

Children's Advocacy The Arc of New Jersey

Adara Heilmann, Director



The Arc of New Jersey

- Largest advocacy and service organization for children and adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD) and their families
- Founded in 1949 by families of individuals with IDD and remains today a consumer and family driven organization
- Serves the entire state of New Jersey through our Local County Chapters as well as our State Office Programs
- In addition to our programs, The Arc of New Jersey is highly involved with public policy, advocacy, and governmental affairs activities



Mission

To promote and protect the human rights of individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities and actively support their full inclusion and participation in the community throughout their lifetimes; and is committed to enhancing the quality of life of those individuals and their families through advocacy, empowerment, education, and prevention

Core Values

- People First
- Democracy
- Visionary Leadership
- Community Participation
- Diversity
- Integrity and Excellency

About the Director

- Education

- B.A. Psychology, East Stroudsburg University
- M.A. Child Advocacy and Policy, Montclair State University

- Work History

- The Arc of New Jersey
 - Transition Navigator, Planning for Adult Life 5/1/23
 - Director, Children's Advocacy 1/1/24
- Background in healthcare management, social work, and hospitality



Children's Advocacy

Mission:

- This program connects children with IDD to the appropriate state services that will help them develop and achieve long term goals. The program works directly with children and families, state agencies, and members of the New Jersey Legislature.
- To provide individual and systems advocacy related to Early Intervention (EI), the Children's System of Care (CSOC) and PerformCare, special education, and related services



Strategy

- Uphold our standard as the “go-to” place for children with IDD and their families
- Develop innovative content to make information more accessible to a wider audience
- Increase our presence in the community by attending family resource fairs
- Participate in inter-agency workgroups and advisory committees
- Provide direct advocacy and assistance to help families navigate the service systems in New Jersey
- Establish relationships with state agencies to improve IDD-related services

Who Does This Program Serve?

- Children ages 0-21 and their families
 - Connect them with various systems in New Jersey
 - Early Intervention, Children's System of Care (CSOC), PerformCare, etc
 - Assist families with accessing services through their local school districts
 - Provide Individualized Education Plan (IEP) / 504 Plan reviews
 - Attend IEP meetings and advocate on the student's behalf

Assistance for Families

- Explain the rights of their students to have a Free and Appropriate Public Education (FAPE)
- The parents/guardians rights as a member of their student's Child Study Team (CST)
- Connect with local or state level resources
- Assist with understanding the school, community, and state resources available to their children
- Validate the family's experience and alleviate the stress of feeling unheard or isolated
- Connect with family-oriented activities in the state to increase their community involvement

Family & Child Advocacy

- Child age 0-3 concerned about possible delays
- Child age 0-3 already enrolled in Early Intervention
- Pre-school child with a disability
- Pre-school child with a suspected disability
- Child beginning the process of getting an Individualized Education Plan (IEP)
- Child denied for IEP, working on establishing a 504 plan
- Child has a 504 plan, but the family believes they need an IEP
- Child/Adult in need of transitional services

Family & Child Advocacy

When I receive calls similar to those in the examples on the last slide I can:

- Put the family in touch with agencies for specific care (PerformCare, Early Intervention)
- Schedule meetings to brainstorm IEP/504 plan accommodations or needs
- Attend meetings with the school district
- Attend mediation and due process meetings

Special Education Newsletter



- Table Talk
- Sent out monthly on the 3rd Thursday
- Information about changes to special education legislature in New Jersey
- Inclusive events such as clubs, camps, or fairs for children and families
- Interesting articles related to children and families

Fact Sheets

- Graphics intended to help understand information related to children with IDD
 - IEP/504 Plan accommodations for specific diagnoses
 - Family and student's rights
 - Federal and state legislature

ADD/ADHD Accommodations

Here are some accommodations for your child's IEP or 504 plan:

General:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Preferential Seating• Positive Reinforcement and Feedback• Allowing breaks and time to move around• Limit distractions
Organizational:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Teacher can sign assignment book• Use electronic calendar• Provide baskets/supplies to organize desk/locker• Color code material by class• Teach note-taking strategies or provide typed notes• Break long term assignments into smaller, more manageable chunks
Instructions:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Request verbal and written instructions• Keep instructions concise• Provide rubrics, graphics, or pictures
Tests and Assignments:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Allow alternative assignments (i.e. Oral report rather than an essay)• Reduced homework/classwork• Frequent short quizzes vs. infrequent unit tests• Allow for extra time• Allow for small group/alternative location for testing
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Wobble Chair• Fidget toys

Webinars

- Covers topics including self-advocacy, pre-employment transition, community organization spotlights, and many more
- Guest speakers from different local and state agencies
- Coming soon:
 - Roundtable discussions on specific topics related to special education

Subcommittee Member

- Currently a member of about 20 subcommittees & stakeholder groups
 - Range from State Interagency Coordinating Council to County Interagency Coordinating Councils to smaller, more focused groups
 - Children & Youth or IDD committees
 - County or statewide
- Discussions help to keep informed about current local and state issues that affect children with special needs

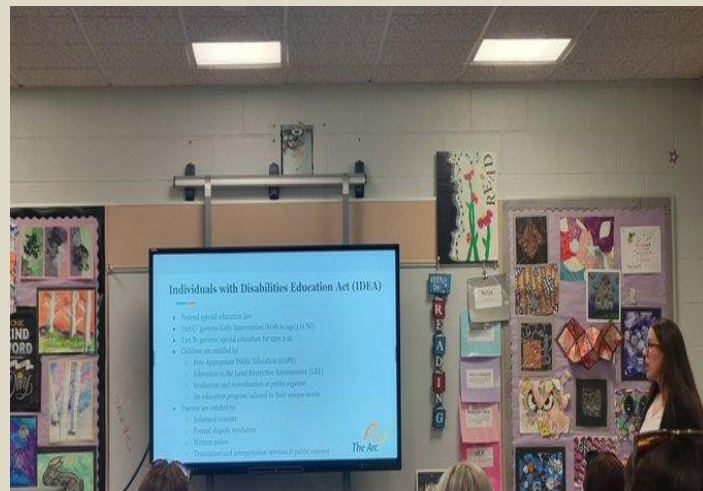
Statewide Systems Advocacy

- Attend state hearings
- Testify at state hearings
- Meet with legislators
- Purpose of meeting, attending, and testifying is to share information regarding issues in New Jersey that are currently affecting our children with intellectual or developmental disabilities and their families
 - Share the mission of The Arc of New Jersey
- Identify trends



Community Presentations

- Guest speaker on webinars
- Share information on The Arc of New Jersey with subcommittees and other agencies
- College Presentations
- Special Education Parent Advocacy Groups (SEPAG)



Facebook Live

- Advocacy with Adara
 - Currently have 4 live videos
 - Bi-monthly
 - Join me on May 20th!
- Archives on Facebook and website
 - Including 3 seasons of Mondays with Michael
 - FB Archives also include Catching Up with Connor, our Director of Healthcare Advocacy's bi-monthly series



Collaboration

- Coca-Cola/The Arc of U.S. Grant
 - In conjunction with our Planning for Adult Life department
 - Focus on educating students about self-determination and building those skills
 - Focus on educating families about special education rights
 - Provide families with access to The Arc@School online curriculum and focus group discussions



Children's Advocacy Website

- Resources and Assistance
 - Link to Problem Intake Form for Special Education
 - Tell us about... Podcast
 - Features different organizations that specialize in providing services and supports for different diagnosis
 - Questions to ask during an IEP Meeting
 - Student Profile Template
- Problem Intake Form
 - Link to request assistance
 - Specifically for support with IEPs, 504 plans, out-of-district-placement, and transition planning

Children's Advocacy Website

- Upcoming Event
 - Webinars
 - Stay Tuned!
 - Round Table Events
 - Parent and Family supports for students with specific diagnoses
 - Facebook Live: Advocacy with Adara schedule
- Archives
 - Webinars, FB Live- Advocacy with Adara & Mondays with Michael, Advocate of the Month

Children's Advocacy Website

- Education Advocate of the Month archives
- Upcoming Ideas for the Website:
 - Graphics related to special education accommodations, special education process or rights
 - Graphics related to state and local services
 - Zoom link for Office Hours
- What would you like to see on a website geared towards Children's Advocacy?

When you visit the website...

Please make sure you sign up for the email list!

- Great way to stay updated on special education news
- Share resources for children and families
- Look for inclusive opportunities
- Local spotlights



Zoom Office Hours

- Brand new feature
- Soft start
 - Advertised on Facebook only
 - Registration required
- 20 minute sessions, first come first served
- Starts May 8th, 1-3 pm



Children's Advocacy Zoom Office Hours

Are you looking to make changes to your student's IEP or 504 plan? Join us on Wednesday, May 8th from 1-3 pm. Due to the anticipated volume of participants, we will be offering 20 minute sessions with Adara Heilmann, Director of Children's Advocacy. Sessions will be granted on a first-come, first-served basis, ensuring we can accommodate as many families as possible.



Please scan the QR Code to register!



732-246-4897



education@arcnj.org



Questions?

I'm all ears!



Contact The Arc of New Jersey!

Adara Heilmann
Director, Children's Advocacy
The Arc of New Jersey
aheilmann@arcnj.org
(732) 246-4897
www.arcnj.org

