

The Arc Greater Twin Cities *Lifetime Assistance Program*



Service Description

The Lifetime Assistance Program is designed to assist families in planning and preparing for the future of their family member with a disability. Through our planning process, we help individuals and families identify and document what's most important in their lives. The goal is to secure a high quality of life for the person, particularly when parents or other primary caregivers are no longer able to provide support.

The Lifetime Assistance Program combines long-term legal and financial planning with person-centered "quality of life planning." Quality of life planning is a process that helps families outline all the details that define a good life for the person. The process also helps families discover and communicate their dreams for the future; the resulting written plans help to ensure a lasting and stable quality of life, with the financial resources to support the plan.

These three aspects of planning - legal, financial, and quality of life planning - ensure that your family member with a disability has a framework for future supports and services. This framework is based on their individual needs and desires, adequate legal safeguards, and a financial structure that provides a secure future.

Planning Guide

To begin the person-centered planning process, families complete a *Planning Guide* that addresses many aspects of the individuals' life. It documents the person's past and current needs, routines, and the people who are important in his or her life.

Areas addressed in the *Planning Guide* may include family relationships; caregiver goals and future plans; individual lifestyle preferences (religious, leisure, work, social relationships, etc); and individual needs such as physical, medical, or behavioral supports, government services, and any other services or supports. The *Planning Guide* is an individualized document; the areas addressed will depend on the individual and may include aspects not noted above.

Lifelong Support Plan

After completing the *Planning Guide*, the Quality of Life Planning process continues with a series of meetings. The information gathered throughout these Planning Meetings results in the development of the individual's *Lifelong Support Plan*.

The *Lifelong Support Plan* is a comprehensive, individualized, future-oriented document that provides a framework for future services and supports based on the needs, wishes, and dreams of the person with a disability and his or her family.

In addition to identifying a vision for the future, the *Lifelong Support Plan* provides information about existing formal and informal supports. *The Plan* also identifies what supports are needed above and beyond what is offered through the existing service system, including requested Quality of Life Specialist services and the timeline for providing these services (see description).

The services outlined in *The Plan* help families cover the gaps that will exist when primary caregivers are no longer able to oversee quality of life; it integrates existing documents and

works in concert with guardians to help ensure the person is well supported. This pro-active planning process is designed to strengthen the person's safety net. The *Lifelong Support Plan* is a tool that helps to ensure continuity of care and is a living document that recognizes the changing needs of a person as he or she ages.

Monitoring and maintenance of the *Lifelong Support Plan*. Monitoring updates is an important part of the program; it's critical to keep the *Planning Guide* and *Lifelong Support Plan* up to date so that it accurately reflects the individual, in the present. Changes may be made at any time via telephone, e-mail or at a meeting. *The Plan* is formally reviewed and updated at least annually.

The Quality of Life Planning Process

The process begins with the completion of the *Planning Guide*, as noted above. Once a draft of the *Planning Guide* is completed, it is reviewed by Arc staff. After that initial review, they will meet with the family to ask questions about the information provided. At that time, additional detail is often added to the document. This meeting is also a time for the family to begin working out the details of the Person-Centered Planning Meeting, including the individuals to be involved (family, friends, and support staff) and possible dates and locations for the meeting.

The purpose of the Person-Centered Planning Meeting is to identify hopes, dreams, and to gather other detailed information for the *Lifelong Support Plan*. This process takes a minimum of 3 hours, and may take more than one meeting (depending on the person's needs). This meeting is a facilitated discussion during which the individual, not his or her disability, is in the spotlight.

The Lifetime Assistance program staff drafts the *Lifelong Support Plan* based on the information obtained through these meetings. The completed *Plan* is then sent to the family for review and revisions are made so that it is an accurate reflection of the individual and his/her family's desires. Once this is complete, all documents are approved and a contract for ongoing services, if desired, is signed. Each year, the team meets to review and update the documents.

Legal and Financial Planning Partners

Financial and estate planning services are usually required to ensure adequate funding and a structure that meets the needs identified in *The Plan*. This process helps to provide a secure financial future for the family member with a disability and helps families create a plan to cover the costs of implementing *The Lifelong Support Plan*.

Arc provides consultation and education services to families, so they are aware of the various legal and financial services that might benefit their situation. Information is provided about special and supplemental needs trusts, the role of trustees, and other components to help guardians prepare for the future of their loved one after their own death.

As part of the planning process the family may also desire assistance assessing the need for guardianship, choosing a guardian/successor guardian, or navigating the process of guardianship. The family may choose to participate in all or part of the ABCs of Guardianship ArcShop, at no extra cost, to educate them in the process.

Families who need or want specific legal and financial services, including the purchase of products, are referred to attorneys and financial planners who are recognized for their knowledge and experience working with families who have a member with a disability. While we have legal and financial professionals to whom we refer families, The Arc Greater Twin Cities does not assume responsibility and is not liable for the actions of these financial planners and attorneys.

Quality of Life Specialist Services (Optional)

Throughout the planning process, families often identify gaps in services or supports that are available to their family member; they are concerned about who will ensure the quality of services once the primary caregiver is no longer able to provide this oversight. Quality of Life (QOL) Specialist services can be chosen by a family, if desired, to help alleviate this concern.

The Quality of Life (QOL) Specialist monitors the individuals' quality of life and oversees the services he or she is receiving. This is done in partnership with the individual and his or her guardian. The QOL specialist is "the keeper" of the hopes and dreams identified in the *Lifelong Support Plan*; their work is driven by *The Plan*, not the service system.

Specific examples of Quality of Life Specialist services in the *Lifelong Support Plan* may include, but is not limited to, the following items:

- Oversight and Monitoring of Services (Residential, Employment, etc,) including in person contact and attendance at provider meetings
- Technical Assistance/Consultation with Guardians
- Review and/or completion of Medical Assistance, federal, state or local level benefit eligibility paperwork
- Review of service provider plans, annually, as requested, or as deemed necessary by the Quality of Life Specialist to ensure safe, healthy and desired living environment
- Emergency response services (i.e. Placement issues, medical issues, health and safety concerns, etc.)
- Transition related interventions

If a family does not choose to employ a Quality of Life Specialist to regularly monitor and oversee services, they may still choose to use a Quality of Life Specialist on an occasional or "as needed" basis to provide disability related information and expertise.