

THE ARC OF FORT BEND COUNTY CORE VALUES

*Adopted by the Board of Directors
September 18, 2006*

1. Awareness: greater awareness about individuals with disabilities increases understanding about the abilities of individuals with disabilities, and greater understanding increases opportunities for individuals with disabilities, so we work to achieve greater awareness to achieve greater understanding to expand opportunities.
2. Diversity: we must serve all individuals with mental retardation or related developmental disabilities and their families in this county. To be fairly representative of individuals with disabilities and their families in this county, the membership of The Arc should include individuals with disabilities of different ages including children with disabilities and their families, and elderly individuals with disabilities and their families, and individuals from different income-level groups, and should reflect the racial and ethnic diversity of individuals with disabilities and their families in Fort Bend County.
3. Respect: we must be understanding of and sensitive to the concerns of individuals with disabilities about their identity and how we describe them.
4. Ownership: it is important to have community members serve on our committees and board, and support our association, but our association should remain an “individuals with disabilities and their families” organization with the goal of a majority of its committee and board and association members from these populations as distinguished from an option used by some nonprofits with a board and committees composed primarily of community members and large donors who “run” the association for the benefit of the unfortunates who can’t help themselves; we must remain the grass roots disability advocacy organization we are; we must remain “owned” by our consumers and their families so they not only have a stake in the outcome of all decisions but actually participate in making them.
5. Advocacy: with limited resources, if we become primarily or solely a provider organization, our association will never do more than make only a limited impact on the quality of life of a few individuals with disabilities; we must remain primarily an advocate for individuals with disabilities and their families if we want to persuade our community and government to be part of the quality of life and opportunities for individuals with disabilities.
6. Cooperation: advocacy and programs that benefit individuals with mental retardation and their families in many cases will also benefit individuals with other disabilities, and our vision and mission should be broad enough to permit use of our resources to assist individuals with other disabilities, and a willingness to collaborate with other disability groups to achieve our vision and mission and goals.

7. Good Stewardship: as an association, we must be fiduciaries of the talent and resources that our volunteers and community supporters entrust to us, and the “ideal” program or advocacy effort is one that uses little of our resources while making a large difference in opportunities for a significant number of individuals with disabilities. The greater the amount of resources and the lower the number of individuals benefiting or the smaller the difference, the less ideal the program or advocacy and the farther we get from good stewardship. As a nonprofit with limited resources, we cannot provide programs and advocacy for all the needs of every individual with a disability in Fort Bend County. Good stewardship requires maximizing our use of limited resources, and a significant resource that is used to benefit only a small number of individuals with disabilities is being underutilized. Good stewardship requires making hard choices by prioritizing the use of limited resources among competing significant needs. A good assessment of the needs of individuals with disabilities in our community and the resources available in our community to serve those needs, updated regularly, should be the basis for our vision and mission and goals, so we may be good stewards.