

## Arc Greater Twin Cities Public Policy Volunteer Action Networks 2008

Arc's Public Policy Volunteer Action Networks have been created to discuss actions and propose strategies to impact system changes at the federal and state level for children and adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities and their families. Action network volunteers are committed to regular discussion and strategy planning of Arc's public policy efforts:

- underway as identified by the legislative agenda;
- to create key advocacy messages for policymakers;
- to develop and/or amend The Arc's national and state position statements;
- to identify areas where service expansion is needed;
- to organize others for civic involvement in policy priorities of The Arc;
- to celebrate successes resulting from grassroots action.

Three primary Volunteer Action Networks have been established for each of the following areas of public policy for all the affiliated chapters of The Arc of Minnesota with Arc Greater Twin Cities organizing and hosting regular meetings:

1. **Health and Managed Care.** The focus of this action network is to track challenges and develop strategies to engage Arc members and volunteers in the issues associated with: *Medical Assistance /Medicaid funded programs, self-directed services, Personal Care Assistant services, respite care and caregiver support, disability health plans, parental fees, prevention programs, case management services, and other challenges that affect both children and adults.* Members of this committee will routinely engage with administrative staff from the Minnesota Department of Health and Human Services and legislators working on the health and human services policy and finance committees in the state house and senate.
2. **Education.** The focus of this action network is to track the trends and develop strategies associated with: *promoting inclusion of children with disabilities in public and charter schools, improving special education service provision and funding in Minnesota schools, increasing the effectiveness of transition services and employment training, access to colleges and technical schools, and ensuring the recognition of students with disabilities in emerging rules and statutes for public education.* Members of this action network will routinely engage with administrative staff from the Minnesota Department of Education and legislators working on the education policy and finance committees in the state house and senate.
3. **Community Living.** The focus of this action network is to increase access and opportunities for children and adults with developmental disabilities that promote their full inclusion in the communities they live in. Systems associated with: *expanding employment, housing, transportation, and assuring quality in community-based services provided, upholding civil rights, promoting abuse prevention and self-advocacy, and fostering social and recreational inclusion* are examples of the primary areas of concern for the work of this action network. Members of this action network will routinely engage with administrative staff from the Minnesota Departments of: Human Services, Transportation and Economic Assistance, along with legislators

working on committees that establish policy and funding for each of those areas in the state house and senate.

### **Expectations for Action Network Participation**

- At any time members, volunteers and staff from ALL chapters of The Arc in Minnesota are encouraged and welcome to participate in these meetings either in-person or via conference call.
- Each action network is co-chaired by an Arc volunteer member and a staff person affiliated with The Arc of Minnesota
- Participants on each of these committees are asked to help coordinate grassroots efforts in their respective counties and ensure regular communication with local policymakers.
- Action network participants are called upon to assist with engaging others in planning and promoting Arc's grassroots organizing efforts around identified public policy priorities.
- From time-to-time the need for each of the action networks to organize a special task force or work group may arise to address a shorter-term challenge or opportunity .
- Action network participants are encouraged to develop their personal expertise on public policy issues affecting children and adults with disabilities for their committee of interest.
- As Arc's volunteer leaders, familiarity with the position statements of The Arc of the United States and The Arc of Minnesota are important as these statements serve as the guidelines for establishing priorities.

### **Time Commitment**

- Action Networks will meet for approximately two hours, no more than nine times annually. Meetings will be monthly during the state legislative session (January-May), once during the summer (June-August) and monthly in the fall (September-November).
- Task force or work group meetings will be conducted in addition to regular action network meetings as needed.
- Volunteers are asked for a minimum of a two-year involvement commitment
- Action network chairpersons will plan meeting agendas in advance and facilitate meetings with suggestions from committee participants as to what priorities should be for each meeting.

### **Volunteer Background/Experience**

A connection to services for children and adults with intellectual or related developmental disabilities is essential. For example: being a parent or guardian of a child or adult with a disability; a self-advocate or person with a disability; a member of a local school board or special education-related school committee; a member of a city disability advisory committee; a graduate of the Minnesota Governor's Council on Developmental Disabilities Partners in Policymaking program; an association with local, state and federal elected officials or an administrator of a disability services program.

### **Primary Responsibilities to the Action Network**

- Active participation in chosen network activities, including the review of information in advance of meetings
- Represents Arc positions to the greater community
- Participation and/or facilitation in Arc's civic engagement training (Realize Your Power) and the review of training materials
- Assists in identifying potential community partners for collaboration in specific system change activities

- Supports development of plans to increase inclusion of people from diverse communities
- Supports committee chairs in developing recommendations for consideration by Arc's board of directors and leadership staff.
- Provides annual feedback on positions put forth by The Arc of the United States and The Arc of Minnesota
- Serves on work groups that plan and execute projects related to specific public policy issues
- Mentors other Arc members in public policy programs and activities
- Maintains membership in Arc and promotes membership to build Arc's public policy network.

### **Arc Greater Twin Cities Primary Public Policy and Civic Engagement Activities**

- Action Alert Network
- *Realize Your Power* Civic Engagement Training
- Contacts with Policymakers
- Congressional and Legislative bill and hearing involvement
- Candidate Forums during election years
- Home Visits and Town Meetings with policy makers
- Grass roots planning and mentoring in community organizing
- Self-advocacy groups and training programs
- Service delivery and budget appropriations at the county level
- Annual Disability Day at the state capitol
- Special Events and Disability Policy forums related to systems advocacy and change.

If you would like to become a participant in one (or more) of the Public Policy Volunteer Action Networks, please contact Michelle Theisen, Volunteer Development Manager by e-mail [michelletheisen@arcgreatertwincities.org](mailto:michelletheisen@arcgreatertwincities.org) or phone #952-920-0855 to provide your contact information. To review the current schedule of action networks meetings and topics go to: [www.arcgreatertwincities.org/PublicPolicy](http://www.arcgreatertwincities.org/PublicPolicy).