



Advocacy Matters

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

July 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.](#)

Disability Pride Month

Disability Pride Month is an annual observance in July that highlights the signing of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), disability culture, history, and community pride.

Many people with disabilities still face barriers to being fully included and valued. Ableism is often ignored, but its effects are real. It limits access to education, jobs, health care, and respect.

Disability Pride Month challenges that. At its core, Disability Pride is about being accepted on our own terms. It says disability is not something to hide or fix—it's part of who we are. Everyone deserves inclusion, rights, and respect, without having to earn them.

[Fill out a template and let us know why Disability Pride is important to you! We will post it on our website and on our socials!](#)

Americans with Disabilities Act Anniversary Month

The New Jersey Self-Advocacy Project (NJSAP) team, along with members from the regional Councils of the Statewide Self-Advocacy Network, celebrated the Anniversary of The ADA!

Signed into law on July 26, 1990, The ADA, or Americans With Disabilities Act, is a civil rights law that prohibits discrimination against people with disabilities in all areas of public life, including employment, schools, transportation, and all public and private places that are open to the general public.

[Take a look at our factsheets and webinars to learn more about The ADA!](#)

July Events

On July 21st Advocates from around New Jersey got together at Funplex in East Hanover to spread awareness about the ADA and Disability Pride Month! Advocates ran the table, spreading information about the advocacy movement and the importance of the historic legislation. Advocates got to engage with a lot of people, including children, to talk about disability pride, and educate the public about issues they might not have previously known about and share resources about disabilities.

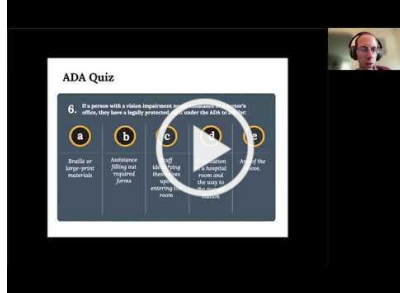
[Click here to see all the pictures!](#)



On July 29th Erin Smithers and Disability Advocate Ginamarie Williams hosted a conversation about disability pride and anti-ableism. This was held on zoom and included an advocacy campaign for participants to fill out and send back to NJSAP, to spread awareness about Disability Pride. [Click here to watch the session!](#)



On July 31st, we held a special edition of our weekly Brain Games testing our



participants on their knowledge of The ADA. Participants were able to answer questions about the different Titles, the importance of The Americans with Disabilities Act, and how this legislation has helped to improve the lives of everyone, not just people with disabilities.

Campaigns

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

In July advocates from the NJSSAN made comments as part of a social media campaign with US Senator Andy Kim



New Jersey Self Advocacy Project

Published by Fedica

42m · 🌐

We are members of Council 3 with the New Jersey Statewide Self-Advocacy Network (NJSSAN) and cuts to medicaid would mean:

"I would have a hard time paying for my medicine, it is \$300 a bottle! Without proper funding for staff, I am not able to go to events and activities that are important to me." -Laurie

"It would be a struggle to get to doctors appointments because cuts would mean less staff. Funding cuts would also mean less money for hearing aids, glasses, dentures and dental care!" - Joe

"Without Medicaid I wouldn't be able to go to my appointments or my programs" -Jennifer

[#MedicaidMatters](#) @AndyKim @CoryBooker @MikieSherrill @TheArcofNJ @TheArcUS

#MEDICAID MATTERS

"We gotta keep fighting. I like the life and health I have and I don't want to lose it. What's going to happen to staff? To me? We're not going to last." - Victor

"I use the food money to buy my groceries. I need it." -Kevin

"I don't know if I'll be able to afford to go to my doctor appointments." - Clint

#MedicaidMatters

"We need our meds and Medicaid helps me get my medicine!" -Robert

"People with disabilities sometimes need help and Medicaid helps me. We need Medicaid!" - Maria

"I have Medicaid and it helps me go to the doctors and it also helps with me going to programs and I need Medicaid!" - Athena

"I need medical procedures done because of a congenital condition and I need to closely monitor myself and this bill could be a threat to my life! Medicaid would be better spent on US Citizens instead of war!" -Todd

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

Council Agenda Items

This month the councils worked on these items:

- NJSSAN members participated in Senator Andy Kim's social media campaign. This

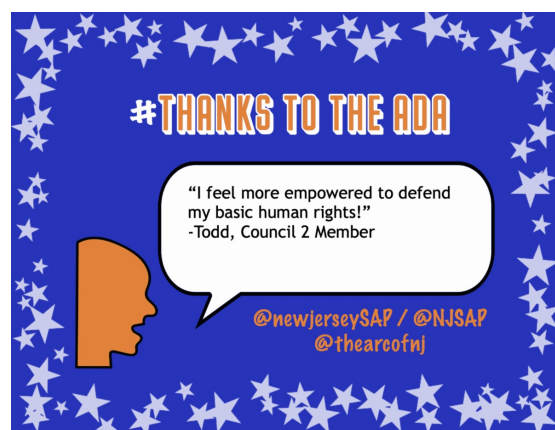
campaign highlights why Medicaid is important and why there should be no cuts to Medicaid and SNAP. **You can see photos from this campaign above!**

- NJSSAN members also went over the [2024 Annual Report](#) from the NJ Ombudsman for Individuals with Intellectual or Developmental Disabilities and Their Families, Paul Aronsohn. NJSSAN members always invite the Ombudsman out to our Council meetings after we go over the report to address any questions or concerns.

- NJSSAN Members also went over the Proclamation from Governor Murphy proclaiming July 2025 as Disability Pride Month. NJSSAN members learned about the importance of Disability Pride Month, went over Disability Pride Month resources, and learned about how they can celebrate all month long. **Click on the image to download your own copy! ----->**

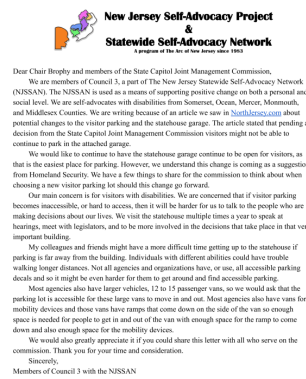


- NJSSAN members filled out templates for social media and NJSAP's website about why the ADA and Disability Pride Month is important to them! [Visit here](#) to see current and past quotes! [Download your own template](#) and send it back to us at NJSAP@arcnj.org and we will also post yours!



- Council 3 members wrote their own letter to the State Capitol Joint

Management Commission Chair, Eric Brophy, and the other members of the commission. These letters are intended to urge the commission members to ensure that visitor parking stays accessible and available for people to use so they can easily speak to the decision makers in the NJ Statehouse. **Click on the image to download the letter.** ----->



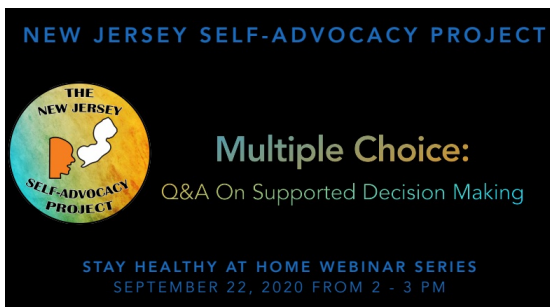
Advocacy Trainings



On July 17th, Bianca Najera presented a training for The Arc of Salem on Employment and Pre-Employment Skills.

There were 24 participants. Bianca discussed the job search process, including how to create a resume and cover letter, apply for jobs, prepare for interviews, and discuss job offers and negotiation. The group also participated in interactive games.

On July 24th Erin Smithers delivered a training to Edison Sheltered Workshop on 'Human Rights and Responsibilities'. This training had 30 participants. 'Human Rights and Responsibilities' goes over basic human rights, the responsibilities that go along with those rights, and it also covers the 5 titles of The Americans with Disabilities Act.



On July 30th Erin Smithers delivered a training to Midland Adult School on 'Supported Decision Making'. This training had 37 participants. 'Supported Decision Making' talks about Supported Decision Making (SDM) as another tool you can incorporate into your everyday life, alongside guardianship, or in place of a guardianship.

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



On July 31st Erin sat in on [The Green Mountain Self-Advocates](#) advocacy meeting. The topic discussed was sharing your lived experiences. Guest Speaker Eric Matthes explained what lived experiences are and why they are important.

New Resources


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



How to celebrate

DISABILITY PRIDE

- Connect with People with Disabilities
- Learn About Disability History and Culture
- Listen to Disability Activists
- Advocate For Disability Rights and Inclusion
- Share Your Disability Story
- Attend a Disability Pride Event in Your Area



Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)
Anniversary

Signed on July 26, 1990

How can you participate with NJSAP?

- Sign our 'Erase the "R" Word' pledge
- Join us on July 21st to give out information
- Take our ADA Quiz
- Watch our ADA Webinars
- Play ADA Bingo



Visit our website to learn more:
<https://www.arcnj.org/programs/njsap/ada-awareness.html>



TAKE ACTION!

Join NJSAP and The Arc as we build a larger, stronger movement of people with disabilities, parents, siblings, and allies to advocate for the full inclusion and civil rights of all people.

Head over to The Arc US Action Alert page, sign up for text & email alerts, and keep an eye on your social media feed for ways to get involved!



Action Alert Campaigns will look like the images above! Click the "Take Action" buttons to quickly send an email, tweet and/or phone call to your officials! Or click "Share Your Story" and answer a few questions to get your experiences heard by decision-makers.

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

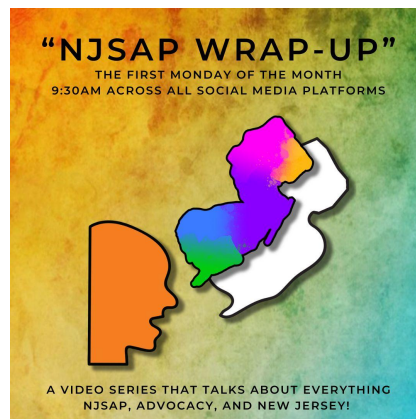
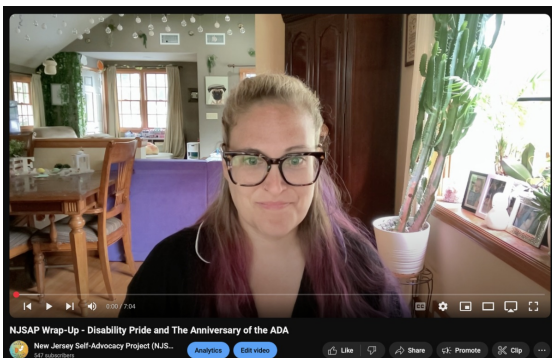


Quick Tip

It is important to know your rights! Understanding your rights is a powerful form of advocacy and it is part of the responsibility of being an advocate. Learn about the laws that protect you, like the Americans With Disabilities Act (ADA), and speak up when something isn't fair or accessible. Change often starts with awareness.

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 the ADA and Disability Pride Month. Click on the image to visit the playlist and watch the video. [You can also visit our website to learn more about the ADA and Disability Pride Month.](#)

Get Involved

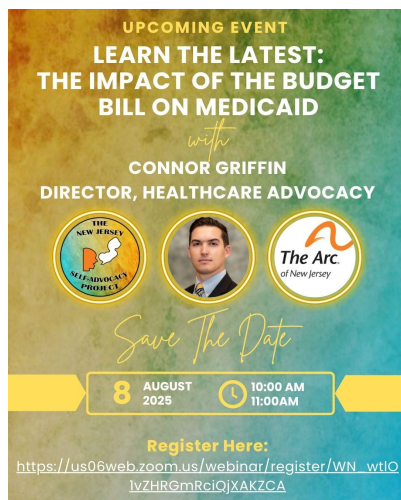
Want to get involved in advocacy campaigns, action alerts, or upcoming events? Here is what is available:



**[ACT NOW: Tell Congress:
Increase the SSI Asset Limit!](#)**



**[ACT NOW: Share your
Medicaid Story!](#)**



Join the NJ Self-Advocacy Project and special guest Connor Griffin (Health Care Advocacy Director) for a general overview of the current budget reconciliation bill and what it means for our community.
[Register here!](#)



Save The Date for our IN PERSON Annual Conference! The 41st Annual Fall Conference will be held on **October 3rd, 2025** at Pines Manor in Edison, NJ. Registration opens in August. **[See the schedule, Buy a t-shirt, and 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. Tell them what is



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 "R" word. **[You can help spread](#)**

important to you! [Complete the survey here!](#)

[awareness and erase the word by signing our petition!](#)

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	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 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

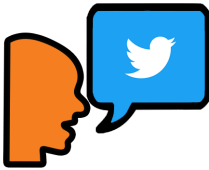
The New Jersey Self-Advocacy Project (NJSAP) is a program of The Arc of New Jersey established in 1983 to challenge individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities to become involved in events, legislative policies, and issues that affect their lives or lives of others with disabilities.

We work together with these individuals to form The New Jersey Statewide Self-Advocacy Network (NJSAN), which is used as means of supporting positive change on both a personal and social level. The NJSAN 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](#)

NJSAN POSITION STATEMENTS
NJSAP@ArcNJ.org - www.njsselfadvocacyproject.org - 712-749-8314

*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.



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www.njsselfadvocacyproject.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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