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The Arc of Illinois Launches "Focus on the Future" to Shape a Brighter, More Inclusive IDD System that Centers Self-Advocate and Family Voices

Statewide Listening Sessions Underway Through May 2025 to Inform Policy Recommendations

TINLEY PARK, IL – The Arc of Illinois, the state's leading grassroots advocacy organization for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities, today announced the launch of Focus on the Future, an initiative to ensure self-advocate and family voices lead efforts to reshape Illinois' IDD system.

As part of the Disability Partners IDD System Redesign Coalition, The Arc is conducting listening sessions across Illinois through May 2025 to collect input from self-advocates and families that will directly inform policy recommendations and advocacy initiatives.

Sessions are available both virtually and in-person in communities across the state.

"This redesign is essential because people with disabilities and their families deserve a system that truly reflects their lived experiences," said Samantha Alloway, Executive Director of The Arc of Illinois. "When we listen directly to the people most impacted, we build a future that is more responsive, more inclusive, and more empowering for everyone."

The initiative, funded by the Coleman Foundation, invites self-advocates, families, providers, and allies to participate in three ways: taking an online survey, attending a listening session, or uploading a video testimonial. All input collected through the statewide summit on May 20, 2026 will shape the coalition's recommendations for a system that is easier to navigate, grows with each person throughout their lifespan, and empowers informed choices and full community participation.

"This is our moment to be heard," added Alloway. "The more voices we gather, the stronger our case for a system that truly serves people with IDD and their families."

To learn more about Focus on the Future or to participate, visit <https://www.thearcofil.org/focus-on-the-future/>. For more information on the IDD System Redesign Coalition, visit <https://disabilitypartnersil.org/>.



ABOUT THE ARC

The Arc of Illinois advocates for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities, families and community organizations to ensure that people with disabilities can work, learn, participate and thrive in communities across the state.

For 76 years, the Arc has offered resources and information, supported families in their individual advocacy efforts and trained and educated people with disabilities, families and professionals.

ABOUT THE DISABILITY PARTNERS COALITION

The Disability Partners IDD System Redesign Coalition was established to enhance an Illinois IDD system that meets the needs of every citizen with IDD for their entire lifespan. This includes a system that is easy for people to navigate, that grows with the person and leads to a better life through continuous improvement. The Coalition brings together The Arc of Illinois, Illinois Association of Rehabilitation Facilities, The Center for Developmental Disabilities Advocacy and Community Supports, The Institute on Public Policy for People with Disabilities, and UIC's Institute on Disability and Human Development to drive person-centered, sustainable system change across Illinois.

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