



# **The PFAL** **(Planning for Adult Life)** **INTEL**

All the news that's fit to email!

November, 2025

In this issue:

- A big announcement!
- The DDD transition timeline
- Information about our Youth Advisory Board
- Blog: Of Mice and Men and Flying to Belfast: Planning is everything
- New challenges, competitions, and services
- Upcoming webinars

From the desk of Jennifer Harrison - Director, Planning for Adult Life

January brings New Year's kisses. July has fireworks. But, besides heaping helpings of turkey and the errant snowflake, November has very little SHA-BAM.

Until now...

We are so thrilled to use this November to announce:

**Celine Fortin Named Executive Director of The Arc of New Jersey**



Press release: Céline R. Fortin, MSW, LSW and Associate Executive Director, has been elevated to the role of Executive Director effective October 1st. Fortin has been with The Arc of New Jersey for more than 30 years and takes the reins of the organization from previous Executive Director, Tom Baffuto, who retired earlier this year.

As Executive Director, Fortin will be responsible for working directly with government agencies, stakeholders, the Board and Local Chapters to further the mission of The Arc of New Jersey and help advance the work done on behalf of those who the organization supports throughout the state. For more than 75 years, The Arc of New Jersey has been the preeminent champion for IDD inclusion across the state. With a range of programs including Children's, Legal, and Health Care Advocacy, as well as Governmental Affairs, Supported Employment, and Information and Referral Services, The Arc of New Jersey continues to set the standard for care and support along with the 20 individual Local Chapters that provide community-based services to individuals across each of New Jersey's 21 counties.

"I am honored and humbled to serve as the next Executive Director of The Arc of New Jersey," said Fortin. "I was privileged to have served alongside Tom Baffuto for more than 25 years and I am inheriting a mantle shaped by excellence. I'm eager to continue to build on his legacy and provide new ideas and a vision for The Arc of New Jersey to fuel our growth and drive our mission forward as we effect change, shape policy and drive inclusion for those with disabilities."

Fortin brings extensive experience to the role of Executive Director, with a career that includes more than 40 years of service to the IDD and mental health communities. She first joined The Arc of New Jersey in 1990 as a research assistant and since then, has held several director-level roles including most recently serving alongside Baffuto as Associate Executive Director. Across each, she has demonstrated an unwavering commitment to advocacy and being a voice for individuals and families as they navigate and the face challenges that are often overlooked. A licensed social worker in the state of New Jersey (LSW), Fortin earned a Masters of Social Work (MSW) with a Minor in Developmental Disabilities from Rutgers University.

"There is no one more qualified than Céline to guide The Arc of New Jersey forward as we leverage our strengths and dial up the impact we're having across the state," said Lauren Zalepka, Board President, The Arc of New Jersey. "Her passion for advocacy is

unmatched and the experience she brings to the table, especially with supporting the Board and our Local Chapters, is exactly what's needed as we focus on the future. We also extend our sincere thanks and appreciation to Michael Prendergast for his exceptional leadership and filling the role of Interim Executive Director for The Arc of New Jersey during this transition period. We're looking forward to seeing Céline at the helm and are eager to see her visionary leadership take root in the coming months."

Céline has been an inspiration to everyone here at The Arc of NJ for decades and we cannot wait to see what she accomplishes - and what we can accomplish under her leadership - in the years to come.

Here's to good work!

Jen

Ever wished you could have a timeline of exactly what to do when your child turns 21? Explore the English or Spanish **DDD timeline** below!

**NEW JERSEY HUMAN SERVICES**  
**Division of Developmental Disabilities**

**Graduates Aging Out of the School System: Accessing Adult Services from the NJ Division of Developmental Disabilities**  
**A TIMELINE FOR STUDENTS EXITING SCHOOL AND TURNING 21**  
 To be determined eligible for services all applicants must complete either the short or the full application

**STEP 1 Apply for Medicaid Eligibility**

- Learn about Medicaid eligibility for DDD services here: [www.nj.gov/humanservices/ddd/individuals/adp/services/medicaid](http://www.nj.gov/humanservices/ddd/individuals/adp/services/medicaid)
- For additional help, email [DDD.MedEl@lightedark@ehs.nj.gov](mailto:DDD.MedEl@lightedark@ehs.nj.gov)

**STEP 2 Apply for DDD Eligibility**

- Individuals can begin applying for DDD Eligibility any time after 18 years old.
- Call the DDD Community Services Office closest to where you live and/or download the DDD Eligibility Application here: [www.nj.gov/humanservices/ddd/individuals/adp/services/assessment](http://www.nj.gov/humanservices/ddd/individuals/adp/services/assessment)

**STEP 3 Complete NJ Comprehensive Assessment Tool (NICAT)**

- As part of the application process, individuals will complete the NICAT with a DDD Intake Worker, usually from the DDD Community Services Office closest to where they live. Learn about the NICAT here: [www.nj.gov/humanservices/ddd/individuals/adp/services/assessment](http://www.nj.gov/humanservices/ddd/individuals/adp/services/assessment)

**STEP 4 Complete the Support Coordination Agency Selection Form**

- When the individual is in their last year of receiving school-based services, the Support Coordination Agency Selection Form is completed and submitted.
- Research Support Coordination Agencies here: [www.nj.gov/humanservices/ddd/assets/documents/individuals/support\\_coordination\\_agencies\\_list.pdf](http://www.nj.gov/humanservices/ddd/assets/documents/individuals/support_coordination_agencies_list.pdf)

**SEPTEMBER – JUNE: Preparation and Planning**

- Participate in webinars and activities offered about Transition Planning
  - Planning for Adult Life ([www.planningforadulthood.org](http://www.planningforadulthood.org)) offers monthly educational sessions for students with intellectual/developmental disabilities ages 16-21 and their families, and other resources, like:
    - Webinar Wednesdays – monthly webinars on transition-related topics
    - 607 PLANS? ONLINE LESSONS – a downloadable guide and fun instructional videos
- Participate in webinars offered by Division of Developmental Disabilities Office of Transition to Adult Life and Employment
  - DDD Welcome Sessions and Transition Thursdays are for people and families to learn about the transition process, including services available through DDD.
  - To sign up for DDD Transition news and announcements, scan the QR code or email [DDD.TransitionHelpdesk@ehs.nj.gov](mailto:DDD.TransitionHelpdesk@ehs.nj.gov).

**DDD Community Services**

Flanders: 973-927-2600  
 Freehold: 732-863-4500  
 Mays Landing: 609-300-1898  
 Newark: 973-693-5080  
 Paterson: 973-977-4004  
 Plainfield: 908-226-7800  
 Trenton: 609-292-1922  
 Voorhees: 856-770-5900

**Services comunitarios de la DDD**

Flanders: 973-927-2600  
 Freehold: 732-863-4500  
 Mays Landing: 609-300-1898  
 Newark: 973-693-5080  
 Paterson: 973-977-4004  
 Plainfield: 908-226-7800  
 Trenton: 609-292-1922

NJDDD Graduates Timeline: September 2024 1 of 2

**NEW JERSEY HUMAN SERVICES**  
**Division of Developmental Disabilities**

**Graduados que terminan el sistema escolar: Acceder a los servicios para adultos de la División de Discapacidades del Desarrollo de NJ**  
**Una línea de tiempo para estudiantes que terminan la escuela y cumplen 21 años de edad**  
 Para poder optar a los servicios, todos los solicitantes deben llenar la solicitud abreviada o la solicitud completa

**PASO 1 Solicitar para la elegibilidad de Medicaid**

- Información sobre la elegibilidad para Medicaid se puede encontrar aquí: [www.nj.gov/humanservices/ddd/individuals/adp/services/medicaid](http://www.nj.gov/humanservices/ddd/individuals/adp/services/medicaid)
- Si necesita más ayuda, envíe un correo electrónico a [DDD.MedEl@lightedark@ehs.nj.gov](mailto:DDD.MedEl@lightedark@ehs.nj.gov)

**PASO 2 Solicitar para la elegibilidad de la DDD**

- Individuals pueden comenzar a solicitar para la elegibilidad de la DDD en cualquier momento después de cumplir los 18 años.
- Llame a la Oficina de Servicios Comunitarios de la DDD más cercana a su hogar y/o descargue la solicitud de elegibilidad de la DDD aquí: [www.nj.gov/humanservices/ddd/individuals/adp/services/assessment](http://www.nj.gov/humanservices/ddd/individuals/adp/services/assessment)

**PASO 3 Completar la Herramienta de Evaluación Integral de NJ (NICAT)**

- Como parte del proceso de la solicitud, los individuos completarán la Herramienta de Evaluación Integral de NJ (NICAT, por sus siglas en inglés) con un trabajador de admisión, usualmente de la oficina de Servicios Comunitarios de la DDD más cercana a su hogar. Aprenda sobre el NICAT aquí: [www.nj.gov/humanservices/ddd/individuals/adp/services/assessment](http://www.nj.gov/humanservices/ddd/individuals/adp/services/assessment)

**PASO 4 Completar el formulario de selección de la agencia de coordinación de apoyo**

- Cuando el individuo está en su último año de recibir servicios basados en la escuela, el formulario de selección de la agencia de coordinación de apoyo se completa y entrega.
- Lista de las agencias de apoyo aquí: [www.nj.gov/humanservices/ddd/assets/documents/individuals/support\\_coordination\\_agencies\\_list.pdf](http://www.nj.gov/humanservices/ddd/assets/documents/individuals/support_coordination_agencies_list.pdf) (en inglés)

**SEPTIEMBRE – JUNIO: Preparación y Planificación**

- Participar en seminarios en línea y actividades ofrecidas sobre la planificación de la transición
  - Planificar para la vida adulta ([www.planningforadulthood.org](http://www.planningforadulthood.org)) ofrece sesiones educativas, mensuales, para estudiantes con discapacidades intelectuales/del desarrollo entre los 16 hasta los 21 años de edad y sus familias, y otros recursos, tales como:
    - Seminarios en línea los días miércoles – seminarios mensuales sobre temas relacionados a la transición
    - Tiene planes? Clases en línea – una guía descargable y videos de instrucción interactivos
- Participar en seminarios en línea ofrecidos por la Oficina de la Transición a la Vida Adulta y Empleo de la División de Discapacidades del Desarrollo
  - Las sesiones de bienvenida y transición de la DDD los días jueves, son para personas y familias para que aprendan sobre el proceso de transición, incluyendo servicios disponibles por medio de la DDD.
  - Para suscribirse a las noticias y anuncios de transición de la DDD, escanee el código QR o envíe un correo electrónico a [DDD.TransitionHelpdesk@ehs.nj.gov](mailto:DDD.TransitionHelpdesk@ehs.nj.gov).

**Línea de tiempo para los graduados de la NJDDD: Septiembre 2024** 1 de 2

Click here to view on the DDD website in English

Click here to view on the DDD website en Espanol

The Arc of NJ's Youth Advisory Board - now open!

The New Jersey Self-Advocacy Project is a thriving part of The Arc of NJ, and now kids under the age of 18 can make their voices heard, too!

We are proud to announce our new Youth Advisory Board, monthly on-line meetings to sound off on issues like special education, autism awareness, and anything else that's on your mind! Meetings begin in January...

Scan the QR code on the flyer below to join this amazing group of up-and-coming self-advocates!

**The Arc**  
of New Jersey

# YOUTH Advisory Board

JOIN US FOR THE FIRST OF OUR  
MONTHLY MEETINGS

1/13/26 @ 6:00 pm for 14-17 year olds  
1/13/26 @ 7:00 pm for 18-21 year olds  
1/14/26 @ 10:30 am for 18-21 year olds  
\*Ideal for transition classes!

REGISTER HERE



[Or click here to register](#)

## And now a bit about... the importance of planning!!

This month's blog:

**Of Mice and Men and Flying to Belfast: Planning is everything**

By Jennifer Harrison

This is a true story. Do not attempt at home. It may not end well.

Ours is not a traveling family. Not for lack of desire, per se, but a combination of time deficiencies and funds earmarked less for wanderlust and more for HVAC breakdowns. But there was this one time - long enough ago for the sting to have dissipated but not so long to have faded from memory and mockery - that I planned a holiday in Belfast for my younger daughter and me. Excuses be cursed, we were two gals ready to get our corned-beef-and-cabbage on in the historic city.

Now, I am an excellent savings-getter so our hotel was flawlessly Good Enough. The Weather Channel has an excellent app, and so we packed to perfection. The plane was... well, the main character of this story.

Our flight was scheduled for 5:30 on a Thursday evening. We live about ½ hour from Newark. My husband's gas tank was hovering around the F mark. All systems were go.

So, we piled into the car around 3:30 that afternoon and set off for the airport. This is roughly how the conversation went from there.

My husband: What terminal are we headed to?

Me (consulting the itinerary): 8.

My husband: 8? Newark doesn't have a terminal 8.

Me (consulting the itinerary again): Maybe it's a B?

My husband: Well, IS it a B?

Me (trying to focus on the itinerary through tears): No. It's an 8.

The car went silent.

That's because while Newark Airport does not have a terminal 8, JFK airport in Queens, nearly an hour and a half away without traffic - and there's always traffic - does. And that's where we were meant to head.

I have made these mistakes before in various situations and under sundry circumstances. And it was never for lack of planning. It was for poor planning, insufficient planning, and planning executed with only one pair of (poor and insufficient) eyes. Because even though we may try to dot all the i's and cross all the t's and discern all the 8's from B's, we can't always be sure we've done so. And that's why help helps.

Which brings us to PFAL and the importance of planning... with a plan.

When it comes to bridging the gap between childhood and adulthood with a child with developmental disabilities, planning for adult life can mean laying the groundwork for post-secondary education, vocational training, integrated employment (including supported employment), continuing and adult education, gaining adult services, and independent living/community participation. And while there are several age restrictions to filing government paperwork, getting a jump on things is always a good idea. Delaying this process can mean fewer choices for higher education, career paths, or personal development; last-minute decisions, increased stress, and a feeling of being overwhelmed as students approach adulthood; students potentially missing out on opportunities to develop critical life skills such as budgeting, time management, and/or self-advocacy; or gaps in education and work experience that may affect

students' competitiveness in the job market or their readiness for further education. Like knowing the correct airport terminal - or airport itself - knowing where you're heading is often as important as getting there.

So what does planning look like?

- It looks like working with your school's transition team and support services to get an IEP in place that best reflects your child's strengths, wants, and needs.
- It looks like understanding the income and services resources like SSI, Medicaid, and DDD and making sure that the timelines are firmly planted in your brain and calendar. (For your DDD timeline, scroll up and check out the flyers!)
- It looks like thinking hard about the future and whether it should include full guardianship, partial guardianship, or an alternative that will give your student the most independence and least restrictive environment for them.
- It also looks like getting excited for the future. Yes, it comes with anxiety - the future tends to do that - but it is also the brilliant next phase, filled with big steps and baby steps and all the steps in between that deserve to be celebrated.
- Finally, planning looks like support. And that's where [Planning for Adult Life](#) and the other incredible programs at The Arc of NJ come into play.

[Children's Advocacy](#)

[Criminal Justice Advocacy](#)

[The Family Institute](#)

[Healthcare Advocacy](#)

[Project Hire](#)

And the [New Jersey Self-Advocacy Project](#)

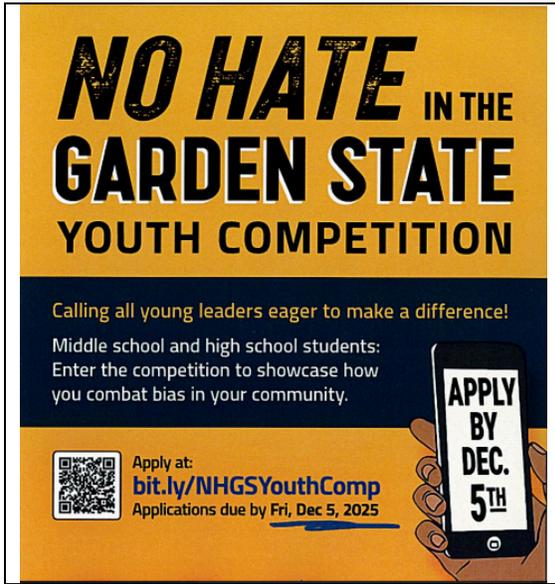
We are all here to help.

My daughter and I managed to make our plane that evening with only a couple of amber (they were amber!) lights run, but the lesson lives on. Because, as we've learned, the best laid plans... Well, you know.

DISCUSS THIS:

**WHAT CAN I DO TO  
STICK TO A PLAN?**

**Want the end of 2025 to include a little more joining?  
Check out these great challenges, programs, and opportunities for  
your student below!  
(Click on the icon to see full-sized)**



**NO HATE IN THE GARDEN STATE YOUTH COMPETITION**

Calling all young leaders eager to make a difference!  
Middle school and high school students:  
Enter the competition to showcase how you combat bias in your community.

Apply at:  
[bit.ly/NHGSYouthComp](https://bit.ly/NHGSYouthComp)  
Applications due by Fri, Dec 5, 2025

APPLY BY DEC. 5TH



**YAI** Seeing beyond disability.

**START Services NJ**

**OPEN FOR REFERRALS**

**START (Systemic, Therapeutic, Assessment, Resources, and Treatment) is a crisis prevention and response program for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (I/DD) who have complex behavioral and mental health needs.**

Over the course of 12-18 months, START builds a strong natural system of support for each participant, reducing psychiatric emergencies and hospitalizations. The program partners with community providers to offer linkages, psychoeducation, and training that improve quality of life for people and their systems of care. YAI has overseen START programs since 2016 in New York and, since 2018, in California.

**ELIGIBILITY**

**Eligibility Requirements**

- 21 years of age or older
- Eligible for NJ DDD services
- A resident in one of the following NJ counties: Burlington, Camden, Cape May, Cumberland, Gloucester, Mercer, Middlesex, Monmouth, Ocean, Salem, and Somerset

**ABOUT YAI**

YAI and its affiliates support children and adults with I/DD to live, love, work, and learn in their communities. YAI's 4,000 staff provide housing, health care, job training, education, and community integration for more than 20,000 people with I/DD and their families in NY, NJ, and CA.

**CONTACT**

For more information, please call the START Services NJ offices at **929.561.5689** or visit our website: [yai.org/STARTNJ](https://yai.org/STARTNJ)

**Want to show the world exactly what people with disabilities can do when entering adulthood?**

Join our social media campaign with Community Access Unlimited (CAUNJ.ORG) with 5-10-second videos featuring teachers, parents, guardians, and especially individuals with developmental disabilities showing off their talents and showing what you can do!

Some examples include:

"I can ride the bus!"  
"I can create a sculpture with clay!"  
"I can take a college class!"

Send in your WE CAN DO THAT! to [helpdesk@planningforadulthood.org](mailto:helpdesk@planningforadulthood.org)



**EMPOWER TEEN SPEAK**

**Research shows...**

- One out of every ten youth report not having a trusted adult in their life.
- Youth who report an adult in their life are more likely to have better mental health outcomes.

**Enter Teen Speak...**

EMPOWER TEEN SPEAK is a free, confidential, and anonymous program that helps parents and caregivers improve their relationship with their teens and address concerns about their teens' behavior, safety, and well-being.

The program was developed by Dr. Jennifer Saloner, who is a marriage and family therapist, and a mom of two kids. She also worked for many years as a teacher and a parent. Her goal was to create a safe space for parents and caregivers to share their concerns and get support from other parents and caregivers.

EMPOWER TEEN SPEAK is a free, confidential, and anonymous program that helps parents and caregivers improve their relationship with their teens and address concerns about their teens' behavior, safety, and well-being.

For more information, please visit [www.empowerfamily.org/teen-speak](https://www.empowerfamily.org/teen-speak)

**TEEN SPEAK**

Strengthening the connection between parents/caregivers and their teens

**EMPOWER TEEN SPEAK**

FOR MORE INFORMATION VISIT [www.empowerfamily.org/teen-speak](https://www.empowerfamily.org/teen-speak)

**UPCOMING WEBINARS:**

**PLANNING FOR ADULT LIFE:**

"Staying Involved After High School" - December 17, 7pm-8pm

Erin Smithers, Director of the NJ Self-Advocacy Project will discuss how you can stay active, engaged, and energized out in the community even after you've left high school. Meet people, share ideas, and explore things you may not even know existed! There's a whole world out there - we'll help you navigate it!

Planning for Adult Life's  
MEET US IN THE MIDDLE WEBINAR SERIES  
The 3<sup>rd</sup> Wednesday of every month, 7pm



December 17: "Staying Involved After High School"  
with Erin Smithers, Director of The NJ Self-Advocacy Program



Erin Smithers will discuss how you can stay active, engaged, and energized out in the community even after you've left high school. There's a whole world out there - we'll help you navigate it!

[Click to register](#)

## CHILDREN'S ADVOCACY:

"Making the Future More Secure" - Dec 3, 6:00pm - 7:30pm

Join Donald T. Brown, the Special Needs Funding Coach for an engaging webinar about gaining more peace of mind regarding what will happen when parents are gone by learning how to most effectively support your loved ones.

Topics include:

Protecting government benefit eligibility

The basics of special needs trusts and ABLE accounts

Writing a letter of intent

Information will be presented in a practical, plain-spoken manner, and participation is encouraged. Content is also relevant for professionals seeking basic answers to financial topics impacting those they support. Participants are welcome to a resource kit and complimentary consultation.

## **MAKING THE FUTURE MORE SECURE**

**WITH DONALD T. BROWN, REGISTERED REPRESENTATIVE AND INVESTMENT  
ADVISER REPRESENTATIVE OF EQUITY  
SERVICES**

### **TOPICS**

**PROTECTING GOVERNMENT BENEFIT ELIGIBILITY  
THE BASICS OF SPECIAL NEEDS TRUSTS AND ABLE ACCOUNTS  
WRITING A LETTER OF INTENT**

### **WHEN?**

**WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 3, 6:00 PM-7:30 PM**



[Click to register](#)

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### **CHILDREN'S ADVOCACY:**

"Empowering Transitions: Post Secondary Options for Students With Disabilities" - December 10, 6:00pm-7:30pm

Hosted by West Morris Regional High School SEPAG- Planning for life after high school is an exciting and important step—especially for students with disabilities. This informative webinar will guide students, families, and educators through a range of post-secondary pathways, including college, vocational training, employment programs, and independent living supports. We'll explore how to access accommodations, navigate disability services, and make informed decisions based on each student's strengths, goals, and needs. Join us to learn about the resources, rights, and opportunities available to support a successful transition to adulthood.

[Click to register](#)

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### **THE FAMILY INSTITUTE:**

"Understanding and Supporting the Age-Related Health Changes in People with IDD as They Grow Older" - December 10, 12:00pm-1:00pm

Join us as Margaret Gilbride, JD, CT, the Director of Transition, Employment, Aging & Disability at The Boggs Center on Developmental Disabilities, discusses how to support individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities (I/DD) throughout

the aging process. We will explore strategies to enhance accessibility in both home and community settings, including day programs, fitness centers, and places of worship.

[Click here to register](#)



Check out this new DDD Transition Thursday's Webinar Series. These webinars are designed to provide you with essential information and guidance as you or your loved one transition from the school system to adult services through the Division of Developmental Disabilities (DDD).

**Topic:** Transition to Adult Services & Intake Process

**Date:** 2nd Thursday of each month

**Time:** 6:00 PM - 7:00 PM

You will learn:

- **Transition Preparation:** Steps to take as you or your loved one approaches the transition from the school system to accessing services through DDD.
- **Eligibility Criteria:** An overview of the requirements to be determined eligible for DDD services.
- **Intake Process:** Guidance on completing the application, submitting required documentation, and completing the NJCAT assessment.
- **Interactive Q&A:** Opportunity for questions to be answered.

Register by clicking the link below:

- January 8, 2026 [Transition to Adult Services & Intake Process](#)
- February 12, 2026 [Transition to Adult Services & Intake Process](#)
- March 12, 2026 [Transition to Adult Services & Intake Process](#)
- May 14, 2026 [Transition to Adult Services & Intake Process](#)

# Follow us on Instagram!



@Pfalarcnj

Thanks for reading! We'll see you next month... The  
Team at PFAL

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The Arc of New Jersey | 985 Livingston Avenue | North Brunswick, NJ 08902 US

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