

A LOOK AHEAD

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 8, 2025

The **A Look Ahead** conference series brings together expert speakers for training that focuses on improving the quality of life for individuals living with disabilities and the people that support them.

A Look Ahead partners include:
The Arc of DFW Area, FEAT-North Texas, The Self-Determination Group and First United Methodist Church of Arlington

Website: <https://thearcofdfw.org/a-look-ahead-series/> Facebook:

<https://www.facebook.com/alookaheadseries/>



#alaseries

Welcome to the A Look Ahead Quarterly Mini Conference Series!

A Look Ahead is brought to you by four partnering agencies: The Arc of DFW Area, FEAT- NT, The Self-Determination Group and FUMC-Arlington. We have gathered today to offer a half-day conference for individuals with disabilities, their families and friends and the professionals who work with them. We offer you a day filled with important information, resources, and strategies to help you look ahead and create a plan with hopes and dreams for the future.

**For the first time in my life, I got to
decide who came into my home
and who touched my body.**

Ricky Broussard

Our knowledgeable and engaging lineup of speakers, panelists and topics is sure to help fill your toolbox of strategies and ideas. Take advantage of these sessions and learn all you can and leave here with a renewed determination to create a good life for your child, friend, family member, student, or yourself.

We have a great group of exhibitors today. Please visit their tables. You will find valuable information and can connect with resources in our community.

While passing in the hall or visiting the exhibitor tables, be sure to meet other conference attendees. This conference offers some great networking opportunities.

Thank you to our volunteers that made today possible. It takes a lot of hard work and commitment to pull off an event of this size and frequency.

If you would like to receive information about further A Look Ahead events, be sure to sign up with the conference planning partner organizations so that you will be added to the email distribution lists.

Enjoy the conference - you are in for a real treat!

The A Look Ahead Conference Planning Partners

CEU's AVAILABLE FOR TEXAS EDUCATORS AND TEXAS SOCIAL WORKERS

To receive CEU credit for attendance, you **MUST** complete **ALL** the following requirements:

- **SIGN IN** and **SIGN OUT** at the **CEU table** located near registration.
- **SIGN IN** to **each session** on the sheets provided in each classroom.
- **COMPLETE** and **RETURN** the CEU packet with evaluation forms for **each session** and the conference evaluation to the CEU table.
- You only need to complete **ONE EVALUATION** for **EACH** breakout session.

Certificates will be **emailed** within 30 days of the event if **ALL** requirements are met.

CEU's are provided by The Arc of DFW Area

CONFERENCE SCHEDULE

Registration 8:30 am – 9:00 am

Welcome 9:00 am – 9:20 am

1st Set of Breakout Sessions 9:30 am – 11:00 am

- An Introduction to Person-Centered Planning: The Goal, Process, and Benefit | Rms #155-156
- Employment First in Texas | Rm #152
- Medicaid Long-Term Services and Supports: What You Need to Know | Rm #154
- Out of Options: Addressing Inequities in Care for Texans with IDD and Mental Illness | Rm #151

2nd Set of Breakout Sessions 11:10 am – 12:10 pm

- Employment for People with Disabilities: Strategies for Success | Rm #152
- Finding Your Path to a Place to Call Home | Rm #151
- Person-Centered Planning: What Does the Future Hold? | Rms #155-156
- Under the Dome: A Preview of Disability Related Issues Before the 89th Texas Legislature | Rm #154

Lunch (on site) 12:10 pm – 12:55 pm

3rd Set of Breakout Sessions 1:00 pm – 2:30 pm

- Bottom Dollars: Documentary Film Screening and Discussion | Rm #152
- Disaster Resilience for Texans with Disabilities | Rm #151
- Guardianship and Alternatives: Respecting Rights and Honoring Choices | Rm #154
- There is No Place Like Home | Rms #155-156

To Access Session Presentation Handouts:



Scan the QR code or visit the link <http://bit.ly/43Mg6kx> to access session handouts.

Please note: Some presenters do not make handouts available.

Please turn in your conference and session evaluation forms.

Your compliments and suggestions are important to us. Each form is reviewed and considered in future planning.

An Introduction to Person-Centered Planning: The Goal, Process, and Benefit

Presenter: Jordan Smelley, Self-Advocate, MHPS & Certified People Planning (PPT) Trainer

Rooms #155-156

For years, human and medical service systems controlled what supports looked like and how they provide them to people with disabilities. Services focused on a person's disability label and how to "fix" the person. For these reasons, people with disabilities and their families started to speak out. They started to demand more control over what life could look like. They wanted a service system that focused on strengths, preferences, interests, and needs (SPIN). They also wanted supports provided in the community and at home. Person-Centered Planning is a process used to help convey this message and make this change possible. To quote Christopher Morely, "There is only one success... to be able to spend your life in your own way."

Employment First in Texas

Presenters: Lucy Gafford, UNT WISE, and Britni Miles, Texas APSE

Room #152

Lucy Gafford with UNT WISE and Britni Miles with Texas Association of People Supporting Employment First (Texas APSE), will explore...

- where we are with Employment First in Texas
- barriers and challenges of navigating employment services
- who Texas APSE is and how they help advance Employment First

Practical solutions and resources to improve employment outcomes for Texans with disabilities will also be shared.

Medicaid Long-Term Services and Supports: What You Need to Know

Presenter: Jeff Miller, Sr. Policy Specialist – Disability Rights Texas

Room #154

Texas Community-based Medicaid Long-Term Services and Supports (LTSS) help people with disabilities (of all ages) live in the community. Understanding the eligibility requirements, service options, and other unique characteristics of each program is important. The information you have received may not be accurate or complete. If you have questions, concerns or have received confusing information, this session is for you! Jeff Miller, Disability Rights Texas, will provide an overview of Texas' LTSS Medicaid Waiver and State Plan programs that answer these questions: What are LTSS programs? Who is eligible to receive services? How are services accessed? When can I expect to receive services? And more... He will also address why there is such a LONG wait for some services and how you can become involved to help reduce the waiting lists.

Out of Options: Addressing Inequities in Care for Texans with IDD and Mental Illness

Presenters: Sabrina Gonzalez Saucedo, Director of Public Policy & Advocacy – The Arc of Texas & Alex Stuckey, Investigative Journalist

Room #151

Hundreds of thousands of Texans with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD) also experience mental illness. But the state is ill-equipped to help them, leaving families across Texas with nowhere to turn.

The Arc of Texas spoke to families across Texas with the help of Pulitzer Prize-winning investigative reporter Alex Stuckey, examining the areas in which the state's mental health resources for adults with IDD are lacking and how they can be improved. The report is part of the five-year-long Whole Person Project, an initiative of The Arc of Texas funded by Texas Council for Developmental Disabilities that aims to improve access to quality mental health services for adult Texans with Disabilities.

Join Sabrina and Alex as they discuss The Whole Person Project and share the findings for the recently issued investigative report and recommendations "Out of Options: Addressing Inequities in Care for Texans with IDD and Mental Illness".

Employment for People with Disabilities: Strategies for Success

Presenters: Lucy Gafford, UNT WISE, and Britni Miles, Texas APSE

Room #152

People with disabilities who want to work want to work at a real job for real pay. The good news is they can! Before you think employment is not possible for yourself or someone you know, join this session! Lucy Gafford and Britni Miles will provide an overview of employment strategies that work and stories of success. When you change the question from “Can ___ work in the community?” to “What makes employment possible for ___?” doors open! Everyone has something to contribute!

Finding Your Path to a Place to Call Home

Presenter: Jacky Sylvie, Housing Options Manager – REACH Center for Independent Living

Room #151

Creating a place to call home often takes time and resources. Have you thought about housing for yourself or an adult child with a disability? Do you know about available housing options and what they may look like? What about housing vouchers and how do they help create affordable housing? Some people are creating neighborhood homes. Do you know the steps needed to create one? If not, join Jacky for a lively discussion. She will answer these questions and more. It's never too early and it is never too late to start to explore possibilities.

Person-Centered Planning: What Does the Future Hold?

Panel Discussion Facilitated by Cindi Paschall, M.O.M. & Disability Rights Activist, & Jordan Smelley, Self-Advocate, MHPS & Certified People Planning (PPT) Trainer

Panelists: Beth McElwain, Caroline McElwain, Carissa Paschall, Cindi Paschall, and Jordon Smelley
Rooms #155-156

Everyone, with or without a disability, wants to have choices, meaningful relationships, a purpose, and places to go and belong in their lives! People are experts in what they want and what a “good life” means for them now and in the future. Person-Centered Planning is a process that puts people with disabilities and their families at the center, giving them the power to define the direction of their life. During this session parents and people with disabilities will share their lived experiences in how they use and benefit from Person-Centered Planning to create a positive life trajectory for themselves or for a child with a disability.

Under the Dome: A Preview of Disability Related Issues Before the 89th Texas Legislature

Presenters: Sabrina Gonzalez Saucedo, Director of Public Policy & Advocacy – The Arc of Texas, & Jeff Miller, Sr. Policy Specialist – Disability Rights Texas

Room #154

The 89th Texas Legislature began in January 2025 and runs until June 2025. State lawmakers will consider several topics that are important to individuals with disabilities and their families. During this session Jeff and Sabrina will preview the session, including key issues and legislation already filed and waiting for consideration. If you have questions, bring them with you. Q & A time is built into this session.

Autonomy isn't doing everything yourself.

It's being able to direct the choices that impact your life.

@ ReachEveryVoice

WHAT IS ADVOCACY?

In its simplest form, advocacy changes what is into what should be. Those in elected positions often do not know the issues faced by people with disabilities and their families. This is where you come in. Our stories are powerful and are needed to clarify day to day challenges and needs to improve quality of life outcomes. By raising awareness, advocates can influence policies at the state and federal levels.

WHERE TO START



01. Stay Informed. Get Connected!

Stay informed! You don't have to be an expert, but the more you know the better advocate you will be. Here are a few places you can connect with to refresh and increase your knowledge. Some of the resources below will also share information on upcoming trainings, resources, bill details and movement and organized advocacy opportunities.

- CTD - Coalition of Texans with Disabilities: [Raise Your Voice!](#)
- COPPA - [Council of Parent Attorney's and Advocates](#)
- [Disability Across the Lifespan: Advocacy and Inclusion for All](#)
- NDRN - [National Disability Rights Network](#)
- [RevUP](#)
- TCDD - Texas Council for Developmental Disabilities: [Bill of the Week](#)
- TLO - [Texas Legislative Online](#)
- TxP2P - Texas Parent to Parent: [Weekly Advocacy Calls](#)
- TxSER - [Texans for Special Education Reform](#)
- The Arc of DFW Area - HCBS Funding Work Group & Justice Reform Advocacy Group

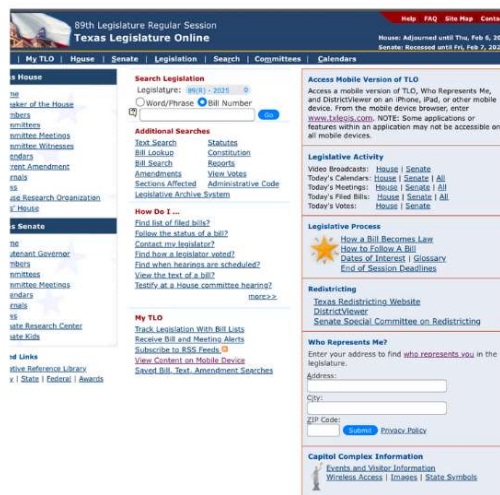
Follow on Facebook @ArcDFWArea or join our Advocacy Groups at Advocacy@thearcofdfw.org

- The Arc of Texas - Follow on Facebook, Instagram, X, and LinkedIn @TheArcofTexas
Subscribe to emails for [Action Center](#)
- The Arc of the United States - Follow on Facebook, Instagram, X, and LinkedIn @TheArcUS and [Grassroots Advocacy](#)

Texas Legislature Online

provides detailed information for what is happening at the Texas Legislature. You can find information on:

- Bill Text
- Bill Movement
- Committees
- Hearing Dates





02. Who Represents Me?

Find and contact elected officials

Get the names and contact information for the people who represent you on the federal, state, and local levels.

Find elected officials using a physical address

Enter your physical address in the form below in order to get a list of elected officials at the federal, state, and local levels.

All fields are required.

Street address

Find your Elected Officials

Who represents me? Knowing who represents you and who serves on a specific committee is key to effective advocacy. Those elected to office should be there to serve the people. As such, you can call, request a meeting, send an email, etc. Don't be disappointed if you talk with a staffer. They are often a key connection.

Find your elected officials here:

<https://www.usa.gov/elected-officials>



03. Start the Conversation

Schedule a meeting to discuss your concerns and policy priorities that are important to you. You can schedule a meeting at an elected officials District office or at the Capitol in Austin or Washington, DC. The template from the Arc of Texas provides a meeting request example.

<https://www.thearcoftexas.org/Resources>

EMAIL TEMPLATE

Dear <Legislator Name>,

My name is <Your Name>, and I am your constituent. I'd like to schedule an appointment. As a friend of The Arc of Texas, I am committed to improving the lives of Texans with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD) and would like to briefly discuss with you issues that are important to Texans with disabilities and their families. I'm open to meeting via video conference (such as Zoom) or in person at your district office. Thank you, in advance.

Sincerely,

<Your Name>

<Your Home Address>

<Your Phone Number>



04. At the Meeting

- **Provide a brief explanation** of why an issue is important to you!
- **Make a request of the lawmaker** in relation to the topic (e.g. certain bill or issue)
- **Provide a one-pager** summarizing the issue and the request.
- **Get a photo!**



05. After the Meeting

- Send a Thank You note or email.
- Send responses to any questions you were unable to answer at the time.
- Send any information that you offered to provide during the meeting.
- Send a digital version of the one-pager.
- Send a copy of the photo that you took during your visit. **Bonus point for tagging them on social media!**

Bottom Dollars: Film Screening and Discussions

Presenters: Lucy Gafford, UNT WISE, and Britni Miles, Texas APSE

Room #152

Join Britni Miles & Lucy Gafford for the screening of Bottom Dollars, a Rooted in Rights original documentary film about sub-minimum wage and the employment of persons with disabilities.

The film exposes the exploitation of workers with disabilities through personal stories and expert interviews. It also presents clear employment alternatives with competitive wages and community inclusion. Britni & Lucy will add content and commentary to the discussion. Have questions? Bring them with you.

Disaster Resilience for Texans with Disabilities

Presenter: Courtney Walker, Outreach Manager & DRTx Disaster Taskforce – Disability Rights Texas

Room #151

Winter Storms, Hurricanes, Flooding, Wildfires, and Tornadoes...Texas has a wide variety of weather that can impact our daily lives. Texans with disabilities can be impacted even more because equipment, services and supports may be disrupted or missing during a natural disaster.

Join Courtney Walker, Outreach Manager at Disability Rights Texas and member of the DRTx Disaster Taskforce, as she shares strategies and resources to enhance disaster preparedness and resilience for individuals with disabilities in Texas, addressing unique challenges and offering practical solutions for a more inclusive response and recovery.

Guardianship and Alternatives: Respecting Rights and Honoring Choices

Presenter: Jeff Miller, Sr. Policy Specialist – Disability Rights Texas

Room #154

When a person turns 18, they are granted by law the rights and responsibilities of an adult unless action is taken. While once thought that guardianship was the first and only option available, that has changed! The 84th Texas Legislature mandated that probate courts consider alternatives to guardianships and supports and services before a guardianship is granted. They also placed Supported Decision-Making into statute as an alternative to guardianship. During this session, Jeff will review the various ways in which a person with a disability can be supported in making decisions that will include the differences between guardianship and supported decision-making, other alternatives to guardianship and community supports and services. He will also explore issues that individuals with disabilities and their families should consider.

There Is No Place Home

Facilitated by Jacky Sylvie, Housing Options Manager – REACH Center for Independent Living

Panelists: Gayla Altman, Josh Altman, Ricky Broussard, Jill Burt, Stephanie Maddox, Dan Peterson, Sharla Peterson, Brian Ruggles, and Danny Williams

Rooms #155-156

Not too long-ago residential options for people with disabilities were limited to state run institutions or group homes. Thanks to the Olmsted Decision, societal growth, and creativity there are now a variety of options to consider. But finding the right home will often require us to have knowledge of those options, services, supports, and financial resources. Whether your child just received a diagnosis, or you are in the search process, this session is for you! Panelists – individuals with disabilities and their family members – will share their lived experiences in securing a place they prefer to call home. It is never too early; or too late to take **A Look Ahead!**

**If you don't demand what you believe in
for yourself, you're not going to get it.**

Judy Heumann

A Look Ahead Conference Presenters Are The Best!

Our presenters are amazing! Please let them know how much they are appreciated!
They are here to share their knowledge and experiences with conference participants;
to offer hope and to empower and encourage you as you look ahead.

PRESENTERS:

Lucy Gafford, UNT WISE

Lucy Gafford is a Certified Rehabilitation Counselor with a master's degree in Rehabilitation Counseling from UNT. She was previously employed by the state VR agency in Texas for 11.5 years where she served as a transition vocational rehabilitation counselor, a unit program specialist, and an area manager. In her time with Vocational Rehabilitation she participated in many committees and task forces including the DARS Transition Taskforce and the Texas DRS Leadership Academy. Currently, Lucy is the director of UNT WISE, a training and consultancy program housed in the College of Health and Public Service at UNT. Training and mentoring staff continues to be a passion, so she has served as an adjunct professor for the department of Rehabilitation and Health Services for the past decade. Lucy also enjoys working with businesses to improve diversity initiatives in relation to hiring people with disabilities and serving on the Advisory Committee for UNT's Neurodiversity Initiative to improve post-secondary outcomes for neurodivergent students.

Britni Miles, Texas Association of People Supporting Employment First (Texas APSE)

Britni Miles has 15+ years in the field of employment supports for people with disabilities. Britni worked as a direct support professional placing and coaching individuals who once worked in segregated, sub-minimum wage environments into real community jobs utilizing Employment First beliefs, customized employment strategies, and person-centered principles. Britni has experience designing large corporate hiring programs for people with Intellectual/Development Disabilities. She facilitates training in best practices of Competitive, Integrated, Employment for employment service providers, state agencies, and other stakeholders. Britni is a Certified Employment Support Professional (CESP) and Texas APSE's Chapter Founding President.

Jeff Miller, Disability Rights Texas

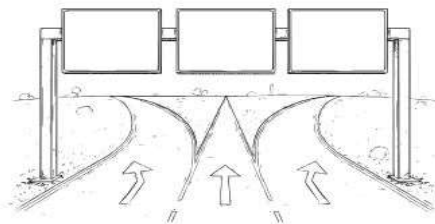
Jeff Miller has held various policy related positions at Disability Rights Texas starting in 2006, including work in the areas of health care access, community integration, and special education. He is currently a Sr. Policy Specialist. In addition to extensive professional experience, Jeff is able to share his personal experiences as a father of a son with disabilities. Jeff received his law degree from the University of Louisville School of Law and holds a B.A. in Speech Communication from the University of Houston.

Cindi Paschall, M.O.M. and Disability Rights Advocate

Cindi Paschall is a parent passionately involved in advancing the human rights of persons with disabilities. She has dedicated the past 27 years to advocacy, applying her personal experience and knowledge in helping others. Over the years Cindi has worked and also volunteered for various organizations dedicated to helping persons with disabilities live their desired lifestyle. She currently serves as a volunteer for The Arc of DFW Area and is a Regional Partner for the Navigate Life Texas website project. Cindi is also a 1997 Texas Partners in Policymaking graduate.

**WHEN OBSTACLES ARISE,
YOU CHANGE YOUR DIRECTION
TO REACH YOUR GOAL; YOU
DO NOT CHANGE YOUR
DECISION TO GET THERE.**

Zig Ziglar



Sabrina Gonzalez Saucedo, The Arc of Texas

As Director of Public Policy & Advocacy, Sabrina pairs her passion for disability rights with previous experience as an analyst at The Texas Council for Developmental Disabilities, where she monitored disability issues in Texas and conducted activities to advanced public policy. She also previously served as a public policy fellow at the Disability Justice Initiative of the Center for American Progress, and at the U.S. Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions in Washington, D.C. where she worked on public policy issues at the intersection of disability and education.

A Master of Public Affairs candidate at The University of Texas at Austin LBJ School of Public Affairs, Sabrina holds a bachelor's degree in political science from St. Edward's University.

Sabrina enjoys spending time with her loved ones, traveling, and watching movies in her spare time.

Jordan Smelley, Self Advocate, MHPS & Certified People Planning Together (PPT) Trainer

Jordan is a Mental Health Peer Support (MHPS) Specialist in Texas and a person in long-term recovery from mental health challenges and co-occurring intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD). Jordan partly defines his own recovery in relation to the opportunities available to present and educate the community on topics around supporting persons with IDD. Jordan was awarded the American Association on Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities Texas Chapter's Empowerment Award for Excellence in Promotion of Self-Advocacy at its 47th Annual Convention on November 16, 2023, in recognition of his self-advocacy efforts around expanding supports available to persons with IDD.

Alex Stuckey, Investigative Journalist

Alex is a Pulitzer Prize and Livingston Award-winning investigative reporter who has spent the better part of a decade reporting on mental health and disability issues in Texas. She is a graduate of Ohio University's E.W. Scripps School of Journalism where she majored in journalism with a certificate in Political Communication.

Jacky Sylvie, REACH Centers for Independent Living

Jacky is a native Texan with over 15 years of support for nonprofits and advocating for empowering people with disabilities. With a degree in social work and a background in Supported Employment, she is connecting the community with resources and training on the path to independence and income-based housing. She loves experiencing the great outdoors with her husband, two amazing kids, and the crazy cats.

Courtney Walker, Disability Rights Texas

Courtney is the North Texas Outreach Manager at Disability Rights Texas. She is also a member of the DRTx Disaster Taskforce. Courtney is a graduate of the University of North Texas where she majored in sociology.

Thank you to our Panelist!!

Your willingness to share your stories and lived experiences is helping to provide hope and encourage our participants as they take **A Look Ahead!**

Gayla Altman
Josh Altman
Ricky Broussard
Jill Burt
Beth McElwain
Caroline McElwain
Stephanie Maddox

Carissa Paschall
Cindi Paschall
Dan Peterson
Sharla Peterson
Brian Ruggles
Jordan Smelley
Danny Williams



Work spares
us from
three evils:
boredom,
vice,
and
need.

~ Voltaire

**We have a wonderful group of exhibitors today!
Please stop by and visit them, they
welcome your questions.**

Be An Angel DFW
Disability Rights Texas
Green Oaks Education and Support, Inc.
Inspired Ability
Legal Aid of Northwest Texas
My Health My Resources of Tarrant County
People Planning Together Training
REACH Inc.
The Arc of DFW Area
The Self-Determination Group



**We look forward to seeing you in
May as we continue
celebrating our 10th Year!**

Attendees, exhibitors, presenters, and sponsors, please join us May 10th, 2025.
There is something for everyone!



The May 10th **A Look Ahead Conference** registration is open. Scan the QR code or use the link <https://bit.ly/MAY25ALA> to reserve your spot today!

Sponsors and Exhibitors, expand your presence within the DFW Community.
For more information about sponsorship packages and exhibitor space,
please contact Michelle at alookahead@thearcofdfw.org.



Wi-Fi connections are available in all rooms.
The Wi-Fi password is JohnWesley.