



## Executive Director Advocates for FY22 Budget Priorities at Department Listening Session

The Arc of New Jersey's Executive Director Tom Baffuto highlighted the need to increase wages for Direct Support Professionals and raise the day program rate when he testified at the Department of Human Services (DHS) Budget Listening Session last month. The Listening Session was an opportunity to provide feedback to the Department about funding priorities in the Fiscal Year 2022 Budget. Tom thanked the leaders of the DHS for last year's DSP wage increase, but warned more funding will be needed in FY22 as the state's minimum wage is set to rise again next January. To continue reading, [click here](#).



## DHS Commissioner Announces Departure

In the final days of December, Governor Murphy announced that Department of Human Services Commissioner Carole Johnson will exit her role to join President Elect Biden's COVID Response Team. Commissioner Johnson's final day with the Department will be January 15. Deputy Commissioner Sarah Adelman will serve as the Acting Commissioner. **For more information, click the image to the right.** We wish all the best to Commissioner Johnson as she takes on this role and we look forward to working with Acting Commissioner Adelman as she leads the Department of Human Services into the new year.



## Special Olympics Donates Activity Kits to Keep People Moving During COVID

The Arc of New Jersey thanks Special Olympics New Jersey for their generous donation of activity kits for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities living in group homes operated by Chapters of The Arc. These kits will help keep people active and engaged while they continue to practice social distancing due to COVID-19. Group homes across the state received items such as: corn hole, ring toss, bowling and



baseball games. We thank Special Olympics New Jersey for helping us keep individuals moving and having fun during this difficult time. Pictured left is the delivery of kits to The Arc of Camden County which took place last month. *From left to right: Carmen Bannon, Chief Program Management Officer for Special Olympics NJ, Marianne Aponte, Area 7 Director for Camden, Gloucester and Salem County, Peggy Englebert, Executive Director of The Arc of Camden County, and Tom Baffuto, Executive Director of The Arc of New Jersey.*

## Health Lifestyles Grant Awarded for 2021



*The Horizon Foundation for New Jersey*

We are very pleased to report that our Healthy Lifestyles Project (HLP) received another \$25,000 grant from The Horizon Foundation for New Jersey that will allow the program to continue in 2021. We are grateful to The Horizon Foundation for New Jersey for another year of funding, as this program does great work helping adults with intellectual and

developmental disabilities learn how to live a healthy lifestyle through diet, exercise and stress management. Despite the in-person restrictions brought about by COVID, the HLP has continued to work virtually with individuals with I/DD on everything from cooking healthy meals to at-home exercises. [Click here](#) to learn more.

## The Arc of NJ Recognizes Extraordinary Heroes of 2020

In the final months of 2020, The Arc of New Jersey recognized the extraordinary heroes who made a difference to people with intellectual and developmental disabilities and their families during this exceptionally hard year. These Heroes included Direct Support Professionals, advocates, an educator, elected officials, and more. If you haven't done so already, please take a moment to view our [Heroes 2020 web site](#) for more details about these outstanding members of our community. You can also view the Heroes of 2020 Ad Journal by [clicking here](#).



## Project SEARCH Seeking Student Applicants

Applications are now available for students interested in being a part of the Project SEARCH program at Overlook Medical Center's class of 2022. Overlook Medical Center is located in Union County. The Project SEARCH High School Transition Program is a business-led, one-year, school-to-work program that takes place entirely at the workplace. The goal for each student participant is competitive employment.



The program provides real-life work experience combined with training in employability and independent living skills to help youths with disabilities make successful transitions from school to productive adult life. Applications are available by [clicking here](#). Virtual Information Sessions for Prospective Students and Families will be held in early 2021. Click [here](#) for dates and to register.

# Using Alexa to Assist with Special Education

**5** Ways to use Alexa to support at-home learning for students with special needs.

With Alexa Blueprints and Routines, parents and educators can help provide structure, help students manage their daily schedules and learn new skills while at home.

- 1** Assist with daily routines. Parents, educators, or support professionals can use Alexa Blueprints to help students with their daily tasks and manage their daily schedules. Alexa Routines can be scheduled by day of the week, time, and many other options.  
"Alexa, I'm done with breakfast!"  
"Alexa, what's on my calendar?"
- 2** Keep students on schedule and ready for their day. Connecting an Alexa-enabled device to Google Classroom, or other calendar apps, allows students to check their schedule and what they need to do in a given day. Using the Alexa Daily Learning Blueprint, parents and educators can create a summary of what to expect for the current day.  
"Alexa, I'm feeling frustrated."  
"Alexa, open my Social Story."  
"Alexa, open my Quiz."
- 3** Support students' ability to regulate their emotions. Alexa Routines can also be used to help with self-regulation. Breathing exercises, meditation, or calming sounds can be used to help students regulate their emotions. Support professionals, if used with care, can engage the Amazon Echo device to provide timely calming sounds and breathing exercises when an intense feeling is a common mood.
- 4** Get instructional support at home. Using Alexa Blueprints, parents and educators can create social stories, quizzes, and other tools that can help students practice skills and receive prompts or strategies to adjust behavior.
- 5** Help model good behavior with social stories. With Alexa Blueprints, parents and educators can create Social Stories to help model new routines or good behaviors. A skill can be created for each social story, or a skill can be scheduled on a daily or weekly basis.

To learn more and get started, visit: [thearc.org/alexa](http://thearc.org/alexa)



Virtual assistants like Amazon's Alexa are becoming more and more prevalent. The Arc of the United States teamed up with the education team at Amazon to explore ways to better communicate how these devices can help with at-home learning for children with special needs – including a new infographic (which you can view by clicking the image of the left). With [Alexa Blueprints](#) and [Alexa Routines](#), students can now track upcoming events on their calendar, create study resources, or even make appointments – all without needing to open their computer. Teachers can use Alexa to prepare for upcoming lessons, create quizzes and offer Q&A resources to students. With feedback from parents and educators, [Alexa Blueprints](#) now offers a feature that focuses on helping students regulate their emotions. Parents, educators, support professionals, and students themselves can access breathing and meditation exercises, calming music and even a “glow” that changes in color and intensity, all ways to help with self-regulation. It also features the capacity to build “social stories” that model desired routines and good behaviors. Check out this [User](#)

[Guide](#) for more information.

## Upcoming Virtual Events!



We've added additional webinars to help individuals with I/DD and their families during this difficult time. Register today and be sure to check out our [calendar](#) for other upcoming events.

### Webinars:

- January 6 at 2 pm: [Up-to-Date Information on the COVID-19 Vaccine](#)
- January 7 at 1 pm: [Person-Centered Planning in Schools](#)
- January 20 at 6 pm: [PFAL Webinar Wednesday Series: Introduction to IEPs](#)
- January 21 at 2 pm: [The Relationship Between Autism Spectrum Disorder and Criminal Responsibility](#) (Part 1)

### Zoom with Us:

- January 21 at 6 pm: [Overview of the Arc of New Jersey and How We Can Help](#)

### Stay Healthy at Home - a webinar series hosted by the NJ Self-Advocacy Project - every Tuesday at 2 PM on GoToWebinar

The webinar series covers a variety of topics related to advocacy, life skills, employment, and civic engagement. Sessions are designed to be accessible to self-advocates, parents, and support staff. Live viewers can share comments, ask questions, and access resources.

- January 5: [REPLAY- Downsizing: How to Lower Your Carbon Footprint](#)
- January 12: [Resolution Solutions & Healthier Habits](#)
- January 19: [Managing Minutes for Productive People](#)
- January 26: [Fitness Resolutions](#)

### Healthy Lifestyles Project LIVE! - every Wednesday at 11 AM on Zoom

This interactive series of events is hosted by the NJ Self-Advocacy Project and focuses on activities to promote health and wellness education for students and adults with I/DD. Live viewers will be able to share comments, ask questions, and participate in activities led by professionals *in real time*.

- January 6: [Food for Thought: Interactive Recipe](#)
- January 13: [SPIRIT Club Virtual Fitness Class](#)
- January 20: [Marine Mammals and Sea Turtles of New Jersey](#)
- January 27: [Music to My Ears: A Collaborative Song-Writing Session](#)

**\*NEW\*** We also have Fitness Fridays at 1 PM: [Click here to register.](#)

## A Message from The Arc of New Jersey

Thank you to all our generous donors who, over the past few

# Thank You

weeks, have made donations to support us. These critical funds will help us in our efforts to assist individuals with I/DD and their families, as well as our local county chapters, through the COVID19 crisis. To put your donation to work for individuals with I/DD and their families, [click here](#). If you have questions or need assistance, our staff is here to help. [Click](#)

[here](#) to access information about our Programs.

## Use Your Amazon App to Support The Arc of New Jersey

If you are an AmazonSmile customer, you can now support The Arc of New Jersey, Inc. in the Amazon shopping app on your Android device! Simply follow these instructions to turn on AmazonSmile and start generating donations.

1. If you have the latest version of the Amazon Shopping App, open the App on your Android device.
2. View Settings and select AmazonSmile.
3. Follow the in-App instructions to complete the process.

If you do not have the latest version of the Amazon shopping App, update your App. Click [here](#) for instructions.



## Need help or more information? Want to become active in our advocacy network?

- **Visit our website** to access lots of great information that can help you navigate service systems, find resources and keep you informed as to the important issues facing children and adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities and their families.
- **Join our advocacy network** to add your voice to the thousands who are working hard to promote and protect the quality of life of people with intellectual and developmental disabilities.

Visit our website

Join an Advocacy Network

The Arc of New Jersey | 732.246.2525 | [info@arcnj.org](mailto:info@arcnj.org) | [www.arcnj.org](http://www.arcnj.org)

STAY CONNECTED

DONATE NOW!

