



The Arc of Texas

LEGISLATIVE PLATFORM FOR THE 81ST TEXAS LEGISLATURE

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

The Arc of Texas represents, supports, and acts on behalf of individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities and their families regardless of level of disability or membership. This includes diagnoses of intellectual disability, autism spectrum disorders, and other pervasive developmental disorders.

PEOPLE FIRST*

All people with intellectual and developmental disabilities have strengths, abilities and inherent value; are equal before the law; and must be treated with dignity and respect. The Arc believes in self-determination by empowering people with the supports needed to make informed decisions and choices.

COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION*

The Arc of Texas works toward and believes that all people have the fundamental moral, civil and constitutional rights to live, learn, work, play and worship in safe and healthy communities of their choosing. The Arc places a high priority on protecting the safety and well being of these individuals.

* Adopted by The Arc of the United States Board of Directors in July 2000.
(www.thearcoftexas.org/about/)

EDUCATION

Information and Access to Early Childhood Intervention Services & Supports

Strengthen current outreach efforts to inform families whose children need early intervention about availability of services. Advocate for programs that are appropriately funded and available statewide.

Compliance with the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)

Promote compliance with IDEA so that Texas students with disabilities have access to and are provided a free and appropriate education by improving public education services, accountability, and due process systems.

TRANSITION SERVICES & SUPPORTS

Transition from Youth to Adulthood is Supported through Meaningful Planning and Delivery of Supports from all Involved Agencies

Advocate for meaningful educational outcomes for youth with disabilities that are based on the individual's personal goals and result in employment and/or continued education in age-appropriate settings. Work to eliminate barriers to meaningful adult services so that individuals utilize resources and maximize community living and employment opportunities. (See the HB1230 Transition Workgroup Recommendations, 80th Texas Legislature.)

Establish a Plan to Address Transition Medicine

Advocate for children with chronic illnesses and significant disabilities (i.e., Down Syndrome, Sickle Cell, Spina Bifida, Intellectual Disability, and Autism), now living into adulthood because of medical advances, so that they have access to an appropriately trained and equipped adult health care system. Today, this population is underinsured and adult health care providers in primary and subspecialty care lack the skills and knowledge to treat this population.

CRISIS INTERVENTION

Restore and Strengthen the Safety-Net

Urge the Texas Legislature to restore and increase general revenue funding to MHMR Centers for crisis services to Texans with disabilities and their families (i.e., emergency services, respite, and therapies).

LONG-TERM SERVICES AND SUPPORTS

Address Medicaid Waiver Program Waiting Lists

Urge the Texas Legislature to continue all efforts to provide services and supports to individuals on the waiting lists by appropriating funds to move a significant number of individuals off waiting lists, while maintaining the first-come, first served provision, so that by 2014 no individual waits more than 24 months to receive Medicaid Waiver Program services and supports.

Access to Gainful Employment Opportunities and Competitive Wages

Promote the availability of meaningful employment supports and services for Texans with significant disabilities, so that they are able to prepare for and obtain employment. Work to make improvements to the employment service delivery systems, to include flexibility and blending of funds to maximize the employment results for the individual, minimize agency conflicts, and create long-term and on-going supports.

Ensure Quality Supports and Services by Strengthening the Direct Care Workforce

Advocate for the provision of meaningful and quality supports and services to persons with disabilities by urging policy makers to (1) pay livable wages and benefits to direct care workers, (2) pay appropriate reimbursement rates for specialized therapies, services and supports that are provided to Texans with disabilities, and (3) provide appropriate and meaningful training opportunities for direct care workers.

JUVENILES AND ADULTS IN THE TEXAS CRIMINAL JUSTICE SYSTEM

Strengthen Forensic Services for Juveniles and Adults with Disabilities in the Texas Criminal Justice System

Advocate on behalf of juveniles and adults with disabilities in the Texas criminal justice system, so that (1) they are identified through an appropriate jail screening instrument and (2) receive timely supports and services to facilitate their habilitation and return to productive lives in their communities (i.e. juveniles in custody must have access to appropriate public education services while in custody).

What is an “intellectual disability”?

“Intellectual disability is the currently preferred term for the disability historically referred to as mental retardation. The term intellectual disability covers the same population of individuals that are diagnosed with mental retardation in number, kind, level, type, and duration of the disability and the need of people with this disability for individualized services and supports.”
(AAIDD 2008)

The Arc’s Board of Directors adopted the Legislative Platform for the 81st Texas Legislature in May 2008. For more information, call our office (800-252-9729) or contact the members of our Governmental Affairs Team directly:

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The Arc of Texas is the state’s largest non-profit volunteer organization creating opportunities for persons with intellectual and developmental disabilities to be included in their communities and to make the choices which affect their lives. Since its founding in 1950 by a group of parents of children with intellectual and developmental disabilities, The Arc of Texas has been instrumental in the creation of virtually every program, service, right, and benefit that is now available to more than half a million Texans with intellectual and developmental disabilities. Today, The Arc continues to advocate for including people with intellectual and developmental disabilities in all aspects of society. For more information about The Arc of Texas visit us at www.thearcoftexas.org.