



NJCDD's Eye on Advocacy weekly e-newsletter is published every Tuesday, focusing on important news and events for the intellectual and/or developmental disabilities community. You are welcome to submit news items and feedback to njcdd@njcdd.org

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National Service Dog Month

September is National Service Dog Month! Service dogs are dogs that are individually trained to do work or perform tasks for people with disabilities.

This month is dedicated to raising awareness and educating the community about service dogs that provide greater independence and support to their partners.

[Learn More](#)

Take Action



Join us for a full day of dynamic, topic-specific conversations regarding "A DRAFT Community Blueprint for Safe, High-Quality Licensed Settings." Together, we aim to shape better and safer homes for individuals with Intellectual or Developmental Disabilities (I/DD). We'll host five live virtual sessions; each focused on a key area of reform. Attend one, some, or all, based on your interests and availability.

**Wednesday,
September 17, 2025
9:00AM -3:30PM**

Three Steps to Participate:

Read the DRAFT Community Blueprint

<https://tinyurl.com/you5bvuw>

Share your input

<https://tinyurl.com/4rsfyub9>

[Register Here](#)

Download the Flyer [HERE](#)

Multi-lingual closed captioning will be available. For questions, please contact Kyoko Coco, Kyoko.Coco@njcdd.org, 609-341-3112.

Todas las partes interesadas en la comunidad de personas con discapacidad son bienvenidas. Únase a nosotros para un día completo de discusiones sobre las reformas necesarias en el "Versión preliminar de plan comunitario para entornos con licencia seguros y de alta calidad". Al trabajar juntos, nuestro objetivo es dar forma a hogares mejores y más seguros para las personas con discapacidades intelectuales o del desarrollo (I/DD). Organizaremos cinco sesiones virtuales a lo largo del día. Cada uno se centró en un área clave de reforma. Asista a uno, algunos o todos, según sus intereses y disponibilidad.

Miércoles

17 de Septiembre de 2025

9:00AM -3:30PM

Tres pasos para participar:

Lee el borrador del Plano Comunitario

<https://tinyurl.com/you5bvuw>

Comparte tu opinión

<https://tinyurl.com/4rsfyub9>

[Regístrate Aquí](#)

Descarga el Folleto [AQUÍ](#)

Los subtítulos multilingües estarán disponibles usando Wordly. Si tiene preguntas, comuníquese con Kyoko Coco, Kyoko.Coco@njcdd.org, 609-341-3112.



[Access the Recording](#)

A Community Blueprint for Safe, High-quality Licensed Residences

[Download the Blueprint](#)

On June 30, 2025, the Regional Family Support Planning Councils' Health and Safety Subcommittee, the New Jersey Council on Developmental Disabilities' Health and Wellness Subcommittee, and the Office of the New Jersey Ombudsman for Individuals with Intellectual or Developmental Disabilities and Their Families co-hosted a listening session to hear directly from stakeholders about the successes, challenges, and ideas for improving safety and high-quality care in licensed residential settings.

As a result of the conversation, a draft Community Blueprint for Safe, High-Quality Licensed Residences was developed. This blueprint outlines key roles and responsibilities, as well as necessary reforms, across four stakeholder groups—State Government, Provider Agencies, Frontline Staff, and Family Members/Guardians—and includes broader areas like the use of technology and additional advocacy areas.

We invite you to review the draft Community Blueprint and share your feedback to help shape the path forward:

[Share Your Feedback](#)

Virtual conversation: Ensuring Safety & Thriving Lives in Licensed Settings

In light of the "Hidden at Home" investigative news series, which exposed critical flaws in New Jersey's licensed residential settings for adults with intellectual/developmental disabilities (I/DD). All stakeholders are welcome, particularly parents and other family members, to share their experiences. What's working? What's not working? How can we ensure our loved ones are safe, supported, and thriving?

This conversation aims to elevate the voices of families and drive meaningful change. Specifically, we want to learn your thoughts about how we – as a community – should move forward.



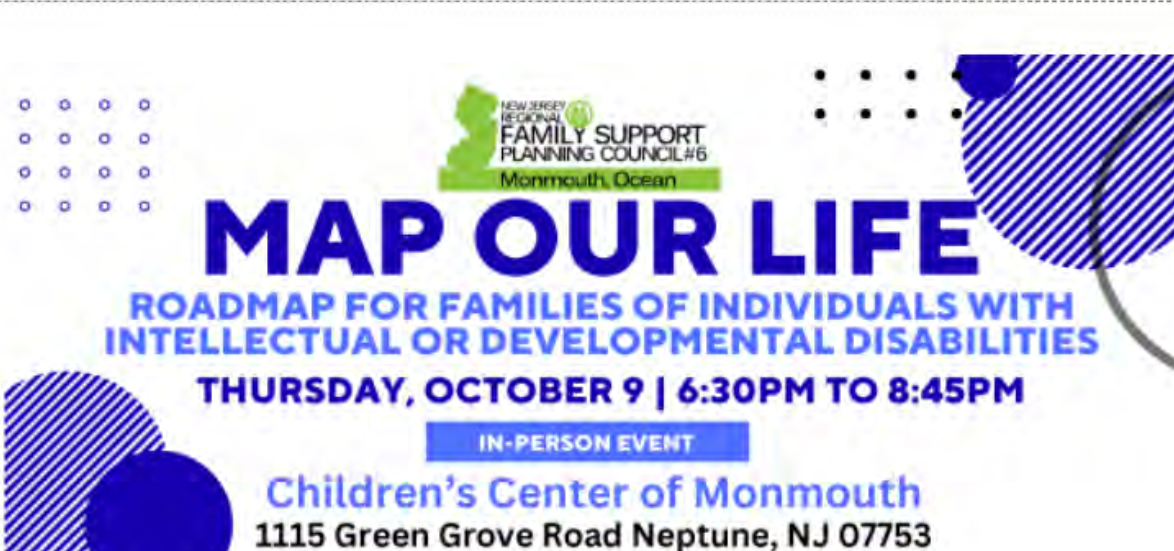
Join us on **September 24 from 5:00 PM to 6:30 PM** for a free, virtual training designed to support youth (ages 14–20) and their families as they prepare for the transition from school to adult life.

[Access the September 24 Session Here](#)

[Download the Flyer HERE](#)

All sessions will offer a clear roadmap and practical guidance for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities, including those with co-occurring mental health and behavioral health needs.

Hosted by Allies, Inc., a partner of the Woods System of Care, this training is part of a current grant project funded by the New Jersey Council on Developmental Disabilities. The focus is on empowering families with knowledge and resources to navigate complex systems and advocate effectively for their loved ones.



Learn how to build personalized long-term plans for your loved ones with Intellectual/Developmental Disabilities (I/DD), including emergency planning, caregiver support, and care coordination.

[RSVP Here](#)

Download the Flyer [HERE](#)

GUEST SPEAKERS:

Christine Bakter, Deputy Director, New Jersey Office of the Ombudsman for Individuals with Intellectual or Developmental Disabilities and Their Families, A representative from **Northwell Health**



Fiscal Intermediary (FI) Transition Update

The transition of the Division of Developmental Disabilities' (DDD) Vendor Fiscal/Employer Agent (VF/EA) Self-Directed Services Model from Public Partnerships LLC (PPL), the current fiscal intermediary, to Acumen Fiscal Agent (Acumen), is underway. For information, visit [Acumen-NJ, DDD | 2025 Fiscal Intermediary Transition \(PPL to Acumen\)](#)

If you have not started your Acumen enrollment or you need help completing it, you can [book an appointment with Acumen](#) (phone, virtual, or in-person at their Hamilton office).

Acumen Transition Updates and Q&A Webinars

Acumen and DDD are hosting weekly transition update webinars, with Q&A, for individuals and families, support coordinators, supports brokers, and vendors, every Thursday from 1 – 2 p.m. *unless otherwise noted.*

September 18 **11 am – 12 pm:** [Webinar for Support Coordinators and Supports Brokers](#)
1 – 2 pm: [Webinar for Individuals/Families, Authorized Representatives, Employers of Record, and Self-Directed Employees](#)
3 – 4 pm: [Webinar for Community Vendors and Individuals/Families who use Vendor Services](#)

September 25 **11:30 am – 12:30 pm:** [Webinar for Support Coordinators and Supports Brokers](#)
1 – 2 pm: [Webinar for Individuals/Families, Authorized Representatives, Employers of Record, and Self-Directed Employees](#)
3 – 4 pm: [Webinar for Community Vendors and Individuals/Families who use Vendor Services](#)

Upcoming Events →



[Register Here](#)

Each year, the New Jersey Self-Advocacy Project (NJSAP) and the New Jersey Statewide Self-Advocacy Network (NJSSAN) work together to host the annual Fall Conference. This event is an opportunity for disability advocates to network, learn about current advocacy issues, and attend professional development workshops.

The theme of our 2025 in-person conference will be "Play Your Part." The Advisory Board members of the NJSSAN picked this topic to bring awareness that every person is a vital part of advocacy as a whole. Advocacy is stronger when we all speak up together and everyone 'plays their part'!

During our opening session, we will hear from some amazing speakers, including Patrice Jetter. There will also be an exhibitor hall, a keynote speaker, and a panel led by members of our NJSSAN. The Conference will end with a dance party/networking session. DJ Redline will be the DJ for our dance party/networking session. Exhibitors will also be available throughout the conference.



Empowering Self-Direction: A Sustainable Future

You are invited to the Collaborative for Citizen Directed Supports - Self-Direction Conference: Sustainability & Beyond in New Jersey. Don't miss out on this opportunity to join a movement that is focused on building a stronger, more sustainable community that thrives on self-direction!

Location: The College of New Jersey – Brower Student Center, Ewing, NJ
Conference Date: Networking & Exhibitor Social: Thursday, October 23, 2025 | 6:00 PM – 8:00 PM
 Conference Friday, October 24, 2025 | 8:00 AM – 4:00 PM

Individuals, families, professionals, and advocates gather for this transformative event to explore the power of self-direction.

[Register Here](#)

Webinar Series for Educators & Transition Specialists

Webinar One: Launch Pad for Success
 September 25, 2025 | 2:30 PM - 3:15 PM Zoom
[Register Here](#)

Webinar Two: Adult Life 101 - A Beginner's Guide to Adult Services
 October 23, 2025 | 2:30 PM - 3:15 PM | Zoom
[Register Here](#)

Webinar Three: The Changing Landscape of Post-Secondary Options

November 20, 2025 | 2:30 PM - 3:15 PM | Zoom
[Register Here](#)

Webinar Four: Roadblocks in Family Partnerships: Repairing Communication in Challenging Situations

January 15, 2026 | 2:30 PM - 3:15 PM | Zoom
[Register Here](#)

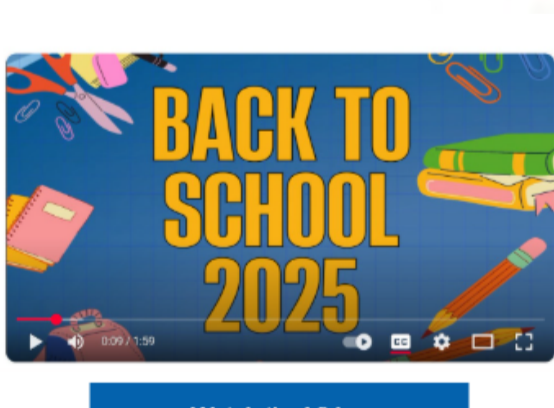
Webinar Five: Understanding Social Security Benefits: Setting Your Graduates Up for Employment Success

February 26, 2026 | 2:30 PM - 3:15 PM | Zoom
[Register Here](#)

Webinar Six: Long-Term Planning

March 19, 2026 | 2:30 PM - 3:15 PM | Zoom
[Register Here](#)

In the News →



[Watch the Video](#)

Back to School

Message from the Commissioner
 This year, more New Jersey across more children will attend high-quality preschool than ever before. Literacy will remain a central priority, with expanded investments in tools, training, and evidence-based programs to ensure every child builds a strong foundation in reading. At the same time, students will explore math in ways that aim to develop quantitatively and analytically literate citizens. Likewise, new opportunities in computer science, AI career pathways, and other cutting-edge technologies are preparing our students for the future. Next-generation statewide assessments, new student data systems, and our world-class educators further enhance our schools as the pride of our state and communities.

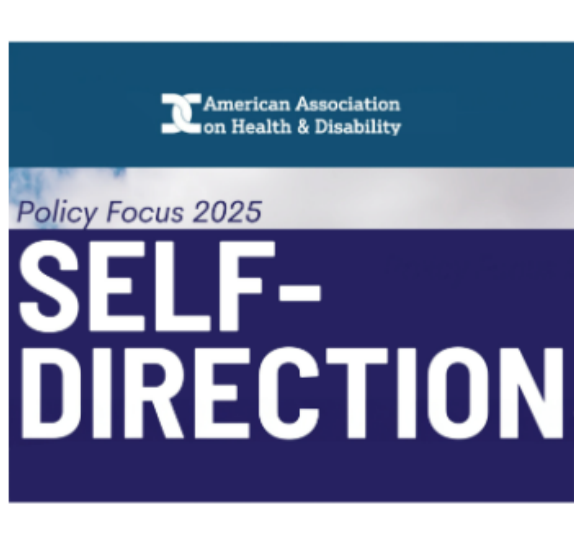
[Read More](#)



State Health Department Issues Executive Directive, Standing Order to Ensure Access to COVID-19 Vaccines in NJ

September 9, 2025
 TRENTON, NJ – The New Jersey Department of Health (NJDOH) today issued **Executive Directive No. 25-003**, allowing anyone six months of age and older to receive a COVID-19 vaccine for the 2025-2026 respiratory illness season. The Department also issued a **Standing Order** authorizing pharmacists in **New Jersey** administering COVID-19 immunizations without a prescription. Together, these actions remove barriers to ensure that all individuals who wish to receive a COVID-19 vaccine are able to do so in the State.

[Read More](#)



Self-Direction in Services and Supports

Posted on August 19, 2025 (August 20, 2025) by Michelle Sayle
 The movement towards self-direction in essential programs for independent living is an important advancement for the civil rights of people with disabilities. Not only should disabled people have the right to live in their communities, they should also have the ability to determine how they receive care and support. Self-direction is a shift in care provision that is starting to become better integrated with a variety of health programs. Programs like HCBS under Medicaid have been leading the way in bringing self-determination into the space of care. As we look towards major spending cuts to Medicaid, this policy blog covers how they will affect the movement for dignity and autonomy for people with disabilities.

[Read More](#)

Resources



NEW RESOURCE

Selecting a Service Provider: Making Choices, Becoming Empowered

A Guide for People with Disabilities and Their Families

People receiving services through New Jersey's Division of Developmental Disabilities (DDD) can choose the service provider that best meets their needs. This guide offers people with disabilities and their families ideas that can help them select a provider that will support them to live the lives they want.

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

Selecting a Service Provider: Making Choices, Becoming Empowered

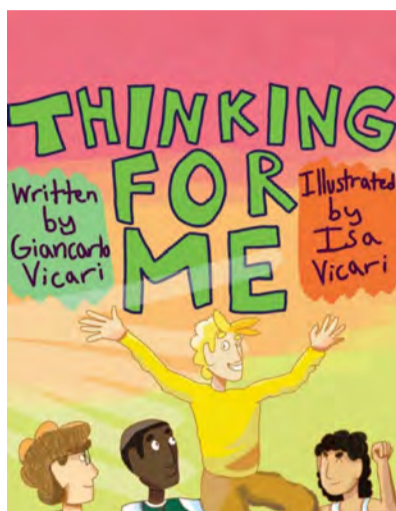
People receiving support through New Jersey's Division of Developmental Disabilities can choose the service provider that best meets their needs. This guide offers people with disabilities and their families ideas that can help them select a provider that will support them to live the lives they want.

[Download guide – English](#)

[Download guide – Spanish](#)

Limited quantities are available in hard copy format through the Publications Order Form.

[Access the Order Form Here](#)

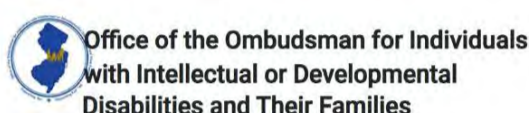


Thinking for Me Comic

[Learn More](#)

Giancarlo Vicari, Youth Ambassador from New Jersey, created a comic called "Thinking for Me" about turning 18 and talking to your parents about alternatives to guardianship. We help make Giancarlo's comic into a 5-minute audio story narrated by Giancarlo and his friends. This audio story is a great resource to share with anyone interested in learning more about supported decision-making and alternatives to guardianship!

[Download the Comic](#)

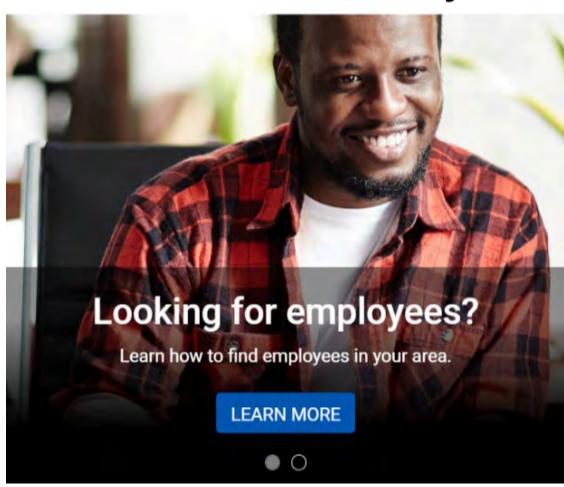


Transition Resources New Jersey State Resources

One challenge common to every individual with an intellectual or developmental disability and their families is the transition from childhood to adulthood. Known as the proverbial "cliff" – the point at which there seems to be a sudden drop in services and supports as children age out of the school system and into adult life. Below are resources to help with this transition.

[Learn More](#)

Jobs that Care New Jersey



Looking for employees?
Learn how to find employees in your area.

[LEARN MORE](#)

The Direct Care and Service Workforce is critical to the lives of people with disabilities and those who are aging. The demand for these jobs is growing fast and will continue to increase in years to come. This workforce is essential to providing the supports individuals need to live healthy, active, and engaged lives in the community. From helping with personal, health, and home care to providing support with community activities, workers in these roles make a difference!

If you are interested pursuing a rewarding career, please check out the information on this site to learn more and to find jobs in your area.

[Learn More](#)



Employment First

The Employment First page on the NJCDD website has been updated with information intended for individuals living with disabilities who are interested in working!

Now, along with information about Employment First in New Jersey, the page features plain language information and links related to:

- [Seeking Employment](#)
- [Benefit Resources](#) as they relate to work
- [Transitioning to employment](#) from high school

[Learn More](#)



DISABILITY BENEFITS 101 NEW JERSEY
[HTTPS://NJ.DB101.ORG](https://nj.db101.org)

- + FIND THE RIGHT HEALTH COVERAGE FOR YOU
- + BENEFITS AND WORK ESTIMATOR
- + LEARN ABOUT SSI & SSDI BENEFITS, AND MORE!



BENEFICIOS POR DISCAPACIDAD 101 NUEVA JERSEY
[HTTPS://NJ.DB101.ORG](https://nj.db101.org)

- + ENCUENTRE EL SEGURO MÉDICO A SU MEDIDA
- + ESTIMADOR DE BENEFICIOS Y TRABAJO
- + CONOZCA LOS BENEFICIOS DE SSI Y SSDI, ¡Y MÁS!

The NJCDD is proud to support NJ DB101, a free, user-friendly, all-in-one place, resource guide for employment and benefit questions/information. Find out how working impacts benefits like SSI, SSDI, Medicaid, and more! Resources are in plain language and available in both [English](#) and [Spanish](#).

[Learn More](#)

An Enhanced Family Support Crisis Handbook

4th Edition

Available in English and Spanish



Enhanced Family Crisis Handbook

The purpose of this expanded version of the Toolkit is to empower individuals with disabilities and their family and professional caregivers by providing information to more effectively advocate for persons with complex severe behavioral health conditions (which we formerly referred to as "dual diagnosis") for treatments, supports, services and the conditions that promote mental wellness.

[Learn More](#)

Manual Mejorado de Crisis Familiares

El propósito de esta versión ampliada del kit de herramientas es facilitarles a las personas que tienen discapacidades y a sus cuidadores familiares y profesionales herramientas que los empoderen, al proveer información que permita abogar de una forma más efectiva por las personas que tienen condiciones graves y complejas de salud conductual (a las que antes se denominaban con "diagnóstico dual") para conseguir los tratamientos, apoyos, servicios y las condiciones que fomentan el bienestar mental.

[Aprende Más](#)



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