



DOWN SYNDROME GUILD  
OF DALLAS

## ADVOCACY

From birth until their 22<sup>nd</sup> birthday, our children with Down syndrome were entitled to services by federal law. After school services end, there are no more entitlements. So even if you were never an advocate before, now is the time!

1. Familiarize yourself with the pertinent legislation – the civil right laws that protect individuals with disabilities from discrimination:

- Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)
- Rehabilitation Act
- Supreme Court ruling called the *Olmstead* decision

2. Most programs for people with Down syndrome are funded by the Texas legislature and/or Medicaid. Texas consistently ranks LAST in the quantity and quality of services for people with developmental disabilities. Therefore, it is important for DSG families to be informed about the issues when the Texas legislature meets (every other year) and communicate their views to their legislators.

*To find out who represents you in the Texas legislature, go to [www.legis.state.tx.us](http://www.legis.state.tx.us) Click on “Who represents me?” in the column on the right side of the home page, then enter your home address.*

3. The idea of becoming an advocate can seem overwhelming and intimidating, but it need not be. Effecting change almost always happens with the support of a group, so you are not in this alone. Some great resources for more information about the many legislative issues of interest to families of adults with Down syndrome are:

- **Arc of Texas**- provides legislative updates as well as an excellent handbook that can walk you step-by-step through the process of letter writing, calling and visiting legislators, as well as other tips. To find out more, visit their website [www.theArcOfTexas.org](http://www.theArcOfTexas.org) and click on the Advocacy button.
  - **Disability Policy Consortium in Austin, TX**- Visit the website at [www.dpctexas.org](http://www.dpctexas.org). To sign up to receive email updates, click on the star icon in the upper right corner of the home page.
  - **Advocacy Inc.**- visit their website at [www.AdvocacyInc.org](http://www.AdvocacyInc.org)
4. One of the biggest issues for Texas advocates is the disproportionate amount of money spent on state schools vs. services for people in the communities where they live. The Down Syndrome Guild collaborates with Community Now! an organization that advocates for the community inclusion of all people. For more information, see the Community Now! website at <http://www.CommunityNowFreedom.com/home>.

**If you would like to receive Legislative updates from the Down Syndrome Guild, please call Becky Slakman at 214-267-1374.**