

# Advocacy Matters

A digital newsletter produced by the New Jersey Self-Advocacy Project

## FISCAL YEAR 2016 BUDGET UPDATE

We are very happy to report that The Arc of New Jersey's **number one advocacy priority** for the FY16 Budget, the **Community Care Waiting List**, was addressed by the Legislature in the proposed budget made public earlier this week.

Thank you to all of the families and self-advocates for their continued support and advocacy, as it is your ongoing dedication that led us to this outcome. You made your **voices heard** and we achieved **big results** because of it.

Throughout our meetings with members of the **Budget Committees** and top-level Majority and Minority staff, The Arc of New Jersey conveyed the importance of this issue and the plight of so many individuals and families **caring for loved ones with I/DD** who are in need of **Community Care Waiver services**.

The Legislature's proposed budget includes a **\$3 million increase** to address the **Waiting List** and that money would also qualify for a **federal match** from Medicaid. While lawmakers grappled with a mounting pension and benefit payment, increasing state debt and an unfunded transportation trust fund, they ultimately decided to put forward **additional money** focusing on the **needs of people with intellectual and developmental disabilities and their families**.

Finally, we are thrilled to announce that the Legislature's proposed budget includes an increase of **\$2.5 million in Family Support Services** through the Department of Children and Families. In addition, the **I/DD-specific housing voucher funding** was also maintained in the proposed budget.

The Arc of New Jersey will now focus our advocacy on the **Governor** as he has the power to veto any or all of these line-items from the budget when the bill reaches his desk. Keep an eye out for one final **Action Alert** in the very near future and please make sure you participate and feel free to forward the alert to any of your family or friends.

**Thank you** again for your ongoing advocacy and for supporting the work of The Arc of New Jersey as we support people with intellectual and developmental disabilities.

June 2015

# The New Jersey Self-Advocacy Project's Governmental Affairs Ambassador Program

**Make the choice to use your voice!**

**Who:** All interested Self-Advocates & Support Staff

**What:** Governmental Affairs Ambassador Program  
(GAAP) Legislative Advocacy workshop

**Where:** Center for Healthier Living, 108 Bilby Road,  
Suite 101, Hackettstown, NJ 07840

**When: Friday, August 14th, 10:30 AM - 12:30 PM**

**Why: Self-Advocacy works!** People with disabilities  
have the power to **affect change** and **education**  
decision makers about issues of importance.

**Ambassadors who attend the workshop will:**

- Learn about the **legislative** (law making) **process**
- Learn about the **rights** and **responsibilities** of being a  
Self-Advocate and Ambassador
- Learn about effectively **communicating** ideas, hopes, &  
needs to decision makers
- \_Build advocacy, communication, and teamwork **skills!**

The **Governmental Affairs Ambassador Program** is a program dedicated to  
providing education to Self-Advocates and Support Staff about New Jersey's  
**legislative process** and how law makers influence **funding** for services and  
supports for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities statewide.  
Legislators are charged with making decisions that affect the daily lives of people  
with intellectual and developmental disabilities and their families, so it is crucial  
that these decision makers know the facts in order to make the **best possible choices**.

**Pre-registration is required, so please e-mail**  
**[ARitchey@ArcNJ.org](mailto:ARitchey@ArcNJ.org) to reserve your spot!**