



Our special needs journey started when McKenna was six months old. At that time, McKenna was not hitting her developmental milestones, and it was evident there was something very serious going on with her global development. During that time, we went through a range of different emotions – we were upset, scared, angry, just overwhelmed with the unknown. We knew nothing about starting our life with our child with a disability.

November 2015

Dear Friend,

There are over 34,000 people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (ID/DD) throughout Northern Virginia. Disabilities such as autism, Down syndrome, cerebral palsy, epilepsy, and rare chromosomal disorders. **And the journey for each of them and their families begins the same way. With a question: “What do I do next?”**

For so many families, they find the answers at The Arc of Northern Virginia:

- ≈ **The importance of early intervention** for improving childhood development.
- ≈ **How to advocate for their child’s educational needs** in the school systems.
- ≈ **Discovering employment opportunities** that match their interests and abilities.
- ≈ **Identifying the housing model** that offers the best environment for their loved one.
- ≈ **The process for receiving government benefits** for vital services and supports.
- ≈ **The steps to secure a strong life-long future** for their child as they grow older.

How do I know this? Because I am McKenna’s mother. And I am also honored to serve on The Arc of Northern Virginia’s Board of Directors.

My family is just one of the thousands each year that The Arc of Northern Virginia provides **invaluable information, education, and resources** to help answer their particular questions **at every age and stage throughout their lifespan:**

- ≈ Over the past year, over 1,100 people participated in over 70 workshops and programs on a variety of topics, including Early Intervention, Special Education, Government Benefits, Housing, Employment, Transportation, Futures Planning, Special Needs Trusts, and more.
- ≈ Online webinars provided access to those who must remain at home as a caregiver, and these webinars are archived on The Arc of Northern Virginia’s website to allow families multiple viewings at their convenience and on their schedules.
- ≈ The Arc of Northern Virginia completed its six-guide series for Transition POINTS (Providing Opportunities, Information, Networking, and Transition Support), a program that provides families with actionable information on services and supports across the lifespan to help people with ID/DD thrive in their community of choice. All six are available in print or on The Arc of Northern Virginia’s website.
- ≈ The Arc of Northern Virginia continues to create new offerings, tools, and programs in recognition of the changing landscape of public services and in response to family inquiries. *(Please take a look at the other materials with this letter and visit online at www.thearcofnova.org/dec2016.)*

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My journey began with a phone call. Each year, The Arc of Northern Virginia fields over 5,000 phone calls and emails from families seeking answers to the questions that are obstacles to meeting the needs of their loved one. And with each and every answer, The Arc of Northern Virginia connects them to the individual solutions they are seeking that will move them along their own journey.

Every question we had was answered. I attended a lunch bunch at The Arc of Northern Virginia where parents of children with disabilities are invited to bring their questions and concerns about early intervention programs, special education, special needs trusts, and government benefits. Since that time, we've consulted with The Arc of Northern Virginia regarding special needs trusts and Medicaid waivers. Today, McKenna is 5 and just transitioned to kindergarten. And we will continue to rely on The Arc of Northern Virginia for advice, expertise, and support as McKenna grows older.

No matter where a family is on their journey, new questions will arise. And The Arc of Northern Virginia will answer each and every one. At no charge.

What makes it all possible? The generous support of everyone who recognizes the value and impact of this important work for people with disabilities. The Arc of Northern Virginia is grateful for the commitment of those who help raise the \$600,000 each year necessary to provide all of their programs, services, and advocacy for people with ID/DD and their families.

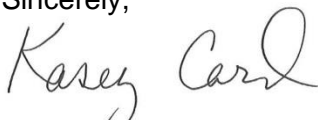
A final question: What can we accomplish together as partners in fulfilling this mission we share? We can make a difference in providing guidance, support, and—most importantly—answers for families, one at a time.

Thanks to The Arc of Northern Virginia, we feel much more "in the know" now in terms of what services and benefits are available for McKenna and our family. We recognize that caring for a loved one with an intellectual disability is a lifelong responsibility. As daunting as that sounds, becoming informed has been very empowering and made us that much more prepared for what comes next as McKenna grows up.

My family wants all families who are starting their life with a child with a disability to feel that same sense of empowerment we now have. We know that The Arc of Northern Virginia will help us as we continue our journey.

Please help The Arc of Northern Virginia with a gift today so that they can remain a source for answers for so many families. Thank you!

Sincerely,



Kasey Card
Parent and Board Member

P.S. Sorry, just one more question: Will you join me in making sure The Arc of Northern Virginia remains the invaluable resource for people with disabilities and their families? **Your donation today will guarantee that every family gets the answers they need.** Thanks!