"Get involved as if your life depended on it... Because it does."

-- Justin Dart

Hot Tips for Legislative Advocates is funded by a grant from the Washington State Developmental Disabilities Council. To obtain copies, or for more information, contact:

The Arc of Washington State
2638 State Avenue NE Olympia, WA 98506
888.754.8798  www.arcwa.org

For people with intellectual and developmental disabilities

Achieve with us.

Revised November 2023
HOT TIPS

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Advocacy Survival Kit

RUBBER BAND
Be flexible. Advocacy takes many twists and turns. People who are flexible will have longevity and success.

ERASER
It’s okay to make mistakes — in fact, you can count on making them! Don’t let missteps keep you from moving forward.

CHEWING GUM
Stick to what you believe in. Don’t give up! Real change takes time and tenacity.

MIRROR
Change begins with YOU.

PENNY
A penny for your thoughts. Tell your story!

HEART
Speak up about things that touch your heart, things that are important to you.

LIFESAVER
Take a friend. There’s no need to go it alone!
Advocacy Successes
Can your voice really make a difference?

SB 5473 (2003) Law enforcement training on DD
HB 1791 (2005) Developmental Disabilities Land Trust (Dan Thompson Memorial Trust)
SB 5311 (2005) Create the Caring for Individuals with Autism Task Force
HB 1107 (2006) Require all school districts to provide early intervention services
HB 1050 (2007) Students can graduate with their class and continue their transition program (Kevin’s Law)
SB 6448 (2008) Create the Children’s Intensive In-home Behavior Supports waiver
SB 6313 (2008) Disability history in schools
HB 2078 (2009) Create DD screening tool for jails/corrections
HB 2490 (2010) Change “mental retardation” to “intellectual disability” in state language
SB 5459 (2011) Close RHC, provide community crisis services
SB 6384 (2012) Try employment first, then other options
SB 5556 (2013) Establish Endangered Missing Persons Advisory
HB 2616 (2014) Help parents with developmental disabilities involved in dependency proceedings
SB 5317 (2015) Require screening for autism for children in Medicaid programs
HB 2545 (2016) Toxic-Free Kids & Families Act—Restricts harmful flame retardants
HB 1258 (2017) Training about DD for First Responders
HB 2448 (2018) Allow transfer of property to non-profit supported living, person with DD lives out their life there.

For information on these and other successes contact The Arc of Washington State at 888.754.8798

Change is made by those who show up!

Your elected officials represent you, but they can’t do this effectively if they don’t know what you want.

This booklet offers examples of ways to become a trusted resource for legislators and other elected officials on issues that affect your life.

These are tried and true methods for successful advocacy. Take that first step to write a letter or email, make a phone call, attend a reception or an Advocacy Day.

It’s about building a relationship with those who make decisions that affect your life. Lawmakers look to their constituents for reliable information on issues before them.

With so many issues to learn about including education, health care, transportation, the economy, state institutions versus community services—your knowledge of developmental disabilities helps them to do their job!
Be A Resource

There’s a fine line between keeping your legislators current on developing issues and over-working your relationship with too much repetition.

If you keep in regular contact with your legislators, be sure to always provide fresh, useful information, such as the status of a bill or budget item on which you need their support or assistance.

Legislation changes often and quickly throughout the session, as other interest groups weigh in and amendments are made. Be sure to stay on top of these changes and...

**TAKE ACTION**

- Attend Advocacy Day
- Join a local advocacy group such as a parent coalition or self-advocacy organization
- Visit The Arc of Washington State’s Online Action Center: www.arcwa.org

**Amendment:** Bills are often changed through amendments. Sometimes the changes are minor, but sometimes they are drastic enough to entirely alter the intent of the legislation.

**Dropped:** When a bill is introduced, it is “dropped in the hopper” at the code reviser’s office located on the Capitol campus.

**Hopper:** This is an actual box at the code reviser’s office in which bills are dropped. It looks like a mail slot in the wall.

**Executive Session:** After a bill is “heard” the committee takes a vote. This executive session can occur days or weeks after the hearing.

**Floor:** The full chamber of either the House or Senate. It’s where legislators vote as a whole.

**Hearing:** A committee “hears” public testimony from citizens, agencies and professional lobbyists who explain why a bill is good, bad or in need of amendments.

**Pull:** Can refer to pulling a legislator off the floor or it can refer to an action in Rules Committee in which a member is allowed to pull a bill to the floor for a vote.

**Sine Die:** (Without Day) The final adjournment of a legislative session, without adjourning to a specific time or date.
The Arc of Washington State
Local Chapters

The Arc of Cowlitz
360.425.5494

The Arc of Grays Harbor
360.537.7000

The Arc of King County
206.364.6337

The Arc of the Peninsula
360.377.3473

The Arc of Snohomish County
425.258.2459

The Arc of Southwest Washington
360.254.1562

The Arc of Spokane
509.328.6326

The Arc of Tri-Cities
509.783.1131

The Arc of Whatcom County
360.715.0170

Achieve with us.

We’re Here to Help YOU
Impacting government may feel overwhelming no matter how long you’ve been advocating, but others are available to guide you along the way.

From parent coalitions and self advocacy organizations to state and local Arc chapters—we’re here to help you have a voice. It only takes a few simple steps to get into the action:

Be informed. Sign up for Olympia Insider email updates, Olympia Reporter, Twitter updates, our Action Network and join The Arc’s Facebook group. (See page 11).

Get connected. Join a chapter of The Arc, a parent coalition, self advocacy or other group that holds the same interests, goals and values you do.

Take action. Visit The Arc of Washington State’s Online Action Center, attend town hall meetings and legislative receptions, participate in Advocacy Day, make phone calls, write emails and visit your legislators in person. (Action tips are provided throughout this booklet.)
**Do’s and Don’ts**

**Tips for Meeting with Elected Officials**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Do</th>
<th>Don’t</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>... make appointments.</td>
<td>... get upset if your legislator can’t see you personally.</td>
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<tr>
<td>... be on time for your scheduled visit.</td>
<td>... be late for the visit.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>... be positive and friendly.</td>
<td>... be confrontational or threatening.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>... clearly state the reason for your visit.</td>
<td>... try to discuss too many different issues.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>... personalize the issue in your life.</td>
<td>... ignore the legislative assistant (LA).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>... provide reliable information.</td>
<td>... talk only in acronyms.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>... give the names of people who can be a resource for additional information.</td>
<td>... give incorrect information.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>... get back to them with more information, be sure to get back to them.</td>
<td>... try to answer questions with guesses.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>... Write a “thank you” letter.</td>
<td>... forget to write a “thank you” letter.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>... ignore legislators the rest of the year.</td>
<td>... ignore legislators the rest of the year.</td>
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<td>... ignore legislators the rest of the year.</td>
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**Self Advocacy Groups**

Self-Advocacy organizations for individuals with disabilities exist in communities throughout the state. To learn more, call 888.754.8798, ext. 102.

**Self Advocates in Leadership (SAIL)**
www.sailcoalition.org
888.754.8798, ext. 102
*Location: Statewide coalition meets monthly in Seattle area*

**Allies in Advocacy**
www.disabilityrightswa.org/collaborations/allies-in-advocacy/
253.304.5762
*Location: Statewide coalition*

**People First of Washington (PFOW)**
www.peoplefirstofwashington.org
800.758.1123
*Location: Chapters throughout the state*

**Leadership, Education, Advocacy and Determination (LEAD)**
www.arcsno.org/programs/self-advocacy-l-e-a-d-coalition
425.258.2459 ext. 108
*Location: Snohomish County*

**Association of Centers for Independent Living ~ WA**
- Alliance of People with disAbilities  866.545.7055  www.disabilitypride.org  *King County*
- Center for Independence (South)  800.724.8172  www.cfisouth.org  Pierce, Thurston, S. Kitsap, Grays Harbor, Mason, S. King Counties
- Center for Independence (North)  888.482.4839  www.cfinorth.org  Whatcom, San Juan, Skagit, Island, and Snohomish Counties
- Central Washington Disability Resources  800.240.5978  www.mycwdr.org  Kittitas, Grant, Yakima, Chelan, and Douglas Counties
- Coalition of Responsible Disabled  509.326.6355  www.cordwa.info  Spokane, Lincoln, Pend Oreille, Whitman, Stevens, and Asotin Counties
Parent Coalitions

Parent Coalitions are non-profit organizations designed to provide information and resources to families who have sons/daughters with developmental disabilities.

To learn more, contact Cathy Murahashi, the Statewide Parent Coalition Coordinator at 206.829.7039.

Benton/Franklin Counties  509.967.3974
Clark County  360.823.2247
Grant/Adams/Lincoln  509.659.4173
Grays Harbor  360.537.7000
King County  206.829.7039
Kitsap County  360.373.2502
Kittitas County  509.929.7277
Pacific County  360.537.7000
Pierce County  253.564.0707
Snohomish County  425.258.2459
Spokane County  509.789.8327
Thurston County  360.357.5596
Whatcom County  360.715.0170

What You Don’t Know Won’t (necessarily) Hurt You

Sometimes, a legislator or aide may ask for information that you do not have (such as data or charts). Not only is it okay to say you don’t know, it is the very best response you can give!

As a constituent, it’s not your job to understand or have access to information that agencies and professional advocates have.

Stick to what you know best — your life. You are the expert in telling your story and how it relates to decisions being made by lawmakers.

Instead of guessing, say you don’t know; or find someone who does, such as an advocate from an organization like The Arc of Washington State.

You will greatly increase your credibility and strengthen your legislative relationships!
The Legislative Hotline

The toll-free Legislative Hotline is a fast way for you to voice your opinions on bills during the legislative session.

When you call the Hotline, an operator will answer and take your message. Your message will be sent to all three of your legislators and the Governor.

When you make a Hotline call, be sure to follow these simple guidelines:

- State your NAME and ADDRESS. If you know the names of your legislators, or district, that’s even better.
- Identify the BILL NUMBER (or budget item) you’re calling about.
- State YOUR POSITION simply. Do you support, oppose or want changes to the bill?

Weekday hours are 8:00 am to 8:00 pm. Saturday hours are 9:00 am to 1:00 pm. DURING LEGISLATIVE SESSION ONLY.

If the Hotline is busy, KEEP TRYING!

The Bill Process

Each session, 2,000 to 3,000 bills are introduced (dropped) but only 10% ever make it into law. To make sure each proposed law is a good idea, bills go through a tough review process. There is a series of cut-off dates for bills to make it out of each committee or the bill dies.

Bills change throughout the process based on what legislators hear from those who speak up. Make sure your voice is heard!
Budget Steps

The state budget process takes place each year. Every odd-numbered year the biennial (two-year) budget is created. In even-numbered years a supplemental budget makes fixes needed for unanticipated issues in the budget.

Each Spring, the Governor directs all state agencies to put together decision packages, based on his requests for budget cuts and/or increases.

State agencies work during the Summer to deliver their decision packages to the Governor by Fall. This gives him some basis for making his budget proposals.

The Governor decides in the Fall how he wants to spend or save money, based on the information state agencies provide. He sends his budget recommendations to the Legislature in time for legislative session (usually toward the end of December).

In the Winter, the Legislature develops budget proposals in response to the Governor’s budget. They have to agree before it can pass and go to the Governor for his signature.

Phone Calls, Emails, Mail...

Your phone calls and emails are important, it just takes 10 or 15 calls about a bill (or budget item) and it is considered a landslide of public opinion. Most legislators use email to communicate with their constituents and work on their laptops during committee meetings or on the chamber floor.

Formula for all legislators’ email addresses:

- Legislator’s full first name, followed by dot (.)
- Full last name
- @leg.wa.gov

Example: Thomas.Jefferson@leg.wa.gov

Although email is the best way to communicate during session, when things are happening really fast, a written letter or note can leave a lasting impression. Thank you cards remind legislators that you appreciate what they do.

When the Legislature is not in session, writing a letter or email is a good way for you to share your perspectives about issues in greater depth.

House
P.O. Box 40600
Olympia, WA 98504

Senate
P.O. Box 40404
Olympia, WA 98504

*Note: For your senator, insert your 2-digit district number after 404. Example for the 1st district: 40401

Governor Jay Inslee
Office of the Governor
P.O. Box 40002
Olympia, WA 98504-0002
Online Information/Action Center

Opportunities to advocate from your home computer are just one click away when you visit The Arc of Washington State’s Online Action Center. The Action Center provides:

- **Action Alerts** provide messages to your legislators that you can use as is or edit using your own words. With one click, you can send your message to the appropriate legislator(s).
- **Easily send a letter to your state Senator and Representatives, to your Congressional representatives, to the Governor and to other elected officials.**
- **Letters to the Editor** can be very effective in making your personal opinion known to the public to help educate them. At the Legislative Action Center you can submit your letter to five newspapers at once.
- **Budget side-by-sides** show the contrast between the Governor’s budget proposal, House and Senate proposals, and then the final budget.
- **Bills of interest** provides a brief summary and links to legislative bill reports and budget overviews.
- Annual **Legislative Notebook for Advocates** containing one-page information sheets on current issues as well as associated data and charts.

To sign up for Action Alerts, or to write and send letters please visit www.arcwa.org and click on Take Action.

Questions? Email Diana@arcwa.org

The Art of a Clear Message

When you speak up for yourself, or for others, **you are an advocate**. Your time with legislators, staff or aides is short, and your message should be too. It’s a good idea to plan one minute, five minute and ten minute versions.

Assume that the person you’re talking to doesn’t know anything about you, your life or the issues that affect your life. To be a good advocate, get your point across with a clear message. Shape your message with three main points:

1. **The issue most important to you**
2. **How this issue affects your life or the lives of others**
3. **The action or results you are seeking**

Be sure your message answers these questions:

- 🌟 Who are you and where do you live?
- 🌟 What is important to you and why?
- 🌟 What action do you want taken?
Join Us for the Statewide Developmental Disabilities Legislative Reception

The 41st Annual Disability Legislative Reception is designed to bring legislators and their constituents from all over Washington together to share their perspectives on issues important to individuals with disabilities.

A summary of the issues relevant to people with developmental disabilities (DD) will be provided in the afternoon in a Zoom meeting.

Join us at 5:30 back on another Zoom link for the Developmental Disabilities Legislative Reception.

Wednesday, January 18, 2023
Advocacy Day Briefing  2:00-4:00 pm
Zoom link to register: Click here

Reception  5:30-7:30 pm
Zoom link to register: Click here

Using Technology to Advocate

Many legislators use technology to reach their constituents, share their views on issues and quickly work to inform and educate each other.

Facebook pages are a way to share quick thoughts and ideas. The Arc of Washington State has a Facebook page with updates on legislative news, a forum for discussions and links to other advocacy groups. www.facebook.com, search The Arc—Washington State

Twitter is a text base communication in which you send and receive “tweets”, short messages that are 140 characters or less, on your mobile phone or your Twitter online page. You can “follow” The Arc at ArcofWA. (www.twitter.com)

The Olympia Insider YouTube channel provides video coverage of issues and concerns happening in Olympia. (www.youtube.com/user/TheOlympiaInsider)

The Olympia Reporter gives a more in-depth look at what happens each week during legislative session. (www.arcwa.org/arc_insider.htm)

Action Network provides you with email action alerts that offer easy-to-use information for you to make your voice heard. http://capwiz.com/arcwa/state/main/?state=WA

Email Diana@arcwa.org to learn more.
Advocacy Day

Advocacy Day is a great way to learn about the legislative process. Each Advocacy Day begins with an hour briefing at 10:00 in the morning. The briefing includes:

- Special speakers
- Tips for a successful day
- Inside information on current bills and budget issues

Participants are offered several ways in which to advocate during the afternoon, such as:

- Meeting with legislators or their aides*
- Attending online hearings
- Writing messages to legislators

*Appointments with legislators must be made well in advance. Please contact The Arc of Washington State at 1.888.754.8798 ext. 5 if you need help making your appointments.

2023 Advocacy Day Schedule

January 18th - Briefing on IDD Issues, 2:00 to 4:00 pm
January 18th - Statewide IDD Legislative Reception, 5:30 to 7:00 pm
January 25th—Housing Options—Close Rainier
February 1st - Employment Services & Rates
February 8th - Community Inclusion & Day Programs
February 15th - Supported Living
February 22nd - Out-of-Home & In-Crisis
March 1st - TEFRA & Waiver Services
March 8th - Education Cap & Restraints
March 15th - Family and Senior Supports
March 22nd - Caseload Forecast in the Budget
March 29th - Workforce Shortage
April 5th - Residential Habilitation Centers (RHC)

To allow greater accessibility, we will not meet in person. Instead we will have weekly meetings via Zoom. Advocacy Day begins at 10 a.m. on Wednesdays during the legislative session. We start with an hour and a half briefing on current issues and end with an afternoon of advocacy.

While we feature a highlighted topic each week, the morning briefing will also cover late breaking news on budget items and bills of interest. If this is your first Advocacy Day and you need a guide and/or help planning your day, please let us know in advance.