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- Become an Ally of The Arc of Texas
As experts on disability rights, staff members of The Arc of Texas lent their expertise to 23 different councils, committees, and workgroups.

In addition to meeting with legislators, The Arc of Texas submit 29 pieces of formal testimony on several bills this session that would impact Texans with IDD.

The Master Pooled Trust, a pooled special needs trust managed by The Arc of Texas, added 185 accounts. Since their inception, they have served a total of 3,888 beneficiaries.

In the second year of Partners in Disability Leadership, 18 graduates developed the skills and knowledge necessary to be better stewards of disability rights in their organizations.

With an average of 10 phone calls per week, The Arc of Texas completed 120 Information & Referral Requests in 2021.

In collaboration with the University of New Hampshire and Center for START Services, more than 400 people participated in our survey for the Whole Person Project.

During the 87th Texas Legislative Session, The Arc of Texas tracked over 120 bills that impacted the human rights and self-determination of Texans with IDD.

The Arc of Texas led 71 future planning presentations, completing their first year of the Future Planning 101 project in partnership with the Blind Children’s Program.

The Arc of Texas spent 227 days tracking legislation, submitting testimony, and promoting Disability Rights policies at the Capitol during the 87th Legislative Session and 3 special sessions.

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Who We Are

Founded in 1953, 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 (IDD). Today, The Arc of Texas continues to advocate for including people with IDD in all aspects of society.

MISSION

The Arc of Texas promotes, protects, and advocates for the human rights and self-determination of Texans with intellectual and developmental disabilities.

VISION

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

ACHIEVABLE SOLUTIONS

We work with Texans with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD) and their families to identify barriers to and solutions for inclusive education, competitive integrated employment, quality community-based services and supports, and access to civil rights and justice.

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WHAT IS IDD?

INTELLECTUAL & DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES

An intellectual disability occurs before age 18 and is characterized by significant limitations in both intellectual functioning and adaptive behavior, such as social and practical everyday living skills.

A developmental disability is a severe chronic disability attributable to mental or physical impairment or combination of mental and physical impairments that manifests before age 22. Examples of developmental disabilities include autism spectrum disorder, cerebral palsy, and Down syndrome.
WE ARE THE ARC OF TEXAS. We are leaders, problem-solvers, advocates, & experts creating solutions that improve the lives of all Texans with IDD.
The 87th Texas Legislative Session was unlike any other for many reasons, including the COVID-19 pandemic. There were fewer opportunities to go to the Capitol and meet with legislators in person; however, this session proved how effective our long-held advocacy strategies are, such as developing and maintaining relationships with your representatives and sharing your real-life stories. Although it was not always easy, we learned together, and we are proud of our accomplishments.
THE 87th TEXAS LEGISLATIVE SESSION AT A GLANCE

The 87th Texas Legislative Session kicked off on Tuesday, January 12, 2021.

Waitlist funding, voting rights, and guardianship were just a few of the efforts that The Arc of Texas worked on in the 140 days of regular session, and three following special sessions.

REGULAR SESSION
Every other year Texas legislators gather in Austin to enact new laws. The 87th Texas Legislative Session began on January 12 and lasted 140 days, ending on May 31.

FIRST SPECIAL SESSION
The governor alone can call a special session and set its agenda. A special session may meet at most for 30 days. Governor Abbott called a special session of the Texas Legislature on July 8 to address issues including elections. It lasted 30 days, ending on August 6.

SECOND SPECIAL SESSION
After House Democrats carried out a quorum break to block the passage of a GOP elections bill, during the first special session. A second special session was called on August 7. It lasted 27 days ending on September 2.

THIRD SPECIAL SESSION
Governor Abbott called the final special session of the Texas Legislature on September 20 to tackle issues including redistricting and the COVID-19 pandemic. It lasted 30 days, ending on October 19.
Legislative Wins Worth Sharing

Although this session proved challenging, with fewer opportunities to meet with legislators in person, The Arc of Texas continued to prioritize policies and legislation that advance the equality and civil rights of Texans with IDD.

Thank you to our amazing grassroots members: advocates with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD), their families, and allies. We would not have had the success and opportunities we had this session without you!

BILL BLOCKED WITH EXTENSIVE ADVOCACY EFFORTS

House Bill 1675

House Bill 1675, a bill that would remove due process for an individual whose parent wishes to be awarded guardianship, was heard on May 13 in the Senate Committee on Jurisprudence. Texas Advocates and The Arc of Texas members, probate court judges, ad litem attorneys, and many other allies came to the Capitol to provide testimony in opposition of the bill. A bill that would have lessened the protections for adult children with IDD when their parents were pursuing guardianship of the individual did not pass.

While House Bill 1675 was based on a family’s personal experience, the legislation would have stripped due process rights from all Texans with IDD in their transition to adulthood. The wholesale response and education in opposition to this bill and its ultimate non-passage reveals the power of advocacy efforts from individuals with IDD and those connected to the IDD community.
ENSURING EQUALITY IN THE CRIMINAL JUSTICE SYSTEM

House Bill 2831

A bill that resulted from The Arc of Texas’s efforts on the IDD Task Force and would create an Advisory Committee to provide recommendations for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD) confined in county jails was sent to Gov. Abbott on May 31, 2021.

House Bill 2831 will modify the jail intake screening form, provide jailers with training on interacting with people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD), and monitor and improve the jail intake process. We are excited to see our efforts on the IDD Task Force pay off and look forward to continuing to advocate for Texans with IDD who are involved in the criminal justice system.

THE ARC OF TEXAS STANDS WITH STUDENTS

House Bill 159 & House Bill 785

The Arc of Texas stands with students with disabilities and supports legislation that helps them meet their education goals in a productive and safe learning environment.

Our Voting Rights Won't Be Denied

Lawsuit Filed Challenging New Texas Law Targeting Voting Rights

On September 7, 2021, The Arc of Texas joined Texas advocacy groups in a federal lawsuit asking for declaration that Senate Bill 1 is illegal and for an order preventing its enforcement.

Texas voters with disabilities are proud to participate in the democratic process and deserve equitable access to the polls, not more barriers.

Unfortunately, these same Texans are accustomed to fighting for their civil rights and must continue to do so against the latest voter-suppression measures passed by the Texas Legislature.

Jennifer Martinez, The Arc of Texas, CEO
Limitations on early voting hours and a ban on 24-hour voting.

The prohibition of mail-in ballot drop-boxes and limitations on the distribution of mail-in ballot applications.

Limitations and possible penalties for voter assistants, including criminal felonies.

The elimination of drive-thru voting centers.

The lawsuit challenges multiple provisions in SB 1, including:

Learn more about efforts of The Arc of Texas and track the progress of our lawsuit by visiting our website.

www.thearcoftexas.org/SB1Lawsuit
February’s Freeze Fails Texans with Disabilities

In the wake of Winter Storm Uri in February 2021, days of abrupt power outages and a shortage of drinking water experienced across the state of Texas proved to be more than just an inconvenience for many Texans who suffer serious medical conditions and rely on electricity to power the machines that keep them alive.

On February 12, 2021, Governor Greg Abbott issued an emergency disaster declaration for all 254 counties in the state. Snowfall began on February 14 and by February 15, 2021 ERCOT had issued a declaration of emergency.

Two out of three Texans lost power at some point between February 14 and February 20. Almost half, 49%, lost water and about 250 people died. Texans with disabilities are even more vulnerable when infrastructure fails because they often heavily rely on technology, transportation or in-home care.

Disaster planning for cold weather events, should be treated as a priority. The Arc of Texas urged Texans with disabilities affected by the winter storm to share their story to The Texas House State Affairs & Energy Resources Committees to promote inclusive future planning.

www.thearcoftexas.org
In response to high rates of COVID-19 illness and death among individuals with disabilities and existing barriers in vaccine accessibility, The Arc of Texas, alongside other partnership organizations, launched Texas Partners for Inclusive Access. This collaboration among state agencies, university research centers, and community-serving organizations across the state is aimed at providing trustworthy information and resources so that Texans with disabilities have fewer barriers to obtain community-based services and supports.

Efforts, including providing direct support and case management, sharing educational resources, and conducting grassroots outreach, are funded by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) in partnership with the Administration for Community Living (ACL).

Texas Partners for Inclusive Access is committed to making sure all Texans with disabilities feel safe and supported in learning about and getting the COVID-19 vaccine.

In response to high rates of COVID-19 illness and death among individuals with disabilities and existing barriers in vaccine accessibility, The Arc of Texas, alongside other partnership organizations, launched a collaborative statewide initiative to provide educational information on the COVID-19 virus and safe practices to create more equitable access to testing and vaccines.
Waiting on a Waiver

On November 19, 2021 the U.S. House of Representatives passed President Biden’s Build Back Better plan, bringing us one step closer to making significant investments in the lives of individuals with disabilities, their families, and the direct support workforce.

The reality is care can’t wait for the over 170,000 Texans on the Texas Health and Human Services Commission interest lists. The Build Back Better Act would prioritize people with disabilities by enacting robust funding for home and community-based services, which would improve the quality of life for millions of people with disabilities, their families, and the direct support professional workforce. The plan includes $150 billion for Medicaid home and community-based services (HCBS) which provide the support people with disabilities need to be a part of their community, and better pay for the workers who support them.

170,000 TEXANS are waiting on a waiver

WHAT ARE HCBS WAIVERS?

Medicaid HCBS waivers are a lifeline for Texans with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD). Medicaid HCBS waivers provide cost-effective long-term services and supports such as personal attendant services, nursing, and employment support – none of which are typically covered by private insurance. This effective and cost-efficient program allows people disabilities to live and work in their community.

www.thearcoftexas.org/waiting
Broussard, an Imagine Enterprises Peer Support Specialist and experienced disability rights advocate, is dedicated to encouraging participation in policymaking, so the needs and rights of the disability community are accurately represented, and empowering others with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD) to live more independent, self-directed lives. Broussard is also a champion of disability rights at the Texas Capitol.

In 2013, the Ricky Broussard Act was signed into law. The law provides that improved and consistent transition services be available to high schoolers regardless of their school district, thus increasing the likelihood of graduates obtaining post-secondary education and employment opportunities.
Identifying Solutions

PARTNERS IN DISABILITY LEADERSHIP

GRADUATING STEWARDS OF DISABILITY RIGHTS

The Arc of Texas launched its second year of Partners in Disability Leadership, a program to equip professionals with information, leadership skills, and connections to influence positive change in the services and support systems used by Texans with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD) and their families. The 2021 class of 18 participants met once a month for six months virtually to learn from distinguished disability-rights advocates and experts across the nation. Program participants also worked on a leadership project specific to their professional goals or to implement within their organizations or agencies.

Flip through the 2021 Partners in Disability Leadership Yearbook, which features 2021 graduates and their leadership projects, and learn more about the program at www.thearcoftexas.org/disabilityleadership.

FUTURE PLANNING 101 SEMINAR

PLANNING FOR THE FUTURE IN PARTNERSHIP WITH THE BLIND CHILDREN’S PROGRAM

The Master Pooled Trust, a pooled special needs trust managed by The Arc of Texas, was asked in 2020 by the Blind Children’s Program to provide Future Planning 101, which outlines the basics of person-centered planning, transition, community, benefits, trusts, and guardianship. Under the 2020–2021 contract, the MPT staff presented a total of 71 times to 203 families in English and Spanish. Their contract has been extended through 2026.
LESSONS, OPPORTUNITIES & CONNECTIONS

TRAINING NEW AND EMERGING DISABILITY ADVOCATES AND REFLECTING ON SESSION

The Arc of Texas and Easterseals Central Texas hosted Texas 87th Legislative Session Lessons, Opportunities + Connections a free, four-session virtual advocacy training series in July 2021. Participants learned about what happened during the 87th Texas Legislative Session, made connections with other new and emerging disability advocates, and discussed advocacy activities to do during and after a legislative session.

THE WHOLE PERSON PROJECT

SEEKING TO EXPAND ACCESS TO MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES FOR TEXANS WITH IDD

The Arc of Texas completed its first year of the Whole Person Project, a Texas Council for Developmental Disabilities grant funded program aimed at creating and supporting promising practices that enable people dually diagnosed with intellectual and developmental disabilities and mental illness to be included in their communities and have control over their own lives.

The goal of the project is to improve supports provided to individuals with IDD-MH and their families by enhancing community-based mental health (MH) services and encouraging cross-collaborative training between IDD and MH professionals and those who may come in contact with people with IDD during a mental health crisis, such as law enforcement.

The first year of this five-year grant funded program was aimed at collecting research to determine appropriate and needed next steps to improving the delivery and availability of mental health services for adults with IDD.

Learn more about this project and share your story with The Arc of Texas at www.thearcoftexas.org/wholepersonproject.
Throughout another unprecedented year, our commitment to promoting, protecting, and advocating for the human rights and self-determination of Texans with IDD never wavered.

Support The Arc of Texas as we respond to and take action on emerging issues. Join us in working toward a future that is more inclusive; where everyone with intellectual and developmental disabilities can be part of their communities and make decisions about their own lives.

500,000+ Texans with IDD

28 Local chapters across Texas

www.thearcoftexas.org
Become an Ally of The Arc of Texas

Allies support our work alongside individuals with IDD and their families to reduce barriers to and find solutions for inclusive education, competitive integrated employment, community-based services and supports, and equitable access to civil rights and justice.

INVESTED
DONATE TODAY TO HELP ENHANCE THE LIVES OF TEXANS WITH IDD

• Go online to make a one time or recurring donation at www.thearcoftexas.org/donate
• Choose The Arc of Texas when you shop with Amazon Smile
• Mail a check to The Arc of Texas offices: 8001 Centre Park Drive Suite 100; Austin, Texas 78754

INFORMED
STAY UP TO DATE ON THE LATEST ISSUES AFFECTING TEXANS WITH IDD

• Subscribe to our e-newsletter, Disability Dispatch, at www.thearcoftexas.org/disabilitydispatch

INVOLVED
LEARN MORE ABOUT PROGRAMS AND EVENTS OFFERED BY THE ARC OF TEXAS

• Lend your expertise to our organization by applying to serve on a committee
• Learn about the current events and programs at The Arc of Texas by visiting www.thearcoftexas.org/get-involved/events
Trusted experts with achievable solutions to enhance the lives of Texans with intellectual and developmental disabilities.

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