2023 Advocacy Toolkit

Each year The Arc of Virginia, with its chapters, members and partners, develops a Legislative Agenda to make improvements to the systems of support for people with developmental disabilities. We then sponsor DD Advocacy Days at the General Assembly to advocate for and garner support for the agenda.

Partnering with statewide self-advocate and family organizations, enables us to bring together hundreds of voices with a united message for our elected representatives.

Standing Out to Get Noticed!

Members of the General Assembly meet thousands of constituents in a short time, so it is not only hard but nearly impossible for them to remember all the needs and issues coming at them on a daily basis. That is why we bring a wave of orange into their offices, hallways, elevators, sidewalks, committee rooms and capitol. And they DO REMEMBER US! They know the Orange Scarves represent Developmental Disabilities, that is why we ask advocates to wear the orange scarves and stickers, to be remembered.

But for those groups who join us for a DD Day from another organization, we encourage you to wear or bring something that also names and represents your group!
WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW:

- Legislative Agenda
- Talking Points
- Mobilizing Information

Thank you to our 21 local chapters of The Arc for their work and support in advocating for a system that supports all people in having A Life Like Yours.

And thank you to vaACCSES for continued partnership in transforming Virginia's system.

Achieve with us.
WHY TRANSFORMATION IS NEEDED

2012: Virginia sued by DOJ for lack of Community Services.
2016: Waiver Redesign to Build New Community Services
2023: New Community Residential Services go virtually UNUSED, with utilization at LESS THAN 3%:

1. **PROBLEM:**
   **A Lack of Provider Capacity**
   Providers lack the support and resources to build or expand their business models to meet the demand for Community Services. All providers struggle to attract and retain an adequate qualified workforce.

   **SOLUTION**
   Stimulate Provider Businesses through Innovation
   
   **One-Time Funding to Build Capacity:**
   - Match Supported Living Rate to Smallest Group Home Rate - $1M
   - Workforce Development & Recruitment Campaign (Community RFP) - $2M
   - Business Start-Up/Expansion Incubator (Administered by a Community Collaboration) - $2.85M
   - Drive Market Demand & Customer Base for Expanding Providers - Educate Individuals & Families on the underused Inclusive Services (Community RFP) - $330k

2. **PROBLEM:**
   **A Lack of Access to Supports**
   Over 3,000 Virginians with disabilities are in Priority 1 on the waiting list with an urgent need for services. The slots funded do not keep pace with the growth of priority 1.

   **SOLUTION**
   Eliminate the Crisis to Transform from Reactive to Proactive System
   
   **Fully Fund Priority 1**
   Currently, the system only funds DD Waiver services once someone is in urgent need -- the most expensive way to provide services.

3. **PROBLEM:**
   **A Lack of Basic Care**
   Currently individuals and families aren't provided even the very basic services that could potentially keep them from going into crisis and needing more comprehensive (and costly) waiver services down the line.

   **SOLUTION**
   Build System Sustainability for the Future
   
   **Develop Framework for a Core Services Waiver**
   Offering of limited services designed to intervene in people's lives before crisis - delaying the need for more costly or comprehensive services and supports.

Supported by members of the DD COALITION
Additional Talking Points

Match Supported Living Rate to most integrated Group Home rate (4 people)

➤ Virginia’s continued congregate and institutional bias must end. Community Inclusive service options must be paid at least equal to the corresponding congregate group models.

➤ Matching these rates is BUDGET NEUTRAL for the Commonwealth.

Workforce Development Campaign

➤ We must raise awareness of the existence of these jobs and promote them to the general population.

➤ We must use creative approaches to this effort using our community partners to develop and implement the campaign. These partners are closest to the ground and can have greater impact with less investments than state agencies.

Business Start-Up or Expansion Incubator

➤ Provider businesses need support and an infrastructure to develop new business models using the new community waiver services that now go virtually unused.

Drive Market Demand - Educate Individuals and Families

➤ People must have access to accurate information about the new services available to them.

➤ Providers need customers as they expand -- a waiver slot and the knowledge of available services will create that strong customer base.
Additional Talking Points

Fully Fund Priority One

- Until this is done, Virginia cannot advance to an efficient system that meets the need and demand for services.

Develop Core Services

- The only way to get a waiver in Virginia currently is to be in urgent need...an inefficient dysfunctional system, CORE Services are part of a larger plan to move from a reactive system to a proactive one.
Increase Peer Mentoring Rate

Peer Mentoring was the only direct service left out of last year's DD Waiver Rate increases and must be increased to maintain parity with other DD Waiver Services.

Combine Spending CAPS for AT/EM/EHBS

- The current budget caps for Assistive Technology (AT), Environmental Modifications (EM), and Electronic Home-Based Services (EHBS) are too low per service to provide adequate access to modernized, specialized technology necessary to increase abilities.
- This legislation is based on one of the recommendations identified by the 2021 Virtual Supports Workgroup.
- Technologies such as AT/EM/EHBS can reduce the state's cost of staffing utilized to support an individual, and can increase a person's individual autonomy by decreasing their reliance on other people for daily activities.

Address DD Medicaid Waiver Eligibility Risks Based on Income Limits

Advocates are working with stakeholders to design solutions that can help the most people.

Ensure Public Participation Access to Virtual Meetings

Public meetings - including those public commissions, boards, and work groups where citizens are appointed - must include full virtual access for equitable participation, including for voting on agenda items. Virtual means of access opens the door to greater representation of people with disabilities in our public policy discourse.

Remove "Handicap" Terminology from Virginia Code

Language reflects how we value people, and should be updated to affirm Virginia's respect of and for people with disabilities.
Mobilizing - What You Can Do

>> TAKE ACTION | Virtual Budget Hearings: January 5th at 10am

Budget Hearings are key to informing your legislator how you think Virginia should invest its money. This is the time to advocate for the DD Rescue Plan outlined above. People with disabilities will be testifying at these hearings all across the state.

On January 4th -- go to hac.virginia.gov to register to speak at the Hearing in your area.
* Northern  * Western  * Hampton Roads  * Central

We need EVERYONE to flood the General Assembly with emails on Budget Hearing Day!

Go to our website thearcofva.org/action-center on January 5th and follow the link to email your legislators using our easy Action Tool.

>> TAKE ACTION | DD Advocacy Days **SIGN UP FORM**

Session will be in person this year. These are days that we will support you to advocate with your representatives. We ask attendees to advocate for all or some of The Arc’s Legislative Agenda as well as to bring up any specific issues you have and to share your personal story of how the issues impact you.

January 12       January 17       January 19       January 24       January 26
January 31       February 2      February 7      February 9       February 14

WHAT TO EXPECT DURING YOUR DD ADVOCACY DAY:

- A Team Member of The Arc will be there to support you or your group
- We provide you with printed materials
- We provide an Orange Scarf if you do not already have one (please bring yours if you have it)
- You have the option to attend and observe the Legislators in Session at Noon each day.
- We will provide you with a Lunch Voucher for Meriweather's Cafe (3rd floor Suntrust Bldg)
Mobilizing - What You Can Do

DD Advocacy Day Suggested Schedule:
Time Determined Meet in lobby to pick up bags from staff of The Arc of VA
8am - 11am Visit with your legislators
11:30 am Get in line at the Capitol to go into Gallery to observe Session
Noon Session begins

General Assembly Session - Once you have been introduced (IF YOU PRE-ARRANGED THIS WITH YOUR DELEGATE OR SENATOR) and recognized, you may stay and observe session for as long as you like.

Lunch Options - When you leave session, head to Meriweather's Cafe, 3rd Floor Suntrust Building to use your free lunch voucher. We ask that you use our voucher for your meal and beverage only. (Desserts not covered with Voucher)

PREPARING FOR YOUR DD ADVOCACY DAY:

Finding Your Legislator
You can find your legislator at: whosmy.virginiageneralassembly.gov

Setting Appointments with Your Legislator
As soon as you decide which DD Advocacy Day you will be attending, contact your representatives to schedule appointments. Ideal times for appointments are 8am - 11am and/or 2pm - 5pm.

When you call, be sure to tell them you are a constituent. Ask ONE of your representatives to introduce you in session if you are able to attend session. Suggest something like: “....welcome to (your group name Or if you don't have a name, advocates) here today for a developmental disability Advocacy Day with The Arc of Virginia.” You could add some comments about the things you are advocating for.

Ideas for Telling Your Story
- If you don’t have a Waiver or receive services, how long have you been waiting?
- If you do, what services or supports help you to live your life? Or help you and your family?
- What else do you need in order to live the life that you want?
- Review The Arc’s Legislative agenda, and relate the items back to your life.
Mobilizing - What You Can Do

Location: General Assembly Building
900 East Main Street, Richmond

Parking
A limited number of metered public parking spaces (2 hours) are located nearby. Pay parking lots and decks are nearby on 8th and Grace Streets and 7th and Marshall Streets. Downloadable maps of nearby parking lots and decks are available, as well as rates for these areas. If you have any questions about parking lots in the Capitol vicinity, please call the Capitol Tour Desk at (804) 698-1788.

Inside Pocahontas Building
Be prepared to walk through metal detectors when you enter the General Assembly and Capitol buildings. Remove keys, cell phones and other items from your pockets.

Accessibility
The front entrance to Pocahontas Building is accessible. 4 parking spaces zoned as accessible parking are located on the northside of Bank St., between 9th & 10th Streets. Spaces are available in the garage at St. Paul's Church. Free parking for up to 2 hours at any meter spot for anyone with accessible tags.

Attire
We suggest wearing comfortable shoes. Coat closets with limited space are on floors 3 & 4.

>> TAKE ACTION | Legislative Action Alerts

Action Alerts are an important part of all successful advocacy. There are multiple legislative steps that take place, for a Bill or a Budget Item to pass - YOUR VOICE matters most and makes a difference when the time comes for legislators to vote. Our Action Alerts are usually timed around these votes, and focus on the key messaging and talking points that we think will have the greatest impact.

So please watch your inbox for Important Action Alerts and Take Action!

Watch for updates
thearcofva.org/action-center