

## In This Together & Census 2020

My name is Dara Bacon and I am the new Director of Communication & Public Awareness for The Arc Tennessee. As 2020 gets underway, I wanted to share a little about myself and let you know about an important opportunity we have to positively impact all Tennesseans, especially people with disabilities.



Dara, Ezra and Uriah Bacon

First, a little bit about me. Originally from Kentucky, I graduated from Western Kentucky University with a degree in Public Relations. I live here in Nashville with my husband and two sons, Uriah, 7, and Ezra, 3. In Fall 2012, I gave birth to Uriah four weeks after finding out that among his many great qualities would be an extra chromosome (Down syndrome). This served as a pivotal part in my journey to navigating, advocating and engaging in the world of individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD).

But my journey started long before becoming a mother because I have an aunt that was also born with Down syndrome. Aunt Heady is one of my favorite people on Earth and still resides in my hometown of Bardstown, Kentucky. She just celebrated her 60th birthday, surrounded by friends and family.

As we age, I've come to better understand that having a family member or friend with a disability often lends a

different perspective on life. I know Heady's care in this later stage of her life looks completely different than in her prime years. It is also evident that growing up in rural Kentucky well before the American with Disabilities Act (ADA) or Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) is radically different compared to the road Uriah is on here in Nashville decades later.

I'm constantly looking for ways we can positively impact the lives of people with IDD, and by working for The Arc Tennessee, I have already learned so much. One important opportunity I have recently learned about is how impactful the United States Census is for our state funding.

This year, 2020, we have not only a presidential election but a national census. The following pages include information about Census 2020 produced by The Arc US. Because an accurate count of our population impacts the amount of federal funding each state receives, it's incredibly important. Individuals with IDD are generally undercounted yet census results guide funding for Medicaid, education grants for students with disabilities, state councils on developmental disabilities, independent living councils and much more.

Take a moment to read the following information about Census 2020 and plan to participate. We are in this together so let's do what we can for an accurate count!



Heady Spalding (Aunt Heady) and Dara

**Si tiene un niño o miembro de la familia con una incapacidad intelectual o de desarrollo, puede contactar  
Pathfinder a: 615-875-5083 para recibir más información sobre recursos y servicios.**



United States®  
**Census  
2020**

## YOU COUNT! BE COUNTED.

### What is the census?

The government counts everyone in the country. They ask questions about every home in the country. One person from every home answers the questions. This is called the census. **The census is when the government counts everyone in the country.**

The census happens every 10 years. **We will have a census in 2020.**

The government will send you a letter in the mail. They will send the letter in March. This letter has instructions on how to fill out the census.

The census asks one person in every home to answer a few questions. A home can be a house or apartment.

### What questions does the census ask?

The census asks two kinds of questions. It asks questions about your home. Then, it asks questions about each person who lives in your home.

The census also asks questions about you.

**The census asks these questions about your home:**



**What is your phone number?**



**Do you own your home or rent it?**



**How many people live in your home?**

**Only one** person needs to respond to the census in each home. If you live with other people, you should talk to them about who will fill it out.



Your answers to the census are **secret**. The government will not share your answers with anyone. Your answers are used to count how many people there are in the country. **The law does not allow your answers to be shared for any other reason. The census does not ask if you are a citizen of the United States.**

## The census will ask:

- **What is your name?** You put your name on the form.
- **What is your sex?** The census gives two options. You can choose “male” or “female.”
- **What is your age?** You put down how old you are on the form.
- **Are you Hispanic, Latino, or of Spanish Origin?** This question has to do with where your family comes from. The form uses the term Hispanic, Latino, or of Spanish origin, so if your family comes from a Spanish-speaking country, your answer to this question is probably yes.
- **What is your race?** For this question, you check boxes. The census lists different races. Some examples are “white,” “black,” or “American Indian.” You can check more than one box. After you check boxes, the census asks for more details, like what area, country, or tribe your family is from.



The census will also ask these same questions about the people who live with you.

## Is it really the census?

Sometimes, people will mail you spam that says it is from the census. Here is how to tell if mail that says it's from the census is real or fake:

The census  
will **not**

A purple icon of a Social Security card with the letters 'SSN' in white.

SSN

ask for your Social  
Security number



send people to jail  
for not answering  
questions



ask for money or  
your bank account  
information

### Why is the census important for people with disabilities?

The law requires the census to collect information for the government. The government uses that information to make decisions. These decisions affect people with disabilities. There are two main ways the census affects people with disabilities.

#### 1 Money for services and programs

Information from the census is used by federal, state, and local governments to make decisions about funding for services and programs. These services and programs include education, housing, health care, transportation, and other community needs. People with disabilities can benefit from these services. All communities benefit from these services.

Everyone needs to be counted to make sure the government has the right information to make decisions about these important services. Having enough money for programs and services for people with disabilities depends on having the right information. That is one reason why it is important for all people with disabilities to be counted in the census.



#### 2 Representatives in Congress



The federal government makes laws for the whole country. The people who make these laws are called Members of Congress. Members of Congress are the people who make laws for the whole country.

We vote for our Members of Congress in elections.

One part of Congress is the House of Representatives. The Members of Congress in the House of Representatives are called Representatives.

Every state has a different number of Representatives, based on how many people live in the state.

Remember, **the census counts how many people live in the whole country and in each state. The government uses that number to figure out how many Representatives the state should have.** If people don't fill out the census, a state might get less Representatives. Then, the people in that state won't have as much of a say about decisions in Congress.

**We need to make sure every state has the right number of Representatives.**

### How do I fill out the census?

The government sends you a letter in the mail. They will send the letter in March 2020. This letter has instructions on how to fill out the census online.

#### There are three ways to fill out the census:

Remember, only one person in your home can fill out the census. If you live with other people, you should talk to them about who will fill it out.

There are guides to help people with disabilities fill out the census. There are large print guides. There are also guides in braille. If you have questions, you can call 1-800-923-8282 or go to **2020census.gov**.



**ONLINE**



**PHONE**



**ON PAPER**

If you do not fill out the census, a census worker may come to your home to help you fill it out. They may come in May, June, or July.

### Are they a real census worker?

All census workers have a badge proving they are a census worker. You can ask to see their badge to check that they work for the census.

#### Every census worker's badge has four things on it:

1. The badge says "Department of Commerce."
2. The badge has the worker's name printed on it.
3. The badge has a picture of the census worker.
4. The badge has an expiration date on it. That means that the census worker can use the badge until that date. But they cannot use the badge after that date.

**A real census worker has all 4 things on their badge.**

**For More Resources, Visit [TheArc.org/Census](https://thearc.org/census)**



FY 2019- 2020

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Dara Bacon, Editor  
[dbacon@thearctn.org](mailto:dbacon@thearctn.org)

The Arc Tennessee  
545 Mainstream Dr., Suite 100,  
Nashville, TN 37228  
Fax: 615-248-5879

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Do you have something you would like published in the Connection? Please send it in! Information on where to send your stories and pictures or comments is in the box on the left of this page.

Deadlines for issues:

Winter	12/31/19
Spring	3/15/20
Summer	6/30/20
Fall	9/30/20



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When customers shop Smile Amazon, the AmazonSmile Foundation will donate 0.5% of the price of eligible purchases to the charitable organization selected by the customer. Under *Your Account*, select The Arc TN as your charitable organization. <https://smile.amazon.com/>



## CALENDAR REMINDERS

Date & Time	Event	Place
3/20-21/20	People First Self-Advocate Summit	Franklin, TN
3/31/20	MegaConference Stipend Deadline	Online
4/1/20	National Census Day	Mail, Online or by Phone
5/1/20	MegaConference Registration Deadline	Online
5/20/20, 3:00pm	Annual/Board Meeting	Nashville Airport Marriott
5/20/20 6:00pm	AwardsBanquet	Nashville Airport Marriott
5/21-22/20	TN Disability MegaConference	Nashville Airport Marriott

<http://www.thearctn.org/Calendar.php>

## MISSION STATEMENT

The Arc Tennessee empowers people with intellectual and developmental disabilities and their families to actively participate in the community throughout their lifetime.

<http://www.thearctn.org>



## Lines from Linda

*By: Linda Brown, president*

It appears that 2020 has started out to be a very exciting and important year. With the HUGE success of Disability Day on the Hill, the census taking place, MegaConference taking place May 21-22, 2020 and an election year, it is more important than ever to make sure our families are counted and our voices are heard.

It was another great year for Disability Day on the Hill 2020. The number of self-advocates in attendance was the most that has ever attended. Being able to hear first time attendees practicing what they were going to say to their representative was very inspirational. A huge THANK YOU to Dave Griffin for all his coordination with helping People First members obtain appointments with their representative(s). Dave also shared different ideas on how to effectively convey what members felt was important to them. If you were unable to make an appointment for that day, you can always contact your representative and schedule a time to meet with them in their local office. Speaking to your representative(s) is also a great time to practice your advocacy skills and build confidence in speaking up for what is important to you or your loved ones.

The next upcoming event is MegaConference which will be held May 21-22, 2020 at the Nashville Airport Marriott. Visit the following link to register and to stay up to date about presenters <https://www.tndisabilitymegaconference.org/>. The theme for this year's conference is Envisioning Our Landscape. There is still time to sign up for sponsorship and exhibitor table space for your agency. MegaConference will be a great time to hear from experts in the disability community, learn how self-advocates are finding their voice and making huge strides in becoming independent in all aspects of their lives. It is so important that we attend events like MegaConference so we can stay informed about

the latest changes in the disability community. By attending MegaConference you will come away wanting to learn more and share with others the knowledge you have gained.

With the census everyone is counted that completes the census form. The government will use this information to make decisions that will affect people with disabilities. The census is conducted every 10 years and funding for key programs that support individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities can be affected. Support of these programs can make it possible for people with disabilities to live in the community instead of an institution. Other programs that can be affected are education, housing, health care, public policy and much more. Remember that the 2020 Census is April 1, 2020! The Arc (2019 August Recess Toolkit) has a link where you can stay up-to-date on census information and receive a reminder about Census Day April 1, 2020.

Another important event taking place in 2020 will be voting for our next president. The next presidential election will be November 3, 2020! A great first step in becoming informed about issues affecting the lives of individuals with disabilities is to view The Arc TN page <https://www.thearctn.org/Public-Policy.php>. This is a great place to stay up-to-date on public policy issues (TennCare, importance of voting, points for how to advocate and much more).

Remember to make this the year that you attend MegaConference, brush up on advocacy skills, complete the 2020 Census, and VOTE!!!



*Jeff, Terrell,  
Linda & Myles  
Brown*



## Growing Your Voice Self Advocate Summit

**FREE Hotel Stay & Conference Meals\***

**Franklin, TN**

**March 20 - 21, 2020**

**Register at [www.thearctn.org/People-First.php](http://www.thearctn.org/People-First.php)**

*\*Friday night hotel stay is free for self-advocates on a first come, first serve basis.  
Conference meals included for all registered attendees.  
Travel reimbursement available.*



By: *Dave Griffin,*  
*People First project coordinator*

Disability Day On The Hill was February 4, 2020. We had more than 20 self-advocates from Middle Tennessee visit 18 state representatives and state senators. Many thanks go to Andrew Austin, Lee Sherwood, Tommy Hall, Jordan Wallace and Nick Irvine for bringing a large group of self-advocates from New Horizons. We had 33 self-advocates from West Tennessee visit 23 state representatives and state senators. Additionally, People First members from West Tennessee dropped off packages at the offices of 4 additional state representatives and 2 additional state senators. Meri James of West Tennessee Family Solutions and staff of The Arc Mid-South were instrumental in transporting such a large group from Shelby and Madison counties. The total number of self-advocates meeting with state legislators exceeded 50.

This turnout was made possible by nearly 40 helpers that attended a Disability Day on The Hill training at New Horizons the week before the event. DSP's, support staff and volunteers helped self-advocates practice asking legislators for their needs. Apart from their individualized requests to lawmakers, we asked our representatives to support one bill and a budget request that would benefit People First as a whole.

We asked our representatives and senators to support SB 1612 / HB 1596. Passage of this legislation would create an Office of Accessible Transportation dedicated to improving and expanding accessible transportation in the State of Tennessee. We also asked our representatives and senators to support turning \$3 million in nonrecurring state funds to recurring state funds to solidify a permanent increase in Direct Support Professional (DSP) wages to at least \$10.00 an hour.

As state coordinator of People First, I want to thank everyone who helped make this a huge success. The Arc Tennessee staff was a tremendous help in keeping the People First table manned to field questions. Our helpers for both Middle and West Tennessee were terrific in assisting self-advocates find and participate in scheduled appointments.

As Dylan Brown wrote, "Moving forward we hope our PF members gained confidence in self-advocating for themselves, have exciting stories they can share at their next local PF chapter meeting with other self-advocates, and are more motivated than ever to be active in making their communities stronger by adding their voice."

We are always interested in new information or trainings we can share with our local chapters to help them grow stronger. If anyone in our disability community has information to share, please don't hesitate to reach out to our Coordinator, Dave Griffin (dgriffin@thearctn.org), or Dylan Brown (dbrown@thearctn.org).

## TENNESSEE DISABILITY **MEGA**CONFERENCE

Empowerment • Inclusion • Self-determination • Choice

**Thursday & Friday**  
**May 21-22, 2020**

The Tennessee Disability MegaConference is Tennessee's largest disability-specific conference for individuals with disabilities, families, and professionals. At the conference, people share the latest information and innovations on many topics including housing, employment, education, health care, recreation and leisure, mental health, and others. Continuing education credits are offered in many categories. People attending make new friends and important connections as everyone works together to encourage the full participation of all people with disabilities!

Highlights include:

- Nationally renowned keynote speakers
- Interactive/Recreational workshops
- Educational sessions
- Exhibits with disability products and services
- Self-advocate entrepreneur goods for sale
- Wednesday night pre-conference Awards Banquet
- Thursday night dance or movie
- Breakfast and lunch included
- Limited stipends available for persons with disabilities, their family members and caregivers

For all MegaConference information and updates, visit the website often.

[www.tndisabilitymegaconference.org](http://www.tndisabilitymegaconference.org)

## **The Arc Tennessee Hosts Its 3rd Annual Big Ideas Event**

On February 15, 2020 dozens of family members, self-advocates, and professionals in the disability field gathered for Pushing Boundaries...a Big Idea event at the Inn at Opryland. Entertaining and thought provoking keynotes by Alonzo Kelly and Elizabeth Dykens and creative breakout sessions were mixed in with plenty of opportunities for networking with the speakers and other attendees. The intimate setting created the perfect environment for those individual conversations that often generate as many creative ideas as the sessions themselves.

The Arc Tennessee could not make this event possible without the support of our generous sponsors: The TN Department of Education, TN Department of Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities, The TN Council on Developmental Disabilities, Disability Rights Tennessee, Vanderbilt Kennedy Center, BlueCare and Pinnacle Financial Partners. We are thankful for their partnership on this event.

Be sure to visit our Big Ideas webpage <https://www.thearctn.org/Big-Ideas.php> what we have in store for 2021!





## Carrie's Corner

By: Carrie Hobbs Guiden,  
executive director

### *How do we reach more individuals with I/DD and their families?*

One of the primary responsibilities of The Arc Tennessee is sharing information with families about resources potentially available for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (I/DD) that may have a positive impact on their lives. We share this information in a variety of ways. We send out weekly emails to members. We post information on The Arc Tennessee website. We share information via social media. We mail out printed newsletters. If you are reading this article, it means we have had success in reaching out to you at some point. We host in-person forums all over the state. We have attempted very casual family support meetings in each of the grand regions. We attend school resource fairs and community events. Yet I know there are still thousands of families we are not reaching, and this means that we are not fully achieving our mission to empower Tennesseans with I/DD and their families to live fully included lives in their communities.

This past summer The Arc Tennessee hosted 15 family forums in rural counties across the state. The purpose of these forums was to help families caring for members with I/DD to learn more about engaging in the special education system and to learn about services available to adults after exiting school. We advertised these family forums through social media and email; through the UT extension offices; through local newspapers, schools and chambers of commerce and even some churches; through other government agencies; through the networks of our disability advocacy partners; and even on one occasion through local radio. We even provided lunch or dinner at the meeting, depending upon the time of day. The most family members we had attend any meeting was four.

I fully realize that families supporting a member with I/DD are often stressed and stretched to their limits. I also understand that it can be nearly impossible to think about the future when a family is barely able to figure out how to make it through the day. Even though I have not personally experienced it because I am not caring for a family member with I/DD, I have been around enough families over the past 25 years to grasp the incredible stress families deal with on a regular basis. Yet, many families still manage to become engaged enough to at least become aware of the resources that may help them or their family member with I/DD. What distinguishes those families from others? It isn't socioeconomic status. It isn't two parent homes vs. single parent homes. It isn't race. What differentiates those that seek information from those that do not? I wish I could figure out the answer.

How do we reach the seemingly unreachable? How do we get vital information into the hands of individuals and families that could benefit from it? Short of going door to door, which we simply do not have the manpower to do, there must be other ways for us to reach individuals and families that could benefit from information, resources, and support navigating our complex system for people with I/DD. There are times I find myself taking the easy way out by telling myself we've done all we can to reach families – yet I'm sure there are ideas I have not thought of or have not embraced.

Our Board Advocacy and Education Committee often discussed the idea of locating a "family member in every county" that could gain the trust of people in that county and be our conduit for information. We have struggled locating those family members. However, it is an idea that I believe bears revisiting.

Do you have an idea of how we can reach more families? Are you willing to be that family member in your county that shares information with others in I/DD community? I would love to hear your thoughts and ideas. Please share them with me at [cguiden@theartcn.org](mailto:cguiden@theartcn.org) and/or with Robyn Lampley, the chair of our Advocacy and Education Committee (and a parent of a wonderful young adult with Down syndrome) at [rlampley@dsdc.org](mailto:rlampley@dsdc.org).



### FOR YOUR GENEROUS DONATIONS!

*This listing reflects donations received 1/1/20 - 2/28/20. We apologize for any omissions and appreciate omissions brought to the attention of Gavin Dillinger at [gdillinger@theartcn.org](mailto:gdillinger@theartcn.org) or 615-248-5878 x 17.*

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## Special Education Mentoring Services Available

*Loria Hubbard, director of programs*

Thanks to funding from The Tennessee Department of Education, The Arc Tennessee offers Special Education Mentoring services to families who have a concern about their child's special education experience. This service helps families learn to be their child's advocate. We have three Community Resource Specialists and two Exceptional Education Mentors who work directly with families to:

- Connect with Needed Resources Including Learning Rights and Responsibilities
- Individualized Planning Assistance
- Pinpoint Specific Concerns
- Review IEPs, Evaluations, and Other Documents
- Prepare for IEP Meetings
- Planning Meetings
- Attend IEP Meetings with Families
- Model Positive School Communication
- Serve as a Stabilizing Influence
- Review the Completed Draft IEP After the IEP Meeting

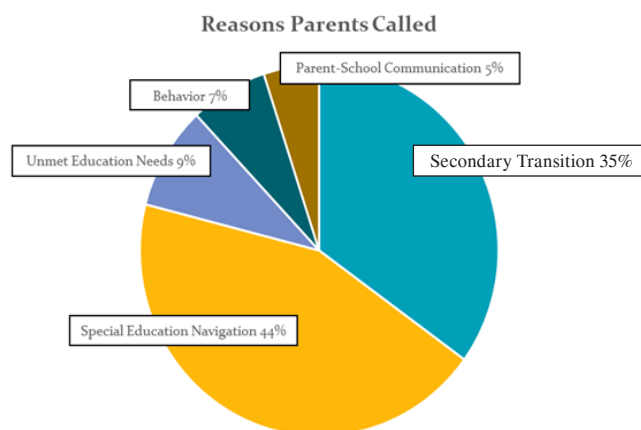
Not all families need all the services we have available. Many families will connect with the resources we provide, learn their rights and responsibilities, get a few pointers and feel empowered to be their child's advocate at their next IEP Team Meeting. Some families will need more supports. We individualize our services based on what a parent says they need.

We walk families through being prepared through individual instruction in planning for IEP Team Meetings, sharing communication tips, discussing what comes after an IEP Meeting, and more. The goal of this service is better student

outcomes through more meaningful family engagement in special education. We often hear from families who have received Mentoring services. One such comment we recently received:

"I just wanted to take a moment to tell you how amazing Ms. Sipes is. She has been a grand help to our family. She is a true asset to The Arc and the families you help. She is also an amazing mentor. I appreciate her so much and just wanted to let you know."

In the 2018-2019 fiscal year we assisted 229 families. These families called for different reasons:



Our team is ready to work with more families to mentor special education advocacy. If you or someone you know would benefit from this service, contact us at 615-248-5878 x306 or email at, [SpecialEducation@theartcn.org](mailto:SpecialEducation@theartcn.org). We will connect you with resources and help you on your way to become the most dedicated advocate your child can have.



**FESPED-TN**  
FAMILY ENGAGEMENT IN SPECIAL EDUCATION

## Family Engagement Project Updates!

*By: Jennifer Aprea, family engagement coordinator*

It has been a great year for family engagement in special education! In 2019 we worked hard to connect with families from all over the state and create resources that will help families during their special education journey. We are very excited about what 2020 will hold for our program! Be sure to stay tuned for more information about our contract expansion with the Department of Education. One of the main goals in Commissioner Schwinn's Best for All Strategic Plan is:

Exceptionalities: Develop regional hubs with the expertise in special education that districts need and create a

statewide network that effectively supports students with disabilities through an online tool for families and educators to help identify and navigate resources.

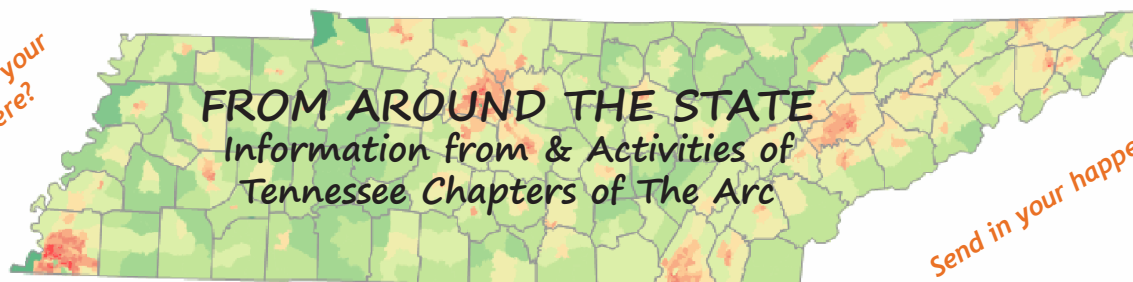
We will be working with the Department of Education to make this happen for the state of Tennessee, and we look forward to connecting with even more families throughout the state to make sure your feedback and input is heard. You can read more about the Best for All Strategic Plan here: <http://bit.ly/BestForAllTN>.

Lets work together to make 2020 our best year yet!





Want to see your  
chapter here?



## FROM AROUND THE STATE

### Information from & Activities of Tennessee Chapters of The Arc

Send in your happenings!

#### **Pictures from Disability Day on the Hill February 4th, 2020**

More than 50 People First self-advocates and members of The Arc from various chapters gathered to advocate at Cordell Hull. One of the most successful DDH's we've had to date!



#### **Pictures from the 3rd Annual Big Ideas Event February 15th, 2020**

Just a few pictures of the family members, self-advocates, and professionals that attended the Pushing Boundaries... a Big Idea event.



Winter 2020



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