

Looking Forward with 20/20 Vision

The Arc Baltimore's Strategic Plan Moving Ahead

In January, a group of 20 staff—including senior leadership staff, a board member, a self-advocate and a few direct support staff—attended a Transformational Conference sponsored by the Maryland Association of Community Services (MACS). The intent was to get agencies thinking about and planning for possible changes they might need to make in response to the CMS rule (Centers for Medicaid and Medicare Services) and the continuing roll-out of the State's Employment First initiative. It became apparent that a number of our constituents did not have a clear understanding of the overall direction in which The Arc was moving. The group decided that the first thing it needed to do was to put together a clearly articulated plan—20/20 Vision—that focuses on the supported individual. In the following interview, Steve Morgan, executive director of The Arc Baltimore, provides background on what to expect.



What background should we know about the plan?

A: Our current strategic plan went into effect in July of 2015. After attending the MACS conference, we began enhancing the plan. Our work will be ongoing through 2020, hence the name 20/20 Vision, intended not only to connote clarifying our “perfect” vision but to lay out a timeframe for realizing it.

The written version of 20/20 Vision is a work in progress that is still in its early stages. The first order of business is to incorporate the added elements and expectations from the CMS rule and Employment First. These are still emerging. Also, we are just beginning to develop our communications for what's coming—and to dispel any myths and misconceptions that are out there.

What is the philosophy behind the plan?

A: The underpinnings of our strategic plan are, of course, the vision, mission and values of the organization. The future we seek for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities and their families is that they will thrive in their communities. To accomplish that vision, The Arc provides life-changing supports. That vision and mission—along with our guiding values of *People First, Citizenship, Community, Visionary Leadership, Diversity and Integrity and Excellence*—serve as the guide for all the goals and strategies in our 20/20 Vision.

What do readers need to know about the CMS changes and Employment First?

A: The CMS rule was issued about a year ago. It has generated much interest and concern among our constituencies. Ironically, the “requirements” in the CMS rule align well with the mission, vision and values of The Arc. However, since the emphasis so far has been on data gathering and compliance—along with a number of significant misunderstandings—many are seeing the rule as something new and onerous. The core of the CMS rule and Employment First will present new challenges for community integration and self-determination, but we've been on that path for a long time already.

What are the keystones of the plan?

A: 20/20 Vision is really an expanded or enhanced version of The Arc Baltimore's strategic plan developed last year by a work group of board and staff leadership as well as self-advocate representation. The enhancements to 20/20 Vision will clarify the impact of the CMS rule and Employment First on our programs.

What is needed to make the plan succeed?

A: 20/20 Vision is primed for success because of all the key stakeholders at The Arc Baltimore. Their commitment and passion for the vision is clear. The task before us is to simply bring clarity to our pursuit

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of the vision and what it means in daily operations. This, too, will be an inclusive process so that all of our stakeholders' voices will be heard. We will be inviting stakeholders to meetings and distributing surveys in the coming months.

What would you like the take-away message to be?

A: It may sound like a contradiction, but what is most exciting about the plan is that it's not really anything new and yet it represents a revitalization, a sort of "getting back to the basics" of the enduring mission of The Arc. Our intent is that 20/20 Vision will clearly show all of our constituents the fundamentals of what we do. When I first came to The Arc, one of the most appealing aspects of working here was the simplicity of our mission. It was and is all about the individuals we support, enabling them to have a quality life that they choose. The service delivery system has grown so complex in recent years that it's easy to lose sight of those fundamentals and get caught up in a lot of compliance activities, documentation, paperwork, etc. Our hope for 20/20 Vision is that it will get us all to refocus on those fundamentals—personalized supports, inclusion, community, self-determination, independence, productivity and the full exercise of civil and human rights. ●

A Brief Overview of CMS Home & Community-Based Settings Final Rules

The rules are designed for many purposes. They:

- ▶ encourage states to think about what community living truly means for people receiving supports.
- ▶ require that all home and community-based settings support full access to the greater community; are selected by the individual; ensure rights of privacy, dignity and respect; and provide freedom from coercion and restraint.

The rules for non-residential settings must:

- ▶ meet the same standards as residential settings.
- ▶ ensure that people receiving supports experience the greater community just as much as they would if they were not receiving Medicaid services.
- ▶ afford opportunities for individuals to have knowledge of—or access to—information regarding age-appropriate activities outside the setting, including competitive work, shopping, religious services, medical appointments, dining out, etc.

WHAT YOU CAN DO NOW

By the year 2020, outcomes will include fuller lives, realized potential and dreams pursued. To help that vision succeed, we need more community partners and more community support. You can help by:

- ▶ opening the doors to potential employers.
- ▶ contributing and becoming a member of The Arc if you have not already done so. Get others in your family to do so, too. Our history and success are built on families' charitable involvement and gifts of time and energy alongside the general community.
- ▶ keeping an eye out for more on the Medicaid changes and their impact on The Arc Baltimore.

For more information contact a communications staff member at 410-296-2272 x5219 or at contactus@thearcbaltimore.org.