



*Achieve with us.*

## **The Arc of Texas 2018/2019 Policy and Advocacy Priorities**

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

### **Improve access, delivery and quality of community-based services for Texans with IDD.**

Texans with IDD overwhelmingly choose to live in the communities where they call home. Many Texans lead independent and self-determined lives with the cost effective services and supports provided by Medicaid home and community-based waiver programs, yet the service delivery model has not kept pace with the demand. The Arc of Texas supports innovative, best practice approaches that prioritize community-based supports and shift Texas' institutional spending bias to meet the needs of the hundreds of thousands of Texans with IDD waiting for Medicaid community-based waiver services. Without the system of community-based support that Texas has built over many years, individuals would be forced to live in costly, restrictive facilities. Texas must invest in a system that delivers positive outcomes for people with IDD, reduces gaps in services and prevents unnecessary institutionalization.

### **Support competitive, integrated employment opportunities for transition age youth and adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities.**

The desire to work and earn a living is universal among all people, including individuals with IDD. A majority of Texans with IDD express a desire to work in the community for competitive wages and share their talents and passions with employers across Texas. Texas needs to build the employment infrastructure and align public and corporate workforce needs with the skills, capabilities and desires of Texans with IDD. Texas must fully embrace the Texas Employment First Policy, promote existing employment services through outcome-based monitoring, provide education to state agencies, individuals with IDD and family members about work incentive programs, and dispel misinformation at every level that prolongs the myth that Texans with IDD cannot work for competitive wages in the community.

**Enhance Texas' public education system to provide evidenced-based, effective educational supports and services for students with disabilities in the least restrictive setting.**

Students with IDD must be fully included and provided all necessary services and supports to ensure they are successful in school and are prepared for a meaningful life after high school. The structure, funding and operations of the Texas Education Agency, school districts and Education Service Centers must align and fully comply with the charges laid out in the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act to provide students with disabilities a free appropriate public education (FAPE).

**Advance criminal justice best practices to remove the barriers to justice that Texans with IDD face when they come into contact with the criminal justice system.**

People with IDD are overrepresented in both the juvenile and adult criminal justice systems, which is in part, a result of the failure of the justice system to identify their disabilities, provide legally required accommodations, and provide appropriate sentencing and sentencing alternatives. Additionally, people with IDD are more likely to be victims of violence and sexual assault—up to six times more likely than people without disabilities. Texas' criminal justice system, including law enforcement, attorneys and judges, victim service providers and first responders, must understand the unique needs and characteristics of people with IDD to ensure everyone receives a pathway to justice without falling through the cracks.

**By advocating across the system (HHSC, TWC, TEA, DFPS TDCJ, etc) The Arc of Texas is able to identify barriers, promote policies and change attitudes that lead to self-determination and positive outcomes throughout the lifespan of Texans with IDD.**

**What is Intellectual disability and developmental disability (IDD) –** An intellectual disability is usually a permanent condition originating sometime between birth and age 18 characterized by significant limitations in adaptive behaviors (reasoning, learning, problem solving).

Developmental disability is a broader term that includes ASD (autism spectrum disorders), epilepsy, cerebral palsy, developmental delay, down syndrome and other disorders that occur during the developmental period. Individuals with a developmental disability may or may not have an intellectual disability and vice versa.