

Key Learnings From

IN-PERSON ADVOCACY TRAINING

Let's Talk:
The Nuts and Bolts of Advocacy and Government

Saturday, January 10, 2026

10 a.m.-Noon | The Mansion at AHRC | 189 Wheatley Rd., Brookville, NY 11545

Questions? Reach out to inspire@ahrc.org

Presented by the Interagency Government Affairs Committee of



A chapter of
The Arc
New York



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Your vote is your voice. We must actively engage elected officials to ensure they represent our interests.

- **To be a constituent of an elected official is based on your home address**, not your citizenship, voting record, or any affiliations. Elected officials are there to help constituents – or help connect them to the right person.

→ Find your elected officials with the [Long Island Zoning Atlas](#).

- **Knowing your representatives and their level of government matters.** Each level of government typically has “checks and balances” through an executive, legislative, and judicial branch.

→ Bicameral or two-house legislatures offer balanced representation to prevent haphazard decision-making. In NYS, both the senate and assembly have equal access to the same resources (research, attorneys, etc.).

The difference is districting.

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Tips and Insights for Engaging Local Legislators

Be prepared to build a relationship with a legislator AND their staff.

Local offices handle most constituent concerns year- round.

Policy work happens both in the district office and capitol office.

Sign up for legislator newsletters and follow on social media.

Find events or opportunities to introduce yourself like mobile office hours.

Be assertive but polite! During Budget Season, it's ok to follow up multiple times on bills.

If you have a question or larger concern, you may want to research/reach out to the legislative committees focusing on an issue.

Legislative offices track phone calls, emails, and visits.

IN-PERSON ADVOCACY TRAINING

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1.) General Election: Nov. 3, 2026; Primary: June 23

-Federal: Midterm Elections (Midway through Presidential Term)
U.S. House of Representatives

-State: Governor, Lt. Governor, Comptroller, Attorney General
Senators, Assemblymembers

Register to vote at <https://elections.ny.gov>

2.) When In Session

U.S. Senate:

https://www.senate.gov/legislative/2026_schedule.htm

U.S. House of Representatives:

<https://pressgallery.house.gov/schedules/2026-house-calendar>

The NY State Legislative session only lasts January – June:

<https://www.nysenate.gov/sites/default/files/pdfs/2026-legislative-session-calendar.pdf>

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You Can Track Bills Moving Through the Legislature With These Tools

U.S. Senate/House:

<https://www.congress.gov/help/search-tools-overview>

NYS Senate:

<https://www.nysenate.gov/search/legislation>

NYS Assembly:

<https://nyassembly.gov/leg/>

Nassau County Legislature:

Pending legislation – not published; can request from County legislator or attend. More information available at <https://www.nassaucountyny.gov>

Suffolk County Legislature:

<https://apps2.suffolkcountyny.gov/legislature/research>

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Social media is strong tool to build your network and learn more about other advocates' experiences.

- Cultivate your online network and share what matters to you.**
- Follow trusted organizations for news and advocacy updates** like OPWDD, The Arc New York, The Arc of the United States, NYDA, IACNY, Disability Scoop, and Able News.
- Follow your elected officials**, see the types of stories they share, and opportunities to bring attention to our community and IDD issues.
- Film a reel.** Video outperforms text; 78% of consumers would like more video outreach (2025 State of Video Technology Report).
- Like, share posts, comment, or send a direct message.** Engagement builds engagement.

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Step outside of your comfort zone and be ready to network as an individual advocate and part of a movement.

Get Involved in Your Local Community: Follow your interests, local civic groups, book signings, networking events – and be ready to share your story.

Attend a Rally:

Capitol Rally, March 10, 11:30 a.m. in the War Room. The Arc New York seeks to get 400-500 people there as a show of force and solidarity from across the state. This is also a great opportunity to schedule meetings with your legislators and legislative offices before and after the rally. The Arc New York will circulate a flyer and registration link once it is available.

Set Google Alerts for specific advocacy issues and key words.

Explore research from organizations like the Brennan Center for Justice & Disability Rights or Urban Institute's Disability Equity Policy Initiative (DEPI).

Follow the news – listen actively and learn different perspectives

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Be Ready to Meet With Legislators: Prepare a 20-Second “Elevator Pitch”

In 20 Seconds:

- 1.) Introduce yourself and your connection to the issues.
- 2.) Identify the issue that you have a question or concern about.
- 3.) Explain how it impacts you or your loved one's life.
- 4.) Ask a specific question or advocate for a specific outcome.

Be as
Concrete
as
Possible

Remove
Jargon

Be
Compelling

Practice!

This will help you:

- Make phone calls to elected officials.
- Prepare for visits or rallies.
- Update an email message through a one-click campaign.
- Post to social media.
- Introduce key issues to friends/family.
- Stay focused on the issues at hand.

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As you continue to advocate and build out your “pitches” to touch on different topics, you’ll learn more about yourself, the people in your life, and the world around you.

Build up to 20-seconds per issue	Keep refining your message	Different pitches for different audiences
Anticipate Questions	Prepare questions for your audiences about acronyms or sector-specific issues	Consider powerful experiences you’d like to share

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**In today's digital economy
and culture,
“Visibility is Currency”**

**Be Prepared: People may disagree with you. Make
cruel comments. Forge ahead and stay polite!
This is about building awareness and systemic
change, not a zero-sum game.**

**Create Space for Different
Voices to be Heard**

**Keep an Open Mind – It's Ok to
Adjust Your Perspective With
New Experiences and
Information.**

**Say Thank You to Everyone Who
Takes the Time to Connect.**