



**T**he Arc is a community-based organization that advocates for and supports people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD) and their families. Both the Tennessee chapter—as well as the 16 local chapters serving communities all across our state—are part of a larger national network providing a wide range of resources. Together, their mission is to promote and protect the human rights of people with IDD and actively support their full inclusion and participation in the community throughout their lifetimes.

### **What services or resources does this agency provide?**

The state chapter (called The Arc Tennessee) is very active in advocacy and public policy at both the state and local levels. It is an important source of accurate and breaking information on state policy and legislation relevant to students with IDD. The chapter also has excellent resources on topics like employment and entrepreneurship, education, self-advocacy, awareness, family supports, ABLETN, Employment and Community First CHOICES (ECF) program, supported decision-making and other alternatives to conservatorship, and conservatorship. Their Advocacy and Awareness Network provides information and referral, technical assistance, and individual advocacy to support and guide individuals with IDD and their families in the



areas of: (a) understanding and applying for government programs, including Medicaid, home and community based services (HCBS), SSI, SSDI, and Vocational Rehabilitation; (b) navigating the policies and procedures of state and federal programs, including rights and appeals; (c) identifying community connections and natural supports; (d) identifying career pathways and employment opportunities; (e) becoming a self-advocate; and (f) navigating issues within the DIDD and/or TennCare services provider systems. Each local chapter selects which supports and resources they will provide based on local needs and priorities. For example, some chapters:

- Facilitate job club for youth and young adults with IDD who are working or want to work
- Help host transition fairs
- Offer social and recreational activities throughout the year



- Undertake disability awareness events
- Advocate for better services and supports in their region
- Have summer programming for adolescents with IDD
- Host parent support groups
- Collaborate with local organizations and businesses to host job fairs
- Assist teachers and families with the transition planning process
- Operate creative social enterprises that employ people with IDD
- Support families to carry out person-centered “futures planning”
- Facilitate Next Chapter Book Clubs
- Provide employment services
- Coordinate educational workshops for families and people with IDD

### **What areas of Tennessee do they serve?**

Although The Arc Tennessee chapter serves the entire state, local chapters tend to serve one or more counties. A complete list of chapters and the counties each serves can be found here: <http://www.thearctn.org/chapters.php>.

### **Is there a cost and, if so, who pays?**

To become a member of The Arc Tennessee, there is a yearly fee (\$5 for individuals with disabilities, \$20 for other individuals, and \$100 for agencies) and some programs of local chapters may have associated costs. Membership in The Arc Tennessee helps support its programs. It also includes membership in the national chapter and the local chapter where there is one. However, membership in The Arc is not required to access

### **Where can I learn more?**

Visit The Arc Tennessee website at:

<http://www.thearctn.org/>

its services and resources. Most are freely available.

### **For which students might this agency be appropriate?**

The mission of The Arc reflects its focus on individuals of all ages with intellectual and developmental disabilities, including autism, Down syndrome, Fragile X syndrome, and other disabilities representing more than 100 different developmental disability diagnoses. With their emphasis on promoting inclusion and self-advocacy, their resources and supports are especially relevant for transition-age youth and their families.

### **Who is eligible to receive their services/ supports and when?**

There are no eligibility requirements to join the organization, but the services and supports chapters offer are designed for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities.

### **What is the referral process?**

#### **What documents are needed?**

Because The Arc Tennessee does not provide direct services, there is no formal “referral” process. Simply call their office and ask for assistance.



### **What is the family's responsibility?**

Because The Arc can be a resource to individuals and families throughout adulthood, schools should make sure students with disabilities and their families know about The Arc and are familiar with the types of resources and supports it offers. However, it will be up to families to decide whether and when they want to become connected with The Arc.

The Arc's Advocacy and Awareness Network conducts yearly family forums across Tennessee on a variety of topics. Families can request a workshop or family meeting be held in their area.

The chapter also hosts monthly family support meetings in Nashville and Memphis that cover a broad range of topics in an informal setting. Other groups can be created where there is enough interest. Families are encouraged to network and share their stories. To get on the mailing list for one of the groups, email Carrie Hobbs Guiden at [cguiden@thearc.org](mailto:cguiden@thearc.org).

### **What is the student's responsibility?**

Students will have to take the initiative to contact their local chapter of The Arc for any information and support they might need. In addition, it will be a student's responsibility to follow through with any services or supports he or she might be using.

### **What is the responsibility of an educator?**

Many students and their families are not aware of local organizations like The Arc that can be a resource to them long after graduation and throughout adulthood. It is important to make sure

students and families know about the resources and supports such an organization might provide.

As an educator, you may want to draw upon the online resources, trainings, and expertise available through the local chapter of The Arc. Given the ever-changing nature of policy and legislation, it can be helpful to have someone who can help you keep informed on this topic.

### **How (and when) do you involve them in the transition planning process?**

Although not a required participant in transition planning, The Arc offers valuable resources and expertise organization that could be an asset to your team. Consider the following ideas:

- Invite someone from your local chapter of The Arc to talk about available post-school supports at the planning meeting.
- Encourage parents to reach out to The Arc about their new Center for Future Planning (<https://futureplanning.thearc.org>).
- Explore if someone from The Arc can help you implement more student-led transition planning meetings.
- At meetings, share with families a packet of relevant resources from The Arc related to topics like adult services, alternatives to conservatorship and conservatorship, employment, stress management, and ABLETN.

### **What questions should I ask of my local chapter of The Arc?**

Every local chapter offers unique resources and services. When you contact The Arc, ask them:



- What trainings or workshops do you provide for parents, educators, and students?
- Does your chapter host a job club or parent support group?
- Is there a specific age range your chapter serves?
- Does your chapter offer any type of job training?
- Do you have a print or electronic newsletter so I can keep up with your activities?

**Additional contact information:**

- Give them a call at: 615-248-5878
- Send them an email at: [info@theacrctn.org](mailto:info@theacrctn.org)