

**Introducing the Partners in Disability Leadership 2022 Class**

The Arc of Texas is pleased to announce its 2022 Partners in Disability Leadership (PDL) class and program. 23 individuals from across the state of Texas will come together over the course of the next 9 months to learn from a host of dynamic expert presenters, hone their leadership skills, and network with colleagues across the state, working to achieve positive influence for intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD) services and support systems in their organization or agency.

Partners in Disability Leadership was launched in 2020 and has since supported 42 graduates through the program. The goal of The Arc of Texas PDL program is to provide participants the knowledge and skills to positively impact the services and supports systems used by Texans with IDD and their families. Participants learn from diverse perspectives about topics ranging from the history of IDD perceptions, theories, and societal views, to the intersectionality of disability, race, gender, and other identifiers to creating cultures of inclusion among other topics. Participants also develop a leadership project throughout the course of the program that aims to positively impact their organization or agency by addressing issues or focus areas pertinent to their work. Projects developed in past programs include increasing commitment to self-direction, supporting policies that promote quality of life for Texans with IDD, sharing knowledge of IDD services with other staff and future leaders, and amplifying sensible and positive policy through the participation of Texans with IDD. The Arc of Texas provides ongoing support of project development and networking opportunities for current participants and alumni.

“Our goal is to support graduates so they can develop the advanced knowledge and skills needed to make a positive impact on the way Texas supports and provides services to individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities and their families,” says The Arc of Texas executive director Jennifer Martinez. “The participants in this year’s Partners in Disability Leadership program are a diverse class of professionals coming to us from backgrounds ranging from Independent School Districts, the Texas Legislature, the Texas Health and Human Services Commission, Managed Care Organizations, and beyond. We are thrilled to welcome these 23 professionals to our PDL program, and I am excited to see the ways this unique leadership, learning, and networking experience shapes their impact on the disability rights movement.”

Ultimately, graduates of the program work to become stewards of the disability rights movement and leaders within their agencies and organizations and graduate equipped with the information, leadership skills, and connections necessary to influence positive change in IDD services and support systems.

**About the 2022 Class**

Selected for their passion and commitment to leadership and the disability rights movement, this year’s Partners in Disability Leadership class members are comprised of professionals working in the education, non-profit, and public service sectors who have shown a deep interest in creating a more inclusive Texas. The 23 come from cities and towns in nearly every region of Texas.

Below are the names and hometowns of this year’s participants:

**Individual Name – City**

Shelley Brookins, Combine, TX

Maria Casimiro, Converse, TX

Lindsey Conner, Fort Worth, TX

Pablo Del Cid, Bastrop, TX

Caitlin Dempsey Flanders, Austin, TX

Taylor Fidler, Lubbock, TX

Ashley Fleming, Elgin, TX

Erinn Graber, Cibolo, TX

Sapheallah Harris, Grand Prairie, TX

Dr. Courtney Harvey, Austin, TX

Jaimie Havens, Lubbock, TX

Natalie Hendrix, Lubbock, TX

Kelly Land, Fort Worth, TX

Lydia Nunez Landry, Seabrook, TX

Ryan Markmann, San Antonio, TX

Carolyn McIntosh, Austin, TX

Waylon Metoyer, Austin, TX

Kristi Norrell, Pattonville, TX

Stephanie O’Silas, Plano, TX

Greg Papazian, Philadelphia, PA

Elizabeth Sidener, Round Rock TX

Susanne Sims, Sugar Land, TX

Carol Villarreal, San Antonio, TX

Those interested in joining a future class can look for applications to open in Winter 2022. Stay informed by subscribing to our [2023 Partners in Disability Leadership interest list](https://www.thearcoftexas.org/get-involved/partners-in-disability-leadership/sign-up-for-email-updates-about-partners-in-disability-leadership/).

Learn about [Partners in Disability Leadership alumni](https://issuu.com/thearcoftexas) and the projects they developed.

**About Partners in Disability Leadership**

Partners in Disability Leadership program is an advanced virtual leadership development training program created for professionals who are interested in being stewards of the disability rights movement and leaders within their agencies and organizations and funded by Texas Council for Developmental Disabilities (TCDD). PDL takes a skills-based learning approach and equips professionals with information, leadership skills, and connections to influence positive change in IDD services and support systems. Participants learn how to promote self-determination, implement person-centered practices, recognize the intersectionality of disability and race, and create cultures of inclusion. Participants also gain skills to become effective leaders and communicators

Learn more about [Partners in Disability Leadership](https://www.thearcoftexas.org/get-involved/partners-in-disability-leadership/).

*Please join The Arc of Texas in welcoming our 2022 PDL class!*