



The Arc®

Maryland



Public Policy Platform 2015 New Directions for Equality & Justice

Our Mission:

“The Arc Maryland works to create a world where children and adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities (I/DD) have and enjoy equal rights and opportunities.”



2015 Priorities

The driving principle of any system is the end goal: People with I/DD living full, rich lives in their communities with necessary supports to enable them to be included in every activity and opportunity.

Legislative Priorities will be identified and determined collaboratively at the GAC Retreat

I. FUNDING

❖ We advocate:



II. EDUCATION & CHILDREN'S SERVICES

❖ We advocate:



III. EMPLOYMENT

❖ We advocate:



IV. HEALTH CARE & PREVENTION

❖ We advocate:



V. CIVIL RIGHTS

❖ We advocate:



VI. FAMILY SUPPORTS

❖ We advocate:



VII. COMMUNITY LIVING

❖ We advocate:



VIII. LAW ENFORCEMENT & JUSTICE

❖ We advocate:



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GENERAL PRINCIPLES

The Arc Maryland is the largest and strongest statewide advocacy organization advocating for and with persons with intellectual and developmental disabilities and their families in Maryland. Our membership includes people with intellectual and developmental disabilities, parents and other family members, educators, professionals, and interested persons from the general public.

Historically, people with I/DD have been denied fundamental human and civil rights. It is a history of institutionalization, segregation, abuse, and neglect. The last decades of the twentieth century signaled a turning point with the passage of hard-won landmark federal legislation that altered the lives of people with I/DD and their families. Despite these great strides toward expanding rights, there still remain several policy issues (on the federal, state, and local levels) that continue to restrict and deny the rights of persons with I/DD to live fully inclusive lives in their own communities, including over 90,000 individuals with I/DD living in the State of Maryland.

The State of Maryland has specific obligations to uphold the rights of individuals with I/DD, without discrimination based on the severity or complexity of disability. To support these rights, The Arc Maryland subscribes to the following general principles:

- Respect for difference and acceptance of persons with disabilities as part of human diversity;
- Respect for inherent dignity and individual autonomy, including the freedom to make one's own choices;
- Full and effective participation and inclusion in society;
- Accessibility;
- Non-discrimination; and
- Equality of opportunity

The Arc Maryland seeks to promote and ensure the full realization of all human rights and fundamental freedoms for all persons with disabilities without discrimination of any kind. To this end, we will work to help and urge the State of Maryland to:

- Adopt all appropriate legislative, administrative, and other measures for the implementation of the rights recognized in this Policy Platform;
- Take all appropriate measures, including legislation, to modify or abolish existing laws, regulations, customs, and practices that constitute discrimination against persons with disabilities;
- Take into account the protection and promotion of the human rights of persons with disabilities in all policies and programs;
- Take all appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination on the basis of disability by any person, organization, or private enterprise;
- Promote the training of professionals and staff working with persons with I/DD in the rights recognized under this document so as to better provide the assistance and services guaranteed by those rights; and
- To closely consult with and actively involve persons with I/DD in the development and implementation of legislation and policies to implement these rights.

POLICY ISSUES

I. FUNDING

Budget and tax policies determine the availability of programs and services that people with I/DD rely on for their health, safety, and quality of life. Sufficient funding is required to properly run these programs.

The Arc Maryland is committed to working with the State of Maryland to ensure developmental disabilities services are provided efficiently and effectively, while promoting the health, safety, and meaningful desired outcomes of the individuals served. We collaborate with the State to work through issues related to Federal and State requirements for funding as well as matching federal funds for Medicaid, Medicaid Waivers, and Vocational Rehabilitation.

The State must adequately fund, staff, and effectively manage all agencies supporting individuals with I/DD, including: Developmental Disabilities Administration (DDA), Department of Disabilities (DOD), Department of Human Resources (DHR), Division of Rehabilitation Services (DORS), and Special Education Resources.

We advocate to:

- Increase DDA funding for a stable, quality system of community services (residential, employment, day, individual, and family supports);
- Fund Respite Care through DDA and DHR budgets;
- Reform the current system so that funding pays for actual needs and costs;
- Address chronic underfunding of current programs and services in order to achieve a genuine quality of life for all individuals;
- Retain a pool of state-only funds for emergencies, enhancing respite, and family supports;
- Adequately fund individuals who are receiving services and supports at home;
- Secure additional funding to accompany the Alcohol Tax to fully meet the needs of all crisis and emergency categories of the DDA Waiting List;
- Fully fund and secure placements for all of the Transitioning Youth (TY) entering the adult service delivery system;
- Adequately fund children and youth in need (including infants, toddlers, and school age children ages 5-21, in and out of school time);
- Fund and provide supports for aging and vulnerable citizens with increasing needs so they can age in place and remain in non-institutional, community based programs;
- Provide an annual cost of living increase for service providers and direct support personnel;
- Safeguard funding to implement state legislation that increases the wages of direct service workers funded by DDA; and
- Ensure there is adequate funding for providers to meet the needs of those with multiple disabilities or complex needs, such as those individuals who need 1-to-1 support to have their basic needs met.

II. EDUCATION & CHILDREN'S SERVICES

Education is the gateway to achieving full potential and independence for people with I/DD. The education system must have high expectations, offer integrated instruction by highly qualified teachers, require appropriate assessments, and use only positive behavioral supports to address problem behaviors.

Early intervention services are of vital importance to children with disabilities. The largest amount of brain development occurs during the critical time between the ages of 0 and 3. Families must be given comprehensive, affordable access to a wide variety of therapies, including speech, occupational, and physical as well as behavioral support. Families also deserve access to robust educational support to guarantee that their child has the opportunity to achieve on academic and social levels that are equal to their non-disabled peers.

The Arc Maryland reaffirms the rights of persons with I/DD to a Free and Appropriate Public Education (FAPE) with supports to ensure their full participation in an inclusive and least restrictive environment that is free of bullying and the unnecessary use of restraint and seclusion.

In order to help ensure the realization of lifelong learning, we believe the State of Maryland should take appropriate measures to support and fund improved teacher preparation and professional development for educating children with I/DD. This should include training in the use of Positive Behavioral Interventions & Supports (PBIS), alternative communications, and Universal Design for Learning (UDL) educational techniques and materials to support students with I/DD.

We advocate for:

- Funding the Infants and Toddlers Program to ensure detection, supports, and early intervention are available for all families;
- Funding the Community-Based Services Waiver for Children with Autism Spectrum Disorder (Autism Waiver);
- Persons with I/DD to receive the support required, within the general education system, to facilitate their effective education;
- Persons with I/DD to not be excluded from the general education system on the basis of disability;
- Children with I/DD to not be excluded from free and compulsory primary or secondary education on the basis of disability;
- Persons with I/DD to have access to inclusive, quality, free and appropriate public education (preschool, primary, and secondary education) on an equal basis with others in the communities in which they live;
- Persons with I/DD to be able to access higher education, vocational training, adult education, and lifelong learning without discrimination and on an equal basis with others;
- Reasonable accommodation of an individual's requirements to be provided including, but not limited to, facilitating the learning of various communications techniques including sign language, Braille, alternative script, augmentative and alternative modes, means, and formats of communication orientation and mobility skills, and facilitating peer support and mentoring;

- Effective individualized support measures to be provided in environments that maximize academic and social development, consistent with the goal of full inclusion;
- Comprehensive transition planning should begin for students with I/DD no later than age 14, if not sooner;
- School-based job exploration to focus on placements in community-based jobs at fair wages, rather than segregated, sheltered workshops or enclaves that pay less than minimum wage to workers with disabilities;
- Educational professionals and school staff to have continuing disabilities training including Positive Behavioral Interventions & Supports (PBIS) and Universal Design for Learning (UDL);
- Schools to apply Universal Design for Learning (UDL) practices, including tailoring state assessments so that all children have adequate opportunities to demonstrate their knowledge;
- Ensuring families have access to respite care, inclusive child care, and inclusive after school programs;
- Passing legislation to compel local school systems to pay a parent's costs associated with retaining expert witnesses if the parent is successful in a due process hearing;
- Supporting lifelong and social development skills to facilitate an individual's full and equal participation in education as a member of the community; and
- Expanding educational opportunities, including opportunities across the lifespan, inside and outside of school settings, such as recreational activities, sports, college, and job training.

III. EMPLOYMENT

Employment is the cornerstone of community living for most adults with I/DD who are able and willing to engage in meaningful work. Integrated employment programs, including supported employment, must be properly funded and administered to provide job development and placement, skills training, job coaching, and other services necessary to help find and maintain employment.

The Arc Maryland reaffirms the rights of persons with I/DD to have meaningful jobs with fair wages. We reaffirm the rights of persons with I/DD to work on an equal basis with others. This includes the right to gain a living by work that is freely chosen or accepted in a labor market, and to conduct work in an environment that is open, inclusive, and accessible to persons with I/DD.

We advocate to:

- Ensure that reasonable accommodation is provided to persons with I/DD in the workplace;
- Prohibit discrimination on the basis of disability with regard to all matters concerning all forms of employment, including conditions of recruitment, hiring, continuance of employment, career advancement, and safe and healthy working conditions;
- Protect the rights of persons with I/DD, on an equal basis with others, to just and favorable conditions of work, including equal opportunities and equal remuneration for

work of equal value, and safe and healthy working conditions, including protection from harassment and the redress of grievances;

- Support “Employment First” policies as a strategy to increase opportunities for competitive, integrated employment of individuals with I/DD;
- Build the infrastructure and supports needed to phase out the issuance of subminimum wage certificates, increase opportunities for competitive integrated employment, and put in place safeguards to protect the interests of any people affected by this shift;
- Build infrastructure and create incentives for employers that will expand work opportunities for individuals with significant disabilities in integrated employment at competitive wages;
- Provide funding that assists individuals to be employed or involved in their community in inclusive settings with funding incentives and technical assistance to downsize and convert sheltered workshops, segregated work programs, and subminimum wage jobs to supported employment, competitive employment, and other inclusive community opportunities;
- Ensure that persons with I/DD are not held in servitude and are protected, on an equal basis with others, from forced or compulsory labor;
- Promote employment opportunities and career advancement for persons with I/DD in the labor market, as well as, assistance in finding, obtaining, maintaining, and returning to employment;
- Promote opportunities for self-employment and entrepreneurship;
- Promote the employment of persons with I/DD in the public and private sector through appropriate policies and measures, which may include affirmative action programs, incentives, and other measures; and
- Require government agencies and administrations (local, state, and federal) to include individuals with I/DD in their hiring initiatives.

IV. HEALTH CARE & PREVENTION

Health care and wellness is critical for people with I/DD to improve and maintain healthy lives. Health care systems must be accountable for providing timely access to high quality, comprehensive, accessible, affordable, and appropriate services that meet individual needs. Individuals with I/DD are receiving more comprehensive diagnoses, may have co-occurring conditions, and are living longer. This increases the need for services that grow and adapt to individual needs throughout the lifespan.

The Arc Maryland reaffirms the rights of persons with I/DD to achieve the highest attainable standard of health without discrimination on the basis of disability. Health and wellness services should be available throughout the lifespan, and treat the full health of the individual, including any co-occurring conditions.

Multiple systems (medical, aging, DD, mental health, substance abuse) may be necessary for treatment, services, and supports, but having those multiple components creates the risk of gaps in continuity of care. The Arc Maryland seeks to work with the State and medical professions to close gaps between delivery systems and move toward “whole person” models of health care.

Some disabilities are caused by preventable factors, such as exposure to lead poisoning and other environmental variables, or by the use of alcohol or smoking during pregnancy. Education of expectant mothers and fathers, families, and health professionals about environmental factors is important. Affordable access to comprehensive prenatal care is critical. The State should embark on a campaign, in collaboration with consumer and family organizations, to inform teens and expectant mothers and fathers of risk factors that could increase the likelihood of their child being born with a disability.

The prevalence of autism in Maryland is even higher than the prevalence in the nation¹. With so many people with autism in our state, the government has an obligation to ensure that children and adults with autism, and their families, have the supports they need to live inclusive, meaningful lives, with access to evidence-based treatment, such as Applied Behavioral Analysis (ABA) therapy. There is also a critical need to fully fund and eliminate the waiting list of those eligible for the Autism Waiver in our state.

It is the obligation of the State to take effective and appropriate measures to enable persons with I/DD to attain and maintain full physical, mental, social, and vocational capacity in order to support maximum independence and full participation in all aspects of life.

We advocate to:

- Provide persons with I/DD with access to quality, appropriate, and affordable health care and wellness programs;
- Provide those health services needed by persons with I/DD specifically because of their disability, including early identification and intervention, and services designed to minimize and prevent further disability;
- Provide these health services as close as possible to peoples' own communities, including rural areas;
- Prohibit discrimination against persons with I/DD in the provision of health insurance and life insurance;
- Ensure affordable access to comprehensive prenatal care for expectant parents;
- Educate expectant parents on preventable factors that could cause I/DD;
- Fully fund and eliminate the waiting list of those eligible for the autism waiver;
- Require that health insurance companies cover evidence-based treatments for individuals with autism, such as Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) therapy;
- Prevent discriminatory denial of health care, health services, or food and fluids on the basis of disability; and
- Have organized, strengthened, and extended comprehensive habilitation and rehabilitation services and programs, particularly in the areas of health, employment, education, and social services, in such a way that these services and programs:
 - Begin at the earliest possible stage, and are based on the multidisciplinary assessment of individual needs and strengths;

¹ The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) estimates that 1 in 68 children in the United States has been identified with autism spectrum disorder (ASD). This March 2014 estimate is roughly 30 percent higher than previous estimates (2012: 1 in 88 children).

- Support participation and inclusion in the community and all aspects of society, are voluntary, and are available to persons with I/DD as close as possible to their own communities, including rural areas;
- Promote the development of initial and continuing training for professionals and staff working in habilitation and rehabilitation services; and
- Promote the availability, knowledge, and use of assistive devices and technologies.

V. CIVIL RIGHTS

Civil rights are the foundation for the services and protections that people with I/DD enjoy today. Civil rights must be preserved through vigilant enforcement of laws and regulations as well as strong opposition to efforts to limit the rights of people with I/DD.

The Arc Maryland reaffirms that all persons are equal under the law and are entitled to the equal protection and benefit of the law. We believe that unjustified segregation is a violation of individual rights, and that people with I/DD have the legal right to live inclusive lives within the community.

Every human being has a right to liberty and security of person, and to live free from exploitation, violence, and abuse. We support the rights of individuals, regardless of their place of residence or living arrangements, to maintain privacy in information, correspondence, and communications. Further, we uphold the rights of persons with I/DD to liberty of movement, and the freedom to choose their residence without being deprived or constricted in their residence arbitrarily on the basis of disability.

We advocate:

- For the elimination of discrimination in housing, transportation, recreation, education, employment, and community access;
- For enforcement of existing legislation such as the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and the *Olmstead* Supreme Court Decision;
- For the civil rights of persons in institutions and nursing homes to live in the most inclusive setting in the community, with appropriate supports;
- For protections in biomedical research to guard against abuse of persons with I/DD;
- For protection of equal access rights for community housing, including freedom of discrimination based on source of income, such as SSI;
- To take all appropriate measures to protect individuals with I/DD, within and outside the home, from all forms of exploitation, violence, and abuse;
- To take all appropriate measures to prevent all forms of exploitation, violence and abuse by ensuring appropriate forms of assistance and supports are available for persons with I/DD, their families, and caregivers, including the provision of information and education on how to avoid, recognize, and report incidents;
- To ensure that all facilities and programs designed to serve people with I/DD are effectively monitored by independent authorities;
- To take all appropriate measures to promote the physical, cognitive, and psychological recovery, rehabilitation, and social reintegration of persons with I/DD who are victimized;

- To put in place effective legislation and policies to ensure that instances of exploitation, violence and abuse against persons with I/DD are identified, investigated, and prosecuted;
- To provide information intended for the general public in accessible formats and technologies;
- To urge private entities that provide services to the general public, including through the internet, to provide information and services in accessible formats for persons with I/DD; and
- To protect the privacy of personal, health, and rehabilitation information of persons with I/DD.

VI. FAMILY SUPPORTS

Family support is essential for caregivers who provide care in the community. Counseling, support groups, respite, training, cash assistance, and information and referral must be made widely available to family caregivers.

Maryland is the wealthiest state in the U.S., but ranks toward the bottom in state funding for developmental disabilities services. Children and adults with I/DD should be able to receive supports in their home or community in small family-type settings rather than in institutions, congregate care programs, or out-of-state placements.

Families deserve to have a voice in decisions that affect their lives. The process by which families access Low Intensity Supports and Services (LISS) funding is vital, and can determine how a family pays for a loved one's therapy, makes home modifications, or facilitates community inclusion. As stakeholders, providers and families who receive LISS need to be part of the decision-making process on any changes made to funding or eligibility and consulted and informed before any changes are made.

The Arc Maryland reaffirms the rights of individuals with I/DD to fully participate, on an equal basis with others, in relationships, marriage, family, and parenthood. With regard to guardianship, trusteeship, adoption of children, or similar cases, the best interests of the child shall always be paramount, without discrimination on the basis of disability.

We advocate:

- To increase funding for family support services, such as counseling, support groups, and respite;
- For children and adults with I/DD to receive supports in their home or community in small family-type settings;
- To establish a multiyear Community and Family Supports initiative to meet the needs of individuals on the DDA Waiting List and build capacity in the community;
- To engage stakeholders on any potential changes made to funding or eligibility for family supports, such as Low Intensity Support Services (LISS);
- To protect the rights of persons with I/DD who are of marriageable age to marry and have a family;

- To protect the rights of persons with I/DD to freely and responsibly decide on the number and spacing of their children and to have access to age-appropriate information, reproductive, and family planning education;
- To protect the rights of individuals with I/DD to retain their fertility on an equal basis with others; and
- To prevent concealment, abandonment, neglect, and segregation of children with I/DD by:
 - Making available and providing early and comprehensive information, services, and supports to children with I/DD and their families, accompanied with necessary support to navigate multiple complex State systems;
 - Ensuring that a child shall not be separated from his or her parents against their will without judicial review to determine that such separation is necessary and in the best interests of the child;
 - Ensuring that no child shall ever be separated from their parents on the basis of disability of either the child or one or both of the parents; and
 - Ensuring that in cases where the immediate family is unable to care for a child with I/DD, the State should undertake every effort to provide alternative care within the wider family, and failing that, within the community in a family setting.

VII. COMMUNITY LIVING

Fully inclusive community living, with an emphasis on self-determination and respect for the free will of the individual, is the vision and mission of the disability rights movement. The Arc Maryland reaffirms the rights of all persons with I/DD to live in the community with choices equal to others.

Self-Advocacy is the key to empowerment for people with I/DD, and we believe that people with disabilities are the experts on what is best for their own lives. We believe in supporting the self-advocacy movement through the full, meaningful inclusion of self-advocates in the development and implementation of all policies and programs that impact their lives. The Arc Maryland wholeheartedly supports the mantra of the self-advocacy movement: **“NOTHING ABOUT US WITHOUT US!”**

Transportation is the pathway to employment, health care, recreation, and other aspects of community living for people with I/DD. Accessible transportation programs must be properly funded and administered and anti-discrimination policies in transportation must be enforced. The State should increase funding for the maintenance and expansion of an accessible public transportation system.

Technology is instrumental in making communication, education, independent living, and employment opportunities available for people with I/DD. Technology must be customized and made widely available to persons who may benefit from it.

Housing is critical for most people with I/DD to live in the community. There must be an adequate supply of safe, accessible, and affordable supportive housing. People with I/DD should have the opportunity to choose where and with whom they live, and are not obliged to accept living in a particular living arrangement. Individuals with I/DD should have access to a

range of in-home, residential, and other community support services, including personal assistance necessary to support effective inclusion, and to prevent isolation or segregation.

Institutions are obsolete and should be closed. People with I/DD have the right to live inclusive lives in the community, with quality supports and services. The Arc Maryland strongly opposes the expansion of State Residential Centers (SRCs), including the Secure Evaluation and Therapeutic Treatment (SETT) Center, and urges the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (DHMH) to develop appropriate community capacity to eliminate institutions altogether.

Direct Support Professionals constitute the backbone for community living for people with disabilities. A well-trained, adequately compensated direct support workforce is essential for providing the necessary supports and services to individuals with I/DD where they live and work.

We advocate:

- To empower self-advocacy organizations and the self-advocacy movement in our state;
- To listen to the viewpoints and concerns of self-advocates as the experts on I/DD;
- To meaningfully include self-advocates in the development and implementation of policies, programs, and research that will have an impact on their lives;
- To uphold, protect, and enforce the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and Olmstead Supreme Court Decision and close the remaining state institutions;
- To ensure that community services and facilities for the general population are available on an equal basis for persons with I/DD and responsive to their needs;
- To ensure equal access for people with I/DD to the physical environment, transportation, information and communications, and to other facilities and services open or provided to the public, in both urban and rural areas;
- To identify and eliminate all obstacles and barriers to accessibility, which may apply to:
 - Buildings, roads, transportation, and other indoor and outdoor facilities, including schools, housing, medical facilities, and workplaces
 - Information, communications, and other services, including electronic services, emergency services, and all available technologies
- For reliable and accessible public transportation so persons with I/DD can access community resources, employment, friends, and have greater control over their own lives and relationships;
- To facilitate access by persons with I/DD to quality mobility aids, devices, assistive technologies, and forms of live assistance and intermediaries at affordable costs;
- To provide training in mobility skills to persons with I/DD and to specialist staff;
- To encourage entities that produce mobility aids, devices, and assistive technologies to take into account all aspects of mobility for persons with I/DD;
- To protect equal access rights for community housing, including freedom from discrimination based on source of income, such as SSI;
- To increase affordable housing options so persons with I/DD can control their own housing by renting or buying their own homes;
- To support the rights of persons with I/DD to acquire assets and savings to strive for financial independence;

- To preserve community supports that provide residential services in the most integrated setting, including non-congregate care in both state operated and community based programs;
- To support the Bridge Subsidy Demonstration Program permanent in all counties so that persons with I/DD can access short-term rental assistance while awaiting a permanent housing voucher;
- To support Medicaid's 'Community First Choice' (CFC) Option, which improves access to community services, offers more consumer choice, and promotes high quality services;
- To support CMS's Home and Community-Based Services (HCBS) minimum standard rule, which requires that:
 - HCBS settings must be integrated in the community
 - Must not be located in a building that is also a publicly or privately operated facility that provides institutional treatment or custodial care
 - Must not be located on the grounds of, or adjacent to, a public institution
 - Must not be a housing complex designed expressly around an individual's specific diagnosis or disability
- To support the promotion of "Visitability" - the incorporation of accessible architecture features into housing design;
- To close the remaining state institutions and oppose the expansion of State Residential Centers (SRCs) and new admissions; and
- To protect and increase funding for DDA for a stable, quality system of community services (residential, employment, day programs, individual and family supports) that includes competitive wages and benefits for direct support staff, annual cost-of-living increases, and funding to provide quality services and meet mandated regulations.

VIII. LAW ENFORCEMENT & JUSTICE

The Arc Maryland reaffirms the rights of persons with I/DD to have effective access to justice.

Individuals with disabilities are 4 to 10 times more likely to be victimized than those without disabilities, and are also overrepresented as victims, witnesses, and suspects in the criminal justice system. This does not mean that people with disabilities are more likely to commit crimes, but that they are more likely to have difficulties when they come into contact with the legal system. When individuals with I/DD become involved in the criminal justice system, they often face miscommunication, fear, confusion, lack of information to make informed decisions, and prejudice.

According to the Governor's Executive Order for the formation of the Maryland Commission for the Effective Community Inclusion of Individuals with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities:

- "Many officials in positions of authority, including law enforcement officials, paramedics, and other first responders, receive limited training about responding to situations involving individuals with (I/DD)."

- “Maryland would benefit from statewide policies, guidelines, and best practices on standards for law enforcement officials, paramedics, and other first responders’ responses to situations involving individuals with (I/DD).”
- “Maryland would benefit from statewide training standards that educate individuals in positions of authority, particularly those in public sector positions such as law enforcement officials, paramedics, and other first responders, about the best approaches for safely managing situations involving individuals with (I/DD).”
- “Maryland would benefit from the development of a coordinated, collaborative, and comprehensive strategy to ensure enhanced responses to situations involving individuals with (I/DD).”

The Arc Maryland has been selected as one of five Chapters of The Arc nationwide to support the implementation of The Arc U.S.’s National Center for Criminal Justice and Disability (NCCJD) “Pathways to Justice” training program to build the capacity of the criminal justice system to effectively serve and protect people with I/DD in the state of Maryland. The Arc Maryland has formed the state’s first Disability Response Team (DRT), which consists of representatives from law enforcement, legal, victim advocacy, self-advocacy, and other disability advocacy organizations. In collaboration with NCCJD, The Arc Maryland’s DRT will be trained and certified in 2015 to provide “Pathways to Justice” training for law enforcement and legal professionals throughout the state.

We advocate:

- To develop comprehensive training, policies, practices, and sensitivity to ensure protection of the civil rights, safety, and effective community inclusion of individuals with I/DD;
- To ensure all necessary measures are taken to provide safe harbor in emergencies for people with I/DD, including the adequate training of emergency personnel and first responders;
- For victim assistance and adequate legal representation for persons with I/DD; and
- To seek fair treatment in the criminal justice system for people with I/DD.