

Have a Heart for The Arc

Join The Arc of Texas for a statewide advocacy event!

Valentine's Day, Feb. 14



#HaveAHeartForTheArcTX

tinyurl.com/HeartForTheArc

If you have questions or need assistance,
email publicpolicy@thearcoftexas.org or call 512-454-6694.

ABOUT THE EVENT



← Click on the image to watch this 60-second video overview!

Have a Heart for The Arc Day is an opportunity to highlight issues facing Texans with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD) and their families. Chapters of The Arc of Texas, people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD), and their families are encouraged to join the fun by delivering valentines to their state representatives and legislative candidates to remind them to “Have a Heart for The Arc” and protect the human rights of Texans with IDD.

The event aims to:

- Provide you with an understanding of key issues impacting Texans with IDD, and how your advocacy and vote are essential to our mission.
- Build relationships with decision-makers by delivering Valentine’s Day goodies and our policy priorities ([print in color](#) or [print in black-and-white](#)). Let them know people with disabilities are an important part of their constituency!

Post on social media
about why you’re participating, photos of your Valentine’s Day goodies and pics conversations with legislators/candidates. Share our posts, too!

Tag **@TheArcofTexas** and use the hashtags
#HaveAHeartForTheArcTX
#TxLege
#Disabilities

HOW TO PARTICIPATE

It’s easy and fun! This toolkit covers everything you need to complete the steps below.

See next page for tips, tools and templates related to each step, or click a link below to jump to details about a specific step. First, take 60 seconds to [watch this video](#)!

1. [Identify](#) your state legislators and/or candidates.
2. [Schedule](#) an appointment with them for Feb. 14, 2024.
3. [Practice](#) your message – use our talking points.

4. [Prepare](#) Valentine's Day cards/goodies to deliver with our policy priorities.
5. [Meet](#) with your state legislators and/or candidates on Feb. 14, 2024.
6. [Thank](#) them afterward via email or mail, and/or mention them on social media.

Step 1 – Identify Your State Legislators and/or Candidates (for the Texas House and Texas Senate)

Engaging with your state legislators makes them aware of issues impacting Texans with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD). It's also important to engage with candidates running for the Texas Legislature if yours are not seeking reelection.

Find out who represents you in the Texas Legislature:

- Click here to access the finder: <https://wrm.capitol.texas.gov/home>
- Next, enter your address or county and click the "Find" button.
- Then, you will see a list of all your policymakers. For the purposes of Have a Heart for The Arc Day, click on the person listed for the "Texas House" and the "Texas Senate" to learn about them and get their contact information.

Find out who is running in your district for the Texas Legislature, if anyone:

- Using the same link as above, you can find out which Texas House district and Texas Senate district you live in: <https://wrm.capitol.texas.gov/home> (You will see a district number by your Texas House member's name and your Texas Senate member's name.)
- Next, click here to access the Texas Secretary of State's candidate finder: <https://candidate.texas-election.com/Elections/getQualifiedCandidatesInfo.do>
- Then, make these selections on the form:
 - Election Year: Select "2024"
 - Election: Select "03/05/2024 MARCH 5TH _____ PRIMARY" (In order to see candidates from both primaries – the republican primary and the democrat primary – you will need to do this step twice. It's important to get our message to all candidates, regardless of their party affiliation.)
 - Party: *Leave blank. No need to select anything.*
 - Office Type: Select "STATE"
 - Office Name: Select "STATE REPRESENTATIVE DISTRICT _____" or "STATE SENATOR DISTRICT _____" (In order to find candidates running in the Texas House and the Texas Senate, you will need to do this step twice.)
 - Status: *Leave blank. No need to select anything.*

- Finally, click the “Qualified Candidates Information” button and you will see a list of candidates who are running, if there are any.

Step 2 – Schedule an Appointment with Your Legislators and/or Candidates for Feb. 14, 2024

Once you identify who represents you in the Texas Legislature, contact them to schedule a time to meet on Feb. 14, Have a Heart for The Arc Day! You can meet in-person at their district or Capitol Building office, or via Zoom video conference – it is up to you.

Use the templates below to schedule your appointment by phone or email:

Email Template

Dear <legislator/candidate name>,

I am your constituent. I would like to schedule an appointment for Feb. 14 in observance of “Have a Heart for The Arc Day” organized by The Arc of Texas. We are committed to improving the lives of Texans with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD). I would love to briefly discuss with you the importance of having a heart for people with IDD and policies most important to me as a voter. I can meet in-person at your district office or via Zoom video conference. What time works for you on Feb. 14? Thank you, in advance, for your response.

Sincerely,

<Your name>, <Your home address>, <Your phone number>

Phone Script

Hello. May I speak with the scheduler for <legislator’s/candidate’s name>? My name is <name> and I am your constituent. I would like to schedule an appointment for Feb. 14 in observance of “Have a Heart for The Arc Day” organized by The Arc of Texas. We are committed to improving the lives of Texans with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD). I would love to briefly discuss with you the importance of having a heart for individuals with IDD and the policies most important to me as a voter. I am open to meeting via Zoom video conference or in-person at your district office. What time works for you?

Step 3 – Practice Your Message (Use Our Talking Points)

*It's okay to say...
"I don't know the
answer to that
question, but I will
look into it and
get back to you."*

Before your meeting, practice your message. Feel free to use our talking points! We like the K.I.S.S. method – keep it short and simple:

- What is most important for the person to consider?
- Why does this matter to you? Do you have a story?
- How might you build rapport or find some common ground with this particular person?
- Rehearse these talking points:

Talking Points

1. **I am here as part of The Arc of Texas' Have a Heart for The Arc Day because I care about Texans with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD).** As your constituent, it's important that you understand the issues impacting these folks.

2. **The Arc of Texas has four public policy priorities and works with people with IDD to identify barriers and solutions to:**

Give them printed priorities ([print in color](#) or [black-and-white](#)). →

THE ARC OF TEXAS
PUBLIC POLICY PRIORITIES

A statewide membership organization working with Texans with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD) and their families to identify solutions to the following issues. We can connect you with constituents for stories and testimony.

- QUALITY OF LIFE**
When Texans with IDD receive individualized supports and services, they're able to make their own decisions about how and where they want to live and work.
- INCLUSIVE EDUCATION**
Inclusive education policies are necessary to assist Texans with IDD in reaching their full potential – from early childcare settings to postsecondary education.
- CIVIL RIGHTS & JUSTICE**
When Texans with IDD have equitable access to justice and services within community, they are less likely to be victims of abuse and crime, and more likely to participate civically.
- INTEGRATED EMPLOYMENT**
Work is fundamental to adult life, and Texans with IDD have skills the workforce needs. Policies are needed to improve competitive, integrated employment options.

The Arc of Texas envisions a world where Texans with intellectual and developmental disabilities are included in their communities with quality supports and services that meet their needs and choices.

WHAT IS IDD?
Intellectual and Developmental Disability

INTELLECTUAL DISABILITY
Occurs before age 18. Characterized by significant limitations in both intellectual functioning and adaptive behavior, such as social and practical everyday living skills.

DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITY
Severe chronic disability attributable to a mental or physical impairment, or combination. Manifests before age 22. Examples: autism spectrum disorder, cerebral palsy, and Down syndrome.

TheArcOfTexas.org
Follow us @TheArcOfTexas
Instagram Facebook YouTube Twitter

- **Make decisions about where to live** – for example, at home with family and community services needed, instead of in an institution.
- **Receive an equal and inclusive education** – from early childcare to postsecondary settings, so they can reach their full potential.
- **Have a job with a fair wage** – because work is a fundamental part of adult life, and people with IDD have skills the workforce needs.
- **Have equitable access to civil rights and justice** – so they are less likely to become victims of abuse and crime.

3. **I ask that you keep these priorities in mind when making policy decisions.** These issues are so important to your constituents with IDD and their families. People with disabilities are just like us – and they are voters!

4. **Thank you for your time.** Please reach out to me or The Arc of Texas for more information as you need it.

Step 4 – Prepare Valentine’s Day Cards/Goodies

Create something unique to build rapport with your legislators – a Valentine’s Day card, artwork, a photo of you or someone you know with IDD (with permission), or candies! (Making valentines is a great activity for community groups who like to craft!) You might also include a short note letting them know what is important to you and that you are a constituent who has a loved one with a disability, you have a disability, or you serve people with disabilities.

If you are able, print our public policy priorities ([print in color](#) or [print in black-and-white](#)) to deliver with your Valentine’s goodies.

Step 5 – Meet with Your State Legislators/Candidates on Feb. 14

You got this! Use our talking points ([see step 3](#)) and, if meeting in-person, deliver your Valentine’s Day goodies and our public policy priorities ([see step 4](#)). Plan your travel time and parking so you can be on time for the appointment. If meeting via Zoom video conference, find a quiet spot before the appointment begins.

Step 6 – Thank Them via Email/Mail (and a Social Media Mention)

It’s best to follow your conversation with a thank you note within 1-2 days.

Effective thank you notes remind the person about who you are and why the issue you discussed is important to their constituents. Use the template below to send a note via email or mail (and answer questions you promised to follow up on):

Email/Mail Template

How to address the envelope if writing a legislator:

The Honorable <First Name> <Last Name>
Texas Senate
P.O. Box 12068
Austin, TX 78711

The Honorable <First Name> <Last Name>
Texas House of Representatives
P.O. Box 2910
Austin, TX 78768

Note: “The Honorable” is only used for people who hold office. If you met with a staff member or candidate, simply use their first and last name.

Template for Your Thank You Note

<Today’s date>

Dear <Name>,

Thank you for meeting on Feb. 14 as part of The Arc of Texas’ “Have a Heart for The Arc Day.” I appreciate our discussion about issues impacting your constituents who have intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD). I hope you will consider The Arc of Texas’ public policy priorities, as we discussed. As a reminder, The Arc works with people with IDD to identify barriers and solutions to:

- Make decisions about where to live – for example, at home with family and community services needed, instead of in an institution.
- Receive an equal and inclusive education – from early childcare to postsecondary settings, so they can reach their full potential.
- Have a job with a fair wage – because work is a fundamental part of adult life, and people with IDD have skills the workforce needs.
- Have equitable access to civil rights and justice – so they are less likely to become victims of abuse and crime.

Learn more at <https://www.thearcoftexas.org/what-we-do/public-policy-and-advocacy/public-policy-priorities/>. Let me know if you have questions.

Sincerely,

<Your name>, <Your home address>, <Your phone number>

Template for Mentioning Them on Social Media

Thanks <@mention> for visiting on #HaveAHeartForTheArcTX day about issues impacting Texans w/ intellectual and developmental #disabilities!

@TheArcOfTexas policy priorities: community supports/services, education, employment, & civil rights/justice. #TxLege

*(Note: Look up a legislator’s handle by googling their name and the social media platform you plan to post on. For example, google “Texas Senator Carol Alvarado Facebook” and click on her Facebook page in the search results. The text that follows “facebook.com/_____” in the browser bar is the handle. Hers says www.facebook.com/**CarolforTexas**, so her Facebook handle is @CarolforTexas. Mention it in your post so they will see it.)*

YOU ARE ESSENTIAL TO OUR MISSION

From all of us at The Arc of Texas, thank you! The conversations with legislators and candidates through last year's Have a Heart for The Arc Day were fruitful, and we look forward to seeing how these efforts continue to grow each year.

So, what is public policy and what does it mean to advocate? Public policy addresses a public issue through laws, regulations, and programs developed by governments. Advocacy is when you inform policymakers about issues you care about and share stories to help them understand how their decisions impact people's lives. [Learn more.](#)



Learn how to advocate. Check out our [Legislative Advocacy Toolkit](#), a general overview (not specific to a particular event or issue) intended to help you strategically engage with legislators anytime!

Vote! Elected officials have the power to impact the lives of Texans with disabilities positively or negatively. YOU have the power to help determine who gets elected. The Primary election is March 5, 2024 (early voting is Feb. 20–March 1). [Check out other important dates.](#)

SUBSCRIBE AND FOLLOW

[Subscribe to our emails](#) and follow us on social media to receive advocacy opportunities as they arise.

We love it when you share our posts and mention @TheArcOfTexas in yours! Post about why you're participating in this event, photos of your Valentine's Day goodies, and pics of your meetings with legislators and/or candidates!

Find us on these platforms:

- [instagram.com/TheArcOfTexas](https://www.instagram.com/TheArcOfTexas)
- [facebook.com/TheArcOfTexas](https://www.facebook.com/TheArcOfTexas)
- twitter.com/TheArcOfTexas
- [linkedin.com/company/TheArcOfTexas](https://www.linkedin.com/company/TheArcOfTexas)

Use these hashtags and mention us:

- #HaveAHeartForTheArcTX
- #TxLege
- #Disabilities
- Mention us: @TheArcOfTexas