

The 2024 Public Policy Agenda of The Arc of Colorado (The ArcCO) is shaped by our mission, beliefs, and values. *

The ArcCO mission is to promote and protect the human rights of people with intellectual and developmental disabilities and actively supports their full inclusion and participation in the community throughout their lifetimes.

The ArcCO believes that all people have moral and civil rights providing them with opportunities to love, work, play, learn and worship in communities where they choose to live. All people with IDD have inherent value with individual strengths and abilities, are equal before the law and must be treated with dignity and respect.

Education. The ArcCO is working to ensure that measures intended to protect the safety of students and school personnel do not violate due process, civil liberties, and the right to reasonable accommodations, or result in profiling of students based on disability or other related status.

The ArcCO supports the following:

- Training of education professionals, individuals with IDD and their families and/or supports on education-related programs, services, and accommodations for individuals with IDD, including but not limited to, training on Individual Education Plans (IEP) and Section 504.
- Education and implementation of Supported Decision-Making training for professionals working in the Colorado Department of Education system.
- Access, equity, and inclusion in education settings for individuals with IDD, including but not limited to eliminating systems and practices that result in a shortened school day that unreasonably deprives free, appropriate access to public education for individuals with IDD.
- Implementation of policies that eliminate the use of restraints and seclusion in educational settings for unnecessary use.
- Training of mental health professionals and school personnel to support mental health crisis intervention systems to meet the needs of all students, including for students with IDD.
- Policy development to address the racial, cultural, and linguistic inequities in education.

Guardianship. The ArcCO is engaged in advocacy that supports a comprehensive update to Colorado's guardianship and conservatorship laws, including but not limited to, adoption of the Uniform Guardianship, Conservatorship, and other Protective Arrangements Act (UGCOPPA). UGCOPPA promotes person-centered planning to incorporate an individual's preference and values into a guardianship order and requires courts to order the least-restrictive means necessary for protection of persons who are unable to fully care for themselves.

The ArcCO supports the following:

- Legislation that supports and honors the rights of individuals subject to guardianship and/or conservatorship.
- Less restrictive alternatives to guardianship (e.g., health-care proxies, advance directives, supported decision-making, powers of attorney, notarized statements, representation agreements, releases, etc.) in lieu of permanent, restrictive, protective arrangements.
- Guardianship policies and best practices, in concert with Colorado Statute, that respect and promote the rights of people with disabilities to manage their own affairs with or without informal assistance and guidance from family, friends, and others.
- If guardianship is essential, limiting the guardian's authority to the fewest restrictions necessary, for the shortest amount of time reasonably necessary, and tailored to the individual's specific capacities and needs, with a presumption in favor of limited rather than full guardianship.
- Legislative efforts that increase oversight of guardians.
- Policies, procedures, and funding to ensure dignity of choice such that the will and preferences expressed by people with IDD are respected, honored, and enforced.

Housing. Across Colorado, availability and access to affordable, accessible, and integrated housing has become increasingly challenging for individuals with IDD. For people who use wheelchairs or other mobility devices, finding housing with even basic accessibility features (e.g., an entrance with no steps) ranges from daunting to impossible.

The ArcCO supports the following:

- Legislative and policy efforts that increase the availability and access to safe, accessible, integrated, and affordable supportive housing in the community for people with IDD.
- Efforts to increase affordable, safe, accessible, integrated, and community-based housing options that promote independence, freedom, authority, and support individuals with IDD to exercise choice and control over their housing.
- Housing options that honor personal will, preference, and style, and are free from discriminatory housing practices.

Mental Health. Increasingly, The ArcCO recognizes the interdisciplinary nature and need for services, supports, and accommodation for a cross-section of disabilities involving IDD and other mental and/or behavioral health challenges. Both the disability and mental health systems are extremely complicated to work with and navigate. People with IDD and mental health needs and their families often struggle to identify resources or services in each system.

The ArcCO supports the following:

- Efforts to improve navigation and communication between the IDD and mental health systems.
- Collaborative work with disability rights network partners to support and increase access to and improvement in the quality of mental health services for individuals with IDD across the lifespan.
- Work to ensure that the most appropriate mental and behavioral health services available and accessible to people with IDD, including those in the child welfare system, in a residential facility or within the criminal justice system.
- Education opportunities for community-based first responders (e.g., police, emergency medical services, emergency room personnel), helping to ensure they are equipped with

knowledge about working with people who have IDD and may experience a behavioral and/or mental health crisis.

Transportation. The Arc of Colorado believes that accessible, affordable, and reliable transportation allows people with IDD access to important opportunities in education, employment, health care, housing, and community living. Many transportation barriers exist for individuals with IDD throughout Colorado, prohibiting meaningful participation in everyday activities that promote high quality community living experiences.

The ArcCO supports the following:

- Expansion of accessible, affordable, and reliable public transportation programs and services.
- Enforcement of anti-discrimination policies to help individuals with IDD access transportation resources that provide the necessary support and services to meaningfully engage in employment, health care, recreational activities, and other aspects of community living.
- Increased access, equity, and inclusive services for traveling, specifically, but not limited to airport travel, hotels, and public transportation.
- Work to improve accessibility at DEN, including but not limited to training programs for DEN staff and TSA personnel.
- Improvement of all Colorado airport facilities, and restrooms to accommodate the needs of the disabled in the airport. Ensure access to ADA accessible hotel rooms when making hotel reservations.

* *See also, The Arc of the United States Public Policy Agenda for the 118th Congress 2023-2024* at <https://thearc.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/Public-Policy-Agenda.pdf>