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THE ARC OF THE UNITED STATES

STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK  
FOR THE FUTURE OF THE ARC

2010-2019

A CLEAR PATH FORWARD

THE ARC OF THE UNITED STATES - STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK, 2010 – 2019  
APPROVED BY THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS, 2/27/10

Dear friends,

On behalf of the Board of Directors and Staff of The Arc of the United States we are pleased to present the Strategic Framework for the Future of The Arc, 2010 – 2019. The Strategic Framework is intended to clearly set forth The Arc's vision for the full inclusion of people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD) in all aspects of society, as well as for The Arc as their advocate and servant at the national, state and local level. It provides detailed Goals and Strategies, which if successfully pursued will bring this vision to life, achieving justice and equality for people with IDD. On the occasion of The Arc's 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary, the Strategic Framework will provide direction to guide the organization in the next decade.

With the foundation provided by the Strategic Framework in place, The Arc will build shorter term operating plans, taking into account priorities, opportunities, resources and the many practical considerations involved in seeking and achieving change. As the decade unfolds, the Strategic Framework will be reviewed and, as necessary, updated, refined and revised to reflect the changing conditions and circumstances that affect people with IDD and their families and the organizations that advocate for and serve them.

The Strategic Framework is also intended to be a resource for The Arc's many state and local chapters, informing their planning and action. Chapters are welcome and encouraged to adopt The Arc's new mission statement, and some or all of the goals and strategies, as their own. Selection and prioritization among the goals and strategies likely will vary from place to place throughout The Arc network, depending upon state and local conditions and needs and the capacity and orientation of the respective chapters.

This Strategic Framework is the culmination of a lengthy, collaborative effort that began in Spring 2008 and has involved literally thousands of The Arc's volunteer and staff leaders, constituents and other stakeholders. This process included an exhaustive review by Grant Thornton of The Arc's past and current operations and external environment, a comprehensive national stakeholder survey, interviews, online discussion, conference calls, small group discussion, email correspondence, and plenary sessions at both The Arc and NCE meetings. We thank all involved both for the candid assessment of the current status of The Arc, as well as the spirited examination of prospects for the future. Particular thanks are extended to members of The Committee on the Future and its predecessor, the Affiliation and Planning Task Force, and to members of the Board of Directors and Staff of The Arc for their hard work.

We look forward to hearing your comments, reactions and suggestions in response to the Strategic Framework and to working with you to achieve the vision of inclusion and participation for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities.

Lynne Cleveland  
President of the Board of Directors

Nancy Webster

Chair, Committee on the Future of The Arc

Peter V. Berns  
Chief Executive Officer

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THE ARC OF THE UNITED STATES - STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK, 2010 – 2019  
APPROVED BY THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS, 2/27/10

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## **MISSION**

The Arc promotes and protects the human rights of people with intellectual and developmental disabilities and actively supports their full inclusion and participation in the community throughout their lifetimes.

## **CORE VALUES**

The Arc of the United States, and chapters at the state and local level, share a commitment to six core values which influence and inform our work. They are:

### *People First*

The Arc believes that all people with intellectual and developmental disabilities have strengths, abilities and inherent value; are equal before the law; and must be treated with dignity and respect. The Arc represents, supports and acts on behalf of individuals and their families regardless of the level of disability or membership in The Arc. The Arc believes in self-determination by empowering people with the supports needed to make informed decisions and choices.

### *Democracy*

A democratic process involving members, through affiliated chapters, is utilized to take positions on important issues, policies and programs.

### *Visionary Leadership*

The Arc leads by promoting its mission and core values and by developing position statements. We lead with integrity, accountability, and by open, honest and timely communication. We work with individuals, organizations and coalitions in a collaborative fashion. There is a valued partnership with volunteer and staff leadership at all levels of the organization that provides mutual support for their respective roles.

### *Community Participation*

The Arc works towards and believes in the community imperative that all people have the fundamental moral, civil and constitutional rights to live, learn, work, play and worship in safe and healthy communities of their choosing. The Arc has responsibility to ensure the safety and well being of individuals.

### *Diversity*

The Arc values and insists upon diversity in its leadership and membership. The Arc actively pursues and welcomes diverse groups (including but not limited to race, ethnicity, religion, age, geographic location, sexual orientation, gender and level of disability).

### *Integrity and Excellence*

The Arc conducts its business with integrity. The Arc reflects quality and excellence in all its work.



## **OUR VISION FOR PEOPLE WITH INTELLECTUAL AND DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES AND THEIR FAMILIES**

All people with intellectual and developmental disabilities are included and participate as full members of the community. Infants, children and youth with I/DD experience the security of family, while living and learning with their peers. Adults with I/DD lead lives of their own choosing, fully integrated in the community, have the opportunity to engage in productive work for fair wages, participate in civic and community affairs, have good health and enjoy meaningful relationships.

People with I/DD have access to the full range of home and community based supports and services necessary to control their own lives; their families have access to needed family supports. Families enjoy the freedom and peace of mind that comes from knowing that their loved ones have the supports they need to live a full and satisfying life.

Valued and accepted, people with I/DD enjoy the respect, dignity, equality, safety and security accorded to other members of society. As self-advocates, they have a powerful and united voice on the issues that affect their lives and well-being, and enjoy the broad support of family members, friends, colleagues and community members. People with I/DD and their families fully embrace The Arc as their preferred partner for advocacy, services and supports

## **OUR VISION FOR THE ARC OF THE UNITED STATES AND OUR STATE AND LOCAL CHAPTERS**

The Arc is the nation's leading advocate for all people with intellectual and developmental disabilities and their families and the preeminent provider of the supports and services people want and need. The Arc actively involves people with I/DD, their parents, siblings and other family members, caregivers, colleagues, neighbors and friends as leaders and activists in a movement dedicated to the inclusion of people with I/DD in all aspects of society. The Arc assures that the human rights of people with I/DD are attained, and that sufficient resources are available to meet their needs, in every community in our nation.

The Arc is the standard bearer for best practices in supports and services for people with I/DD and has a demonstrable record of success in achieving the outcomes people want for their lives. Welcoming people of all races, ethnicity and socio-economic status, and providing both a sense of purpose and of belonging, The Arc is the resource of first choice for people with I/DD and their families regardless of the diagnosis and at all stages of life.

The Arc is active, vibrant, well known and respected in communities throughout the United States. With state and local chapters throughout all 50 states and the District of Columbia, The Arc is regularly sought out by elected and appointed government officials, as well as by the media, business, academia and other nonprofits as the authoritative source of information and advice about the needs, issues and concerns of people with I/DD. The Arc is an effective, responsive and sustainable organization that is constantly evolving to meet the changing needs, desires and circumstances of people with I/DD and their families. It enjoys substantial philanthropic support from individuals, corporations and foundations on par with other successful national nonprofits.

## **SUMMARY OF GOALS**

The Arc's goals over the next ten years are to assure that:

- I. Infants, children and youth with I/DD have access to the supports and services they need to live in their family homes, to succeed in school and to partake in all of the experiences of childhood.
- II. Adults with I/DD have the opportunity to lead lives of their own choosing, free from poverty, to be employed, to reside in the community, and to live independently with ready access to whatever services and supports they need.
- III. People with I/DD have the opportunity to participate in civic activities, volunteerism and community service, religion, arts, culture and recreation alongside their peers without disabilities.
- IV. Individual members of the public value, respect and accept people with I/DD as equal members of society.
- V. Quality health education, health promotion and health care are widely available and accessible, enabling individuals to avoid known environmental causes of I/DD and to prevent secondary health problems for people with I/DD.
- VI. The Arc is a powerful advocate for people with I/DD, leading a vibrant, engaged and growing movement of people with I/DD, their family members, friends and colleagues, and the nonprofit organizations that serve them, committed to the full inclusion of people with I/DD in society.
- VII. The Arc is a catalyst advancing best practices among all community-based service providers and the preeminent provider of inclusive services and supports for people with I/DD and their families.
- VIII. The Arc is a household name, well known and respected as an effective, responsive, well managed and responsibly governed, and sustainable nonprofit federation.

## **GOALS AND RELATED STRATEGIES**

The Arc will pursue these goals, through the collective action of the national organization and our network of state and local chapters, utilizing the following strategies.

### **Goal I. Infants, children and youth with I/DD have access to the supports and services they need to live in their family homes, to succeed in school and to partake in all of the experiences of childhood.**

- Strategy 1 Increase the availability of early intervention services that are provided in naturally occurring environments.
- Strategy 2 Increase the inclusion, participation and integration of students with proper accommodations in their neighborhood schools, as well as in other public and publicly general educational settings
- Strategy 3 Promote best practices in school-to-community transition.
- Strategy 4 Eliminate the use of seclusion, aversive interventions and non-emergency restraint of children in schools.
- Strategy 5 Increase the involvement of students with I/DD in the IEP process, including in transition planning.
- Strategy 6 Increase the quality and accessibility of lay and professional advocates to support people with I/DD and their families, including the development of parent advocate and youth self-advocate groups.
- Strategy 7 Reach out to and empower parents, siblings and other family members of infants, children and youth with I/DD and provide them access to the information they need, when they need it, across multiple media and modalities
- Strategy 8 Actively involve, collaborate with and support other family support/service organizations.

**Goal II. Adults with I/DD have the opportunity to lead lives of their own choosing, free from poverty, to be employed, to reside in the community, and to live independently with ready access to whatever services and supports they need.**

- Strategy 1 Increase opportunities for integrated employment at fair wages, and self-employment, for people with IDD.
- Strategy 2 Increase services and supports necessary for people with IDD to be gainfully employed or self-employed.
- Strategy 3 Build the capacity and readiness of employers to recruit, hire and retain individuals with I/DD as employees.
- Strategy 4 Identify and promote best practices in services and supports for people with IDD relating to housing, employment, recreation and other aspects of community participation.
- Strategy 5 Increase the availability of affordable and accessible rental housing and home-ownership, including supported housing.
- Strategy 6 Increase the availability of personal supports.
- Strategy 7 Encourage, assist and support chapters of The Arc to transition from group homes to providing supported living, as well as to assist people with I/DD to live in their own homes in the community with the appropriate supports.
- Strategy 8 Encourage, assist and support chapters to transition from segregated day programs and employment to providing support for integrated, community based employment and activities
- Strategy 9 Support chapters of The Arc to facilitate the community change process necessary to replace the remaining state institutions with community based services and supports.
- Strategy 10 Promote and support the growth of self-determination and self-advocacy.
- Strategy 11 Rebalance the Medicaid program so that home and community based services, and family support are mandatory and readily available with consistency and portability from state to state.

Strategy 12      Improve basic income support systems for people with I/DD and their families, and change requirements applicable to benefits eligibility, to reduce the incidence of poverty.

**Goal III. People with I/DD have the opportunity to participate in civic activities, volunteerism and community service, religion, arts, culture and recreation alongside their peers without disabilities.**

Strategy 1      Build the capacity and readiness of civic, cultural, religious, governmental, business and other community organizations to include and support the participation of people with I/DD in their programs and activities.

Strategy 2      Increase services and supports necessary for people with IDD to participate in civic, cultural, religious and other community organizations

Strategy 3      Increase voting by people with I/DD and their participation in the political process.

Strategy 4      Increase the availability of family support, including respite services.

**Goal IV. Individual members of the public value, respect and accept people with I/DD as equal members of society.**

Strategy 1      Publicize the high rate, as well as specific incidents, of bigotry, discrimination, and victimization of people with IDD.

Strategy 2      Develop and support chapters of The Arc in implementing testing programs to identify discriminatory practices in housing, employment and instances of unlawful failures to provide accommodation.

Strategy 3      Promote increased public awareness of people with I/DD, their needs issues and concerns.

- Strategy 4      Monitor the media for negative portrayals and descriptions of people with I/DD in the media and promote more accurate, respectful and positive coverage.
- Strategy 5      Promote appropriate education and training of medical professionals, legal professionals, law enforcement officials, teachers, clergy, human resources professionals and others whose conduct impacts the lives and opportunities of people with I/DD.
- Strategy 6      Educate people with I/DD, and their family members, about their rights and provide them the tools and supports to protect their rights where such are being unlawfully denied.
- Strategy 7      Showcase the positive role and contributions of people with I/DD in society.

Goal V.    Quality health education, health promotion and health care are widely available and accessible, enabling individuals to avoid known environmental causes of I/DD and to prevent secondary health problems for people with I/DD.

- Strategy 1      Educate the public to avoid environmental agents and behaviors known to cause of intellectual and developmental disabilities.
- Strategy 2      Increase the availability and accessibility of quality routine and preventative medical, dental, vision and mental health care for people with I/DD.
- Strategy 3      Make public and private health insurance universally available to people with I/DD.
- Strategy 4      Prevent discrimination against people with I/DD in the delivery of health care services
- Strategy 5      Build the capacity of medical professionals, and health care organizations, to provide health care services to

people with I/DD, including by expanding relevant specialized training.

**Goal VI. The Arc is a powerful advocate for people with I/DD, leading a vibrant, engaged and growing movement of people with I/DD, their family members, friends and colleagues, and the nonprofit organizations that serve them, committed to the full inclusion of people with I/DD in society.**

- Strategy 1 Build the capacity of all chapters of The Arc to engage in both public policy advocacy and individual advocacy for people with I/DD
- Strategy 2 Assure and sustain a state office or chapter in every state or a combination of state and regional offices that provide a presence in all 50 states.
- Strategy 3 Dramatically expand the number of members and activists, including obtaining greater participation of families of younger children and people from diverse ethnic and cultural backgrounds.
- Strategy 4 Promote and support the development of people with I/DD as leaders, advocates and spokespersons on issues of their concern.
- Strategy 5 Actively collaborate with and support self-advocacy organizations and involve them in all aspects of the work of The Arc.
- Strategy 6 Develop a network of well-trained, empowered and informed self-advocates.
- Strategy 7 Build the capacity of board and staff leaders of state and local chapters, as well as individual members and volunteers, to engage in advocacy.
- Strategy 8 Collaborate with culturally focused groups to increase awareness of The Arc in communities of color, as well as the accessibility of advocacy, supports and services for people with I/DD.



Strategy 9      Develop benchmarks and compile state-specific rankings of the accessibility and quality of supports and services for people with I/DD and their families.

Strategy 10     Empower people with I/DD and their families to tell their stories.

Strategy 11     Position The Arc as the leading resource for the media and the general public about intellectual and developmental disabilities.

**Goal VII. The Arc is a catalyst advancing best practices among all community-based service providers and the preeminent provider of inclusive services and supports for people with I/DD and their families**

Strategy 1      Establish a knowledgebase of best practices in supports and services for people with I/DD, as well as of the specific programs, services and supports offered by chapters of The Arc.

Strategy 2      Conduct or commission research to assess the quality of outcomes attained by people with I/DD served by chapters of The Arc in comparison to other community-based service providers.

Strategy 3      Set clear direct service standards for what are best practices in services and supports for people with IDD and their families and a system of education, training and support to promote organizational improvement consistent with the standards.

Strategy 4      Provide ongoing professional development and education for program staff of chapters of The Arc, promoting best practices in programs, services and supports for people with I/DD.

Strategy 5      Develop and implement mechanisms for promoting continuous quality improvement in the supports and services provided by chapters of the Arc.

Strategy 6      Develop and implement processes to effectively address complaints from the public about programs, supports and services provided by chapters of The Arc, or other evidence of conduct that is incompatible with the best interest of people with I/DD and their families.

**Goal VIII. The Arc is a household name, well known and respected as an effective, responsive, well managed and responsibly governed, and sustainable nonprofit federation.**

Strategy 1      Rebrand The Arc to establish its position as the leading advocacy and service nonprofit for people with I/DD in the United States, including supporting chapters in implementing the new brand identity.

Strategy 2      Reaffirm The Arc's relevance and role on behalf of all people with intellectual and developmental disabilities, regardless of diagnoses, at all stages of life.

Strategy 3      Develop a collaborative approach to fundraising, among national state and local, that maximizes philanthropic resources

Strategy 4      Strengthen and expand the depth and breadth of the network of local chapters, including:

- i. Directly recruiting new local chapters in states where there is no state chapter,
- ii. Support and coordinate with state chapters to recruit new local chapters, and
- iii. promoting mergers and consolidation where necessary and appropriate to advance the mission of The Arc.

Strategy 5      Establish a nimble, seamless, state of the art model for involving parents, family members and interested individuals as members of The Arc that is educational, mission driven, flexible, rewarding and high impact.

- Strategy 6      Recruit and involve businesses, professionals, consultants, government agencies, associated nonprofits and other organizations in The Arc.
- Strategy 7      Develop dynamic partnerships with major corporations to promote inclusion, as well as to provide ongoing support for The Arc at all levels.
- Strategy 8      Provide ongoing professional development and education for executive and program staff of chapters of The Arc, promoting best practices in programs, services and supports for people with I/DD.
- Strategy 9      Develop the Board of Directors to be composed of a majority of parents, family members and people with disabilities themselves on the Board, while also including leaders from the business, philanthropic, media, academic and others capable of providing resources and expertise necessary for the success of The Arc at the national level.
- Strategy 10     Increase use of technology, including social networking, in all aspects of the organization's work.

## ABOUT THE ARC AND HOW WE WORK

The Goals and Strategies, described above, will be achieved through the collective action of The Arc of the United States and its network of state and local chapters.

### **About The Arc of the United States:**

As an organization, The Arc of the United States uses and will continues to use a variety of means, or methods of action, to advance the organization's mission, vision, goals and strategies. These include:

#### **Federal Public Policy Advocacy.**

The Arc of the United States is extensively involved in federal public policy advocacy to protect and promote the rights of people with I/DD as well as provide the financial resources necessary to support their full participation in community life. The Arc's federal public policy advocacy is conducted in partnership with United Cerebral Palsy through the Disability Policy Collaboration, with methods of action that include:

- developing a Public Policy Agenda and affirmatively pursuing enactment of that Agenda through the federal appropriations, substantive legislation, regulations and policy directives;
- monitoring and influencing policy developments within the Executive, legislative and judicial branches of the Federal government;
- participating in litigation as needed to protect and promote the legal rights of people with I/DD;
- educating policymakers, including elected officials and their staff, about the status, needs and interests of people with I/DD and their families;

- educating the media about the impact of current policy, as well as proposed policies, on the lives of people with I/DD and their families;
- educating and mobilizing The Arc's extensive network of volunteer and staff leaders, employees, volunteers, individuals with disabilities, their families and friends, and concerned citizens in support of, or opposition, to specific legislative and regulatory proposals and actions; and
- collaborating with other disability organizations, as well as organizations outside the disability community, in furtherance of common interests and objectives, including by organizing, participating in and serving as leaders for coalition efforts.

### **State Public Policy Advocacy**

State and local chapters of The Arc are active engaged in advocacy at the state and local level. The Arc of the United States will support and maximize the impact of their work, as well as advance the strategies described in this plan, with methods of action which include:

- building a knowledgebase of state and local policy advocacy efforts and actions;
- promoting the transfer of knowledge among and between states that are working to address similar problems;
- working with state chapters to develop and coordinate the implementation of national strategies for state policy reforms on critical issues impacting people with I/DD in multiple states;
- keeping chapter leaders well informed about the latest public policy developments; and
- providing training and technical assistance for chapters, their volunteer and staff leaders, and activists.

## **Targeted Advocacy Campaigns**

Many of the goals and strategies, described in this plan, are inextricably intertwined and the change necessary to achieve them will require multi-faceted approaches, blending together a variety of methods and tactics. The ongoing crisis of lack of access to services and supports, and the related waiting lists, is a prime example. The Arc will:

- formulate and execute a coordinated advocacy campaign to make services and support for people with I/DD readily accessible on demand, including:
  - research
  - coalition building
  - media and public education
  - litigation
  - lobbying
  - grassroots organizing and action.

## **Promoting Chapter Excellence**

Many of the strategies described in this plan involve actions and events that take place at the local level in the course of interaction between individuals with I/DD, their family members and the public and private organizations that affect their lives. Chapters of The Arc are the nation's largest provider of services and supports for people with I/DD, including advocacy services. The Arc of the United States will advance the goals and strategies described above through methods of action that include:

- assembling and making available information and resources for use by the board and staff leaders, staff and volunteers of state and local chapters through websites,
- providing training, professional development and volunteer development, through conferences, meetings, conventions, webinars, and other venues;
- providing training and one-to-one technical assistance for board members and staff of chapters.

## **Communications and Public Education**

Broad support, both within and from outside the disability community, will be critical to achieving the goals and executing the strategies described above. To achieve this level of public support, an aggressive program of communications and public education will be required, with methods of action that include:

- directly providing timely, credible and accessible information to opinion leaders, decisionmakers and members of the public through websites, social networking sites, radio, television, print and other media;
- utilizing the communications capacity of The Arc's extensive network of state and local chapters to maximize reach into communities across the country;
- monitoring coverage in the media of people with I/DD and the issues and concerns that impact their lives;
- obtaining coverage through news, features, and opinion articles; and
- clear messaging about the status, needs and concerns of people with I/DD.

## **Advancing Knowledge**

Knowledge is critical to achieving the goals and executing the strategies described in this plan. To identify, marshal and harness the knowledge and information that is critical to success, methods of action will include:

- building cooperative working relationships with individual researchers and research institutions, including the university centers on disability;
- compiling data, information and research from available sources;
- supporting or sponsoring additional research where needed to fill gaps or further inform strategy and action.

**About State and Local Chapters of The Arc:**

The 730+ state and local chapters of The Arc provide the primary vehicle through which The Arc of the U.S. works to advance its mission to promote and protect the human and civil rights of all people with intellectual and developmental disabilities and actively support their full inclusion and participation in all aspects of the community throughout their lifetimes. While there is variety from place to place, state chapters take the lead when it comes to state-level public policy advocacy and government relations; some are also involved in direct service activities as well. Local chapters are on the front lines providing individual advocacy, programs, services and supports for people with I/DD and their families. While some chapters may work exclusively with adults with I/DD, others work with individuals and their families at all stages of life. Their work touches on all aspects of community life, including education, employment, healthcare, housing, recreation and more.