

ADVOCACYDENVER

providing active voice and supporting civil rights
for people with disabilities

Updated October 2011

AdvocacyDenver's media kit is available to the public with the intent to provide current information about the organization, its history, and its news.

Our Mission

AdvocacyDenver is a non-profit, civil right advocacy organization serving children, teens and adults with developmental or intellectual disabilities — and their families.

Our Work

We provide an active voice to those seeking assistance, guidance, access and support in areas of education, health care, legal services, housing, transportation or financial guidance. Where other organizations focus on creating adaptive opportunities with existing programs or services, we concentrate on listening and providing support based on the individual's needs, choices or objectives.

Our primary goal is to help individuals and families secure the specific opportunities they are seeking while simultaneously working with other organizations and government agencies to create policy change for the constituents we serve.

We work directly with adults and children to help them face a wide variety of personal challenges related to developmental or intellectual disabilities. We also fight for them on a systemic level, providing counsel and recommendations for Colorado policymakers who can positively impact our constituency.

We offer comprehensive solutions that help individuals with disabilities find the right balance of support and independence for fulfilled, satisfying lives. As the individuals, families and organizations with whom we work find confidence, self-respect and accomplishment, our communities benefit and thrive.

Our History

AdvocacyDenver, a local affiliate of the Arc National organization, was originally known as "The Arc of Denver" and was one of the first Arcs of the U.S. The organization was founded in 1954 by a group of parents of children with cognitive disabilities and was one of the first Arcs in the United States. Since its inception, AdvocacyDenver has been fully committed to ensuring that Denver County residents with intellectual or developmental disabilities and their families have access to integrated supports and systems that ensure that they are able to lead healthy, active lives in the community.

AdvocacyDenver Staff

Policy Advocacy

Aileen McGinley is the Executive Director of AdvocacyDenver; for more than 14 years, she has managed the organization and has served as the Executive Director for the past nine years. Ms. McGinley has a BA in Liberal Arts and 30 years of experience in the field of developmental disabilities (in three states!). Her focus for the past 18 years is advocacy for individuals, systems change, and community

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development. She has administered various private and state funded projects targeting systems change in the areas of family support, criminal justice, and self-determination.

Administration

Jennie Venable, MS, is the Director of Operations and Development for AdvocacyDenver. In early 2010, she moved to Colorado from North Carolina. Miss Venable holds a BA in Political Science from Guilford College and an MS in Parks and Recreation from the University of North Carolina Greensboro. Throughout her educational and professional experiences, Jennie has advocated for inclusion and civil rights. She is expanding her knowledge of systemic advocacy and is excited to be a part of the AdvocacyDenver community.

Kaley Day is the Assistant to the Director of Operations and Development. She also serves as a Communications Intern for AdvocacyDenver. Kaley is a senior at the University of Denver, majoring in Strategic Communication with an emphasis in non-profit organizations and minoring in Sociology and International Studies. Kaley, a Colorado native, also has an older brother with disabilities and has grown up in the advocacy community with a passionate interest in civil rights.

Individual Advocacy Program

Pam Bisceglia is an advocate for children. As a single parent of a child with a disability Pam gained practical experience regarding the resources that are available to Denver families. Problem solving, sensitivity, experience with the Denver community and resources available to children and adults with disabilities mark her personal experience. Her professional experience is punctuated by her devotion to individuals in need, first-hand knowledge of the operation of public school systems and their obligation under state and federal law.

DeAnn Major is the Director of Transitional Advocacy Services and Juvenile Justice Direct Advocacy and Policy Development. She brings nearly twenty years of experience working in the fields of disability, legal rights, and advocacy. Ms. Major attended the University of Northern Colorado where she received a Bachelor of Arts degree in Elementary and Middle School Education. She has worked as a legal advocate in state institutional settings to promote community placements and monitoring for health and safety concerns. She is involved in criminal justice campaigns to end the criminalization of children.

Ken Dwenger is an Advocate for Adults. He has a BS in Computer Science from Purdue University and 28 years of experience in the private sector; 20 years of this experience was in management. He was an active volunteer with Arc of Denver beginning in 1996 and upon retirement from the telecommunications industry in 2001, Mr. Dwenger began his work as an Adult Advocate and has worked at AdvocacyDenver for over 10 years. Ken serves as an advisor to the People First chapter in Denver (a self advocacy organization for people with developmental disabilities) for over 15 years. Mr. Dwenger has worked with Colorado Division for Developmental Disabilities on the Customer Satisfaction, Self-Determination, Quality Assurance and Critical Incident Tracking Committees. He currently serves as a member of the Child Protection Team with Denver Department of Human Services,

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a community oversight team which reviews all child protection referrals insuring investigations are timely and thorough and the findings are appropriate.

Tony Sears is an Advocate for Adults with more than ten years of service at AdvocacyDenver. Mr. Sears holds a BA in Psychology and has worked in the Mental Health field for over 19 years, the past ten years of which have been in the Developmental Disabilities field. Additionally, he works with public agencies and advocacy organizations in crisis intervention, criminal justice, dual diagnosis (Developmental Disabilities and Mental Health), and RTD's Access-A-Ride Appeals Committee.

Collette Susman is a part-time adult advocate. She is the proud mother and advocate of her delightful daughter Ruairi who has numerous fragile medical conditions, intellectual challenges and a sensory processing disorder. Her younger brother started her passion, by watching him and her mother struggle through the school and community systems. She feels blessed to be able make a career out of her passion of assisting those individuals who need extra assistance, those who cannot advocate and/or speak for themselves.

Center for Special Education Law

Michael Breeskin has been Counsel for AdvocacyDenver's Center for Special Education Law since its inception in 2011. Prior to this, he was Counsel for AdvocacyDenver for eight years. Mr. Breeskin has a Juris Doctor from the Georgetown University Law Center and previously served as Senior Attorney of a non-profit organization designated by the Governor as *the* Protection and Advocacy System for people with disabilities in Colorado.

Health Care Advocacy Program

Catherine Strode is the Coordinator of the Health Care Advocacy Program for AdvocacyDenver. She holds an MPA from UCDenver and a BA in Liberal Arts. She was a legislative aide and has worked on advocacy and communication campaigns with health care nonprofit organizations across the state. A former television news reporter and producer, she is an award-winning journalist. One of her health care documentaries, "The Healing Touch," was a finalist in the New York Film Festival.

Madelyne Snyder, Director of Communications and Grant Development, received her B.A. in political science from the University of Massachusetts-Amherst in 2008. Upon graduation, the Illinois native moved to Denver and has not looked back since. As a professional and a volunteer, Ms. Snyder has worked with several not-for-profit organizations that focus on making public health care readily available and accessible to communities. Currently, Madelyne is responsible for organizational communications, grant writing, database management, and support of the development processes.

Alex Andrews is the Health Care Research Advocate for AdvocacyDenver's Health Care Advocacy Program. She holds a BS in psychology from Colorado State University and an MA in Child and Family Studies from Syracuse University. Mrs. Andrews has provided assistance for families and children

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throughout her work in the non-profit sector and has a great deal of experience conducting research in the social sciences.

Quick Facts

AdvocacyDenver

- Began in 1954 by a group of parents of child with cognitive disabilities
- Affiliated with the Arc of the United States
- One of the first Arc chapters in the United States
- Serves individuals with intellectual or developmental disabilities who reside in Denver County
- Features four programs: Individual Advocacy, Policy Advocacy, the Center for Special Education Law, and the Health Care Advocacy Program
- Offers a number of educational and invaluable internship and volunteer opportunities
- Overseen by a board that represents professionals from a number of fields who are strongly committed to pursuing the organization's mission and supporting its development

Policy Advocacy

- Headed by the Executive Director and includes the Director of Transitional Advocacy Services and Juvenile Justice Direct Advocacy and Policy Development, the Coordinator of the Health Care Advocacy Program, and the Director of Children's Advocacy and Policy Development.
- Driven by trends documented from individual advocacy activities and research

Individual Advocacy

- Core program features five adult advocates and two children's advocates who provide direction and support to individuals with developmental or intellectual disabilities who encounter barriers or gaps to accessing necessary services and supports in order to lead quality and fulfilling lives
- All requests for support go through the program's Referral and Intake Hotline: 303.974.2530
- Child advocates address issues relating to (but not limited to!) Individual Education Plans (IEPs), 504 plans, educational placement, educational accommodations and supports, juvenile justice, and transitioning from child to adult systems in the world of Developmental Disability
- Adult advocates address issues relating to accessible housing, locating quality employment opportunities, aging, managing personal finances, Medicaid benefits reduction and removal, and more

Health Care Advocacy Program

- Identifies barriers and gaps in health care that individuals with intellectual or developmental disabilities
- Has been in existence since 2006 thanks to generous continued support from the Colorado Health Foundation
- Provides individual advocacy to adults with intellectual or developmental disabilities in the Denver County area. Individual advocacy trends drive research that is collected and used to support policymakers through education and recommendations made in order to eliminate systemic barriers

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- Recognizes a significant need for chronic disease management education that is inclusive of individuals with cognitive disabilities. The program works to assist community educators in providing education in a manner that is accessible to the population AdvocacyDenver serves

Center for Special Education Law

- Began in 2001 at AdvocacyDenver
- Provides affordable legal services to parents of children with special needs who encounter legal conflict with the educational institution
- Available to parents of children with special needs who live anywhere within Colorado

If you have any questions or would like to contact AdvocacyDenver for comment please contact:

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