

Equal Justice Journal

March 2025



"Advocating for equal justice for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities"

Developmental Disabilities Awareness Month

Developmental Disabilities Awareness Month, observed each March, is a time to recognize the rights, value, and aspirations of individuals with developmental disabilities. It serves as a reminder of the importance of respect, inclusion, and equal opportunities for everyone, regardless of their abilities. Throughout the month, communities come together to celebrate achievements, advocate for rights, and promote understanding. People can get involved by attending local events, sharing educational resources, supporting relevant organizations, promoting inclusivity, and learning from individuals with developmental disabilities. Established in 1987 by President Ronald Reagan, this observance continues to inspire positive change and foster an inclusive society.

Recent Trainings



Director Robyn Holt, and case manager Hannah Noel presented "Understanding the Intersection of IDD, Sexual Violence, Criminal Justice, & Bystander Intervention" at Montclair University.

This training educated students on the intersection of IDD, criminal justice, and sexual violence, highlighting the unique vulnerabilities individuals with IDD face as both victims and defendants. It covered barriers to reporting, legal protections, and best practices for advocacy and support. A key focus was on bystander intervention, equipping students with strategies to recognize, prevent, and respond to sexual violence. Through case studies, role-playing, and discussions, students learned how to create safer, more inclusive communities and support individuals with IDD in navigating the justice system.



Juvenile Justice Corner



The article "An Exploration of the Disproportionate Representation of Youth with Learning Disabilities in the Juvenile Justice System" by Kayla S. Cox highlights the overrepresentation of youth with learning disabilities in the juvenile justice system, pointing out how school policies often push these students toward criminal justice involvement. Youth with disabilities are more likely to face school discipline, leading to arrests. The article calls for trauma-informed, supportive educational practices and better training for educators and law enforcement to address these students' needs. It advocates for systemic reforms to prevent criminalization and promote inclusive, preventative approaches. We encourage readers to support local initiatives, volunteer with awareness-raising organizations, and engage with policymakers to create more equitable opportunities and reduce the criminalization of youth with disabilities.

To read more, click [here](#).

Equal Justice Talks Webinar Series



From Classroom to Cell: Understanding and Addressing the School-to-Prison Pipeline for Individuals with IDD

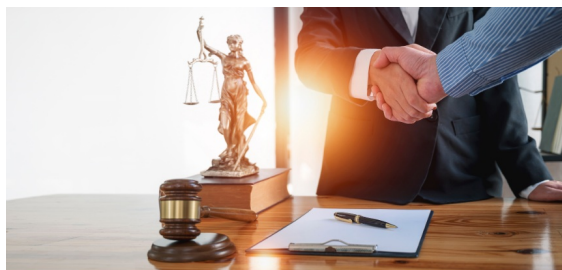
Upcoming Webinar:

"Restorative Justice in the Criminal Justice System: Centering Individuals with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities"

The criminal justice system often struggles to provide fair and equitable treatment for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD), but restorative justice offers an alternative framework that shifts the focus from punishment to accountability, healing, and community connection. This approach has the potential to transform criminal justice responses while creating space for those historically marginalized by traditional systems. This webinar will explore how restorative practices can be integrated into criminal justice processes, offering a more inclusive, human-centered approach.

Avery Arrington, Assistant Director of Training at the National Center on Restorative Justice (NCORJ), will lead the discussion. Avery brings extensive experience in restorative justice facilitation and training, with a background in student conduct, bias response, and community accountability. Her work focuses on expanding access to restorative practices for marginalized communities and creating meaningful alternatives to traditional justice systems.

Register [here](#).



Past Webinar: "Building Bridges between the Disability & Criminal Justice Community: Updates from The Arc's National Center on Criminal Justice and Disability"

We hosted a webinar on March 19th, exploring the intersection of disability and criminal justice, led by The Arc's National Center on Criminal Justice and Disability. The session covered key developments, strategies, and initiatives aimed at improving systems for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD) in the criminal justice system. Attendees gained valuable insights into current trends, best practices, and policies shaping disability advocacy and justice reform. This event provided a unique opportunity for professionals, advocates, and others committed to creating more inclusive systems. Thank you to everyone who registered and participated in helping to drive meaningful change!

[Visit our Webinar Archive](#)



Crisis Intervention Training (CIT)

Crisis Intervention Team (CIT) is a specialized police response program that trains officers to effectively manage encounters with individuals experiencing mental health crises. The goal is to de-escalate situations, connect individuals with mental health services, and reduce unnecessary arrests or use of force.

If you are law enforcement staff or court personnel interested in coordinating a presentation in your county, please contact rholt@arcnj.org.



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The Arc of New Jersey Criminal Justice Advocacy
Program

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