The Arc

# NATIONAL CONVENTION

Portland, OR | 2026



# WELCOME TO PORTLAND

Dear friends,

**On behalf of The Arc Oregon, welcome to Portland!** We are proud to host The Arc's 2026 National Convention, and we are so glad you are here.

Oregon has a deep history in the self-advocacy movement. In 1974, self-advocates gathered in Salem for a convention where one participant said, "I want to be known as a person first." That moment gave the People First movement its name. Today, self-advocates continue to lead this work, and many of them started the week with us at the Self-Advocacy Convention of Oregon on November 17.

You will also meet people from chapters of The Arc across our state, from the coast to the high desert. They have been part of this work for decades, and they are excited to welcome you.

When you have a free moment, Portland is ready for you. Powell's City of Books, one of the largest independent bookstores in the world, is a short trip from the hotel. Pioneer Courthouse Square, Lan Su Chinese Garden, and our famous food carts are close by too. MAX light rail and the Portland Streetcar are accessible and easy to use. Two tips: bring a raincoat, and enjoy shopping with no sales tax.

**Thank you for coming together with us. We hope you leave Portland inspired, connected, and ready for the work ahead.**

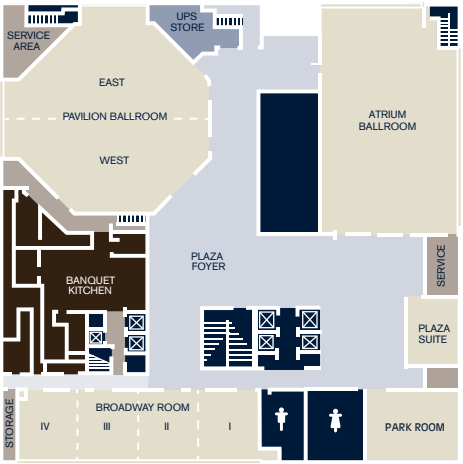
Warmly,

Em Braman
Executive Director, The Arc Oregon

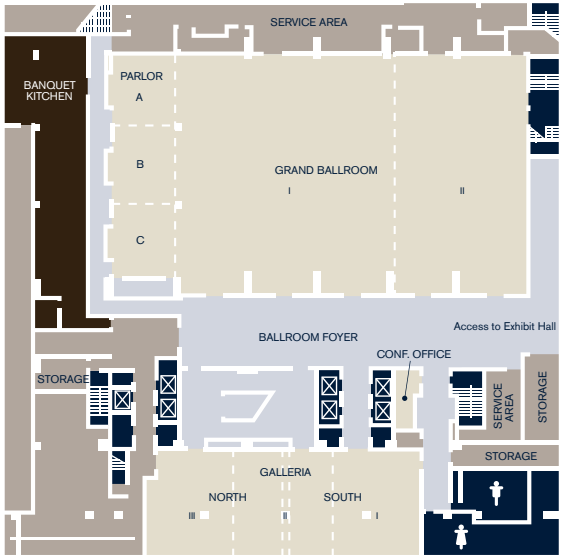
# HOTEL MAPS

**Hilton Portland Downtown**
921 SW 6th Ave, Portland, OR 97204
(503) 226-1611

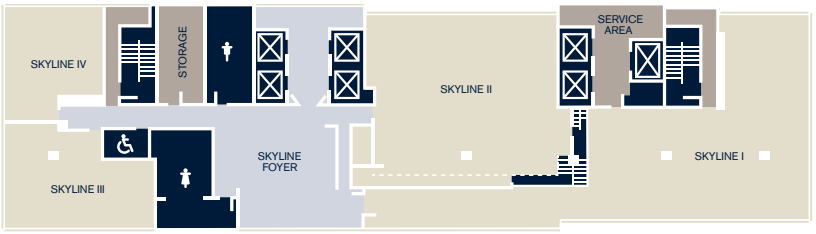
## Plaza Level



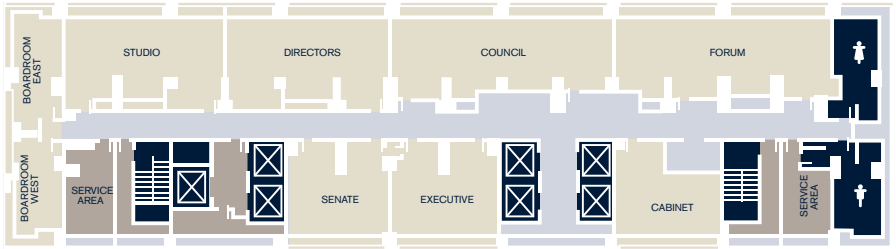

## Ballroom Level




## 23rd Floor Skyline Level




## 3rd Floor Conference Level



# EVENT INFORMATION

## Registration & Information

**PLAZA LEVEL**

| | |
|---|---|
| Tuesday, November 17 | 12:30 pm – 4:30 pm |
| Wednesday, November 18 | 7:30 am – 5:00 pm |
| Thursday, November 19 | 7:30 am – 4:30 pm |
| Friday, November 20 | 7:30 am – 10:30 am |

## Meeting Space Wi-Fi

Network Name: **Hilton Meeting Room**
Password: **TheArc26**

## Exhibit Hall

**ATRIUM BALLROOM, PLAZA LEVEL**

Meet this year's national sponsors of The Arc and explore new tools to enhance your work.

| | |
|---|---|
| Wednesday, November 18 | 8:00 am – 6:00 pm |
| Thursday, November 19 | 8:00 am – 5:00 pm |

Editor's Note on Terminology: Throughout our program, you may see the term "intellectual and developmental disabilities" replaced with the acronym "IDD."

## Quiet Room

**SENATE SUITE, 3RD FLOOR, CONFERENCE LEVEL**

This room offers a quiet, calm space to spend time away from noise, lights, and other distractions. The quiet room is not intended for use as a meeting space or for networking.

| | |
|---|---|
| Tuesday November 17 | 8:00 am – 5:00 pm |
| Wednesday, November 18 | 8:00 am – 5:00 pm |
| Thursday, November 19 | 8:00 am – 5:00 pm |
| Friday, November 20 | 8:00 am – 12:00 pm |

## Adult Changing Room

**FORUM SUITE, 3RD FLOOR, CONFERENCE LEVEL**

A private space with an adult changing table available 24/7 during the Convention.

## Social Media

Share your photos and videos on social media using the hashtag #TheArcConvention. You can find and tag us on Facebook, Instagram, and LinkedIn.

TheArcUS @TheArcUS

@TheArc_US

## Mobile App

Scan the QR code to download the event app for the latest information and updates.

## Photographs & Videos

The Arc reserves the right to use any photography or video taken during the 2026 National Convention for future marketing and promotional purposes.

## The Arc's Online Store

Show your support for disability rights with The Arc's exclusive merch. Shop year-round and check out our bold tees, cozy hoodies, bags, and more at TheArc.org/Store.












# SCHEDULE OF EVENTS

**This schedule is subject to change. Please refer to the Convention mobile app for the most up-to-date schedule (see page 5).**

## Tuesday, November 17

8:00 am – 11:30 am

### NCE Steering Committee Meeting

**SKYLINE II, 23RD FLOOR**

For invited participants only.

12:30 pm – 4:00 pm

### Joint Meeting of The Arc of the US Board of Directors, The Arc of the US Foundation Board, National Council of Self-Advocates, and Sibling Council

**SKYLINE II, 23RD FLOOR**

6:30 pm – 8:30 pm

### Joint Dinner With The Arc of the US Board, The Arc of the US Foundation Board, NCE Steering Committee, National Council of Self-Advocates, and Sibling Council

**SKYLINE I, 23RD FLOOR**

For invited participants only.

1:00 pm – 4:00 pm

### Professional Development Seminar

### Conducting Business Leadership: An Interactive Workshop for Leaders at Every Level

**PAVILION BALLROOM, PLAZA LEVEL**

**Additional fee and pre-registration required. Visit the registration desk for assistance.**

*Hal Adler, Leadership Landing and Telluride Choral Society*

What can a choir teach us about leadership? More than you might imagine.

This dynamic, hands-on workshop uses the performing arts as a powerful metaphor for leading teams. Through the relationship between conductor and choir, explore essential leadership skills, such as setting a clear vision, communicating effectively, building trust, fostering collaboration, and fully engaging team members.

This immersive experience brings leadership principles to life, offering practical insights to improve communication, strengthen culture, and inspire peak performance. Discover how the same principles that create harmony in an ensemble can help organizations thrive.

# Wednesday, November 18

7:30 am – 8:30 am

## Breakfast

**FOYER, BALLROOM LEVEL**

8:00 am – 5:00 pm

## Exhibits

**ATRIUM BALLROOM, PLAZA LEVEL**

8:45 am – 10:00 am

**Keynote Presentation**

## Self-Advocacy, Respect & What Comes Next

**GRAND BALLROOM, BALLROOM LEVEL**

*Dani Bowman, DaniMation*

What does self-advocacy look like when the world still underestimates disabled people, misrepresents them, or treats disrespect like entertainment? Dani Bowman will kick off our National Convention and share what it's like to build a career on her own terms. She's the founder of DaniMation and was featured in Seasons 1-4 of Netflix's "Love on the Spectrum U.S." Dani will share how she uses her public platform, why harmful language like the R-word still matters, and how we can all push back when disability is mocked.

10:00 am – 10:30 am

## Dani Bowman Meet & Greet

**GRAND BALLROOM, BALLROOM LEVEL**

10:45 am – 12:00 pm

## National Council of Self-Advocates Symposium: Building Mental Health & Resilience

**SKYLINE II, 23RD FLOOR**

This symposium was designed by and for people with disabilities. During the session, you will experience an interactive and supportive space to explore what mental health is, learn self-care and mindfulness techniques, and recognize when you or someone else may need support. You will also learn how to build resilience and navigate challenging times.



## BREAKOUT SESSIONS

10:45 am – 11:45 am

### AI Jumpstart: From Curiosity to Action With AI

**BROADWAY III/IV, PLAZA LEVEL**

**AI & TECH FOR ALL**

*Molly Little, The Arc of Delaware County, NY; Donald Mullin, The Arc of Rensselaer County*

AI is everywhere, but where should your chapter begin? This interactive workshop helps leaders of The Arc move from curiosity to confident action. You will learn a simple, fast, low-risk approach to launching AI that creates early wins using existing staff and affordable tools. Hear stories from leaders at The Arc of Delaware County and The Arc of Rensselaer County, two chapters already on an AI journey, and watch AI in action through live demonstrations. You will leave with Globe North's AI JumpStart framework, a practical roadmap for identifying high-value use cases, engaging staff, piloting safely, and scaling what works. Whether you're AI-curious or AI-cautious, you will come away energized, informed, and ready to take the next step.

10:45 am – 11:45 am

### Provider Mergers, Acquisitions & Affiliations

**PAVILION BALLROOM EAST, PLAZA LEVEL**

**BUILDING & SUSTAINING RESILIENT ORGANIZATIONS**

*Erik Geizer, The Arc New York; Mike Vollmer, The Bonadio Group*

In this session, presenters will discuss and share experiences related to the increasing frequency of various types of mergers, acquisitions, and affiliations in the IDD sector. They will weigh the pros and cons and critical considerations that come with each venture. They will also cover how to prepare for these endeavors and measure success.

10:45 am – 11:45 am

### Impact Findings of Mental Health First Aid in the IDD Community

**PAVILION BALLROOM WEST, PLAZA LEVEL**

**CONNECTED COMMUNITIES: FAMILY CENTERED SUPPORTS & SERVICES**

*Lindsay Dutton, The Arc Oregon; Kerry Mauger, The Arc of the US*

Mental health conditions affect up to 40% of people with IDD, double the national average, which underscores a critical need for accessible care. This session will explore a three-year national initiative, funded by the United Health Foundation, that equipped 10 chapters of The Arc to implement a Mental Health First Aid (MHFA) program. By tailoring evidence-based practices to the IDD community, the project educated families

and professionals on crisis intervention. Presenters will discuss co-occurring IDD and mental health conditions, access disparities, and inclusive crisis responses. You will gain insights into curriculum enhancements and recommendations for making future mental health services truly responsive to the unique needs of people with IDD.

10:45 am – 11:45 am

## Shaping Fair Funding: Special Education Reform in Action

**GALLERIA NORTH, BALLROOM LEVEL**

**SPEAKING UP & SPEAKING OUT: LESSONS IN POLICY & ADVOCACY**

*Heather Eckner, Autism Alliance of Michigan*

This workshop will equip disability leaders with practical advocacy tools to advance equitable special education funding, using Michigan's Blueprint as a case study. Through guided activities, facilitated discussions, and scenario-based exercises, participants will map stakeholders, craft compelling messaging, and design actionable strategies to influence policy. You will leave with ready-to-use templates and approaches for mobilizing families, self-advocates, and coalitions in your own community. The session emphasizes amplifying lived experience through bold advocacy, empowering leaders to turn complex policy issues into impactful action while strengthening organizational capacity and leadership.

10:45 am – 11:45 am

## Different Voices, Different Needs: Achieving Neuro-Inclusivity

**GALLERIA SOUTH, BALLROOM LEVEL**

**TELLING OUR STORY & FUNDING THE FUTURE**

*Faith Johnson, The Arc of Tempe/Arizona Achieve*

This interactive session explores the diverse realities of neurodivergence and challenges the misconception that there is a single "look" or experience of being neurodivergent. Through the lived experiences of two advocates—a Black, highly masking, and verbal advocate and a white, verbal advocate—you will gain a deeper understanding of how neurodiversity presents across race, communication styles, and levels of support needs.

10:45 am – 11:10 am

## What's at Stake at the Supreme Court for People With Disabilities

**BROADWAY I/II, PLAZA LEVEL**

**SESSION SHORTS – SPEAKING UP & SPEAKING OUT: LESSONS IN POLICY & ADVOCACY**

*Shira Wakschlag, The Arc of the US*

Learn about what's at stake for people with disabilities in the most recent Supreme Court term and how you can get involved in protecting disability rights before the Court.

11:20 am – 11:45 am

## Is Justice Being Served? Holistic Solutions in a Broken System

**BROADWAY I/II, PLAZA LEVEL**

**SESSION SHORTS – SPEAKING UP & SPEAKING OUT: LESSONS IN POLICY & ADVOCACY**

*John Gotchall, The Arc of Benton County; Leigh Anne McKingsley, The Arc of the US*

People with IDD are overrepresented in the U.S. criminal "justice" system, as both victims and incarcerated individuals, highlighting a critical need for professionals in the system to better understand and support people with IDD. In this session, we will highlight Just Policing, a new virtual training from The Arc's National Center on Criminal Justice and Disability, designed to provide police officers with disability awareness training to better serve people with IDD. The Arc of Benton County will also share its CommCard Training Program, Justice Consult and Access Program outcomes, and development of their Disability Response Team as a holistic approach that can work for other communities. Expect real-world strategies, practical tools, lessons learned, and a safe place for people with IDD, advocates, and professionals to discuss this challenging area of advocacy.

11:45 am – 2:00 pm

## Lunch on Your Own

12:00 pm – 2:00 pm

## NCE Awards Luncheon

**GRAND BALLROOM, BALLROOM LEVEL**

**Additional fee and pre-registration required. Visit the registration desk for assistance.**

The NCE Awards honor the professional excellence and achievement of NCE members who make significant contributions to strengthening the IDD community. These awards recognize those who strive for excellence, prioritize our clients' needs, and deliver outstanding results.

# BREAKOUT SESSIONS

2:15 pm – 3:15 pm

## Seeing, Hearing, Doing, Living: How Meta's AI Glasses Are Expanding Independence for People With Disabilities

**BROADWAY III/IV, PLAZA LEVEL**

**AI & TECH FOR ALL**

*Katy Schmid, SEO, National Programs, The Arc US, John Decker, Director of Community Services and Supports Alta California Regional Center*

Wearable AI is moving assistive technology out of specialized devices and into everyday eyewear. This panel will explore how Meta's AI glasses—with cameras, open-ear audio, and a voice-driven assistant—are being used by people who are blind or have low vision, are deaf or hard of hearing, or live with mobility, intellectual, or developmental disabilities. Panelists will discuss real-world use, from

describing a scene or reading a menu to navigating unfamiliar spaces hands-free, and what changes when assistive features arrive in a mainstream product instead of a device that marks the wearer as disabled. The conversation will also address accuracy, privacy, and how disability-led design and smart policy determine who actually benefits.

2:15 pm – 3:15 pm

## Shifting Power: Who Leads and Why It Matters

**PAVILION BALLROOM EAST, PLAZA LEVEL**

**BUILDING & SUSTAINING RESILIENT ORGANIZATIONS**

*Dustin Smith and Rachel Wobschall, The Arc Minnesota*

In most social justice movements, leadership by those directly affected is expected. Yet in the disability rights movement, disabled leadership, especially at the executive level, is often the exception rather than the norm. The Arc Minnesota offers a different model: four of its six executive leaders identify as people with lived experience of disability, spanning mental health disability, physical disability, and IDD.

Grounded in the disability justice principle of "Leadership of Those Most Impacted," this session will examine how disabled leadership drives stronger decision making, deeper accountability, and more effective systems change. Explore how to intentionally recruit, support, and develop disabled leaders; the structural barriers that exist in nonprofits; and how organizations can move beyond tokenism toward real power sharing. We invite you to ask: if disabled people aren't leading disability justice work, who truly is?

2:15 pm – 3:15 pm

## Beyond Translation: Culturally Responsive Support for IDD Families

**PAVILION BALLROOM WEST, PLAZA LEVEL**

**CONNECTED COMMUNITIES: FAMILY CENTERED SUPPORTS & SERVICES**

*Veronica Regueiro, CBEM LLC*

Families from diverse backgrounds, including Hispanic families, play a central role in supporting people with IDD, yet many encounter systems of care that don't reflect their values, communication styles, or lived experiences. While language access has improved, translation alone isn't enough to build trust or support meaningful engagement.

This session will provide practical and culturally responsive strategies for supporting people with IDD and their families. Explore how cultural values such as *familismo*, *respeto*, and *personalismo* shape family roles, decision-making, interactions with service providers, and how families understand disability. Through examples and guided discussion, learn to spot barriers like mistrust and disengagement and improve communication, strengthen family partnerships, and integrate cultural and spiritual perspectives into person-centered support.

2:15 pm – 3:15 pm

## Interrupting the Pipeline: Toward Autonomy

**GALLERIA NORTH, BALLROOM LEVEL**

**SPEAKING UP & SPEAKING OUT: LESSONS IN POLICY & ADVOCACY**

*Leslie Lipson, Georgia Coalition for Equity in Education; Dana Lloyd, I DECIDE Georgia*

Students with disabilities, particularly those at the intersection of race and disability, are often pushed toward two harmful outcomes: criminalization and the loss of autonomy through guardianship. While the school-to-prison pipeline is widely recognized, the school-to-guardianship pipeline is less visible yet just as concerning. Both are shaped by everyday school practices, lowered expectations, and systems that favor control and compliance.

Drawing on legal advocacy, systems work, and real-world examples, presenters will help you spot early warning signs, see how ableism and racism intersect to shape outcomes and why some students are disproportionately impacted, and apply concrete strategies that can be used in IEP meetings, school settings, and community contexts to interrupt these pathways. The goal is to move from reactive responses to intentional strategies that help young people build decision-making skills, maintain rights, and pursue a self-directed life.

2:15 pm – 3:15 pm

## Accessibility Isn't Broken, the System Is: 3 Tools for Change

**GALLERIA SOUTH, BALLROOM LEVEL**

**TELLING OUR STORY & FUNDING THE FUTURE**

*Yvette Pegues, The Arc of the US Board Member*

If support doesn't show up or things don't work the way they should, it's not your fault. In this session, you will learn why accessibility keeps breaking and what you can do about it. You will leave with a simple three-question hack to help you speak up, find out who is responsible, and push for real change, not just quick fixes. We'll also talk about how to improve systems or create new ones when they don't work. This interactive, easy-to-follow session will leave you with tools you can use right away to advocate for yourself and your community.

2:15 pm – 2:40 pm

## Beyond Social Skills: Helping Your Loved One Build a Social Life

**BROADWAY I/II, PLAZA LEVEL**

**SESSION SHORTS – CONNECTED COMMUNITIES: FAMILY CENTERED SUPPORTS & SERVICES**

*Ilana Hamburgh and Jeremy Hamburgh, My Best Social Life*

Many families want to help their loved one build a social life but haven't been successful or don't know where to start. Social skills groups, therapy, and encouragement may lead to better conversations, but not lasting friendships or relationships. Opportunities arise, but connection doesn't follow. This session explores

why and what to do differently. You will learn how social connection happens and how to support your loved one in building friendships and community, including how to identify the right environments, help your loved one meet new people in a structured way, and support growth in confidence and independence. You will leave with practical strategies to help your loved one move from isolation to connection.

2:50 pm - 3:15 pm

## Gender Identity and Support Services: Facilitating Connection

**BROADWAY I/II, PLAZA LEVEL**

**SESSION SHORTS – CONNECTED COMMUNITIES: FAMILY CENTERED SUPPORTS & SERVICES**

*Seneca Clemons, Northwest Center*

Have you ever been caught off guard when someone asks what pronouns you use? Are you curious about how to provide inclusive services for the LGBTQ+ community? If so, this breakout session is for you. You will gain a working understanding of terms like nonbinary, gender-fluid, and transgender, plus practical tools for promoting gender-inclusive conversations and community spaces. Whether you are a service provider looking to expand your cultural awareness, a community member wanting to learn more about gender diversity, or someone who simply wants to spend time in a space of solidarity with your neighbors, our doors are open.

3:30 pm – 4:30 pm

## Advocacy Power Hour Sessions

### Ask Us Anything: Education Policy Advocacy

**PAVILION BALLROOM EAST, PLAZA LEVEL**

*Robyn Linscott, The Arc of the US*

Join The Arc's Director of Education and Family Policy for a quick update on key education issues and initiatives happening across the network. Then, the conversation turns to you. Bring your questions, share what's working in your state and what's not, and connect with fellow advocates from across the country.

### Ask Us Anything: Grassroots Advocacy

**PAVILION BALLROOM WEST, PLAZA LEVEL**

*Claire Manning, The Arc of the US*

The Arc's SEO of Advocacy and Mobilization will give a short update on key grassroots advocacy issues and initiatives happening across the network. After that, the floor is yours. We'll have time for you to ask questions, share what's working (and what's not) in your state, and connect with other passionate advocates.

## Ask Us Anything: Olmstead & Legal Advocacy

**BROADWAY III/IV, PLAZA LEVEL**

*Shira Wakschlag, The Arc of the US*

The Arc's Legal Advocacy & General Counsel will share an update on Olmstead and other legal advocacy issues occurring around the country. Then it's your turn. Bring your questions and trade notes on what's working where you live and what's not.

3:30 pm – 4:45 pm

## NCE Professional Development Bonus Session: What's Changing in HCBS? Insights From the MAP-It Project

**GALLERIA NORTH, BALLROOM LEVEL**

**Additional fee and pre-registration required. Visit the registration desk for assistance.**

*Kate Brady and Yoshi Kardell, The Grassroots Project, Human Services Research Institute*

Medicaid policy changes affecting home and community-based services (HCBS) can have a major impact on people with disabilities and older adults, yet changes often happen with little visibility. To address this challenge, the Human Services Research Institute, with support from the WITH Foundation, launched MAP-It: A Medicaid Action & Policy Impact Tracker for People with Disabilities. In partnership with George Washington University and the American Association on Health and Disability, MAP-It tracks state-level Medicaid and HCBS policy changes and makes them easier to understand, helping advocates, families, and community organizations engage earlier, share lessons across states, and hold decision-makers accountable. We'll share key findings and trends emerging from the project and discuss what they mean for people with disabilities and HCBS systems nationwide. We also want to hear about your experiences tracking, responding to, and influencing HCBS changes in your state.

5:00 pm – 6:00 pm

## Opening Welcome Reception

**ATRIUM BALLROOM, PLAZA LEVEL**

7:30 pm – 9:30 pm

## The Arc Movie Night

**PAVILION BALLROOM, PLAZA LEVEL**

### Join us for an advance screening of "Being Heumann"!

In 1977, disability rights activist Judy Heumann (Ruth Madeley) leads a historic occupation of a federal building, demanding government action on disability rights. Directed by Academy Award winner Siân Heder (CODA) and inspired by true events, "Being Heumann" is a revolutionary, irreverent, and deeply human story of courage, resistance, and lasting change.



# Thursday, November 19

7:30 am – 8:45 am

## State Chapter Leaders Meeting

**COUNCIL MEETING ROOM, 3RD FLOOR CONFERENCE LEVEL**

This meeting is for state chapter leaders (Executives/CEOs) and/or their designee and other invited guests to share updates and discuss other important issues. Breakfast will be available.

8:00 am – 8:45 am

## Breakfast

**FOYER, BALLROOM LEVEL**

9:00 am – 10:30 am

## General Session: Update From Washington

**GRAND BALLROOM, BALLROOM LEVEL**

*Robyn Linscott, Claire Manning, Kim Musheno, Katy Neas, and Julie Ward, The Arc of the US*

The Arc's CEO, Katy Neas, along with The Arc's Policy and Advocacy teams, will share the latest insights on federal policy, advocacy strategies, and legislative updates impacting the disability community. Explore how national developments from Washington are shaping opportunities and challenges for people with IDD, families, and professionals.

10:45 am – 12:00 pm

## The Arc's Annual Business Meeting

**GRAND BALLROOM, BALLROOM LEVEL**

11:00 am – 7:00 pm

## Networking Room

**DIRECTORS, 3RD FLOOR, CONFERENCE LEVEL**

12:00 pm – 1:30 pm

## Lunch on Your Own

## BREAKOUT SESSIONS

1:45 pm – 2:45 pm

## AI as Accommodation: Tools That Help Self Advocates Thrive at Work

**BROADWAY III/IV, PLAZA LEVEL**

**AI & TECH FOR ALL**

*Sydney Badeau, The Arc Wisconsin*

AI can help self-advocate professionals work at their full potential. In this session, we will share real examples of how AI supports everyday work tasks like writing emails, organizing schedules, preparing for meetings, and communicating clearly. You will learn how AI can be used as an accommodation to support executive functioning, reduce stress, and increase independence at work. We will share accessible tools that help with planning, problem solving, and staying on

track. Designed for all experience levels, this session focuses on building confidence around AI use. You will leave with practical ideas you can use right away, whether for your own work or for the self-advocates you support.

1:45 pm – 2:45 pm

## Beyond Group Homes: Replicating Connecticut's IDD Housing Model

**PAVILION BALLROOM EAST, PLAZA LEVEL**

**BUILDING & SUSTAINING RESILIENT ORGANIZATIONS**

*Patricia Nadeau and Penny Phillips, Favarh – The Arc of the Farmington Valley*

Every family of a person with IDD carries the same question: where will my loved one live and thrive when I'm no longer able to be there? The answer, too often, is a waiting list measured in decades. Connecticut has built a better answer. Learn how chapters of The Arc in Connecticut are collaborating with private housing developers to create integrated, affordable apartment communities where adults with IDD live as tenants among neighbors of all abilities, with support staff on site 24/7. The model leverages Low-Income Housing Tax Credits, existing service dollars, and public-private partnerships, with no capital campaigns, land purchases, or landlording by providers. In five years, more than 30 communities in Connecticut have been completed or are underway. This session will show what it takes to build it.

1:45 pm – 2:45 pm

## Making Medicaid Sign-Up and Renewal ("Eligibility") Processes Easier: A Conversation With the Lab

**PAVILION BALLROOM WEST, PLAZA LEVEL**

**CONNECTED COMMUNITIES: FAMILY CENTERED SUPPORTS & SERVICES**

*Sharon Lewis, Aging & Disability Health Policy Lab*

Many states are making changes to Medicaid because of new federal rules. Work requirements for adults in the "expansion" group have drawn much of the attention, but the changes can affect people with disabilities and their families too. Some people have had trouble keeping Medicaid coverage, including people with disabilities who work, "Disabled Adult Children," and people whose savings or income briefly go over the SSI limits.

The Aging & Disability Health Policy Lab is looking at ways to make Medicaid sign-ups and renewals easier for people with disabilities and older adults. In this session, we will explain parts of the eligibility process, talk about common problems and what people are seeing in their own states, and discuss ways to help people keep their Medicaid coverage and avoid losing it by mistake. The Lab will use feedback from this discussion to help propose better policies at the state and federal levels.

1:45 pm – 2:45 pm

## Unified Under Pressure: Building Strategic Advocacy Partnerships

**GALLERIA NORTH, BALLROOM LEVEL**

**SPEAKING UP & SPEAKING OUT: LESSONS IN POLICY & ADVOCACY**

*Nora Bent and Maura Sullivan, The Arc of Massachusetts*

Since 2025, the landscape for the disability community has shifted significantly. The Arc of Massachusetts has responded by focusing on collective power. This session will examine high-impact advocacy alliances through three examples: the IDD-Autism Alliance, a coalition of disability advocacy organizations; the partnership between The Arc of Massachusetts and Advocates for Autism of Massachusetts; and the Disability Impact Tracker, an online portal documenting the impact of federal changes. Presenters will share frameworks for navigating diverging organizational priorities so partners can move in the same direction.

1:45 PM-2:45 PM

## Unifying The Arc Chapters Statewide to Recruit, Advocate and Fundraise

**GALLERIA SOUTH, BALLROOM LEVEL**

**TELLING OUR STORY & FUNDING THE FUTURE**

*David Singer, VP of Communications and Marketing, Berkshire County Arc; Noah Leavitt, Director of Marketing and Communications, Northeast Arc*

Marketing/Communications/Development Directors from the 18 chapters of The Arc in Massachusetts meet monthly to share strategies and tools, ensuring a collective voice for branding, recruitment, and legislative advocacy.

Last year, the group conducted its largest statewide joint media campaign across print, digital, and social media, directing candidates to one website listing open positions across chapters. The group also shared stories, identified legislative priorities, and pushed out unified messages statewide.

1:45 pm – 2:10 pm

## Sibling Support: The Missing Link in Family-Centered Services

**BROADWAY I/II, PLAZA LEVEL**

**SESSION SHORTS – CONNECTED COMMUNITIES: FAMILY CENTERED SUPPORTS & SERVICES**

*Nikki Donnelly and Kaitlin McNamara, Sibling Leadership Network*

Siblings of people with IDD play a vital, lifelong role in family systems, yet they are often underserved in services and supports. This session will introduce the experiences, strengths, and challenges of "sibs" and why they are essential to true family-centered care. Explore how sibling experiences evolve, from caregiving expectations, family dynamics, and future planning to strengths like resilience, empathy, and advocacy. You will also gain practical strategies for providers and families to better include and support siblings through communication, information sharing, and connection to peer supports.

2:20 pm – 2:45 pm

## Supporting Siblings of Adults With IDD and Distressing Behaviors

**BROADWAY I/II, PLAZA LEVEL**

**SESSION SHORTS - CONNECTED COMMUNITIES: FAMILY CENTERED SUPPORTS & SERVICES**

*Meghan Burke, Vanderbilt University; Emily Holl, Sibling Support Project*

Siblings are likely to become caregivers

for their brothers and sisters with IDD. However, they may struggle when a sibling has distressing behaviors, such as physical aggression. By understanding the experiences of families of people with IDD and distressing behaviors, we can identify ways to support siblings. This presentation will share findings from two studies that explored the experiences of adults with IDD who have distressing behaviors, as well as the experiences of their siblings and parents. Presenters will also share trauma-based supports for siblings.

# BREAKOUT SESSIONS

3:00 pm – 4:00 pm

## A Person-Centered Approach to Emergency Planning for People With IDD

**BROADWAY III/IV, PLAZA LEVEL**

**AI & TECH FOR ALL**

*Laura Dahill, The Arc Lane County; Tom Keating, Cognitopia*

This session introduces a practical, person-centered approach to emergency preparedness, developed through a partnership between The Arc Lane County and Cognitopia. Grounded in the CMIST Framework (Communication, Maintaining Health, Independence, Support & Safety, and Transportation), the model helps people use Cognitopia's Platform for Self-Determination to create personalized emergency preparedness portfolios that reflect their strengths, preferences, communication needs, support networks, and daily routines. After a brief overview of the tools, a project participant with lived experience of IDD will share example portfolios. You will leave with practical ideas and adaptable resources that can help individuals, families, and communities build resilience before, during, and after emergencies.

3:00 pm – 4:00 pm

## Collaborating to Increase Housing Opportunities in Your Community

**PAVILION BALLROOM EAST, PLAZA LEVEL**

**BUILDING & SUSTAINING RESILIENT ORGANIZATIONS**

*Pam Blanton and Jamie Martin, Partners4Housing*

Across the country, families of adults with IDD face a growing housing crisis as caregivers age and affordable options remain limited. This session will highlight a partnership model in Washington, where chapters of The Arc collaborate with housing experts and state partners to expand housing navigation services. Together, they help families understand benefits like Section 8, find compatible roommates, and develop Shared Living Homes. Learn how cross-sector collaboration can expand impact and equip families with tools to create person-centered housing solutions.

3:00 pm – 4:00 pm

## Building Community & Capacity Through Education-Centered Outreach

**PAVILION BALLROOM WEST, PLAZA LEVEL**

**CONNECTED COMMUNITIES: FAMILY CENTERED SERVICES & SUPPORTS**

*Katrina Pirkle and Laura Sugg, The Arc Macon*

What if disability organizations could reach families years before they need traditional services? In this session, The Arc Macon will share its education-centered outreach model, integrating a Certified Special Education Teacher into disability advocacy and community engagement. Working across schools, families, healthcare, and disability systems helps identify needs earlier, build trusted relationships, and connect families with resources before critical transitions. Learn how this approach evolved and how expanding beyond traditional service delivery can create opportunities for community impact and sustainable growth.

3:00 pm – 4:00 pm

## Transforming Healthcare Education by Centering Voices of People With IDD

**GALLERIA NORTH, BALLROOM LEVEL**

**SPEAKING UP & SPEAKING OUT: LESSONS IN POLICY & ADVOCACY**

*Tori Glaude, The Arc of the US; Maura Sullivan, The Arc of Massachusetts*

The Arc's Transforming Healthcare Project is building more responsive, inclusive healthcare for people with IDD by training healthcare professionals. This session will share findings from a national initiative that assessed provider training gaps and developed guidelines rooted in cultural humility, accessible communication, sexual violence awareness and education, and disability leadership. Presenters will discuss practical strategies for healthcare education, how people with IDD are co-leading this work, and what that model means for the future of healthcare access.

3:00 pm – 4:00 pm

## Crossing State Lines: One Family, One Fight, One Law

**GALLERIA SOUTH, BALLROOM LEVEL**

**TELLING OUR STORY & FUNDING THE FUTURE**

*Stefanie Hennes, Sibling Caregiver & Advocate*

Interstate moves can disrupt essential services for individuals with disabilities. In this session, Stefanie Hennes, primary caregiver for her brother with an intellectual disability and autism, will share her experience navigating a cross-state relocation while fighting to maintain critical supports. Combining lived experience with advocacy insight, she will highlight systemic barriers to accessing disability services after a move to another state and offer tips for anticipating and overcoming those hurdles. Stefanie will also explain how she leveraged her family's story to motivate local legislators to introduce Ralph's Act, which became law this year and will improve service continuity for certain people with disabilities who relocate to Maryland. You will gain practical strategies for navigating interstate transitions and using a personal story to advocate for more accessible, consistent disability systems.

3:00 pm – 3:25 pm

## Engaging & Empowering Siblings in Future Planning

**BROADWAY I/II, PLAZA LEVEL**

**SESSION SHORTS – CONNECTED COMMUNITIES: FAMILY CENTERED SUPPORTS & SERVICES**

*Rebecca Tyers Brown, Achieva*

Siblings of people with IDD are often the "next generation" of support, but many feel unprepared, overwhelmed, or excluded from future planning conversations. As parents age and systems grow more complex, siblings are increasingly stepping into advocacy, caregiving, and decision-making roles without clear guidance or support. This session will center the lived experiences of siblings and offer practical, actionable strategies to help families engage siblings early, build confidence, and create sustainable, person-centered plans for the future.

3:35 pm – 4:00 pm

## Nourish & Flourish: Tailoring Accessible and Enjoyable Meals

**BROADWAY I/II, PLAZA LEVEL**

**SESSION SHORTS – CONNECTED COMMUNITIES: FAMILY CENTERED SUPPORTS & SERVICES**

*Alysha Broughton and Tiffany McGill, St. Louis Arc*

Nourish & Flourish is a community-based nutrition education initiative led by the St. Louis Arc Nutrition Department through a CDC-funded grant in Missouri. This session will demonstrate the value of registered dietitian

nutritionists (RDNs) in advancing preventive health outcomes for adults with IDD. Drawing on local health and food access data, the program addresses disparities including type 2 diabetes, hypertension, and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease. Learn how practical, accessible nutrition education can address barriers and serve as a sustainable, replicable model for underserved IDD communities.

## BREAKOUT SESSIONS

4:15 pm – 5:15 pm

### The Connected Care Model for Safer IDD Medication Management

**BROADWAY III/IV, PLAZA LEVEL**

**AI & TECH FOR ALL**

*Erika Salmon, The Arc of The Ozarks; Naveen Venkatachalam, AL CloudCare/Sushoo LLC*

Medication errors are still too common for people with IDD, especially when agencies rely on paper medication administration records (MARs) and direct support professionals (DSPs) are often overworked or change frequently. This session will share how The Arc of the Ozarks, Guardian Pharmacy, and AL CloudCare built an integrated medication workflow where AI guides DSPs, flags administration patterns, and answers staff questions around the clock, without requiring staff to have advanced tech skills. Presenters will share the "before and after" story: fewer errors, faster surveys, simpler onboarding, and greater transparency for families and guardians. You will leave with a practical roadmap and checklist to start adapting this connected care model.



4:15 pm – 5:15 pm

### What Is the Future of Health Delivery in the US?

**PAVILION BALLROOM EAST, PLAZA LEVEL**

**BUILDING & SUSTAINING RESILIENT ORGANIZATIONS**

*Cody Mullen, The Arc of the US Board Member and Purdue University*

The United States has experienced significant and rapid shifts in public health and the healthcare delivery system over the past 18 months, including major changes from the implementation of the One Big Beautiful Bill Act (OBBBA). The session will look at topics including Medicare Advantage, the intersection of federal and state policies, and the Rural Health Transformation Program. The presenter will conclude with an analysis of emerging trends for 2027 and beyond, including legislative and executive actions taken to date, as well as pending executive orders and legislation that may significantly affect the healthcare industry and the individuals it serves.

4:15 pm – 5:15 pm

## The Arc and Civitan International: The Partnership Is Working!

**PAVILION BALLROOM WEST, PLAZA LEVEL**

**CONNECTED COMMUNITIES: FAMILY CENTERED SUPPORTS & SERVICES**

*Tammy Kaskel, The Arc Baltimore; Teresa Wakeman, Civitan International*

The strategic partnership is working, and your community can be part of it. The Arc of the US and Civitan International share overlapping missions, visions, and values. Local chapters of The Arc focus on advocacy and services, while Civitan Clubs focus on community service and research. The strategic partnership provides opportunities to learn and work together toward common goals and combined service to people with IDD. More than 50% of members of some Civitan Clubs have IDD, and some clubs are agency-based.

This interactive workshop will discuss the organizations' history, overlaps, and gaps; highlight the partnership that began in 2025; share real examples of successful projects between Civitan Clubs and chapters of The Arc; and include time to collaborate and explore ideas for your chapter and a local Civitan Club. We will help you find the closest Civitan Club, and if there isn't one near you, discuss how to create one.

4:15 pm – 5:15 pm

## From Claims to Change: Using State Medicaid Data to Advance Policy

**GALLERIA NORTH, BALLROOM LEVEL**

**SPEAKING UP & SPEAKING OUT: LESSONS IN POLICY & ADVOCACY**

*Rachel Benson and Matt Serres, Oregon Health and Science University*

National research shows that people with IDD experience worse health outcomes than those without IDD, yet many states lack usable data to inform policy and advocacy. This session will highlight a collaborative Medicaid claims analysis conducted by the OHSU University Center for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities, the Oregon Council on Developmental Disabilities, and the Center for Health Systems Effectiveness. Presenters will share key findings on health disparities among adult Oregonians with IDD and demonstrate how Medicaid data can be translated into actionable policy and advocacy tools. The session will also offer a practical roadmap for replication in other states

4:15 pm – 5:15 pm

## Fundraising Forward: Turning Relationships Into Resources

**GALLERIA SOUTH, BALLROOM LEVEL**

**TELLING OUR STORY & FUNDING THE FUTURE**

*Michele Petrella, The Arc of the US*

Successful fundraising is about more than finding the next grant or making the next ask. It's about building relationships and intentionally moving them forward. This practical session will explore how to build a stronger, more diversified fundraising pipeline by tapping foundations, individual donors, corporate and community partners, and the relationships already in your networks. You will learn simple approaches to relationship mapping, prospect identification, cultivation, and moves management, plus how a customer relationship management (CRM) system can help organize contacts, capture institutional knowledge, track next steps, and turn connections into long-term supporters. Whether your organization has a dedicated development team or fundraising is one of many hats you wear, you'll leave with strategies and tools you can put to work right away.

4:15 pm – 4:40 pm

## Using AI to Create Accessible Digital Content

**BROADWAY I/II, PLAZA LEVEL**

**SESSION SHORTS – AI AND TECH FOR ALL**

*Angie Tesch, The Arc Minnesota*

Accessible digital communications are essential, but they can be hard to implement consistently. See how The Arc Minnesota uses AI to improve accessibility while saving time. Learn why accessible digital content matters, what accessibility guidelines look like, and how to apply them. Presenters will share before-and-after examples, demonstrate how AI can support tasks like writing alt text, improve clarity using plain language, and highlight tools that evaluate accessibility for images and text. You will leave with simple, repeatable workflows, tips for using AI responsibly, and free resources you can use right away.

7:30 pm – 9:00 pm

## Local Host Event

**SKYLINE I, 23RD FLOOR**

**Additional fee and pre-registration required. Visit the registration desk for assistance.**

Get ready to hit the dance floor as we bring everyone together for a night of music, celebration, and connection! Hosted by The Arc of Oregon, this is your chance to mingle, dance, and celebrate with fellow attendees in an energetic, welcoming atmosphere.

# Friday, November 20

7:45 am – 8:45 am

## The Arc Chapters Board Member Meeting

**COUNCIL ROOM, 3RD FLOOR, CONFERENCE LEVEL**

State chapter board members can share updates and discuss other important issues. Breakfast will be available.

8:00 am – 8:45 am

## Breakfast

**FOYER, BALLROOM LEVEL**

8:00 am – 8:45 am

## Siblings Breakfast

**DIRECTOR'S ROOM, 3RD FLOOR, CONFERENCE LEVEL**

Join the Sibling Council for an informal discussion about the important role of siblings and how you can get involved.

# BREAKOUT SESSIONS

9:00 am – 10:00 am

## Peer Support in Augmentative and Alternate Communication: Insights From a National Partnership

**BROADWAY III/IV, PLAZA LEVEL**

**AI & TECH FOR ALL**

*Emily Quinn, Oregon Health and Science University*

The National Partnership to Advance Peer-Support Models for Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) formed a nationwide consortium of 100 individuals from 41 organizations, including AAC users, members of marginalized communities, service providers, and advocates. Panelists will discuss how peer support is applied, the value of lived experience, and its impact on health, wellbeing, and community. Hear from the leaders involved and learn from their successes, challenges, and recommendations, with actionable takeaways for all.



9:00 am – 10:00 am

## Beyond Warm Bodies: Building a Mission-Aligned Workforce

**PAVILION BALLROOM EAST, PLAZA LEVEL**

**BUILDING & SUSTAINING RESILIENT ORGANIZATIONS**

*Melanie Bazile, Compass*

Staffing remains a persistent challenge in the IDD field. How do we move beyond finding people to finding the right people? This session will share Compass' journey from crisis-driven hiring to building a mission-aligned workforce. Explore how to go from filling shifts to designing systems that prioritize alignment with the people supported, organizational values, and long-term outcomes. Through real examples, presenters will share strategies like values-based interviewing, matching meetings that include clients and families, and intentional onboarding. They will also share how data, like 90-day retention and match quality, drives better decisions. Leave with actionable strategies to build a mission-aligned workforce that stays.

9:00 am – 10:00 am

## From Help to Empowerment: Supporting Families of Children With IDD

**PAVILION BALLROOM WEST, PLAZA LEVEL**

**CONNECTED COMMUNITIES: FAMILY CENTERED SUPPORT & SERVICES**

*Rachel Nemhauser, Disability Advocate & Parent Support Specialist*

Families raising children with IDD are often expected to advocate within complex systems, yet many have never been taught how. This session will explore how professionals can help families build the knowledge, skills, and confidence needed to advocate effectively. You will examine how trauma, stress, and systemic barriers affect engagement. You will also learn practical strategies for coaching advocacy, including how to model communication, simplify systems, and build confidence. A key focus is understanding when to step in and when to step back, balancing immediate support with long-term empowerment. You will leave with actionable tools to strengthen family engagement and support more effective, sustainable advocacy.

9:00 am – 10:00 am

## Understanding the Latest Threats to Medicaid

**GALLERIA NORTH, BALLROOM LEVEL**

**SPEAKING UP & SPEAKING OUT: LESSONS IN POLICY & ADVOCACY**

*Kim Musheno and Ellen Taverna, The Arc of the US*

The 2025 federal budget reconciliation bill made historic cuts to Medicaid, resulting in a major cost shift to states. This session will explain the latest threats to Medicaid at the federal level, so you can understand the landscape and respond appropriately at the state level.

9:00 am – 10:00 am

## Supported Decision Making: Putting the Pieces Together

**GALLERIA SOUTH, BALLROOM LEVEL**

**TELLING OUR STORY & FUNDING THE FUTURE**

*Em Braman and Felicity Woods, The Arc Oregon*

In this workshop-style session, we will break down the components of a supported decision-making (SDM) agreement. You will explore the strategies and supports that work for you or someone you support in each of the component areas within supported decision-making. With hands-on help from presenters, you will identify those supports and strategies and get them ready to be written into a supported decision-making agreement. Examples and templates will be provided. You will leave with a drafted SDM agreement structure you can finalize later.

10:30 am – 12:00 pm

**Closing General Session**

## Minnesota Voices: Disability, Immigration & Coming Together for Families

**GRAND BALLROOM, BALLROOM LEVEL**

***Facilitator:*** *Naveh Eldar, The Arc of Minnesota*
***Panelists:*** *Andrea Castillo, Maren Christenson, Rufo Jiru, Fatima Molas, Mai Thor*

Learn how Minnesotans adapted aid strategies to meet the needs of people with disabilities affected by the surge in immigration enforcement in 2025 and 2026. Hear from people who have given and received support and learn lessons from Minnesota's experience that we all can apply to the challenges facing us today.


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The Arc

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1 Ticket - $20
3 Tickets - $50
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7 Tickets - $100

**Drawing will be held live via Zoom on Monday, November 23, at 4:00 pm ET. Ticket holders will be sent a link to join. Winners need not be present to win.**




The Arc

*For people with intellectual and developmental disabilities*

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