

You **ARE** Your Child's Most Valuable Advocate

Parenting is a tough job under the best of circumstances. It requires skills, patience and personal growth. Parenting also requires you to be an advocate for your child — their cheerleader on the sidelines, a defender against their opponents, and a voice when they can't find their own. Parenting a child with a disability and the devotion to helping him or her live a good life can bring a whole new meaning to the term "advocate." Why? The answer is simple — as a parent you have a profound impact on your child's success. You know your child best and have their best interest at heart. You are in it for the long haul!

Advocating for your child now and into adulthood may not come easy, but it should not be avoided. Securing the medical, communication, educational, social, employment and long-term supports and services your child needs is often met with resistance. Policies, limited budgets, outdated ideas, social values and low expectations are often barriers to getting your child the help they need. With limited support from the outside world, good advocacy skills are crucial in order to navigate through the maze of barriers to secure the quality-of-life outcomes desired. It requires knowledge, persistence and leaving your comfort zone. It is my hope that the tips below will help you in your journey to become your child's best advocate.

Create a Vision — Many parents have a difficult time thinking about what the future holds for their child. But know this — the future is coming and it will be here before you know it! The sooner you can look ahead and plan, the better. Your vision is your why. It gives you direction. It is the powerful reason why you make the decisions you make. Decisions made create consequences. Without the direction of a vision to guide you, you may end up somewhere else — somewhere you don't want to be.

Be Informed — Become the expert on your child. Learn about your child's disability and how it impacts their life. When you know your child's strengths and needs, it can help you identify and advocate for supports and services needed for success.

You will also want to learn about all options and possibilities. Some things to consider are — where and with whom will my child live, learn, work, play and worship?

There is nothing more persuasive than an empowered parent equipped with knowledge and options. Remember the most dangerous phrase in language is... we've always done it this way. The more know you the better advocate you will be.

Learn Your Rights — Rights will vary depending on your child's disability, program policies and where you live. The internet is a great resource, but there are others. Attend a workshop or conference. Read a book. Watch a video or film. Take advantage of online learning opportunities. Most organizations serving individuals with disabilities or chronic health care needs and their families include a section on rights.

Connect With Others — To strengthen your ability to be an advocate for your child, find and connect with other advocates — individuals with disabilities, parents and family members. Together you can talk about what's worked and what hasn't worked, share resources and ideas and celebrate accomplishments. You don't have to travel this journey alone!

— Cindi Paschall

Believe in yourself,
as a parent you are
your child's best
advocate!

Legislative Advocacy: Ready. Set. **ACTion!**



ADVOCACY TOOL KIT

Arc chapters at the local, state and national level have used grassroots advocacy effectively to procure services for children and adults with IDD who were denied an education, the right to attend day care and preschools, the right to work and more. Six decades of accomplishments can be viewed [here](#). But know this: our work is not done and your voice is needed.

Need help getting started? The Arc of Texas *Project Move Advocacy and You* tool kit is a great place to start. The tool kit was designed to help individuals and families living with IDD put advocacy in ACTtion!

Download a copy below.

- [English](#)
- [Spanish](#)

POLICY UPDATES

Sign up to receive policy updates at the state and national level.

- [Arc of Texas Action Center](#)
- [Arc US Disability Action Network](#)

Policy updates are also posted on Arc GMC social media pages – [Facebook](#) & [Twitter](#)

[Texas Legislature Online](#) (TLO) provides information on legislation, committees, house, and senate.

RevUP! The Vote

To vote, you MUST register. Use Your Power. Register to vote [here](#). Register. Organize. Educate. VOTE!

Watch this short [video](#) for more information about the RevUp campaign.

WHO REPRESENTS ME?

The [Who Represents Me](#) website provides information about current districts and members of the Texas Senate, Texas House of Representatives, the Texas delegation to the U.S. Senate and House of Representatives, and the State Board of Education.