



Advocacy Matters

A digital newsletter produced by
The New Jersey Self-Advocacy Project

October 2025

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.](#)

October Events

On October 3rd the NJSSAN hosted its 41st Annual Conference at Pines Manor in Edison. This was the first conference in person since 2019. Over 200 folks were in attendance. Speakers included the DHS Commissioner, Deputy Commissioner, and Assistant Commissioner, as well as The Arc of NJ's Executive Director. Patrice Jetter was the keynote speaker. [See more photos and information here!](#)



Pictured from left to right: DHS Assistant Commissioner Jonathan Seifried, DHS Deputy Commissioner Kaylee McGuire, DHS Commissioner Sarah Adelman, NJSAP Director Erin Smithers, and The Arc of NJ Executive Director Celine Fortin.



Pictured from left to right: NJSAP's Erin Smithers, DJ Redline, NJSAP's Frankie Bayak



Pictured from left to right: NJSAP's Frankie Bayak, NJSAP's Erin Smithers, Keynote Speaker Patrice Jetter, and Garry Wickham

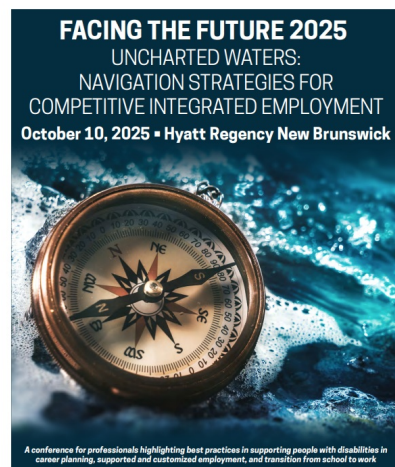


Conference attendees busting a move on the dance floor with DJ Redline

On October 6th NJSAP hosted a table at the Springfield Farmers market. This took place at the Springfield Free Public Library. The table was set up to help spread information about the NJSSAN and to also help folks get registered to vote.



On October 10th NJSAP Director, Erin Smithers, attended the Facing The Future NJ APSE Conference in East Brunswick, NJ. This conference highlights best practices in supporting people with disabilities in career planning, supported and customized employment, and transition from school to work. [Click on the images to download the Brochure!](#)



Conference at a Glance			
Registration, Continental Breakfast, and Exhibits			
Welcome Brooks Sanders, President, NJ APSE and Margaret Gilbride, JD, CT, The Boggs Center			
Navigating Success through Uncharted Waters: It Takes Preparation, Skill, and the Right Tools Margaret Gilbride, JD, CT, Director of Transition and Employment, The Boggs Center			
Break (15 minutes)			
Workshop 1 9:10 a.m. - 10:00 a.m. Quality Indicators for Programs Serving Students with Disabilities 18-21 Years Old	Workshop 2 10:10 a.m. - 11:00 a.m. Navigating New Currents: Uncovering the Tangible Benefits of Research-Provider Partnerships in Supported Employment	Workshop 3 11:10 a.m. - 12:00 p.m. "Headin' It": The "Old Fashioned" Ways That Still Work, but Everyone Forgot	Workshop 4 12:10 p.m. - 1:00 p.m. More Than Soft Skills: Refining Interpersonal Skills for Neurodivergent Job Seekers
Break (15 minutes)			
Workshop 5 10:10 a.m. - 11:00 a.m. A How-to Guide for Navigating Employment After High School	Workshop 6 11:10 a.m. - 12:00 p.m. Empowering Employment: How Assistive Technology Breaks Barriers to Competitive Integrated Jobs	Workshop 7 12:10 p.m. - 1:00 p.m. Built to Last: The Enduring Value of Supported Employment	Workshop 8 1:10 p.m. - 2:00 p.m. Develop a Career Pathway Using a Digital Toolkit to Support Individuals with Disabilities to Succeed in Career & Technical Education
Awards Luncheon			
Workshop 9 1:10 p.m. - 2:00 p.m. Community-Based Instruction (CBI) and Work-Based Learning (WBL) in Action: Creating Inclusive Employment Opportunities for Students with Disabilities	Workshop 10 2:10 p.m. - 3:00 p.m. Navigating Work and SSA Benefits	Workshop 11 3:10 p.m. - 4:00 p.m. Beyond CPT: Leveraging AI to Transform Disability Employment Services	Workshop 12 4:10 p.m. - 5:00 p.m. Pathways to Possibilities: DRRS, Pre-ETS, and Inclusive Higher Education at TCNJ
Break (15 minutes)			
Keynote Presentation The Person You're Helping Duncan Winburn 3 rd Year Law Student, Joseph F. Rice School of Law, University of South Carolina Disability Rights Advocate			
Conference Adjourns			

Facing the Future 2025 - Uncharted Waters: Navigation Strategies For Competitive Integrated Employment - October 10, 2025

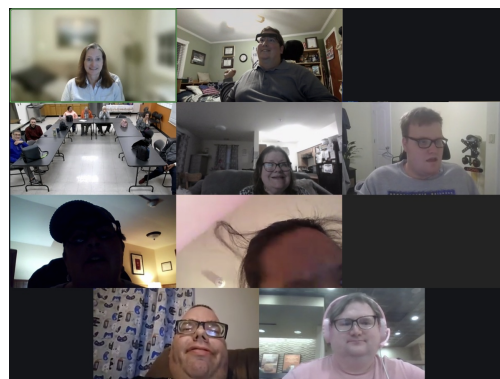
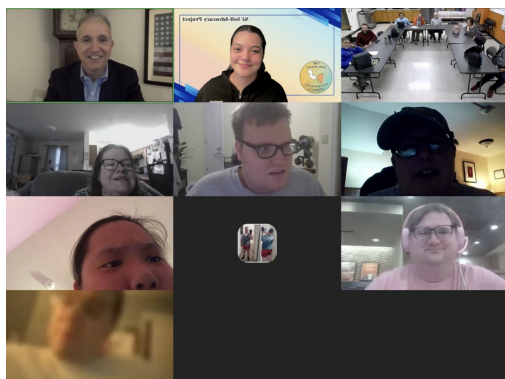
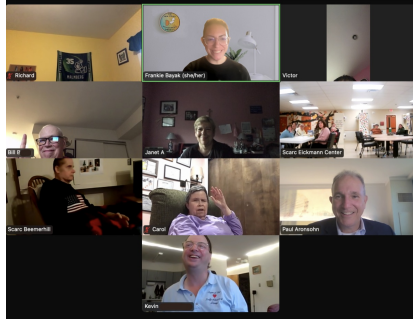
On October 28th NJSAP Director spoke at the SABE Conference. The Self-Advocates Becoming Empowered Regional Conference. This regional conference focuses on New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Delaware, Maryland, Virginia, West Virginia, and Washington, D.C. advocates to learn more about the advocacy initiatives taking place in their area. Erin highlighted the work and events of the NJSSAN, as well as highlighting some specific initiatives taken by two advocates: Pam King and Ginamarie Williams. [Click below to view the slides!](#)



Council Agenda Items

This month the councils worked on these items:

- Chris Miller from Disability Rights New Jersey came out to the Councils this month to provide voting trainings to each of the councils.
- The Councils and the AB are working on a letter to Governor Healey in Massachusetts about the Judge Rotenberg Center in Canton, Massachusetts. This facility is still using electroshock on its students. The NJSSAN wrote letters about this back in 2018 to the FDA to oppose the use of this 'treatment' but the procedures continue and a letter writing campaign to the Governor has started. The Advisory Board has also decided to send this letter to National Disability Rights, and the Mass. Department of Human Rights and Services. The Advisory Board members are currently working on the details and it will be ready to send in November!
- The Ombudsman for Individuals with Intellectual or Developmental Disabilities and Their Families, Paul Aronsohn, visited with the councils. The Councils talked about topics of importance. See photos from the visit below:



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](#).

"CAN'T WE ALL JUST GET ALONG"
CONFLICT RESOLUTION
 NEW JERSEY SELF-ADVOCACY PROJECT

On October 7th Frankie Bayak provided a training to 43 individuals at The Arc of Ocean on 'Conflict Resolution'. This training addresses different way to resolve conflict in your lives, whether it is in a professional setting or a personal one. This training also has an interactive portion for attendees to discuss different ways they would handle certain situations.

On October 8th Frankie Bayak provided a training on 'Consent' to 150 individuals from SCARC. This training teaches why consent is important, what it involves, how to ask for consent and what to do if you don't get consent.

CONSENT

THE NEW JERSEY SELF-ADVOCACY PROJECT

On October 14th a training was provided to a class at the Sussex County Community College on 'Voting Rights'. There were 14 students in attendance. This training talks about myths and facts surrounding voting with a disability. It covers portions of the American's with Disabilities Act as well as



Voting

Exercise Your Right

New Jersey Self-Advocacy Project
NJSAP@ArcNJ.org
Phone: 732-749-8514

how to find out if you are registered to vote and where you are registered.

On October 23rd a training was provided to The Arc of Ocean Employment Center on 'Boosting Your Confidence'. There were 9 attendees present. This training goes over different ways to boost your confidence, achieve your goals, speak up for yourself, and advocate for the things you want out of life.



On October 28th, a training was provided to Kelsch Associates Inc. on 'Supported Decision Making'. There were 4 attendees present. This training goes over how to incorporate SDM, how to pick your supporters, and how to communicate your needs.

New Resources

These new resources are available on [our website](#), or you can click on them to download them directly to your computer!

Anti-Bullying Tips and Strategies	
Report it If you (or someone you know) are being bullied, don't just let it slide. Let someone supportive know: a friend, family member, teacher, or HR. Most people really do care and want to set things right, so let them help you! 	Be a Friend If you see someone being bullied, help them out and let them know they matter. Being understanding and supportive is meaningful. You can make a big impact on someone who needs a friend. 
Stand Up For Yourself If you feel safe and comfortable enough to do so, let the bully know what they are doing is wrong is they should stop. Do not bully them back, simply tell them to stop and move on. 	Find Safe Spaces If you are part of a group where you are being bullied, it may be best to leave it behind. Find a safe, comfortable space with like-minded folks where you can be yourself. 

October is National Bullying Prevention Month, a time dedicated to raising awareness about bullying and promoting kindness, acceptance, and inclusion. Check out our infographic on some Anti-Bullying Tips and Strategies.

We also offer 'Quick Tips' on advocating, staying connected, and living

Tips for feeling less nervous about public speaking:



Quick Tip: Advocating for yourself and others often involves public speaking. Here are some tips to alleviate nervousness when speaking in public! Public speaking and advocacy involve clearly communicating a problem and proposing a specific solution to an audience, with the goal of educating, building empathy, and rallying people around a shared goal. Successful advocacy through public speaking requires a strong understanding of the audience, clear key messages, and credible supporting evidence like statistics or stories.

Voting Resources & Activities

September started voting awareness in the lead up to the election season! Please see below for important dates coming up in October and November. Visit our social media or [the voting page on our website](#) for more resources!

Click on the images below to download your copy of our Voting Rights Guide or The Arc of NJ's Get Out The Vote Guide!

VOTING RIGHTS

Exercising Your Right To Vote Title II of the ADA requires that "state and local governments ensure that people with disabilities have a full and equal opportunity to vote."

What exactly does Title II of the ADA ensure me?

- Accessible Polling Places
- Wide Doorways
- Modifying existing building rules
- Parking Lots
- Voting Equipment
- Allowing alternate forms of ID
- Curb Cuts
- Non-Discriminatory Policies
- Requires accessible voting booths to have an equal level of privacy
- Ramps

FACT: More than 16 million Americans with disabilities are not registered to vote.

According to New Jersey's Self-Advocates, voting is important because:
"It's a way to advocate for yourself and what you believe in!"
"It's about using your voice and letting everyone know where you stand."

As Advocates and Registered Voters, it is your right and your responsibility to plan ahead for election days.

FACT: You do NOT have to be your own guardian to vote. You do need to be registered to vote, at least 18 years of age, and a US citizen.

Are you registered? Find out by visiting this website:
<https://voter.njvrs.com/PublicAccess/jsp/UserLogin/Login.jsp>

Transportation: It is your responsibility to ask a parent, friend, or member of your Support Staff to help you get to your polling place. If you can't make it to your polling place on Election Day, please consider a Vote By Mail application. Applications for a Vote By Mail ballot must be filled out and received by mail at your County Clerk's office **ONE WEEK** before the election.

Do you know where your polling place is located?
Find out here: <https://voter.njvrs.com/elections/polling-lookup.html>

Would you like assistance in the voting booth?
You can ask a friend, family member or staff member to enter the booth with you. You can also request assistance from poll workers at your polling place on Election Day: two workers from two different political parties (one Democrat and one Republican, for example) can assist you in the voting booth. If you require a headset or other accessibility option, don't be shy: ask a poll worker for assistance.

On election days, Disability Rights New Jersey will have attorneys available by telephone to answer questions concerning disability-related voting problems or accessibility issues you might experience: 800-922-7233 or (619) 633-7106 (TTY)

Created by the New Jersey Self-Advocacy Project, a program of The Arc of New Jersey
NJSAP@ArcNJ.org / 732.749.8514 / www.njsselfadvocacyproject.org

The Arc of New Jersey

GET OUT THE VOTE

A voting and election guide for citizens with intellectual and developmental disabilities and their families.

www.GOTVNJ.org

Your Vote is Your Voice.

Voting Early In-Person? [Watch our walk through video](#) and click on this factsheet for more information!



Top 5 Things To Know About In-Person Early Voting

Here are the answers to five common questions about in-person early voting for the 2025 General Election:

1. WHAT IS IN-PERSON EARLY VOTING?

This option enables all registered voters to cast their ballot **in person, using a voting machine, during a nine-day period prior to General Election Day**. You can choose to vote in person when it's most convenient for your schedule.

2. WHERE CAN I ACCESS IN-PERSON EARLY VOTING?

- No matter where you live in the county, you can vote your specific ballot at any of your **county's** designated in-person early voting locations.
- Find your county's sites at [VOTE.NJ.GOV](https://Vote.NJ.GOV).

3. WHEN CAN I ACCESS IN-PERSON EARLY VOTING?

- In person early voting locations will be open **Saturday, October 25 through Sunday, November 2**.
- Hours will be **Monday-Saturday, 10:00 a.m.-8:00 p.m. and Sunday, 10:00 a.m.-6:00 p.m.** No appointment is necessary. Accommodations will be made for voters with disabilities.

4. WHAT IF I ALWAYS VOTE BY MAIL, BUT NOW WANT TO VOTE EARLY IN PERSON INSTEAD?

- If you are registered to vote by mail in the 2025 General Election, you may cast a provisional ballot during early in-person voting **or** on Election Day, which will be provided to you at your early voting location or polling place. If you choose to vote by provisional ballot during early in-person voting or on Election Day, you should not complete and return your mail-in ballot as doing so will result in your provisional ballot being rejected. Learn more about provisional ballots at [VOTE.NJ.GOV](https://Vote.NJ.GOV). If you no longer wish to receive a mail-in ballot, reach out to your County Clerk's office for more information.

5. CAN I STILL CHOOSE FROM OTHER VOTING OPTIONS?

Yes. You may select, instead, to:

- **Vote in person** at your polling place, from **6:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. on Election Day, Tuesday, November 4**. Accommodations will be made for voters with disabilities. Go to [VOTE.NJ.GOV](https://Vote.NJ.GOV) for your polling place, listed on the Polling Locations page.
- Or, apply for a **mail-in ballot** and return it one of the following ways...

- 1... Secure Ballot Drop Box: Place it in one of your county's secure ballot drop boxes by **8:00 p.m. on Tuesday, November 4**. Drop box locations can be found at [VOTE.NJ.GOV](https://Vote.NJ.GOV).

- 2... Board of Elections Office: Deliver it in person to your county's Board of Elections Office by **8:00 p.m. on Tuesday, November 4**. County Election Officials' contact information can be found at [VOTE.NJ.GOV](https://Vote.NJ.GOV).

- 3... Mail: It must be postmarked **on or before 8:00 p.m. Tuesday, November 4** and be received by your county's Board of Elections on or before **Monday, November 10**.

NOTE: Mail-in ballots CANNOT be returned to your early voting site or polling place.
To learn more, access our Voter Education Video Series at Vote.NJ.gov or scan here.



Governor Phil Murphy
Lieutenant Governor and
Secretary of State Tahesha Way



1-877-NJ-VOTER (1-877-658-6377)
Vote.NJ.Gov



@NJ_Votes



@NJ_Votes



NJ Department of State



@NJ_Votes



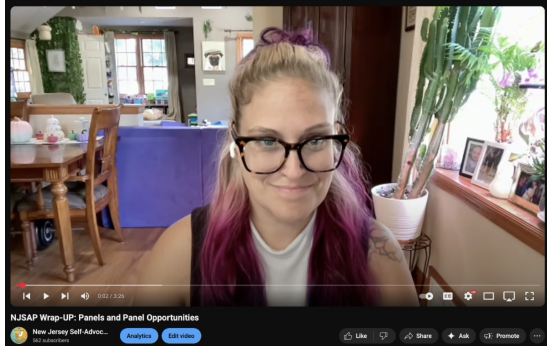
Important Upcoming Dates:
-October 14: Registration Deadline
-October 25: Early Voting Started
-November 2: Early Voting Ends
-November 4: ELECTION DAY!



Throughout October we posted "30 Days of Voting Myths vs Voting Facts". You could have followed along each day to find the answers to each question! Resources and information were posted everyday throughout the month.
[Didn't take our quiz? Take it here!](#)

NJSAP Wrap-Up

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



This month Erin Smithers talked about Speaking Panels and Panel Opportunities. Another great way to advocate.

Click on the image to visit the playlist and 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



Erin Smithers went out to The Arc of Hunterdon on October 9th to visit with the advocacy group and provide a training on Respectful Communication. This training helps teach participants about how to speak up respectfully in different situations.

Get Involved

Want to get involved in advocacy campaigns, action alerts, 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.



NJSSAN Calendars



We are holding monthly NJSSAN
Council meetings *virtually*!
For information regarding
your Council area, please
click here.

2025			NEW JERSEY STATEWIDE SELF-ADVOCACY NETWORK
January	February	March	
1. January 16	1. February 20	1. March 20	
2. January 23	2. February 27	2. March 27	
3. January 14	3. February 11	3. March 11	
4.5. January 15	4.5. February 19	4.5. March 19	
AB. January 27		AB. March 31	
April	May	June	
1. April 17	1. May 15	1. June 19	
2. April 24	2. May 22	2. June 26	
3. April 08	3. May 13	4.5. June 18	
4.5. April 16	4.5. May 21		
	AB. May 19		
July	August	September	COUNCIL 1 3rd Thursday of each month*, 5:30-6:45pm Hunterdon, Morris, Sussex & Warren Advisor: Frankie Bayak Fbayak@ArcNJ.org/732-749-8514
1. July 17	3. August 12	1. September 18	
2. July 24	4.5. August 20	2. September 25	
3. July 8		3. September 09	
AB. July 28		4.5. September 17	COUNCIL 2 4th Thursday of each month*, 4-5:30pm Bergen, Essex, Hudson, Passaic, and Union Advisor: Erin Smithers ESmithers@ArcNJ.org/732-246-2525, ext. 26
		AB. September 29	
October	November	December	
1. October 16	1. November 20		
2. October 23	2. November 20		COUNCIL 3 2nd Tuesday of each month*, 5:30-7pm Mercer, Middlesex, Monmouth, Ocean & Somerset Advisor: Blanca Najera BNajera@ArcNJ.org/732-246-2525, ext. 37
3. October 14	3. November 11		
4.5. October 15	4.5. November 19		
	AB. November 24		
			COUNCILS 4 & 5 3rd Wednesday of each month*, 3-4pm Burlington, Camden, Gloucester, Salem Atlantic, Cape May, & Cumberland Counties Contact Erin or Frankie as seen above
			NJSSAN ADVISORY BOARD Last Monday, every other month* Only Open to Advisory Board Members

* Check the calendar image for exact dates

For more information, contact: Frankie Bayak
NJSAP@ArcNJ.org / 732-749-8514
www.njselfadvocacyproject.org

2026 Calendar

Click on the image to download the calendar

NJSSAN Council Meetings 2026

-JANUARY-							-FEBRUARY-							-MARCH-						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S	S	M	T	W	T	F	S	S	M	T	W	T	F	S
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-JULY-							-AUGUST-							-SEPTEMBER-						
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-OCTOBER-							-NOVEMBER-							-DECEMBER-						
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25	26	27	28	29	30	31	29	30						27	28	29	30	31		

Council 1: 3rd Wed. 5:30PM - 7PM

Council 2: 4th Wed. 3 - 4:30PM

Council 3: 2nd Tues. 5:30 - 7PM

Council 4/5: 3rd Wed. 3PM - 4PM

Statewide AM Council: 2nd Wed. 10- 11 AM

Advisory Board: Last Mon. 3-4PM. Every other month. By Invite only.

Join our newest Council Meeting held during the day! Starting January 2026!

NEW NJSSAN MONTHLY MEETING

"STATEWIDE AM COUNCIL"

2ND WEDNESDAY OF THE
MONTH

10AM ON ZOOM



STARTING
JANUARY 14TH, 2026

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 5 Councils based on geographic location within the state.

[You can read the current NJSSAN Priorities here.](#)

NJ Statewide Self-Advocacy Network Position Statements

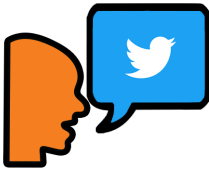
The New Jersey Self-Advocacy Project (NJSPAP) is a program of The Arc of New Jersey established in 1983 to challenge individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities to become involved in events, legislative policies, and issues that affect their lives or lives of others with disabilities.

We work together with these individuals to form The New Jersey Statewide Self-Advocacy Network (NJSSAN), which is used as means of supporting positive change on both a personal and social level. The NJSSAN consists of five Councils based on geographic location within the state.

1. [Home & Community-Based Services \(HCBS\)](#)
2. [Housing for People with IDD](#)
3. [Transportation](#)
4. [Supported Decision Making and Alternatives to Guardianship](#)
5. [Raising Awareness of IDD Issues](#)

NJSSAN POSITION STATEMENTS
NJSPAP@arcnj.org - www.njselfadvocacyproject.org - 712-749-8314

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www.njselfadvocacyproject.org



New Jersey Self-Advocacy Project & Statewide Self-Advocacy Network

A program of The Arc of New Jersey since 1983

Promoting Advocacy and Independence for People
with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities

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

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