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Awareness, Education and Support for Learning Disability.
Awareness Week

Awareness:

As Learning Disability Week concludes, we reflect upon the progress that has been made thus far, as well as on the efforts that need to be continued and what direction we must put those

efforts. The purpose of Learning Disability Week is to help people foster an understanding of what learning disabilities entail, what possible barriers these individuals encounter, promote inclusion, celebrate these individuals' abilities and continue to share support and resources.

Just by you reading this, you are in the state of awareness.

Education:

Some laws to get familiar with are [Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act](#), Individuals with Disabilities Education Act ([IDEA](#)), [Title II & III of the Americans with Disabilities Amendment Act of 2008](#), [Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act](#), and Every Student Succeeds Act ([ESSA](#)).

Support:

You might be asking yourself, "Why do I have to get myself familiar with all these laws?" Knowledge is power in this case. The more you're aware of what your rights are and how they're protected, the more you'll be able to advocate for yourself and loved ones. By knowing what's in place now, you can understand where progress still needs to be made. What might be missing from these laws? How do they need to be altered/changed? Check out some of the [proposed laws](#) that are out there now.

You might also be asking yourself, how can I support my students, my child(ren), my friends, my neighbors, the list goes on... who have a learning disability? Though we would love to wrap and put a bow on an answer, it's not that simple-- it depends on who you are looking to support. At it's very core, learning disability is defined as needing support in "understanding or in using language, spoken or written, that may manifest itself in the imperfect ability to listen, think, speak, read, write, spell or to do mathematical calculations" (IDEA, Section 1401.30.A). No two people are going to need to same supports, therefore we should be approaching support in a way that is person-centered. A great place to start is raising awareness, empowering parents, equipping teachers, individualize learning, incorporating social and emotional learning, building self-advocacy skills, focusing on transition planning and [advocate for increased funding!](#)

Check out NJ LDA's resource page [here](#).

Awareness is the foundation. **Education** will be a lifelong process we use as the bricks.
Support is the glue that holds it all together.



Tell Your NJ Legislators to Support a 3% COLA Increase for People with IDD

Action Alert:

People with IDD need your support in the FY27 Budget! A 3% COLA increase for home and community-based services would protect supports for people with IDD, provide safe and reliable care, and address rising operational costs for providers. This funding would also help to increase wages for Direct Support Professionals (DSPs) to outpace minimum wage and reflect their value to people with IDD and their families.

Senator Zwicker and Assemblywoman Murphy have sponsored resolutions to include this funding in the FY27 Budget. Contact your legislators and tell them to support Senate Resolution #261 and Assembly Resolution #131!

Click [here](#) to show your support!



Hello Summer
Hello New Adventures!

With summer here and school out, there's probably some time in your schedule you need to fill! While there is staying cool in the AC or in the pool to always fall back on, here are some different ideas that you can try out this summer!

At Home

1. Eat a meal outside every week
2. Start a new hobby (e.g. join a sports team, learn to cook/bake, geocaching, learn to code, grow a sensory garden)
3. Create something! (Like a tie-dye shirt, a fort, or soap)

In Town

1. Visit your local farmer's market
2. Take a book or audiobook out from the library
3. Volunteer at a local animal shelter

Travel

1. Drive to a new town (with your family, friends, by yourself) and explore what that town has to offer (museums, shops, zoos, whatever you can find!)
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*Data provided by the National Association of State Treasurers
and the ABLE Savings Plans Network (ASPN).*



ABLE Accounts

This is a topic that many families with loved ones with a disability consider when planning financially for the future. You'll also hear the term Special Needs Trusts being thrown around as well. It's hard to know what the best route is for you and your family without researching the pros and cons, and also getting input from people who have lived through making the decisions as well! Read more about Eric Jorgenson's direct experience with ABLE accounts [here](#).

To learn more about ABLE accounts, click [here](#) to register for a Webinar hosted by ABLE today. They'll break down what an ABLE account is, who qualifies for them, how they work and more!

June's Blog:

Removing the Fear from the Unknown by... Education: Why Learning Disability Week is Important

When we don't understand something, our first instinct is most likely to fear whatever that thing is. Take for example, a new career, a diagnosis, or relocating to a new town. These situations present possible obstacles and uncertainties. The "what-if" spiral starts and sometimes it's hard to snap ourselves out of thinking about worst-case scenarios. The easier way would be just to avoid the unknown: not applying for the new job, avoiding doctor's appointments, and staying in the same town.

When we submit to this type of thinking about the "unknown", we are already entering these new circumstances with assumptions or just avoiding them altogether. It can be easy to fall back onto this fear, but at the same time, it can be quite problematic: we can be left dissatisfied, disappointed, or cause harm. When we start a new career, the only way through the unknown is to keep showing up and learning, day-by-day. It's a process that takes time, just like making the appointment, listening to the doctor, and applying a plan.

How does this relate to Learning Disability Week? When we don't understand learning disabilities and the people around us that have them, we may feel some type of fear around them because of a lack of understanding: about what learning disabilities are, how it affects them, how we can support those around us with learning disabilities, and how we can make them feel seen. What better time to educate yourself on Learning Disabilities than the present?

So what should we be taking away from all of this? The term learning disabilities can manifest in many different ways. Having a learning disability does not equate to that person having less intelligence than their peers without a learning disability. It simply means the process of learning differs, whether it's how they receive, process, store or communicate information. Getting to know the different types of learning disabilities, whether it's through your own research or getting to know your friends, peers, or classmates that have learning disabilities is the first step in becoming aware and being an active participant in Learning Disabilities Week. It starts with education. The more we can understand it, the less fear there will be around it and the more we will be able to better support those around us with learning disabilities!

Upcoming Events

Tuesday July 14th: Youth Advisory Board Meeting (18-21 year olds)
7:00 PM- 8:00 PM

A group to give young people a voice in decisions that affect them, improving services, and creating youth-led initiatives.

[Click to Register](#)

Saturday July 18th: Planning for Adult Life (PFAL) and Blue Light Music Mixer
Ages 14-17: 2:00 PM-4:00 PM
Ages 18+: 5:00 PM-7:00PM
Blackwood, NJ

Join for a free hands-on studio session for youth and adults of all skill levels and abilities. hosted in partnership with Blue Light's professional recording studios in Blackwood NJ. Play pro instruments, records vocals, write songs, leave with a track of your own.. and maybe a friend or two!

[Click to Register](#)

Upcoming and Past June Webinars

Every Tuesday: NJSAP (New Jersey Self-Advocacy Program)
2:00 PM

The New Jersey Self-Advocacy Program team finds it important to keep nurturing our connections with you and branching out in ways that help us all continue to grow, no matter where you are! These webinars are for adults and students with intellectual and developmental disabilities, their family members, and Direct Support Professionals.

We will be presenting hour-long trainings every Tuesday at 2 PM on a variety of topics relating to self-advocacy and healthy living, available to view right from your home, office, classroom or wherever you may be!

[Click to Register](#)

Thursday June 18th: Sexuality and IDD: An Introduction

Consuelo Senior, Director of YAI Knowledge and a mental health clinician, will discuss how sexual rights are human rights and, especially for people with IDD, it is important to learn and be supported to exercise those rights. This session will explore topics such as "What really is sexuality for people with IDD?" There will be poignant and relative information for medical staff, clinicians, direct support professionals, families, people with IDD and other neurodevelopmental disorders, everyone!

[Watch Webinar](#)

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