



Advocacy Matters

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

December 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.](#)

December Events

On December 2nd NJSSAN advocate, Ellen Moskowitz, testified to Commissioner Adelman at The NJ Department of Human Services Budget Listening Session. Ellen is the Chair for Council 4 and 5 and a past President for the NJSSAN Advisory Board!

You can watch her testimony by clicking the video below, or you can read her testimony by clicking on the image!



**New Jersey Self-Advocacy Project
&
Statewide Self-Advocacy Network**
A program of The Arc of New Jersey since 1983

December 2, 2025

Hello Commissioner Adelman and members of NJDHHS,

My name is Ellen Moskowitz, and I am a Self-Advocate in Atlantic County. I am currently the Chairperson of Council 5, and a member of the New Jersey Statewide Self-Advocacy Network (NJSSAN). I have been a Self-Advocate with NJSP for over 15 years. I've served as President of NJSSAN, and I am fully committed to continue learning and advocating for myself and for others in New Jersey.

I am here today to speak about the importance of getting people with disabilities out of developmental centers and into the community. There are currently 5 Developmental Centers still open in NJ: Green Brook Regional Center, Hunterdon Developmental Center, New Lisbon Developmental Center, Vineland, and Woodbine DC. Only California and Texas have more Developmental Centers. Other states understand the importance of including people with disabilities in their communities. It is beneficial for both the community and people with disabilities.

In 2012, a task force was introduced by Governor Christie to close developmental centers. 2 locations were closed, and residents were placed into the community. However, nothing more has been done in over 10 years.

Closing developmental centers results in a better quality of life for residents, improving their social life, skills, and community inclusion. Home and Community-Based Services, HCBS, are often a lot more affordable than running a large state facility. Closing these centers also allows you to shift resources from institutional care to developing or expanding community-based services. Revenue can also be generated from leasing out the closed facilities or the land the facilities are on.

Since Home and Community-Based Services are incredibly important and are also being threatened to be cut with the recent decision to cut Medicaid services, this can be a good way to ensure services can be kept or expanded to serve even more individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities.



Supporting the rights of people with intellectual and developmental disabilities
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E-mail: NJSAAT@arcnj.org
www.njselfadvocacyproject.org

On December 16th NJSAP's Training and Technical Assistance Coordinator, Bianca Najera, spoke at the Hudson County Food and Shelter Coalition. This was a virtual opportunity for organizations and business partners across Hudson County to share updates, highlight resources, discuss community needs, and strengthen collaboration. Bianca spoke about The New Jersey Self-Advocacy Project, the Healthy Lifestyles Project, and the New Jersey Statewide Self-Advocacy Network. Bianca highlighted key programs and services that our program offers as well as updates and upcoming events. It was a great opportunity to connect with other programs and let others in Hudson County know about what NJSAP has to offer!



Advocacy In Action



The recent increase in the use of the 'R' word has brought up so many feelings for people with disabilities. It is not okay to use that word.

The Arc of NJ's Gianna Morello commented: "I have been called this word a couple times in my life and I know what it feels like!! It is so painful because we are worth more than that word and are worth more than the people that call us that word!! Never back down, you get up and stand for what you know is right in your life!!"

[Take action and sign our 'R-word' pledge to never use this hurtful word.](#)

Advocacy Trainings

If you would like the NJSAP team to provide a training to your group please reach out to us at NJSAP@ArcNJ.org or fill out our [training request form here](#).




On December 17th Erin Smithers delivered a training for The Arc of New Jersey's Planning For Adult Life Program, all about how to stay involved with advocacy after leaving High School. This training also highlights the different services that NJSAP and the NJSSAN offer. There were 15 people in attendance.

New Resources

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

Role of the New Jersey Governor



New Jersey's Governor serves a four-year term and can be re-elected. There is a two consecutive term limit, with no limitation on non-consecutive terms.

1. Executive Authority: The Governor enforces state laws, administers the executive branch, and oversees various state agencies and departments. They have the power to issue executive orders to direct the operations of the state government.

2. Legislative Role: The Governor can propose legislation to the New Jersey Legislature (the state's lawmaking body), and has the power to veto bills passed by the legislature. They can override a veto with a two-thirds majority vote.

3. Budget: The Governor is responsible for preparing and presenting the state budget to the legislature. The budget outlines how state funds should be allocated across different programs and services, including education, healthcare, transportation, and more. The budget must pass both houses (Assembly and Senate) before the Governor signs it into law.

4. Appointments: The Governor has the authority to appoint individuals to key positions in state government, including judges, agency heads, and members of boards and commissions.



5. Commander-in-Chief: The Governor is the commander-in-chief of the New Jersey National Guard and other state militia forces. This gives them the authority to mobilize the National Guard during emergencies, such as natural disasters or civil unrest.

6. Pardon Power: The Governor has the authority to grant pardons, reprieves, and commutations for individuals convicted of state crimes.

7. Crisis Management: In times of emergency, such as natural disasters or public health crises, the Governor plays a central role in coordinating the state's response and directing resources to affected areas.

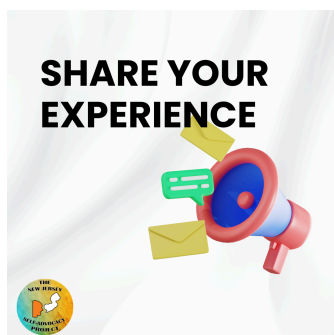
8. Public Representation: The Governor represents New Jersey in dealings with the federal government and other states. They may advocate for the state's interests at the national level and work with the federal government to secure funding or address issues affecting New Jersey.

The governor's office is located inside the State House in Trenton, making NJ unique in having the executive's office located in the same building as the legislature. NJ is also notable as one of the few states in which the governor's official residence is not located in the state capital.



[Mikie Sherrill](#) takes office as the Governor of New Jersey on January 20, 2026, following her election victory in November 2025. Familiarize yourself with the role of the Governor of New Jersey with this helpful infographic!

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



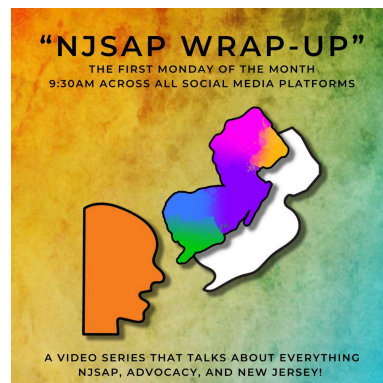
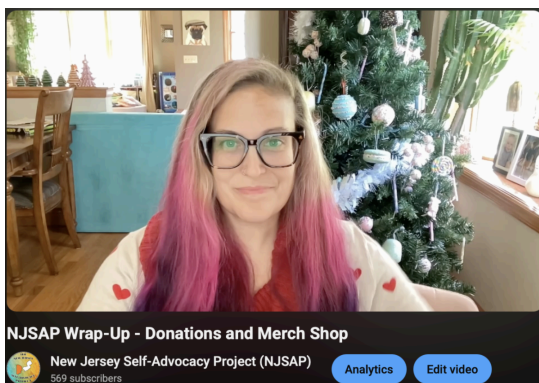
Quick Tip:

Share your experiences!

Lived experience is expertise. Sharing your story with an audience can be helpful to others as it can open minds and help create real change. A powerful and impactful way to advocate!

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 walks you through how to donate to the NJSSAN and purchase merchandise made by our advocates in the NJSSAN.

Click on the image to visit the playlist and watch the video.

NJSAP Reach

The Director of NJSAP, Erin Smithers, would like to attend your advocacy group to connect our program to yours, provide trainings and resources (including advisor trainings), or to help you start an advocacy group if you don't have one!

Please reach out to Erin Smithers to schedule a visit: ESmithers@arcnj.org



On December 11th, Erin Smithers attended The [SARTAC \(Self Advocacy Resource and Technical Assistance Center\)](#) Advocacy Meeting. The members spoke about how to keep self-advocacy groups going strong. Erin spoke briefly about how the NJSSAN retains members. A lot of information and ideas were shared!

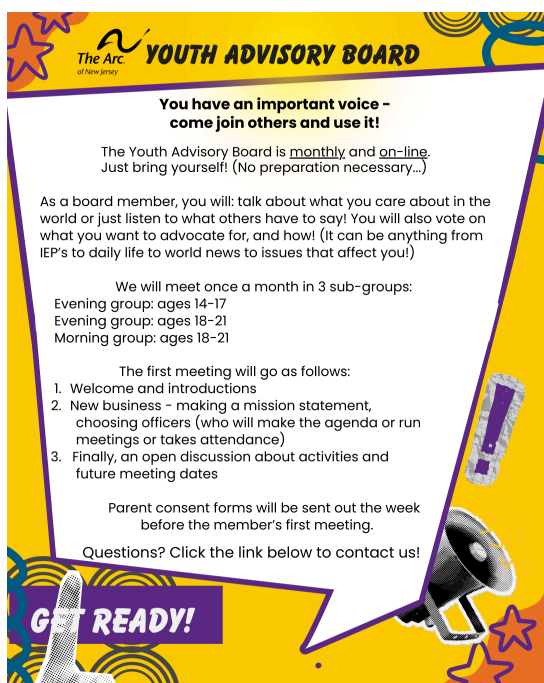
In 2016, [Self Advocates Becoming Empowered \(SABE\)](#), the oldest national self-advocacy organization in the country, was awarded a grant from the Administration for Community Living to establish the first-ever national Self Advocacy Resource and Technical Assistance Center (SARTAC).

The resource center is funded as a Project of National Significance by the Administration on Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities under the Administration on Disabilities. Their Advisory Committee includes 13 self-advocates from all over the USA who work as a team to oversee the SARTAC project.

Get Involved

Want to get involved in advocacy campaigns or upcoming events? Here is what is available.

Plan your own event with NJSAP! Reach out to Erin Smithers to get started:
ESmithers@arcnj.org.



YOUTH ADVISORY BOARD

You have an important voice - come join others and use it!

The Youth Advisory Board is monthly and on-line. Just bring yourself! (No preparation necessary...)

As a board member, you will: talk about what you care about in the world or just listen to what others have to say! You will also vote on what you want to advocate for, and how! (It can be anything from IEP's to daily life to world news to issues that affect you!)

We will meet once a month in 3 sub-groups:
Evening group: ages 14-17
Evening group: ages 18-21
Morning group: ages 18-21

The first meeting will go as follows:

1. Welcome and introductions
2. New business - making a mission statement, choosing officers (who will make the agenda or run meetings or takes attendance)
3. Finally, an open discussion about activities and future meeting dates

Parent consent forms will be sent out the week before the member's first meeting.

Questions? Click the link below to contact us!

GET READY!

The Arc of NJ is looking for 14-21 year olds who would like to learn more about how to be an advocate in NJ! Join the NEW Youth Advisory Board Meetings by registering [here!](#)



Please join us for The Arc of NJ's Project HIRE / Planning for Adult Life (PFAL) **EMPLOYMENT MENTORSHIP PANEL**

ASK QUESTIONS - OR JUST LISTEN - AND GET ANSWERS!

Panel includes:

- Project HIRE participants
- Parents who helped them through the process
- Employers who can tell you what they are looking for
- And Project HIRE Director Colleen Collick, who oversees it all

**FEBRUARY 12
1:00PM-2:30PM
REGISTER HERE!**



Upcoming Employment Mentorship Panel involving The Arc of NJ's Project HIRE and Planning For Adult Life Programs. Join them on Zoom on February 12th, 1pm - 2:30pm.
[Click here to register!](#)

NJ GOVERNOR-ELECT

TRANSITION 2026

KEY PRIORITIES

- Share your ideas
- Join the Team

STAY INFORMED

Visit www.nj.gov/govelect for updates on the transition process, appointments, and policy initiatives

BUILDING A STRONGER, FAIRER NEW JERSEY

@essexdemocrats

PAID FOR BY ESSEX COUNTY DEMOCRATIC COMMITTEE, INC. 80 MAIN STREET, SUITE 504 WEST ORANGE, NJ 07063

Are you a person with Intellectual and/or Developmental Disability (I/DD) who is taking care of an aging relative?

If so, we'd love to hear your story!

Please consider joining a virtual listening session to share your experiences. To participate, you must be 18 or older, identify as a person with an I/DD, and currently serving as a primary caregiver of an older relative.

The Boggs Center is interested in hearing about your experiences and gaining an understanding about the unique challenges you face.

We will be hosting three discussion sessions, each lasting one hour.

Contact Sarah Adler if interested at sma372@scarletmail.rutgers.edu.

Listening session dates:

1/6/26 at 10:00am - 11:00am EST.
1/6/26 at 6:00pm - 7:00pm EST.
1/13/26 at 1:00pm - 2:00pm EST.



Scan or click to contact Sarah!

RUTGERS HEALTH
The Boggs Center
on Disability and Human Development
Robert Wood Johnson Medical School

Department of Pediatrics
Robert Wood Johnson Medical School
Boggs, The State University of New Jersey
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boggscenter@rutgers.edu
p. 732-255-9500
f. 732-255-9190

Governor-Elect Mikie Sherrill seeks public input from people w/disabilities. This is a chance to share your voice and express value on topics such as Disability Rights, Increasing Medicaid Asset Limits, DSPs & Affordable Housing. Let your voice be heard and make an impact on the topics that matter most to you and your community!

[Fill out the survey here](#)

The Boggs Center on Disability and Human Development is working on a variety of aging initiatives. One of them is learning about people with IDD who are essentially the primary caregiver/supporter of an aging parent. **Click on the flyer above for the listening session where they hope to learn more about your needs and your stories.**

Upcoming Webinar Series

Inclusive Healthy Communities
NJ Division of Disability Services



4 PART • LIVE WEBINAR SERIES

Transform Your Financial Future: A Webinar Series for People with Disabilities in NJ

1



Financial Inclusion 101

Jan 28 | 1 pm ET

2



Five Key Strategies to Achieving Financial Wellness

Feb 25 | 1 pm ET

3



Review of Benefits from the Social Security Administration

Mar 25 | 1 pm ET

4



Extra Costs of Living with a Disability

Apr 29 | 1 pm ET

Building financial wellness is about more than managing money. It's about creating independence, stability, and opportunity.

National Disability Institute, supported by the New Jersey Inclusive Healthy Communities (NJ-IHC) project, is hosting a four-part webinar series for people with disabilities, their families, and community partners across New Jersey.

Each session focuses on essential topics, including the foundations of financial empowerment, navigating Social Security benefits, and managing the extra costs of disability. Join subject matter experts to gain practical strategies that support financial inclusion and economic stability.

Register here: https://us02web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_8-vvQBMLS3CDLVB9rl2gBg#/registration

Take part in these current action alerts!



TAKE ACTION: Share why Public Education matters to you!



ACT NOW: Share what Medicaid means to you!

NJSSAN Calendars



We are holding monthly NJSSAN Council meetings *virtually!*
[For information regarding your Council area, please click here.](#)

NJSSAN Council Meetings 2026

-JANUARY-

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-NOVEMBER-

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-DECEMBER-

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Council 1: 3rd Wed. 5:30PM - 7PM
Council 2: 4th Wed. 3 - 4:30PM

Council 3: 2nd Tues. 5:30 - 7PM
Council 4/5: 3rd Wed. 3PM - 4PM

Statewide AM Council: 2nd Wed. 10- 11 AM

Advisory Board: Last Mon. 3-4PM. Every other month. By Invite only.

2026 Calendar



Click on the image to download the calendar

Join our newest Council Meeting held during the day! Starting January 2026!

NEW NJSSAN MONTHLY MEETING

“STATEWIDE AM COUNCIL”

• • • 2ND WEDNESDAY OF THE
• • • MONTH

• • • 10AM ON ZOOM



STARTING
JANUARY 14TH, 2026



To join the meeting click on the Zoom link here: <https://tinyurl.com/3upyxnmp>.

Interested in joining the NJSSAN? See below to sign up for emails from your Council!

Council 1
Hunterdon, Morris, Sussex & Warren
Counties

[Join Council 1 Email List](#)

Council 2
Bergen, Essex, Hudson, Passaic & Union
Counties

[Join Council 2 Email List](#)

Council 3
Mercer, Middlesex, Monmouth, Ocean &
Somerset Counties

[Join Council 3 Email List](#)

Council 4
Burlington, Camden, Gloucester & Salem
Counties

[Join Council 4 Email List](#)

Council 5
Atlantic, Cape May & Cumberland Counties

[Join Council 5 Email List](#)

Statewide A.M. Council
All NJ Counties

[Join Statewide A.M. Council
Email List](#)

The New Jersey Statewide Self-Advocacy Network (NJSSAN) is made up of people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD) throughout the state. The NJSSAN is used as a means of supporting positive change on both a personal and social level. It consists of 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 (NJSSAP) 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 a 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](#)

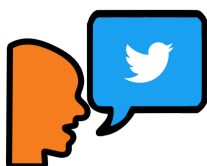
3. [Transportation](#)

4. [Supported Decision Making and Alternatives to Guardianship](#)

5. [Raising Awareness of IDD Issues](#)

NJSSAN@ArcNJ.org NJSSAN POSITION STATEMENTS
www.njssanfornewjersey.org 732-749-8314

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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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