Executive Role in Federal Public Policy: Cultivating Congressional Support

Marty Ford, Senior Executive Officer for Public Policy, The Arc
Kim Keprios, Chief Executive Officer, The Arc Greater Twin Cities
Steven Kroll, Executive Director, NYSARC, Inc.
Specific Federal Programs under Threat

• Medicaid

• Social Security Disability Insurance

• Affordable Care Act
Congress Today

• Gone are the days: Bipartisan, bi-cameral, Administration, & advocates working things out together

• Incremental change

• Coalitions, coalitions, coalitions

• Where are the Congressional champions?
Congressional Champions Who Retired Last Year

- Sen. Tom Harkin (D-IA)
- Sen. Jay Rockefeller (D-WV)
- Sen. Carl Levin (D-MI)
- Rep. John Dingell (D-MI)
- Rep. Henry Waxman (D-CA)
- Rep. George Miller (D-CA)

Over 240 years of work on disability programs

2015 Summer Leadership Institute
Over the Years

• Many, many more over the years – Bipartisan list

• Need to continually rebuild

• Disability is a bipartisan issue

• Can we reach Members of Congress on critical issues when we need them?

• Do they understand our issues on a daily basis?
Federal Public Policy

• The Arc’s Public Policy team – 5 people
• 535 Members of Congress plus their staffs
• Depending on pending issues, 14 Committees and 14 Subcommittees and their staffs
• Public Policy staff concentrate efforts on Leadership and Committee/Subcommittee Members and staff
Federal Public Policy - Role of State and Local chapters

- Members of Congress want to connect with their constituents/voters
- They need to know what goes on in their Districts/States
- They need information on the key issues that families and individuals with I/DD face
Personal Relationships

• Need to Build Personal Relationships (*not just virtual ones*)
  ▪ Parents of a child with a disability?
  ▪ Family friend?
  ▪ Former college roommates?
  ▪ Kids’ schoolmates’ parents?

• Create new relationships

• You, your Board members, people with I/DD, families – these connections can make the difference!
Find and Cultivate Disability Champions

• Attend and plan events regularly - get to know Members and staff – let them get to know you

• Keep them up to date on your issues

• Stay in touch as they rise in Leadership or move on to other policy positions

• Mentor young colleagues, staff, families
Become a Valued Resource – the Go-To Person

• Give the staff one-pagers that outline your issues
• Offer to gather more information, provide data, etc.
• Tell your chapter/personal story – tie it to the big picture issues

When visiting in person:
• Leave time to talk about your “ask” – don’t get lost in photo-ops and constituent/family geography
• Try to get a commitment (co-sponsorship, vote, hearing, attendance at event, etc.)
Create and Use Opportunities

• Meet with lawmakers when they’re home:
  ▪ Lobby days
  ▪ Attend town halls
  ▪ Host legislative breakfasts
  ▪ Invite lawmakers to events/chapters

• Keep the Public Policy Team posted when you learn critical new information
Make No Assumptions

• There are no permanent friends and no permanent enemies

• Never take a friendly vote for granted; check-in with Members on important issues

• Keep the door open for unexpected Members to be persuaded to vote your way on occasion
Kim Keprios, Chief Executive Officer, The Arc
Greater Twin Cities
Mission

The Arc promotes and protects the human rights of people with intellectual and developmental disabilities, actively supporting them and their families in a lifetime of full inclusion and participation in their communities.
32% Ages birth – 21
68% Ages 22+

36% Autism Spectrum Disorder

64% Down Syndrome, Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder and Other Intellectual & Developmental Disabilities
SERVICES USED

8,264 connections with individuals through programs & services

18% One-to-One Assistance

31% Networking Groups, Sibshops & Mentoring

51% Trainings & Events

42% of volunteers engaged in public policy were self-advocates

25% of people who used services were from diverse communities

2015 Summer Leadership Institute
HOW PEOPLE SUPPORT US

Volunteering at The Arc & Arc’s Value Village

6,152 volunteers
95,901 volunteer hours
6,429 hours contributed by student interns

DIRECT GIFTS

$554,504 in Annual Fund gifts
$421,313 contributed to the Arc Gala
1 in 3 Arc’s Value Village shoppers round up the next dollar to support The Arc

2015 Summer Leadership Institute
“Our politics are our deepest form of expression: they mirror our past experiences and reflect our dreams and aspirations for the future”

- Paul Wellstone
Systems Change/Civic Engagement

- Action alert network
- Tuesdays at the Capitol
- Legislative home visits
- Day at the Capitol
2015 Summer Leadership Institute
MINNESOTA’S OLMESTAD PLAN

Changes Ahead for people with disabilities
full supports for full integration into communities of their choices in

- Employment
- Housing
- Transportation
- Supports and Services
- Lifelong Learning and Education
- Healthcare and Healthy Living
- Community Engagement

It’s The Law!

This road made possible by the US Supreme Court Olmstead Decision

You are now leaving behind: one size fits all services

APPRECIATE better job training while you’re in school

Human Rights

Side By Side with Everyone Else

2015 Summer Leadership Institute
2015 Summer Leadership Institute
“The capacity for hope is the most significant fact of life. It provides human beings with a sense of destination and the energy to get started.”

- Norman Cousins
Elements of an Effective Federal Advocacy Program: A Three Legged Stool

• The Arc
• Chapter Leadership
• Community Support

Steven Kroll, Executive Director, NYSARC, Inc.
The Arc

- Sound public policy analysis to support our position
- Professional lobbyists
- Up-to-date political intelligence, grassroots tools, advocacy coordination
The Chapter

• Chapter Presidents and Executives
• Grassroots advocates
  ✓ Family members and the people we support
  ✓ Chapter Board members and volunteers
  ✓ Chapter staff
  ✓ Community members
  ✓ Individuals and businesses who partner with and/or support chapters
The Chapter (continued)

- Being able to articulate the impact of a proposal on your Chapter to your members of Congress
  - Financial impact
  - Human impact on persons and programs
  - Impact on chapter as an economic engine

- Statewide impact or regional impact
  - Same as above: financial, human, and economic
Grasstops

• Opinion leaders
  ✓ Local government officials
  ✓ Academic leaders
  ✓ Clergy
  ✓ Business leaders
  ✓ Leaders of other community institutions
  ✓ Service clubs, foundations, etc.
Why Is Federal Advocacy a Chapter Responsibility?

- There are 11,800 registered lobbyists in Washington, DC (2014)
- $3.24 billion in lobbying expenditures were reported in 2014
- 4,692 lobbying reports listed Medicare and Medicaid in 2014
- 1,014 lobbying reports listed retirement (includes Social Security) in 2014
- The Arc’s five lobbyists = one-half of one percent

- SOME OF THEM AGREE WITH US; SOME OF THEM DON’T
Why is Federal Advocacy a Chapter Responsibility?

The thousands of lobbyists can tap into thousands of grassroots networks, just like ours.

Bottom Line: We can represent ourselves, or someone else will occupy that space.
Our Strengths

• Our families

• Our self-advocates

• Our expertise

• Our mission

• Passion, energy, and enthusiasm

• Our economic impact on our communities
What Might Members of Congress Respond To?

A combination of:

• People they know and respect
• Economic imperatives
• Doing the right thing for good people
• Simple, clear, and repeated messages
• Publicity
• Fear of something bad happening
• Politics
• Fundraising
How Can We Protect Social Security and Medicaid Funding?

• Building relationships, preferably before you need something
  ✓ With the Member of Congress
  ✓ With the congressional staff
  ✓ Be a long-term credible source of information and expertise

• Putting a human face on our advocacy
  ✓ Engaging the member of Congress in the district

• Making the economic case for your congressional district

• Making sure your Chapter leadership has a consistent presence on federal issues

• Facilitating grassroots and grasstops involvement
Reconciling State and Federal Advocacy

• Chapters can be a big fish at the local level

• We are all smaller fish in a big sea at the federal level

• A well-orchestrated school of fish can have an impact

• What happens in Washington, DC can be closer to hometown USA than it appears

• What is our value proposition?