



2008 Public Policy Platform

Top Priorities of The Arc

Waiting List Initiative

Maryland is *the wealthiest state in the nation and has the lowest poverty rate of any state, but ranks 44th in its commitment in state funding for developmental disabilities services.* Seek a multi-year Waiting List Initiative to meet the needs of individuals on the DDA Waiting List and Autism Waiver and build capacity in the community. Obtain full funding for the Transitioning Youth Program. Supports should lead to self-determination and inclusive lives for people with developmental disabilities.

Funding for Community Programs

Seek funding to ensure a stable, quality system of Community Programs funded by the Developmental Disabilities Administration, including funding for inflationary increases and costs of mandated regulations, and adequate wages for direct support staff. Community Programs include residential, employment, vocational and individual and family supports.

Close Institutions

Close institutions. Unjustified segregation is a violation of individual rights. People with developmental disabilities have the legal right to inclusive lives in the community, with appropriate quality supports. Oppose expansion of state residential centers and new admissions, including capital and operating funds.

Community Services

- Increase funding to the Developmental Disabilities Administration for a stable, quality system of community services (residential, employment, day, individual and family supports), including competitive wages and benefits for direct support staff, annual cost-of-living and inflationary increases, and funding to provide quality services and meet mandated regulations.
- Advocate for funding systems, technologies, and policies that enable supports to be provided in accordance with self-determination and best contemporary practices.
- People with cognitive and developmental disabilities have a right to be safe no matter where they live. There must be effective and diligent state oversight in both community programs and state residential centers. Seek effective oversight and strong quality safeguards of state-operated and community programs to ensure the safety and protection of vulnerable persons.

The Arc of Maryland works to create a world where children and adults with cognitive and developmental disabilities have and enjoy equal rights and responsibilities.

Higher Education

- Seek equal access to relevant course work at colleges, community colleges and universities; equal access to tuition tax credits and other higher education funding.
- Advocate for quality, higher education teacher preparation so educators are prepared to teach and support students with disabilities in inclusive educational classrooms.

Jobs

- Advocate for funding that assists individuals to work, be self-employed or be involved in their community in inclusive settings.
- Advocate for people with disabilities in competitive jobs to be paid market wages and benefits.
- Advocate for technical assistance to downsize and convert sheltered and segregated programs to supported employment and other inclusive community activities.

Children and Families

- Advocate for children to receive supports in their home or community in small family-type settings rather than in institutions, congregate care programs, or out-of-state placements.
- Advocate for Inclusive Child Care and After School Care, with appropriate accommodations for infants and children with disabilities.
- Seek increased funding for Respite Care through DDA and DHR budgets.

Education and Early Intervention

- Advocate for full funding of the Infants and Toddlers Program.
- Advocate for inclusive preschool programs that provide full opportunities for children with disabilities to be included, with needed supports and accommodations.
- Seek systemic changes that will ensure that students with developmental disabilities receive a Free and Appropriate Public Education that includes individualized supports and access to a general education curriculum in inclusive settings with peers of the same age in their neighborhood schools. Systemic changes include special and general education staff training, dual certification of teachers in regular and special education, and implementation of positive intervention strategies for students with disabilities.
- Advocate for high school assessments to be tailored so that all children have an adequate opportunity to demonstrate their knowledge. Ensure that options are linked to a positive benefit for the student and improved instruction overall.
- Advocate for increased funding for public education and special education. Ensure that increased funding for education goes proportionally to Special Education to educate students with all levels of disabilities in the least restrictive environment.
- Advocate for an increase in funding and the number of children served through the Community-Based Services Waiver for Children with Autism and Spectrum Disorder (Autism Waiver).

Health Care & Prevention

- Advocate for comprehensive and affordable community-based health care that includes basic health care, specialty health services, dental care and preventative care so persons with disabilities can thrive in their communities.
- Seek competency among community health care professionals to address the health needs of persons with developmental disabilities.

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- Advocate for enhancing the availability of Medicaid benefits for persons with developmental disabilities.
- Oppose cutting or limiting Medicaid benefits for the population served by the Medicaid program.
- Support legislation aimed at creating an environment that is free from contaminants and environmental hazards that can result in intellectual and developmental disabilities

Housing

- Increase affordable, accessible and universal design housing so persons with disabilities can control their own housing by renting or buying their own homes.
- Support “Visitability” that promotes the incorporation of accessible architectural features into housing design.
- Advocate making the Bridge Subsidy Demonstration Program permanent in all counties so persons with developmental disabilities can access short-term rental assistance while awaiting a permanent housing voucher.

Constitutional and Civil Rights

- Protect the Americans with Disabilities Act and its full implementation and enforcement.
- Seek implementation of the Olmstead Supreme Court Decision for civil rights of persons in institutions and nursing homes to live in the most inclusive setting in the community, with appropriate supports.
- Advocate for protections in biomedical research to guard against abuse of persons with cognitive and developmental disabilities
- Advocate for victim assistance. Seek fair treatment in the criminal justice system; adequate and effective legal representation for persons with cognitive and developmental disabilities.

Transportation

- Advocate for reliable and accessible public transportation so persons with cognitive and developmental disabilities can access community resources, employment, friends, and have greater control over their own lives and relationships.
- Advocate for enhanced funds to address the increased demand and cost for more flexible and coordinated transportation systems that are safe.
- Advocate for more enhanced public transportation systems that include appropriate accommodations for persons with cognitive disabilities, such as travel training.
- Work toward moving the present transportation service from a disability-specific system that relies on paid staff and serves to further segregate people with disabilities to a safe, inclusive transportation system.

REVENUE AND TAX POLICY

- Support revenue sources sufficient to meet the state’s obligations and make long-delayed investments in community services for persons with developmental disabilities, education, and health care.
- Assure federal funding, including available matching funds, necessary to meet the vital human needs of people with disabilities
- Assure the continued viability of nonprofit organizations.

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