



Toolkit for Fourth of July, 2009

“The Declaration of Independence and Choice in Health Care”

Fourth of July is all about independence. And that includes the independence we deserve from a system that makes long-term service and supports fragmented, difficult to obtain, and expensive. All Americans should be able to afford and access the services they need in the setting of their choice.

This Fourth of July, you have a chance to make vision a reality. Join thousands of your peers in the fight to ensure long-term services and supports are part of health care reform.

Across the country, organizations in the disability and aging community will host “Declaration of Independence and Choice” events where their clients, members, staff, volunteers and board members will show their support for this cause by signing a “Declaration of Independence and Choice” and sending it to their federal legislators.

This guide is designed to help you plan a “Declaration of Independence and Choice” event that both engages Member of Congress and piques the interest of the media in your community. You will find event ideas, a sample press release and materials you can use to make your event a success.

Already have a celebration planned? Not to worry. You can turn any event into “Declaration of Independence and Choice” celebration. Just reserve a “Declaration Signing” table. Ask attendees to sign the Declaration and learn more about this important issue. Whatever you do, the stories and signatures you share will help us make it affordable to care.

For more information, please contact Annie Acosta at (202) 783-2229 or acosta@thedpc.org

Event Ideas

Here are few easy ways to get your declaration event planning started:

- Take photos of each person as they sign. Send these photos along with your organization’s “Declaration of Independence and Choice” to your Members of Congress.
- Make a poster-sized version of the declaration to decorate your event space. Or, if possible, make this one you deliver with the signatures.
- Play patriotic music throughout the event.

Inviting Elected Officials

Inviting your member of Congress or Senator to your event is a great way to reinforce our message of Independence and Choice.

Start by checking to see if your [Senators](#) and [Representatives](#) are cosponsors of the Community Living Assistance Services and Supports Act. If so, you may wish to thank them publicly for their leadership.

- **The Invitation**

Inviting elected officials to your event takes organization and persistence. It's a good idea to submit your invitations as far in advance as you can.

In your invitation, include a brief description of the event, the date and time and how many people are expected to attend. You should also include whether or not you would like to official to speak at the event.

You should be ready to call the staff member who handles the schedule of events and appointments for the elected official. He or she will help you confirm the official's attendance at your event.

- **Names and Addresses –**

If you need help locating and compiling the names and addresses of your federal legislators, please enter your zip code at <http://www.congress.org/congressorg/directory/congdir.tt>

And Don't Forget....

- Take pictures! Keep a digital camera handy at all times to capture your advocacy in action. Please send photos to acosta@thearc.org so we can publish them in our newsletters and magazine.
- Staff, members, and clients should complete release forms for photographs.
- Collaborate and discuss joint projects with other organizations in your community.

Sample Press Release

July 4, 2009

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: _____, (xxx) xxx-xxx, name@organization.org

The Arc of _____ / UCP of _____ Celebrates Independence and Choice in Health Care

City, state – The Arc of _____ /UCP of _____ celebrated the fourth of July holiday with a (describe event) where members, staff, and volunteers showed their support for including long-term services and supports in health care reform by signing a “Declaration of Independence and Choice.”

This declaration calls for “Rep. _____ to help America declare independence from a broken health care system support a reform bill that ensures we can afford and access the services we need in the setting of our choice.”

The Arc of _____ / UCP of _____ took part in the national Long Term Services and Supports campaign of The Arc of the U.S/United Cerebral Palsy. All across the country, organizations that support older adults and persons with disabilities are signing their own declarations and delivering them to their Members of Congress.

““There is an artificial line between acute care and long-term service and supports. Health care reform without long-term services and supports will fail to solve this crisis.” _____, The Arc of _____ /UCP of _____ Executive Director said, said. “We must make it affordable to care.”

For more information, please visit The Arc of _____ /UCP of _____.

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About The Arc of _____ /UCP of _____




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The Declaration of Independence and Choice in Health Care

In the course of a nation's history, Independence and Choice have stood as hallmarks of the American way of life. That includes the independence we deserve from a system that makes providing **long-term services and supports** fragmented, difficult and expensive.

We hold these truths to be self-evident: that while all people are created equal, not all of us have equal access to long-term services and supports; that individuals often face filial and financial strains when someone they love needs help; that the system drains state and federal Medicaid coffers and that insurance companies cannot solve this problem; It is simply unaffordable to care.

America's repeated attempts at health care reform ignore long-term services and supports. This is an act that directly ignores Americans' opinions. Consider these facts:

-  Seventy-five percent of Americans strongly support the inclusion of long-term services and supports in health care reform. Large majorities across age, gender, region and income-level, believe long-term services and supports should be covered under national health care reform.
-  More than half of us (51 percent) feel strongly that with so many Americans needing help caring for persons with disabilities and the elderly, no health care reform plan is complete unless it addresses long-term services and supports.
-  A majority us believe that offerings like care for assisted living (57 percent), people with Alzheimer's disease (61 percent), and assistance for persons with disabilities and older persons in taking their medications (64 percent) will be covered when health care reform is enacted.

We, therefore, call on Rep. _____ /Senator _____ to declare independence from a broken health care system support a reform bill that ensures we can afford and access the services we need in the setting of our choice.

It is time to make it affordable to care.

