



Advocacy Matters

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

May 2026

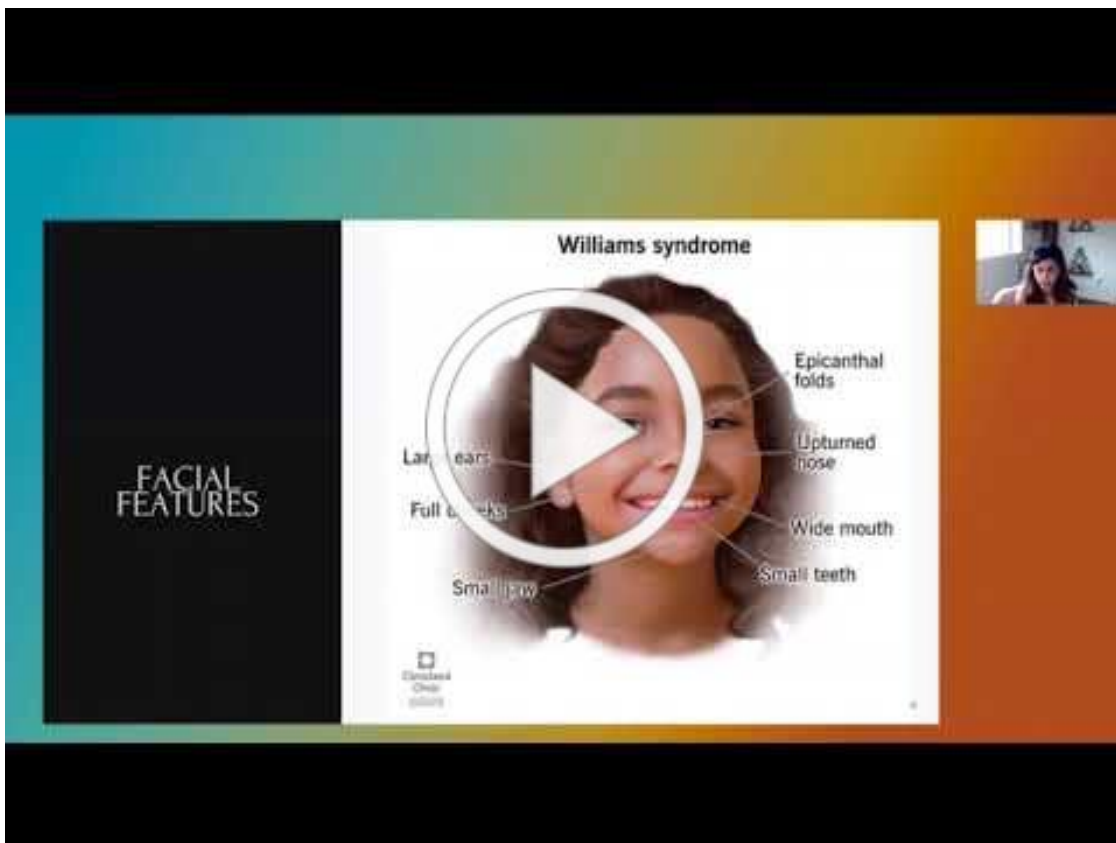
We have a lot to say, so make sure to click
"View entire message" if it appears at the bottom of this
newsletter.

[If you have been forwarded this message, you can subscribe
here.](#)

Williams Syndrome Awareness Month

Williams syndrome is a genetic condition that is present at birth and can affect anyone. This distinct condition encompasses both medical and cognitive challenges, such as cardiovascular issues, developmental delays, and learning disabilities. Affecting 1 in 10,000 people globally, around 25,000 to 30,000 individuals in the United States are touched by Williams syndrome. It manifests equally in both males and females, transcending cultural boundaries.

On May 6th, NJSAP held a special webinar presented by Gianna Morello. You can watch the webinar below!



The Arc of NJ's Gianna Morello talks about Williams Syndrome, her lived experiences, and the link to music in this special webinar event!

Council Agenda Items

This month our Council's worked on these items:

- The councils went over upcoming events they can attend.
- The AB President went over his experience in Partners in Policymaking. The application to apply for next year is listed below in 'Upcoming Events'.
- Some councils recorded videos for the next generation of advocates. These videos will be shared online as well as at The Youth Advisory Board Meetings.
- Councils also updated the merch store for 2026, or added items into the store. Council merchandise goes directly to the councils. [You can visit the merch stores here!](#)

Advocacy In Action



"Some parents (and society) don't put enough expectations on children with disabilities. Social standards should be the same for people with and without disabilities. We should live the life we deserve, through careers, marriage, and college!"

-Cortez Range,
NJSSAN Member

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!



My House is Your House: Living with Roommates

New Jersey Self-Advocacy Project
NJSAP@ArcNJ.org

On May 21st, Bianca Najera delivered a training to The Arc of Salem on My House is Your House: Living with Roommates. 22 participants were in attendance! This training is about team building, healthy communication, respect, and more.

New Resources

This new resource is available on [our website](#), or you can click on them to download them directly to your computer!

All About Consent



Consent is permission for something to happen or agreement to do something.

It is NOT consent if...

- 🚫 someone says "no."
- 🚫 someone is forced or pressured.
- 🚫 someone is sleeping/passed out.
- 🚫 if someone doesn't say anything.
- 🚫 someone changes their mind.



Consent must be...

- 👍 voluntary.
- 👍 set with rules and boundaries.
- 👍 asked each time.
- 👍 clear.
- 👍 understood by all of the people involved.



Give/get consent when...

- ✍️ posting online.
- ✍️ asking to borrow something.
- ✍️ in sexual situations.
- ✍️ making non-sexual physical contact.
- ✍️ making any interaction with another person.



- 📌 Be confident with your decision.
- 📌 Make sure you understand what is being asked.
- 📌 It's always ok to say no!

- 📌 Make sure you can think clearly.
- 📌 It is okay to change your mind.
- 📌 Don't be afraid to hurt someone's feelings!

Giving and getting consent is a big part of advocacy! Follow these tips to make sure you are always giving and receiving consent properly.

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



Quick Tip: Use an 'I statement' when expressing needs. For example, I need a little more time to finish this.

It is important you express your needs clearly and frequently.

Your self-advocacy skills grow every time you communicate what you need.

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: Domestic Violence and People with Disabilities - Part 3, What We Can Do.



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 Get Out The Vote (GOTV) Guide that The Arc of NJ puts out annually.

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!



Upcoming NJSAP Events

On July 17 NJSAP will have a table at Pier Village in Long Branch, NJ.

We are inviting advocates from around NJ to come give out information on Disability Pride Month, The Anniversary of the signing of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), and information about NJSAP and the NJSSAN.

The table will be set up from 10am - 2pm, in between The Robinson Ale house and 7-11!

RSVP HERE!

**Come Celebrate
Disability Pride &
The ADA Anniversary
with NJSAP!**

When
July 17, 2026
10am – 2pm



Where

1 Chelsea Ave, Long Branch
*In Between the 7-11 and
Robinson Ale House

**Come hand out resources,
spread information, and have
fun!**

Visit <https://www.arcnj.org/programs/njsap> to RSVP!!

**NJSAP
PRESENTS**

**ADVISOR SUPPORT
MEETINGS**

Designed to support
advocacy group advisors!

JUNE 04 **SEPT 03** **DEC 03**

11AM ON ZOOM

Click here to join

NJSAP will now be holding a quarterly meeting to support Advocacy Group Advisors (Support Staff).

This meeting is designed to supply Advocacy Group Advisors with support and instill confidence in their position.

Join us on June 4th at 11am on
Zoom:
<https://us06web.zoom.us/j/82583118988>

Save the Date for NJSAP's Annual
Fall Conference!
In Person!
October 2nd, 2026 at
Pines Manor in Edison

Save the Date

The 42nd Annual
NJ Statewide Self-Advocacy Network
Fall Conference



**OCT
02**

Pines Manor
2085 Lincoln Hwy.
Edison, NJ 08817

Registration opens
this summer




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.



Summer EBT is a Federal Child Nutrition Program that provides qualifying families with a **one-time \$120 EBT card** per eligible child to help purchase groceries during the summer. Eligible students will receive a new Summer EBT card each year!

Remember, Summer EBT Benefits have a strict time limit. Eligible Families who receive Summer EBT funds have 12 days (approximately 4 months) to use their benefits. Benefits are not used within the 122-day time period, the funds will be returned to the federal government and cannot be reissued.

Dual participation in the Summer EBT program is prohibited. This means that children may not receive multiple benefit allotments from the same State, or from more than one State, each summer.

To see if your child is eligible to receive a NJ Summer EBT benefit card this summer, use the [Summer EBT Student Eligibility Look-Up Tool](#).

I HAVE QUESTIONS ABOUT:	WHO DO I CONTACT?
- Activating My Card - My Summer EBT Balance - Changing My PIN - Reporting a Lost, Stolen, or Damaged Card - Request a Replacement Card - Lock/Unlock My Card	EBT Card Customer Service 1-800-997-3333 ConnectEBT Mobile App Available on Apple and Android/Google 
If your child attends a participating school: - My Child's Eligibility Status - The Address Where My Card Was Mailed - The Date of Birth Listed for My Child	Scan Here to Confirm Your Child's Eligibility Or Call Your Child's School to Confirm Eligibility 
If your child <u>does not</u> attend a participating school or is home-schooled and between the ages of 6-16: - My Child's Eligibility Status - The Address Where My Card Was Mailed - The Date of Birth Listed for My Child	Scan Here to Confirm Your Child's Eligibility Or Email: DENSummerEBT@ag.nj.gov 
To Opt Out (Decline) Receiving Summer EBT Benefits	Scan the QR code to Find the "Opt Out" Form And Click This Button to Opt Out:  

Summer EBT is a Federal Child Nutrition Program that provides qualifying families with a one-time \$120 EBT card per eligible child to help purchase groceries during the summer. Eligible students will receive a new Summer EBT card each year!



New Jersey Partners in Policymaking is now accepting applications for the 2026-2027 program year.

Applications must be received by June 26, 2026 and applicants will be notified of acceptance by July 27, 2026.

[Apply here!](#)

Join us at PALS Programs



PALS New York

- June 14- June 20
- Fordham University
- Ages 18-30

PALS New Jersey

- June 21 - June 27
- TCNJ
- Ages 12-30

PALS Boston

- July 5 - July 11
- Stonehill College
- Ages 12-30

About PALS Programs

PALS Programs creates inclusive camp experiences for individuals with and without Down syndrome. Our volunteer led programs change attitudes, transform lives, and inspire a world of belonging.



Summer 2026

Our program pairs individuals with and without Down syndrome together for a week of new adventures, while learning more about themselves and others as they build transformative friendships.

Participants spend a full week together (7 days, 6 nights) living in dorms, participating in on-campus activities, and taking on attractions in the local area. The cost is \$2,300 for one week, and tuition support is available.

PALS PROGRAMS

www.palsprograms.org 267-477-1257

PALS Programs offers week-long experiences where individuals with and without Down syndrome come together to build friendships, gain independence, and enjoy a fun, supportive campus environment. **Click on the flyer to download it to your device!**

DISABILITY RIGHTS NEW JERSEY
ADVANCING JUSTICE. ADVOCATING INCLUSION.

TAKE OUR SURVEY



Take DRNJ's 2027 Public Input Survey

Your feedback is essential!

As New Jersey's designated Protection and Advocacy system for people with disabilities, we are federally required to conduct a **Public Input Survey**. The purpose of this survey is to gather information and opinions that will help our organization's leadership set our 2027 priorities, goals, and objectives for the protection & advocacy of individuals with disabilities.

The results of this survey are meaningful to us beyond being a requirement. The survey collects feedback from a wide range of people about disability issues, and this valuable input helps us make decisions about the work we will do, including the cases we will accept.

Take DRNJ's 2027 Public Input Survey.
Your feedback is essential!

The purpose of this survey is to gather information & opinions that help DRNJ's leadership set the 2027 priorities, goals, & objectives for the protection & advocacy of people w/disabilities.

[Take the survey here](#)

Take part in these current action alerts!



TAKE ACTION: Share why Public Education matters to you!



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



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.](#)

NJSSAN Council Meetings 2026

2026 Calendar

Click on the image to download
the calendar

-JANUARY- S M T W T F S 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30 31	-FEBRUARY- S M T W T F S 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28	-MARCH- S M T W T F S 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30 31
-APRIL- S M T W T F S 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30	-MAY- S M T W T F S 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30 31	-JUNE- S M T W T F S 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30
-JULY- S M T W T F S 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30 31	-AUGUST- S M T W T F S 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30 31	-SEPTEMBER- S M T W T F S 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30
-OCTOBER- S M T W T F S 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30 31	-NOVEMBER- S M T W T F S 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30	-DECEMBER- S M T W T F S 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 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.

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.](#)

NJ Statewide Self-Advocacy Network Position Statements

The New Jersey Self-Advocacy Project (NJSAP) 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](#)

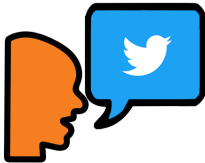
5. [Raising Awareness of IDD Issues](#)

NJSAP@ArcNJ.org

NJSSAN POSITION STATEMENTS
www.njsanet.org/position.html

732-749-8314

*You are encouraged to share this information with others who may also be interested. However, if you are forwarding this email, please delete the "unsubscribe" link at the bottom of this page. If you do not remove the "unsubscribe" option and a person who receives your forwarded email clicks "unsubscribe," 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 & New Jersey 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

[Unsubscribe](#) | [Update Profile](#) | [Constant Contact Data Notice](#)



Try email marketing for free today!