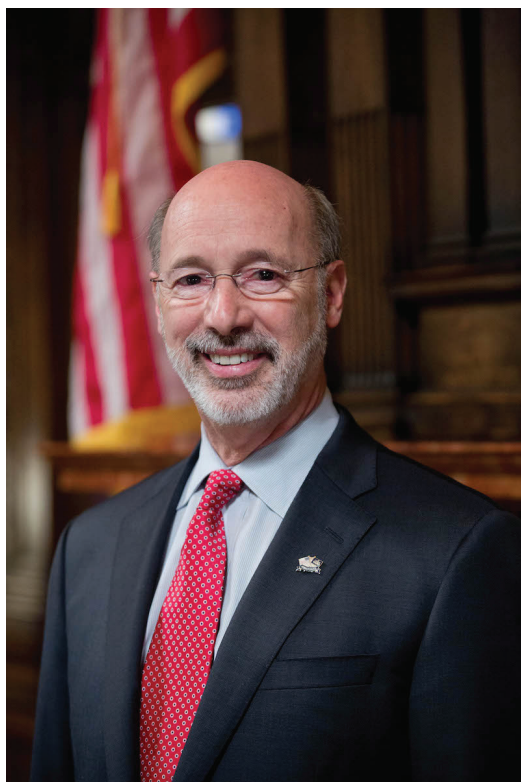


Pennsylvania Message

Governor Wolf's Budget Proposes Restoring Services to People With Disabilities

The Arc of Pennsylvania has been closely monitoring the state budget process for fiscal year 2015-2016 on behalf of persons with intellectual and developmental disabilities. Over 14,000 individuals are recognized by the Commonwealth as having a need for, and a right to, support services and yet have been on the waiting list for services through multiple administrations. Executive Director Maureen Cronin recently met directly with Governor Wolf's administration to emphasize the importance of funding community-based services for people with disabilities.

Governor Wolf's proposed \$29.9 billion budget provides for numerous increases critical to restoring services that are life lines for people with disabilities and their families. The Arc of Pennsylvania particularly commends Governor Wolf on his plans to provide waivers for upcoming high school graduates and



Governor Tom Wolf

individuals on the emergency waiting list; to restore the cuts that severely impacted human services funding 3 years ago; to increase special education funding; to increase funding for the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation so that Pennsylvania can fully leverage use of all federal matching funds available to support Pennsylvanians with disabilities in securing employment; and to improve general education funding, which directly impacts the educational outcomes of students with disabilities.

The Arc of Pennsylvania enthusiastically supports a budget that will empower the most vulnerable in our communities by resolving to help those with disabilities that are presently confined to their homes to be able to get out to look for a job; to help high school students secure meaningful, sustainable work; and to provide respite care for caregivers.

Achieve with us.

President's Message - Jeanne Downey



We Should Be The Change That We Want To See

*If you're ready, we can shake the world
Believe again, it starts within
We don't have to wait for destiny
We should be the change that we want to see
John Legend-If You're Out There*

How often have you cheered for the great advocacy efforts that have happened over the past several years? It may have been victories in education, employment, housing, or other events that have impacted people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD). You probably felt grateful to those who made the effort to create those changes. And hopefully, you felt inspired to do something. NOW is the time to engage and shake things up! NOW is the time to BE the change you want to see!!

We are entering a new era in Pennsylvania. We have a new Governor, his new Cabinet, new Secretaries and Deputy Secretaries, new staff and many other new faces in government. We MUST make sure that these elected and appointed officials understand, support, and promote our efforts to improve the lives of people with IDD. This is a core function of government and yet we need to keep reminding them of this. The Arc of PA has become THE leading voice in Harrisburg on disability issues. Our input, at the state and local level, is valued by so many of the members of congress. But I sense that with this new administration in place, we will need to ramp up our advocacy efforts and reinforce our mission. There is a lot of work to be done to prevent a back slide of all that has been accomplished. And YOU need to be part of the effort!

The Arc of PA Advocacy and Policy Day is one way that we all can be inspired, energized, educated, and challenged to ramp up our current advocacy efforts. We have said this time and time again-TELL YOUR STORY!! People who work in government and other systems want to understand the impact that their decisions have someone's life. When they meet us and hear about what is happening (or not happening) to us, they will better understand why changes are needed. When they have a face to put with some legislation or budgetary item, they will remember what we had to say. Advocacy happens everywhere and every day. Take advantage of any and all opportunities that you have to make the impact that you know is needed to shake the world! Be part of the efforts that cause other to cheer! Be the change you want to see!

Jeanne C. Downey

President, The Arc of Pennsylvania



President Jeanne Downey greets participants at A&P Day 2015.



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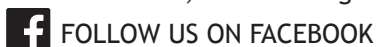
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Executive Director's Message Maureen Cronin

Take Action to Protect Funding for People with Disabilities



As advocates for people with disabilities, we at The Arc of Pennsylvania firmly believe that our Commonwealth needs to take a strong moral stand for inclusion. In government, few things are as telling about our state priorities as the programs we choose to fund during the budget process. As you may know, programs for people with disabilities have been badly underfunded in the past few years, with many people being relegated to waiting lists for years for services they desperately need. These programs do not receive the funding they need—in fact, oftentimes their funding is cut.

Given this unfortunate reality, it is encouraging that Governor Wolf has proposed a budget which would begin to restore funding to programs that have been cut, fund special education, and offer waivers for assistance for people with disabilities. There is also a plan to draw down the maximum amount of federal funding for the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation by increasing state level funding. The Arc of Pennsylvania is working diligently to support the Governor's initiatives for persons with intellectual and developmental disabilities. We have been informing and educating legislators on why program funding should remain intact in the final enacted budget.

But we need your help. While it is reassuring to see a proposal supportive of people with disabilities, restoration of funding is by no means guaranteed. It is a tight budget year, and the House and Senate will finalize their own budget proposals that could offer no increases or even cuts for services. That is why we must be proactive about telling our lawmakers where we stand on this issue. Please take some time to take action by contacting your legislators and telling them to support a budget which restores services for people with disabilities. Here are some of the specific budget items that we are highlighting as our priorities:

Department of Human Services:

- An increase of \$18.9 million to offer waiver services for an additional 1,000 individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities to assist them in seeking employment and to live in community settings.
- Increase funding to offer waivers to 50 adults with autism.
- \$4.8 million increase in funding to begin restoring funding cuts that occurred in 2012-2013 from the Human Service Block Grant. Funding will continue being added over the next three years to further offset these cuts.

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Advocacy and Policy Day 2015

Sometimes it pays to try something new. The Arc of PA held its annual Advocacy and Policy Day on April 20, 2015 in Harrisburg, and a new format contributed greatly to its success. In the past, the event has focused on bringing in speakers to give presentations and educating people on topics relevant to people with disabilities in Pennsylvania. While we continued to hear from speakers and educate people this year, the event was restructured to allow for much more direct interaction between attendees and the people involved with forming policy for the Pennsylvania state government.

After a welcome from The Arc of PA Board President Jeanne Downey and our Executive Director Maureen Cronin, we commenced with the morning session. The Arc was fortunate to be able to welcome Acting Secretary of the Department Human Services Ted Dallas as our first speaker. He shared his priorities for ensuring that people live inclusively in the community. This was encouraging, as his leadership of the department is will guide services for people with disability in the coming years.



Self-advocate Josh Stranix and Acting Secretary of the Department of Human Services Ted Dallas

Attendees heard from College Savings Program Bureau Director Kathleen McGrath about ABLÉ Accounts. The ABLÉ act is a nationwide initiative implemented on the state level which will allow and encourage people with disabilities to have special savings accounts which do not impact their eligibility for services. To round out the morning, we also learned about legislative disability policy from excellent panelists.

After the morning session, attendees split up into breakout sessions. This started with round table discussions followed by advocacy visits. Participants, guided and assisted by The Arc of PA staff, went directly to state departments involved with policy in one of four areas: education, budget, employment, and human services. They were given the opportunity to meet in person with policy makers and talk about the hopes and concerns of



Self-advocate Sara Wolff and College Savings Program Bureau Director Kathleen McGrath

people with disabilities. They learned about systemic issues and communicated with policy makers about them. This allowed attendees to personally participate in The Arc's work of advocating for people with disabilities and make a positive change. After the roundtable discussions, The Arc of PA had its first organized advocacy afternoon for Advocacy and Policy Day; numerous advocates visited House leadership to advocate for HB 585, which would end organ transplant discrimination against people with disabilities. Arc members also visited the legislators to discuss the budget, ABLÉ accounts in Pennsylvania, and other policy priorities.



Our panelists: Rep. Sabatina, PA House of Representatives; Brianda Freistat, Policy Advisor for House Majority Leader Rep. Dave Reed; Executive Director Noah Karn, House Labor and Industry Committee; Beth Rement, Press Secretary for Senator Teplitz

The day ended with our ever-popular legislative reception, giving our members the opportunity to meet with the legislators in a more casual environment and thank them for their work.

This change in format was a great success, and we have already heard feedback that it was welcomed by attendees. At future Advocacy and Policy Days, we hope to continue to help our members and other attendees

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to engage with policy by bringing them straight to the people who make the policy. By empowering the people who care about issues facing people with disabilities, we can make a larger impact in our state.



The Arc of PA staff and self-advocates worked hard to make the day a success



Attendees pose with panel members after our panel discussion

Department of Labor:

- \$5 million increase in state funds for the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation that will leverage ##additional federal funds to provide increased employment opportunities for Pennsylvanians with disabilities.

Department of Education:

- \$100 million increase for special education.

You can find your legislator and information about contacting them at www.legis.state.pa.us/cfdocs/legis/home/findyourlegislator/

Tell your legislators how important it is to support people with disabilities. Tell them that how we support people with disabilities reflects the compassion we have as a society. Tell them to fund and restore funding to these crucial services.



Executive Director Maureen Cronin speaks at A&P Day 2015

Include Me Updates



The Arc of PA's Include Me School Age Program is now in its fifth year of operation. 24 Include Me consultants helped 214 students with significant disabilities in regular education classrooms across 33 school districts across Pennsylvania. The University of Pittsburgh independent evaluation of the program indicates students continue to make significant improvements in social and academic domains. Teacher expectations and level of child engagement in regular education classrooms has increased. In addition to the five years with school age students, Include Me is now in its third year of a preschool program. This program assists preschools with increasing inclusive practices for children with significant disabilities and provides

parent trainings about inclusive practice options.

Include Me continues its partnership with Mikayla's Voice to provide inclusion assemblies and inclusive art events in districts. Many inclusion assemblies were held over the past year, several with well-known guest readers. Senator Bob Casey visited the assembly at the Scranton School District. Drew Crawford, a professional basketball player for the Erie Bayhawks, participated in the assembly at Erie Public School. The Erie assembly was highlighted on the local television station prime time news broadcast, and The Arc of PA Board President Jeanne Downey was interviewed for the broadcast. Wheels of Friendship art events were held at Daniel Boone Middle School in Berks County and North Pocono School District in Lackawanna County.

SAGA: Systems Advocacy & Government Affairs

ABLE Accounts in Pennsylvania

Advocates, legislators, and the Treasury Department are working to pass ABLE Account legislation that would make ABLE savings accounts available to Pennsylvanians as soon as possible. Interest in ABLE Accounts is high and numerous different ABLE bills have been introduced. The Arc of Pennsylvania is leading a stakeholder group that is communicating priorities about ABLE Accounts to policymakers and legislators. We are appreciative of the efforts the Pennsylvania Treasury Department, Senator Baker, and the House Finance committee are putting towards ABLE legislation. While many pieces of ABLE legislation have been introduced in PA, we expect SCO 888 (introduced by Senator Baker with support the Treasury Department) or a similar House bill (which should be introduced this fall) to move most quickly.

Anti-discrimination Legislation for Organ Transplants

The Arc of Pennsylvania is advocating for #OrganEquality for people with disabilities by supporting HB 585. We have been working closely with Senator-elect Sabatina (D-Philadelphia), who introduced the legislation while serving as a Representative. During Advocacy & Policy Day our members had numerous visits to advocate for HB 585, and our op-ed has already been featured in several news outlets. If you haven't yet, please join our efforts to prevent organ transplant discrimination against people with disabilities by asking your Representative to support HB 585—contact asarani@thearcoppa.org to learn more.

New Resource Available for Funding Advocacy

The budget negotiation process that will result in a final 2015-2016 state budget for Pennsylvania is underway. Members of the House and Senate have held hearings to ask questions about Governor Wolf's proposed state budget, and they are now preparing their own budget proposals. As we detailed earlier, now is the time to let your legislators know that funding community supports is vital to the well-being of Pennsylvanians with disabilities and their families. The Arc of Pennsylvania has advocacy

one-pagers focused on funding community services, now available in our website resources section, for use in your meetings with legislators.

Burden of Proof Legislation Introduced

Legislation will be introduced to give school districts the burden of proof in due process proceedings regarding least restrictive environment (LRE) for students with disabilities. Pennsylvania currently has no assignment of burden of proof to school districts, which allows the burden to instead be placed on the parents. Senator Browne recently introduced co-sponsorship memo SCO 788 - please contact your state senators to express your support. The Arc of PA supports this legislation and is advocating for it to be passed into law.



Senator Casey meets with a group from The Arc of PA

LEARN MORE / DO MORE

Stay Informed with PIE - The Policy Information Exchange (PIE) covers policy issues for Pennsylvanians with disabilities, their families, and advocates. The Arc of Pennsylvania manages PIE for the PA Developmental Disabilities Council.

Email us at pie@thearcoppa.org to receive electronic alerts and the quarterly newsletter.



Our littlest advocate: Policy Director Ashlinn Masland-Sarani and her daughter Eleanor ran into Governor Wolf while doing advocacy on Bring Your Child to Work Day 2015 and paused for a quick picture!

GO GREEN

The Pennsylvania Message is now available via email. Please send your full name, local chapter, and email address to ahouser@thearcoppa.org to receive your electronic copy.

Tech Talk

by Tammy Thompson-Cooke, M.S. CCC-SLP, *Augmentative Communication Services Coordinator*
Pennsylvania's Initiative on Assistive Technology (PIAT) – Institute on Disabilities at Temple University

AAC Approaches: No-tech to High Tech Options

The variety of ways that we interact with others continues to change with time. In the earliest days, we were once limited by communicating face to face, but eventually we were able to send letters via messengers, Pony Express, telegraph and then the telephone. Thanks to continued advancements in technology, we now keep in touch with mobile phones, text, email and video chat. Similarly, individuals with complex communication needs benefit from a range of augmentative and alternative communication (AAC) strategies, materials and devices -- also known as no-tech, low-tech and high-tech, respectively.



No-tech AAC may include environmental modifications and helpful strategies that provide additional opportunities for successful communication. Many parents, caregivers, professionals and staff have the best intentions for meeting the needs of individuals with complex

communication needs, but may not offer choices on a regular basis. Items offered may be accepted because it's the only choice or that "it's better than nothing." Choices (when available) provide a feeling of worth and empowerment. When teaching choice making, "feigned ignorance" (pretending not to know what is desired) offers an opportunity to offer at least one item the person likes among related items, if only as an opportunity to practice this skill. For individuals who have complex communications, no-tech may be how they express themselves through facial expressions, gestures, formal sign language(s) and nonverbal behaviors. When it is difficult for communication partners to figure out what a complex communicator wants or needs (and can't be clearly express themselves), it has been helpful for teams to use tools such as "Communication Forms and Functions" to determine which behaviors serve particular functions, and the "Communication Profile," which documents and helps interpret consistent behaviors that may indicate how someone is feeling or trying to tell you. Go to www.CommunicatePA.wikispaces.com to download these documents.



Low-tech AAC includes a variety of objects or pictures that may be used to increase language understanding, as well as expression. The Picture Exchange Communication System (PECS) is a well-known system for teaching communication in a very structured

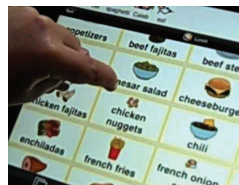
manner that sometimes overshadows other ways that visual tools can be used for expressive language. Objects can be held up to provide additional context or meaning to what is said. Topic or choice boards can be placed strategically near activities or in particular rooms that

may be used as a way to represent choices. Visual schedules and task analysis may be used to reflect a sequence of events or step-by-step directions. Low-tech communication boards and static display books may be created in such a way that can represent a full message or with single words that can be combined to create novel messages.



High-tech AAC is a broad term for voice-output devices, but can be broken into "mid-tech" or "lite-tech" versus high-tech in reference to computerized devices (a.k.a., speech-generating devices). Mid-tech devices can record digitized/voice messages and range in complexity from switches

and simple devices with static, unchanging message displays (that may look similar to a communication board). High-tech, computerized devices, whether specialized dedicated devices or tablets with AAC apps, have dynamic screen displays that may navigate to various pages based on buttons activated on the screen and have the ability to play messages that are digitized (recorded) or synthesized (computer-generated, text-to-speech). Additionally, these computerized devices organize pages of words and messages based on categories, and may also include robust vocabulary page sets in order to formulate unique messages. The selection for the type of voice-output device is typically determined through a feature-matching process; including communication need(s), how and where it will be used and cost (including funding source).



Efficient communicators use a variety of tools to convey ideas, which in this context is called an AAC system. Someone with complex communication needs may use a topic/choice boards for making selections for meals or leisure

activities, a sequential-message device that allows them to participate in social scripts (multi-exchange greeting) or tell jokes, and/or some form of high-tech device that can be customized to direct others in order to receive assistance with personal care, meet basic needs, make requests for desired items and share stories. A tool that helps coordinate teams and the assistance required by communication partners for supporting the use of the most appropriate AAC tool(s) during particular activities is called a Participation Plan.

For more information about Augmentative and Alternative Communication go to www.CommunicatePA.wikispaces.com. PIAT offers presentations, training, equipment demonstrations and device loans (<http://disabilities.temple.edu/>). Follow us on Facebook: PIATTempleU.



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Discovering Employment Opportunities with the Discovery Program

This past February, The Arc of PA brought together a new group of Discovery consultants for training and while also continuing training for our current consultants. This training begins the process of certification as a Discovery consultant and is conducted by Mike and Teresa Callahan from Marc Gold & Associates. We recently received a grant from The Stabler Foundation which will help with training costs and consultant support. This expansion and funding will allow us to reach more young job seekers through the Discovery program.

Discovery is based around the idea that people still have value and skills to offer employers even if they would have difficulty in a traditional job interview process. In the Discovery process, consultants meet with a young person with a disability who is either seeking employment for the first time or looking for work that better fits their skills and personality. The consultant spends time talking with the participant, their family, and others who know them well; after these interviews the consultant participates with and observes the participant in a number of activities. Through this, the consultant then develops a positive, descriptive profile of the job seeker which

can then be used to find customized employment opportunities.

Since they are working in the community, people who find employment through Discovery earn at least minimum wage, and often much more. This approach brings increased quality of life and well-being to the job seekers, allowing them to find an environment in which they can thrive. It also brings significant benefit to their communities and places of employment by giving them a chance to be as productive as they can be in a job they enjoy.

The Discovery and Customized Employment model has proven to be successful at helping people with disabilities find meaningful work in their communities. This success means that it is now even influencing other employment programs for people with disabilities. For example, the Arc of Washington County/Arc AAdvantage has redesigned their sheltered workshop at the Arc Human Services Distribution Center to focus more on community integrated employment. Discovery shows that people with disabilities don't have to "settle" for whatever job they can get - they can find work which pays well, is fulfilling, and makes a real contribution to their employer.

MISSION STATEMENT

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