

**The Arc of Pennsylvania**

**Position Statement**

**Technology First**

**ISSUE**

**Establish Pennsylvania as a Technology First State**

**BACKGROUND**

A Technology First State embraces technology as a first source of support when addressing outcomes in service planning for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities.

The use of technology and the types of technology being used is increasing. On a daily basis, we rely on technology for information, connections to others, and assistance in our daily lives. More technology is under development and will continue to impact our lives in different ways. In fact, technology is being implemented in almost every aspect of our lives and business functions. “Technology is unavoidable and mandatory to function as a citizen of today’s world. Interacting with technology should no longer be considered optional.” *(Source: Innovations in Supporting Families, Issue Brief: Technology & Supporting Families, Community of Practice Framework for Systems Series)*

The Arc of Pennsylvania promotes the human rights of people with intellectual and developmental disabilities and actively supports their full inclusion and participation in the community throughout their lifetimes. An increasing number of people, using their person centered planning resources, are using generic and specialized technology for learning, inclusion, safety, self-determination, and increasing their independence as they live in their community. Many Pennsylvanians with intellectual and developmental disabilities encounter obstacles in their lives that can be overcome with technology and while the benefits of technology are well known for use by people with disabilities, it remains an underutilized source of support.

The focus on technology as a first consideration in person centered planning is consistent with The Office of Developmental Programs Everyday Lives document and efforts to embed The Life Course Framework into how we do business here in Pennsylvania. Charting the LifeCourse is a framework that was developed to help individuals and families of all abilities and at any stage of life, develop a vision for a meaningful life, think about what they need to know and do, identify how to find or develop supports, and discover what it takes to live the lives they want to live.

**POSITION**

**The Arc of Pennsylvania believes that technology can be used to support and enhance an individual’s life.**

**The Arc of Pennsylvania believes that both generic technology and specialized technology can be used to support inclusion in neighborhood schools, success at community integrated employment, increasing independence in the home and community, and aid in safety and self-determination.**

In seeking to become a Technology First state, Pennsylvania follows the commonwealth of Ohio in establishing a Technology First Initiative to expand the use of technology for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities.

“Technology, loosely defined, is the creation and use of devices that allow us to interrelate with society and the environment. They may be as simple as a light switch or as complicated as computer networks that fill entire rooms.” (1) There is a rapidly expanding landscape of technology to support Pennsylvanians in connecting with others, controlling their living space, securing safety, and increasing quality of life. Pennsylvanians can play a key role in shaping how these emerging technologies impact the lives of people with intellectual and developmental disabilities and their families.

Technology First does not mean that people need to replace or revise their emphasis on person centered planning and formal disability services. Technology First embraces person-centeredness. Technology First requires the integration of technology into a person’s home, work, and community. While a technology first approach does not replace staff, it may impact where staff are allocated and how long staff are needed for certain kinds of assistance.

The Arc of Pennsylvania’s position includes:

1. The Arc of Pennsylvania seeks an Executive Order or Legislative Action that establishes Pennsylvania as a Technology First State. A Technology First state embraces technology as a first source of support when addressing outcomes in service planning for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities.
2. All people with disabilities should be afforded the opportunity to enhance their lives through the use of technology. To that end, people with intellectual and developmental disabilities, their families, and planning teams have access to information about the varied types and uses of technology needs.
3. Technology that is intended to address an individual’s assessed needs shall be prioritized when considering services and support needs.
4. The commonwealth of Pennsylvania should establish a Technology First Council to advise departments under the Governor’s jurisdiction, about the ways to expand the use of technology for Pennsylvanians with intellectual and developmental disabilities. In addition, the council should develop strategies to expand the use and understanding, as well as funding opportunities to increase access to technology.

**Information Sources:**

* Everyday Lives, <https://www.myodp.org/mod/page/view.php?id=7775>
* Charting the Life Course, <http://supportstofamilies.org/wp-content/uploads/CoP-Innovations-Technology-Issues-Brief.pdf>

**Approved by The Arc of Pennsylvania Board of Directors, March 9, 2019**