

Advocacy Matters

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

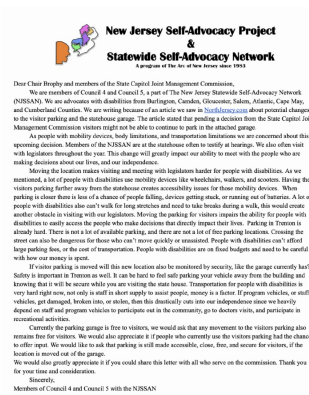
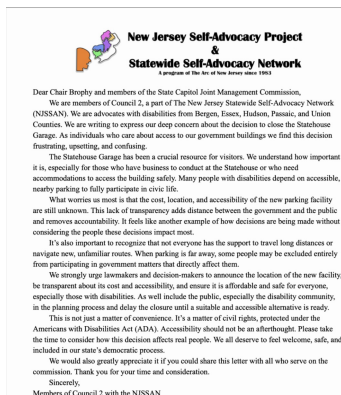
June 2025

We have a lot to say, so make sure to click
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Council Agenda Items

This month the councils worked on these items:

- **A letter writing campaign to ensure accessibility to the new visitor parking lot that might be moved from the Statehouse garage in Trenton:** The Councils want to ensure the new visitor parking lot will still be free, accessible, and close by, for easy access to the Statehouse. These letters were sent to the statehouse directly, as well as the State Capitol Joint Management Commission Members. See Council 1, Council 2, and Council 4/5's letters below. **Click on the images to download the entire letter.**



- **In Preparation of the June 10th Primaries, and in anticipation of the upcoming election in November, the Councils worked on voting**

registration, voting quotes, and voting trainings.

- **Members also participated in surveys from NJCDD and Access Link.** If you would also like to participate in these surveys they are listed below in the "Get Involved" section.
- **Council 2 commented on a [SPAN article about ADA guideline violations](#):** "We are Council 2 of the NJSSAN, an advocacy group in NJ and it can feel like some businesses don't want to treat people with disabilities equally. If a business is accessible it should not be segregated. It should be a good standard of quality for everyone with a disability and not have separate entrances in the back, where we feel guilty about having to use those accessible entrances. I think that businesses should listen to people with disabilities and do what's right. You should think about what people with disabilities need. People with disabilities should not be an afterthought, they should not be left behind."

Advocacy Trainings

On May 28th, the Director of NJSAP, Erin Smithers, presented a training, to over 60 professionals, on Advocacy Misconceptions at the 'Supporting Youth and Adults with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities Convening'. Erin talked about the importance of support staff when it comes to promoting confidence and advocacy efforts for people with IDD. The convening was held at the Professional Conference Center at ESCNJ in Piscataway.



On June 4th, Director of NJSAP, Erin Smithers, presented a training to family members and advocates with The Arc of NJ's Children's Advocacy Program. Erin talked about the importance of self-advocacy and how to stay involved as a young adult. This training was held on zoom and is available from [The Children's Advocacy Program](#) for re-watch, or to watch if you were unable to make it.

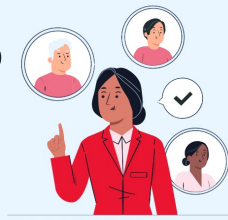
On June 6th, Bianca Najera presented a training for Employment Horizons Inc. on Anti-Bullying. There were 50 participants. Bianca covered the different types of bullying, its emotional and social impact, and how each of us can play a role in building a safer, more inclusive, and respectful environment for everyone. We also shared helpful resources and strategies for preventing bullying.



On June 11th, Bianca Najera presented a

Reverse Job Fair

New Jersey Self-Advocacy
Project
NJSAP@arcnj.org



training for SCARC on Reverse Job Fairs. There were 150 participants. Bianca covered the concepts and benefits of reverse job fairs, preparation tips, and successful examples. We also discussed strategies for organizing and marketing the event, best practices, and common challenges and solutions.

On June 18th Erin Smithers was part of a panel on Zoom-Middlesex County Behavioral Health Partnership Convening: Facilitated Discussion on Supporting Youth and Adults with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities. There were 38 participants. Erin talked about how to support individuals who are having trouble navigating the system. Erin also talked about how advocacy starts small, and talked about common advocacy misconceptions.



Facilitated Discussion: Supporting Youth and Adults with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities

Middlesex County Department of Community Services, Office of Human Services
In collaboration with Center for Health Care Strategies

June 18, 2025, 2:00 pm – 3:00 pm ET

Group Discussion

Ruby will facilitate a group discussion where Robyn, Erin, Alexa, Health and Child Welfare, CHCS Dr. Tili, and Alyssa will answer questions from attendees about Robyn Holt, LSW, MA, Director, Criminal Justice Advocacy Program, The

Arc of New Jersey

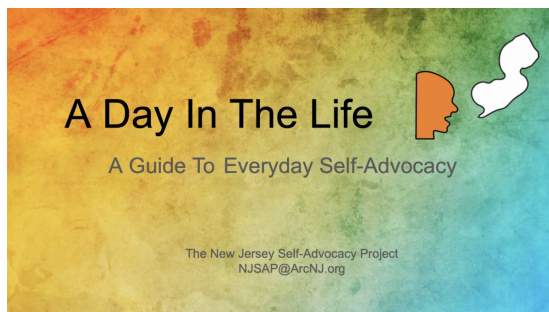
Erin Smithers, Director, NJ Self-Advocacy Project, The Arc of New Jersey

Alexa Morales, MS, LPC, ACS, Director of Clinical Services, PerformCare

David Tili, PhD, IDD Manager, PerformCare

Alyssa Lacey, Transition & Employment

Specialist, Division of Developmental Disabilities



On June 18th Director Erin Smithers also presented a training to the new advocacy group with The Arc of Morris, Arc Angels United. Erin talked about everyday advocacy and also the importance of Action Alerts and how to stay connected. The training was held at the Morris County Library, in Whippany NJ, to 11 group members.

On June 24th Erin Smithers presented a training to 9 advocates with Arc A.E.R.O.s, an advocacy group with The Arc of Union. The training was on Action Alerts and ongoing advocacy campaigns. The training was held at The Arc of Union in Springfield, NJ. Participants also participated in a current action alert!



NJSAP Reach

NJSAP would like to stay in touch with advocacy groups around the state!

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



Division of
Developmental
Disabilities



On June 17th Erin sat in on [The Division's Self-Advocacy Advisory Committee](#). The Division of

Developmental Disabilities Self-Advocacy Advisory Committee is a professional workgroup of adults with IDD, staff from the Division of Developmental Disabilities, the NJ Council on Developmental Disabilities, and The Boggs Center.

On June 20th Erin sat in on [The Arc A.E.R.O.s Advocacy Group](#)

with The Arc of Union.

At their June meeting, The Arc A.E.R.O.s talked about the upcoming election and the recent Primary election. They also discussed the two Gubernatorial candidates that were chosen during the Primaries.

New Resources

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

WHAT CAN NJSAP DO FOR YOU?

02 TRAININGS
The NJSAP team offers a wide variety of trainings for adults and students with IDD. A member of our team will present a training for your group free of charge! [Schedule your training here!](#)

03 WEBINARS
Our webinars are for adults and students with intellectual and developmental disabilities, their family members, and Direct Support Professionals, on an array of topics. [Webinars are every Tuesday at 2 PM. Register here!](#)

04 RESOURCES
NJSAP is committed to spreading information and resources to anyone who needs it! [On our home page](#) you will find information for upcoming events, information about our services, and downloadable flyers and infographics on a variety of topics.

05 NEW JERSEY STATEWIDE SELF-ADVOCACY NETWORK (NJSAN)
The NJSAN is made up of individuals with IDD throughout the state. The NJSAN is used as a means of supporting positive change on both a personal and social level. It consists of five Councils based on geographic location within NJ. [Find out more about your council here and how you can join our meetings!](#)

06 HEALTHY LIFESTYLES PROGRAM
[Sign up for our HLP Live events](#) for guided sessions relating to health and fitness for adults with IDD. There will be an HLP event on Zoom every Wednesday at 11AM, Thursday at 1PM, and Friday at 1PM. Event topics change weekly so you are sure to find something you are interested in attending!

01 INTRODUCTION
The New Jersey Self-Advocacy Project was established in 1983 to challenge individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD) to become involved in events, legislative policies, and issues that affect their lives or the lives of others with disabilities.

PROTECT MEDICAID

WE NEED YOU TO TAKE ACTION!!

On May 22, The House of Representatives approved a budget bill that would cut \$800 billion from Medicaid and \$300 billion from SNAP.

The bill now moves to the Senate.

WHAT IS MEDICAID?

Medicaid is a joint federal and state program that provides health insurance and access to long-term supports and services to more than 1,722,000 New Jerseyans.

WHAT IS SNAP?

Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) Helps low income families, including people with disabilities, afford groceries and put food on the table.

Over half of Medicaid spending is on seniors and individuals with disabilities (52%).

[Source](#)

Over 300,000 older adults and people with disabilities in New Jersey receive essential health coverage through NJ FamilyCare, NJ's Medicaid program.

[Source](#)

If this bill becomes law

- States simply won't have the money to fund the care and services people with disabilities need.
- 16 million people could lose their health insurance.
- More people will go hungry, including millions of kids.

Any cuts to Medicaid and SNAP will hurt people with disabilities!!

TAKE ACTION HERE!! Tell Congress to reverse course and act to protect Medicaid and SNAP!

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



Quick Tip: Build connections. Collaborate with others who share your same cause. Together, you can amplify your cause and create a greater impact. The more people who speak up the louder your message will be. What better way to get involved with advocacy than with others who share the same goals! [Join our NJSAN Council meetings](#) to connect with other advocates in your area!

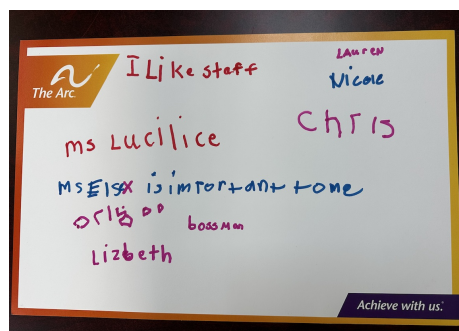
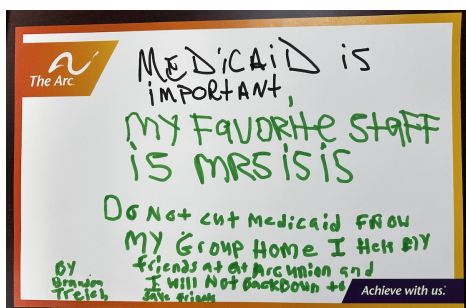
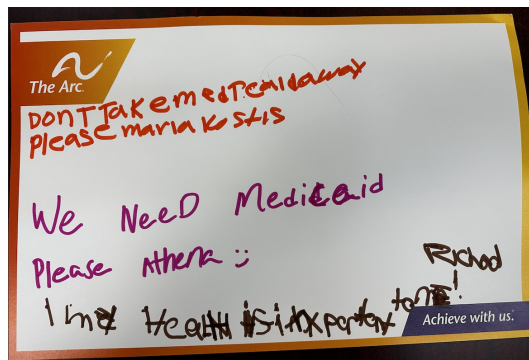
Campaigns

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

Advocates from The Arc of Morris and The Arc of Union participated in the #ProtectMedicaid campaign:



The Arc Morris's Advocacy Group, The Arc Angels, members on June 18th:



Arc A.E.R.O.s advocates from The Arc of Union on June 24th.

If you would like to participate in the #ProtectMedicaid campaign you can [share your story here](#) and use the hashtag: #ProtectMedicaid on social media!

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 Action Alerts. An action alert is a type of message that informs individuals about a specific issue and calls them to take a particular action to support or oppose it. These alerts are commonly used in advocacy campaigns to amplify a message and encourage collective action. They provide a straightforward way for people to engage in civic participation, such as contacting elected officials or signing petitions.

Get Involved

Want to get involved in advocacy campaigns, action alerts, or upcoming events? Here is what is available:



[ACT NOW: Advocate to Reinstatement Funding in FY26 Budget for People w/ IDD](#)



[Tell Congress: No Medicaid or SNAP Cuts!](#)



Join NJSAP at Funplex on July 21st, in East Hanover to celebrate ADA Awareness Month and



Disability Rights New Jersey is seeking input from people with disabilities, family members, professionals, health care and service providers, and the general

Disability Pride Month. We will be giving out resources and prizes!

[Register here](#)



The New Jersey Council on Developmental Disabilities (NJCDD) is creating a five-year plan that will guide their work from 2027 to 2031. The plan will be based on input from people like you! [Complete the survey here!](#)

public to guide in determining their areas of focus for the next three years. [Complete the survey here!](#)



[NJ TRANSIT's ACCESS LINK Customer Satisfaction Survey - Spring 2025!](#)

Please take some time to tell NJ TRANSIT about your travel experience. Your opinion makes a difference to help improve NJ TRANSIT.

Do you want to 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

January	February	March
1. January 16 2. January 23 3. January 14 4.5. January 15 AB. January 27	1. February 20 2. February 27 3. February 11 4.5. February 19	1. March 20 2. March 27 3. March 11 4.5. March 19 AB. March 31
April	May	June
1. April 17 2. April 24 3. April 08 4.5. April 16	1. May 15 2. May 22 3. May 13 4.5. May 21 AB. May 19	1. June 19 2. June 26 4.5. June 18
July	August	September
1. July 17 2. July 24 3. July 8 AB. July 28	3. August 12 4.5. August 20	1. September 18 2. September 25 3. September 09 4.5. September 17 AB. September 29
October	November	December
1. October 16 2. October 23 3. October 14 4.5. October 15	1. November 20 2. November 20 3. November 11 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

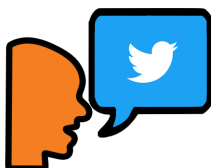
The New Jersey Self-Advocacy Project (NJSAP) is a program of The Arc of New Jersey established in 1983 to challenge individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities to become involved in events, legislative policies, and issues that affect their lives or lives of others with disabilities.

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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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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