

**From:** Joanne Morris [<mailto:jmorris@thearcnlc.org>]  
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**Subject:** DDS 5-Year Plan

The Arc New London County is a 64-year-old grassroots advocacy and service organization founded by families looking for opportunities for their children with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (IDD). With a service universe of 1,500 to 2,000 people here in Southeastern Connecticut, The Arc NLC employs approximately 300 people in a region hard-hit by the Great Recession. We are more than a critical service provider to our communities and our residents; indeed, we are an economic driver in a struggling rural region of Connecticut.

“In Partnership for Full Equality” is the mission that drives our Board of Directors, many of whom are parents or loved ones of people with IDD, our leadership team and our direct support professionals. As a full-service agency providing homes, vocational training, job placement and in-home supports to people with IDD, we also provide the largest Community Life & Advocacy program in the area. The CL & A program is supported solely by community fundraising efforts of The Arc NLC and The United Way. CL & A encompasses support groups for survivors of sexual abuse and domestic violence; Special Olympics; social media and technology competency and safety training; and, an extensive volunteer corps that has given back thousands of hours of community volunteer time – from providing sorely needed lawn cleanup to public libraries to helping with Lions’ Club fundraisers to dispensing water and snacks at runner’s fundraising marathons. With the help of The Arc NLC’s CL & A outreach, people with IDD learn to find their voice, explore opportunities in the communities of SE CT, advocate for their best interests and – perhaps most important – to vote with an informed voice.

The State of Connecticut Department of Disabilities 5-year-plan, while comprehensive and thoughtful, says little about the state’s greatest asset: Its community-based, private provider network. Able to serve people with IDD nimbly in the spirit of person-centered supports, the provider network must be a key resource of Connecticut’s 5-year plan. To do otherwise would be to short-change people with IDD and their families throughout the state. Moreover, Connecticut’s extensive waiting list must be addressed, and this plan must be adapted to include a plan for providing services to all who need them. The state’s private provider network is a practical, affordable solution to addressing the needs of people with IDD who continue to wait desperately for supports they and their families require. It must be a key part of this 5-year plan.

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