Maryland
Partners in Policymaking®
Frequently Asked Questions

Is there a specific philosophical point of view that speakers and presentations will share?

The basic philosophy is self-determination. Best practices, current philosophy, and policy will depend on the speaker's perspective and the movement or policy being presented.

Who is eligible to apply for the program?

Eligible applicants include adult Individuals with intellectual and/or developmental disabilities (IDD) and adult family members of persons with IDD, including parents and siblings of persons with IDD. To be considered for the program, you must be a resident of the state of Maryland and at least 18 years old.

What are the criteria you look for in individuals with IDD?

We look for people that are invested in making a change. Not only in their own life, but in all lives of people with IDD and their families. In the past, we have had participants with various disabilities involved in the program. We want to create an environment for optimal participation, so please let us know if you need any accommodations. You must have an interest and passion for advocacy and for making positive change with and for people who have IDD.

I have already filled out the application. When will I hear something?

We will be in touch with everyone individually via email after applications close on Tuesday, September 8, 2026. Once the selection committee finalizes their decisions, we will promptly reach out to all of the applicants on September 18, 2026 by 11:59 PM.

How many people are you looking to enroll in the class?

We are looking to enroll at least 30 new Partners. Of course, if we have the resources, we may be able to take one or two more than 30, but around 30 people, including individuals with IDD and family members, are what we are looking for to ensure active engagement in the class and the development of life-long connections.

How important is it to be able to attend every session of the Partners program?

Attending every session of the program is incredibly important. We are looking for class members with a dedication to taking full advantage of the investment in them. We have designed the sessions to incorporate frequent breaks, and have added accommodations people may request to enhance their fullest experience with Partners. Of course, “life happens” and this may impact your ability to participate in a class at some point. What matters is that you come into the process fully intending to complete 100% of the courses.

We encourage you to please hold all the class dates in your calendar, in the event you are selected for enrollment in the Maryland Partners in Policymaking® program.

How much does it cost to be a part of the Maryland Partners in Policymaking® program?

The Partners in Policymaking® program is free for participants. We recognize that your time is valuable and therefore, your time, dedication, and commitment are your contributions to the program. The Arc Maryland and the Maryland Developmental Disabilities Council have, however, estimated that each spot in the program is valued at close to $6,000. Being a part of the Maryland Partners in Policymaking® program is like a scholarship opportunity. Class members are chosen because of the potential seen in them to be lifelong advocates for people with disabilities.

How can I stand out from other applicants to be selected?

The more information you share about yourself, the better. Be thorough and complete in answering questions on the application. Tell us fully about yourself, your interests, and what you plan on doing with what you learn from the class.

Upon completion of the Maryland Partners in Policymaking® program, how do I utilize my newfound skills?

What you do with your Partners experience is completely up to you! Partners is about creating long-term agents of change. This can be accomplished through many channels of advocacy on local, state, and national levels. This can mean taking on leadership roles in volunteer organizations, participation in public policy and legislative sessions, and much more. Opportunities will present themselves during and after the class. It is up to you to seize them!

If I do not get accepted, or cannot be a part of the program this year, will there be another opportunity for me in the future?

Thanks to funding from the Maryland Developmental Disabilities Council, Partners in Policymaking in the state of Maryland will be available this year for the 2026-27 class. While we hope the program may be extended beyond this year, at this point, that is not certain. That said, we strongly encourage those who are interested to apply for this class. Further, we encourage those who are not accepted to remain in contact with us, in case additional opportunities are offered.

What are some accommodations that might be available for me?

We expect that many of our applicants will have what they need to participate in the Maryland Partners in Policymaking® program, but there may be participants who need assistance or accommodations such as technology for participation, respite, transportation to in-person classes, large print materials, American Sign Language (ASL), closed captioning, and other supports to fully participate in the program. Please let us know of your needs on the application and we will be in touch to see what we can do to facilitate your participation.

Will I have the opportunity to meet with policymakers through the class?

Yes! The Maryland Partners in Policymaking® class will have multiple opportunities to hear from and speak with policymakers as we cover local government, state laws and policy, attend Developmental Disabilities Day at the Legislature, and have a session on Federal advocacy.

How do Partners Graduates stay connected after the class year ends?

Program alumni stay connected through a private Facebook group where they also share resources and opportunities in the community. Additionally, we have hosted reunions in the past for all the graduates. Many alumni also attend Developmental Disabilities Day at the Legislature and The Arc Maryland's Annual State Convention.

Who can I contact for more information about Partners in Policymaking?

For additional questions about the Maryland Partners in Policymaking®, you can contact Natalie Brooks an NBrooks@thearcmd.org or call The Arc Maryland office at **410-571-9320, ext. 203.**

The Arc Maryland

Maryland Developmental Disabilities Council
CREATING CHANGE · IMPROVING LIVES

People On the Go Maryland

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