



# **FAMILY SUPPORT HANDBOOK**

Welcome to the Family Support Program! This booklet is intended to answer the most frequently asked questions about the program.

## **1. *What is Family Support?***

In May 1992, the Tennessee General Assembly passed legislation establishing a statewide family support program. Statewide funding for this program is determined by our state legislators on a yearly basis. The program is administered by the State of Tennessee Department of Developmental and Intellectual Disabilities and managed by community agencies. In Williamson County, the Family Support Program is managed by The Arc Williamson County. This program went into effect July 1, 1992 and is designed to provide financial assistance and community resource information to individuals with disabilities and their families.

## **2. *Who is eligible for Family Support?***

Persons with a severe disability which is likely to continue indefinitely and results in substantial functional limitations in 3 or more areas of major life activities. Individuals whose primary disability is a mental health illness are not eligible. Persons must be a full time resident of Tennessee; be a U.S. citizen; and live in the community in an unsupported setting. Individuals living in group homes, foster homes or other residential settings are not eligible for services. Individuals who receive services through a Medicaid waiver are not eligible.

## **3. *What services are available through Family Support?***

Services are designed to be flexible and responsive to family needs. Services might include: respite care, day care, equipment for home, automobile modifications, specialized supplies, specialized equipment, health related, and summer camp. Information about community resources is also available.

## **4. *How does the application process work?***

During the month of March, anyone interested in receiving services will submit a completed, signed application along with all needed proofs to The Arc for the following fiscal year. When this is received, application will be contacted to determine eligibility. If you are determined eligible, your application will be presented to the local Family Support Council to determine who will receive funding and how much. If you are not approved for funding you will be placed on the waiting list. If you are determined not eligible, you will receive notice of this in writing. If you do not agree with the eligibility determination, you may submit in writing within 10 calendar days of the date of the letter to the local Family Support Council for a reconsideration.

## **5. *What are the Local Council Priorities?\****

Immediacy of Need

- a. Individual with qualifying disabilities living alone
- b. Elderly parents or grandparents caring for a dependent with a qualifying disability
- c. Families with more than one child with a qualifying disability
- d. Single parent with a child with a qualifying disability

## Impact of Aging Population

- a. Elderly with severe disability living alone
- b. Adult children caring for a sibling with a disability
- c. Adult children caring for parents with a severe disability

\*\*These are the categories that will be given first preference. If you do not fit in one of them, it doesn't necessarily mean you won't receive funding.

### **6. What is the definition of a severe disability?**

The Family Support Guidelines define severe disability as one that is attributable to a mental or physical impairment other than a mental health impairment; that is likely to continue indefinitely; and results in substantial functional limitations in three or more activities of daily living.

### **7. What is an acceptable form of proof of disability?**

- a letter from a doctor, psychologist, nurse practitioner or physician's assistant that includes diagnosis and why the diagnosis results in a disability. We will need this yearly UNLESS the letter reads that this is a life-long disability OR
- cover Page of CURRENT ANNUAL IEP OR IFP (NOT PROGRESS REPORT). We will need this yearly and it has to be current!

### **8. What is an acceptable form of proof of residency?**

- a current Tennessee rent or mortgage receipt or utility bill in the consumer's name or the consumer's parent, guardian or conservator's name and must be dated with 90 days of submission OR
- a current Tennessee motor vehicle driver's license or identification card issued by the Tennessee Department of Safety in the consumer's name or the consumer's parent, guardian or conservator's name OR
- a current Tennessee motor vehicle registration in the consumer's name or the consumer's parent, guardian or conservator's name OR
- a document showing that the consumer or the consumer's parent, guardian or conservator is employed in this state OR
- a document showing that the consumer or the consumer's parent, guardian or conservator has registered with a public or private employment service in this state OR
- evidence of registration to vote in this state

### **9. What is an acceptable form of proof of citizenship\*\*?**

- birth certificate
- passport

\*\*If you are an individual who claims qualified alien status then you must provide legal verification to support the status.

### **10. What is a Family Support Plan?**

A Family Support Plan is a written agreement developed and signed by the individual/family member and The Arc Family Support Coordinator after an individual is approved for the Family Support Program. The plan identifies family needs and establishes the financial commitment of the agency. The fiscal year of this program begins July 1 and ends June 30. Each plan is negotiated annually and is dependent upon the availability of funds.

### **11. If needs change, can I revise services in my Family Support Plan?**

Yes. The program is designed to be flexible and recognizes that family needs may change during the year. Services can be added or changed as long as money is available in the existing individual plan.

**12. What if a bill is turned in and there is no money available in the plan to cover the cost?**

The Arc cannot pay any bills that exceed the amount indicated on the Family Support Plan. Any bills received over the plan amount will be returned to the family. Payment will become the responsibility of the family and not The Arc.

**13. What happens if I don't spend all of the Family Support money in a year's time?**

Unspent money cannot be used in the next fiscal year. Money not spent will be allocated to other families needing services.

**14. Will I receive the same amount of money each year?**

Not necessarily. Allocations are based on the availability of state funds, needs of the family and the number of eligible individuals who are needing services. Receiving Family Support funding one year does not guarantee funding the next year.

**15. Can Family Support money be taken away for any reason?**

Yes. There are several reasons for discontinuing Family Support assistance, including but not limited to: fraud or misuse of funds; moving out of state; moving into a residential setting; or being admitted to a Medicaid Waiver.

**16. How does the billing process work?**

The Arc can reimburse individuals for expenses they have incurred or can pay companies, vendors or service providers directly. We will need one of the Invoice for Payment Forms with your signature on it and a copy of the receipt. For respite, we will need the Invoice for Payment Form and the Respite Invoice Form with the Respite Provider's signature. You can submit invoices for payment by bringing them by the office, by mail, by fax or by e-mail. We will send you a check or direct deposit your reimbursement within five working days unless we have notified you otherwise. You will not be able to receive payment when you bring invoices by the office unless you have made prior arrangements to do so. Please note the Guidelines for Reimbursement that are printed on the Invoice Form.

**17. What is the time frame for submitting for reimbursement?**

You may submit bills for services approved in the Family Support Plan. The service must have occurred between July 1 and June 30<sup>th</sup> of the current year and the invoice must be dated during those dates. It is possible in the spring to pre-pay for summer camp that occurs after July 1. Remember, the Family Support Program runs on a fiscal year not on a calendar year. Please return all receipts for reimbursement by JUNE 1.

**18. How can I share my comments and concerns about the Family Support Program?**

You will be invited to participate in a program evaluation on a yearly basis that consists of a written survey. Also you may contact any member of the Local Family Support Council or the Board of Directors of The Arc.

**19. What can I do if I have an unresolved complaint pertaining to the Family Support Program?**

If the conflict cannot be resolved with your Family Support Coordinator, there is a formal grievance procedure. The Family shall in writing or by phone submit their complaint or grievance to the Regional Office (291 Stewarts Ferry Pike, Nashville, TN 37214, 231-5057) within 30 days of the aggrieved occurrence. It will be forwarded to the Local Council for resolution. The Local Council must meet within thirty days of receipt of the written complaint. If the Local Council and the family is unable to resolve the complaint or grievance the family shall submit another letter of complaint or grievance to the Regional Office within ten days upon notification of denial. It will be forwarded to the District Council for resolution. The District Council shall meet within 30 days following the receipt of the written complaint. If the District Council and family is unable to resolve the complaint or grievance the family shall submit another letter of complaint or grievance to the Regional Office which will be forwarded to the Chairperson of the Family Support State Council. All parties involved will present the complaint or grievance before the Family Support State Council at their next scheduled meeting. The decision of the Family Support State Council is final.

**20. Does the Family Support Program have to follow Title VI Guidelines?**

Yes, and The Arc of Williamson County is in full compliance with Title VI regulations applied to state contracted agencies as of June 1998. The Arc is committed to the principles of equal access, equal opportunity and affirmative action. The Arc does not discriminate against eligible individuals on the basis of race, ethnic, or national origin, gender, sex, religion, age, military service or disability in its admission or access to, or employment in, its programs, services or activities. The Title VI coordinator for The Arc of Williamson County is Sharon Bottorff and she can be reached at 790-5815, extension 3. You have the right to file a Title VI complaint with the local coordinator, the DIDD regional coordinator, the DIDD state coordinator, The Tennessee Title VI Compliance Commission or the U. S. Department of Health and Human Services Office of Civil Rights.

**ANY TIME YOU HAVE A QUESTION, PLEASE CALL  
THE ARC OFFICE AT 615-790-5815 ext. 3**

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