



Collaborating for Better Outcomes

Mental Health Support
in the Criminal Justice System





ArcServices.Org.SpArc

586-569-4327

SpArc@ArcServices.Org

SpArc is a robust advocate for those with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD) in the criminal justice system. Navigators, experts in human services, possess comprehensive knowledge of available support services and resources. Their primary objective is to establish stable support systems, fostering a happy life while minimizing interactions with the law.

SpArc Navigators in Action:

Inform and Empower: Guiding individuals with IDD on interactions with law enforcement, empowering informed decisions on disclosing disabilities for respectful and supportive interactions.

Explore Alternatives: Uniquely addressing specific needs, SpArc explores alternatives to incarceration for individuals with IDD in Michigan, promoting fairness and understanding.

Connect to Resources: Beyond the legal realm, facilitating access to housing, employment, medical, and psychiatric care, avoiding unnecessary contacts with law enforcement.

Educate First Responders: Proactively educating law enforcement and first responders on recognizing signs of IDD and providing guidance for improved interactions.

Community Participation: Actively engaging in initiatives like Safe and Healthy Macomb, contributing to the broader goal of ensuring every resident, including those with IDD, lives a healthy and fulfilling life. Through collaboration, SpArc fosters a more inclusive and supportive community.

For more information, contact:

TAKE A PICTURE
OF THE QR CODE
TO GO TO THE
REFERRAL
PAGE



Sue Lind
sue.lind@arcservices.org
586-569-4327

• **1 in 20**
• **Prisoners in**
• **the U.S. has a**
• **developmental**
• **disability**

• **33-50%**
• **of all use-of-**
• **force incidents**
• **with police**
• **involve a citizen**
• **with a disability**

• **People with**
• **disabilities are**
• **Twice**
• **as likely to be**
• **the victim**
• **of a crime** than
• **people without**
• **disabilities**



ArcServices.Org.SpArc

586-569-4327

SpArc@ArcServices.Org

SpArc is Here for Everyone

Bridging Communities, Building Trust

SpArc is a free program that supports individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD) who are caught in the criminal justice system. We know that justice involvement is harder—and sometimes more frequent—for people who face both disability and discrimination.

SpArc was created to help.

We guide people with IDD through the courts, help them get services like housing, health care, and job support, and work to keep them out of jail and safely in the community.

HOUSING SUPPORT

- Emergency shelter or transitional housing
- Permanent supportive housing referrals
- Assistance communicating with landlords
- Help gathering documents for applications

HEALTHCARE CONNECTIONS

- Medicaid, Medicare, and community health programs
- Psychiatric care and mental health services
- Assistance with medications and follow-ups
- Connections to dental and vision care

BENEFITS NAVIGATION

- SSI/SSDI application help
- Food assistance (Bridge Card/SNAP)
- Cash assistance and energy relief programs
- Guardianship info and support documentation

EMPLOYMENT & MORE

- Vocational support or job coaching connections
- Transportation and ID replacement
- Supportive service referrals

Your Community Matters.

We are working to build stronger relationships with underrepresented groups in Macomb County—because everyone deserves access to support, regardless of their background or language.

- We offer culturally respectful services
- We partner with community organizations
- We don't require a diagnosis to reach out
- We will help you understand what documents or evaluations might be needed
- We are open to learning from you, too

Who We Help

- Adults (18+) with IDD involved in the justice system
- Families who don't know where to turn after arrest or police contact
- Individuals who may need help navigating court, probation, or accessing services
- People who are struggling and want a safer, healthier path forward

Let's Work Together

If you are a cultural leader, community service provider, or place of worship, we welcome collaboration. We want to understand your community's needs and share our resources.

The Arc of Macomb County, Inc. is a 501(c)(3) non-profit membership association.



ArcServices.Org.SpArc

586-569-4327

SpArc@ArcServices.Org

SpArc: Bridging Justice and Behavioral Health

Justice-Involved Doesn't Mean Unsupported

Behavioral health challenges and criminal justice involvement often go hand in hand—especially for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD).

SpArc is a wraparound program that supports individuals with IDD who have been arrested, are court-involved, or are at risk of incarceration. Many of our clients also face co-occurring behavioral health needs.

Here's How We Help

IMPROVES CONTINUITY OF CARE

- We help clients follow through with treatment plans and keep appointments
- Our Navigators maintain communication with CMH case managers and therapists
- We flag clients at risk of destabilization before they reach crisis

JUSTICE SYSTEM NAVIGATION

- Support during arraignments, court hearings, and probation
- Help explaining court conditions and legal expectations
- Letters of support and mitigation information for courts

HOLISTIC RESOURCE SUPPORT

- Housing, ID replacement, transportation, Medicaid
- Coordination with shelters, hospitals, and care providers
- Helping clients obtain meds, guardianship docs, and benefits

TRAUMA-INFORMED & CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE

- Our staff are trained in trauma-informed practices
- We support clients with high ACEs and complex diagnoses
- We welcome collaboration to make support as person-centered as possible

We're Not Case Managers—We're SpArc.

SpArc does not replace CMH or therapy. Instead, we fill in the gaps:

- During jail diversion efforts
- When individuals bounce between jail, shelter, or hospitalization
- When behavioral symptoms lead to criminalized behavior
- When families or courts don't understand disability and mental illness overlap

Let's Work Together

We'd love to partner with your practice, agency, or treatment team. Reach out to learn how SpArc can support your work with high-risk clients and reduce recidivism.

The Arc of Macomb County, Inc. is a 501(c)(3) non-profit membership association.



ArcServices.Org/SpArc
Facebook.com/SpArcMacomb

ArcServices.Org/SpArc

586-569-4327

SpArc@ArcServices.Org

Crisis Intervention with Compassion

How SpArc Supports and Strengthens CIT Response

SpArc, a program of The Arc of Macomb County, partners with law enforcement and behavioral health agencies to support individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD) during crises. Our Navigators enhance CIT efforts by offering disability-specific insight, education, and follow-up care.

Why IDD Expertise Matters in Crisis Response

People with IDD may not respond to commands or questions the way neurotypical individuals do. They may become overwhelmed, shut down, or behave in ways that are misunderstood as noncompliance or aggression.

SpArc bridges that gap by helping first responders:

- Recognize signs of IDD in the field
- De-escalate situations with empathy and context
- Understand communication barriers and sensory triggers
- Reduce the risk of unnecessary force or incarceration

What SpArc Brings to CIT Partnerships:

- **Trainings for Officers & Dispatch:** SpArc offers in-person and virtual education on IDD awareness, scenario-based learning, and de-escalation techniques tailored to disability-related behaviors.
- **Field Support & Case Coordination:** When appropriate, SpArc Navigators collaborate with officers and clinicians to follow up with individuals post-crisis.
- **Resource Access:** We connect individuals to wraparound supports including housing, behavioral health, guardianship help, and public benefits.
- **Registry Promotion:** We advocate for special needs registries and support their implementation across departments.

Working Together for Better Outcomes

SpArc doesn't replace CIT—we strengthen it. By layering IDD-specific expertise into your existing response model, we reduce repeat calls, avoid unnecessary jail time, and build safer interactions for all.

Let's Talk

Interested in bringing SpArc training to your department? Want to co-host a community safety workshop or explore deeper collaboration? Contact us. Together, we can create safer, smarter responses—because disability shouldn't be a barrier to safety.

The Arc of Macomb County, Inc. is a 501(c)(3) non-profit membership association.



ArcServices.Org/SpArc
Facebook.com/SpArcMacomb

ArcServices.Org/SpArc

586-569-4327

SpArc@ArcServices.Org

SpArc: Smart Alternatives to Incarceration

Supporting People with IDD Before, During, and After Justice Involvement

SpArc is Macomb County's innovative jail diversion program for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD). We step in early—often before charges are filed—and work to stabilize lives, not shatter them.

How We Divert Individuals from Incarceration

SpArc Navigators are trained in disability-informed crisis response, system navigation, and community-based problem-solving. Here's how we intervene:

1. PRE-ARREST INTERVENTION

- Partner with police to identify disability-related behavior early
- Promote use of Special Needs Registries to inform safe response
- Work with families and officers to de-escalate situations without arrest

2. JAIL ALTERNATIVES AT ARRAIGNMENT OR BOND HEARINGS

- Provide the court with documentation of disability
- Advocate for community-based alternatives to incarceration
- Help secure safe housing, transportation, and mental health care for release

3. COORDINATED CASE SUPPORT POST-RELEASE

- Connect clients to long-term supports: CMH, guardianship, benefits, vocational help
- Monitor follow-through on court conditions
- Help reduce recidivism through stabilization

When to Refer to SpArc

- You may be seeing someone who could benefit from SpArc if they:
- Struggle with understanding court proceedings
- Seem confused or disoriented when interacting with police or jail staff
- Have a known or suspected intellectual or developmental disability
- Repeatedly cycle through jail for nonviolent or compliance-related offenses

Our Approach Works

Instead of expensive jail time, SpArc focuses on housing, healthcare, and community-based services. The result?

- Lower recidivism
- Stronger public safety
- Better outcomes for individuals with IDD

The Arc of Macomb County, Inc. is a 501(c)(3) non-profit membership association.

Best Practices for Interacting with Individuals with IDD

Respect. Patience. Clarity. Safety.

Individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD) may interact with the world differently—but with the right approach, you can communicate more effectively, avoid escalation, and build trust.

Here are field-tested strategies from SpArc Navigators, grounded in dignity and trauma-informed care.

1. LOOK FOR SIGNS OF IDD

- Common indicators may include:
- Difficulty understanding instructions or questions
- Slower response time or processing delays
- Overreaction to noise, touch, or sudden movement
- Repeating words or pacing
- Limited eye contact or nontraditional social behavior

Don't assume noncompliance. It may be a sign of confusion, anxiety, or sensory overload.

2. USE CLEAR, CALM LANGUAGE

- Speak slowly and clearly—avoid shouting or complex phrases
- Break directions into one step at a time
- Repeat information calmly if needed
- Avoid sarcasm, metaphors, or rhetorical questions

Example: Instead of “Do you know why I pulled you over?”

Try: “I stopped you because your taillight is out.”

Reminder: Not all disabilities are visible.

Treat everyone with patience and respect—your calm presence can change the outcome.

3. REDUCE ENVIRONMENTAL STRESSORS

- Minimize lights, sirens, and loud radio chatter
- Avoid sudden movements
- Give space but stay visible and calm
- Ask before touching the person—many have touch sensitivities

4. OFFER SUPPORT, NOT CONFRONTATION

- Ask: “Is there someone I can call to help you right now?”
- Ask if they have a disability ID card or are registered in a local Special Needs Registry
- Allow extra time for responses or compliance
- Document behaviors without judgment—avoid terms like “hostile” or “nonresponsive” without context

5. KNOW WHEN TO REFER OR REQUEST HELP

If you suspect a person may have IDD and needs additional support:

- De-escalate and divert when safe and appropriate
- Contact SpArc for assistance navigating follow-up care
- Document the potential need for a disability-informed response in reports

Disability & Due Process

Understanding How IDD Affects Legal Decision-Making

SpArc, a program of The Arc of Macomb County, works directly with individuals who have intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD) and are involved in the justice system. Many of these individuals face unique challenges in making informed legal decisions—challenges that courts and counsel must consider to ensure fair, ethical proceedings.

What is IDD?

IDD refers to a group of conditions—including autism, Down syndrome, and cognitive impairments—that affect intellectual functioning, learning, and adaptive behavior. These disabilities may impact:

- Memory and comprehension
- Language and communication
- Judgment and reasoning
- Executive function and impulse control
- Processing speed

How IDD Affects Legal Participation

1. UNDERSTANDING OF RIGHTS

- Individuals may agree to waivers (like Miranda or plea deals) they don't fully understand
- They may nod or say "yes" to avoid embarrassment or appear cooperative
- Concepts like "plea bargain," "probation," or "time served" may be misinterpreted

2. PARTICIPATION IN DEFENSE

- Clients with IDD may struggle to recall facts, timelines, or names
- They may be unable to evaluate legal advice or consequences
- They may avoid asking questions—even when confused

3. COMPETENCY CONCERNS

- IDD is often mistaken for mental illness, though both may co-occur
- Individuals may not meet the legal threshold for incompetence but still lack the capacity to engage in their defense meaningfully

Red Flags for Legal Professionals

You may be working with someone with IDD if they:

- Have a limited education history or were in special education
- Appear agreeable but can't explain their case or decisions
- Exhibit childlike behavior, poor impulse control, or flat affect
- Have difficulty with dates, timelines, or multiple-step instructions
- Have repeated low-level offenses or probation violations

How SpArc Can Help

- SpArc Navigators assist courts and counsel by:
- Providing context around an individual's disability and functional level
- Offering referrals for psychological evaluations
- Coordinating supports to meet conditions of release or probation
- Connecting individuals to case management, benefits, and stabilization services

Every person deserves to understand their case and participate in their own defense.

SpArc ensures that disability is recognized—not criminalized.

Mental Health and IDD

Key Challenges & Insights for Legal and Clinical Professionals

Individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD) often experience co-occurring mental health conditions—but their needs are frequently misunderstood, misdiagnosed, or overlooked. SpArc bridges that gap through coordinated support, education, and advocacy.

Dual Diagnosis: What It Means

“Dual diagnosis” refers to individuals who have both:

- An intellectual or developmental disability (such as autism, Down syndrome, or cognitive impairment)
- A mental health condition (such as anxiety, depression, bipolar disorder, or schizophrenia)

This combination requires thoughtful, trauma-informed interventions—not one-size-fits-all care.

Why These Individuals Fall Through the Cracks

- **Misdiagnosis or Missed Diagnosis:** Symptoms of IDD may be mistaken for mental illness—and vice versa
- **Inappropriate Placement:** People with IDD are often placed in environments designed for behavioral health clients without staff trained in developmental disabilities
- **Medication Complications:** Individuals may be overmedicated or prescribed treatments not suited to their cognitive profile
- **Limited Access to Services:** Many community mental health (CMH) programs have strict eligibility rules that exclude people based on IQ scores or disability labels
- **Justice System Risks:** Dual-diagnosed individuals face a higher risk of arrest, incarceration, and institutionalization due to behavioral symptoms that are misunderstood as defiance or danger

Key Considerations for Providers & Legal Professionals

- Always screen for co-occurring conditions, especially if standard treatment isn't working
- Treat IDD as a health condition—not a barrier to receiving mental health care
- Collaborate across systems—CMH, disability services, probation, housing, and crisis teams
- Ensure that safety plans, discharge instructions, and probation terms are developmentally appropriate
- Understand that behavioral outbursts may stem from unmet communication, sensory, or environmental needs

How SpArc Helps

SpArc Navigators specialize in supporting dual-diagnosed clients by:

- Coordinating between mental health, disability, and justice systems
- Advocating for eligibility or reassessment when CMH doors are closed
- Educating staff, officers, and families on trauma, communication, and behavioral supports
- Helping secure consistent psychiatric care, case management, and stabilization services



ArcServices.Org.SpArc

586-569-4327

SpArc@ArcServices.Org

Inclusion, Not Incarceration

How SpArc Reduces Recidivism and Builds Belonging

SpArc, a program of The Arc of Macomb County, provides wraparound jail diversion services for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD). Our approach is rooted in stability, connection, and community inclusion—because no one thrives in isolation.

The Problem

People with IDD are:

- More likely to be arrested for behaviors related to misunderstanding or unmet needs
- Often held longer in jail due to communication challenges or lack of stable housing
- More likely to return to jail without targeted support
- Less likely to be connected to long-term services and employment

This isn't just a justice issue—it's a systems failure.

SpArc's Solution: Stabilize, Support, Include

Our Navigators use a disability-informed, trauma-sensitive model to help individuals:

- Navigate CMH, SSI, Medicaid, and guardianship
- Build job readiness and pursue inclusive employment
- Access safe, supported housing
- Reconnect with families and support networks
- Fulfill court obligations with dignity and structure
- Engage in community—not cycles of jail time

Why It Works

- SpArc reduces recidivism by replacing instability with opportunity.
- Disability is addressed, not punished
- Support is proactive, not reactive
- Clients are linked to long-term resources—not left alone
- Inclusion lowers crisis risk and raises quality of life

When people with IDD have what they need, they stop showing up in courtrooms—and start showing up in their communities.

Inclusion Is Prevention

SpArc believes that belonging is the most powerful tool in public safety.

- We train officers, legal professionals, and providers to recognize IDD
- We design reentry plans rooted in person-centered goals
- We connect people to lives worth living—not just services that check a box

The Arc of Macomb County, Inc. is a 501(c)(3) non-profit membership association.



ArcServices.Org/SpArc

586-569-4327

SpArc@ArcServices.Org

Collaborating with SpArc

How Community Resources Create Real Change

SpArc, a program of The Arc of Macomb County, provides jail diversion and wraparound support for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD) who intersect with the justice system.

But we don't do it alone.

We Rely on Community Collaboration

SpArc Navigators connect individuals to the services that help prevent recidivism and promote stability. We work hand-in-hand with:

- Housing providers
- Residential and detox programs
- Food and basic needs organizations
- Transportation providers
- Workforce development and job coaches
- Peer support and mentoring programs
- Faith-based and grassroots groups
- Community mental health (CMH) agencies

Your work makes our work possible.

How We Partner

- **Warm Hand-Offs:** We connect clients directly to your team and help gather required documents
- **Disability-Informed Support:** We help you tailor services to individuals with IDD—who may need simplified steps, slower pacing, or added reminders
- **Ongoing Communication:** We stay involved post-referral to ensure follow-through
- **Shared Stability Plans:** We work with you to align housing, court obligations, health care, and employment for better outcomes

Why Disability-Informed Partnerships Matter

Many individuals with IDD are turned away or misunderstood in traditional systems. They may:

- Have trouble completing forms or attending appointments on time
- Seem resistant when actually overwhelmed
- Lack formal diagnosis or documentation—but still need support

SpArc helps bridge those gaps, so they stay connected to care—not fall through the cracks.

Small Support = Big Impact

A bed, a ride, a caseworker who listens—it's often these small supports that change someone's entire path.

The Arc of Macomb County, Inc. is a 501(c)(3) non-profit membership association.

Accessing SpArc's Referral Page

The First Steps to Joining our Program



Open your web browser and type the following URL into the address bar:
[arcservices.org/sparc-referral/](https://ArcServices.Org/sparc-referral/)

Press Enter to navigate to the SpArc online referral form page.

Once the page loads, you should see the online referral form displayed on the screen.

Fill out the required fields on the form with accurate information. This includes details about the individual you're referring, including applicable Neuropsych and court information.

Double-check the information you've entered to ensure it's accurate and complete.

After completing the form, click on the "Download" button located at the bottom of the page.

Finally **send the referral** one of two ways to our SpArc Navigators. The first option is to print and **fax the document to 586-569-4327**. The second is to email the document to **sue.lind@arcservices.org**.

**TAKE A PICTURE
OF THE QR CODE
TO GO TO THE
REFERRAL
PAGE**

