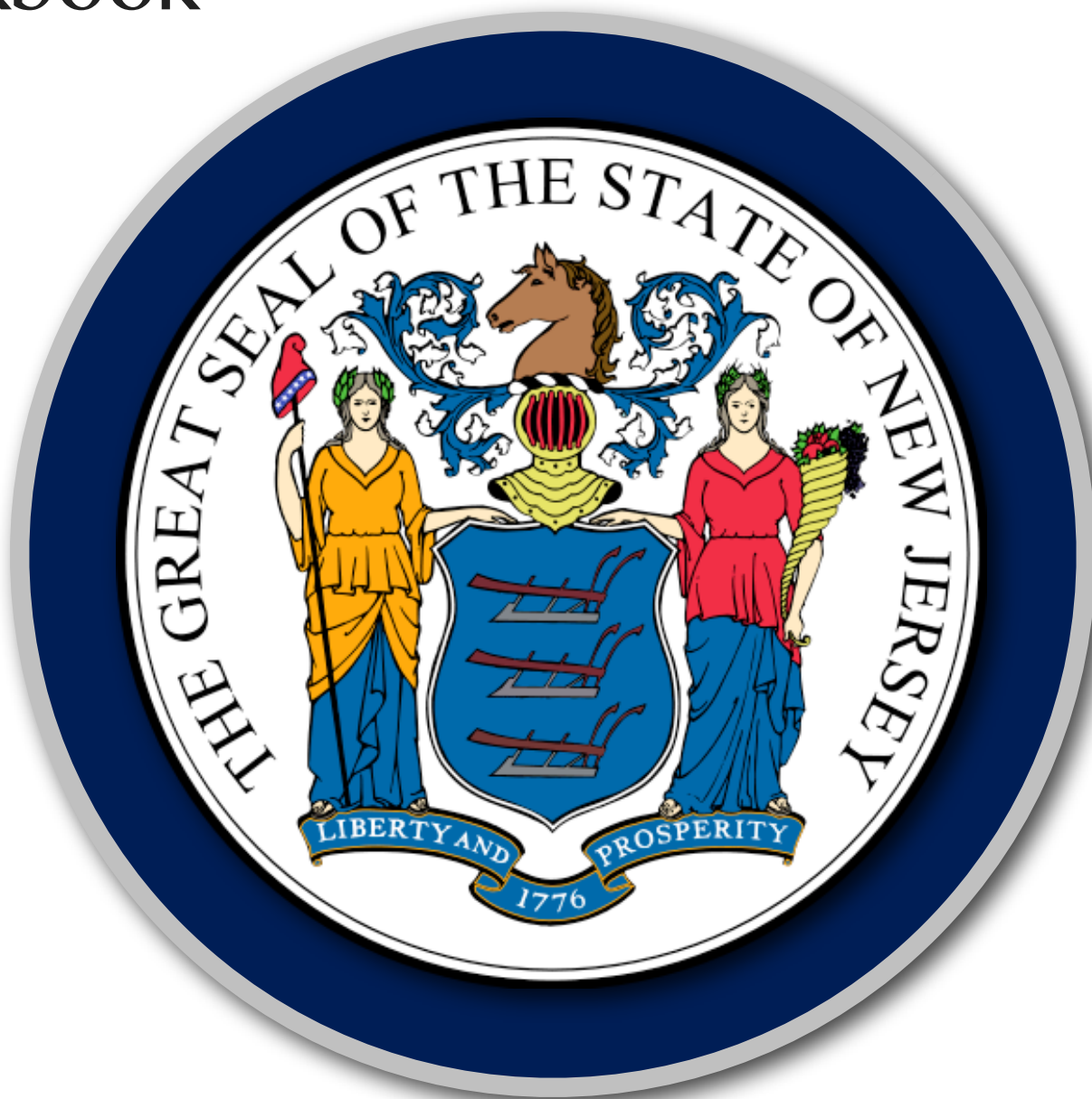


The Arc of New Jersey and New Jersey Self-Advocacy Project

Governmental Affairs

Ambassador Program

Workbook



The Arc of New Jersey
985 Livingston Avenue
North Brunswick, NJ 08902
p. 732.246.2525, ext. 37
f. 732.214.1834
NJSAP@arcnj.org



Achieve with us.

Walter Bender, President
 Thomas Baffuto, Executive Director
 985 Livingston Avenue
 North Brunswick, NJ 08902
 T 732.246.2525
 F 732.214.1834
www.arcnj.org

Dear Ambassador:

Thank you so much for joining in The Arc of New Jersey's public policy advocacy work and for your dedication to the self-advocacy movement. From working with many of you for several years, I know that you are all very good at making your voices heard.

Whether you have been advocating for years or this is all new to you, we are thrilled that you are getting involved with this new program. As a Governmental Affairs Ambassador, you're going to have the chance to talk directly to law makers in Trenton and in your own towns. You'll work with the NJSAP team to put together the ideas and words that will make people listen. You'll be a role model for other advocates and your community. And through it all, you'll have a chance to make a real difference, not only for yourself but for everyone with a disability

Thank you again for volunteering. Your dedication and support mean a lot to me and all the other advocates, families and staff at The Arc of New Jersey. I know that working together we can do great things.

Let's keep moving forward together!

Sincerely,

Wally Bender
 President of The Arc of New Jersey

For people with intellectual and developmental disabilities



The Arc of New Jersey

Our Mission, Vision and Core Values

The Arc of New Jersey is a statewide, private, nonprofit advocacy organization founded in 1947 by a group of parents who envisioned a **better quality of life** for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities and their families.

Every state has an Arc chapter, though the services offered by each chapter differ; some chapters provide direct services, while others focus solely on advocacy. New Jersey has 20 local county chapters and one state chapter.

The county chapters provide direct services, including day programs, respite, and group homes, while The Arc of New Jersey's main focus is **advocating for the rights and needs** of people with intellectual and developmental disabilities and their families statewide.

Special Programs of The Arc of New Jersey

1. New Jersey Self-Advocacy Project (NJSAP)

The New Jersey Self-Advocacy Project team supports individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities in learning the skills necessary to speak for themselves and exercise their rights. NJSAP team members also support people with disabilities to organize around issues of importance and to work collectively on projects of their choosing.

2. Public Policy and Governmental Affairs

Public Policy and Governmental Affairs staff work collaboratively with the Legislature and the Administration to insure that the well-being of individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities is a priority both legislatively, in regulations and in each fiscal budget.

3. Citizen Advocacy (CAP)

CAP ensures that individuals with disabilities have equal access to the supports and services which help them to be independent and integrated members of their community by providing case management services and volunteer advocates.

4. Criminal Justice Advocacy (CJAP)

CJAP is the only program of its kind in New Jersey that provides alternatives to incarceration on behalf of individuals with developmental disabilities who are defendants in the criminal justice system through advocacy, case management, education, and training.

5. Family Advocacy

The Family Advocacy Program organizes and assists family members of individuals with developmental disabilities to advocate at the state level for positive changes in public policy related to issues faced by individuals with developmental disabilities and their families.

6. Education Advocacy

The Director of Education Advocacy assists families and school districts in ensuring that children with disabilities receive quality educational services appropriately tailored to their needs.

7. Mainstreaming Medical Care (MMC)

The Director of the MMC advocates for quality health care for people with developmental disabilities, and monitors and advocates for changes in Medicaid and Medicare that affect individuals with developmental disabilities.

8. NJ Coalition for Prevention of Developmental Disabilities

The Coalition works to mobilize individuals, agencies, Governmental, communities and families in a strong statewide effort to reduce the incidence of preventable developmental disabilities.

9. Project HIRE

Project HIRE is an employment placement and training program for adults with developmental disabilities and provides transition services designed to assist schools in developing and implementing quality transition plans for students in special education programs.

Created by Ashley Ritchey,
Training and Technical Assistance Specialist
with the NJSAP

NJSSAN & NJSAP:

SEE HOW THE NETWORK OPERATES

The New Jersey Statewide Self-Advocacy Network

The NJSSAN is made up of thousands of individual self-advocates, as well as hundreds of local self-advocacy groups and 5 regional Councils across the state



NJSSAN: A Grassroots Mission

What is the NJSSAN?

The New Jersey Statewide Self-Advocacy Network (NJSSAN) is an organization dedicated to gaining respect and equal rights for all people with disabilities. The NJSSAN is made up of thousands of self-advocates, independent advocates, allies, advisors, and supporters of people with intellectual and developmental disabilities throughout the state.

The NJSSAN is made up of 5 councils and approximately 100 local self-advocacy groups.

- Council 1 comprises the counties of Hunterdon, Morris, Sussex & Warren.
- Council 2 comprises the counties of Bergen, Passaic, Essex, Hudson & Union.
- Council 3 comprises the counties of Mercer, Middlesex, Monmouth, Ocean & Somerset.
- Council 4 comprises the counties of Burlington, Camden & Gloucester.
- Council 5 comprises the counties of Atlantic, Cape May, Cumberland & Salem.

Each Council has a Chair and Vice Chair. Both positions are 3 year terms. The Chair and Vice Chair of each council are also members of the NJSSAN Advisory Board.

What does the Advisory Board do?

The Advisory Board is a group of elected self-advocates who represent people with intellectual and developmental disabilities in New Jersey. The AB meets once monthly to discuss the activities in their local groups and councils, as well as to brainstorm about public outreach activities, fundraising events, and upcoming legislative decisions that affect the quality of life for all people with I/DD.

What is an Independent Advocate?

An independent advocate is a person who is not a member of a local self-advocacy group or associated with a community provider, yet would still like to be involved in public outreach events, to testify before the Senate and/or Assembly, and to participate in research studies or surveys.

While NJSSAN membership was previously limited to individuals who were members of a local self-advocacy group or community provider, a new initiative to include Independent Advocates in the network will help to build the strength and power of the NJSSAN.

After all, there is strength in numbers!

Where does the New Jersey Self-Advocacy Project fit in?

The New Jersey Self-Advocacy Project, a special program of The Arc of New Jersey, is dedicated to assisting people with I/DD to gain the strength and support to successfully advocate for themselves and exercise greater control over their lives. NJSAP staff are responsible for supporting and facilitating the mission of the Network and its members. As a grassroots initiative, NJSAP does not dictate the direction of the self-advocacy movement but rather provides learning tools and resources to amplify the efforts and objectives of self-advocates.

"Never be afraid to raise your voice for honesty and truth and compassion against injustice...If people all over the world...would do this, it would change the earth."

— William Faulkner

grass roots, plural noun:

1. People or society at a local level rather than at the center of major political activity
2. The groundwork or source of something (i.e., change, improvement, equality, respect, representation)



The New Jersey Self-Advocacy Project

Established in 1983, **The New Jersey Self-Advocacy Project (NJSAP)** is a grassroots

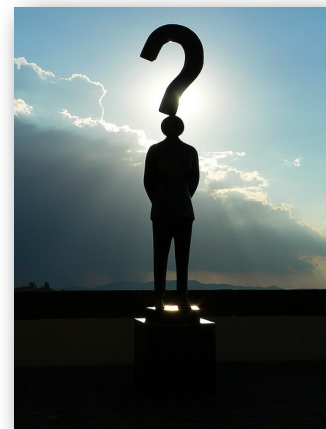
organization that supports the goals of the people and groups that make up the **New Jersey Statewide Self-Advocacy Network (NJSSAN)**.

NJSAP team members work to educate the public, as well as decision makers and legislators, about issues of importance to people with disabilities.

Team members with the Project are dedicated to supporting the goals and mission of the many self-advocacy groups and Councils throughout the state. As a grassroots mission, the agenda of NJSAP is created by the **aims and objectives** of the self-advocates themselves. The Project and NJSAP staff are a resource to all self-advocates and advisors across the state.

Why Self-Advocacy?

As a self-advocate, you know that self-advocacy **works** and can **affect great change** on a personal level, as well as a community-wide or statewide level.



Self-advocacy is a way to empower people to speak up for themselves and exercise their **rights**, as well as to express their **needs** in a respectful way.

Let's list a few ways that self-advocacy has worked for **you** in your life:

A.

B.

C.

Universal Declaration of Human Rights

This information was adopted from the United Nations' Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

Article I: All people are born free and have equal rights

Article III: Everyone has the right to live freely and safely

Article VII: The law applies to every person in the same way

Article XII: Everyone has a right to privacy; no one may interfere with another person's home, family, or correspondence (phone calls, letters, emails)

Article XVI: Everyone has a right to get married and to start a family when they are of legal age

Article XIV: Everyone has a right to speak and to think what they want; they have the right to share their ideas with others



Article XXIII - I: Everyone has a right to have a job and to choose what they will do for work

Article XXIII - II: Everyone has the right to be paid the same as someone else who does the same work

Article XXVI: Everyone has the right to an education

Know Your Rights!

Human Rights

The Right to Life

The Right to Choose, to Make Your Own Decisions

The Right to **Freedom**

The Right to be Heard and to Advocate For Yourself and Others

The Right to Try to Find Happiness

The Right to Eat What you Want

The Right to Privacy and Respect

The Right to Choose Friends & Partners

The Right to Choose Your Bedtime,

Personal Style, Music, Home

Decorations, etc.



Legal Rights

The Right to Vote

The Right to Worship and Practice Any Religion You Choose

The Right to Live and Work in the Least Restrictive Environment

The Right to Due Process and Appeals: you have the right to know what is happening and why your rights are being restricted, also how long they will be restricted.

The Right to Petition for Change: ask for a rule to be changed if you believe it is not good for you.

The Right to Equal Protection: **everyone enjoys the same rights** even if they have a disability.



Governmental Affairs Ambassador Program

What is the Governmental Affairs Ambassador Program?

Ambassadors are self-advocates who want to speak up for themselves and other people with disabilities in New Jersey. This program is a way for self-advocates to develop the skills necessary to **reach out** to legislators and decision makers, **educate** them about the issues affecting the lives of thousands of people with disabilities across the state, and **affect change** on multiple levels.

How can Governmental Affairs Ambassadors make a difference?

Ambassadors will have the opportunity to speak with legislators and other decision makers, and **educate them** about the **needs** of people with disabilities and their families. Legislators and administrators must be educated about **what people need** before they can make the best decisions about medical care, supported living, employment centers and public transportation, etc.



As an **ambassador**, you will have the opportunity to speak directly to the people making decisions about your life and the lives of thousands of other people with disabilities in New Jersey.

What will Governmental Affairs Ambassadors do?

Ambassadors will work with NJSAP team members to learn how the state administration and government operates and the most successful ways of affecting change at each stage of the legislative process.

Ambassadors will practice their public speaking skills and will be responsible for expressing their **point of view**, as well as the **needs** of people with disabilities, in a respectful and concise (testifying before legislators is limited to 3-5 minutes) manner.

You will also craft **personalized letters**, with the help of NJSAP team members and your support staff, that will let your legislators know who you are and where you stand on issues of importances of people with disabilities statewide.



Rights and Responsibilities

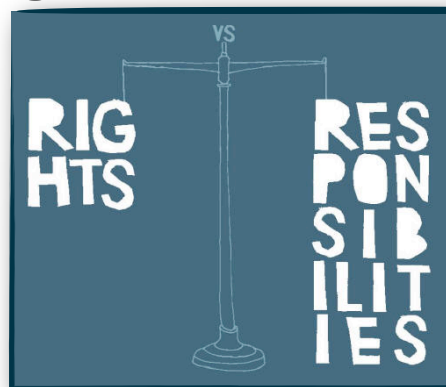
So, we know that every person has the **right** to life, choice, and freedom from harm.

Everyone has the right to be heard and to figure out what makes them happy.

Legally, every person has the right to vote and to practice any religion they choose.

We also have the right to eat what we want, wear the clothes that we want to wear, to make decisions without being told what to do by someone else, to make our own bedtime, to choose our friends and partners.

But rights cannot be discussed or enjoyed without also talking about **responsibilities**.



Rights: obedience to moral and legal principles and authority

Responsible: the ability or authority to act or decide on one's own, without supervision; having a capacity for making moral decisions and accepting of the **consequences**.

Responsibilities of an Ambassador

What do **you** feel are the **responsibilities** of a Governmental Affairs Ambassador?

What would you like to **accomplish** as a Governmental Affairs Ambassador?

Sharing Your Story

What was it like **growing up** with a disability?



Describe your experience in school.

What are some of the challenges you have faced as a person with a disability?

How have you overcome these challenges?

How did you get involved in **self-advocacy**?

What are the most important **issues** affecting the lives of people with disabilities today?

If you could change one thing about your life, what would it be?

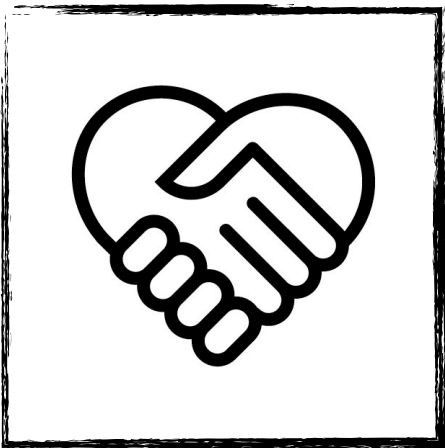


Communication and Courtesy Count!

As an ambassador, you will have the opportunity to speak, or **testify**, before the New Jersey State Senate and Assembly, as well as other members of the Administration.

For example, an important issue that is currently being discussed by the Administration is **deinstitutionalization**, or the closing of developmental centers and transitioning people into the community.

The issue of **deinstitutionalization** can be very emotional for people on both sides of the debate, so it is important to express your opinion in a way that is **respectful** of all people, even if they do not **agree** with your point of view.



Effective Communication

Think of a time when you were involved in a **debate** or **heated discussion** with someone (friend, family member, support staff).

What was the issue?

How did you express your point of view?

Was this the most **effective** way to get your point across?

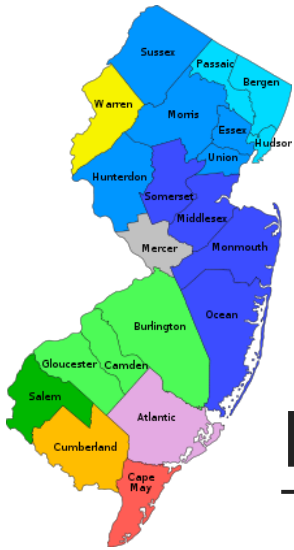
Did you “**win**” the argument?



What, if anything, would you have done **differently**?

What are the Issues?

Personal	Statewide



Branches of New Jersey State Governmental

Executive

1 Governor

18 Departments and Divisions

56 State Agencies

Legislative

40 State Senators (1 per legislative district, 4 year term)

80 Assembly persons (2 per legislative district, 2 year term)

Judicial

State Courts

How does each branch of the Governmental affect disability services?

Executive: Responsible for providing the actual services that people with I/DD use on a daily basis (ex: DHS, Dept. of Education); develop rules and regulations and make recommendations to the Governor about **policy and budget issues**; interact with independent service providers, like The Arc, through contracts and families.



Legislative: Responsible for developing and changing existing laws that affect people with I/DD. Legislators play a major role in the passage of the State's budget (determine how much **funding** will go into disability services each year)



Judicial: Provide guidance on existing laws (ex: what is a “reasonable accommodation” as mandated in the ADA); work to resolve **disputes** between parties.

How a Bill Becomes a Law

Legislative Process	What You Can Do
A bill is drafted.	If your needs are unmet, approach legislators with ideas. Example: the R Word law, effectively removing the word from all state documents (past and future)
The bill is introduced. (Tracked on Govnet)	Focus on the problems or pitfalls of the bill. Speak with self-advocates about their perspective on the issue. Example: Bill about assaulting a person with DD versus a non disabled person; Tom consulted Arc of Union SA's
The bill is referred to committee.	Chair decides which committee will hear it, based on topic. When bill is posted to a Committee, people can testify. MANY bills referred, but only a certain # actually discussed.
Second reading (Can be heard by S then A or vice versa; doesn't matter)	If the bill passed through the committee, it moves on to the State Senate and the Assembly. We reach out to the entire Senate and Assembly through Action Alerts, urging people to contact legislators in their district. Information info found on this website .
Third reading	Keep reaching out to your legislators, as well as the Senate and Assembly.
Governor's action 1. Sign 2. Veto 3. Conditionally Veto	Action Alerts continue; testify before Senate or Assembly; letters to local legislators. Example: Governor wanted a task force of 5 professionals to investigate DC's; chosen by Senate and Assembly. Check + balance.
The bill becomes a law.	Thank you's to appropriate supporters; continue to express your perspective to opposition.

New Jersey's Budget Process

The budget is a **bill** known as the **Appropriations Act**. It details how much money will be spent by all state departments during the **fiscal year**. It also details the **priorities** of every state department.



Calendar	What the State is Doing	Your Role
July - September	Governor is planning the budget for each department.	
September - October	The departments hold meetings for their budgets and submit their priorities and requests	
November - December	Departments make recommendations to the Governor.	
December - January	Governor reviews the departments' requests and makes decisions about proposed budget.	
February	Governor presents budget to legislators.	
March - May	Legislature holds budget hearings (open to the public)	
May - June	Legislature and OLS draft the Appropriations Act, which must be approved by both Houses.	
June 30th	Governor signs the bill (Appropriations Act) into law.	

Writing Testimony

Ambassadors will work with NJSAP team members to develop written testimony, which must be submitted to legislators before the advocate has the opportunity to testify before legislators.



Helpful Hints for Writing Testimony:

- * Always introduce yourself.
- * Keep your message short and simple.
- * State your position clearly. **Why** are you concerned about **this** particular issue?
- * Focus on one issue and **make it personal**.
- * Explain why the issue is important to your life and the lives of other people with disabilities.
- * **Always** be polite.
- * Thank the committee for taking the time to consider your testimony.

Tips for Speaking to Audiences

1. Find Your Passion.

It is easier to talk about something if you truly care about it. Refer to the **Sharing Your Story** section of this workbook to recall the issues of importance in your own life and the lives of other people with disabilities

2. Nail Down Your Point

Testifying before legislators is limited to a 5 minute **maximum**. You might not have the time to say everything you **want**, but we will create talking points that make sure the legislators to hear what they **need** to.



3. Use Your Imagination.

Visualize yourself giving the type of speech you want to. How do you want the audience to respond? What would make your speech a **success**, in your opinion?



4. Practice, Practice, Practice!

“So, to feel brave, act as if we were brave, use all of our will to that end, and a courage fit will very likely replace the fit of fear.” - William James

Delivering Testimony



Before taking the stand to **testify**, ambassadors will practice delivering their **testimony** with NJSAP team members.

Together, NJSAP staff and Governmental Affairs Ambassadors will create **talking points** to use as a guide when speaking before legislators.

Helpful Hints for Speaking Before Legislators

- * Thank the Committee for their attention.
- * Introduce yourself. Who are you and what group do you represent?
- * Make it personal. Share a story that explains why the issue is truly important to you.
- * Speak from the heart and make eye contact with the audience.
- * Thank the Committee for their time and consideration.

SAMPLE TESTIMONY

Testimony before the Assembly Budget Committee

Budget Hearings - FY 2010 Budget

March 20, 2009

Jane Doe, Member, The Arc of NJ's Governmental Affairs Ambassador Program

Good morning. Thank you, Assembly person _____ and the rest of the Committee for the opportunity to speak before you today. My name is Jane Doe and I am a self-advocate from Elizabeth, New Jersey. I am an Ambassador with The Arc of New Jersey's Governmental Affairs Ambassador Program.

I am here today to talk to you about the desperate need for more community based housing for people with disabilities. I lived in an institution until I was 23 years old. After transitioning into the community, my quality of life greatly improved. I found full-time employment and became an officer in a local self-advocacy group.

There are over 7,000 people with disabilities waiting for housing in the community. This number continues to increase and there needs to be funding in the budget to address this problem. I am asking you to include enough funds in the fiscal year 2010 budget to move 10% of the people on the residential waiting list into the community. This is a reasonable goal and would be a great start in working toward reducing the number of people who are on the waiting list with no certainty of a residential placement any time in the near future. Investing additional funds in the budget for community transition and placement would allow these people to see the light at the end of the tunnel.

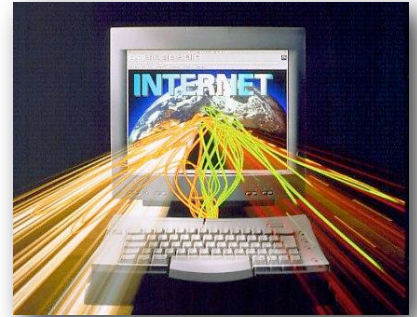
People with disabilities across the state who want to transition into the community need you to make this issue a priority in the budget. Please include funds to create more housing in the community. The daily lives of thousands of people with disabilities are affected by this issue and they are counting on you to make the right decision.

Thank you very much for the opportunity to speak to you today. I would be happy to answer any questions that you may have for me.

SAMPLE TESTIMONY

Advocacy Online

The New Jersey Library Association (NJLA) is a website that allows people to send messages and alerts to legislators, decision makers, and supporters in a few different ways.



1. Visit <http://capwiz.com/ala/nj/home> to find the legislators in your area. Every **county in NJ** has 1 elected **State Senator** and 2 elected **Assembly persons**.
2. Click on the **ELECTED OFFICIALS** tab.
3. Enter your **ZIP CODE** or **FULL ADDRESS**
4. A list of State Senators and Assembly people in **your** county will appear.
5. Click on the **CONTACT** tab to write to your legislators.

Here is an **example** of what you might see on the **NJLA website**. Photos of the 2 Assemblymen and 1 State Senator in The Arc of New Jersey's area are displayed, along with information about the Senators and Assemblymen: their political party, hometown, occupation, and political experience.



The screenshot shows the NJLA (New Jersey Library Association) website. The header includes the NJLA logo and a navigation menu with links: HOME, About NJLA, Advocacy, Honors & Awards, Initiatives, Communications, Resources, and For Vendors. Below the header, there is a section titled "LEGISLATIVE UPDATES" in red. Under this section, there are links for Home, Elected Officials, Issues, Election, and Media, as well as NJ Legislative Directory, President, and Supreme Court. A blue box highlights the "New Jersey State Legislative Directory" with a link to "Browse Directory Alphabetically". Below this, the letters A through Z are listed in a grid. A grey box titled "My Representatives" contains four portraits of elected officials: Governor Chris Christie (R-NJ), Sen. Bob G. Smith (D-NJ-17th), Asm. Joseph V. Egan (D-NJ-17th), and Asm. Upendra J. Chivukula (D-NJ-17th). At the bottom left, there is a link to "Change Location".

Internet Advocacy

The **American Planning Association** (APA) also offers a free advocacy tool. Not only can you find the contact information for State Senators and Assembly persons in Trenton, but you can find the address of the local (municipal) elected officials in your community.



1. Visit http://www.planning.org/_offsite/capwiz.htm
2. Click on the LOCAL OFFICIAL SEARCH OPTION
3. Type in your ZIP CODE
4. A list of towns and cities in your county will appear.
5. Click on any town to find out the Mayor's contact information, as well as other officials who can be contacted to affect change in **your** community.

[Home](#) • [Elected Officials](#) • [Issues](#) • [Election](#) • [Media](#)

[Congressional Directory](#) • [President](#) • [Agencies](#) • [Supreme Court](#)

Local Officials

[Local Gov't Search](#) » [NJ](#) » [Middlesex County](#) » South Brunswick TWP

South Brunswick Township

Address:
South Brunswick
540 Ridge Rd.
Monmouth Junction, NJ 08852

Phone: (732) 329-4000
Web: www.twp.south-brunswick.nj.us

Office & Contact Information

Mayor

Name:
Gambatese, Frank (x)

Contact Information:
mayor@sbttnj.net
Phone: (732) 329-4000

Council Member

Name (District):
Killmurray, Chris (x)
Deputy Mayor
Camarota, Joseph J. (x)

Contact Information:
ckillmurray@hoaglandlongo.com
Phone: (732) 329-4000
jbeatwork@aol.com
Phone: (732) 329-4000
chascarley@msn.com
Phone: (732) 329-4000
osullivan.john5@gmail.com
Phone: (732) 329-4000

Township Manager

Name:
Watkins, Matthew

Contact Information:
mwatkins@sbttnj.net
Phone: (732) 329-4000

This is what the APA
webpage for
contacting the local
elected officials in
South Brunswick
looks like.

Here
is an
example of the APA's
website for the State
Senator and Assembly
persons from District 20
in Elizabeth.

Click on the names in
blue to contact the
legislators in your district.

[Home](#) • [Elected Officials](#) • [Issues](#) • [Election](#) • [Media](#)

[Congressional Directory](#) • [President](#) • [Agencies](#) • [Supreme Court](#)

Elected Officials-New Jersey (07201)

Write Your Elected Officials

Select a message to send to your elected officials.

House: [Complete Streets Bill Introduced in House](#)
Senate: [Sustainability and CDBG in the Continuing Resolution](#)
Congress: [House to Vote This Week on Eliminating Sustainable Community Initiative Funding](#)
Senate: [Support the Livable Communities Act \(S. 1619\)](#)
Congress: [Support the Interagency Partnership for Sustainable Communities](#)
Congress: [Co-Sponsorship for the Livable Communities Act](#)
Congress: [Livable Communities Bill Introduced in House](#)
House: [Support the American Clean Energy and Security Act of 2009](#)
House: [Support HR 2454: The American Clean Energy and Security Act of 2009](#)
[Urgent Support Needed For The Nadler Amendment to the Recovery and Reinvestment Act](#)

Or compose your own message to [Federal](#) or [State](#) elected officials.

ZIP Code 07201 splits legislative districts (represented by *). Please enter your full 9-digit ZIP code (ZIP+4) below.

President & Congress	Governor & State Legislators
President • Barack Obama (D)	Governor • Chris Christie (R)
Senators • Frank Lautenberg (D) • Robert Menendez (D)	Senate • Raymond Lesniak (D-20)
Representatives* • Donald Payne (D-10) • Albio Sires (D-13)	General Assembly* • Joseph Cryan (D-20) • Annette Quijano (D-20)



Getting To Know Your Legislators

Using the Capwiz online advocacy tools,
let's find your legislators.

In which **congressional district** do you live?

Who is the **State Senator** in your district?

Who are the **two Assembly persons** in your district?

What **Committees** do they serve on?

Are there any **disability-related issues** they have supported?

Tips for Contacting Your Legislators Online

In the age of the Internet, it is **easy** to contact legislators. They receive a whole lot of mail that is not personalized; these mass messages are called **form letters**. These letters do count, but they are not as powerful as a personalized message from a real person who will be directly affected by the decisions a legislator will make.

1. **Always** introduce yourself.

Who are you? What group do you represent? Where do you live? Most important in the eyes of a politician or legislator: you are a registered New Jersey VOTER. Let the legislator know that you have done your research and appreciate their continued support on the issues of importance to people with disabilities and their families.



2. Make it as **personal** as possible.

Explain why you care about the issue. How will your life be directly affected by their decision (specifics!). Don't be vague; provide examples that will highlight how their decision could impact your life everyday.



3. **Thank YOU!**

Express your gratitude for their support and dedication to making the best decisions for all people with disabilities. People want to be recognized if they are doing good. Thank them for hearing you out, even if you don't quite see eye to eye.



OUTLINE FOR CONTACTING LEGISLATORS

The Honorable Robert Green
 New Jersey State Senate
 125 West State Street
 Trenton, NJ 08608-1101

This is a basic **outline** for
 crafting a letter to your
 legislators.

Dear Senator Green,

We will work on drafting a letter
 together, so this is just an
 example of the essential points
 you want to include in your
 message.

1st Paragraph:

- Who are you?
- Which issue are you writing about? One issue per letter.

2nd Paragraph:

- **Why** do you care about this issue? Be as **specific** as possible.
- Include a **personal story, anecdote** or **experience** that illustrates why and how this legislation would affect your daily life and the lives of other people with disabilities statewide.
- Don't be afraid to write from the heart, so long as you remain **polite** and **respectful**.

3rd Paragraph:

- **THANK YOU**, Senator, for taking the time to consider my suggestion.
- I humbly urge you to support (BILL # if possible), as the proposed legislation would be in the best interest of all people with disabilities and their families throughout the state. I greatly appreciate your support.

Sincerely,

YOUR NAME

YOUR ADDRESS

YOUR EMAIL ADDRESS

YOUR DAYTIME TELEPHONE NUMBER

OUTLINE FOR CONTACTING LEGISLATORS

SAMPLE LETTER TO GOVERNOR

The Honorable Chris Christie
Governor of New Jersey
125 West State Street
Trenton, NJ 08608-1101

Dear Governor Christie,

My name is Elizabeth Burke and I am a Governmental Affairs Ambassador with The Arc of New Jersey. I am the current President of my local self-advocacy group, The Speakers, and work part-time at a bakery. I am writing to you today regarding proposed legislation (include # if possible) that would increase funding for people with disabilities who are currently waiting to transition into the community.

I spent ten years in a developmental center before I made the decision to move into the community. The transitional process took many months and I was required to attend interviews with many people before I was placed into supported housing. Although the process was not quick or easy, I know that it was the best decision I could have made for myself. I love living in the community, close to my family and friends, and want other people with disabilities to have the opportunity to enjoy this level of independence, too.

I humbly urge you to vote for the bill that would increase funding for community housing options for people with disabilities. As many as 7,000 people are currently on the waiting list for housing, so additional funding is absolutely necessary to allow these people to make the transition and live the kind of life they envision for themselves. Thank you for taking the time to read my letter, Governor Christie, and I hope that you will take my suggestion to heart.

Sincerely,
Elizabeth Burke
123 Park Avenue, Elizabeth, NJ 07303
[email address or daytime telephone number](#)

SAMPLE LETTER TO GOVERNOR

Governmental Affairs Goals

The Arc of New Jersey's Governmental Affairs (GA) Committee determines the advocacy goals and priorities of the organization each year.



The GA Committee is made up of 2 Family Advocacy Program representatives, one self-advocate, and members of the board and representatives from various local chapters of The Arc. All goals are created with the quality of life and needs of people with intellectual and developmental disabilities and their families in mind.

Governmental Affairs Goals for 2012

1. **FY 2013 Budget Advocacy**
2. **Advocacy for New Legislation and Regulations**
(Ex: DDD Data, DD Trust Fund, Waiting List)
3. **Advocacy for Comprehensive Medicaid Waiver**
4. **DDD's Communication and Emergency Management**
5. **Deinstitutionalization**, specifically the closure of Vineland DC

How and why do the Governmental Affairs Goals change?



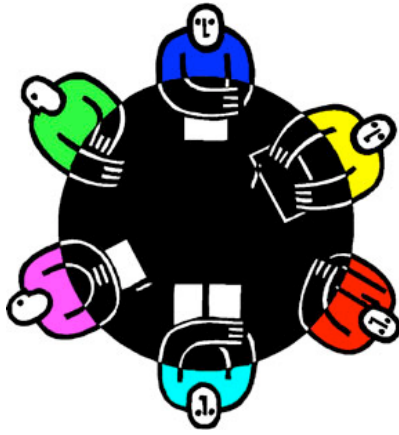
The Governmental Affairs Committee meets regularly throughout the year, so goals

and strategies may be adjusted according to new information, changes in political parties or suggestions from self-advocates or other members of the community.

Also, new bills or budget initiatives may come up that need to be advocated for or against.

To sum it up, GA goals can change due to:

- Changes in the political realm (re-elections, new legislators)
- Certain goals may no longer work or have been voted out, so another opportunity may arise to work on a particular issue of importance
- New legislation or budget issues may arise



Committees

Committees are an important part of the legislative process. Committees are a collection of individuals who possess certain traits (active, decisive, entrepreneurial) and in-depth **knowledge of specific areas/issues** that come together to make **decisions** about proposed legislation. Legislators are assigned to Committees by their Party (Democrat or Republican) based on their experience or knowledge of a certain subject area.

26 Committees exist in the New Jersey State Legislature. These Committees include the Appropriations Act (State Budget), Education, Agriculture, Consumer Affairs, Law and Public Safety, Health and Senior Services.

There are Assembly Committees and Senate Committees, as well as Joint Committees.

- Committees **review proposed legislation (bills)**
- Committees schedule hearings to **gather information** from people who will be affected by proposed legislation
- Committees allow **amendments to legislation**
- Committee members can **sponsor bills** themselves

New Jersey's Congressional Districts

“**Legislators** must act in the capacity of a **go-between** in the relationship of the average citizen with (their) national government. Much of a legislator's day must be spent in **answering letters**, running errands, showing the sights to visitors, and similar activities on behalf of his constituents.”



A congressional district is a portion of a state that has one elected member of the **House of Representatives**, which is one of the two Houses of the United States Congress.

The major power of the House is to pass **legislation** that affects the **entire** country. Legislation must also be passed by the Senate and agreed to by the President before it becomes law.

Congressional districts have 3 main parts:

1. **Representative**

(Congressman or Congresswoman)

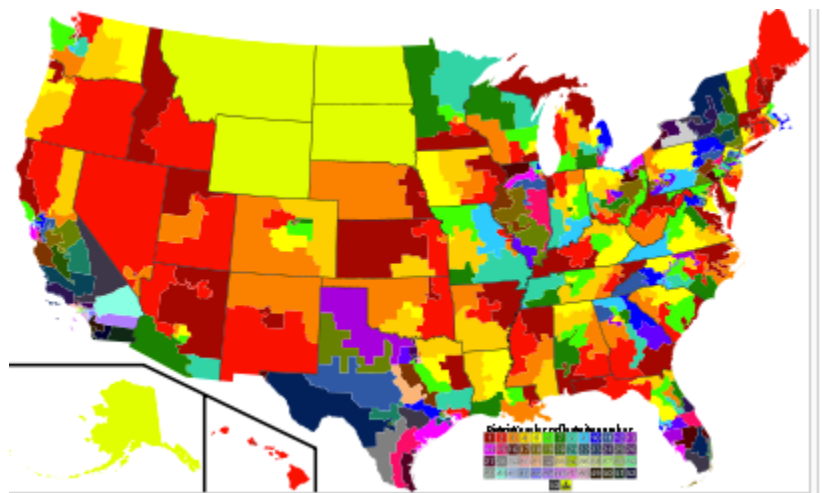
2. **Constituents**

(Residents of the district and the district itself)

3. Specific **land area** that the representative and constituents live in.

New Jersey currently has **13** United States congressional districts. The number of districts in each state depends upon the results of the **census**, which report the population of each county. For example, California, the most **populous** state has 53 congressional districts.

Redistricting can occur after the results of a census are reported. Redistricting can render certain districts **obsolete**, or no longer necessary.



**Map of United States
Congressional Districts**

Contacting Your Congressional Representative

As an Ambassador, you may want to contact your United States Congressman or Congresswoman regarding issues of importance to people with intellectual and developmental disabilities in New Jersey (statewide), as well as proposed legislation on the federal level (nationwide).

This [website](#) will allow you to find the United States Congressional representative in your area.

UNITED STATES HOUSE of REPRESENTATIVES

FIND YOUR REPRESENTATIVE
Enter your zip code **GO**

112th Congress, 2nd Session

[REPRESENTATIVES](#) [LEADERSHIP](#) [COMMITTEES](#) [LEGISLATIVE ACTIVITY](#) [THE HOUSE EXPLAINED](#)

Write Your Representative

This service will assist you by identifying your congressperson in the U.S. House of Representatives and providing contact information. If you do not know your correct ZIP+4, you may look it up online at the [U.S. Postal Service web site](#). Please review the [frequently asked questions](#) if you have problems using this service.

To contact your Representative:

Select your location from the list:

Enter your ZIP code: and your +4:

Click the "Contact My Representative" button.

CONTACT MY REPRESENTATIVE

Resources

- ▶ [Directory of Representatives](#)
- ▶ [Leadership](#)
- ▶ [Committees](#)
- ▶ [Advanced Search](#)
- ▶ [Site Map](#)

How to locate and contact the Congressional Representative in your district:

1. Click [here](https://writerep.house.gov/writerep/welcome.shtml) or visit <https://writerep.house.gov/writerep/welcome.shtml>
2. Select your **location** from the list of states.
3. Enter your **ZIP Code**.
4. Click the **red CONTACT MY REPRESENTATIVE** button. (Representatives will have an address in D.C., as well as a town/city in their district.)

My Congressional Representative is:



SAMPLE LETTER TO CONGRESSIONAL REPRESENTATIVE

*IF YOU NEED TO FIND THE NUMBER OF A BILL,
VISIT [THOMAS](#)*

The Honorable Leonard Lance
426 Cannon House Office Building
United States House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Representative Lance,

My name is Ben Saunders and I am a Governmental Affairs Ambassador with The Arc of New Jersey. I am also a Vice Chair with the Go Getters Self-Advocacy group in Washington, New Jersey; I have been an officer with the Go Getters for 5 years.

I am writing to you today regarding H.R. # , which proposes that people with disabilities be allowed to have more than \$2,000 in savings without losing their SSI benefits. I believe that the current regulation is unfair and discourages many people with disabilities from finding full-time employment; they are afraid of making too much money and losing their benefits.

As a person with a disability who wants to pursue full-time employment, I urge you to consider supporting this resolution. I want to be able to work and save money but I cannot lose my SSI benefits, which help cover the cost of my most basic needs: food, shelter and clothing.

Thank you, Representative Lance, for taking the time to read my message and consider my point of view. Please respond to my letter at your earliest convenience with information about this resolution and your perspective on this issue.

Sincerely,
Ben Saunders
123 Park Avenue, Washington, NJ 08702
[email address or daytime telephone number](#)

SAMPLE LETTER TO CONGRESSIONAL REPRESENTATIVE

Vocabulary Bank

Ambassador:

Committees:

Concise:

Congressional District:

Grassroots:

Legislation:

Responsibility:

Rights:

Testify:

Acronyms

A

AATF	A dults with A utism T ask F orce
ABD	A ged, B lind, and D isabled (NJ Medicaid)
ADA	A mericans with D isabilities A ct
ADD	A ttention D eficit D isorder
ADHD	A ttention D eficit H yperactivity D isorder
ADL	A ctivities of D aily L iving
ARRA	A merican R ecovery and R einvestment A ct of 2009
ASL	A merican S ign L anguage

C

CARF	C ommission on A ccreditation of R ehabilitation F acilities
CBVI	C ommission for the B lind and V isually I mpaired
CCR	C ommunity C are R esidence
CCW	C ommunity C are W aiver
CDC	C enter for D isease C ontrol and P revention
CHLP	C ommunity H ealthy L aw P roject
CICRF	C atastrophic I llness in C hildren R elief F und
CIL	C enter for I ndependent L iving
CIMU	C ritical I ncident M anagement U nit
CMO	C are M anagement O rganization
CMS	C enters for M edicare and M edicaid
CP	C erebral P alsy
C-PEP	C hildren's P lacement E nhancement P ilot
CQI	C ontinuous Q uality I mprovement
CRPD	C ommunity R esources for P eople with D isabilities W aiver (DDS)
CST	C hild S tudy T eam

D

DAS	D ivision of A ddiction S ervices (DHS)
DCF	D epartment of C hildren and F amilies
DCR	D ivision of C ivil R ights (DLPS)
DCs	D evelopmental C enters (DDD)
DD	D evelopmental D isability
DDD	D ivision of D evelopmental D isabilities (DHS)
DDHH	D ivision of the D eaf and H ard of H earing (DHS)
DDRT	D evelopmental D isabilities R esource T ool
DDS	D ivision of D isability S ervices (DHS)
DFD	D ivision of F amily D evelopment (DHS)
DHS	NJ D epartment of H uman S ervices
DHSS	D epartment of H ealth and S enior S ervices
DMAHS	D ivision of M edical A ssistance and H ealth S ervices (Medicaid-DHS)
DMHS	D ivision of M ental H ealth S ervices (DHS)
DOC	D epartment of C orrections

Acronyms

DOE	D epartment of E ducation
DOJ	D eartment of J ustice
DOL	D eartment of L abor & W orkforce D evelopment
DVRS	D ivision of V ocational R ehabilitation S ervices (DOL)
DYFS	D ivision of Y outh and F amily S ervices

E

EBT	E lectronic B enefits T ransfer, Families First Card (DFD)
EEOC	E qual E mployment O ppportunity C ommission (US)
EIS	E arly I ntervention S ystem (DHSS)
EITC	E arned I ncome T ax C redit

F

FASD	F etal A lcohol S pectrum D isorders
FFS	F ee-for- S ervice
FQHC	F ederally Q ualified H ealth C enter

H

HIPAA	H ealth I nsurance P ortability and A ccountability A ct
HMO	H ealth M aintenance O rganization
HUD	D epartment of H ousing and U rban D evelopment (US)

I

ID	I ntellectual D isabilities
IDEA	I ndividuals with D isabilities E ducation A ct
IEP	I ndividual E ducation P lan
IHP	I ndividual H abilitation P lan
I&R	I nformation and R eferral
ISP	I ndividual S ervice P lan

L

LOS	L evel of S ervice
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M

MAAC	M edical A ssistance A dvisory C ouncil (DMAHS)
MACC	M edical A ssistance C ustomer C enter (DMAHS)
MOU	M emorandum of U nderstanding

N

NI	N eurologically I mpaired
NICHY	N ational I nformation C enter for C hildren and Y outh with D isabilities
NJAC	N ew J ersey A dministrative C ode
NJACP	N ew J ersey A ssociation of C ommunity P roviders
NJAMHAA	N ew J ersey A ssociation of M ental H ealth and A ddiction A gencies
NJCDD	N ew J ersey C ouncil on D evelopmental D isabilities
NJSA	N ew J ersey S tatutes A nnnotated

Acronyms

O

OAL	Office of A ddministrative L aw (State of NJ)
OEM	Office of E mergency M anagement

OPIA	Office of P rogram Integrity and A ccountability (DHS)
OPRA	O pen P ublic R ecords A ct
OT	O ccupational T herapy

P

PAAD	P harmaceutical A ssistance to the A ged and D isabled
PASP	P ersonal A ssistance S ervices P rogram (DDS)
PASS	Social Security Administration P lan to A chieve S elf- S upport
PCA	P ersonal C are A ttendant or P ersonal C are A ssistance
PDD	P ervasive D evelopmental D isorder
PT	P hysical T herapy
PTSD	P ost t raumatic S tress D isorder

Q

QA	Q uality A ssurance
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R

RDTC	R egional D iagnostic T reatment C enters
RFP	R equest for P roposal
RFQ	R equest for Q ualifications
RHCF	R esidential H ealth C are F acility
REIC	R egional E arly I ntervention C ollaborative

S

SCHIP	S tate C hildren's H ealth I nsurance P rogram (US) - NJ FamilyCare
SE or SES	S upportive E mployment S ervices
SILC	S tatewide I ndependent L iving C ouncil
SPAN	S tatewide P arents A dvocacy N etwork
SRU	S pecial R esponse U nit
SSA	S ocial S ecurity A dministration
SSDI	S ocial S ecurity D isability I ncome
SSI	S upplemental S ecurity I ncome

T

TANF	T emporary A ssistance for N eedy F amilies
TBI	T raumatic B rain I njury
TDD	T elecommunications D evice for the D eaf

U

UAP	U niversity A ffiliated P rogram
UIR	U nusual I ncident R eport (OPIA)
UIRMS	U nusual I ncident R eport and M anagement S ystem (OPIA)

V

VA	V eterans' A dministration
VRS	V ocational R ehabilitation S ervices

Notes

Notes
