



For Immediate Release

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The Arc Rhode Island Partners with Rhode Island Advocacy for Children to Provide Better Outcomes for Students with Disabilities

Providence, RI – The Arc Rhode Island is pleased to announce a historic merger with Rhode Island Advocacy for Children, a move which will greatly expand much-needed education advocacy support services to individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD) and their families across the state. This merger comes at a critical time for Rhode Islanders with disabilities who are facing unprecedented challenges in getting special education services during the coronavirus pandemic.

“Rhode Island is a state in educational crisis, and now with ever increasing pressures during this pandemic, we need trained, certified Educational Advocates to help parents navigate through the complex world of special education,” said Joanna Scocchi, State Director of The Arc Rhode Island. “With this merger, The Arc Rhode Island can offer special education advocacy support to families so that their children will learn, grow, and have equal educational opportunities to succeed in the future.”

As part of the merger, The Arc Rhode Island is welcoming Mary Lou Kennedy Rossi to its team to serve as a Senior Program Manager for Education Advocacy. Rossi served as an Educational Advocate for Rhode Island Advocacy for Children after a thirty-year career in education, during which she served as an elementary school principal and special educator. She also serves as a professor at the University of Rhode Island’s College of Education.

Rhode Island Advocacy for Children has been protecting the educational rights of children with disabilities for over 6 years. During that time, it has served over 350 families, providing them guidance, training and strategies to collaborate with school districts on their child's educational plans (IEPs/504s).

The Arc Rhode Island is a state office of the oldest parent-led disability rights organization, The Arc of The United States, which has more than 600 chapters throughout the country. The Arc Rhode Island supports the state's disability community in many ways, including combating social isolation and improving mental health through its Circles of Connections program. Individuals and families interested in learning more about The Arc Rhode Island can visit [www. https://ri.thearc.org/](https://ri.thearc.org/) or visit them at their new address: 1130 Ten Rod Road, Suite E-205, North Kingstown RI 02852. (Our office follows all CDC & State of Rhode Island health protocols. Please call for information: 401-363-9899)

The Arc advocates for and serves people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD), including Down syndrome, autism, Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders, cerebral palsy and other diagnoses. The Arc has a network of over 600 chapters across the country promoting and protecting the human rights of people with I/DD and actively supporting their full inclusion and participation in the community throughout their lifetimes and without regard to diagnosis.

Editor's Note: The Arc is not an acronym; always refer to us as The Arc, not The ARC and never ARC. The Arc should be considered as a title or a phrase.

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