

Equal Justice Journal

November 2024



"Advocating for equal justice for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities"

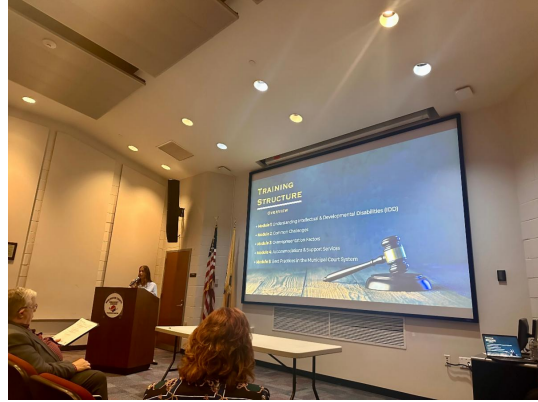
Spotlight: Men's Mental Health Awareness Month



During Men's Mental Health Awareness Month, it's important to shine a light on the unique challenges faced by men with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD) within the criminal justice system. Individuals with IDD are disproportionately represented in the system, often due to difficulties in communication, understanding complex legal proceedings, or navigating the nuances of social interactions. Many men with IDD may struggle to comprehend their rights or the charges against them, making them vulnerable to exploitation, mistreatment, or unfair sentencing. Additionally, without appropriate accommodations or support, they may face heightened risks of isolation, violence, and inadequate mental health care while incarcerated. Raising awareness of these issues is crucial for advocating for more inclusive, informed, and compassionate approaches to justice—one that recognizes the needs of individuals with IDD and ensures they receive fair treatment, proper support, and access to mental health resources. Organizations like [New Jersey Mental Health Cares](#), [The Men's Health Network \(MHN\)](#), [N.J. Division of Mental Health and Addiction Services \(DMHAS\)](#) are crucial in providing vital resources and support, working to break down barriers and address disparities through counseling, advocacy, and community outreach.

Previous Events

[Annual Municipal Division Conference](#)



CJAP case manager Jennifer Catalano assisted program director Robyn Holt in developing and facilitating a presentation for the Annual Municipal Division Conference in Burlington County regarding the IDD population, covering topics such as common challenges, overrepresentation factors, accommodations, and best practices within the municipal court system. Various county judges, prosecutors, public defenders, and other court personnel attended, providing incredibly positive feedback and gratitude for CJAP informing them of this valuable information.

Supports for Persons with Criminal Justice Involvement

Presented by: Robyn Holt, Director Criminal Justice Advocacy Program, Hannah Noel and Karlee Salus

The CJAP team conducted a training for the Division of Developmental Disabilities on November 19th. This training addressed education on individuals with IDD, and the prevalence of human trafficking, in recognition of Walkaway Runway Month.



Crisis Intervention Training (CIT)

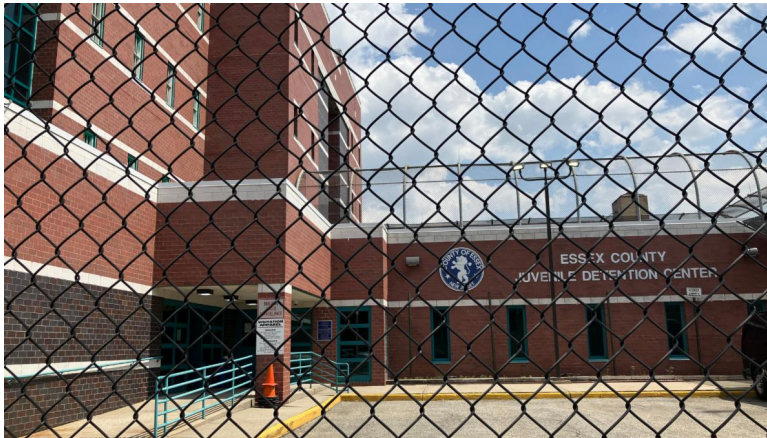
Crisis Intervention Team (CIT) is a specialized police response program that trains officers to effectively manage encounters with individuals experiencing mental health crises. The goal is to de-escalate situations, connect individuals with mental health services, and reduce unnecessary arrests or use of force.



If you are law enforcement staff or court personnel interested in coordinating a presentation in your county, please contact rholt@arcnj.org.



Juvenile Justice Corner



In recent developments, Disability Rights New Jersey (DRNJ) has been actively advocating for the protection and fair treatment of individuals with disabilities in the state's juvenile detention facilities. In August, DRNJ filed a lawsuit against Essex County Juvenile Detention Center, seeking proper access to investigate serious allegations of abuse and neglect. This lawsuit highlights concerns over the lack of appropriate services and accommodations for juveniles with disabilities in the state's detention centers, as many are denied necessary support, such as specialized education, mental health care, and accommodations for communication challenges. In October, a New Jersey judge ruled in favor of DRNJ, granting them the access they need to investigate these allegations further. The case underscores the importance of systemic reforms to ensure that individuals with disabilities, particularly youth in detention, receive the appropriate care and treatment they deserve. Disability rights advocates continue to call for better oversight and improvements to services in juvenile justice settings to prevent further violations of the rights of individuals with disabilities. For more information on how DRNJ is working to improve services and protect the rights of those with disabilities, visit their website [here](#).

Equal Justice Talks Webinar Series



From Classroom to Cell: Understanding and Addressing the School-to-Prison Pipeline for Individuals with IDD

Upcoming Webinar: "The School-to-Prison-to-School Pipeline for Youth with Disabilities"

Wednesday, December 18th 2024
11:00AM-12:00PM EST



Join us for an enlightening webinar on the critical topic of the **School-to-Prison-to-School Pipeline for Youth with Disabilities**. This session, led by **Maura McInerney, Esq.**, will explore how students with disabilities are disproportionately impacted by exclusionary discipline practices and policies that increase their risk of incarceration. Maura will discuss practical strategies, legal frameworks, and advocacy efforts that educators, policymakers, and community leaders can use to dismantle this pipeline and support equitable education opportunities for all students.

Attendees will leave with actionable insights into protecting the rights of youth with disabilities and fostering inclusive educational environments that prioritize rehabilitation and success.

[Register Here.](#)



Past Webinar: "Effects of Trauma on People with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities"

An insightful webinar, "Effects of Trauma on People with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities," was held, exploring the unique ways trauma impacts individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD). The webinar delved into the psychological, emotional, and behavioral effects of trauma on this population and discussed strategies for trauma-informed care. If you missed this webinar on November 5th, [click here to watch](#).

We want to hear from you! If there are specific topics you're interested in or if you'd like us to dive deeper into please reach out to: Rholt@arcnj.org.

Visit our Webinar Archive

GRATITUDE BOARD

Jennifer Catalano
Case Manager

I am grateful for the opportunity to educate various professionals around the state to create a more supportive system for individuals with IDD who are involved in the criminal justice system.

Hannah Noel
Case Manager

I am grateful for the connections established between our program and various law enforcement departments through New Jersey. The CIT and training collaborations we participated in this past year have been impactful in bridging the gap between law enforcement and the IDD population.

Robyn Holt
Director

I am deeply thankful for my incredible team. Their dedication and enthusiasm for delivering top-notch services to individuals with IDD inspire me daily.

They go beyond surface-level challenges, recognizing the importance of training and awareness to support our clients in the most effective way possible.

I feel fortunate to work alongside such a passionate and committed group who truly embody the heart of this program!

Lindsay Pili
Administrative Assistant

I am grateful for the kind and supportive coworkers who work to create a safe environment for people with special needs. Also for the opportunity to work alongside many programs at The Arc of NJ. Together, we assist in creating games and projects that educate individuals, enabling them to make more informed and thoughtful decisions about their lives.

Karlee Salus
Case Manager

I am grateful for the Mental Health Diversion Court, which provides individuals the opportunity for treatment and support rather than incarceration, promoting recovery and second chances for a better future.

Happy Thanksgiving!

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The Arc of New Jersey Criminal Justice Advocacy Program

732-246-2525

cjap@arcnj.org

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