

SURVEY SNAPSHOT:

The COVID-19 Pandemic Impact on Chapters of The Arc, Direct Support Staff, and People With Disabilities

The Arc's chapter network has more than 600 chapters across the United States providing community-based services and leading in advocacy for and with people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (I/DD) and their families. They are on the front lines of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Many of our chapters provide services that support people with disabilities to live as independently as possible in the community. Amidst this global crisis, our chapters report numerous challenges that are hindering their ability to serve their communities, from closed programs to health and safety concerns for staff and people with disabilities.

The pandemic has not only exacerbated existing issues such as staffing shortages and inadequate funding that leads to unmet needs and waiting lists—it has also presented new challenges. **These include access to:**

- 1** Necessary personal protective equipment (PPE) & medical supply shortages
- 2** Health risks for individuals served and staff
- 3** Supports during stay-at-home orders
- 4** Devices and internet connectivity to provide remote services

In order to better understand the challenges The Arc's chapters are facing, we administered a survey in early May 2020 to determine where our chapters stand in this global crisis. Two hundred and ninety-two (292) chapters responded to the survey, providing the following key insights.

Access to PPE:

A urgent concern now and over the next three months

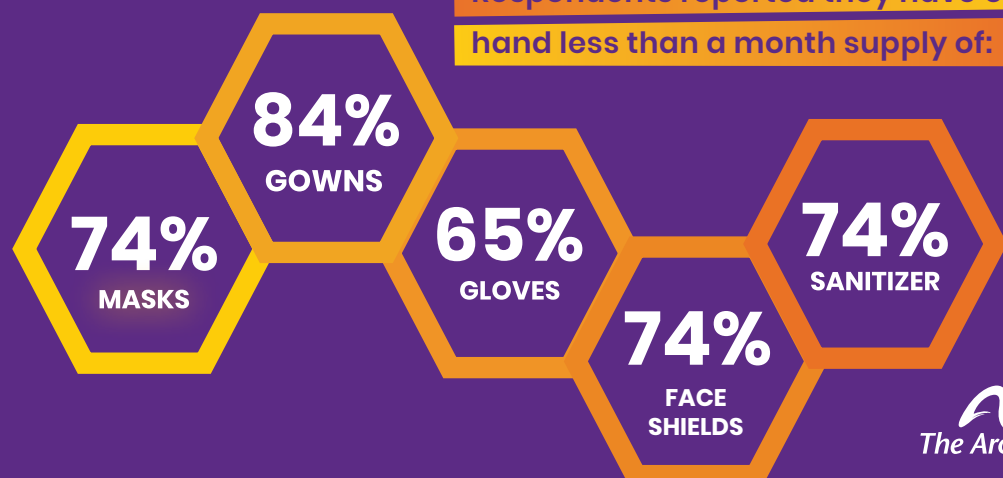
Our chapters employ direct support professionals, or DSPs, who often help people with disabilities with very personal tasks that can't be done from six feet away. This workforce is vital in the lives of people with I/DD. Yet in this health crisis, the PPE necessary to do their job safely is scarce.

Among the 84% of chapter respondents that are using, or will in the immediate future need to use PPE:

72%

Report that their current and anticipated supplies are insufficient to meet their needs over the next three months for some or all types of PPE

Respondents reported they have on hand less than a month supply of:



People with disabilities and staff testing positive

People with I/DD face grave danger in the face of the COVID-19 pandemic—with underlying health conditions, many are at a higher risk. And the staff that support them have also been greatly impacted by COVID-19. **Of the agencies that responded:**

31%
reported

At **least one individual** they serve had **tested positive** for COVID-19.

33%
reported

At least one of their **staff members** had **tested positive**.

Staffing challenges, already a crisis, are even worse during a pandemic

Our DSP workforce was in crisis before the pandemic. With an average annual turnover rate of 45%, an average wage of \$10.72 an hour and an average vacancy rate of 9% , the needs of people with disabilities, their families, and the workers themselves are not being met.

Among chapters that provide direct services, 75% report that they are having significant challenges with staffing. For chapters facing staffing challenges as an immediate result of the pandemic...



91%

Report fear about going to work



73%

Some staff refuse to work



59%

Hiring new, direct support staff



26%

higher staff vacancy than pre-pandemic

The digital divide is acute for the disability community

Now more than ever, chapters of The Arc are using technology in a vital way to support people with disabilities during the pandemic. While 83% of respondents report shifting to providing services using online and remote technology, many individuals with disabilities are being left behind.

Chapters using technology to deliver services reported major barriers to doing so:



69%

Lack of internet in the private homes of program participants



72%

Lack of hardware, devices, software, or subscription services needed by program participants



35%

Chapter staff lacked access to hardware, devices, software, or subscription services.

The COVID-19 pandemic has challenged our chapter network—but just as The Arc has done for nearly 70 years, we will rise to meet the current crisis. Congress must act to ensure individuals with disabilities, their families, service providers, and the workforce that supports them have the tools they need to weather the storm.

June 2020