

# POSITION STATEMENTS

For more information on this and other topics, visit [thearc.org](https://thearc.org)

## LIFE IN THE COMMUNITY SUMMARY

---

All people, regardless of disability, deserve the opportunity for a full life in their community where they can live, learn, work, and play alongside each other through all stages of life. People with intellectual and/or developmental disabilities<sup>1</sup> need varying degrees of support to reach personal goals and establish a sense of satisfaction with their lives.

---

### AGING

People with intellectual and/or developmental disabilities who are 55 years of age or older have a right to the same opportunities to enjoy full lives as other older people. They are entitled to full access to community supports, including support from those agencies that serve all older people.

### BEHAVIORAL SUPPORTS

A full and active life supported by caring relationships can reduce the occurrence of challenging behaviors in people with intellectual and/or developmental disabilities. However, if such behaviors occur, people with intellectual and/or developmental disabilities and those who support them must have access to positive behavioral supports that focus on improved quality of life as well as reductions in the behaviors.

### EARLY CHILDHOOD SERVICES

All young children who are at-risk for or who have been identified with intellectual and/or developmental disabilities should have access to high-quality, affordable developmental services in natural environments. These services should build on the strengths of the child and family, address their needs, be responsive to their culture and personal priorities, and be delivered through research-based practices.

### EDUCATION

All children and youth with intellectual and/or developmental disabilities (IDD) must receive a free appropriate public education that includes fair evaluation, ambitious goals, challenging objectives, the right to progress, individualized supports and services, high quality instruction, and access to the general education curriculum in age-appropriate inclusive settings. These are essential for achieving the nation's four policy goals of equality of opportunity, full participation, independent living, and economic self-sufficiency (the four policy goals). Parents and families must be supported as essential partners in the education and transition to adult life of their sons and daughters.

## EMPLOYMENT

People with intellectual and/or developmental disabilities (IDD) can be employed in the community alongside people without disabilities and earn competitive wages. They should be supported to make informed choices about their work and careers and have the resources to seek, obtain, and be successful in community employment.

## FAMILY SUPPORT

Family support services<sup>1</sup> and other means of supporting families across the lifespan should be available to all families to strengthen their capacities to support family members with intellectual and/or developmental disabilities<sup>2</sup> (IDD) in achieving equal opportunity, independent living, full participation, and economic self-sufficiency. Family caregivers include, but are not limited to, parents (including those with IDD themselves), adoptive parents, foster parents, siblings, uncles, aunts, cousins, grandparents, grandchildren, and individuals who are in spousal-equivalent relationships.

## HEALTH

All people, including people with intellectual and/or developmental disabilities (IDD), should have timely access to high quality, comprehensive, accessible, affordable, appropriate health care that meets their individual needs, maximizes health, well-being and function, and increases independence and community participation.

The health care system must be aligned to principles of nondiscrimination, comprehensiveness, continuity, appropriateness, and equity. Both comprehensive public and private health insurance must provide for necessary health care without regard to the nature or severity of disability, pre-existing conditions, or other health status.

## HOUSING

People with intellectual and/or developmental disabilities (IDD), like all Americans, have a right to live in their own homes, in the community. Children and youth belong with families. Adults should control where and with whom they live, including having opportunities to rent or buy their own homes, and must have the freedom to choose their daily routines and activities.

## INDIVIDUAL SUPPORTS

People with intellectual and/or developmental disabilities (IDD) must have access to individual supports, such as assistive technology and personal assistance, to support their participation in daily life.

## OPPORTUNITIES FOR FINANCIAL ASSET BUILDING

People with intellectual and/or developmental disabilities (IDD) must have the same opportunities to advance their economic and personal freedom by earning and saving money to enhance their physical, social, emotional, and financial well-being and the right to exercise choice in investment and spending decisions as their peers who do not have disabilities.

## **PARENTS WITH INTELLECTUAL AND/OR DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES**

The presence of an intellectual and/or developmental disability does not in itself preclude effective parenting; therefore, the rights of parenthood must not be denied individuals solely on the basis of intellectual and/or developmental disabilities. Parents with intellectual and/or developmental disabilities should have access to support as needed to perform parental roles just as they are supported in other valued social roles and activities.

### **SEXUALITY**

People with intellectual disabilities and/or developmental disabilities, like all people, have inherent sexual rights. These rights and needs must be affirmed, defended, and respected.

### **SPIRITUALITY**

People with intellectual and/or developmental disabilities have the right to choose their own expressions of spirituality, to practice those beliefs and expressions and to participate in the faith community of their choice or other spiritual activities. They also have a right to choose not to participate in religious or spiritual activity.

### **TRANSPORTATION**

People with intellectual and/or developmental disabilities (IDD) must have access to both public and private transportation to lead full, self-directed lives.