



Welcome to the Table Talk newsletter from The Arc of New Jersey's Children's Advocacy Program. Our January edition is filled with valuable advocacy resources as well as exciting opportunities and experiences for your family. For more information, please visit our [webpage](#).



### Advocacy with Adara on Facebook Live Update

Season three is back! Don't forget to view our archived episodes on Facebook.

New to the series? Each episode offers a friendly 10-15 minute chat on special education or services for children with IDD and their families. Tune in every other Monday during the school year at 12 pm on our Facebook page. No sign-ups needed, just drop by, watch, and don't forget to share your thoughts in the comments. We look forward to having you join us!

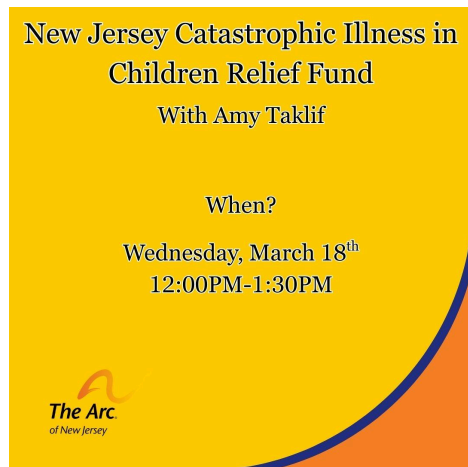
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## Upcoming Webinars



### Empowering Athletes of All Abilities: A Conversation with Dan Minko, Co-Founder of Spectrum Sports

Join us on Wednesday, March 4th at 12:00 PM for an inspiring and informative session with Dan Minko, co-founder of Spectrum Sports, an inclusive sports and fitness program that focuses



### New Jersey Catastrophic Illness in Children Relief Fund: What is it and how can it benefit your family?

on helping individuals with disabilities get active and engaged. What began as a curiosity turned into a lifelong passion for Dan, who transitioned from being a high school special education teacher to creating a program that brings together fitness, socialization, and healthy habits for the special needs community. In this webinar, Dan will share his journey—starting with his early volunteer work at the Special Olympics and continuing through his career as a teacher and now as a leader in the inclusive sports world. He'll discuss how Spectrum Sports uses basic sports skills, obstacle courses, fitness activities, and games to support athletes in a safe, social, and loving environment.

[Register Here](#)

March 18th at 12:00 PM- Meet Amy Taklif from the New Jersey Catastrophic Illness in Children Relief Fund (CICRF) to find more about this financial assistance program for New Jersey Families whose children have an illness or condition otherwise uncovered by insurance, State or Federal programs, or other sources, such as fundraising. The Fund is intended to assist in preserving a family's ability to cope with the responsibilities which accompany a child's significant health problems. This program is for any child, any condition, and any income.

[Sign Up Here](#)

### Upcoming Events


### NJ Regional Family Support Planning Councils

The Regional Family Support Planning Council (RFSPC) were created in 1993 by the Family Support Act to make sure that people with disabilities and their families have a voice in planning and decisions about services. There are 10 RFSPCs representing all of the counties in NJ. Learn more [here](#).

### We Can Do That! Challenge

Join our social media campaign with Community Access Unlimited (CAU) with a 5 to 10 second video featuring individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities teachers, parents and guardians showing off their talents and showing what they can do!

Send your video to [helpdesk@planningforadulthood.org](mailto:helpdesk@planningforadulthood.org)



**Welcome to EDGE at The Arc, Ocean County Chapter!**  
 (Employment, Development, Business, & Engagement)

**EDGE**  
 Empowering, Educating, Developing, Business, & Engagement

In partnership with the Commission for the Blind and Visually Impaired, EDGE (Employment, Development, Business, & Engagement) supports blind, deaf-blind, and visually impaired high school and college students transition to independent living, self-advocacy, and career development.

With former EDGE attendees you can staff and/or manage jobs, we are able to bring various life-time experiences that are great opportunities to "step" in moving towards independence and career development.

This year-round program consists of two parts: EDGE 1.0 and EDGE 2.0. Both have a double layer of support, one blind and vision impaired staff and mentors, who will collaborate with attendees to plan for success and assist in reaching it.

**EDGE 1.0 ONLINE PROGRAM**  
 Develops essential skills necessary for transitioning from high school to independent living and employment opportunities.

**EDGE 2.0 ONLINE PROGRAM**  
 Develops critical business and career skills necessary to successfully transition into the labor force and prepare for a career.

**EDGE 1.0 ONLINE PROGRAM INCLUDES BUT IS NOT LIMITED TO:**

- Self-advocacy
- Employment readiness development
- Preparing for independent living
- Self-advocacy or self-advocacy
- Using computer and assistive technology
- Financial literacy
- Independent living
- Technology engagement skills

**EDGE 2.0 ONLINE PROGRAM INCLUDES BUT IS NOT LIMITED TO:**

- Developing the most out of the disability services
- Employment readiness development
- Preparing for independent living
- Self-advocacy or self-advocacy
- Using computer and assistive technology
- Financial literacy
- Independent living
- Technology engagement skills

Email us at [EDGE@arcocean.org](mailto:EDGE@arcocean.org) or visit our [www.arcocean.org](http://www.arcocean.org) website to refer you, today!

[Facebook](https://www.facebook.com/edgeocean) [Instagram](https://www.instagram.com/edgeocean) [LinkedIn](https://www.linkedin.com/company/edgeocean) [YouTube](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC...)

## EDGE at The Arc of Ocean County

This year round program, in partnership with the Commission for the Blind and Visually Impaired (CBVI) supports blind, deaf-blind, and visually impaired high school and college students in the transition to independent living, self-advocacy, and career development. For more information, email [edge@arcocean.org](mailto:edge@arcocean.org).

## The Great College Fair

April 22nd at 5:30 PM- Please join The Arc of New Jersey's Planning for Adult Life (PFAL) and The Arc of Monmouth at this wonderful in person event. Dinner will be provided. Representatives and current students from NJ college transition programs will be available to answer all of your questions about postsecondary education. Click [here](#) to register.



Join Planning for Adult Life for  
**The Great College Fair**

- ✓ Talk to professors and students
- ✓ Come when you want, stay as long as you like!
- ✓ Figure out which schools and programs work for YOU
- ✓ Dinner and swag
- ✓ For more information and to register, click here or scan below!

**A LIVE EVENT!**  
**Wednesday, April 22, 5:30-7:30pm**  
 at The Arc of Monmouth  
 1158 Wayside Rd, Tinton Falls, NJ 07712



## Special Education Resources

To learn more about the special education process and current issues, take some time to explore the resources below. Gaining a deeper understanding of the process can help us better support students with disabilities. Click the links for helpful information and guidance.

and guidance.

- [Students Get Involved!](#)
- [IEP Participation Rubric: I'm Determined](#)
- [17 Special Education Advocacy Tips](#)
- [Language Instruction Services for Children From the Division of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing \(DDHH\)](#)
- [NJ School Bus Safety Push Left Out Critical Reforms, Mom Says](#)
- [Mastering Self-Disclosure: An Essential Skill](#)



### This NJ Official Drove 148,000 Miles to Help Families with Disabled Loved Ones

Paul Aronsohn, New Jersey’s first Ombudsman for Individuals with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities, clashed early with the administration of Phil Murphy after issuing a candid report describing the state’s services as a “tale of two systems” in need of urgent reform. Over nearly eight years, he fielded more than 6,000 calls and visits while balancing advocacy for families with maintaining working relationships inside state government, often facing criticism from both sides. As he steps down exhausted but proud, Aronsohn urged the incoming administration of Mikie Sherrill to appoint leaders with personal experience of disability and a stronger sense of urgency and mission. Read full article [here](#).



### New Autism Program Opening for North Jersey Students

Coming Summer 2026: Educational Services of NJ (ESCNJ) will open a new program for students with autism in Phillipsburg. This program run by the ESCNJ Andover-Morris location will reduce lengthy transportation times for students in the Skylands Region. Historically, students in this region had commutes of up to 90 minutes to facilities outside of the area. This new location will alleviate the long ride for students as well as decreasing costs for the local school districts. This program will offer academic, functional, and independence-focused instruction with a 2:1 student to staff ratio. Continue reading [here](#).



### Take Action! Cuts to Special Education are Happening NOW

The rights of students with disabilities are at serious risk following cuts to the Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services (OSERS), which enforces IDEA and supports youth with disabilities. Without proper enforcement, states may neglect their responsibilities, putting millions of students in jeopardy. Tell Congress to protect OSERS—students with disabilities can’t afford to lose these critical services.

Click [here](#) to email your lawmakers!

NJ Department of Education Initiates State Takeover of



In Honor of Black History Month: 17 Black Disability Activists and Advocates



## Lakewood Township School District

Following a recent court ruling and years of documented failures, the NJDOE announced that it has filed an Order to Show Cause regarding Lakewood as the initial step towards full State intervention in the District. This filing represents a significant and necessary action to address the persistent deficiencies that have denied Lakewood students the thorough and efficient education guaranteed by the New Jersey Constitution. Read full statement [here](#).

February is Black History Month. In this blog posting from Disability Rights Florida, you can read about historic advocates and activists, starting with Harriet Tubman, one of the greatest liberators of all time! She was also a person with a disability, which she acquired after being struck by a 2 lb weight as a teenager. She expressed experiencing sleeping spells, which historians now believe were likely epileptic seizures caused by a traumatic brain injury (TBI). Read the blog post [here](#).

### Children's Advocacy Zoom Office Hours

Do you have questions about your student's IEP or 504 plan? Do you need help getting started? Join us on Thursday, May 18th from 12-2 pm.

Due to the anticipated volume of participants, we will be offering 20 minute sessions with Adara Heilmann, Director of Children's Advocacy. Sessions will be granted on a first-come, first-served basis, ensuring we can accommodate as many families as possible.

Please scan the QR Code to register!



732-246-4897



education@aranj.org



Scan me



## Children's Advocacy Virtual Office Hours

Virtual office hours are here to stay! Due to anticipated volume, sessions will be limited to 20 minutes and given on a first come, first served basis to ensure that we can accommodate as many families as possible.

### Upcoming Virtual Office Hours :

January 15th, 22nd, & 29th 12-2 pm  
February 5th, 11th, & 19th 12-2 pm

[Click to sign up](#)



## Missed our kick off meeting? No worries- we still have room!

Are you a teen or young adult with a disability who's passionate about making a difference? We invite you to become part of our Youth Advisory Board — this is a space where your voice matters!

Our board will meet monthly, with our first information sessions kicking off in the new year. Together, we'll focus on building advocacy and leadership skills, and influencing systems that truly support youth with disabilities.

By joining, you will:

- Gain confidence in self-advocacy and community leadership.
- Collaborate with other motivated peers.
- Provide valuable input to improve resources and initiatives for youth with disabilities.

Come learn, lead, and make your voice heard. Your perspective can help create real change! Our March Meetings are scheduled for:

Teen Advisory Council (ages 14-17): Tuesday March 10th at 6:00 pm

Young Adult Council I: Tuesday March 10th at 7:00 pm

Young Adult Council II: Wednesday March 11th at 1:30 pm\*

*\*ideal for transition classes!*

To join our Youth Advisory Board, please fill out this [form](#).

# WHAT CAN NJSAP DO FOR YOU?

## 01 INTRODUCTION

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



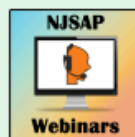
## 02 TRAININGS

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



## 03 WEBINARS

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



## 04 RESOURCES

NJSAP is committed to spreading information and resources to anyone who needs it!

On our home page you will find information for upcoming events, information about our services, and downloadable flyers and infographics on a variety of topics.



NJSAP also has resources and trainings for new advisors and starting new advocacy groups!

We can also connect you to other programs and events around New Jersey.

Contact us at [NJSAP@arcnj.org](mailto:NJSAP@arcnj.org)

## 05 NEW JERSEY STATEWIDE SELF-ADVOCACY NETWORK (NJSSAN)

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

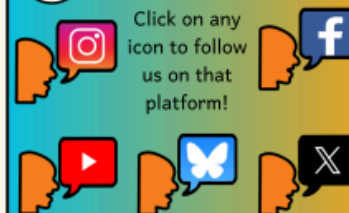


## 06 HEALTHY LIFESTYLES PROGRAM

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



## 06 SOCIAL MEDIA



Thank you for taking the time to read this newsletter from The Arc of New Jersey's Children's Advocacy Program. 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. Happy Sharing!



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