

## “Architects of Inclusion”

*The Arc Caddo-Bossier is an OCDD licensed service provider*



What was started 70 years ago in 1954 by a few families for their children with intellectual and developmental disabilities has become so much more.

[The Arc Caddo-Bossier](#), a nonprofit agency located in Shreveport, proudly serves Northwest Louisiana by living out its mission of “building unlimited opportunities for people with disabilities.” Later

established in 1997, the [Arc Caddo-Bossier Foundation](#) ensures the financial stability of the Arc Caddo-Bossier by generating contributions, administering funds, and making grants that support the programs.

“Architects of inclusion,” stated the Arc Caddo-Bossier’s Executive Director Kristen Powers, “is what we are and what we always have been.”

The Arc Caddo-Bossier fosters community involvement and builds inclusion by providing numerous services and supportive programs to community members with disabilities to help them learn, grow, and thrive in an inclusive setting. The employment division, Frost Industries, offers job training and full and part-time work to adults with disabilities. Furthermore, the James Conly Day Program provides person-centered activities that are both center-based and community-integrated through its new Community Life Engagement offering. Additional services include:

- [Goldman School and Child Development Centers](#) provide childcare and early learning/intervention for children from birth through age five in inclusive environments where children with disabilities learn alongside their typically developing peers. Research shows that inclusive environments benefit children with and without disabilities by enhancing academic performance, increasing acceptance, improving communication and social skills, creating caring friendships, and increasing self-esteem. Families who have multiple young



children, with and without disabilities, can attend the same quality childcare center where they can learn and grow together. Goldman School, which began as the Summer Street School in 1954, is the very first childcare center serving children with developmental disabilities in the state. As of 2023, Goldman School has two campuses licensed to serve up to 192 children total.

- [GREAT Equine Assisted Services Program](#) is a horseback riding facility in Greenwood, Louisiana where Professional Association of Therapeutic Horsemanship (PATH) certified instructors and trained volunteers provide cutting-edge therapeutic services for adults and children with disabilities.
- [Community Living Supports and Services](#) provide supported independent living apartments, as well as both in-home and out-of-home supportive services and respite for local individuals with disabilities who live with family or in their own homes. The Arc Caddo-Bossier's Respite Guest House is the only one of its kind in Region 7 (Northwest Louisiana), offering day or overnight services for people with disabilities who are seeking respite care. There are also eight community homes throughout this region where people with developmental disabilities, supported by direct support professionals, live in small groups and have opportunities to learn new skills as they work to meet their life goals. The Arc Caddo-Bossier's Old Mooringsport Road Community Home was the first community home established in the state.

"The Office for Citizens with Developmental Disabilities (OCDD) and the Arc Caddo-Bossier have always worked together for the betterment of the people with disabilities in our state," stated Kristen. "As a licensed service provider, the Arc Caddo-Bossier relies on OCDD for guidance and support as we seek to deliver on our promises to Louisiana's citizens with disabilities. Because we offer so many different programs and services, our service delivery model is complex and requires us to keep the lines of communication open to help the Arc Caddo-Bossier and OCDD succeed in continually improving how we accomplish our collective missions."

The Arc also continuously tries to find new ways to help individuals with developmental disabilities thrive in their communities. For example, through an exciting partnership between the Arc's national organization and Amazon, the Arc Caddo-Bossier recently received 25 Amazon Echo Show devices and 25 Amazon Fire tablets to help the Arc's community members live their daily lives with the assistance of technology.

In everything the Arc Caddo-Bossier does, people with disabilities are both represented and included in decisions that affect their lives. Regardless of their level of ability, those served are empowered to participate in the same opportunities that anyone would like to enjoy, from education to employment and everything in between.

