

 **Education and Family Advocacy Policy *www.arcjc.org***

 **18-19 School Year**

The Arc’s advocacy program is designed to provide general support that is not disability-specific, which means our services are structured around the common disability experience rather than a particular diagnosis. This support is provided within the context of current special education law such as Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and Section 504 of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), along with other regulations, rules, policies, and best practices.

Although the law is the foundation of our advocacy work, *we are not a legal service and do not provide legal advice*. Instead, it’s our role to empower families with the knowledge and resources that will allow them to effectively advocate for themselves. As your child’s parent or guardian, you know them better than anyone else. The Arc uses a consensus model to maintain a positive working relationship between parents and school leadership, with a focus on a student-centered and compliant IEP.

**Due to the demand for our free services**:

* An advocate will identify the issue and determine the level of advocacy support available (see below for levels).
* Our support is focused on a single issue as opposed to on-going support, should future needs arise, and you may contact us again.
* Our support is subject to professional judgment and available resources.
* The Arc reserves the right to terminate support if the family does not take the professional advice provided.
* If a family is supported by a private advocate, advocacy organization, or attorney, The Arc’s protocol does not allow us to engage with the family during that time.
* When either party (parent or district) engages in the Dispute Resolution process, The Arc’s protocol does not allow for participation at this level
* **The Arc prioritizes individuals with Intellectual/Developmental Disabilities (I/DD).** *I/DD is a condition that involves significant limitations in both intellectual functioning and adaptive behavior, which impacts many everyday social and practical living skills.*

**Our four levels of advocacy support include:**

1. **Information and Referral** to school and community resources and parent empowerment opportunities
2. **One-time phone/email consultation with families**, with guidance in response to questions on IEPs, MTSS, 504 law, and community access
3. **Phone consultation with School District or community staff** on behalf of the family. This requires a signed Arc Release of Information to discuss the identified advocacy issue
4. **Meeting attendance alongside a family** to help resolve their concerns. This requires:
* Signing a Release of Information
* Receiving documents pertaining to the situation
* Meeting attendance is reserved for Individuals with Intellectual/Development Disabilities

**AND** when one of the following criteria is met:

* Denial of a Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE)
* Change of Placement into a more restrictive educational setting when there’s disagreement
* Manifestation Determination Review Meeting (i.e. discipline rights for students with disabilities)

The Arc is a membership-based nonprofit organization serving individuals with Intellectual/Developmental Disabilities in Jefferson, Clear Creek, and Gilpin Counties. The Arc does not receive any support from state or federal governments, relying on membership dues, individual contributions, and arcThrift Store sales for our funding.

**To stay connected with The Arc, sign up for our weekly e-updates by sending an email to** **info@arcjc.org**