

# Equal Justice Journal

## April 2025



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

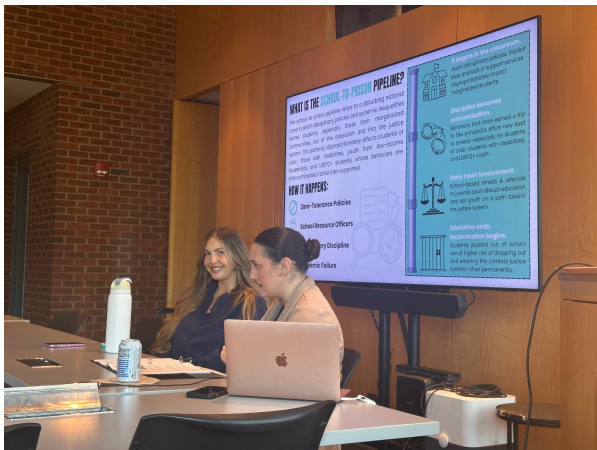
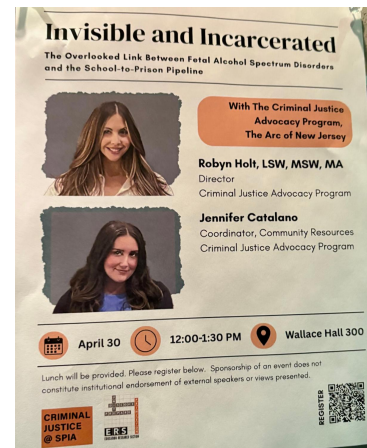
## National Autism Awareness Month

National Autism Awareness Month is a time to recognize and support people with autism, while promoting greater understanding, inclusion, and acceptance. It's more than just awareness, it's about acknowledging the diverse experiences of individuals with autism and advocating for meaningful changes in education, healthcare, employment, and community inclusion.

This month encourages all of us to listen, learn, and stand in solidarity with people with autism and their families. By embracing neurodiversity and challenging harmful stereotypes, we move toward a more inclusive society, one where every person is valued, respected, and empowered to thrive.

## Recent Trainings

At Princeton University, CJAP Director Robyn Holt and Case Manager Jennifer Catalano presented "Invisible and Incarcerated: The Overlooked Link Between Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders and the School-to-Prison Pipeline." This training highlighted the often-missed connection between fetal alcohol spectrum disorders (FASD) and increased risks of criminal justice involvement. Participants explored how early, unmet needs in educational and support systems contribute to the disproportionate incarceration of individuals with FASD. Through research insights, case studies, and discussion, the session emphasized the urgent need for early intervention, proper diagnosis, and systemic change to disrupt the school-to-prison pipeline for this highly vulnerable population.







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

Robyn and Hannah presented to two classes at Seton Hall, these trainings explored how individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD) are uniquely impacted by sexual violence and the criminal justice system. Students examined barriers to reporting, misconceptions about consent, and the importance of disability-informed bystander intervention. The training encouraged critical thinking about systemic gaps and highlighted strategies for building safer, more inclusive communities.



CJAP director, Robyn Holt, authored and published an article in the Spring 2025 edition of Autism Spectrum News, titled "Trauma-Informed Care in the Criminal Justice System: Supporting the Emotional and Physical Wellness of Autistic Individuals."

To read this article click [here](#).

## Juvenile Justice Corner



The Coalition for Juvenile Justice's National Standards for the Care of Youth Charged with Status Offenses call for a shift in how society responds to non-criminal behaviors like truancy, running away, and curfew violations. Instead of court involvement or detention,



the standards advocate for a child- and family-centered approach, recognizing these behaviors as signs of deeper issues often linked to family or community stress. They emphasize avoiding secure confinement and promoting community-based, trauma-informed services. Key principles include early intervention, diversion from the justice system, and providing the least restrictive, most appropriate services. This approach supports youth and families, fostering safety, opportunity, and long-term success while reducing reliance on punitive measures. Advocates can help by learning about the standards, sharing them, and supporting policies that prioritize care over punishment.

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:**

#### **"First 1,000 Days of Life and Implications for Future Health and Behavioral Outcomes: A Neurocriminological and Nutritional Neuroscience Perspective"**

The first 1,000 days, from conception to age two, are crucial for brain development and lifelong health. Traumatic or negative experiences during this period can lead to long-term behavioral and health challenges. This training explores the importance of the first 1,000 days, identifies factors that can hinder development, and discusses implications for intake, screening, intervention, and prevention. It will also incorporate insights from neurocriminology and nutritional neuroscience.

The webinar will be held on **Tuesday, May 27th, 2025, at 1:00-2:00 PM** and hosted by Jerrod Brown, Ph.D., a leading expert in forensic studies, autism, mental health, and trauma.

Register [here](#).



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

The criminal justice system often struggled to treat individuals with IDD fairly, but restorative justice offered a more inclusive alternative focused on accountability, healing, and community connection. This approach aimed to transform traditional responses and create space for historically marginalized populations.

The webinar, led by Avery Arrington of the National Center on Restorative Justice, explored how restorative practices could be integrated into justice processes. Avery brought extensive experience in facilitation and training, with a focus on expanding access for marginalized communities.

[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](mailto:rholt@arcnj.org).



## Stay Connected

The Arc of New Jersey Criminal Justice Advocacy Program

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