

Study Finds Support And Services Lacking For People With Intellectual And Developmental Disabilities

(NAPSA)—Fifty years ago, President Kennedy made a call to the nation to help bring people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (I/DD) out of the shadows and give them opportunities to lead productive, quality lives. Despite gains in many areas, more progress must be made to create these opportunities.

The Arc, the nation's largest and oldest human rights organization for the I/DD community, conducted a national survey, Families and Individual Needs for Disability Supports (FINDS), to learn from caregivers of people with I/DD if their loved ones are faring well in school, the workplace and throughout their lives. The survey questioned whether the I/DD population receives the support services, funding and resources they need and deserve to lead fully integrated lives.

According to the FINDS survey, 62 percent of caregivers report a decrease in services for their family member with disability.

While budget cuts and economic strain have hurt all Americans, the 7 million living with intellectual and developmental disabilities and their families are among the hardest hit.

The survey revealed that potentially 1 million families report being on waiting lists for the most basic government-funded services including transportation, housing, employment supports and personal assistance, with an average wait of more than five years. Many family members have even had to quit their jobs to stay home and provide care.

The Arc serves more than a million individuals and their families through more than 700 state and local chapters and has helped many people with I/DD achieve their goals in the areas of education, employment and independent living. The survey found that most people with I/DD live in poverty and that fewer than 20



The Arc gives 8-year-old identical twins Annika and Maya Adrian-Hage hope that they will be able to achieve their life goals.

percent are employed. Thirty-three percent have Supplemental Security Income as their only source of income while 21 percent live on Social Security.

Although the nation has made some progress over the last 50 years, much more can be done. An immediate priority, say experts from The Arc, is to pressure Congress not to balance the budget on the backs of people with I/DD. Budget cut proposals in Congress threaten to dismantle Medicaid, making it even harder for people with I/DD and their families to achieve their goals in the areas of education, employment and independent living.

To raise awareness surrounding the barriers those with I/DD face, the organization has partnered with Lauren Potter, star of the hit FOX show "Glee." As a successful actress with Down syndrome who is achieving her dreams, Lauren represents the spirit of The Arc's work.

To help people with I/DD achieve their goals, visit www.thearc.org.