



ARCA's mission is working together to open doors for individuals with intellectual, developmental and cognitive disabilities to be valued members of the community.

11300 Lomas Blvd. NE • Albuquerque, NM 87112
Tel: (505) 332-6700 | Fax: (505) 332-6800
www.ARCASpirit.org

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Outlook

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Opening Doors for individuals with intellectual, developmental and cognitive disabilities since 1957. | ARCAOpeningDoors.org

Every September we celebrate National Direct Support Professionals (DSPs) week. This issue of Outlook is dedicated to ARCA's essential workforce and highlights some of the vital roles and extraordinary people who provide supports for individuals of all ages with intellectual, developmental and cognitive disabilities. I look forward to featuring more staff in other, but equally essential, jobs in upcoming issues.



DSPs are highly skilled professionals who assist with a person's activities of daily living as well as their medical and/or behavioral challenges. DSPs work long days, made even longer because of ongoing staffing shortages. A "typical" day might include helping people get out of bed in the morning, providing hands-on personal care, preparing breakfast for three – ten people who each have specific dietary and physical needs including g-tubes, washing dishes, vocational assistance, skills development, administering medications throughout the day on timelines unique to each person, scheduling and assisting with an assortment of therapies, scheduling, preparing for and supporting community outings, making lunch, teaching, crisis prevention and navigation, housework and laundry, community integration, responding to medical emergencies, spending time outdoors, working toward monthly goals as documented in each person's Individual Service Plan, providing assistance with phone calls or FaceTime with loved ones, medical appointments, making dinner, helping people prepare for bed, scheduling shifts, covering shifts when the unexpected arises, completing mandated annual trainings, completing State and Federally required documentation and other tasks that meet regulatory requirements and contribute to an individual's highest possible level of independence and quality of life. I hope this clearly shows the magnitude of work done by DSPs and the extraordinary skills required to succeed.

The basis of ARCA's long tradition of providing stellar services is our workforce and I want to express my deepest gratitude for the compassion, professionalism and extraordinary skills they offer people in ARCA's care every day.

(505) 332-6825 • EKaul@ARCASpirit.org

ARCA's Annual Poinsettia Sale



Join Us!

Saturday, November 19, 2022
9 a.m. - 11 a.m. at 181 E. La Entrada Lane, Corrales
Contact Michele at MCody@ARCASpirit.org
with questions or to RSVP

FOLLOW US!

[instagram.com/arcaopeningdoors](https://www.instagram.com/arcaopeningdoors)

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Please consider adding the ARCA Foundation to your will or estate plan.
Contact Nadine Mary at (505) 332-6805



Mark Your Calendar



ARCA's Annual Poinsettia Sale

November 19, 2022, 9-11:00 am

See Page 1 for Details

CBIS Training

December 5-9, 2022 • Registration deadline October 15

Training Location • 11300 Lomas Blvd., NE
Albuquerque, NM 87112

The ACBIS program provides the opportunity to learn information about brain injury, demonstrate learning in a written examination and earn a nationally recognized credential.

Visit ARCAOpeningDoors.org/CBIS for more information



David Winstead has written over 100 speeches on a variety of topics. David spoke to the ARCA Foundation Board of Directors about his writing and his podcasts!

Circle of Promise

Nell Graham Sale has a long-standing connection to ARCA. I first met her when I was one of ARCA's Supported Living Social Workers and her Albuquerque law firm, Pregenzer, Baysinger, Wideman and Sale, hosted informational seminars regarding Special Needs Trusts.

Years later, former ARCA CEO Elaine Solimon, requested Nell's legal assistance in drafting the 2009 Special Needs Pooled Trusts Restatement which still remains on file with the State of New Mexico. Nell proudly shares she helped form ARCA's Circle of Promise and was one of the judges in choosing the name for our Legacy Society. She is also a member of the ARCA Foundation Planned Giving Task Force.

Nell is currently retired and lives in Santa Fe. It was great to see her at ARCA's Geranium Celebration this Spring. It was there, with our arms full of plants, that she quietly, but proudly, let me know she'd decided to leave a legacy gift to ARCA.

When I asked Nell why she chose to name ARCA as a beneficiary of her retirement plan, she said "I am familiar with many non-profit organizations and ARCA unquestionably stands head and shoulders above all others." Nell said she believes in the work ARCA does "with such love and care."

Thank you, Nell, for your many years of friendship and collaboration and for your generous legacy gift that will help ensure ARCA's mission to provide services for people with intellectual, developmental and cognitive disabilities will continue for years to come.

I am always awed and amazed by the generosity of our legacy donors. In keeping with the theme of this edition of Outlook, it is noteworthy to mention we have eight Circle of Promise members who are either former or current ARCA employees, including Direct Support Professionals!

Nadine Mary • ARCA Endowment & Pooled Trust Coordinator
(505) 313-3514 • NMary@ARCASpirit.org

HR Corner

ARCA cultivates new employees, helping them to help those we serve.

Direct Support Professionals (DSPs) are crucial to the success of people we serve. ARCA's Training Dept., Human Resources and supervisors come alongside every employee to ensure they have the training, skills and support needed to be successful and happy.

Our DSPs work in interesting and diverse settings, from small homes with three or four individuals to large homes with up to ten people. These jobs include teaching independence, personal care, ensuring a clean and healthy environment and helping people served achieve life goals. DSPs also work at La Paloma Greenhouses, where vocational staff teach individuals how to plant and grow flowers and vegetables for our community.

From day one, ARCA's HR Dept. works closely with new employees to ensure the best job fit based on skill, experience, schedule and location. ARCA's award-winning Training Dept. works directly with employees to ensure they have the skills and knowledge needed to be successful. ARCA works hard to accommodate each employee's needs, from guaranteeing work hours conducive to outside interests to work locations matching their comfort level and skill.

ARCA creates opportunities for employees to advance personally and professionally, including tuition reimbursement, GED assistance and part-time apprentice positions providing meaningful training for administrative roles including Finance, HR and office support. At ARCA, we sincerely desire everyone, individuals and employees alike, gain the tools necessary to have great lives and be successful members of our community.



Here we are at lunch in Santa Fe when I gratefully "pinned her" as a new member of ARCA's Circle of Promise!



Why become a Direct Support Professional?

As a Direct Support Professional (DSP) you have the opportunity to teach people; to give them the skills and support they need to live their best life. Along the way, you get to learn an awful lot, too.



Kaitlin Seward is a Nurse Services Coordinator (NSC) with ARCA's InterCare program. Kaitlin studied nursing at CNM while still in high school, graduating with her LPN. While at ARCA, she continued her education and received her RN in February, 2022. "Working with people in long-term settings is a chance to truly connect," said Kaitlin. "At ARCA, I can respond to and advocate for people's unique needs because I know them."

Staffing shortages are a challenge for Kaitlin, who is on-call 24/5. She shared, "Sometimes, I get emergency phone calls in the middle of the night. It's important to accompany an individual because I can help hospital staff interpret behaviors. The person might look fine, but I can verbalize possible indicators they might not consider because I know what they're experiencing is not normal for them. Sometimes you have to advocate strongly."

"During COVID, it was difficult to maintain scheduled appointments," Kaitlin recalled, "People with sensory issues can't tolerate masks, so providers wouldn't see them outside of video visits. I understood, but it was definitely challenging."

Kaitlin knows people with disabilities are often misunderstood. "People with IDD have their own personality, traits, behaviors, sense of humor – just like everyone else," she explained. "I see folks in the community who are intimidated and stare, not because they're rude, they just aren't sure how to interact." People with IDD can be timid in new settings, nervous about what others think. Kaitlin said, "Wherever we are, I try to lead by example. When people see me talking and gesturing the same way I would with anyone, I think they feel more comfortable joining in."

ICF Residential Instructors provide support to ensure that specific treatment services are met.
Lori Calhoun-Gonzales, BSP
InterCare Division Director



Crystal Sanchez, ARCA Neuro Rehab Technician, has been with ARCA for 16 months. She has worked in every Neuro home, helping adults with an acquired brain injury through their rehabilitative journey. Crystal is a caregiver by nature. She's worked as a medical assistant, in a children's psychiatric ward and an ob/gyn clinic and loves to spend time with her nephew who has autism. "As a kiddo, I wasn't nurtured much," she explained. "As an adult, it means a lot to me to help others."

Crystal says there isn't much room for mistakes in ARCA Neuro, so everything is scheduled. "There is so much good energy in ARCA Neuro," she said. "I think the adherence to routine not only helps participants grow, but gives them the freedom to be happy."

Crystal works with the team to establish person-centered goals that are reviewed monthly with the client and their family. During the meeting, they discuss progress, challenges, goals, implementation plans and the discharge plan. Once a goal has been achieved, the plan is revised to include more sophisticated outcomes, for example, when sitting upright in a wheelchair is achieved, the new goal might be exchanging the wheelchair for a walker. "It is imperative everyone is on the same page to maintain consistency," she explained.

"Probably the biggest challenge and reward is learning to not take behavior caused by the brain injury personally, while welcoming each stage of their journey. Sometimes clients feel frustrated because they don't have the abilities they once had. As staff, I see how much they've grown and encourage them to feel proud."

"My favorite times are when someone tells me they can't do something," she said, "and I just keep working with them until they see they can. These moments are priceless to me."

Our Neuro Rehab Techs provide hope and structure support to regain emotional, behavioral and physical skills participants may have lost as a result of their acquired or traumatic brain injury.

Michael Langford
ARCA Neuro Rehab Division Director

Who are Direct Support Professionals?

DSPs, including certified medical assistants, residential teachers, job coaches, instructors, nurses, community services specialists, family providers, paraprofessionals, service coordinators and floaters provide essential, lifelong supports for people with intellectual, developmental and cognitive disabilities.



Chase Painter, Community Services Coordinator, remembers growing up in a small town where everyone treated his classmate, who had visual impairments, the same as every other kid. By the time he got to high school, he wondered why students with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD) were isolated into “special education” classes.

As a Community Services Coordinator, Chase supports clients at work and in their home with money management, medications, home chores and medical appointments. Chase says his greatest pride is realized when he teaches a client a series of tasks and before long, they own it.

Chris never had a job but learned soft skills such as time management and social interactions while working with Chase at volunteer sites in the community. Chris is very social, and Chase thought he would shine at Smith’s, where customer service is imperative. After only two months on the job, customers greet Chris by name in the parking lot while he’s collecting carts. People share their thoughts and ask how Chris’ music and other hobbies are coming along while he’s bagging their groceries. When it’s really busy and Chase offers to give him a hand, Chris smiles broadly and tells him, “I got this. I’m pretty good, you know.” He is good. The reason he’s so busy is people are only lining up at his register so they can enjoy their weekly visit.

“Change can disrupt a person’s routine and make the job seem more difficult,” Chase explains. “The manager will schedule a meeting with the employee and me to discuss the changes and, if additional training is required, I get trained, too! That way I can provide more intensive support until my client is comfortable and doesn’t need me.”

Chase sums it all up, with, “Not all people can do the same things, the same way. I help people feel equal. Disability doesn’t mean inequality, or that it’s ok to be treated differently. Some people don’t think about that. I go back to being a kid and wondering why students with special needs were segregated. It so much more productive when we’re all given equal opportunities and the support to succeed.”

Direct Service Professionals and Family Providers contribute to ARCA programs every day. Their work truly makes a difference and promotes empowerment, advocacy and inclusion for individuals with disabilities. ARCA’s overall success is simply because of the dedication and service they provide.
Michelle Harmon
Clinical Services Director

The DSP is a valued teacher who provides the day to day health, happiness and safety for individuals they serve.

Cecile Evola
Supported Living Division Director



Alica Blake is a Residential Teacher (RT) with ARCA’s Supported Living (SL) program. She says, “I tried working in other fields, but realized it isn’t about the money. It’s about human interaction. Sometimes I’m surprised I get paid for what I do AND get every other week off!”

Alica first came to ARCA in 2007, when she worked in Independent Living and as a Job Coach. She moved to Las Cruces and just as COVID hit, returned to ARCA.

As an RT, Alica works seven days living in an SL home supporting three ladies with intellectual and developmental disabilities and then has seven days off. “COVID shut everything down,” Alica recalled. “With Day Programs closed we had to develop new routines and find ways to both be productive and enjoy ourselves. We spent lots of time together cooking, gardening, going for walks and once each week ordering a meal and going out to pick it up curbside!”

“It’s a different kind of job,” she said. “When you’re working you have to be 100% present.” As an RT, there is a lot of coordination between members of the team. Everything must be documented in accordance with DD Waiver regulations. “It’s a lot of work,” she says, “but keeps everyone on the same page.” Adventures are as important as documentation and Alica takes the ladies all over town, from the Botanical Gardens to Balloon Fiesta, Festival of Lights or a picnic in the East Mountains. “We like to get out and go!”

Alica noted, “The great thing about ARCA is during training you can pick your areas of interest and try out different roles before you select what’s best for you. For me, Job Coaching wasn’t a good fit, but as soon as I came to this home, I knew it was for me. Almost three years later and I wouldn’t change a thing.”

“The RT role is perfect for me,” she continued. “I spend a week in Albuquerque then go home to Peña Blanca for a week. I take trips to Colorado, Cloudcroft and love Madrid! When I want to take a longer vacation, I use my PTO.”

She added, “I think there are a lot of things people don’t know about working at ARCA. The benefits are good, you can work with HR to build a schedule – these are all great. But nothing is more important than the things you learn about yourself.”

The ladies Alica supports love the time they spend together and the difference she makes in their life. Colleen said, “She’s fun and she’s kind.” Stephanie added, “Alica does my nails and makes the best Rice Crispy Treats! When she takes me to the doctor it doesn’t hurt.” Brenda just said, “Oh, I love her!”

DSPs have the most direct and meaningful impact on a person’s everyday wellbeing. We all work in their shadows.
Melissa Wright
Supported Living Division Director



Karlo Kallestewa is from Zuni Pueblo where he started his career in care giving at the community Senior Center.

He moved to Albuquerque and worked for a company doing home care and then relocated to work for an agency supporting individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities for four years. Disappointed with the agency’s culture and wanting to be closer to family, Karlo returned to Albuquerque and found ARCA in 2017.

Karlo has held several positions with ARCA during the past five years, starting as an Instructor 3 in Supported Living and then Residential Manager during the epic staffing challenges brought on by COVID. He recently accepted

the position of Supported Living Floater.

A Floater does just that! Karlo works (floats) between four homes as needed. He works whenever he’s needed and is skilled in all tasks with each individual. He works Sunday through Friday, sometimes very long hours, as staffing shortages continue and “there is always a shift to cover” somewhere.

During a 40-minute visit with Karlo, he provided personal care, used a Hoyer lift to transfer an individual from his bed to his wheelchair and adjusted his clothing and supports to make him comfortable, flushed a young man’s G-tube, documented his work, helped two young men in wheelchairs into the van where he secured their wheelchairs, grabbed the big bag of the supplies they would need while away from home (which he’d packed earlier), locked up the house and drove off for the day!

“I love ARCA,” Karlo says. He explains ARCA is different from other agencies he has worked for because ARCA is flexible and works with its employees to find placements and hours that work for them. He says he feels appreciated and has a great working relationship with his supervisor. He appreciates his co-workers, the teamwork and their ability to problem solve together.

Karlo will tell you that his biggest work challenge, recently, has been “connecting with individuals.” He explains that, as a floater, not working on a day-to-day basis in the same home, with the same individuals, it took some time to get to know and feel comfortable with one another.

When asked what gives him his positive energy and the willingness to do the hard work he does every day, Karlo says, “It’s taking good care of people, getting them out into the community and making a difference for them.”

What does a Direct Support Professional do?

Being a DSP is hard work and requires professionalism, patience and a sophisticated skill set. DSPs come from diverse backgrounds, but share a compassionate spirit and fierce determination to help others live their best life.



Brandon Gonzales, Instructor 3, is a soft-spoken, no-nonsense man with a generous heart. He was raised by his great-grandmother in Northern New Mexico and moved to Albuquerque shortly before COVID began.

Encouraged by his cousin, Eligio Velasquez (a 30+ year employee of ARCA), Brandon applied and was hired as a DSP. Brandon has worked in the same home during his 2.5 years with ARCA.

He describes a typical workday starting at 6:30 a.m. assisting with medication administration, helping individuals with personal hygiene and exercise and “keeping them engaged” in life and the world around them by getting outdoors and going on outings in the community. All individuals in his home use wheelchairs and need a great deal of care and assistance. It’s a physically demanding job; Brandon says his greatest work challenge is “ensuring individuals who are non-verbal are comfortable.”

When asked how working at ARCA is different from other jobs he’s had, and why he does the work he does, he said he likes the “hand-over-hand care” and camaraderie between staff. Brandon likes his steady schedule and how he and his co-workers work as a team to get things done safely and with care. He says the one thing he’d like people to know about the work he does is that it isn’t as hard as people might think.

When Brandon isn’t working at ARCA, he likes to go camping with his family and often drives to Espanola to help care for his great-grandmother. He plans to attend school to become an LPN or RN and hopes ARCA will have a nursing position available when he has his degree.



Milly Charles is an Instructor 2 who spent her early years in Foster Care before being adopted at five years old. She worked in retail and food service before coming to ARCA, where she says she “discovered her strengths.”

Milly works from 1:00 – 9:00 p.m. with four men who depend on her for personal care, medications, meals and community activities. “I thought I would be uncomfortable caring for men, but I quickly learned it’s all about respect,” she shared. “I put myself in their circumstances and know I would hope to find mutual respect with people supporting me.”

Milly works through challenges, including behavioral, by communicating clearly with therapists and other staff. “Some of it becomes almost intuitive,” she explained. “Routine is important, but ultimately you need to be attentive to minor disruptions to avoid bigger challenges. It helps knowing I have the support I need.”

Milly spends a lot of time in the community with Ricky, Charlie, Richard and Steve. “We do so much together. It helps people who haven’t spent time with people who have IDD feel more comfortable and realize we’re all just people when they see us out enjoying life. We laugh a lot.”

Milly uses the skills she developed throughout her life at ARCA. “God knows my heart and guided me here,” she says.

When Claudia Maldonado Duarte’s two daughters were growing up, she worked in their school cafeteria and took English classes at CNM. One of her fellow students told her about ARCA. She brought her an application, helped her complete it and hand carried it to Human Resources. Before long, Claudia was hired as a Residential Instructor 1!

Claudia remembers being nervous. She had never spent time with people who had disabilities and didn’t know places like ARCA existed. “The training helped so much,” she explained. “My house manager didn’t ignore any detail, so I always felt very prepared.” Claudia prefers working with women, which she has for 12 years. “As a new staff, individuals tested me,” she said. “I realize now they wanted to know if I was genuine. If I could be trusted. I quickly learned it’s all about trust.”

About four years ago, Claudia’s house nurse suggested she apply for certification as a Medication Aide. She submitted an application to the Dept. of Health, along with letters of recommendation, and began the process. “It was intense,” she recalls. “ARCA paid for everything, including my salary while I was in classes. I was very nervous after I finished the exam, but 30 days later I was notified I had passed and was a Certified Medication Aide (CMA)!”

The next day, Claudia was assigned to work, temporarily, in a home in need of her skills. Then COVID hit. “I was the CMA for two neighboring homes and for a while worked seven days a week because of staffing shortages.” Today, Claudia can’t imagine being anywhere else.



Claudia starts her day at 6:00 a.m. passing meds, checking blood pressure, taking vitals, g-tube feeding, working with the nurse, scheduling medical appointments, talking with the pharmacy. She says, “Every day is filled with surprises. Especially when someone does something new that everyone thought they couldn’t do.”

“At ARCA, we work together and really know each other,” she said. “It’s long-term care, so we know when someone who is non-verbal is happy or in pain or needs something. I understand facial expressions and recognize sounds – I learned the language and am impressed by how everyone communicates.”

Staffing shortages are difficult and some mornings it’s hard to wake up, but Claudia says once she’s at work her mood changes. “I know my body language is more important than my words. A simple smile makes all the difference.”

The role of our DSPs is the heart of what we do at ARCA. They teach, support, and help each individual at ARCA live their best lives. They live ARCA’s mission every day!

Boyd Lewis
Intercare Division Director

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