Maryland Partners in Policymaking®

What is Maryland Partners in Policymaking®?

Take your advocacy to new heights through Partners in Policymaking®! Maryland's year-long program prepares adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD), parents, and family members of children and adults with IDD to **be effective advocates at the local, state, and federal levels.**

Since its creation in 1987 by the Minnesota Governor's Council on Developmental Disabilities, over 30,000 people have graduated from the program across over 30 states. **In Maryland, over 500 Partners alumni blanket the state.** They are involved in Commissions, serve on boards and workgroups, and are responsible for many of the positive changes we have seen over the years in our schools, workplaces, and community at large.

Each session of "Partners" features subject matter expert presentations and opportunities for discussion to **better equip participants for all aspects of your advocacy journey.** Partners is accessible, informative, and empowering.

Requirements

**You must be 18+ years old to apply!*

To participate, the Partners in Policymaking® program requires:

- A commitment to **attend** and participate in all **12 sessions**,
- An **interest in learning and practicing new skills and gaining knowledge** in a comfortable and safe environment,
- A **desire to partner, as part of a growing network** of people from diverse cultural backgrounds and life experiences,
- Completion of a **group or individual capstone project**, applying information gained to create positive change in Maryland.

Apply by Sept 8th

Session Dates & Topics

October 18 & 19, 2026
Sunday & Monday | In-Person- Columbia (18th) & Virtual (evening of 19th)
Kickoff Retreat & The History of Disability Advocacy

November 16, 2026
Monday | Virtual
Inclusive Education & Lifelong Learning

December 8, 2026
Tuesday | In-Person- Annapolis
State Laws & Policy & Those Who Create Them

January 10, 2027
Sunday | In-Person- Columbia
Behavior as Communication; Use of Media in Advocacy

February 15, 2027 *(Optional)*
Monday | Virtual
DD Day Preview (Primer for Event)

February 17, 2027
Wednesday | In-Person- Annapolis
Developmental Disabilities Day at The Legislature

March 7, 2027
Sunday | Virtual
Developing & Living Your Ideal Life

April 6, 2027
Tuesday | Virtual
A Home Of Your Own - Independence In The Community

May 11, 2027
Tuesday | TBD
Federal Laws & Advocacy in Action (Federal Day on the Hill)

June 1, 2027
Tuesday | TBD
The Self-Advocate in Systems Change

August 10, 2027
Tuesday | In-Person (Ellicott City or Rockville)
The County's Role in Developmental Disabilities

September 17, 2027
Friday | In-Person- Columbia
Taking Your Place and Graduation

The Arc Maryland | Maryland Developmental Disabilities Council — CREATING CHANGE · IMPROVING LIVES | People On the Go Maryland

www.TheArcMD.org/Partners

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Time Commitment

128 hours over a 1 year period of in-class participation, and asynchronous (on your own, outside of class) work

Location

The majority of the in-person sessions will take place in Howard County, Maryland. Additional sessions will take place in Annapolis, Maryland, and we may travel by bus or train to Washington, D.C. (TBD) for one class.
All virtual sessions will be on Zoom.

Cost to Participants

There is **no fee for participants** to attend the sessions and take part in this opportunity. Maryland's program is made possible through a grant provided by the Maryland Developmental Disabilities Council, along with funding provided by The Arc Maryland, with programmatic support by People On the Go Maryland. Each spot in the program is valued at over $5,000.

Overnight accommodations may be provided at no cost for those who drive a long distance to attend, as an accommodation to participate. Also included are meals, speakers' presentations and handouts, resource materials, publications, and accommodation services.

Accommodations

Participants who require accommodations for their participation should include these on their applications. These could include things like ASL, Child Care or Respite Stipends, Transportation Assistance, Technology, or Companion services (attendance of a family member or DSP to provide support to a Partners participant). Please note that we do not have on-site childcare and children are not allowed to attend classes with program participants. Please contact Natalie Brooks for any questions or assistance completing your application at nbrooks@thearcmd.org

Application Deadline: September 8th

Homework

After each session, a homework assignment or review of materials that builds on and supports the topics addressed must be completed by each class member for discussion at the following session.

Presenters

Guest speakers are subject matter experts in the field as professionals, or through their own lived-experience with disability.

Selection Process

A review committee, which includes representatives from the Maryland Developmental Disabilities Council, People On the Go Maryland, and The Arc Maryland team, selects participants based on several criteria. Decisions will be made on September 18, 2026.

Apply From Our Website:

To learn more about the Maryland Partners in Policymaking® program, visit www.TheArcMD.org/Partners or contact Natalie Brooks, Director of Education Initiatives and Partnerships, at NBrooks@TheArcMD.org.