

Closing the Disability Voting Gap

Building ways to get our voices heard

People with disabilities have the right to “effectively and fully participate in political and public life on an equal basis with others...including the right and opportunity for persons with disabilities to vote and be elected.” - *United Nations, Rights of Persons with Disabilities*

What are voter rights in Washington State?

Any person who is over the age of 18 and has lived in Washington for at least 30 days (with the exception of people who are currently incarcerated) has the right to vote. People with limited or full guardianship can vote, and are encouraged to do so, unless this right has been specifically removed. Many families in Whatcom County encourage their family members with disabilities to exercise their right to vote as often as they are able. Voters can receive help from a non-biased assistant like a family member or care provider and utilize the Accessible Voting Units (AVUs) at the Whatcom County Courthouse. AVUs feature a variety of accessibility mechanisms, providing electronic, audio, visual, and selection support.

What is the disability gap, and why does it exist?

The disability gap is the difference in voter turnout between people with disabilities and people without disabilities. In 2012, approximately three million U.S. voters with disabilities were eligible to vote, but did not. While the voting gap is large, the registration gap is much smaller. This means that more people with disabilities are registered to vote than actually submit ballots. Many people with disabilities face challenges in voting – primarily in accessing polling centers. Here in Washington, everyone is sent a mail-in ballot. This boosts voter turnout, but we still have a voting gap. One tenth of people with disabilities using mail-in ballots reported difficulty voting, while others who go to the Auditor's Office to use AVUs face challenges understanding and using the technology. About one fourth of people who are currently part of the voting gap could be more involved in the voting process with more awareness and support.

How can we close the gap?

Talk about it. Help to spread the word about upcoming elections, voting registration periods, and accessible voting mechanisms. Read your Voter's Pamphlet for more information on accessibility and how to provide your input. Talk to your legislators during Advocacy Days (see page 2 for more info), sharing the challenges you or a family member have faced when voting during previous elections.

How to register to vote:

- Online at: <http://www.sos.wa.gov/elections/myvote/olvr.html>
- Print and mail: <http://www.sos.wa.gov/elections/Print-Voter-Registration-Forms.aspx>
- In person at the Auditor's Office

For more information, contact Debbie Adelstein, Whatcom County Auditor: 311 Grand Avenue, Suite 103, Bellingham, WA 98225.
Phone: (360) 778-5100. Website: <http://www.whatcomcounty.us/199/Auditor>



Supplemental Budget

Since the biennial budget was passed last year, 2016 is a supplemental budget year. This means that there will be no big changes to the budget this year, just fixes to cover unanticipated costs. The Governor's budget includes some items relevant to individuals with disabilities, including additional funds to cover:

- Overtime hours for individual providers, who are now required to be paid overtime wages.
- New case managers to cover increased caseloads.
- Healthcare costs for clients being added to the new Individual & Family Services Waiver.
- Increasing the reimbursement rate by \$10/hr for RNs & LPNs in the Medically Intensive Care Program.
- Additional funds for residential services for individuals with developmental disabilities.
- Funds for additional staff, facility upgrades, and additional respite beds at the Yakima Valley institutional facility.



The House and Senate are working on their budgets right now, so there is still time to give your input on budget items that are important to you.

Bills of Interest:

- HB 2323 & SB 6210 – **ABLE Accounts**: Creates an *Achieving a Better Life Experience* (ABLE) savings program for people with disabilities.
- HB 2394 & SB 6329 – **Parent to Parent**: Puts the Parent to Parent program into statute.
- HB 2403 – **Down syndrome Resources**: Creates evidence-based written information about Down syndrome given to parents or pre-parents with the diagnosis.
- HB2515 & SB 6272 – **Medicaid**: Increases Medicaid reimbursement to providers to be the same as Medicare (33% increase).
- HB 2687 & SB 6394 – **Hearing Aid Parity**: Insurance coverage must provide hearing aids for children under 18, plus the option for adults to have hearing aids every three years.

Advocacy Days 2016

Advocacy Days offer a way for you to learn about the legislative process in person. It's a hands-on tool kit for learning how to make a difference! For information or to register, call 1-888-754-8798, ext. 105, email bean@arcwa.org or visit http://arcwa.org/takeaction/washingtonstate/advocacy_day.

Advocacy Days Schedule

Dates & Highlighted Topics

January 27	Supported Living Services
February 3	Budget Overview
February 10	Disability Pride
February 17	Power Up Families
February 24	Disability Protections
March 2	Employment for All



All Advocacy Days are held at The United Churches of Olympia (110 - 11th Avenue SE, Olympia, WA) unless otherwise noted.



Climb on Board!

Opportunity to visit Olympia and meet with your legislators!

The Arc of Whatcom County will be chartering a bus from Bellingham to Olympia to participate in the "Power Up Families" Legislative Advocacy Day on **Wednesday, February 17th**. The bus will leave at approximately 7am for a full day in Olympia. Parents, self-advocates, and care providers are welcome to come at no cost to you. We will provide information and materials to help you understand the issues and share your story.

If you are interested in joining us, please email Monica at monicab@arcwhatcom.org or call (360) 715-0170, ext. 303, **by February 5th** to reserve your seat!

If you plan to join us in Olympia on February 17th, be sure to mark your calendar for our Legislative Advocacy workshop on February 16th. See page 4 for details.



Informing Families

Today and Tomorrow

A Partnership for Better Communication
on Developmental Disability Issues in Washington State

Autism and DDA Eligibility: The DSM Effect

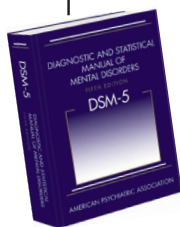
Due to recent changes made to the Diagnostic & Statistical Manual (DSM), it can be a little confusing to know what DDA is looking at when it comes to children with an autism diagnosis and DDA eligibility.

That's because the DSM 5 definition and criteria for Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) is different from the DSM-IV-TR diagnosis of Autistic Disorder. As a result, DDA requires different documentation to help make sure that it's serving the same individuals it's intended to serve, regardless of the version of DSM that's used.



Here's what the DDA eligibility criteria look like under each DSM:

	Diagnosis	Substantial Limitations
DSM-IV-TR	Diagnosis: Autistic Disorder 299.00	Adaptive skills test score of more than 2 standard deviations below the mean.
DSM 5	Autism Spectrum Disorder 299.00, with a severity level of 2 or 3 in both columns of the severity scale.	Adaptive skills test score of more than 2 standard deviations below the mean; AND Full Scale IQ (FSIQ) score of more than one standard deviation below the mean*, or a statement from the diagnosing professional that you cannot complete an IQ test because your condition is so severe you cannot demonstrate the minimum skills required for the test. *If your FSIQ is higher, you can provide documentation signed by the diagnosing professional showing you meet criteria under the DSM-IV-TR for Autistic Disorder (DDA can provide a form to the diagnosing professional if needed).



TIP

When filling out the application materials for DDA eligibility, be sure to include the names and contact information on the Consent form of those who made the diagnosis and administered the test(s). DDA may have a question related to their findings.

DDA may also need to request additional information from sources such as schools or medical providers. Leaving out this information may delay the application.

NOTE: The diagnosis must include a diagnostic report that includes documentation of the diagnostic criteria specified in the DSM-IV TR or DSM-5.

What to Do When You Receive Notice of DDA's Eligibility Decision

APPROVAL: Contact your local DDA office to request services and an assessment. DDA has a variety of programs and services to meet different needs. A case manager will conduct an assessment to determine eligibility for the requested programs or services. Some programs may have waiting lists but asking for services provides the state with an accurate picture of the overall need, and helps with planning and funding requests to the legislature.

DENIAL: Read the reasons why DDA denied eligibility, which is included in the letter (called a Planned Action Notice). This can help you understand what additional information DDA may need if you choose to reapply.



Community Events

ASK THE ADVOCATE WORKSHOP **Legislative Advocacy**

Tuesday, February 16th, 5:30-7:00pm
The Arc of Whatcom County
2602 McLeod Road, Bellingham



This workshop will highlight current legislative issues that impact individuals with developmental disabilities and their families. We will also discuss how to share your experience and create stories to give to legislators when we go down to Olympia for Advocacy Day. Even if you can't join us for Advocacy Day on the 17th, participating in this workshop will get you up to speed on the issues. This will also give you the opportunity to prepare a story to share with your elected officials about the ABLE Act, Parent to Parent, or the issue most important to YOU!

Please RSVP by February 11th: (360) 715-0170, ext. 303, monicab@arcwhatcom.org. Limited supervised care for family members is available on a first-come, first-served basis with RSVP by February 11th.



Seattle Children's
HOSPITAL • RESEARCH • FOUNDATION

Autism 200 Series

Autism 200 is a series of free classes for parents and caregivers of children with autism sponsored by Seattle Children's Autism Center. **You must RSVP in advance.** Contact Jessica: burchij@students.wvu.edu.

Autism 211: Addressing Challenging Behavior, Part 1: Use of Applied Behavior Analysis to Assess & Treat Disruptive Behavior

7:00pm-8:30pm, Thursday, February 18
Western Washington University Speech-Language Clinic
AIC Building, Room #360, 516 High Street, Bellingham
Instructor: Eric Boelter PhD, BCBA-D

Dr. Eric Boelter, a behavioral psychologist at Seattle Children's Autism Center, will review the use of a functional behavior assessment (FBA) to assess individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities who engage in severe disruptive behavior, such as aggression, self-injurious behavior, and property destruction and how this assessment can then lead to effective treatment. The presentation will conclude with a review of the work in this area being conducted at the Biobehavioral Program at Seattle Children's Autism Center.

www.seattlechildrens.org/clinics-programs/autism-center/resources

Strengthening Families

Classes for parents and youth ages 10-14

6-8:30pm, Thursdays in March & April

Mt. Baker Junior High
4936 Deming Rd, Deming, WA 98244

HELP YOUR YOUTH: Prepare for the teen years; strengthen family communication; avoid problems with drugs and alcohol.

PARENTS & CAREGIVERS LEARN: What to expect from their adolescent children; over a dozen tools for effectively parenting teens; how to set limits and show love during the pre-teen and teen years.

YOUTH LEARN: How to resist peer pressure; how to handle angry feelings and manage stress; how to choose positive friends; appreciation for their parents.

FAMILIES WILL: Have fun playing games & doing activities together; discuss what makes your family strong; solve problems together.

Dinner will be served. Free childcare provided for children under 10. Enrollment limited to 12 families. \$5 per family per session or \$35 for 7 week class. Scholarships available--just ask!

To register, call (360) 383-2015 ext. 4519. For more information about the program, visit: sfp.wsu.edu or contact Jamie Olson at (360) 595-7950 or jamie.olson@wsu.edu.

Young Adult Self-Advocacy (YASA) Meeting

10am-12pm, Saturday, February 6

The Arc's Dan Godwin Community Center
2602 McLeod Road, Bellingham

For more information, contact Jessika:
jessikah@arcwhatcom.org or (360) 715-0170, ext 304.



Spin Dance

6-8pm, Monday, February 15

Bellingham Senior Center
315 Halleck Street, Bellingham

Bellingham Parks and Recreation, The Max Higbee Center, and Whatcom County Parks sponsor monthly dances for individuals with disabilities. All persons age 14 and over are invited for music, dancing, and fun! For information, call Amanda: 778-7000.

P2P Support Meeting

7-8:30pm, Monday, February 8

Cordata Elementary Library
4420 Aldrich Road, Bellingham

Join other parents of children with developmental delays, disabilities, and ongoing health care needs in a comfortable, confidential setting for mutual support. On-site child care available for those who RSVP by Friday, February 5th: (360) 255-2056.



The "Road Show" is Coming Soon to a School District near You!

What is the Road Show?

The Road Show is about providing information on the Adult Service System for individuals with developmental disabilities, their families, and educators. The adult service system can be a challenge to navigate, and we would like to give parents and families a chance to ask questions about services and the road ahead. Our plan is that families will have an increased understanding and access to the developmental disability service system and improvements in transition to adulthood.

Some topics we touch on:

Important dates and tips for transition into adult services, navigating the service system, eligibility and services provided through the Developmental Disabilities Administration (DDA), short and long term employment supports through the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR) and the Whatcom County Developmental Disabilities Program, and "building a life" for your son or daughter after they leave school.

Who are we?

Nick Harris & Brianna Edwards: Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR)

Beverly Porter: Parent Advocate, The Arc of Whatcom County

Leslie Kivett: Developmental Disabilities Administration (DDA) Staff

Jessica Lee: Whatcom County Developmental Disabilities Program

For more information, contact Jessica Lee at (360) 778-6047.



Road Show Dates

Wednesday, February 3, 5:30pm

Ferndale High School, 5830 Golden Eagle Dr.

Wednesday, February 10, 5:30pm

*Mt. Baker High School, 4936 Deming Rd.

Wednesday, February 17, 5:30pm

Blaine High School, 1055 H St.

Wednesday, March 23, 5:30pm

*Meridian High School, 194 W Laurel Rd.

**Mt. Baker & Meridian School Districts are welcoming students from neighboring districts to attend.*



Whatcom County Transition Fair

Where will your passport take you?

Wednesday, March 9th

9am - 12:30pm

St. Luke's Health Education Center
3333 Squalicum Parkway, Bellingham

The Transition Fair is for students with developmental and other disabilities, families, educators, and interested community members. Both middle and high school age students and their families are encouraged to attend. All are welcome who are interested in thinking about the future!

Come and learn about: Housing options, recreation, advocacy, employment and vocational supports, guardianship, community/tech colleges, Social Security, Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR), Developmental Disabilities Administration (DDA), and more.

For more information, call the Whatcom County DD Program at 360-778-6047 or email jllee@co.whatcom.wa.us.

This event is in an accessible location. For sign language interpreter service, assistive listening devices, or a communication material in an alternative format, large print or audiotape, please call 10 working days in advance at (360) 676-6724, ext. 32014.



SAVE THE DATE: The Sprout Film Festival Returns in 2016!

April 19th at The Pickford. Stay tuned for more details coming soon!

Programs & People

Lots of Socks!

Raising Awareness on World Down Syndrome Day

This year's World Down Syndrome Day (WDSD) on March 21st will be honored through its "Lots of Socks" campaign, an initiative encouraging participants to wear brightly colored and unique socks as a conversation piece, allowing the wearer to raise awareness about Down syndrome. You can wear the official "Lots of Socks" socks, other brightly colored socks, long socks, printed socks, one sock, or even three socks for three chromosomes. If you don't normally wear socks, then wear them. And why stop at socks? Wear clothing with the "Lots of Socks" logo, "Lots of Socks" t-shirts, WDSD t-shirts, or other brightly colored clothing.

The choice is yours, but we ask you to join us in wearing something which people will ask you about so that you can tell them all about WDSD. It is easy to do, so whether you are at home, school, college, university, work, play, travel or anywhere, join in!

On March 21, 2016, wear "Lots of Socks" and invite all your friends, family, and colleagues to do the same.



March 21st is World Down Syndrome Day!

Use this day to help spread awareness in our community. One way to do this, is through LOTS OF SOCKS. Down syndrome Outreach has many other ideas for you to spread awareness for 3/21. Stay tuned for your March newsletter and e-alerts (or call 715-0170, ext. 304, or email jessikah@archwhatcom.org) on how you can be involved in celebrating people with Down syndrome!



Get to Know The Arc Volunteer Orientation

Tuesday, March 1st, 5:30-6:30pm
The Arc's Dan Godwin Community Center
2602 McLeod Road, Bellingham

Perhaps you have already volunteered a few times with The Arc but want to learn more about the various programs and opportunities available. Or perhaps you have been considering getting involved and just need a little nudge? Then this fun and quick "Get to Know The Arc" Volunteer Orientation is for you!

There are so many exciting things happening at The Arc, and we would love for you to be a part of it. For more information or to sign up, please contact Makenna: (360) 715-0170, ext. 205, or makennap@arcwhatcom.org. We look forward to hearing from you and working with you soon!

MEET MARCELA, THE ARC'S NEW LATINO FAMILY SUPPORT COORDINATOR!

Dear Families,

I am writing to let you know that after two years working with the Parent to Parent Program as a Latino Community Coordinator, I will now be able to offer similar services at The Arc for families who have concerns regarding their children with special needs. Working at The Arc provides a new opportunity to communicate with families we have not been able to work with before, as well as share valuable information with our community. My goal is to provide greater support to the Latino community with new events, workshops, and outreach efforts which will help families to build a greater understanding of special needs and provide a more enriching life for their children.



Staff Members of The Arc and Parent to Parent
(Marcela at top left)

I enjoy working here, especially because it gives me the opportunity to reach out to more Latino families. I understand how hard it is to start a new life in another country where you do not know the language or have your family to support you. It can be very isolating and affect your health as well as that of your family. For these reasons, I've focused on working with immigrants and getting them involved in community activities and enrolled in English classes. I believe there are many barriers to finding help if you do not speak English or Spanish and instead speak another dialect. I am very excited to connect families with the community and help to increase their network of support.

I invite you to come and visit The Arc at the Dan Godwin Community Center and participate in our start-up interest group. We hope that we can include more families who have new ideas to create a bigger impact for our family members, connecting them with the community and providing them with meaningful opportunities. I look forward to meeting all of you in person at The Arc!

Sincerely,

Marcela Jiménez
Latino Family Support at The Arc

Lo invito a visitar El Arc y a participar en el grupo. Deseamos incluir más familias con ideas nuevas para crear un cambio en nuestros miembros de familia, conectandolos con la comunidad y proporcionandole oportunidades significativas. ¡Espero reunirme con usted en persona en El Arc!

Sinceramente, Marcela Jiménez

To reach Marcela, please call (360) 715-0170, ext. 308,
or email marcelaj@arcwhatcom.org.



For people with intellectual
and developmental disabilities

The Parent Coalition

The Arc of Whatcom County provides leadership support for individuals with developmental disabilities and their parents/guardians. The goal of the Parent Coalition is to enable persons with developmental disabilities and their parents/guardians to become effective and involved in accessing services.

The Parent Coalition newsletter
is published monthly by:

The Arc of Whatcom County

Dan Godwin Community Center
2602 McLeod Road
Bellingham, WA 98225
(360) 715-0170

www.arcwhatcom.org

OFFICE HOURS: 9am-12pm M-F

Newsletter Production Staff:

Christine Stone, Monica Burke,
Sonja Hellinga, Olivia Murguia,
Mt. Baker High School students and volunteers

Executive Director: Beverly Porter

Office Manager: Christine Stone

Program Director: Monica Burke

Care & Resource Coordinator:

Mary Jo Durborow

DsO & YASA: Jessika Houston

Board of Directors

Missy Bartel, President;

Todd Childs, Vice President;

Susan Radke, Secretary;

Katie Edson; Bobbie Wiley;

Dale Whipple & Susan Larson

Stay Connected

Online Community Calendar:

Visit The Arc's website at www.arcwhatcom.org and click on Events.

Facebook: Visit our FB page: www.facebook.com/ArcWhatcom for the latest information and events.

E-alerts: The Parent Coalition emails updates on legislation, workshops and upcoming activities. To sign up, visit www.arcwhatcom.org or email monicab@arcwhatcom.org.



PARTNER AGENCY

The Parent Coalition is funded by grants from the Developmental Disabilities Program of Whatcom County, the United Way and your generous donations.

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DID YOU KNOW?

Down syndrome Outreach (DsO) is excited for the **Spring Fling**, an annual family support event on **May 1st** from 12-3pm at the beautiful Fairhaven Park Pavilion.

This fun event is for families who are a part of DsO, and provides an opportunity to meet new families, and reconnect with others. It is a great chance for the young and old to be with our DsO community, learn what our community members have already accomplished in 2016, and enjoy a wonderful afternoon, rain or shine!



The Arc of Whatcom County
Dan Godwin Community Center
2602 McLeod Road
Bellingham, WA 98225

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Event Calendar

February 2016

6 Saturday, 10am-12pm
Young Adult Self-Advocacy
The Arc's Dan Godwin Community Center
2602 McLeod Road
Contact Jessika: 715-0170, ext 304

8 Monday, 7-8:30pm
Parent to Parent Support Meeting
Cordata Elementary School
4420 Aldrich Road
Contact Karlene: (360) 255-2056

12 Friday, 12-1:30pm
Autism Support Group
The Arc's Dan Godwin Community Center
2602 McLeod Road
Contact Monica: 715-0170, ext 303

15 Monday, 6-8pm
Spin Dance
Senior Center, 315 Halleck Street
Contact Amanda: 778-7000

16 Tuesday, 5:30-7pm
PC Workshop: Legislative Advocacy
The Arc's Dan Godwin Community Center
2602 McLeod Road
Contact Monica: 715-0170, ext 303

17 Wednesday
Advocacy Days: Bus to Olympia
See page 2 for details.

18 Thursday, 5-6pm
Buddy Walk Planning Meeting
See box at right for details.

20 Saturday, 6-7pm
People First Meeting
114 W Magnolia, Suite 104
Contact Susan: 738-2060

24 Wednesday, 5:30-6:30pm
The Arc's Board of Directors Meeting
The Arc's Dan Godwin Community Center
2602 McLeod Road
Contact Beverly: 715-0170, ext 306

March 2016

1 Tuesday, 5:30-6:30pm
Volunteer Orientation
See page 6 for details.

NOTE: All events listed are in Bellingham unless otherwise noted. To find more events, visit www.arcwhatcom.org/wp/events/.

Buddy Walk Planning Committee Seeks Volunteer Members

Do you love the Buddy Walk? Do you want to help ensure the success of your Buddy Walk and make this event even more amazing?



If so, Down syndrome Outreach's Buddy Walk Planning Committee is the place to get involved! We will discuss the details of this event and use one another's talents and efforts to create an even more awesome and memorable Buddy Walk than ever before.

Meeting dates:*

Thursday, February 18, 5-6pm
Thursday, March 17, 5-6pm
Thursday, April 21, 5-6pm

The Arc's Dan Godwin Community Center
2602 McLeod Rd, Bellingham

***Childcare is available with RSVP one week prior.**

To RSVP or for more info, contact Jessika at (360) 715-0170, ext. 304, or jessikah@arcwhatcom.org