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The Arc of Snohomish County
2500 Hewitt Ave. Suite 300
Everett, WA 98201
425-258-2459
www.arcsno.org/

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Advocacy Spotlight

Jen Cole is an advocate and mother from Everett

As a young child, Jen Cole immigrated to the United States with her mother. Witnessing the unfair treatment and discrimination both she and her mother received, Jen pursued a career in human services before the birth of her first child, Gabriel. Gabriel was born with a rare chromosomal deletion called 7q11.23, also known as Williams-Beuren Syndrome. Jen has always been concerned about social justice issues, and continues that work today, especially as it intersects with disability and race.

“I’m involved in all sorts [of advocacy]! Mostly educational. I currently serve on the Snohomish County DD Advisory Board, the Washington State Coalition for Language Access, the City of Everett Diversity Advisory Board, the WA State Rehabilitation Council for DVR, and the Special Education Advisory Council (SEAC) for OSPI. I also serve as the SEAC rep on the State Interagency Coordinating Council (SICC). I also serve on multiple workgroups for the state.”

Times have been very up and down for Jen and her family: “I have experienced unfair treatment and discrimination as it intersects with issues related to my appearance, my gender, and as a full-time working mother raising a child with a disability. Trying to work with individuals and organizations who are not interested in change or centering those furthest from opportunity [hasn’t worked]. Forming collaborative relationships and reaching out to others has worked though. I love organizations such as the Arc of Snohomish County who do so much to meet folks where they are and connect them with others.”

Like everyone, 2020 has presented a bevy of new and unique challenges for Jen and her family. “COVID has presented all sorts of unexpected challenges and I don’t think there is enough space to get to them all! [I’ve had surprising success] connecting with others that I did not expect to, and my son is doing pretty good right now with remote instruction. It didn’t happen overnight, but it is happening!

Jen has a last piece of advice for anyone navigating this world. “Relationships and connections are everything and sometimes, even years later, you will find support that you never expected. “

Thank you Jen for your hard advocacy work, and we look forward to seeing your continued success moving forward.



Advocacy in Action

Legislative Notebook Recap

On December 7th, the Arc of Washington State had it's yearly Legislative Notebook meeting for the upcoming legislative session. This annual event covers the myriad of topics presented in the notebook, and often features many calls to action for the upcoming legislative session.

This year saw the notebook meeting, like everything else, done completely remotely for the first time. The morning session featured a breakdown of the theme, "Zooming in on Developmental Disabilities," a rundown of all the issue papers within the notebook, and many other explanations of the charts, graphs, and data contained within.

This year also featured a fantastic question and answer session with four state senators about many topics of concern for the I/DD community. The senators in attendance were Senator John Braun (R), Senator Emily Randall, Senator Christine Rolfes (D), and Senator Sharon Brown (R). All four senators are known allies of the I/DD community, and have shown they are willing to fight for our rights in the past.



The four senators present spoke very candidly about the upcoming budget issue facing our state and how those shortfalls will affect the I/DD community. There will be budget cuts somewhere, but it is unknown where they will come from at this time. All four senators spoke about how the budget crisis has illuminated many shortcomings and pitfalls that currently exist within our state, and how certain financial savings have already been made because of the pandemic. Potential sources of revenue have appeared, but the requirements to use them to plug up the holes in the budget are less than ideal. This is an issue that will be at the forefront of the upcoming legislative session in its entirety.

The afternoon session began with a massive overview of the data included within the notebook. Charts, graphs, and surveys were presented to show where services for the I/DD community currently stand, where they could be, and where we want them to be. This data will be pivotal in discussions with legislators about improving services moving forward.

Finally the day ended with an exciting new proposal about a potential omnibus bill for I/DD services. This idea is still in the beginning planning phases, but would encompass the entire field of I/DD issues moving forward, instead of putting forth smaller, individual bills to further the causes of the I/DD community. As this proposal is currently in its infancy, there is no specific information at this time, but stay tuned for more in the future.

Visit [HERE](#) for more information about the legislative notebook.

You can download the entire notebook, and also watch a recording of the entire meeting.

"The measure of a man, or woman, is not so much what they have accomplished, though that has weight. It often is much more though what that man or woman has overcome to accomplish what they have" - Leif Gregersen

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“Obstacles don’t have to stop you. If you run into a wall, don’t turn around and give up. Figure out how to climb it, go through it, or work around it.”
- Michael Jordan

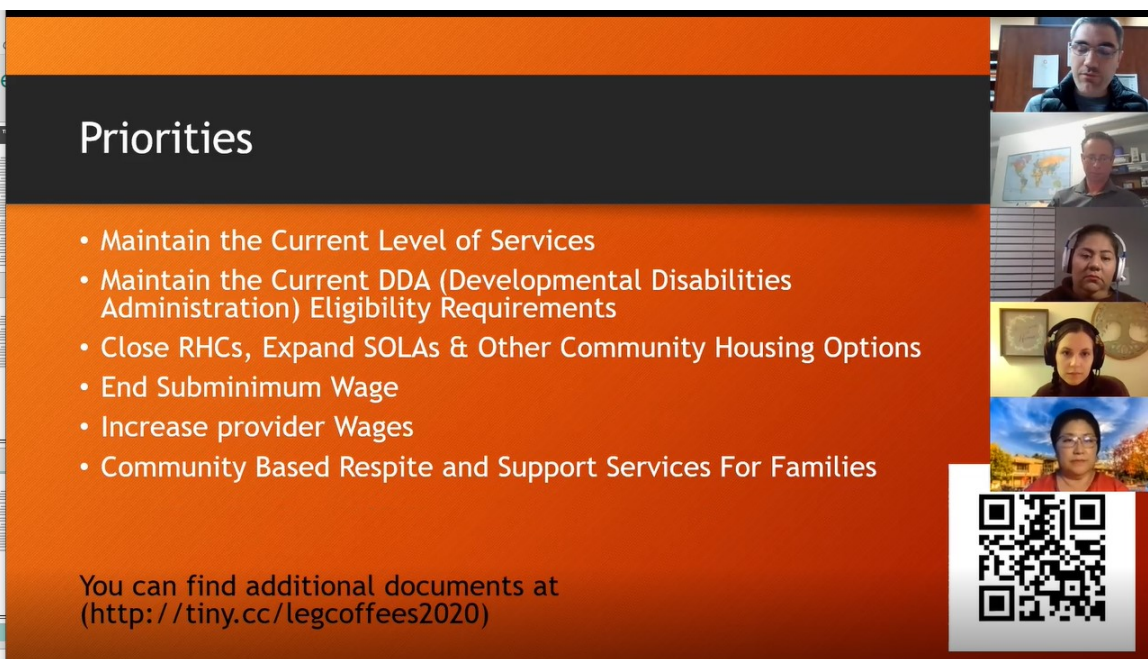
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Advocacy in Action

Legislative Forum Recap

Prior to the November 3rd elections, The Arc of Snohomish County hosted a legislative forum for all seven of our legislative districts. They were hosted by members of our community who lived in those districts, The Arc invited all of the candidates running for the state legislature and invited them to discuss their stances on issues important to the I/DD community.

The turn out for these forums was phenomenal. The vast majority of candidates who were running were able to attend, and several who could not sent in written statements or prerecorded messages. Every candidate expressed great concern regarding how the looming budget crisis will affect the I/DD community, and every candidate offered reassurances that they did not plan on cutting services to the most vulnerable among us.



Priorities

- Maintain the Current Level of Services
- Maintain the Current DDA (Developmental Disabilities Administration) Eligibility Requirements
- Close RHCs, Expand SOLAs & Other Community Housing Options
- End Subminimum Wage
- Increase provider Wages
- Community Based Respite and Support Services For Families

You can find additional documents at
(<http://tiny.cc/legcoffees2020>)

QR code linking to additional documents.

A snapshot of the Legislative forum for the 32nd Legislative District

Candidates were each given three questions ahead of time to answer during the forum, and afterwards was an open question session for the attendees to ask candidates any and all questions that they wanted. The three questions each candidate was asked were 1), What are your top three legislative priorities and how would they serve people with intellectual and developmental disabilities? 2), With the current economic crisis, how would you protect services that people with intellectual and developmental disabilities and their families need? What is your plan for addressing the budget shortfall and how would it serve individuals with disabilities? And 3), Is there other information you would like constituents with developmental disabilities and their families and friends to know?

All questions put forth by attendees were answered as well, and even if there was little or no time for open questions, candidates answered all questions via email at a later date.

Documents from these events can be viewed at [HERE](#)

"I do not have a disability, I have a gift! Others may see it as a disability, but I see it as a challenge. This challenge is a gift because I have to become stronger to get around it, and smarter to figure out how to use it; others should be so lucky."

- Shane E. Bryan

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Election results

November 3 has come and gone, and with it we have a new batch of State Representatives and Senators. Nearly all of our Snohomish County elected officials attended the Legislative Coffee events presented by The Arc of Snohomish County, and every single one of them has expressed interest in continuing the conversation in Olympia.

While the majority of legislators were re-elected, there are a few new faces for this upcoming biennium. Below are some of the new legislators who will be in Olympia representing Snohomish County when the legislative session begins January 11.

Greg Gilday(R) defeated Angie Homola to win the 10th District Position 1 seat in the state legislature. Representative-elect Gilday is filling the seat vacated by Norma Smith, who held the seat for the last six terms and did not run for re-election. Representative –elect Gilday lives on Camano Island with his wife and two sons.

Emily Wicks(D) was appointed to the 38th District Position 1 in May to fill the seat vacated by Representative June Robinson when she was appointed to fill the 38th District Senate seat vacated by Senator John McCoy. Representative Wicks then went on to defeat Bert Johnson in the general election. Representative Wicks lives in Everett with her partner.

April Berg(D) defeated Mark James to win the 44th District Position 2 seat in the state legislature. Representative-elect Berg is filling the seat vacated by Representative Jared Mead. Representative Mead held the seat for one term and did not run for re-election. Representative-elect Berg lives in Mill Creek with her family.

All of our new house members were able to either attend our legislative forums in person, or submitted responses to the questions we asked. The Arc of Snohomish County looks forward to working with all of our new lawmakers, and our current ones, in this upcoming Legislative session.

Download a list of [Snohomish County legislators](#) and contact info.

More [information on your local legislators](#).



From left to right, Representative-elect Gilday (R), Representative Wicks (D), and Representative-elect Berg (D)

"The greater the obstacle, the more glory in overcoming it"

- Moliere

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Arc News

Annual Leadership Appreciation

On November 4th, The Arc of Snohomish County held a special Zoom event to recognize and celebrate Arc Leaders and provide them with an opportunity to network and share resources. Arc leaders were able to connect and share their leader experiences using Zoom breakout rooms. Arc staff from the Leadership team and from Parent to Parent highlighted Arc leaders and their contributions to our community. The Arc of Snohomish County has about 116 active trained volunteer leaders. Arc leaders are parents, grandparents, caregivers, self-advocates, and community members who have completed leadership training with The Arc and who volunteer as Helping Parents, IEP Parent Partners, Transition Club leaders, People First board members, and serve on various community boards and commissions throughout Snohomish County.



Local comedian/daredevil Matt Baker


"The most difficult thing is the decision to act, the rest is merely tenacity."
- AMELIA EARHART, AMERICAN AVIATION PIONEER


Arc leaders know it is important to take care of yourself, especially when you are supporting others. Many stories were shared about what we are doing for self-care, including playing video games, calling friends, coloring, taking walks, cooking, leading with love, exercise, and finding joy in each day. A raffle was also held, with two winners receiving Target gift cards, and all attendees receiving a small Arc appreciation gift.

Arc leaders then gathered their family or household members for a special Comedy and Stunt Show performed by Seattle entertainer Matt Baker. Arc leader Liliana Alfaro summed up the event perfectly, writing "My kids were so happy to see the magic show, they said The Arc is number one! Thanks again for this [recognition]. I feel so proud of myself and [have] more knowledge and confidence to advocate for my family and community."

The Arc will be hosting another Leadership Training in 2021. If you would like more information on the training or Arc leaders please contact Rachel Kube:

Rachel@arcsno.org | 425.258.2459 ext. 107

If you would like to know more about the upcoming legislative session including how you can be involved contact Jake Murray:

Jake@arcsno.org | 425.258.2459 ext. 105

**We're here to help
you have a voice**

You are the expert in telling your story and how it relates to decisions being made by lawmakers.

Although impacting government may feel overwhelming, we're here to help you have a voice.

It only takes a few steps:

Be informed

- Sign up for Action Alerts

Get Connected

- Join The Arc
- Join a parent coalition
- Join a self-advocacy group

Take Action

- Visit The Arc of Washington State's Online Action Center
- Send emails
- Make phone calls
- Attend town hall meetings
- Participate in Advocacy Days
- Visit your legislators in person.

For tips on Legislative Advocacy visit [Hot Tips](#)

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Tools & Resources

Sign up

Legislative Alerts & Updates

The Arc of Washington State | <http://capwiz.com/arcwa/mlm/signup/>
Sign up for legislative action alerts related to developmental disability. Receive the information you need, to voice your opinions on bills during the legislative session. Alerts provide you with messages for your legislators that you can use as is, or edit using your own words. Enter your name and address and click! Your message will automatically be sent to all of your legislators. Toll free Legislative Hotline 1-800-562-6000. Email or call, action takes less than 5 minutes!

Find Your

Legislative District and Elected Officials

Washington Legislature | <http://app.leg.wa.gov/DistrictFinder/>
Find your legislative district and elected officials.

Hot Tips

Legislative Advocates on Developmental Disabilities

The Arc of Washington State |

<https://arcwa.org/content/uploads/sites/35/2019/11/Hot-Tips-2020.pdf>

Some of the topics included:

- Tips for meeting with elected officials.
- How to create a short, clear message.
- The bill process—how a bill becomes a law.
- The state budget process.

Resource Library

The Arc of Washington State | <https://arcwa.org/resource-library/>

A comprehensive list of documents and websites that support developmental disability issues.

DDA Messages

On the [DSHS website](#) you can view bulletins that have been published.

On the website you can view DDA (Developmental Disabilities Administration)-related messages from the last year, sorted by topic. [Sign up for GovDelivery](#) to receive these updates via email. [DSHS press releases](#) are also available for review.



The Arc can provide support, resources and tools to help you be an effective and successful disability advocate on local Boards and Commissions.

For information contact:
Rachel Kube
Rachel@arcsno.org
425-258-2459 x107

Coming Up!

Advocacy Days

Now that we have received the 2020 legislative notebook, we now have the schedule for the advocacy days for the upcoming legislative session. This session will be very different from years past, with the bulk of the session being done online. This grants a unique opportunity for advocates to get involved, as travel to Olympia is no longer necessary to participate in the legislative process. Remote access will allow people who cannot travel to Olympia to be able to communicate, testify, and do everything else that is normally done in person at the capitol.

2021 marks the first year of a new biennium, and with that a longer session. A long session means there are more advocacy days, and combined with the extra access afforded through a remote session, advocates have



a chance to do more than ever before. Here are the first few advocacy days The Arc of Washington State has upcoming.

January 20—Legislative Briefing/Reception

The annual kick off to the legislative session, this will be the first legislative briefing and reception held remotely. Like past years it will begin with the initial session briefing, followed by the reception in the evening. Lawmakers will attend like in years past, so take advantage of the opportunity to connect and mingle in a social setting.

January 27—Session Overview: Budget

The first themed advocacy day addresses the biggest issue facing the state this upcoming biennium: the budget. The priority for legislators this session is to pass a balanced budget. They will be looking at cutting programs, raising revenues, using the state's Rainy Day Fund, and more. Our voices need to loudly say in unison—No Cuts to DD Services!

February 3—Community Residential

Supported living providers have been on the front lines of this pandemic from day one, taking care of clients why they themselves are exposed to COVID. Join providers, family members, and self-advocates to let legislators know how important it is that these providers are paid a fair living wage.

There are many more Advocacy Days scheduled, and we hope to see as many people as possible at every single one. For more information on advocacy days, check out <https://arcwa.org/advocacy/advocacy-days/>

The Arc of
Snohomish County

2500 Hewitt Ave, Suite 300
Everett, WA 98201
425-258-2459

www.arcsno.org
info@arcsno.org

Shayne Nagel
Executive Director
Shayne@arcsno.org

Jamie Coonts
Program Director
Jamie@arcsno.org

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Get Involved

Note that all events are currently conducted remotely. We will be conducting in person events again once it is safe for all interested parties. Thank you for your understanding at this time.

I.CAN Women's Self-Advocacy Group

2nd Tuesday of each month | 10:30am–12pm

We are a group of self-advocates open to all women ages 16 and up. A casual environment that combines learning with fun experiences. We share resources and skills, and hold the belief that everyone has something to contribute to our group. Please contact Kylie Walsh at Kylie@arcsno.org or 425-258-2459 x121 or Corinna Fale at Corinna@arcsno.org or 425-258-2459 x103.

Self-Advocates in Leadership (SAIL)

2nd Tuesday of each month | 1pm–4pm

Group of self-advocates focused on legislative change. Open to all. SAIL is a statewide coalition of people with developmental disabilities that strives to shape public policies that affect people with developmental disabilities.

Please contact Corinna Fale at Corinna@arcsno.org or 425-258-2459 x103.

People First of Snohomish County

4th Tuesday of each month | 11am–12:30pm

A self-Advocacy organization by and for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities. We are focused on educating ourselves and others, advocating for our rights, having fun! We believe we are PEOPLE FIRST and our disabilities are secondary. Please contact Kylie Walsh at Kylie@arcsno.org or 425-258-2459 x121.

Due to coronavirus cancellations, please check our website calendar at www.arcsno.org/calendar for updates

Did you know?

You can speak to your legislators!

This upcoming legislative session is going to be vital in maintaining Intellectual/Developmental Disability (I/DD) services. With the session being conducted remotely, the ability to meet and chat individually with legislators is far different than in years past. But that doesn't mean you can't! We can help you make remote legislative appointments! Take the time to chat with your legislators about matters that are important, or just get to know them better.

Contact Jake@arcsno.org for more information

Federal Bills of Interest

Ongoing COVID-19 Recovery

Currently, congress is working on both avoiding a government shut down, and how to extend COVID-19 supports beyond this year. Currently, the CARES act expires December 31, and with it the protections it offers. Congress is currently working on an extension package to go beyond the new year, but as of now they are currently at an impasse. Current proposals vary from whether or not stimulus checks are included, whether or not businesses will receive immunity from COVID related workplace events, and much more. Contact your federal legislators and let them know that a COVID-19 recovery package needs to be put in place for the new year to continue financial protections for those most vulnerable.