

75 Years and Counting: How The Arc of NJ Can Support You and Your Chapter

From Tom Baffuto, Executive Director: This spring, The Arc of New Jersey will reach an incredible milestone: 75 years of service and advocacy on behalf of people with intellectual and developmental disabilities and their families. What began with a small group of families fighting for a system of supports where none existed, is now a vast and comprehensive grassroots network. At The Arc of New Jersey, we are honored to carry on the incredible legacy of those first families and each day as we work to fulfill our mission, we remember their struggles and weave it into everything we do.

And we want you to know that as we celebrate this milestone, we are not slowing down in the least. In fact, our vast array of programs can help you, your family member, and your Chapter. We want to ensure you are up to date on all of our resources and the ways in which we can be of assistance. The Arc of NJ can be a critical advocacy partner and we want to stand by your side for the next 75 years and beyond. If you have any questions, please feel free to reach out to me at tbaffuto@arcnj.org or 732-733-6174.



The Arc of New Jersey Programs:

- The Arc of NJ Family Institute
- Children's Advocacy
- The NJ Self-Advocacy Project
- Planning for Adult Life
- Training & Consultation Services
- Health Care Advocacy
- Criminal Justice Advocacy Program
- Sexual Violence Prevention Project

Visit our website for additional program offerings and information: www.arcnj.org



The Arc Family Institute

If you have a loved one with intellectual and developmental disabilities, The Arc Family Institute will help open doors to the advocacy, information, resources and community support you need. The Family Institute works to effect change on the local and state level that will benefit people with IDD and their families while also providing one on one assistance to help families with NJ service systems.



- **Training & education:** Webinars, Podcasts, Workshops and Presentations, College Tours
- **Information:** Email updates, Fact sheets, Go Bags, Navigation at a Clip, County Roadmaps, Monthly e-newsletters, Resource and Referrals
- **My Binder:** Virtual tool to keep you organized on topics like DDD, DVRS, IEPs, PerformCare, and SSI.
- **Fireside Chat Series:** Conversations with experts in their field as it relates to individuals with IDD. Gives families the opportunity to ask questions directly.
- **Family Institute Calendars:** Themed tips and resources for each day of the month.
- **Helping families with issues including:** Reviewing the NJ CAT Draft, completing the DDD application, sibling support, guardianship and supported decision making, transitioning out of the educational entitlement, housing, and support coordination.
- **A breakdown of Supports Program services:** Examples of what the services look like, how to access them, and any relevant limitations to the services.

The NJ Self-Advocacy Project

Connecting with thousands of self-advocates from across the state, the NJ SAP continues to keep individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities engaged with advocacy, healthy living and socialization opportunities. Recent updates include:



- **A Speak Our Mind Series on social media:** This is a series of videos of NJ Statewide Self-Advocacy Network members speaking about their lived experiences and thoughts on a variety of topics with a new video added every Friday.
- **New & updated trainings:** Presentations and materials include: Journaling and Vision Boards, Respectful Behavior, Hydration, Online Resources and Activities, Advocating For Yourself, The Internet and Respect, and Gender Identity 101.
- **Empowerment on Tuesdays at 11 am:** All players get the chance to practice socialization and team building skills while using their creativity and critical thinking skills to bypass obstacles and issues.
- **Trailblazers Program:** A movement challenge that encourages individuals to walk and exercise.

NJ SAP is always looking for new members and would love to connect with self-advocates from your Chapter.

Children's Advocacy

The Department of Children's Advocacy works directly with children and families to provide individual and systems advocacy related to Early Intervention (EI), the Children's System of Care (CSOC) and PerformCare, and special education and related services. Recent highlights include:



- **Quarterly meetings with New Jersey Early Intervention System (NJEIS) leadership from the Department of Health.** Opportunity to advocate on the issues local Chapters are experiencing on the local level.
- **Individual and systems advocacy for DCF/CSOC services:** Sharing information about state services for youth with disabilities ages 3-21 and assisting families through the PerformCare application process. Advocating for additional respite hours with increased flexibility of usage, and improved DCF camp rates.
- **Archived Facebook Live series:** discussions on special education and state services for children with IDD and their families
- **Parental Rights Guide:** Summarizes and simplifies information included in PRISE and makes information more accessible for families.
- **New materials for parents:** Special education sample letters and fillable guides.

Planning for Adult Life

If you are supporting a teen with intellectual and developmental disabilities, you likely know the educational entitlement ends at age 21. What you may not know, is what your loved one is going to do when he or she leaves the school system. PFAL helps your child build skills to obtain competitive employment, seek volunteer opportunities, or connect with a community provider organization for social opportunities or day program services.



*Offerings of the program include:
Webinars, workshops, planning
sessions, resources and a monthly
newsletter to assist your child on
the path to adulthood.*

New items:

- It's Time to Travel Roadmap to Transition: Must-answer questions as your child transitions from school to adult life.
- With a grant from The Arc US, providing Extended School Year classes on Self Determination for more than 300 students.
- With a grant from NJCDD, a second year of providing the Employment First Initiative. This initiative provides an 8-week, daily intensive session highlighting employment with students. The focus includes career exploration, developing transferable skills, and more. More than 200 students served so far.
- Planning For Adult Life Conference with 130 registered families for a day of gathering information and meeting providers in the adult system
- Making Action Plan classes to more than 70 different schools throughout the state.
- Coming Up: HOW Series is scheduled with more than 50 parent groups, schools and professionals trainings.

Health Care Advocacy

Promoting quality health care for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities throughout New Jersey, the Health Care Advocacy Program advocates on behalf of families and caregivers in accessing needed supports and services for their loved ones. The program provides advocacy at both the individual and systems levels, empowering individuals with essential information about Medicaid, Medicare, Social Security, and key health care areas that include medical treatment, dental care, mental health, and behavioral care.



- **An Annual Health Care Webinar Series:** Featuring medical experts in their respective fields and focusing on the most relevant information related to medical, dental, mental health, and behavioral health care for individuals with IDD.
- **Information & Resources:** Fact sheets, informational flyers, regular email correspondence, resources, and referrals.
- **A Healthy Times E-Newsletter:** Distributed throughout the year via our electronic email list, with information on key health care news, new resources, and upcoming events.
- **Presentations & Webinars:** In person community presentations, trainings, virtual webinars, and short, topic specific videos on health care and related topics.

Training & Consultation Services

Training and Consultation Services (TCS) specializes in developing high-quality education for supported-employment providers that can be customized to suit the needs of each agency. Our claim-to-fame trainings help job-coaches develop the skills needed to perform at high standards; agencies can pick from our current training catalog or request a new training specific to their needs. TCS is also available to consult on any questions or concerns related to supported employment in New Jersey. TCS services have no limits to the number of uses and are completely free of charge, so please feel free to reach out if we can support you in any way.



- **New trainings:** developed once every three weeks; newest trainings on job-development and building relationships with employers using informational interviewing.
- **Monthly opportunities to take public trainings:** Examples include a time-management workshop and a documentation training (training takes place over two sessions)
- **Office hours:** Virtually from 2:00 to 4:00 p.m. on Wednesdays and 9:00 to 11:00 a.m. on Thursdays.

The Criminal Justice Advocacy Program

The Criminal Justice Advocacy Program (CJAP) acts as a clearinghouse for information regarding offenders, victims, and witnesses with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD) while bridging the gap between criminal justice and human service systems, overseeing the quality of care and services during transitions. CJAP offers alternatives to incarceration for defendants with IDD, a unique initiative in New Jersey. This program ensures equitable access to justice and fair treatment for defendants with criminal cases by providing advocacy, education, and information to involved parties. CJAP intervenes at various stages of a defendant's case, from initial appearance to community reintegration, by creating Personalized Justice Plans (PJPs), when applicable. Services provided by CJAP include:

- **Education and Training:** Conducting trainings for courts, law enforcement, schools, state departments, and community professionals regarding IDD, dual diagnosis, the School-to-Prison Pipeline, as well as research and trends related to the criminal justice system.
- **Advocacy and Support:** Providing advocacy during court appearances, education on IDD, and assistance in navigating the legal system.
- **Educational Webinars:** Hosting monthly webinars as part of the Equal Justice Talks series, and posting short educational videos and content on social media.
- **Case Management:** Establishing connections with organizations and offering referrals and resources as needed.
- **Personalized Justice Plans (PJPs):** Creating written documents submitted to attorneys and judges outlining alternatives to prison/jail sentences, focusing on community-based options.



Sexual Violence Prevention

While it can be hard to face its painful and prevalent reality, people with IDD are seven times more likely to be subjected to sexual violence than people without IDD. The Sexual Violence Prevention Project (SVPP) approaches this challenge of arresting pervasive sexual violence within the IDD community with a focus on awareness, policy, and education.

Home Sexuality Education Curriculum:

This 10 lesson, 100+ worksheet program is free for download on the TheArcSVPP.org webpage. Emphasizing areas of personal safety such as boundaries, consent, private & public, rights, and internet safety, the curriculum leverages repetition and reinforcement to promote comprehension.

Lecture series: SVPP has conducted pro bono guest seminars at universities across the state, including Montclair, Stockton, Seton Hall, and Fairleigh Dickinson. Topics include “Sexual Violence, IDD, and the Criminal Justice System” and “Teaching Personal Safety to Students with IDD.” We also spearheaded a panel on sexual violence and IDD at Stockton University, and delivered talks about personal safety to parents and faculty of NJ school districts.

A.W.A.R.E.: Designed for public defenders and defense attorneys, the packet is designed to help legal professionals understand the importance of accommodations, word choice, attention to signs, response, and empathy when working with clients with IDD. Each packet consists of a “playbook” for identifying and communicating with people with IDD and an A.W.A.R.E. magnet. An A.W.A.R.E. packet for police departments and law enforcement officials is currently in production.

Ponder: A group-work game for good decision-making, the colorful cards help reinforce participants of the importance of considering boundaries, personal values, and consequences when faced with life choices. The game is designed to be fun, interactive, and educational. Ponder: Online, developed for individual play, is currently in development.

Public Policy Advocacy Highlights

- In terms of Public Policy, we continue to maintain a consistent presence at the State capital, weighing in on all relevant legislation. In the past year, we've testified or weighed in on more than 25 pieces of legislation and we've focused tremendous effort on transition services (special education) and the mental/behavioral health care needs of those with IDD. In addition, Governor Murphy signed 4 bills into law that The Arc of New Jersey supported as they were making their way through the legislative process.
- As we embark on a new legislative session, The Arc of New Jersey is committed to connecting with the large number of new legislators in both the Senate and Assembly. We are in the process of meeting with new Committee Chairs, newly elected officials in both Houses, and reconnecting with returning members. This will help build awareness of our organization, the work we do, and the priorities facing people with IDD, their families, and the local county Chapters who serve them.
- Our policy work also extends to the annual State Budget. In response to our advocacy, more than \$1.4 billion dollars in new state and federal dollars have been added into the DDD system during the current Administration.
- We meet throughout the year with our Congressional delegation, reinforcing the federal policy priorities from The Arc US with our New Jersey representatives. This includes continued work on Home and Community Based Services funding, reforms to the Supplemental Security Income program and more.

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