



Advocacy Matters

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

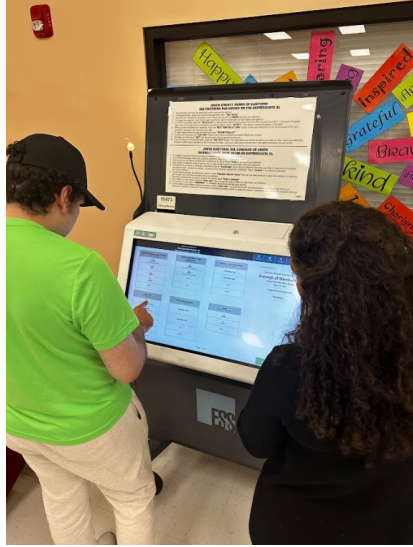
September 2025

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.](#)

September Events

On September 18th Union County Board of Elections brought two voting machines out to The Arc of Union's Mountainside location and participants got to learn about the machines, practice voting on them, and ask questions about the voting process. NJSAP Director, Erin Smithers, gave 2 voting myth trainings to help teach about common voting myths. Erin also helped check registration status to help folks get registered to vote if they weren't yet registered!



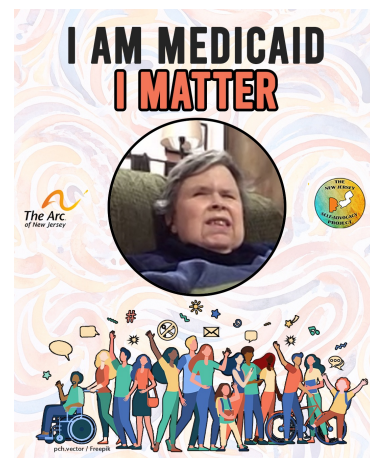
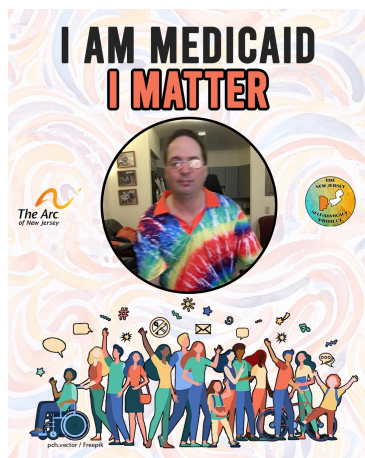


Campaigns

The New Jersey Self-Advocacy Project helps individuals with IDD around New Jersey participate in campaigns.

In September, NJSAP continued to highlight the importance of Medicaid and the people who rely on Medicaid with the 'I am Medicaid. I Matter!' campaign. Participants were asked to place a picture of themselves in the frame provided. Frames were posted on social media and on the NJSAP website. Legislators were tagged on social media to show how many people rely on Medicaid for daily independence, medical care, and prevention! A few of the templates are shown below but they are [all on our website](#) and on our social media platforms.

If you would like to participate you can [download the template here!](#)



NJSAP also started a fundraiser to promote this campaign and showcase the importance of Medicaid. All proceeds from this fundraiser go towards getting advocates in front of decision makers to advocate for themselves and others in NJ!

[Participate in this campaign and purchase your shirt here!](#)



Council Agenda Items

This month the councils worked on these items:

- This month the Councils participated in the "I Am Medicaid, I Matter" Campaign. [You can see their templates on our website!](#)
- The Ombudsman for Individuals with Intellectual or Developmental Disabilities and Their Families, Paul Aronsohn, will be visiting the Councils in October so the groups worked on topics of importance to talk to him about.
- 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 October!

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](#).



New Jersey Self-Advocacy Project
NJSAP@ArcNJ.org

On September 10th Erin Smithers provided a training for 150 participants from SCARC.

The training was Workplace Communication. This training helps participants understand respectful language, professional advocacy, and offers scenarios and case examples to see how participants would react in certain situations.

On September 11th Erin Smithers presented a training on Zoom for 12 students at SCCC. The training was 'What is Self-Advocacy'. This training goes over the main components of advocacy, offers participants a chance to work through situations and how they can advocate, as well as going over current advocacy

initiatives.

The **POWER** of Self-Advocacy



Express Yourself!

Building Communication Skills

New Jersey Self-Advocacy Project
NJSAP@ArcNJ.org

On September 29th Frankie Bayak provided a training to The Arc of Ocean on 'Building Communication Skills'. There were 13 people in attendance. This training provides a ground level explanation on the importance of how communication impacts your goals. A conversation between the Ocean group, about communication, continued long after the training was over!

On September 25th Frankie Bayak presented a training to The Arc of Middlesex on Respectful Communication. There were 15 participants. This training helps folks learn different ways to communicate respectfully. There are different scenarios that participants can work through to help express the importance of communicating in a way that gets your voice across while being assertive, not aggressive.

Respectful Communication

New Jersey Self-Advocacy Project
NJSAP@ArcNJ.org

New Resources

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

Tips for Effective Communication

LISTEN ACTIVELY

Give your full attention, avoid interruptions, use nonverbal cues, and reflect to understand and validate the speaker's message and emotions.

PRACTICE EMPATHY

Make an effort to understand other people's point of view, show empathy, and use relatable examples. Build rapport for meaningful interactions.

SPEAK CLEARLY

Organize your thoughts, use simple language, start with key points and then elaborate, eliminate distractions, and seek feedback.



VOTING MYTHS VS VOTING FACTS

B I U E X

Every day in October, we will be posting a new fact about voting. The full list of myths and facts will also be available on our website!

Take the quiz below and see if you can separate fact from fiction! Make sure to check your score and see the correct answers!

Important Voting Dates in NJ:

Voter Registration Deadline - October 14th

Early Voting - October 25 to November 2

Mail-In Ballot Application Deadline - October 28

General Election - November 4

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

Try a New Way to Advocate!



Quick Tip: Try a new way to advocate! Trying something new builds new skills, and confidence, and presents new opportunities! New experiences can stimulate the brain, promoting the ability to form new neural connections. It improves cognitive flexibility, memory, and problem-solving skills. Trying new things can also release dopamine that helps boost your mood and promote a sense of accomplishment.

When you step out of your comfort zone you expose yourself to different perspectives and experiences, broadening your worldview and strengthening your social bonds to those around you.

You also strengthen your advocating skills and start networking with new people who could help push your campaign further!

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
- Ramps
- to have an equal level of privacy

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.njsvrs.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.njsvrs.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.njselladvocacyproject.org

The Arc of New Jersey

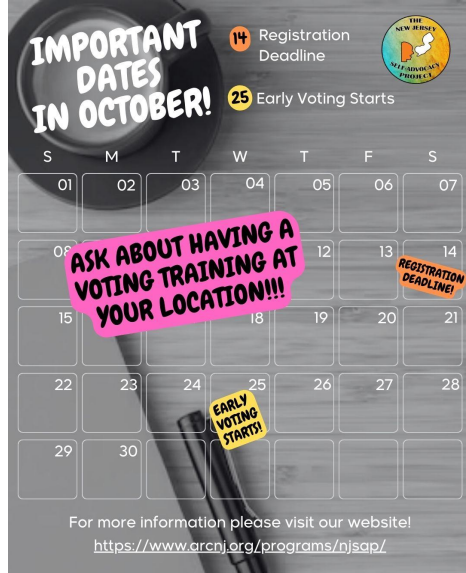
GET OUT THE VOTE

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

www.GOTVNJ.org

Great Seal of the State of New Jersey

Your Vote is Your Voice.



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

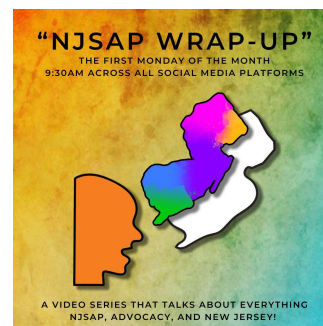
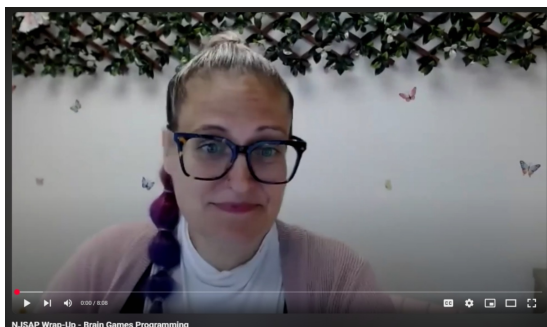


Starting in October we will be introducing "30 Days of Voting Myths vs Voting Facts". If you took our quiz you can follow along each day to find the answers to each question! Resources and information will be posted everyday throughout October.

[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, with special guests Steven and Daniel Knox, talked about NJSAP's Brain Games programming. A great way to network and get to know others around NJ. **Click on the image to visit the playlist and watch the video.**

New Executive Director Celine Fortin



Please join us in congratulating Celine Fortin! Celine was appointed as The Arc of New Jersey's Executive Director on October 1st.

Celine has been with The Arc for 35 years! In her time with The Arc of New Jersey Celine was (and is) an integral part of daily operations. Celine started out as a Research Assistant, then Director of Public Relations, Senior Director of Community Relations, and then Associate Executive Director.

Celine is passionate about advocacy! She has worked closely with NJSAP and the NJSSAN and we look forward to continuing that relationship!

Congratulations Celine!

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), and 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

Don't currently have an advocacy group at your location? The New Jersey Self-Advocacy Project can also help you start an advocacy group!

We have specific trainings to help establish successful groups. We have trainings on how to get a group started, how to keep members, how to build an agenda, how to develop a mission statement, and keys for continued success.

We also provide advisor trainings to help give staff members the tools to support their advocacy group and are available to provide resources for your group on a variety of topics!

We want to be a resource for your group!

Reach out today!



WANT TO START AN ADVOCACY GROUP?

NJSAP can provide free trainings to help you start, and maintain, a successful advocacy group for people with IDD.



Visit our website to sign up for your free trainings!
<https://www.arcnj.org/programs/njsap/trainings.html>

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.



**ACT NOW: Tell Congress:
Increase the SSI Asset Limit!**



**ACT NOW: Share your
Medicaid Story!**



The 41st Annual Fall Conference will be held on **October 3rd, 2025** at Pines



Respectful and inclusive language is essential for the dignity and humanity of people with IDD. However, much of society still does not recognize the hurtful and dehumanizing effects of the

Manor in Edison, NJ. [See the schedule or support the fundraiser here!](#)

"R" word. [You can help spread awareness and erase the word by signing our petition!](#)

REGISTER TO VOTE!

Join NJSAP Staff at the Springfield Farmers Market for our Voting Registration Table!



Springfield Public Library, 66 Mountain Ave.

JOIN US!! » Monday, October 6th
1-6pm

Volunteer at
our table:



Email Us to RSVP:
NJSAP@ArcNJ.org

Join us on October 6th at the Springfield Farmers Market, held at the Springfield Public Library. Come learn all about NJSAP, NJSSAN, and register to vote!

30 DAYS OF VOTING MYTHS VS VOTING FACTS



Everyday, for 30 days, we will be posting a new fact about voting. The full list of myths and facts will also be available on our website!

Important Voting Dates in NJ:

Voter Registration Deadline - October 14th

Early Voting - October 25 to November 2

Mail-In Ballot Application Deadline - October 28

General Election - November 4

[Get ready for a month full of voting questions by taking our voting quiz!](#)

Everyday in October we will be posting a voting misconception, along with the truth. We will also post resources so you can learn more about that voting truth.

NJSSAN Calendars



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

2025

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
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
		AB. September 29
October	November	December
1. October 16	1. November 20	
2. October 23	2. November 20	
3. October 14	3. November 11	
4.5. October 15	4.5. November 19	
	AB. November 24	

NEW JERSEY STATEWIDE SELF-ADVOCACY NETWORK

COUNCIL 1

3rd Thursday of each month*, 5:30-6:45pm
Hunterdon, Morris, Sussex & Warren
Advisor: Frankie Bayak
Fbayak@ArcNJ.org/732-749-8514

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

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

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

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

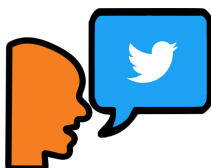
The New Jersey Self-Advocacy Project (NJSAP) is a program of The Arc of New Jersey established in 1983 to challenge individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities to become involved in events, legislative policies, and issues that affect their lives or lives of others with disabilities.

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.njselfadvocacyproject.org 732-749-8514

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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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