

The Mission of The Arc

Established in 1950, The Arc is the nation's leading advocacy and service organization for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities, serving more than 1 million people with I/DD and their families through more than 700 state and local chapters. The mission of The Arc is to promote and protect the human rights of people with intellectual and developmental disabilities and actively support their full inclusion and participation in the community throughout their lifetimes.



In the beginning there was darkness...

Before The Arc, people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (I/DD) were shunned by society and hidden away. Often people couldn't face the reality of these individuals' value in helping us to realize our own vulnerabilities. All of us are vulnerable at birth and require others to nurture and teach us how to survive. Let's review The Arc's efforts in advancing universal human rights and eliminating discrimination for all individuals with I/DD.

1950s: The Arc was established to support people with I/DD due to our founding families realizing that more was needed to fulfill the promise of independence and inclusion for all. Some individuals in our society need assistance to realize their potential and dreams. The Arc was one of the first family-based movements that took action to address this need. The Arc established a three tiered organization (national, state, and local) to promote human rights and fight discrimination towards individuals and families dealing with daily challenges of I/DD. The strength of this multi-level structure has ensured the long term existence and effectiveness of the advocacy movement.

1960s: During this decade, our federal government focused on the discrimination of people with I/DD and their families. President Kennedy and The Arc took the lead in these national efforts. The disabilities of his sister, Rosemary, clearly influenced his actions and desire to right the wrongs of the past. President Kennedy formed a panel in 1961 to study the issue. Less than one month before his assassination in 1963, he signed the *Maternal and Child Health and Mental Retardation Planning Bill* into law. The Arc chapters were influential in making this historic law happen. Through the rest of the decade, The Arc increased advocacy efforts that succeeded in convincing school systems to offer classes and establish workshops for families in need.

1970s: The Arc movement is now focusing on advocating for increased access to formal education and integration into the local communities. **Society is beginning to realize that institutionalization is not the right approach and laws are increasingly being introduced to expand community based services.** Massachusetts passed *The Right To Education Act* making education available to all people, regardless of their disabilities. Normalization becomes the watchword for services and a life in the community.

“Be the change that you wish to see in the world”

- Mahatma Gandhi

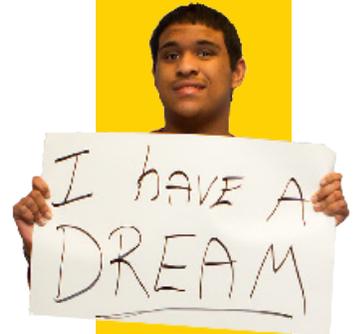
1980s: The Arc understood that infants and toddlers with disabilities had a better chance to develop with the right therapies and training of parents. The Arc parents appreciated having access to an experienced professional in this area. This head start would carry these children into local school systems. As they crossed the bridge from their school programs into adulthood, it was difficult for them to survive, much less thrive. **Massachusetts passed the Turning 22 law in 1985, which provided high school graduates a single point of entry for getting continued assistance and a plan for adult life.** This advancement was significant for the individuals, families, and communities that surround them. The Arc was one of the leaders in making this happen.

1990s: Congress passed **The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)** which was intended to “provide a clear and comprehensive national mandate for the elimination of discrimination against individuals with disabilities.” This mandate accelerated the demise of institutionalization of individuals with I/DD. The growth of group homes helped to relieve some of the concerns of this transition into their communities. The Arc battled against the use of painful aversive therapy and pushed to obtain specialized services for hundreds of those in need. These were just a few of the areas that The Arc fought for to advance universal human rights and eliminate discrimination.

21st Century: The U.N. adopts the *Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities* in 2006. **The world recognizes that we are dealing with a global issue. Our human rights movement has evolved into supporting each person's ability to self-advocate and reach for their dreams.** Our self-advocates strive to be recognized for their contribution to society, their local communities, and our daily lives. But there is still much to do to ensure that all people experience their basic human rights. The Arc is committed to this goal and we welcome you to share this goal with us.

Which brings us to the present... All Aboard The Arc! is about basic human rights.

All Aboard The Arc! is a statewide pledge event in which everyone can participate. This event allows for self-advocates and supporters to celebrate in a more public forum. **Your support will enable us to aid those whose basic human rights are not yet fully realized and discrimination is still a reality of their daily lives.**



For people with intellectual and developmental disabilities

Achieve with us.

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www.allaboardthearc.org