



## The Arc of Pennsylvania celebrates Announced Closures at Polk and White Haven Center

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
August 14, 2019

CONTACT: Sherri Landis, Executive Director  
717-234-2621 [slandis@thearcpa.org](mailto:slandis@thearcpa.org)

The Arc of Pennsylvania celebrates the announcement today from PA Department of Human Service announcing a three year plan to close Polk Center in Venango County and White Haven Center in Luzerne County. “On behalf of our membership and the thousands of Pennsylvanians living with an intellectual and developmental disability, we thank Governor Wolf, Secretary Miller, and Deputy Secretary Kristen Ahrens for their leadership. These closures will result in 194 people at Polk Center and 112 people at White Haven Center living an EveryDay life in their community. In addition, these centers will no longer be available to house and segregate people with disabilities”, says Sarah Holland, President, The Arc of PA.

The closure of two state centers is historic. White Haven and Polk have served people with intellectual and developmental disabilities for more than a half-century. Moving away from a system that relies on institutional care shows Pennsylvania’s commitment to investing in the lives of people with disabilities,” said Sherri Landis Executive Director of The Arc of Pennsylvania. “From the closing of these two large state centers, we are reminded again and again, that people with disabilities can live in their community, and, in fact, flourish when given the supports and opportunities to do so. Individuals with disabilities deserve the opportunity to experience life in their community, just like anyone else.”

The Arc of PA and the advocacy community recognizes that this effort will require the diligent work of many people - Department of Human Services/Office of Developmental Programs and facility staff, advocates, individuals, family members, and providers. All stand at the ready to support individuals and families through the process to developing individual plans for each person as they find a home and life in the community. We also recognize that none of this occurs without the full leadership and support of Governor Tom Wolf. It is his belief in the abilities of people with disabilities and their right to live an EveryDay Life that leads us to the plan for these historic closures. In addition, Hamburg center was closed in 2018.

“The closing of these two centers is another step in making the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania an “institution free” state and reduces the reliance on institutional care. These closures are a sign of commitment in assuring that all persons with disabilities grow up in families, go to school alongside their peers, and as adults, have opportunities for employment and community life,” says Landis.

In October, The Arc of Pennsylvania celebrates 70 years of advocacy on behalf of people with intellectual and developmental disabilities. What a great way to begin this 70<sup>th</sup> year as we continue to advocate for the full inclusion of persons with disabilities into Pennsylvania’s communities. We have worked to ensure that children and adults with autism and intellectual/developmental disabilities receive the services they need, are included in their community, and have control over their own lives. With over 33 local chapters across the Commonwealth, The Arc of PA strives to ensure that all Pennsylvanians with disabilities are no longer segregated and can enjoy life as a valued member of their community. The Arc of Pennsylvania was a plaintiff in the litigation to close Pennhurst and Western State Centers.

**Editor’s Note: The Arc is not an acronym; always refer to us as The Arc, not The ARC, and never ARC.  
The Arc should be considered as a title or a phrase.**

**The Arc of Pennsylvania  
[www.thearcpa.org](http://www.thearcpa.org)**