



The Arc of Missouri  
7400 C North Oak Trafficway  
Gladstone, MO 64118

November 3, 2017

Supreme Court of Missouri  
207 W. High Street  
Jefferson City, MO 65101

RE: Formation of an Advisory Committee on Access to Justice in Guardianship Proceedings

To the Court:

The Arc of Missouri has been made aware of the complaint filed by the Spectrum Institute with the Court that the state's guardianship system is out of compliance with the American's with Disabilities Act. That organization suggested that the Court should convene an advisory committee to address this issue.

The Arc of Missouri supports the formation of and is formally requesting the Court to form an Advisory Committee on Access to Justice in Guardianship Proceedings to review current practices so that litigants with intellectual and developmental disabilities are receiving meaningful access to justice. There are many flaws in the current system which we feel violate individuals' rights under the American with Disabilities Act and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1974, as well as simply ignore citizens' rights to fair and just proceedings. Without change, current system practices will continue to blatantly disregard an individual's ability to participate fully in community living and project a characterization that individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities are "second-class citizens".

The formation of an Advisory Committee is within the scope of the Court's administrative capacity and its supervisory authority over the courts and practicing attorneys. The Arc of Missouri strongly feels litigants are not afforded their right to meaningfully participate in cases which directly impact their lives. Formation of the committee would ensure the rights of individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities are acknowledged and represented appropriately during court proceedings.

The Arc of Missouri also feels the creation of this formal Advisory Committee should consist of members from the Court, self-advocates, advocacy organizations – including the Arc of Missouri, Missouri Developmental Disabilities Council, Governor's Council on Disability, and Missouri Protection and Advocacy – and other representatives from the general public and related public or private organizations.

Sincerely,

Ed Thomas  
President, Arc of United States, Missouri Chapter

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