Advocacy Matters

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

October 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.

NJSSAN Conference



Pictured from left to right: The Arc of NJ Executive Director Celine Fortin., DDD Assistant Commissioner Jonathan Seifried, DHS Commissioner Dr. Stephen Cha, NJSSAN Advisory Board President Shondel Greenwood, NJSAP Director Erin Smithers, DHS Deputy Commissioner Kaylee McGuire (Aging and Disability Services), and The Arc Board President Lauren Zalepka







NJSSAN Conference attendees.



Council 1 representatives, Kalahan and Victor, giving their Council update.

October Events

On October 9th, Erin Smithers attended NJAPSE's 1st Annual Summit at the NJ Law Center.





NJSAP Director, Erin Smithers, attended the HERHealth 2026 conference on October 16th in Edison, NJ. This conference brings together policymakers, healthcare leaders, and industry experts for a dynamic conversation on advancing women’s health across the lifespan.



Council Agenda Items

This month our Council's worked on these items:

- the 2027 Council Calendars
- 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



"Disability etiquette is not synonymous with pity. It means respecting our choices, presuming our competence, and asking what support we need instead of assuming what we cannot do."
– Morgan Neumann, NJSSAN Member, Author, 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 October 14th, Bianca Najera delivered a training to Midland on Workplace Communication. 37 participants were in attendance! 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 October 19th, Bianca Najera delivered a training to the Transition and Career Studies Program at SCCC on All About Self-Advocacy. 16 participants were in attendance! This training discusses speaking up, expressing your needs and preferences, making informed decisions, and advocating for your rights.



On October 20th, Bianca Najera presented a training for the Criminal Justice Advocacy Program on Sexual Harassment and Assault. This training helps participants understand what this is, recognize inappropriate behaviors and boundaries, and know where to seek support, report concerns, and advocate for their safety and rights.



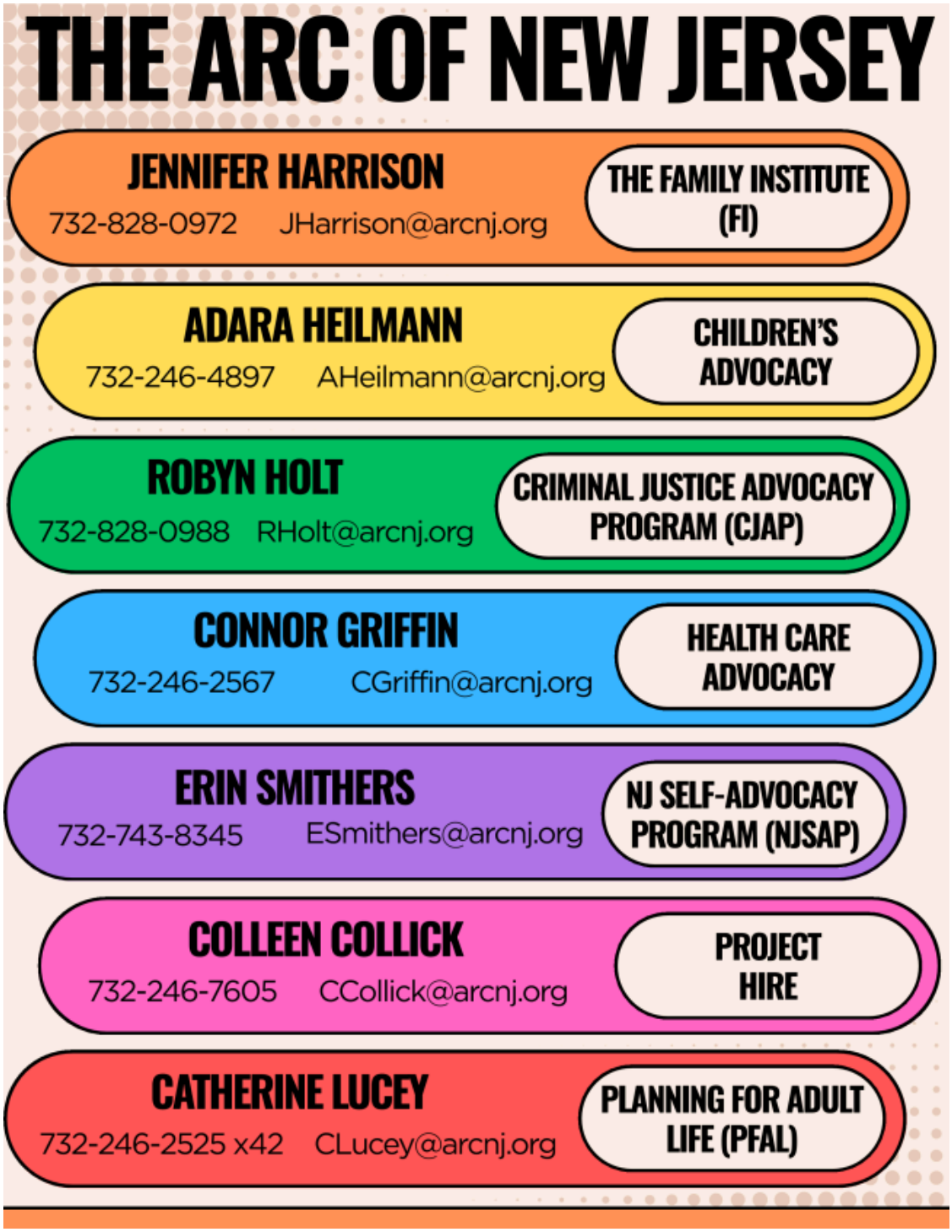


On October 28th, Bianca Najera delivered a training to Employment Horizons on Online Communications & Staying Connected. 26 participants were in attendance! This training helps participants learn how to communicate safely and respectfully online, protect their personal information, recognize scams, and maintain boundaries online.

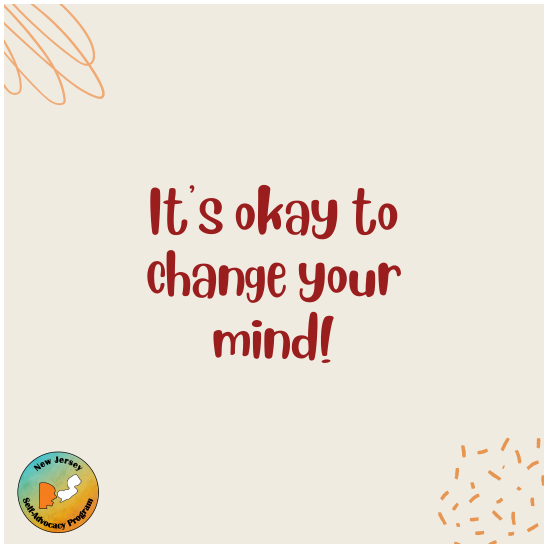
New Resources

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

Want to reach out to the other program's of The Arc of New Jersey, use this directory to reach out!
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:

It's okay to change your mind! If something no longer feels right, you have the right to speak up and choose differently.

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:
Nutrition Tips, presented by Deb Maloy from Tarrytown Pharmacy.



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

NJSAP Director, Erin Smithers, visited The Arc of Hunterdon this month for a Healthy Relationship workshop. Participants played games to help understand when a behavior is part of a healthy relationship or part of an unhealthy relationship while also learning how to speak up for themselves to people they trust.









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 Moceans for an inclusive Friendsgiving
Meal with friends and fun!
Moceans Annual Friendsgiving
Friday, November 11th
4-6pm
52 Evergreen Terrace, Red Bank, NJ
[Get tickets here!]



Join us on Zoom for our next GAAP meeting this Friday! We will be talking about the process of a bill and current bills that are of interest to the community!

[Join here on Friday at 11am!]



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



Smart Home Technology: Supporting Independent Living for People With IDD.

[Take the survey here!]

Wednesday, November 4, 6-7:30 PM
[Register here!]

Take part in these current action alerts!



[Tell Congress: People With Disability Belong in Their Communities!]



[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

CJAP
CRIMINAL JUSTICE ADVOCACY PROGRAM

Sign up for CJAP

CHILDREN'S ADVOCACY

Sign up for Children's Advocacy

The Arc of New Jersey Family Institute
Advocacy • Empowerment
Resources • Education

Sign up for Family Institute

PFAL
Planning for Adult Life

Sign up for PFAL



The Arc of New Jersey

Sign up for Healthcare Advocacy

Sign up for The Arc of NJ

NJSSAN Calendars



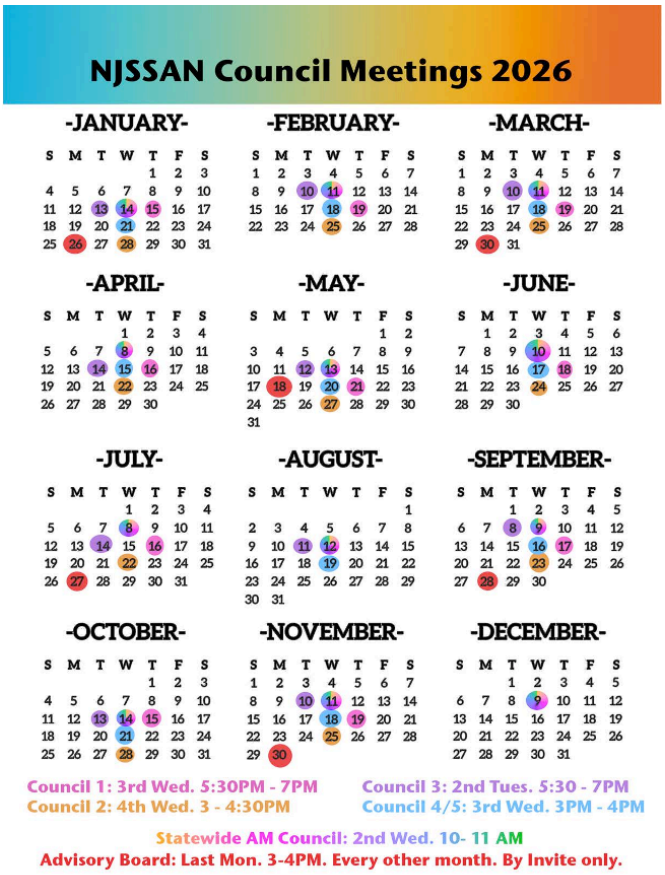
We are holding monthly NJSSAN Council meetings *virtually*!

For information regarding your Council area, please click here.

2026 Calendar

---------->

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

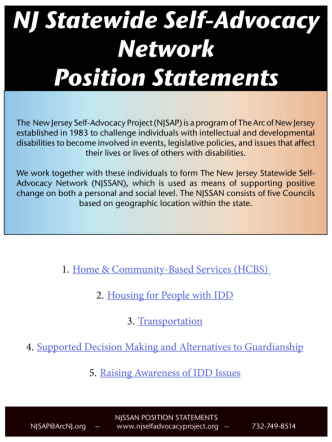
Join Council 5 Email List

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.

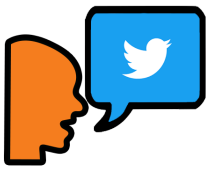
You can read the current NJSSAN Priorities here.



---

*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 | 985 Livingston Avenue | North Brunswick, NJ 08902 US

Unsubscribe | Update Profile | Constant Contact Data Notice

Constant Contact

Try email marketing for free today!