

The Arc of Weld County Advocacy Agreement



Purpose of agreement:

This agreement has been created so that the parties can work together in a cooperative effort to achieve the goals related to the needs of the individual with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD).

How we determine cases eligible for The AWC individual advocacy services:

The Arc of Weld County (The AWC) is mission focused to serve individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD). Frequently we will receive referrals for individuals that do not meet the IDD criteria. In an effort to ensure that we follow our mission as well as to be a good steward of our agency resources we have developed a plan by which to determine which cases we can serve and what we can do for those that fall outside of our mission. The AWC follows the State of Colorado definition of developmental disability. The AWC has adopted those general guidelines. Availability, affordability of assessments as well as other factors often prohibit timely decision making, therefore the following steps have been developed as a guide for The AWC staff when determining which cases, we will provide individual advocacy to and ones that we refer to other agencies.

- Eligibility has been determined for an IDD Medicaid Waiver through a Community Centered Board (CCB) or Case Management Agency (CMA), etc. In that case we will automatically open the case.
- Eligibility can be determined based on the following documents: a). full scale IQ score b). adaptive behavior score and c). qualifying neurological condition as defined by the State of Colorado.
- Often other agencies will have completed this documentation, and it is up to the individual and/or parent(s)/guardian(s) to furnish the assessments to The AWC or furnish us with a signed release so the information can be obtained.
- Frequently for a variety of reasons evaluations may take some time to be completed. While waiting for additional testing we will move forward with helping the individual/family with whatever goals have been established until such time that documentation is obtained to assist in determining the eligibility question.
- If and when it is clear that a person is not eligible to receive individual advocacy services from The AWC, staff will then provide the individual and/or family with the various resources for other agencies based on the individual's needs, that they can contact to receive assistance. The individual advocate will not identify preferences or references for alternative agencies, to remain impartial and objective.
- When making a referral to other agencies, the case will be closed and will be documented in letter form. The closure letter will contain the referral information that the individual/family will need to continue. Closed cases can re-contact The AWC for resource only assistance if the need arises.

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What is Individual Advocacy?

Individual advocacy focuses on the need(s) of an individual with an intellectual and/or developmental disability (IDD) with the goal of changing the situation for that person to protect his or her rights and/or improve services received by that individual, ensuring their right for freedom of choice, independence, and inclusion. When providing advocacy for a family it is imperative that the needs of the person with IDD be the number one priority. The AWC advocates will provide individual advocacy and support to the individual through the advocacy process, as determined by the lay advocate along with the individual and/or family as documented within the advocacy planning worksheet. This plan will be developed at the intake interview. Each interaction with an advocate of The AWC is not only focused on ensuring that the individual's rights are protected, but also in helping the individual and family gain the skills and understanding to be more independent and successful when advocating for themselves or their family member with IDD throughout their lifespan.

Who we are & what we offer:

- Expertise regarding intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD)
- Lay advocates
- Skilled in conflict management, mediation, and negotiation
- Model for effective problem solving and appropriate interactions and/or behaviors
- Educators of building advocacy skills
- Fostering of positive relationships and communication with all agencies
- Assisting clientele with informed decisions making
- Coordination assistance of information and resources
- Systems navigation for individuals with IDD
- Educate and support inclusive practices
- Services are without charge
- Uphold confidentiality of the people we serve
- Collaborators with other community agencies
- Consult and make recommendations on IEPs and 504 plans

Who & what we are not:

- Case Managers
- Supported Decision Makers
- Primary Decision Makers
- Police/Criminal Investigators
- Educational or Special Education professionals
- Therapists or Mental Health Counselors
- Attorney/Legal Council
- Social Service Staff
- Medical or Nursing staff

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Relationship w/ individual with disability/family:

The AWC advocate's relationship with an individual and/or family will be a professional relationship. It will observe boundaries and will be one of informing the individual/family of their options and supporting them with making informed choices. The following factors will apply:

- Per the values of The Arc US charter, The AWC advocacy needs to be focused on the needs of the individual (child/adult) with IDD. We will respect the role and position of family and/or guardians and work with them throughout the advocacy process; however, the focus will remain on the person with IDD.
- The lay advocate will maintain a non-confrontational approach with the individual or family and will always respect their right to refuse our services as well as their right to make decisions that The AWC may not agree with.
- Staff will ensure that the individual/family is the change agent. They should be the primary contact with agency staff as well as taking the lead in making decisions regarding the direction of the case.
- Excessive emotion clouds judgement, therefore, the advocate will model objectivity, reasonable problem solving and will support the individual and or family to do the same.

Responsibilities/expectations of the party receiving advocacy services (self-advocate, Parent, Guardian):

- Will maintain regular contact with the advocate, notifying the advocate of all changes in contact information (i.e. change in residential address, P.O. Box, telephone number(s) and email address).
- Will respond to communication from the advocate in a timely manner. We suggest within 2 business days.
- Will provide requested information and documentation as requested from advocate in a timely manner.
- The party will cooperate with all agreements and written plans that have been developed between The Arc of Weld County (The AWC) and the parties of the person with IDD. Any questions or concerns will be brought to the attention of the advocate so resolution can occur.
- Will attend all scheduled meetings. If unable to attend will notify the advocate in advance of the scheduled meeting. We suggest 2 business days. The party will also inform the advocate of all scheduled meetings pertaining to the individual with IDD. We recommend a minimum of 5 business days.
- Will assist in promoting the independence and safety of the individual with IDD.
- When dealing with members from the various agencies, the party will maintain a controlled and respectful demeanor. Uncontrolled outbursts are unacceptable and are grounds to terminate the agreement.

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Responsibilities/expectations of an advocate for The AWC:

- Will attend all agreed upon meetings, i.e. planning with the party, meet with the party and the service agencies etc.
- Will return all communications from party within two business days from when the initial contact was made.
- An advocate cannot provide legal counsel or legal advice.
- An advocate is obligated to report any suspected or confirmed case of abuse, neglect, mistreatment and or exploitation of the individual with IDD to the appropriate authorities.
- Will assist the party in navigating the various programs and service delivery systems; resolve conflicts with service agencies and achieve the advocacy goal that was agreed upon between the party and The AWC.

I have read the conditions of the agreement and agree to follow those conditions while receiving advocacy services from The Arc of Weld County. This agreement is voluntary and may be terminated by either party at any time with the proper written notification.

Signature of Person receiving services/Parent(s)/Guardian(s)

Date

Signature of Advocate/Witness

Date