

Who is The Arc Muskegon?

The Arc Muskegon is and always has been people – people with cognitive, other related developmental disabilities, parents, friends, family and professionals. In 1952, a group of concerned families and their friends formed an organization they called “Family and Friends of the Mentally Retarded”. In 1953, they joined the National Association for Retarded Citizens and became a local chapter of what is now The Arc. The Arc Muskegon continues to be proudly affiliated with the state and national organization. Nationwide there are approximately **800** local chapters, **33** of them in Michigan. The Arc is a membership organization, with a collective membership of approximately **140,000** people across the country. The Arc is the largest grassroots organization advocating for people with developmental disabilities and their families.

Mission Statement

The mission of The Arc Muskegon is to provide advocacy, education and support services to people with intellectual and developmental disabilities and their families and actively support their full inclusion, equality and participation in their community throughout their lives.



Quality of Life (Dignified Lifestyles) Since 1989

Visiting mental health funded facilities and individuals with developmental receiving state funded services. Trained volunteers are advocates focusing on needs, rights, choices and community inclusion.

Serving people with cognitive and developmental disabilities and their families since 1952

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More About the Program

The Quality of Life Program (also known as Dignified Lifestyles) is funded by a grant from the Michigan Department of Community Health, (DHC) and facilitated through The Arc Michigan. Many Arc chapters participate, including Muskegon. Locally we visit mental health funded group homes and day programs, in addition to people living independently that receive state funded services. This volunteer driven program has effectively and consistently brought about much change and growth to people with developmental disabilities in Muskegon County. Currently, Arc volunteers and staff visit a total of **32** homes, day programs and individuals with disabilities-representing approximately **200** people. On average we visit each home three times a year. Our visits are friendly, informal and necessary. Issues such as choice, rights, community participation, daily activities and quality living standards are addressed during each visit. The information gathered is used for local and state advocacy efforts. The program is founded on the belief that ALL people are entitled to be a part of their community in all aspects of life. Information sought during each visit is shared with staff, local mental health professionals, Arc Michigan and DCH. In 1999, The Arc Muskegon was awarded The Arc Michigan Presidents Award for Leadership in Promoting Quality of Life in Residential Settings. Throughout the state, there are 16 Arc chapters that participate in the Dignified Lifestyles Program.

Volunteer Opportunities

If you are a parent of a child with a developmental disability or a concerned citizen, this is a great volunteer opportunity. You make one visit per month with another volunteer. There is a four hour training for each new volunteer, the local coordinator to schedule visits, quarterly meetings and the opportunity to meet many wonderful, caring individuals. Please call The Arc office for more information, 777-2006.

What is a Developmental Disability?

Developmental disabilities are a class of disabling conditions that usually originate before birth, shortly after birth, and before age **22**, that will continue in some form over a lifetime. Intellectual/cognitive disability (previously called mental retardation) is a developmental disability in which a person's rate and degree of intelligence is lower than society as a whole.

There are approximately **7.2 million** Americans with cognitive or related developmental disabilities. **One in 9** families have a loved one with a developmental disability. Causes for both may include:

- genetics
- trauma at birth
- poor nutrition
- substance abuse
- lead poisoning
- accidents
- environmental factors

Most people with a cognitive disability are in the mild range (I.Q. of 70-75).