Advocacy Matters

A digital newsletter produced by the New Jersey Self-Advoacy Program

August 2026

We have a lot to say, so make sure to click "View entire message" if it appears at the bottom of this newsletter.

If you have been forwarded this message, you can subscribe here.

August Events

In August Erin Smithers, Bianca Najera-Rossell, and NJSSAN advocate, Bill Byrne, went out to 2 Day Programs with The Arc of Morris to provide trainings on NJSAP and self-advocacy. Erin and Bianca talked about The New Jersey Self-Advocacy Program and Bill talked about the importance of advocacy and the history of the self-advocacy movement. **Click the flyer below to download the handout to your device!**

Learn more about The Arc of Morris here!



Bill Byrne and Bianca Najera-Rossell (behind the camera) talking to participants at the Flanders location of The Arc of Morris.



Bill Byrne, Erin Smithers, and new advocate Erica from the Hanover location of The Arc of Morris.



Council Agenda Items

This month our Council's worked on these items:

- Creating Council updates to present at the NJSSAN Fall Conference in October
- The Councils also worked on registering for the upcoming election. They went over **The Arc of US new election center**.
- Councils also went over current action alerts and participated.

Advocacy In Action



"I think the most important part of advocacy is not just exercising our rights to vote, but getting more involved-such as volunteering to phone bank, helping your candidates get elected, etc., getting involved with your local party's club meetings, even running as a committee person or even higher office. Whatever you do, remember what Justin Dart Je. said "Get into politics as your life depended on it…because it does!" "

Anita C., NJSSAN Member and Disability Advocate

Advocacy Trainings

If you would like the NJSAP team to provide a training to your group please reach out to us at NJSAP@ArcNJ.org or fill out our [training request form here.]
Our Training and Technical Assistance Coordinator, Bianca, will happily get back and arrange a time and day for the training!

On August 5th, Bianca Najera delivered a training to SCARC on Building Life Skills Through Music. 150 participants were in attendance! This training is about how music can be used to improve communication, focus, managing emotions, and time awareness.





On August 20th, Bianca Najera delivered a training to The Arc of Salem on Mental Health First Aid. 25 participants were in attendance! This training is about recognizing signs, how to respond, and provides resources.

NJSSAN Fall Conference

TWO WEEKS LEFT TO REGISTER!

Registration ends on <u>September 18th!</u>

Register Here!



Sponsorship and Exhibitor options are still available!



Friday, October 2, 2026 at Pines Manor: 2085 Lincoln Hwy, Edison, NJ 08817

Register online at https://www.arcnj.org/programs/njsap/conference/

Tickets are $75 each. Registration Deadline: September 18, 2026

The theme of our 2026, in-person, conference is "Rise Up For Self-Advocacy". The Advisory Board members of the NJSSAN picked this topic to bring awareness that every person is a vital part of advocacy as a whole. Advocacy is stronger when we all speak up together!

During our opening session we will hear from some amazing speakers. There will also be an Exhibitor Hall, NJSSAN Council updates, Awards, and music provided by DJ Redline. Our Keynote Speaker, Morgan Neumann, is a disability studies advocate, educator, and writer dedicated to reshaping how society understands inclusion, autonomy, and representation. A training session, "Your Voice at Work: Crafting Persuasive Advocacy and Compelling Testimony Supporting Employment First", will also be provided by Dr. Rob Kimmel, a Training and Consultation Specialist for the Employment and Transition project at The Boggs Center on Disability and Human Development.

Lunch will also be served during the event. Please be sure to let us know of any allergies and diet needs when you register.



Fundraiser mugs are $17. They are only available for purchase online but we can assist you in doing so at the event. Vintage shirts will also be available for purchase at the event for $10 cash only.

https://www.bonfire.com/riseupforselfadvocacy/

New Resources

This new resource is available on our website, or you can click on it to download it directly to your computer!

Use this resource to get to know the **NJ Legislative website**. Click on the links to take you to that section of the website and use the graphics to know what to look for!
Click on the image to download it to your device.



We also offer 'Quick Tips' on advocating, staying connected, and living independently, on our social media platforms:



Quick Tip:
Asking questions, requesting clarification, or asking for more information is also a way of advocating for yourself. It helps you make informed decisions by making sure you have all the information and understand the whole situation.

NJSAP Webinars

NJSAP webinars are for adults and students with intellectual and/or developmental disabilities, their family members, and Direct Support Professionals.

We present hour-long trainings every Tuesday at 2 PM on a variety of topics relating to self-advocacy and healthy living, available to view right from your home, office, classroom or wherever you may be!

View our latest advocacy webinar below:
Invisible and Incarcerated: The Overlooked Link Between FASD and the School-to-Prison Pipeline. Presented by Robyn Holt, Director of The Criminal Justice Advocacy Program (CJAP) and Jennifer Catalano, Case Manager with CJAP.



NJSAP Wrap-Up

Every month Erin Smithers presents a short video on different aspects of The New Jersey Self-Advocacy Program. Visit our Youtube Playlist to see all the NJSAP Wrap-Up videos and learn all about our program!





This month Erin Smithers talked about The different programs with The Arc of New Jersey.
Click on the images to visit the playlist or watch the video.

NJSAP Reach

The Director of NJSAP, Erin Smithers, would like to attend your advocacy group to connect our program to yours, provide trainings and resources (including advisor trainings), or to help you start an advocacy group if you don't have one!

Please reach out to Erin Smithers to schedule a visit: ESmithers@arcnj.org



Get Involved

Want to get involved in advocacy campaigns or upcoming events? Here is what is available.

Plan your own event with NJSAP! Reach out to Erin Smithers to get started: ESmithers@arcnj.org.





MOCEANS HERizon The Ground We Stand On: Women on Wellness, Safety, Activism, and the Wisdom of Lived Experience. A Panel Discussion
The first ever HERizon in-person panel discussion.

This FREE event will take place on Wednesday, September 16, 2026, from 12-1:30pm at Ocean County Library's Mancini Hall in Toms River, NJ.

Reserve your spot here!

Join BIANJ on 9/10 for an unforgettable day of sand, surf, and smiles at their 39th annual Sun and Fun Beach Day! **Register Here!**

They've got you covered with:
Beach access via ramp
Umbrellas and surf chairs
Refreshing drinks and tasty beach bites
Sunshine, laughter, & great company!

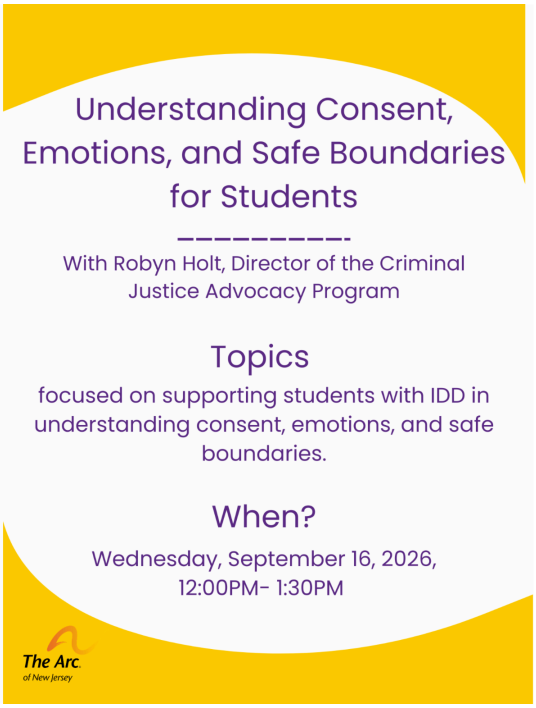
Don't forget to bring:
Beach chairs
Towels and blankets
Sunscreen



Our very own Bianca will be presenting a webinar for Children's Advocacy on September 23rd at 12pm.

The Webinar is all about the significance and the importance of body language.

Register here!



Join the Director of the Criminal Justice Advocacy Program, Robyn Holt, for a webinar focused on supporting students with IDD in understanding Consent, emotions, and safe boundaries.

The webinar is on September 16 at 12pm.

Register here!

Take part in these current action alerts!



[Tell Congress: Protect Medicaid Home and Community-Based Services]



[Tell Congress: No One Should Go Hungry!]

Want to see everything The Arc of NJ has to offer?
Sign up below to receive the newsletters from the different programs at The Arc of NJ



Sign up for CJAP



Sign up for Children's Advocacy



Sign up for Family Institute



Sign up for PFAL



The Arc
of New Jersey

Sign up for Healthcare Advocacy

Sign up for The Arc of NJ

NJSSAN Calendars



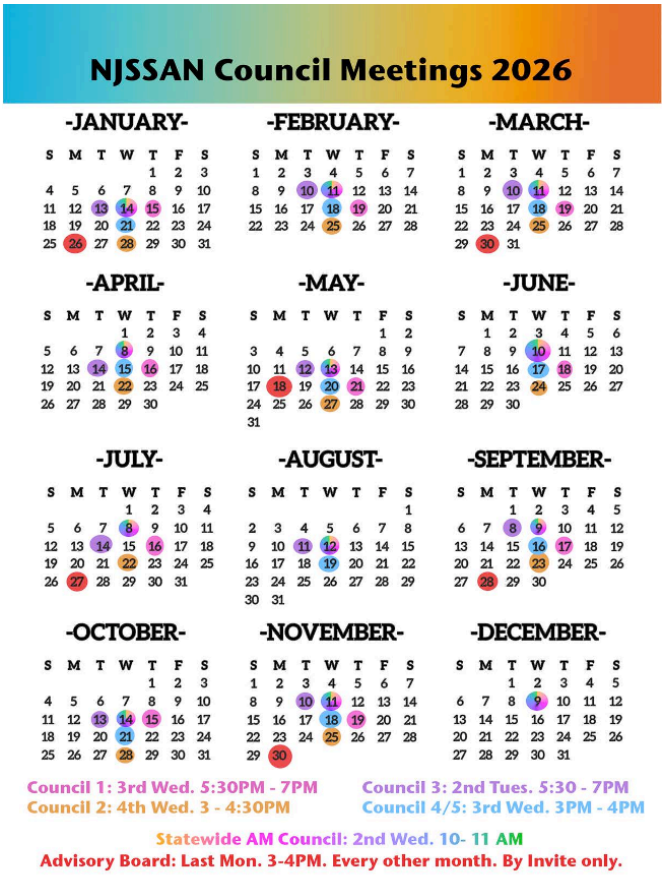
We are holding monthly NJSSAN Council meetings *virtually*!

For information regarding your Council area, please click here.

2026 Calendar

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Click on the image to download the calendar



Interested in joining the NJSSAN? See below to sign up for emails from your Council!

Council 1
Hunterdon, Morris, Sussex & Warren Counties

Join Council 1 Email List

Council 2
Bergen, Essex, Hudson, Passaic & Union Counties

Join Council 2 Email List

Council 3
Mercer, Middlesex, Monmouth, Ocean & Somerset Counties

Join Council 3 Email List

Council 4
Burlington, Camden, Gloucester & Salem Counties

Join Council 4 Email List

Council 5
Atlantic, Cape May & Cumberland Counties

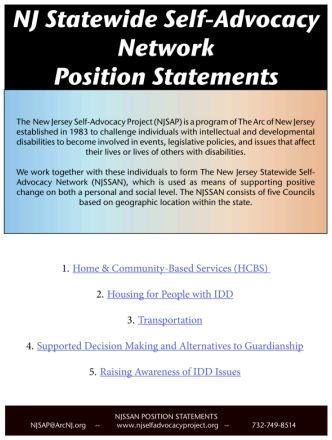
Join Council 5 Email List

Statewide A.M. Council
All NJ Counties

Join Statewide A.M. Council Email List

The New Jersey Statewide Self-Advocacy Network (NJSSAN) is made up of people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD) throughout the state. The NJSSAN is used as a means of supporting positive change on both a personal and social level. It consists of 6 Councils based on geographic location within the state.

You can read the current NJSSAN Priorities here.



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it would result in ***your name*** being removed from our distribution list.

X/Twitter **Facebook** **Instagram** **Youtube**

https://www.arcnj.org/programs/njsap/self_advocacy.html



New Jersey Self-Advocacy Program | 985 Livingston Avenue | North Brunswick, NJ 08902 US

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