



## The Arc of Texas

SB 987

March 12, 2009

- ◆ Good Morning, I am Rona Statman, Director of Family Support Services for The Arc of Texas, a statewide non - profit organization that advocates for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities to be fully included in their communities
- ◆ Federal IDEA law states that all children with disabilities have the right to receive a free appropriate public education including the provision of special education and related services that will prepare them for further education, employment and independent living.
- ◆ Federal IDEA law requires school districts to ensure students with disabilities participate in transition planning for life after school beginning by age 16.
- ◆ It is important to start transition planning as early as possible and **no later than age 14** to ensure a successful transition to employment, independent living and further education when the student leaves school.
- ◆ Waiting until age 16 is too late for many students who are at risk of dropping out of school or not graduating. When students enter high school at age 14 they need to know what their transition goals are and what courses will help them to meet their goals.
- ◆ They need enough time and support to learn employment and independent living skills while they are still in school and to actively make contacts and pursue services with adult service agencies, employers, trade schools, colleges and universities to ensure they are prepared to leave school and to succeed.
- ◆ According to the testimony heard this summer at the Senate Education Hearings and the HB 1230 report, appropriate transition planning and services is not happening successfully for many students. Many students are still graduating or leaving school with no real options for a successful future. They leave to find long waiting lists for adult services and no support to help them get and keep a job or to further their education. Many students are still sent to sheltered workshops and day habilitation programs which do not provide meaningful work or real pay.
- ◆ Students who are lucky to get good transition planning with knowledgeable school staff, that starts early, includes planning with adult service agencies and opportunities to work in real jobs and/or to attend further education before they leave school have a much higher success rate to achieve their goals.
- ◆ Lowering the age for Transition planning to age 14 is best practices and will benefit the majority of students with disabilities

*Creating opportunities for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities to be included in their communities and make the choices that affect their lives.*

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