



Developmental Disability Education Day Speakers Biography

Paul Aronsohn

Ombudsman for individual with Intellectual or Developmental Disabilities and their Families
State of New Jersey

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Appointed by Governor Murphy in April 2018, Mr. Aronsohn is the very first Ombudsman for individuals with Intellectual or Developmental Disabilities and Their Families in the State of New Jersey. His primary responsibility is “to serve as a resource to provide information and support to individuals with intellectual or developmental disabilities and their families.” As a sibling of individuals with special needs, he has personal understanding of the daily challenges and joys families experience. His 2018 annual report can be found in the following link:

<https://www.autismnj.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/2018-Annual-Ombudsman-Report.pdf>

Gabrielle Bohon, Esq.

Vice-Chair, New Jersey Family Support Planning Council- newjersefspc@gmail.com

Vice-Chair, Regional Family Support Planning Council #1 (Sussex, Warren, Morris) – rfspc1@gmail.com

Ms. Bohon, a Boonton mom, an estate planning attorney, has begun her journey as advocate when her daughter, Lily, was born 20 years ago with Down Syndrome. She is now taking her grassroots work to a state level, serving as the Vice-Chair of New Jersey Family Support Planning Council. She leads the family advisory committees that advise the Division of Developmental Disabilities as well as the Division of Children’s System of Care. Read more about her bio in the following link: <https://njcdd.org/wp-content/uploads/NJCDD-PF.2019.Winter.pdf>

Patricia Brennan

Director of Waiting List and Special Projects

Fee for Service Conversion team

Division of Developmental Disabilities, Department of Human Services

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Ms. Brennan, as known as “Tricia” to individuals and families, is the dedicated Division staff who put person-centered planning and approach into her daily practice. Support Brokerage is one of many projects she is currently involved. For more information about Support Brokerage, read the Section 17.20 in the Division’s Policies and Procedure Manual (“Manual”).

For Supports Program: <https://www.state.nj.us/humanservices/ddd/documents/supports-program-policy-manual.pdf>

For Community Care Program: <https://www.state.nj.us/humanservices/ddd/documents/community-care-program-policy-manual.pdf>

Sandi Cooper

Executive Director, Neighbours, Inc.

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Ms. Cooper has a 31 year commitment to individuals and families around futures planning, circle facilitation, organizing supports, developing creative housing options, Support Broker Services, and supporting people to expand relationships. Ms. Cooper is one of the leaders of a growing management team at Neighbours, Inc supporting the team to implement the organizations vision. Also, Ms. Cooper serves as the CEO of Endless



Possibilities, LLC. Endless Possibilities was established in 2004. The mission of the organization is to partner with individuals and their families around building futures, developing partnerships and expanding relationships.

Lorraine D’Sylva-Lee

Training and Consultation Specialist

Rutgers Behavioral Research and Training Institute, Children’s System of Care, Training and Technical Assistance Program & CEO of LEE (Learning Enrichment Experiences) Services

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Ms. D’Sylva-Lee is the former Director of Training and Program Development for the Family Resource Network, a role that fostered collaborations with the Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs, the Division of Developmental Disabilities, the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation Services, the Division of Disability Services and Division of Children’s System of Care (CSOC). She is a certified Trauma-Competent Professional, Nurtured Heart Approach Advanced Trainer, and Lead New Jersey Fellow. She is currently employed as a Training and Consultation Specialist at Rutgers University Behavioral Health Care, Behavioral Research and Training Institute (BRTI) for New Jersey’s CSOC, Training and Technical Assistance (TTA) unit, in this role she develops curriculum and provides TTA statewide on developmental disability related issues. Ms. D’Sylva-Lee is the point person for the annual statewide CSOC youth conference and Developmental Disabilities and co-occurring Mental Illness (DDMI) Superusers quarterly meetings and newsletters. The DDMI Superusers group is a leadership initiative to enhance statewide resource information for children/youth with DDMI needs. Ms. D’Sylva-Lee is an active member of several boards of trustees and councils for local, statewide and national organizations focused on the life-span needs of individuals with IDD. As a family member of person with intellectual and developmental disabilities, she has lived experiences that have prepared her well to approach each task with enhanced insight and sensitivity. After many years of struggling to identify meaningful and purposeful adult DD activities for her daughter, Ms. D’Sylva-Lee opened an approved Medicaid/DDD provider agency for Day Services.

Kara Kushnir, MSW, LCSW

Sibling, Psychotherapist, New Jersey Council on Developmental Disabilities Member

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Ms. Kushnir is a psychotherapist in Bergen County, a school social worker on a child study team in Morris County, and a sibling. Her interest in I/DD all started with her younger sister, Katie (23) who has autism. Ms. Kushnir is the co-founder of Supportive Initiatives for Brothers & Sisters in New Jersey (SIBS NJ), a non-profit organization that provides psychoeducation on the needs of typical siblings, as well as referrals to resources and educational workshops on sibling needs/family needs. In her private practice, A Work of Heart Counseling, Ms. Kushnir helps families sit down and discuss future planning as a facilitator, as well as provides therapy to children, teens, and adults with a wide range of needs, with a special interest in families of children and adults with I/DD. Likewise, Ms. Kushnir enjoys advocating with and on behalf of individuals with I/DD as a member of the NJ Council on Developmental Disabilities.

Ellen Nalven, M Ed.

Planned Lifetime Assistance Network of NJ (PLAN/NJ) www.plannj.org

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As the executive director of Planned Lifetime Assistance Network of NJ (PLAN/NJ), Ms. Ellen Nalven, M Ed. educates families on the importance of life planning to promote independent living and quality of life for



individuals with disabilities. In this role she serves as legal Guardian and Trustee for Special Needs Trusts and oversees the delivery of case management, advocacy and life planning services for nearly 1000 people.

Previously, she served on the faculty of the Department of Psychiatric Rehabilitation at the University of Medicine and Dentistry of New Jersey; as director of employment services for Our House, Inc.; and as a program consultant for the New Jersey Division of Developmental Disabilities. Ellen earned a master's degree in education and a post master's certificate in psychiatric rehabilitation.

Ms. Nelvin is co-chair of the National Pooled Trust Standards Committee and has also received national recognition for her work in employment for people with disabilities. She received the President's award from the National Academy of Elder Law Attorneys (NAELA); the National Rebecca McDonald Leadership Award from APSE, The Association for People Supporting Employment First and the co-founder award from NJAPSE. Ms. Nelvin is a member of the Board of Directors of the National PLAN Alliance.

Myrta Rosa

Member, New Jersey Council on Developmental Disabilities

Member, The New American Movement for People with Disabilities

Vice-President, Helping Hands, Community Access Unlimited

Ms. Rosa is a warm yet fierce lifelong advocate. She was born in Puerto Rico in 1958. She graduated from Perth Amboy High School in 1978. She attended a shelter workshop and then obtained various jobs, but her passion has been always to help people. When her parents' health deteriorated, she and her sister took care of them at home. After their passing, Ms. Rosa decided to move into the Woodbridge Developmental Center where her advocacy journey started. She participated in the Project Take Charge and Partners in Policymaking (PIP). She eventually left the Developmental Center and has been living in the community independently. She has been an invaluable member at multiple organizations including the New Jersey Council on Developmental Disabilities (for 11 years), the New American Movement For People With Disabilities (NAM), and Community Access Unlimited (CAU) (for 10 years). Ms. Rosa is the Vice-President for the CAU's self-advocate group called Helping Hands. She enjoys attending national and international conferences and sharing her expertise and experience. Ms. Rosa is the recipient of the Colleen Frasier Award from New Jersey Council on Developmental Disabilities.

Alycea Tetto

Support Coordination Manager

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Ms. Tetto is first & foremost, a mom of 5, including an adult daughter with developmental disabilities. Following 30 years as a benefits analyst and disability advocate in Long Term Disability insurance, Ms. Tetto says she found her true calling when she entered the system professionally 5 years ago as a Support Coordinator for Disability Services & Advocacy, LLC (DS & A). She wanted to know upfront and first hand all the changes taking place in the system and how they would affect her daughter & others. As a support coordinator, she has a front row seat to this constantly changing system. DS & A is one of the largest Support Coordination Agencies, serving over 1000 clients statewide through 54 support coordinators. She loves nothing more than sharing information with the families she serves and the support coordinators she trains & supports. Ms. Tetto is also a member of Regional Family Support Planning Council #1 (Sussex, Warren, Morris) as well as several parent support groups.