Advocacy Matters

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

September 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.

Welcome Gianna!

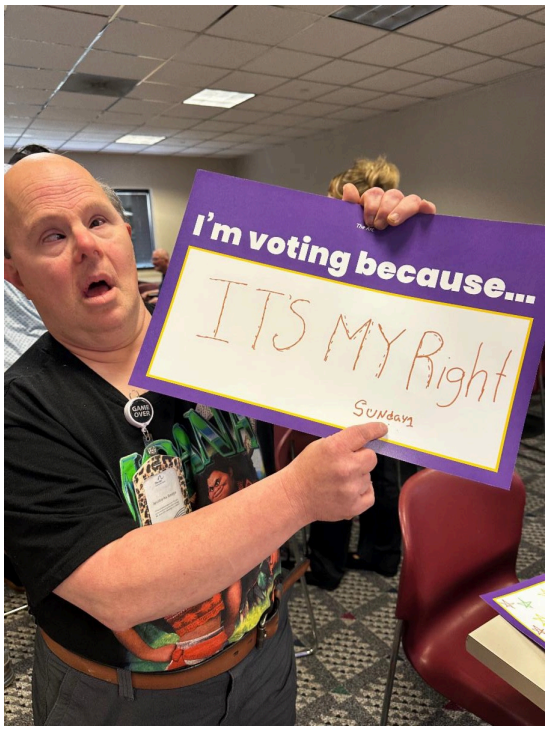
We are VERY excited to welcome the newest member of the NJSAP team, Gianna Morello!

Gianna is our new Community Liaison Coordinator.

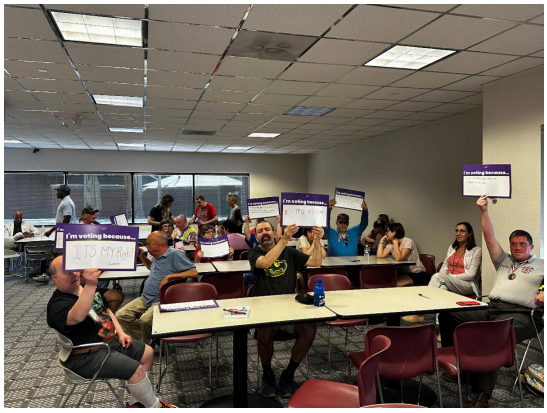
"Hi everyone! My name is Gianna, and I am truly thrilled and honored to be joining this incredible team. As a person with a disability, I bring a unique lived experience and perspective that I hope will contribute meaningfully to our work. I am passionate about advocacy, inclusion, and ensuring that every individual has the opportunity to be heard, valued, and supported. I look forward to fulfilling my responsibilities, collaborating with this wonderful team, and using my voice and experiences to help make a positive difference. Most importantly, I am committed to making sure that no one in our community is overlooked or left behind."

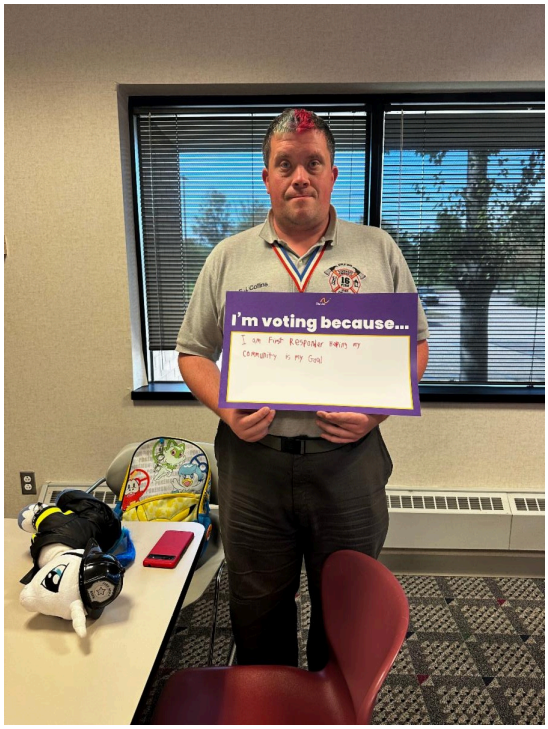


September Events

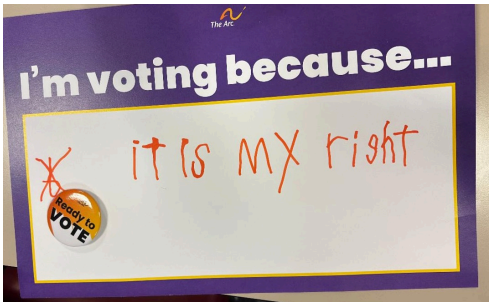


On September 9th, Erin Smithers presented a training about Voting and Voting Myths to The Arc of Hunterdon at their Community Advocacy Day. 45 advocates were in attendance. Participants also filled out posters with their reason for voting!





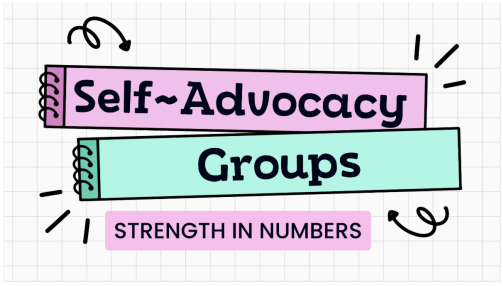




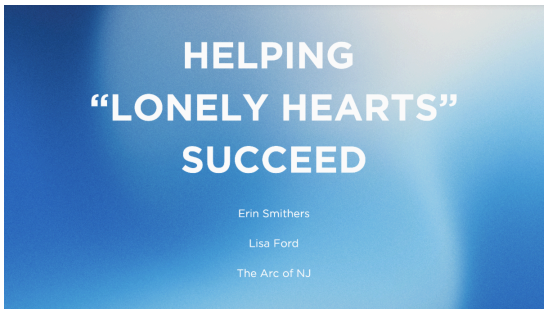
On September 17th, Erin Smithers also presented at Empowering Excellence in Atlantic City, a conference for Direct Support Professionals with the Local County Chapters of The Arc of New Jersey. Erin Smithers presented with Children's Advocacy Director, Adara Heilmann, and The Family Institute's Director, Jennifer Harrison, on how to start an advocacy group and how to maintain your group. 35 people attended.







NJSAP Director, Erin Smithers, and the Assistant Executive Director of Programs and Services, Lisa Ford, presented a training on 'Loneliness and People with Disabilities' for 73 professionals at the Middlesex Behavioral Health Partnership Convening on September 16th.





Council Agenda Items

This month our Council's worked on these items:

- Registering for the Annual Fall Conference
- Guest Speaker Lydia Dolch, from Open The Lid spoke with some Councils this month about their program and services.
- Guest Speaker Chris Miller, from DRNJ, presented a voting training for some Councils.

Advocacy In Action



@meyerforinclusion on Facebook and Instagram

"I've learned that growth comes with growing pains. There will be obstacles, doubts, and moments when progress feels slow, but those experiences help build resilience and strength. Keep believing in yourself and keep moving forward, because growth happens one step at a time. Growing pains are only a step in the right direction."

– Cobey Meyer, 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 September 17th, Bianca Najera delivered a training to The Arc of Salem on Stress Management. 23 participants were in attendance! This training is about identifying stressors and learning coping strategies.





On September 23rd, Bianca Najera delivered a training for Children's Advocacy program on Body Language. 384 participants were in attendance! This training focuses on understanding how our bodies communicate and becoming more aware.

On September 30th, Bianca Najera delivered a training for Midland Adult Schools about Employment and Pre-Employment Skills. This training focuses on how to gain employment, create a resume, and how to make a great first impression.



New Resources

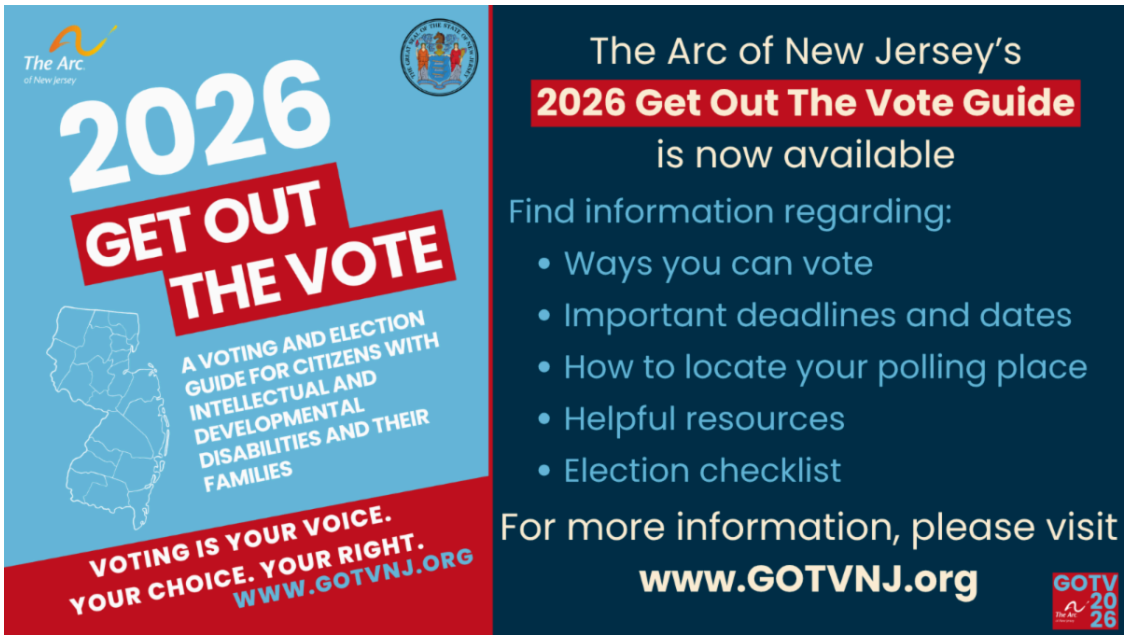
This new resource is available on our website, or you can click on it to download it directly to your computer!

GET OUT THE VOTE

The Arc of NJ's 2026 Get Out The Vote (GOTV) Guide is available now!

This Guide is meant to help you navigate your voting experience and it also provides resources, insights from individuals who vote, and important deadlines that you'll want to keep in mind as Election Day approaches. Remember, your vote is your voice!

Visit here to get your copy



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

CELEBRATING & APPRECIATING THE PEOPLE WHO MAKE A DIFFERENCE EVERY DAY

Quick Tip:
Take a moment today to appreciate the people whose everyday work keeps our community running. From teachers and healthcare workers to small-business owners and service workers.

NJSAP Webinars

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

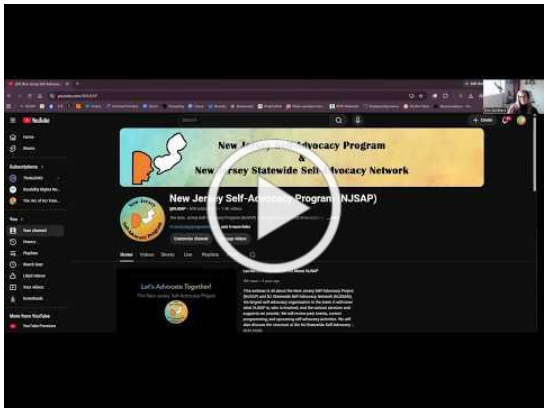
We present hour-long trainings every Tuesday at 2 PM on a variety of topics relating to self-advocacy and healthy living, available to view right from your home, office, classroom or wherever you may be!

View our latest advocacy webinar below:
Travel Training with NJTIP. NJTIP teaches folks with disability and older adults how to safely and independently travel using public and community transit throughout NJ.



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 walks you through our YouTube channel.
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.





Join the Arc of Hunterdon on 10/21 for an evening of learning, sharing and using your voice to make change!

Register here!

Join Healthcare Advocacy for their 3rd Annual Beverly Roberts Memorial Healthcare Symposium.

Register here for the event on November 4th!



There is a new study to learn about people with IDD and employment.

Take the survey here!



Join CAU on October 13th in Scotch Plains for dinner and a presentation on Special Needs Trusts!

Register here!

Take part in these current action alerts!

ACTION ALERT

Tell Congress: Protect Medicaid Home and Community-Based Services

ACTION ALERT

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

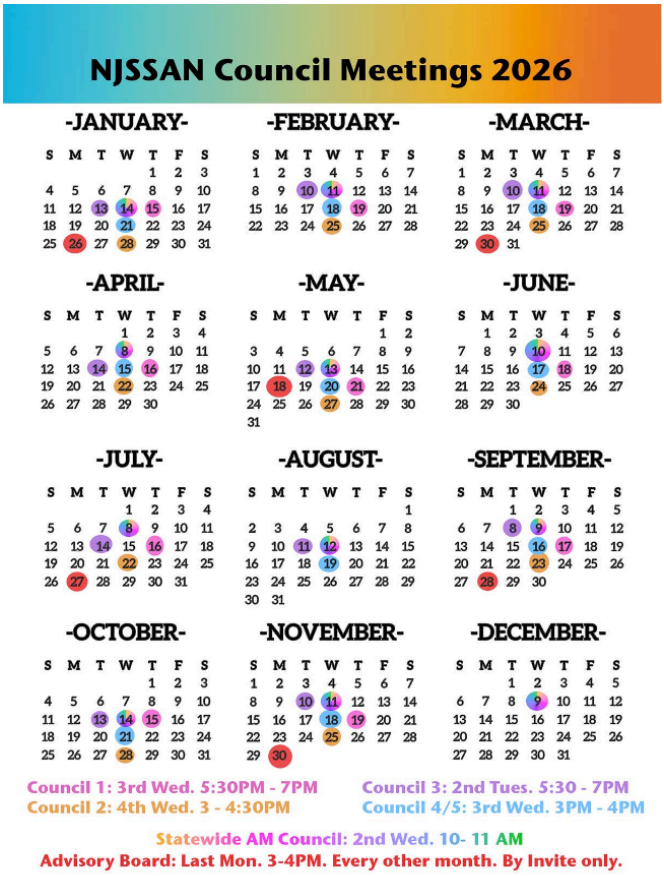


We are holding monthly NJSSAN Council meetings *virtually*!
For information regarding your Council area, please click here.

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

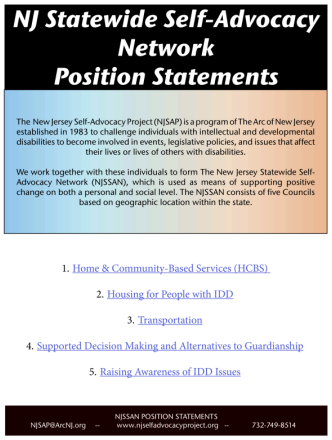
Join Council 5 Email List

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



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