



Executive Director Bismarck, North Dakota

North Dakota Protection and Advocacy Project (P&A) seeks an Executive Director to lead our dynamic, independent state agency in advancing and championing the equality and inclusion of people with disabilities where we live, learn, work, and play. The Executive Director will lead P&A in asserting the human, civil, and legal rights of people with disabilities, striving to create an inclusive society that values every individual. The position is located in Bismarck, North Dakota.

About North Dakota Protection and Advocacy (P&A)

P&A believes that people with disabilities should be empowered to advocate on their own behalf to the fullest extent possible. Services provided by P&A promote consumer control in decision-making and focus on the empowerment of people with disabilities in order to foster independence, productivity, and integration into the community. P&A accomplishes this through a host of advocacy strategies. Partnering with the ND Office of the Governor, the ND Department of Human Services, and the ND Legislative Assembly, P&A helped to realize the restructuring of North Dakota's Olmstead Commission to become an independent entity with an assigned full-time attorney.

In 1977, the Protection and Advocacy Project (P&A) was established as the federally designated protection and advocacy agency for North Dakota. Since then, Congress has passed laws creating new programs and providing additional federal grants for the P&As, all focused on promoting and defending the rights of individuals with disabilities. The P&A in ND currently has nine advocacy programs. While most P&As across the country are private not-for-profit entities, the P&A in ND is an independent state agency with a seven-member governing board.

P&A focuses on empowering people with disabilities with information and tools that they can use to uphold their civil rights. With stakeholder input, P&A prioritizes issues that impact the lives of North Dakotans with disabilities and their families. P&A assists with referrals and provides information, education, and training to individuals and organizations. Services provided to eligible individuals include advocacy assistance and representation, legal representation, and protective services. P&A is active in systems advocacy addressing broad disability services and rights concerns, supporting advocacy groups, and engaging individuals with disabilities and their families in the legislative process, as well as the promulgation of state rules and policies that have a potential impact on their lives.

P&A's funding, totaling more than \$7 million biennially, comes from federal grants and state general funds allocated by the ND Legislative Assembly. P&A has 30 staff members including attorneys, advocates, administrators, and support personnel located throughout the state in ten P&A offices, including one on the Turtle Mountain Indian Reservation. More information about P&A programs and services is available at ndpanda.org.

Role of the Executive Director

The Executive Director will exhibit a keen understanding of the challenges facing North Dakotans with disabilities and their families. The Executive Director will develop and nurture effective relationships between P&A and disability-related entities, as well as with the ND Legislative Assembly and other policymakers. Collaboration with other advocacy organizations is essential to achieve impactful outcomes. The Executive Director will lead staff and stakeholders to respect the governing board's philosophy of using the lowest level of intervention necessary to achieve positive outcomes while also facilitating a well-trained and experienced team of attorneys to advance litigation, when necessary.

The Executive Director is employed at the discretion of the Committee on Protection & Advocacy (the agency's governing board). This individual will manage a dynamic leadership team to effectively execute the organization's mission.

Key Responsibilities of the Executive Director

- Provide visionary, strategic leadership and effective organizational management including program planning, compliance, budget development, and financial oversight.
- Serve as the primary public face of P&A with the disability community, the media, public officials, and the community at large and represent the organization in its various local, state, and federal networks.
- Engage directly with people with disabilities and foster clear communication and trust-building with the broader disability community.
- Set priorities, supervise planning, and pursue creative strategies for addressing future challenges for the disability community and the organization.
- Advocate for and champion full inclusion and equity for the disability community and work to promote understanding about the experiences of North Dakotans with disabilities.
- Cultivate strong working relationships with the governing board and advisory council through effective and responsive engagement with all members.
- Enhance the organization's capacity to identify, prioritize, address, and evaluate constituent needs and services, responsive to emergent issues.
- Supervise and mentor leadership staff to promote teamwork, creative problem solving, and sustainable outcomes.
- Promote effective, collaborative working relationships with advocacy groups, government officials, public interest and civil rights organizations, other associations serving individuals with disabilities, and the general public.
- Engage fully in the activities of the state legislature, educate legislative policymakers on issues affecting North Dakotans with disabilities, and provide testimony on disability-related issues.
- Motivate staff, oversee personnel decisions, and create a workplace culture of inclusion and cultural competency.

The Ideal Candidate Would Possess

- Demonstrated experience in using systemic advocacy and legal remedies to achieve social change.
- A deep understanding of the breadth of experiences of, and a demonstrated affiliation with, individuals with disabilities.
- An unrelenting voice to advocate with individuals with disabilities and their families.
- A reputation as a consensus-builder and collaborator, and the wisdom to work toward long-standing solutions rather than a temporary “win”.
- Extensive experience in social services, disability rights advocacy, or closely related field.
- Substantial management experience in an organization with a comparable or larger budget, including staff supervision, budget development, financial oversight, and grant and contract compliance.
- A Juris Doctor or an advanced degree in public administration, social work, or another area closely aligned with P&A’s mission.
- Strategic vision, problem solving, planning, and project management skills.
- Creativity, collegiality, inclusivity, flexibility, and capacity to motivate and inspire.
- Coalition-building strengths and demonstrated partnerships with nonprofits, community organizations, and service providers working within disabilities advocacy and social services.
- Ability to listen and judiciously respond to a variety of perspectives, including governing board, staff, clients, policymakers, funders, outside stakeholders, and the public at large.
- Conflict-resolution, negotiation, and mediation skills; patience and a calm demeanor.
- An innovative spirit and a willingness to rock the boat when needed.
- Public relations adeptness and political savvy.
- Excellent writing, analytical, and oral communication skills, and experience effectively communicating with a wide range of audiences.
- Familiarity with North Dakota culture; experience working with ND state agencies and the ND legislative process.
- Advanced knowledge of public policy issues including federal and state laws and regulations applicable to persons with disabilities.
- Demonstrated ability to manage staff who are geographically dispersed.
- Integrity and fairness working in a complex environment, and seasoned human relations skills.
- Demonstrated experience working with and in diverse populations, including race, nationality, gender, sexual orientation, and other social identities.

Application Process

Interested candidates must submit a letter of application explaining their interest in the position and the experience they believe demonstrates their ability to contribute to the future of P&A; a resume; and a list of three professional references including someone who supervised you, someone you supervised, and an additional person. Applicants also are asked to submit a short (1-3 pages) description of an activity they have undertaken involving the rights of persons with disabilities.

Applications should be submitted by March 15, 2021 to Karla Buzick: kbuzick@agree.org.

Salary is generous and commensurate with experience. The agency provides excellent benefits.

Questions regarding the application process should be directed to kbuzick@agree.org or call 701.224.0588.

Equal Opportunity Employer

P&A is an Equal Opportunities Employer. It is the policy of P&A to prohibit discrimination and harassment of any type and to afford equal employment opportunities to employees and applicants, without regard to race, color, ethnicity, ancestry, religion, age, sex, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity/expression, pregnancy, medical condition or genetic information, veteran status, national origin, disability, marital or other protected status.

P&A encourages candidates with disabilities, women, persons of color, and others who represent distinct linguistic or cultural communities to apply. Veterans preference does not apply to this position.