
Kathy Hoell	Self-Advocate & State Independent Living Council
Lynn Redding	Self-Advocate & People First of Nebraska
Tim Shaw	Disability Rights Network (Protection & Advocacy)
Haley Waggoner	Self-Advocate & Nebraska Youth Leadership Council