

2023-2024 ANNUAL REPORT



This past year has been a rewarding journey of unwavering dedication and impactful accomplishments as we worked to educate our policymakers, legislators and the general public about the needs and goals of those individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities. Our commitment to listening has been the cornerstone of our efforts, declaring that every voice – from families and self-advocates to service providers and community partners – is not just heard, but echoed profoundly.



We have delivered campaigns and messages that resonate and linger, transforming our advocacy into a powerful tool that ensures that the population we serve isn't forgotten. Our approach has been to make every story, every challenge, and every triumph a part of a larger narrative that demands attention and action. Together, we are making a difference. Together, we are validating that the needs and dreams of individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities are a priority. Your day-to-day leadership, personal engagement, continued support, and overwhelming involvement are what make our mission a reality.

With heartfelt gratitude,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Alan Abramowitz'.

Alan Abramowitz, CEO

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CONTINUING

ADVOCACY



The Arc of Florida held its 1st Annual **ADVOCACY DAYS** at Disney's Coronado Springs Resort in Lake Buena Vista, Florida September 29 through October 1, 2023. This mini-conference, attended by 460 self-advocates, families, caregivers, and leadership, focused on inclusion, acceptance, and diversity while discussing innovative ideas for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities. Representative Allison Tant welcomed conference attendees on Friday evening followed by an Interactive Experience with keynote Christopher Littlefield, an International and TEDx Speaker and the founder of Beyond Thank You and then, the most awesome Dance Party ever!



Sponsors included:

- ABLE United
- Children's Medical Services Health Plan (operated by Sunshine Health)
- Community Assisted & Supported Living (CASL)
- The Florida Certified Board
- Florida Home Health Equipment & Supplies
- Florida Insurance Trust
- Hanley Foundation
- Kaye Kendrick Enterprises
- Park Shore Pharmacon
- Therap



“ We were honored to host this inaugural event and learn from leaders around the state on the future of disabilities in Florida and advocate for those we serve. ”

Dina Justice
COO, The Arc of Florida

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CONTINUING

ADVOCACY



The Arc of Florida continues to expand our advocacy through monthly meetings focusing on pertinent and important topics for three distinct groups. Certificates of attendance are available when relevant.

The screenshot shows the website's navigation menu with links for HOME, ABOUT, ADVOCACY, CAREERS, CHAPTERS, ADVOCACY DAYS AT DISNEY, A POWERFUL STORY, SUPPORT US, and CONTACT US. The main content area is titled 'Monthly Meetings' and includes a sub-header 'Take a look at the meetings we offer and choose the one, or two, that's right for you!'. A purple button reads 'MISS A MEETING? WATCH THEM HERE!'. Below are three meeting options: 'Advocacy Meetings' (with a photo of a woman using sign language), 'Provider Forum' (with a photo of hands on a steering wheel), and 'Lunch-n-Learn' (with a photo of sandwiches). Each option has a 'Take a look!' button.

(136 average registered)

(339 average registered)

(190 average registered)

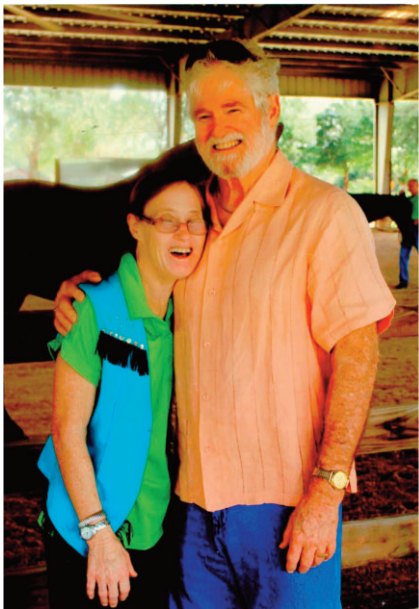
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ADVOCACY



The Arc of Florida republished *Three Fields (brothers)* with an additional, but equally compelling viewpoint. *Three Fields (brothers)* was written by Anderson Burke and outlines his family's journey. Andy discovers the journals of his recently deceased mother which document the heartache of giving up her third son, who had a developmental disability, and the effect this had on the family. Andy set out to find and meet his lost sibling.

In the newer edition, *Three Fields (A Brother. A Sister.)*, Dick Bradley's account is added. Dick tells the story of his sister, also with intellectual and developmental disabilities, with a completely different outcome. His story is one of love and happiness within the family dynamic. With so many similarities between Andy, Dick, and their respective families, *Three Fields (A Brother. A Sister.)* is a gripping story which conveys the importance of support and acceptance for each and every family.



“ In the 20th century, most families had but two choices when they had children born with developmental disabilities: keep the child at home or place them in an institution. *Three Fields (A Brother. A Sister.)* conveys the true stories of how two profound and alternate decisions impacted so many lives. These recounts of discovery, determination and love present to our communities the rewarding values each of us will have when everyone is included. Ultimately, there will no longer be a need to support our institutions...or worse. ”

Kathy Jackson
Executive Director, The Arc of the St. Johns

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CONTINUING

ONE VOICE



By engaging self-advocates, families, and communities, The Arc of Florida has re-created statewide advocacy as well continuing to work to ensure high quality supports are available for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities in all aspects of their community.

PROVIDER SURVEY RESULTS

The Arc of Florida and The Florida Association of Rehabilitation Facilities (FARF) small and medium provider services and supports to individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities (I/DD) under the Medicaid Community Based Waiver, administered by the Agency for Persons with Disabilities (APD). For years, the agency has struggled to maintain staffing due to the cost of living increases and entry level wages outpaced by Florida communities.

APD was funded two years ago by the Legislature to increase entry level wages to \$15/hour for Direct Support Professionals (DSPs). This funding created a pay scale compression within provider agencies at the same time wages in the community continued to increase, and administrative requirements associated with the iConnect system and other regulations escalated significantly.

The Arc of Florida and FARF jointly surveyed our provider agencies regarding the challenges faced in maintaining their current level of services with increasing expenses. We received responses from around 30% of providers surveyed.

38% OF PROVIDERS have reduced services this year, often as a result of not being able to recruit staff or not receiving referrals from APD.

28% OF PROVIDERS are considering further reductions next year.

83% AVERAGE INCREASE in liability insurance over the past five years, ranging from 11% to 400%.

36.5% AVERAGE INCREASE in personnel costs for employee health benefits.

76% OF PROVIDERS could not afford to give pay increases this year since there was no rate increase.

9.5% AVERAGE OVERTIME COST to provider payroll; payroll accounts for an average 70% of provider ongoing operations. Most reported using charitable contributions, earned income and reserve funds to continue along with reductions. Providers noted projected operating losses for FY 24-25.

21% OF PROVIDERS stated much needed improvements needed for the iConnect system, such as adequate training and direction. Providers incurred additional operational costs associated with required documentation without reimbursement.

34% OF PROVIDERS IDENTIFIED ADULT DAY TRAINING (ADT) AS THE MOST DIFFICULT SERVICE TO MAINTAIN. Others included:

- Group Homes and Supported Living
- Personal Supports
- Transportation
- Supported Employment

Our CHALLENGES

- Initiatives to improve those with
- Rate increases
- Development of iConnect system tied to
- Inclusion of rate into APD legislative budget
- Use of the re-estimating con

We need your help: we are experiencing unprecedented increases in gasoline, health insurance and property insurance, as well as other non-wage operational costs which threatens our service delivery. While the increase in wages in 2022 was instrumental, it did not address non-direct care worker support staff and veteran direct care workers already making \$15 per hour. In order to hire the direct care and support staff needed to provide the necessary supports for quality care and cover operational costs, an increase is needed.

As the Consumer Price Index (CPI) has increased by 25% over the last five years, an increase for non-wage operational costs for budget providers has not been addressed in over longer.

The following negative **CASCADING CHALLENGES** are happening now and will directly affect the individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities we serve.

- **THE AMERICAN RESCUE PLAN**, which provided an additional FMAP match for home and community-based providers, **ENDING DEC. 31, 2023.** This was used primarily as bonuses to recruit and retain the workforce serving individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities.
- The Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services allowed states to file an Appendix K in the start of COVID. The provisions in Florida, **APPENDIX K**, which relaxed staff-to-client ratios without compromising safety, **ENDED NOVEMBER 11, 2023** and will impact the capacity to serve clients.
- In order to serve more individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities, we have to solve our staffing crisis. Without an increase, staff won't be able to be compensated at the same levels as other Floridians in the workforce. This will reverse the strides we made in 2022 and disrupt services for this most vulnerable population. As wages and inflation continue to rise, minimum wages goes up another dollar per hour, our staff will also be expecting a raise.

The above challenges clearly articulate the need for a rate increase. Currently, providers are self-assess and making cuts to try to stay afloat while continuing to provide vital services to those with **INTELLECTUAL AND DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES HAVE THE FLEXIBILITY TO CHOOSE SERVICES.**

Let's ENSURE

What Might Have BEEN

FACT: The Agency for Persons with Disabilities (APD) had \$157,738,549 in their General Revenue budget that DID NOT get spent for FY 2022-2023. The final budget numbers have been released.

Money Appropriated	General Revenue	Federal Match
\$743 million (37.49%)	\$1.2 billion (62.51%)	\$1.9 billion

Money Spent	General Revenue	Federal Match
\$59.1 million (37.49%)	\$96.6 million (62.51%)	\$157.7 million

FACT: The ACHA budget amendment shows that \$110.4 million of General Revenue funds were removed from APD's Budget Waiver by placing these funds into reserve on June 16, which was 14 days prior to the end of state fiscal year, thus impacting APD's budget. By placing these funds into reserve for future use, the amounts won't appear as a reversion, but was money that would have been spent. When monies are placed in reserves, they don't show as a cut or a reversion; they are moved into General Revenue to be spent at a later date.

FACT: In addition to the \$157.7 million that was reversed, a budget amendment submitted to the Legislature placed \$110.4 million of funds appropriated for the Budget Waiver into reserve on June 16, which means that the funds, while appropriated, were never spent.

The Social Services Estimating Conference (SSEC) is one of several consensus estimating conferences established by s. 216.136, F.S. Among its responsibilities is to **DEVELOP OFFICIAL FORECASTS** of Medicaid caseloads and expenditures. State agencies are required to use these forecasts **FOR PLANNING AND BUDGETING PURPOSES.**

For purposes of estimating expenditures for the iBudget Waiver within The Agency for Persons with Disabilities (APD), the conference simply adopted the dollar amount previously appropriated by the Legislature as the forecast for the year ahead. Since Chapter 393 requires APD to take action to prevent budget deficits in the iBudget waiver, current law and practice is for the Agency to develop and implement policies so that expenditures do not exceed the appropriation.

SIGNIFICANT ISSUES THAT SHOULD BE TAKEN INTO ACCOUNT when planning for the needs of individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities are:

- Effects of federal law, including case law, in driving administrative practices.
- Logistics of designing and implementing policy changes that impact expenditures in this Medicaid program.
- Difficulties in estimating impact of agency-enacted policy changes on Medicaid expenditures, given the complex dynamics of service utilization.
- Preventing institutional placement of people with intellectual and developmental disabilities.
- Providing policymakers and the public a clear sense of present and future costs of the iBudget program.
- Increasing needs due to aging population in Florida.

The estimating conference needs to consider all factors beyond the prior year's appropriation and develop official forecasts considering all variables that drive expenditures. This will **ALLOW** the Governor and Legislature to have the benefit of **EXACT INFORMATION** for planning and budgetary purposes. Additionally, the SSEC should consider providing supplementary information to policymakers that would be helpful in the long-term planning purposes (such as the cost of serving the waiting list, service utilization increases as the disabled population ages, and the effects of rising health care costs). **LET'S ENSURE** that individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities are protected.

The Arc of Florida
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OUR CHALLENGES

Our CHALLENGES

Let's ENSURE

What Might Have BEEN

Through our membership with The Arc of Florida, we are provided with information on critical legislation and industry-leading insights, as well as access to subject matter experts as it pertains to this ever-evolving field. It was such a great choice to collaborate with other like-minded providers who share the same passion for those we serve. This collective spirit of resilience and innovation fuels our own commitment to making a positive impact daily in the lives of individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities.

Michelle Tolini
CEO, Adult Care Housing

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CONTINUING

ONE VOICE



The Arc of Florida inspired a statewide Delegation Campaign encouraging people to #FindYourVoice and to Step Up and #BeHeard at their local delegation meetings. Our message was heard at every delegation meeting throughout the state.

Legislative delegation meetings are public meetings happening before the start of a new legislative session, usually in the summer and fall. These meetings occur throughout the state; Senators and Representatives from each district are present at their respective meetings. These forums are open to the public and are a great chance for members of the public to present legislative proposals, make funding requests, or express opinions on state issues.

6

Videos/Shorts

4

Social Media Platforms

2

Emails Campaigns

80

Delegation Meetings



“As agency executives, we see firsthand the challenges faced by Floridians with disabilities. Meeting and educating our legislators on issues that affect the population we serve will help in creating policies that foster inclusivity and accessibility, ensuring a fair and equitable Florida for all.”

Gabriel H. Parra
CEO, The Arc of South Florida

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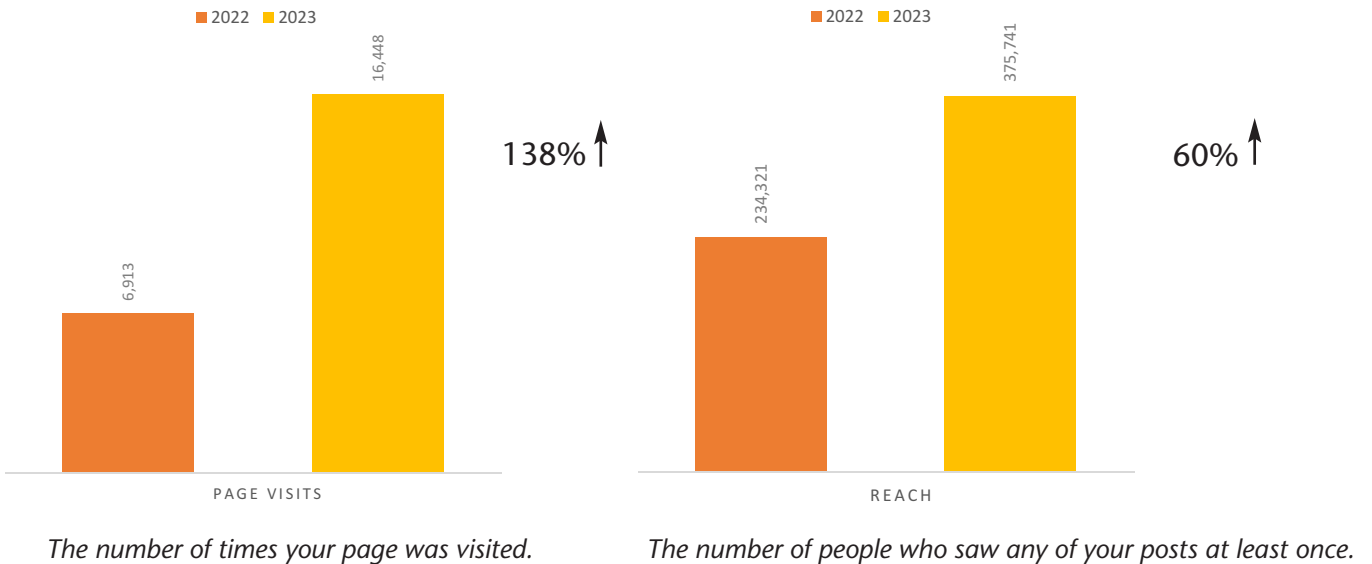
REACH



The Arc of Florida continues to use **SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING** to establish an emotional connection with followers and customers as well as building brand awareness and recognition.

By engaging with audiences, brand visibility increases and larger audiences can be targeted. These platforms allow businesses to respond to inquiries quickly and efficiently, and can even be used to initiate conversations with potential customers. This will then help sell the experiences that come with your product or service. From them, lasting memories are developed and new experiences are gained.

Facebook

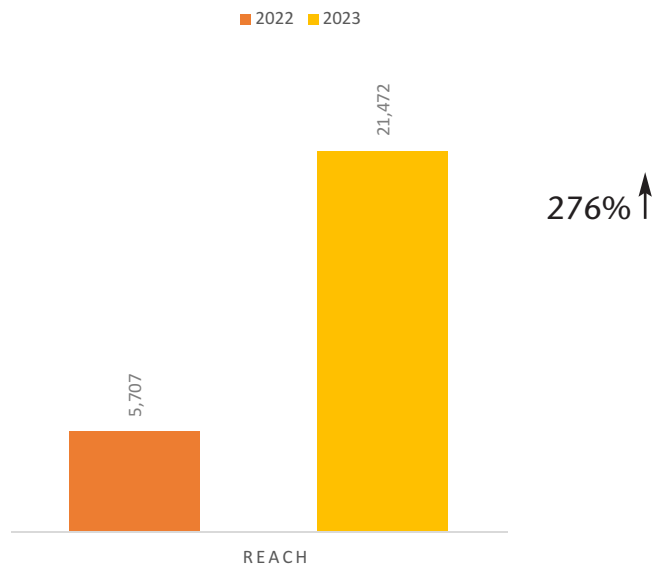
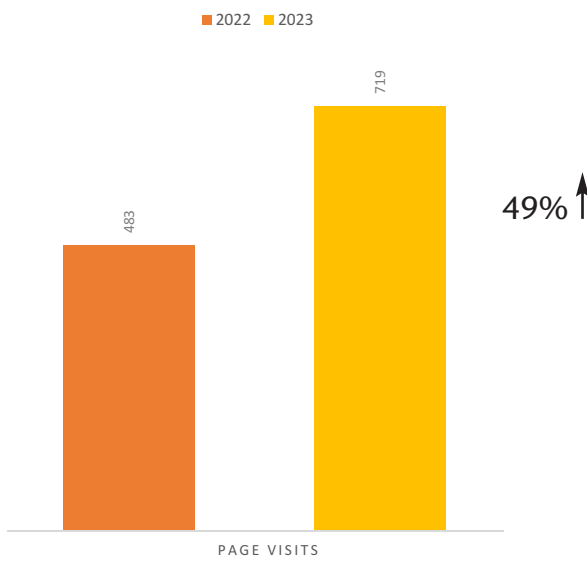


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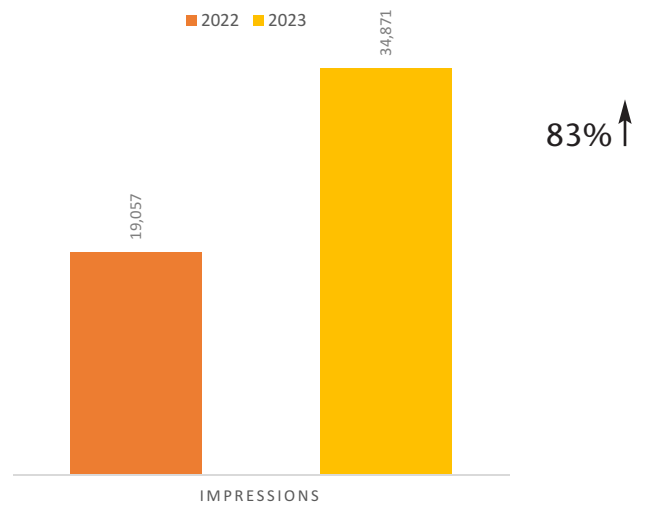
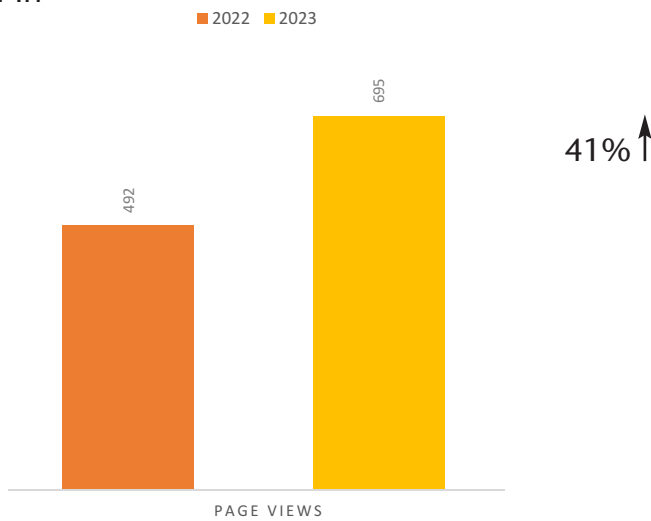
REACH



Instagram



LinkedIn



The number of times your page was visited.

The number of people who saw any of your posts at least once.

CONTINUING GROWTH



The Arc of Florida maintains its statewide advocacy through continued growth of chapters and various membership opportunities.

COLLEAGUE MEMBERSHIPS are providers who have partnered with The Arc of Florida who support individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities (I/DD). These are non-voting members, but with all membership opportunities as our Arc chapters except The Arc branding.

COMMUNITY PARTNER MEMBERSHIPS are those smaller associations supporting individuals with I/DD, often at the grassroots level.

8 New Colleagues 3 New Community Partners



“Working with an organization that shares our mission has been truly transformative. Our membership with The Arc of Florida goes beyond geographical expansion. Together, we're not only creating awareness but also actively pushing for advocacy, making a profound impact on the lives of individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities. This partnership allows us to not just provide psychological and vocational services but to champion a cause, unlocking the full potential of every individual across the entire state of Florida.”

Dr. Moresa Culbreath
Executive Director, We Care Support Services

CONTINUING GROWTH

CHAPTERS

Arc Broward
Arc Desoto
Arc Gateway
Arc of Martin County
CASL – Community Assisted & Supported Living
Gulf County Arc
Jackson Arc
LARC/The Arc of Southwest Florida
Pyramid
Ridge Area Arc
The Arc Big Bend
The Arc Bradford County
The Arc Jacksonville
The Arc Nassau
The Arc Nature Coast
The Arc North Florida
The Arc of Alachua County
The Arc of Charlotte County
The Arc of Indian River County
The Arc of Levy County
The Arc Marion County
The Arc of Palm Beach County
The Arc of Putnam County, Inc.
The Arc of South Florida
The Arc of Space Coast
The Arc of St. Lucie County
The Arc of the Bay
The Arc of the Emerald Coast
The Arc of The Glades
The Arc of the St. Johns
The Arc of Volusia, Inc.
The Arc of Washington-Holmes Counties
The Arc Sunrise of Central Florida

The Arc Tampa Bay
The Arc Tampa Bay Foundation
Victory Living Programs, Inc.

COLLEAGUES

Adult Care Housing
Bridge to Hope
Chautauqua Learn & Serve Charter School
Empowerment Programs
Expert Billing & More
Florida Home Health Equipment & Supplies
God's Protected Harbor
Habilitative Services of North Florida
Independence Landing
JARC Florida
Non-Profit Initiatives, Inc.
Pine Castle
Pyramid, Inc.
Rosen JCC
Shalimare, Inc.
Side by Side
STARability Foundation
Therap
We Care Support Services

COMMUNITY PARTNERS

American Children's Campaign
Autism Speaks
We the People, By the People

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