



# COMMUNITY CONNECTION

in partnership with



Spokane County  
Parent Coalition



PARENT TO PARENT

## **A Neurodivergent Raising a Neurodivergent**

***Taylor Crisp***

***Spokane County Parent Coalition Self-Advocate***

April is Autism Awareness Month, however I live with autism and celebrate all year long. My journey is that of being a parent of a child who has autism, while also having autism myself.

There is so much to celebrate with our shared diagnosis, but navigating help for your child is no easy task, especially as they get older. I am having to start advocating for my daughter more and more, especially when it comes to her education. She is approaching her pre-teen years and I am noticing her body is starting to change as well as her mind. I remember as a child going through the same transitions at her age and the confusion it can cause. I see secondhand through her eyes how overwhelming and exhausting it can be, especially for a child with a disability.

When you're a mom with a disability facing your own struggles, you are often placed in a position where you must put your own struggles to the side so you can address your child's needs. It can be mentally exhausting. But at the end of the day, she needs me, and I want to help her get through her obstacles so that she doesn't have to struggle the way I did.

Sometimes I feel as if I struggle more than other parents do. I am not saying that other parents don't have difficulties, but there are times where I have to work a little harder to parent and hope I am not messing up. With that being said, I do think all parents can relate to that feeling.

My daughter is currently in the fourth grade and is starting to experience how hard and competitive it can be to maintain friendships. Schoolwork is starting to become more difficult as she gets ready for fifth grade. She has become more anxious, and it has triggered some new behavioral challenges.

Kids have been through a lot over the past three years. There's been a worldwide pandemic, school and educational services temporarily shut down, and then children had to transition back to school after an extended period and relearn material while also trying to catch up.

It's also taken a mental toll on kids who are having to relearn how to socialize with their peers again. Instead of questioning why our kids are having behavioral challenges, it's important to reflect on all they have endured.

Helping our neurodivergent children navigate school and fighting for services so our children can have an inclusive, quality education is no easy task. Sometimes services will get denied for kids that truly need extra help in their

education. As parents, we must continue to be that squeaky wheel until our children get the help they deserve. I will continue to advocate alongside my daughter and she and I will continue to face the challenges of this world together.

From one self-advocate with a disability raising a child with a disability to my peers with similar journeys, just know that you are never alone. April is only a few weeks out of the year to celebrate autism awareness, but every day we can make the choice to fight together. We can create a world that will change for us!

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## Play Ball! Join The Arc for a Spokane Indians Game

The Arc of Spokane and Spokane Indians baseball are offering the chance to take your family out to the ball game for a special event! Free tickets are available to the first 50 people who register. Join us at Avista Stadium on April 30, 2023, at 1:05 p.m. for a baseball matchup between the Spokane Indians and the Everett Aquasox.

This game is also a Pajama Party Day! Come dressed in your favorite onesie or matching pajama set for a comfy day at the ballpark. There will also be a game of Pizza Factory Catch available for attendees to play after the game on the field!

Register for the game [here](#).

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## Tell Congress: No Cuts to Medicaid!

Medicaid home and community-based services help people with disabilities access the vital care they need to thrive. Any cuts to this program would be devastating and would impact the lives of millions. We know how important this is—and we know you do too!

Now, help us get this urgent message across to members of Congress.

We need *more* funding for Medicaid HCBS, not cuts!

[Send a message to your elected officials asking them to oppose any cuts to Medicaid and instead support legislation that provides more funding for HCBS!](#)

Take action [here](#).

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## It's NOT only a bill on Capitol Hill!

***Stephanie Sherman-Petersen***  
***Spokane County Parent Coalition Coordinator***

In my role as Spokane County Parent Coalition Coordinator, I've been immersed in the world of legislation happening in Olympia these past few months. Every bill that The Arc of Washington promotes is focused on improving the lives of people in the IDD community. These bills cover everything from adequate housing, living

wages for caregivers, and appropriate funding for special education in our schools. As a parent and former educator, though, House Bill 1479 (HB 1479) has been at the forefront of my mind.

HB 1479 would have eliminated the practices of restraint and isolation in schools. This was a bill that, I assumed, would have had broad support across party lines. After all, many other states have banned the practices already and most people are not aware that such harmful incidents are still happening in our schools. No one could oppose a bill that would prevent the lifelong trauma that results from children being subjected to restraints and isolation, right? Shockingly, the bill has not passed and will not become part of Washington's laws.

In simple language, restraint is when a student is physically immobilized, while isolation is when a child is placed in a small, confined room that is locked. These are practices designed to protect others from imminent danger; however, their occurrences in our schools reveal they are employed far too often and are used disproportionately against our most vulnerable populations.

Here are some numbers from 2020-21:

- 92% of restraint and 96% of isolation incidents were subjected to students with disabilities
- 84% of cases were in grades K-5
- Black and multi-racial students were 2.5 times more likely to be placed in isolation or restraint
- Students experiencing homelessness were more than 2.4 times likely to experience restraint and 2.8 times more likely to experience isolation

These numbers mean that our most vulnerable children are more likely to be the victims of these practices. Children who are still developing their coping skills. Children who are already experiencing trauma. Children who need adults in their lives to teach them and help them regulate their feelings are instead being subjected to harmful practices that have no therapeutic or educational benefits.

There is still hope for Washington State to ban the use of restraints and isolation in the next legislative season. A new bill is already in the works that will ensure all schools align with those who have severed their use of the isolation and restraint practice by employing trauma informed de-escalation strategies. I'm going to be working with parents and self-advocates to get their voices heard in Olympia on this and other bills that matter to the IDD community. Join me!

For more information, please email [advocacy@arc-spokane.org](mailto:advocacy@arc-spokane.org).

\*For further reading and to see more in-depth data shared above, refer to "[Coming into the Light: An Examination of Restraint and Isolation Practices in Washington Schools](#)" compiled by Disability Rights Washington and ACLU of Washington.

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## Developmental Disabilities Awareness Month celebrations include free Looff Carousel rides

The Arc of Spokane celebrated Developmental Disabilities Awareness Month on March 24 with free carousel rides for the first 50 people at the Looff Carousel!

## Supports, Services, and Rights for Students with Disabilities

Special education is a set of services that children with disabilities receive to support their success at school. The services each student receives are based on their unique needs. Special education is different for every child because every child is different.

Special education is NOT a place. Students do not GO to special education.

Learn more about special education services and get resources [here](#).

## Receive a free Arc@School Curriculum Scholarship

The Arc of Spokane wants you to know how to confidently navigate often complex and difficult IEP and 504 conversations when advocating for your child in school!

The Arc is providing 40 FREE Arc@School curriculum scholarships to help family members of individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD) learn the intricacies of the system.

These scholarships are valued at \$99 and fully cover the cost of this eight-module course. Get ready to learn, at your own pace, how to advocate using successful strategies.

You will receive an email from the Arc@School with your username and password within 4-5 business days of registering.

Questions? Contact Tami Leitz at (509) 789-8782 or by email at [tleitz@arc-spokane.org](mailto:tleitz@arc-spokane.org).

Register [here](#).

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## Virtual Spring Socials

Take part in fun and free social activities over Zoom including trivia, art club, a scavenger hunt, a pet party, and more!. Register for sessions [here](#).

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### Healing-Centered Benefits of Restorative Justice Practices

***Blaine Huizinga***  
***Sexual Abuse Awareness and Response Trainer***

What comes to mind when someone mentions “justice” to you? For those of us working for and alongside folks with IDD, we may think of “disability justice” initially. Some may even think of the place where “justice” is supposed to be dispensed, in the courthouse. Rarely do those outside the legal system think in terms of the different types of civil or criminal justice systems. Recently, I shared information about Civil Protection Orders with my team and some different ways those systems may support people experiencing harm. The unfortunate reality is that accessing justice from either may not be accessible or viable options for many folks with IDD. One form of justice that is rooted in indigenous cultures way of life is ***restorative justice***.

When someone is sexually abused, it can have a devastating impact on their life. Unlike criminal justice which seeks to protect the community and punish offenders, or even civil justice which focuses on resolving disputes and offering restitutions, restorative justice seeks to repair the harm that was caused by the crime and restore relationships between the victim, the offender, and the community. Restorative justice practices have been shown to be effective in addressing the sexual abuse of people with intellectual and developmental disabilities. These practices can help victims to feel more in control of their lives. They can also help offenders to understand the impact of their actions, and to take responsibility for their behavior. Here are some other ways these practices can be effective:

- **Healing for Victims.** Restorative justice can help victims of sexual abuse heal from trauma by giving them more voice in the process, and similarly, offering the support they need to heal. Unlike rigidly defined structures of the criminal justice system, where the victim is merely a witness to the crime, restorative justice practices can help survivors define what justice means to them and works to meet that goal. When a victim’s desire for acknowledgement of the crime by the offender and community is prioritized, it can help them to understand the impact of their actions.
- **Accountability for offenders.** Restorative justice can help offenders to take responsibility for their actions and make amends for the harm they have caused. This can help them to understand the impact of their actions and to develop empathy for their victims.
- **Strengthening communities.** Restorative justice can help to strengthen communities by building trust and understanding between victims, offenders, and the wider community. This can help to prevent future crimes and to create a more just and equitable society.

For example, let’s say someone who has an intellectual disability is harmed by someone else who has an intellectual disability in a space where there were no other witnesses. While criminal justice will likely not be an option due to the limited evidence, and civil justice processes not easily accessible, by inviting the person who was



harmed and the person who caused harm together with a neutral mediator, there could be space for the survivor to share the impact of harm while they discuss ways the person who harmed can take steps to make amends. This process, since it is less formal than a courtroom setting in front of a judge, can better allow for more open and less punitive and ostracizing acknowledgement of what occurred and how the individuals can move forward.

When harm happens to the person with IDD, it's most often someone known to them, which means there's likely some kind of relationship (either personal or professional) that has been damaged. In restorative justice settings that address the harm caused and the ways the offender can take ownership and work to restore the individual and community harmed by the crime, the victim and community can potentially restore some of the damage. This can be especially crucial if the offender is a caregiver or family member. It can be hard for someone to be able to trust again if such an important type of relationship has been violated. While not suitable for every type of situation, restorative justice practices are a powerful tool to address sexual abuse when the burden of proof would not be met in the criminal or civil justice settings.



### **VIDEO: Learn about the Assistive Technology Center's helpful reader pen**

The Assistive Technology Center has returned with another video featuring neat technologies that can be used as helpful tools! Watch as ATC Coordinator Paul Clements explains how a reader pen works [here](#).

Learn more about the Assistive Technology Center or set up a consultation at [www.arc-spokane.org/atc](http://www.arc-spokane.org/atc).

## **\$224 Million in Federal funds set aside to improve transition for students with disabilities**

### ***Disability Scoop***

Federal officials are offering up big money in a bid to help young people with disabilities move more successfully from school to work.

The U.S. Department of Education's Rehabilitation Services Administration said that \$224 million in grants is available for innovative demonstration projects "focused on the creation of systemic approaches to improve access to pre-employment transition services for children and youth with disabilities."

Read the full article here. (<https://www.disabilityscoop.com/2023/04/11/ed-department-earmarks-224-million-to-improve-transition-for-students-with-disabilities/30324/>)

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## View new resources in The Arc's Virtual Program Library!

The Arc of the United State's Virtual Program Library is a robust and valuable resource for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities. Find on-demand activities and activities that service providers can facilitate for people and families to do at home. Service providers can also find and share resources that they can use to facilitate or deliver live, remote programming for people with IDD.

If you haven't stopped by in a while, visit the Virtual Program Library to access new resources [here](#).

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## Learn More About [Parent to Parent](#) Resources

Parents may have questions and concerns as they learn about services that can help their child and family and often need time and support to navigate their own emotions and adjust to raising a child with special needs.

Personal support from fellow parent can help with:

- Emotional support for parents
- Information and referrals to community resources
- Connecting you to Trained Helping Parents
- Social and recreational events
- Current information on disabilities, medical conditions and community resources
- Training for parents who would like to become Volunteer Helping Parents
- Public awareness and outreach to the community regarding individuals with disabilities

Learn more about Parent to Parent resources [here](#).

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## Find local resources for the help you need!

Did you know The Arc of Spokane has a digital resource guide? Click [here](#) for information on a variety of different resources!

If you want a more comprehensive and personalized list of resources for your specific situation, please contact our Individual Advocacy Team at [advocacy@arc-spokane.org](mailto:advocacy@arc-spokane.org) or call (509) 789-8327. They will help you untangle complex issues and the service is free. The Individual Advocacy team is ready to help!

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## Contact Us

Contact the Advocacy and Family Support Team by emailing us at [advocacy@arc-spokane.org](mailto:advocacy@arc-spokane.org).

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