

Governmental Affairs Update

The current health crisis and its impact on people with I/DD is continuously evolving and The Arc of New Jersey continues to be at forefront fighting for the best possible outcomes for those we represent. Our advocacy in recent weeks has included the Governor's Office, the Department of Human Services and the Department of Health to ensure the health and well-being of both individuals with I/DD, their families, and the Direct Support Professionals who remain our front line heroes during this very difficult time. We are pleased to report a number of positive outcomes, including:

- The Department of Health issued the Allocation of Critical Care Resources During a Public Health Emergency document which prohibits discrimination against people with I/DD
- The Department of Health announced guidance requiring hospitals to allow a designated support person to accompany an individual with a disability during a hospitalization despite other restrictions on visitors at this time. The designated support person may be a family member, personal care assistant or another disability service provider and is subject to screening by the hospital and required to be asymptomatic for COVID-19.
- The Department of Human Services announced \$24 million in state and federal resources for temporary wage increases for the direct support professionals who care for adult individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities living in group homes and supervised apartments. With these funds, beginning May 1 the Department of Human Services will implement a temporary \$3 per hour wage increase for these professionals for three months, in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

In addition, we have been advocating on a number of issues impacting students receiving special education services, including working with the NJ Department of Education to ensure students have access to the technology they need to receive services from their school remotely.