

# The Arc of Texas 2023 Advocacy Toolkit

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# Identify Your Legislators

**Engaging with legislators to build relationships early in the legislative session is a great way to build relationships for when they count.**

**Be aware that there are many Texas legislators who are retiring or changing districts following the redistricting that took place in 2021.**

## How to find out who represents you in the Texas Legislature:

1. Visit the [Texas Legislature Online website](#)
2. On the right side of the webpage, find the **"Who Represents Me?"** section
3. Enter your address, and hit "submit"

You will now be able to see your:

- U.S. Senators
- U.S. Representative
- Texas State Senator
- Texas State Representative
- Texas State Board of Education Member

## How to find out who is running to represent you in the Texas Legislature:

1. Find out the district numbers for your Texas State Senator and Texas State Representative by completing the steps for finding out who represents you in the Texas Legislature. **Note the district numbers for each.**

For the purposes of the Texas Legislature, **you only need to know your Texas State Senator and Texas State Representative.**

You can then click on their names to learn more about them and find their contact information.



# Schedule an Appointment

**Now that you have identified who represents you, contact them and schedule a time to meet, ideally before the legislative session or during the first month.**

**You can meet in-person at their district or capitol office, or via video conferencing – it is up to you.**

**Below are some templates you can use to schedule your appointment by phone or by email. Please don't forget to revise to personalize and to meet your needs!**

## EMAIL TEMPLATE

Dear \_\_\_\_\_,

My name is <first name, last name>, and I am your constituent. I am emailing you to schedule an appointment in advance of the upcoming legislative session. As a member of The Arc, I am committed to improving the lives of Texans with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD). I would love to briefly discuss with you issues that are important to those with IDD and their loved ones. I am open to meeting via Zoom or in-person at your district office.

Thank you in advance for your response.

Sincerely,

<Your name>

<Your home address>

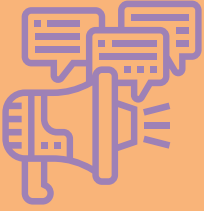
<Your phone number>

## PHONE SCRIPT

Hello, may I speak with the Senator's/Representative's/Candidate's scheduler please?

My name is <first name, last name> and I am a constituent. I am calling to schedule an appointment ahead of the upcoming legislative session. As a member of The Arc, I would love to briefly discuss with the <Senator/Representative/ Candidate> the importance of having a heart for individuals with disabilities and the policies most important to me as a voter.

I am open to meeting via Zoom or in-person at the district office.



# Practice Your Message

**Before you meet with your legislators take some time to plan and practice your message. You will want to prepare to discuss the following:**

- 1. Who am I?**
- 2. What is The Arc of Texas?**
- 3. Why are disability rights important to me?**

**Keep the conversations narrow. Stick to specifics and come away from it with an actionable ask for the office. Remember, this is supposed to be a fun and informal meeting.**

- **Identify yourself as a constituent** to remind them why disability rights are critical to your vote and your district
  - Determine 1-2 issues that you are especially passionate about
  - **Review our Public Policy Priorities – be encouraged to print this out and bring it with you – this would be a great printout to leave with your legislator.**
  - Legislative staff need your perspective and expertise more than you think.
- Be personal and bring your unique expertise to the meeting!**

## MESSAGE SCRIPT

I am a constituent in your district and an ally of The Arc of Texas. (If applicable let them know you are a family member of a Texan with a disability/a provider of services that support Texans with disabilities/exc.)

The Arc of Texas works with the over 500,000 Texans with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD) and their families to identify barriers to and solutions for inclusive education, competitive integrated employment, quality community-based services and supports, and access to civil rights and justice.

I would like to talk to you about the importance of disability rights and why they are a priority to me and my community. (Insert personal narrative that situates your story and priorities within their district).

As I consider the upcoming election, I am asking you to support legislation that prioritizes disability rights. (If applicable, thank them for their work in previous sessions)

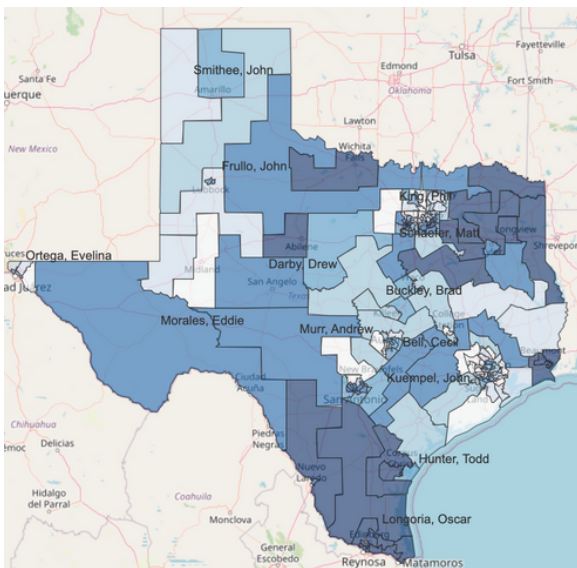


# Prepare Some Written Materials

We encourage you to take some time to create something unique to build rapport with your legislators. These messages can be artwork, cards, photos, or anything else that demonstrates your connection to the community! You might also include a short note, letting them know what is important to you and that you are a constituent who has a loved one with a disability, you have a disability, or you serve people with disabilities.

Use some of the materials available on The Arc's website.

## Medicaid Waiver Wait List Maps



## Policy Priority Info Sheets

**SHOULDN'T ALL 500,000+ TEXANS WITH INTELLECTUAL AND DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES**

Receive an equal education?    Make decisions about where to live?    Have equal access to justice?    Have a job with a fair wage?

**THEY DON'T.**  
We can change that together.

**The Arc of Texas**

**achievable solutions**  
We work with Texans with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD) and their families to identify barriers to and solutions for inclusive education, competitive integrated employment, quality community-based services and supports, and access to civil rights and justice. As a statewide membership organization, we know that Texans with IDD and their families are the best source for achievable solutions.

**trusted experts**  
The Arc of Texas staff and members have a seat at the table among many state and local committees and boards. We've also been a trusted source for state media, including NPR, The Texas Tribune, Spectrum News, and The Houston Chronicle. We work tirelessly every day to be the experts on IDD who you can trust.

**BE OUR CHAMPION**  
The Arc of Texas can help connect you with your constituents with IDD and their families for information, stories, and legislative testimony. Together, we can identify what they need and provide you with the best resources and expertise for solutions that work.

Email us: [publicpolicy@thearcoftexas.org](mailto:publicpolicy@thearcoftexas.org)  
Call us: 512-454-6694

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**What is IDD?**  
An intellectual disability occurs before age 18 and is characterized by significant limitations in both intellectual functioning and adaptive behavior, such as social and practical everyday living skills. A developmental disability is a severe chronic disability attributable to a mental or physical impairment or combination of mental and physical impairments that manifests before age 22. Examples of developmental disabilities include autism spectrum disorder, Cerebral palsy, and Down syndrome.



# Thank your legislators and /or legislative candidates

**Whenever you have the opportunity to meet with your legislator or their staff, you should follow that contact with a thank-you note.**

**The best thank-you notes remind the legislator about who you are, how your issue is important to his/her constituents, and reiterate your “ask”. Remember, this is another opportunity to advocate for your issue.**

**If possible, send the handwritten thank you card within a day or two of your visit. Use the template below as a guide.**

- Include a general reminder about the issues that were discussed during the meeting.
- Customize the card with other specific details from your visit, if desired.
- If you met with a staff member from the legislator’s office, send your note to the staff person c/o the Senator or Representative.

## THANK YOU CARD TEMPLATE

[DATE]

Dear [Legislator’s Name] or [Name of Staff],

Thank you for meeting with me on [DATE] in your Capitol office. I appreciate your time and interest in learning about and discussing issues affecting Texans with intellectual and developmental disabilities.

I enjoyed meeting with you, and I hope you will consider supporting The Arc’s mission, as we discussed. Please feel free to contact me if you have any questions or need further information.

Sincerely,

[SIGNATURE]

<Your phone number>

## WHERE DO I SEND MY CARD?

The Honorable [First Name] [Last Name]  
Texas Senate  
P.O. Box 12068  
Austin, TX 78711

The Honorable [First Name] [Last Name]  
Texas House of Representatives  
P.O. Box 2910  
Austin, TX 78768