

TEXAS ADVOCATES BYLAWS

ARTICLE 1 - NAME AND PURPOSE

- Section 1. The name of the organization is the Texas Advocates.
- Section 2. The principal address of the Texas Advocates will be decided by the Board of Directors.
- Section 3. This non-profit organization will not pay any officer or board member for their services.
- Section 4. We do not get involved with any political elections. We will support political issues that help people with disabilities.
- Section 5. The purpose of the Texas Advocates is to:
- A. Speak out for ourselves and make our own plans and decisions instead of letting others do it for us.
 - B. Promote self-advocacy by helping all people with disabilities make their own decisions and plans.
 - C. Develop local chapters and coordinate and strengthen their efforts and activities.
 - D. Advocate for the rights and interests of persons with disabilities to be included in their communities.

ARTICLE II - MEMBERSHIP

- Section 1. The Texas Advocates Board must approve local chapter bylaws. Local chapters must abide by the Texas Advocates mission and Bylaws.
- Section 2. Chapters must have at least ten paid members.
- Section 3. Any member of a local chapter is also a member of the Texas Advocates state organization.

Qualifications for Membership:

- a. A person with a disability may join a chapter.
- b. A person without a disability may join but cannot vote or receive a self-advocate award.
- c. Each person must pay annual dues.

Section 4. Chapters in good standing (dues paid) may vote at the annual convention.

Section 5. If there is no chapter in the area, a person may join Texas Advocates-at-Large.

Section 6. The board of the Texas Advocates can expel a member or chapter by two-thirds vote of the board for any action against the mission and bylaws of the Texas Advocate.

Section 7. No member may speak officially for the state organization unless approved by the Texas Advocates President.

ARTICLE III - DUES

Section 1. The board sets the amount of state dues for chapter members and Texas Advocates-at-Large members. Chapters send the state dues to the Texas Advocates office annually.

Section 2. The number of dues-paid members will determine the number of votes for the chapter at the annual convention.

Section 3. Chapters must have ten dues-paid members to be in good standing. If they do not send in dues by the deadline set by the board, they will be removed from the membership list, but they can be added again when the dues are paid.

Section 4. If a chapter member joins a local Arc chapter, The Arc of Texas state dues will be waived.

ARTICLE IV - OFFICERS

Section 1. The officers will be President, Vice President, Secretary, and Treasurer. Elected officers must be dues-paid members. The officers are elected by the Board of Directors at the board meeting held at the annual meeting. Only chapter representatives elected by local chapters (board members) are eligible to run for an officer position. They will serve one-year terms. They cannot hold the same office for more than two years in a row. Each officer shall take office immediately following their election and serve until the next election. The officers will be announced at the annual meeting.

Section 2. The President shall:

- a. lead the organization and board meetings.
- b. choose committee members and may serve on any committee except for the Nominating Committee.
- c. serve as The Arc of Texas representative to the board or appoint a representative.
- d. sign all official papers
- e. present an annual report at the Texas Advocates annual meetings.

Section 3. The Vice President shall:

- a. take on the President's duties in his/her absence
- b. take on the President's duties if the President leaves office
- c. help the President as requested

Section 4. The Secretary shall:

- a. keep the minutes of the meetings

- b. notify members of board meetings and the annual meeting
- c. make sure membership records are kept

Section 5. The Treasurer shall:

- a. make sure financial records are kept
- b. make sure financial reports are given to the board

ARTICLE V - BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Section 1. The Board of Directors is made up of the chapter representatives elected by local chapters, officers elected by the board of directors from the chapter representatives, state advisors, and The Arc of Texas President or anyone he/she chooses.

Section 2. To be a chapter representative they must be dues-paid members. They must be a current or past local officer or board member. They must submit a leadership application to their local chapter prior to local elections and to the Texas Advocates if they are elected. They must have completed or be currently enrolled in the Texas Advocates Leadership training or some other self-advocate leadership training that has been approved by the Texas Advocates. They must commit to attend all board meetings. They must be committed to working to achieve the vision and mission of the Texas Advocates.

Section 3. Chapter representatives are elected by their local chapter before the annual convention. They are elected for a two-year term and may not serve more than three terms in a row. Each chapter representative elected by their local chapter must submit their leadership application to the Texas Advocates at least 8 weeks prior to the annual meeting. Each chapter representative shall take office as a board member at the board meeting held immediately before the annual meeting and serve until his/her successor takes office.

- Section 3. The board leads the organization between annual meetings. Each Chapter Representative is required to report back to their local chapters about the activities of the Texas Advocates. Each chapter representative will report to the board on their local chapter's activities. Chapter representatives will serve as a legislative liaison between the Texas Advocates and the local Chapter. Chapter representatives will participate in developing and implementing Texas Advocates training activities. The President reports on the board's activities at the annual meeting. Two-thirds majority of the membership may vote to change the board's actions if they do not agree.
- Section 4. The board may choose a new officer if the officer moves or misses three meetings in a row.
- Section 5. The board decides to meet at least three times a year. The President sends an agenda before these meetings to the board members. The board will meet at the annual meeting to elect officers and select advisors.
- Section 6. If a face-to-face meeting cannot be called, the President may hold a conference call or send a written or e-mail request to board members asking them to submit their votes in writing or by e-mail.
- Section 7. At least 51% of the board must be present at a meeting before a decision can be reached.

ARTICLE VI - EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

- Section 1. The Executive Committee is made up of the President, Vice President, Secretary and Treasurer.
- Section 2. This committee acts when the board cannot meet.
- Section 35. If a face-to-face meeting cannot be called, the President may hold a conference call or send written or e-mail requests to committee members to submit their votes in writing or by e-mail.

Section 46. At least three Executive Committee members must be present at a meeting before any decision can be reached.

ARTICLE VI I- ADVISORS

Section 1. Two state advisors (dues-paid members but non-voting) are chosen by the board for a one-year term and serve the same term as the President.

Section 2. Advisors should attend all meetings and assist the board members. Advisors must be committed to the mission and vision of the Texas Advocates.

Section 3. Advisors must submit an application to the Texas Advocates Board prior to the annual meeting. The Board will select advisors at the board meeting held at the annual meeting.

ARTICLE VIII - TEXAS ADVOCATES MEETINGS

Section 1. The Texas Advocates will conduct an annual meeting.

Section 2. A special meeting of the Texas Advocates may be called by a two-thirds vote of the Board of Directors or the written request of two-thirds of chapters in good standing.

Section 3. The board must notify the chapters six weeks in advance of any meeting. An agenda and any business to be conducted at the meeting must be included.

Section 4. Each chapter receives one vote, plus one additional vote for every ten dues-paid members.

Section 5. A new chapter formed 30 days before the meeting can vote.

Section 6. At least 60% of the chapters must vote before a decision is reached.

ARTICLE IX - NOMINATIONS AND ELECTIONS

Section 1. The Nominating Committee includes the Texas Advocates Past President and four Texas Advocate members selected by the board. Nominating committee members cannot run for an office. The nominating committee selects a slate of officers from the Chapter representatives elected by local chapters.

| Section 2. Nomination procedures for officers are as follows:

- a. The Secretary notifies Board Members and chapters of the date of the meeting and requests nominations for officers.
- b. Only Chapter representatives (board members) elected by local chapters can be submitted for an officer position.
- c. The Nominating Committee chooses one person to run for each office. The Nominating Committee sends their choices to the chapters and board members in the notice of the board meeting, two weeks prior to the board meeting held at the annual meeting.

Section 4. Elections for officers are held at the board meeting at the annual meeting. Board members may nominate other chapter representatives (board members) to run for an office in addition to the Nomination Committee's slate.

Section 5. If more than one person is running for an office, the voting is done by secret ballot.

Section 6. The person with the majority of the votes is elected. If nobody has a majority, another vote is taken between the two people receiving the most votes.

ARTICLE X - LOCAL CHAPTER RELATIONSHIPS

Section 1. Texas Advocates will help develop new chapters (one per city).

Section 2. Texas Advocates will help local chapters promote self-advocacy.

Section 3. The board must approve changes in chapter constitutions and bylaws.

ARTICLE XI - COMMITTEES AND TASK FORCES

Section 1. The President advises and appoints committees to accomplish Texas Advocate goals.

Section 2. The President may choose special committees when needed.

Section 3. Committee members must be dues-paid members.

ARTICLE XII - PARLIAMENTARY AUTHORITY

Members will follow Roberts' Rules of Order in meetings.

ARTICLE XII I- AMENDMENTS

Section 1. State officers, board members, or local chapters can present Bylaw revisions to the board. The board will examine them and recommend they be accepted, rejected, or revised. A copy of the revisions and the board's opinion will be sent to chapters six weeks before the meeting when it will be voted on.

Section 2. The Texas Advocates Bylaws can be revised by the delegate body at the annual meeting or at a special meeting called for that purpose. The revisions must be presented to chapters six weeks before the meeting when it will be voted on. Two-thirds of the members present must vote "Yes" to approve the revisions.

ARTICLE IV - TRANSITION

- Section 1. The first elections under these new bylaws will take place in 2003. The 2002-2003 board will stay in office until the new board and officers take office at the 2003 annual meeting.
- Section 2. Each local chapter will elect one representative to serve on the 2003-2004 Texas Advocates Board of Directors. Local chapters must submit their representatives name and leadership application to the Texas Advocates state office 8 weeks before the date of the 2003 annual meeting. At the first meeting of the board at the 2003 annual meeting board members will draw for one or two year terms. Chapters who are selected for a one year term will hold an election in 2004 to select a representative to serve a two year term. Chapters who are selected for a two year term will hold an election in 2005 to select a representative for a two year term. After the first election all Board members will be elected for two year terms.
- Section 3. The 2002-2003 board will select the first Nominating Committee. The Nominating Committee will meet before the 2003 annual meeting to select a slate of officers from the chapter representatives. Local Chapter representatives who would like to be an officer must submit their name and officer nomination form to the nominating committee by a date determined by the nominating committee. The nominating committee will select a slate of officers and send it to chapter representatives and local chapters two weeks prior to the 2003 annual meeting.
- Section 4. The chapter representatives will hold their first meeting on the afternoon of the first day of 2003 annual meeting. At this meeting they will elect officers and select advisors. The board members, officers and advisors will be announced and installed at the 2003 annual meeting.

Date of Approval

Texas Advocates President

Texas Advocates Secretary