

FEBRUARY 2022



Connecting Our Work to Your Chapter!

Dear Local Chapter President/Executive Director,

I hope the New Year brings you and your family health and happiness. As we kick off 2022, I would like to take this opportunity to showcase the many outstanding programs at The Arc of New Jersey as well as some of their standout accomplishments and the ways in which individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities and their families served by your Chapter can benefit from our work. Despite the difficulties and challenges thrust upon us by the COVID-19 pandemic, The Arc of New Jersey never wavered in our commitment to those we represent. In fact, we found - and continue to find - new and creative ways of reaching out to our community, connecting with our grassroots and leading the way on the IDD issues that matter most.

At The Arc of New Jersey, we spend a great deal of time determining the needs of those we represent and the best ways to meet those needs through advocacy, resources, information, and referral. Here you will learn more about some of our accomplishments and the ways your Chapter, and those you serve, can take advantage of our offerings. I encourage you to take a few minutes to learn about what we're doing on a state level to help you and the thousands of individuals with IDD and their families living across New Jersey. If you have any questions, please feel free to reach out to me at tbaffuto@arcnj.org or 732-733-6174.

The Arc of NJ Family Institute

If you have a loved one with intellectual and developmental disabilities, connecting with our Family Institute will help open doors to the advocacy, information, resources and community support you need. The Arc of New Jersey Family Institute, along with our Children's Advocacy Director, provides a broad range of information, in digestible formats, that make it easy for you to understand the complicated service delivery systems and then take the



necessary steps to advocate for your loved one. This includes everything from workshops, webinars, fact sheets, "Go Bags," Podcasts, College Tours, IEP Reviews, and more. Of critical importance, the staff provides direct advocacy and assistance to help families navigate through the web of systems, eligibility requirements and more. Last year, The Arc of NJ Family Institute assisted more than 5,800 individuals through phone calls, emails and problem forms. Email Lisa Ford, Director, at LFord@arcnj.org or call her at 732-828-2022. www.thearcfamilyinstitute.org

The New Jersey Self Advocacy Project

Connecting with thousands of self-advocates from across the state, the NJ SAP continued to keep individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities engaged with advocacy, healthy living and socialization opportunities throughout the public health crisis. For 9 years running, The Horizon Foundation of New Jersey has awarded our organization with grant funding to operate a Healthy Lifestyles Project which helps adults with IDD learn how to live a healthy life through diet, exercise, and stress management.



NJSAP holds an interactive Zoom series (Healthy Lifestyles Project LIVE) and a webinar series (Stay Healthy at Home). Both have been, and continue to be, essential to individuals with disabilities as many stayed home during COVID. In FY21 alone, NJSAP delivered more than 200 trainings/workshops reaching more than 11,000 self-advocates. They also held virtual conferences, distributed the Advocacy Matters and Positive Pulse newsletters and shared useful information and updates on their social media channels. Email Ashley Ritchey, Director, at ARitchey@arcnj.org or call her at 732-743-8345 www.njselfadvocacyproject.org

Mainstreaming Medical Care

It can be a very complex process navigating the various healthcare systems when you have IDD or when you're supporting a loved one with IDD. Our Mainstreaming Medical Care Program helps individuals understand complicated matters related to insurance, Medicaid, and Social Security. In addition, the Director advocates on behalf of individuals to help them obtain needed care and benefits. This assistance is critical to



helping people meet various eligibility requirements for entitlement programs which will allow them to receive the medical care and services they require. Also, the Mainstreaming Medical Care serves as a wealth of information on everything from private duty nursing, "dual eligibles," Supplemental Security Income and managed care organizations. Throughout the COVID-19 health crisis, the Program continues to be an essential resource when it comes to updates on the virus, vaccination and testing. Email Beverly Robert, Director, at BRoberts@arcnj.org or call her at 732-246-2567. www.mainstreamingmedicalcare.org

Planning for Adult Life

If you are supporting a teen with intellectual and developmental disabilities, you likely know the educational entitlement ends at age 21. What you may not know, is what your loved one is going to do when he or she leaves the school system. Whether your child is interested in building skills to obtain competitive employment, seeking volunteer opportunities, or connecting with a community provider organization for social opportunities or day program



services, planning is essential as your child becomes a young adult. The Planning for Adult Life Program offers webinars, workshops, planning sessions, resources and a monthly newsletter to assist your child on the path to adulthood. We urge families to learn more about Medicaid eligibility, transportation, employment, post-secondary options, and more by connecting with the Planning for Adult Life Program and mapping out a transition course for the future. Email Jerisa Maseko, Director, at JMaseko@arcnj.org or call her at 732-828-0972. www.PlanningforAdultLife.org

Additional Programs at The Arc of NJ

Governmental Affairs - monitoring and responding to all state legislation and budget issues that will impact individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities, their families and provider agencies.

Criminal Justice Advocacy - provides information, resources and case management for individuals with IDD who are defendants in the criminal justice system. The program also provides technical assistance and training for the courts and law enforcement.

Project HIRE - a supported employment program designed to connect people with disabilities to integrated employment opportunities in their community, assisting them in finding and maintaining competitive employment. The program also assists Middle and High School students in their preparation and transition to adult life with its School-to-Work program. Project HIRE is also an approved Ticket to Work provider. This service aims to help qualified individuals, who are interested in becoming gainfully employed, navigate Social Security work incentives and benefits.

Training and Consultation Services - provides staff training and technical assistance to Supported Employment Providers, Support Coordinators, Self Advocates, Families and Schools throughout the state of New Jersey. Specializing in customized options for providers, TCS sessions provide a wide range of trainings, which include, but are not limited to: Job Coaching, Job Developing, Documentation & Record Keeping, Communication & Team Building, Management & Program Structure, and Accreditation. Training is offered through a variety of settings; from larger classrooms, small groups, one-to-one consults, webinars, and teleconferences.

RECENT HIGHLIGHTS

- The Arc of New Jersey has led the way on Direct Support Professional wage increases, creating and chairing the Coalition for a DSP Living Wage, serving as a member for many years and raising awareness on the issue, resulting in consistent wage increases for both DSPs and supervisors in four consecutive State Budgets. We remain a leader on this issue, advocating for additional funding for this workforce in order to stay ahead of the rising minimum wage.
- As a result of our advocacy, the FY22 Budget included funding to significantly increase both the day program rate and the supported employment rates. Addressing the rates for these services was the focal point of our budget advocacy last year.
- Advocated on a wide-spectrum of legislation and was successful in getting more than 15 bills signed into law by the Governor in the first half of FY22.
- Successfully advocated for a temporarily increased day program retainer payment from the Department of Human Services in the months of January and February. This extra funding was needed by Local Chapters to help keep people healthy & safe in light of the Omicron variant and subsequent day program closures.
- Successfully advocated for a 7.5% increase in Early Intervention rates, which had not been addressed in 15 years.
- Advocated with the Department of Human Services and the Governor's Office on many COVID-related issues, including: vaccine access, testing options, and Executive Order 252 requiring DSPs to be vaccinated or COVID tested.
- Published a Get Out the Vote Guide which included a Q&A from both gubernatorial candidates, as well as resources, ballot information and relevant voting timelines.
- Kept Local Chapters and members of our grassroots up to date with frequent communication pieces highlighting ongoing advocacy, political news and policy proposals
- Shared resources, information and updates on social media, The Arc of NJ website and program sites, and through our e-newsletters. (Sign up for our e-newsletter at: www.arcnj.org/help/enewssignup.html)