

Founded by parents of children with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD) in 1946, The Arc Minnesota is a statewide, nonprofit organization that works to promote and protect the human rights of people with IDD.

Alongside people with disabilities, self-advocates, parents and family members, coalition partners, and other allies, we advance policy solutions that create positive systems and social change.

Our nonpartisan grassroots and legislative advocacy work is grounded in our organizational values: human & civil rights, self-advocacy & self-direction, equity & belonging, and disability & racial justice.

## Create More Inclusive Playgrounds for Minnesota Children

Most playgrounds in Minnesota are not accessible to, nor safe for, children who have disabilities. Play is a critical part of development for kids of all ages, and children with disabilities should have access to playgrounds, just like all other kids in our communities. Playgrounds that are inclusive of all types of disabilities would help to ensure that no one is left out and all children play safely side-by-side. They would support the developmental needs of the whole child, including physical, cognitive, sensory, and social development.

*Investing in bonding projects that help build safe, inclusive playgrounds across Minnesota will result in long-term, positive benefits for all children, and help children with disabilities foster true belonging in community from an early age.*

## End Suspensions and Expulsions for Young Learners

Wide disparities exist in Minnesota schools' use of exclusionary punishment, which contribute to poor student outcomes. Research shows that frequent use of dismissals harms all students, including those not subject to punishment, but especially impacts students of color and those with disabilities. They are suspended and expelled at rates far higher than their white and non-disabled peers. Our schools are the foundation of our collective knowledge and community as a society, and all children deserve to learn in an inclusive environment that supports them, without fear of discrimination and harm.

*Ending suspensions and expulsions for K-3 will help create equitable, accessible, and safe schools. All students will benefit from positive learning environments that fully include all students, support them, and address their individual needs. Ending suspensions and expulsions for Minnesota's young learners will help promote alternatives that create a supportive and positive climate for all students and school staff.*

## Expand Access to Inclusive Higher Education Statewide

Attending college at an inclusive higher education institution has many positive impacts on young adults with intellectual disabilities (ID). Those who attend college are more than twice as likely to secure employment and rely less on government programs and services. But in-state college options for students with ID are extremely limited, which stifles opportunities for those who could benefit. Many institutions of higher education do not have the expertise nor resources needed to expand enrollment and include students with ID on-campus.

*Expanding access to inclusive higher education will help more young adults with ID earn meaningful credentials, secure employment at competitive wages, and live in homes of their own. Providing technical assistance and grant funding to institutions of higher education statewide can help advance access to postsecondary education in Minnesota.*

## Reform Medical Assistance to Incentivize Employment

Some Minnesotans with disabilities have been able to maintain safety-net supports while working through Medical Assistance for Employed Persons with Disabilities (MA-EPD). However, both the high MA-EPD premiums and low asset limits contribute to people remaining in poverty and create disincentives to work. People who have disabilities should be able to earn money, build and keep assets, and invest in their futures without fear of losing health care, benefits, supports, and services.

*Eliminating asset limits, shifting the income-based premium schedule to a fair structure, and providing more opportunities to maintain benefits will remove barriers to building and maintaining financial stability, and help people with disabilities to get out of poverty. This will impact all of society, because once all people are able to earn money and financially prosper, everyone will benefit.*

## Increase Affordable, Accessible Housing Options

For people who have disabilities—especially those using a wheelchair—finding affordable, accessible housing in their communities is nearly impossible. Many are forced to turn to costly and isolating settings, instead of living in homes of their own. Housing developers and builders need more clarity around a shared definition of accessibility, as well as financial support to ensure they can include physically and sensory accessible dwellings in housing projects.

*Creating a shared definition of accessible housing will provide clarity for developers, builders, and people with disabilities. Ensuring that bonding requests for housing projects include physical and sensory accessibility features will support builders and developers to create more inclusive homes. More affordable, accessible housing for Minnesotans with disabilities will support their informed choice and reduce reliance on restrictive and expensive provider-controlled settings.*

## Help More Minnesotans with Disabilities Live in Homes of their Own

While supporting people to live in their own homes is the policy direction of the state, this is not yet a reality for many Minnesotans. Informed Choice policies adopted in 2021 will help ensure that people are aware of the options for living in their own home, but those changes alone will not remove all the barriers that are currently in place.

*Strategic policy change can help more Minnesotans with disabilities live in homes of their own. We must address gaps in support and service coordination, prevent evictions and service terminations, and stabilize housing for those with low income.*

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