

Eye on Advocacy e-newsletter

September 30, 2025



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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Spinal Cord Awareness Month

The United Spinal Association represents our nation's 5.5 million wheelchair users. They proudly trace their roots to the paralyzed World War II vets who came home to an inaccessible nation and made it their new mission to create a fully inclusive society. The Association honors them by using today's tools to directly provide top-notch service and resources to their members, chapters, and the broader disability community.

[Learn More](#)

Take Action



MAP OUR LIFE

RESEARCH STUDY FOR FAMILIES OF
INDIVIDUALS WITH INTELLECTUAL OR
DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 9 | 6:30PM TO 8:45PM

IN-PERSON EVENT

Children's Center of Monmouth
1115 Green Grove Road Neptune, NJ 07753



Learn about a clinical research study focused on testing a long-term care planning tool for family caregivers of individuals with intellectual and/or developmental disabilities (I/DD).

[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, **Arshnoor Kaur** and **Nicole Sampaio**, Research Coordinators, Northwell Health




Seven Years Later: Lessons from New Jersey's First Ombudsman for Individuals with Disabilities

October 28, 2025
12:00pm - 1:00pm (Zoom)



Paul Aronsohn
New Jersey's inaugural Ombudsman for
Individuals with Intellectual or Developmental
Disabilities and Their Families



Join us for an insightful discussion with Paul Aronsohn, New Jersey's inaugural Ombudsman for Individuals with Intellectual or Developmental Disabilities and Their Families on October 28. As he prepares to conclude his historic tenure at the end of Governor Murphy's administration, Paul will share candid reflections on his seven-year journey advocating for New Jersey's disability community. **Senate Majority Leader M. Teresa Ruiz, Caucus Co-Chair**, championed the legislation that created this groundbreaking office and will lead the meeting.

[Register Here](#)

Tuesday, October 28, 2025
12:00pm - 1:00pm (Zoom Webinar)

Paul, along with advocates, will discuss the victories that transformed lives, the systemic challenges that persist, and a vision for strengthening advocacy efforts under future leadership. From navigating bureaucratic barriers to ensuring people with disabilities and their families receive essential services, hear firsthand about the real-world impact of having a dedicated state Ombudsman and what lies ahead.

This is a unique opportunity to learn from the experiences of the person who helped define this crucial role and to understand how legislative advocacy can create lasting change for our most vulnerable residents.

Upcoming Events



SparkNight is the free monthly art party at the museum inviting everyone to explore art, engage their creativity, and have fun! You are invited to attend the launch event for Disability Awareness Month. Free and open to the public. Complimentary light refreshments.

Thursday, October 02, 2025, 5:00 p.m.-8:00 pm
Zimmerli Art Museum, 71 Hamilton St, New Brunswick, NJ, 08901

[Learn More](#)

Please contact for more information education@zimmerli.rutgers.edu.

If you anticipate needing any type of accommodation or have questions about the access provided, please call Nicole Simpson, Access Coordinator, at 848-932-6178 or email nsimpson@zimmerli.rutgers.edu in advance of your participation.



[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.



Know Your Rights: Nursing Facility Transition, Medicaid & Person-Centered Planning

Join staff from Disability Rights New Jersey's Institutional Rights team as they present a rights-based webinar on nursing facility transition, Medicaid, and person-centered planning rights to educate people with paralysis residing in nursing facilities about their rights to support independence and community inclusion.

Tuesday, October 14, 2025, 2-3pm

A webinar for individuals with paralysis, their family members and professionals

ASL interpretation and captioning will be available.

[Register Here](#)

[Download Flyer](#)



Supporting Families, Empowering Futures for Youth with Intellectual/Developmental Disabilities

Join us on Wednesday, October 15 between 6:00 pm to 7:30 pm for a free, virtual information session designed for families of youth with intellectual/developmental disabilities. Learn how to access valuable services and resources available through the New Jersey Department of Children and Families, Division of Children's System of Care (CSOC). This session is co hosted by CSOC and the Regional Family Support Planning Councils.

[Register Here](#)

Download the flyer [HERE](#)

September 19 was Concussion Awareness Day in New Jersey: a day annually dedicated on the third Friday of September to raise awareness of the causes, signs and symptoms, and dangerous effects of concussion.

Watch a Video of the Full Presentation

Resources



Selecting a Service Provider: Making Choices, Becoming Empowered

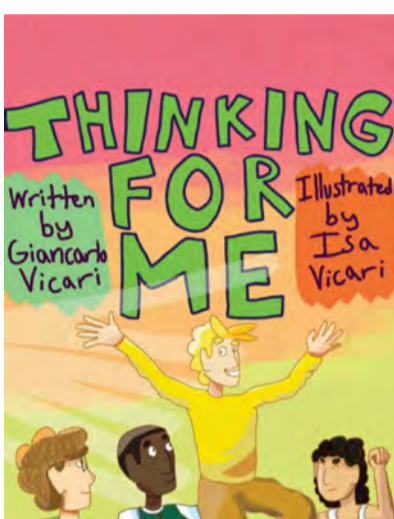
People receiving support through New Jersey's Division of Developmental Disabilities can choose the service provider that best meets their needs. This guide offers people with disabilities and their families ideas that can help them select a provider that will support them to live the lives they want.

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 helped 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



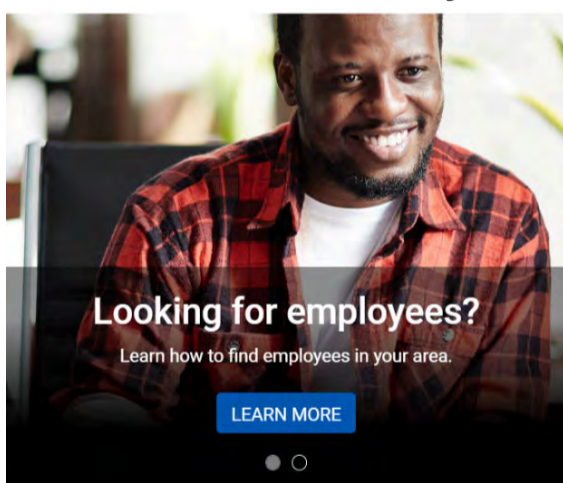
Office of the Ombudsman for Individuals with Intellectual or Developmental Disabilities and Their Families

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



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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Telephone: 1-800-792-8858 | Email: njcdd@njcdd.org

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