



For people with intellectual and developmental disabilities and their families since 1948.

The Guardian

March 2017 • Volume 68 No. 3



► [Donate Now](#)

Top 10 Tips to Prepare for Your Child's IEP

Beginning in late March, through the end of the school year, parents of children with special needs will begin their annual Individualized Education Plan (IEP) process. The IEP process aims to capture the progress made over the past 12 months and define new goals to achieve over the next year. While the

intention is to help students reach their greatest potential, the process can be overwhelming and emotional for family members involved. To support parents through this necessary, annual process, The Arc of Essex County offers our top 10 tips for preparing for your child's IEP:



1. Your first IEP may occur when your child turns three and begins pre-school, though some may occur later. Begin the IEP conversation with your school district six months prior to your child's third birthday to ensure the school district conducts all evaluations and prepares an initial IEP prior to the start of school.
2. Prepare a "Me" book to introduce the school district to your child - include likes, dislikes, strengths, weaknesses, motivators, etc. This resource helps to paint a personalized and accurate picture of your child and their support needs.
3. Approach your role in the meeting as your child's advocate and voice. Remain calm and well informed when discussing the needs of your child. Don't take a back seat; speak up for what you feel is best for your child.
4. Be Prepared. Speak to your child's medical team, consult with other parents, attend workshops offered by your school district or other provider agencies to learn educational best practices that pertain to your child's specific educational needs.
5. Make a binder that becomes your child's annual IEP resource. Refer to the previous year's IEP before attending the current year's IEP. This becomes a handy tool to reference your child's progress to see what works, what can be improved, and what goals and objectives can be added for the future.
6. If you are uncomfortable with anything in your child's IEP, you have 15 days to review, request changes, and ensure your expectations and concerns are met before going into effect.
7. Be sure that all evaluations (psychological, therapies, vocational, etc.) are up to date and that you keep copies to be used when applying to PerformCare before the age of 18 or to the Division of Developmental Disabilities at the age of 18.
8. Between the ages of 18 and 21, advocate for vocational sampling and community integration to be part of your child's educational experience.
9. At your final IEP before aging out of the educational system, invite your support coordinator or service providers (if they have been identified) to ensure the smoothest transition into the world

of adult services.

10. Your child's individual education plan is protected by federal law. If you feel the guidelines of the [Individuals with Disabilities Education Act \(IDEA\)](#) are not being adhered to, you can consult professional counsel or parent advocacy groups.

For more information or questions about the IEP process, see the New Jersey Department of Education's [Special Education Resources](#). For additional information about transitioning from the educational setting to adult services, contact The Arc of Essex County's Senior Director of Supports Program Service Melissa Soules at msoules@arcessex.org or (973) 535-1181 ext. 1262.



Developmental Disabilities Awareness Month

Photo Contest Now Open

Get your cameras out and your photos ready! During Developmental Disabilities Awareness Month, The Arc of Essex County is looking for photos of your loved ones that celebrate their unique personalities and demonstrates their enthusiasm to achieve... The ten best photos (finalists) will be posted on our Facebook Page where our fans can vote on their favorite shot.

All finalists will receive a gift from The Arc of Essex County. Our grand prize winner will receive two tickets to The Arc of Essex County's 4th Annual Uncorked & Uncapped: Wine, Beer, and Food Fest at The Westminster Hotel in Livingston on Thursday, September 28th (valued at \$200). Second place winner will receive a \$50 American Express gift card and third place winner will receive a \$25 American Express gift card.

To Enter:

- **Step 1:** Take a digital photo of your family member, friend, neighbor, or co-worker with an intellectual or developmental disability that celebrates their unique personality and demonstrates their enthusiasm to achieve
- **Step 2:** "Like" The Arc of Essex County's Facebook page: www.facebook.com/thearcofessexcounty
- **Step 3:** Click on the Photo Contest Tab in Facebook and follow the instructions to enter your photo. The Arc of Essex County will select the top 10 finalists and post them on its Facebook page where our fans can vote for their favorite photo.
- **Step 4:** Invite your friends to "Like" our page so they can vote your photo to the top! Voting will open on Monday, April 10, 2017 at 12:00 a.m. and close at 11:59 p.m. on Friday, April 14, 2017.

To view the official rules, [click here](#).

Registration Now Open for 19th Annual Building Tomorrows 5K Run, Family Walk, and Fun Fest



Registration is now open for The Arc of Essex County's 19th Annual Building Tomorrows 5K Run, Family Walk, and Fun Fest on Saturday, April 29th. The 2017 event will take place at a new location - The Clipper Pavilion at South Mountain Recreation Complex in West Orange. Featuring a USATF-Sanctioned 5K run, a Family Walk around the reservoir, and an afternoon of interactive family fun, the 2017 Building Tomorrows event will raise money for The Arc of Essex County and individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities.

Entry fees for the USATF-sanctioned 5K are \$20 for USATF members and \$30 for non-USATF members (early-bird rate is \$25 prior to April 19). There is no fee to participate in the Family Walk. As our strength is powered by the commitment of individuals like you, individual walkers and teams are strongly encouraged to fundraise. Individuals who raise \$25 or more receive an event t-shirt. Admission to the Fun Fest is \$5 per person (children 5 years and under are free).

To register, visit www.runorwalk.org. For questions, contact The Arc of Essex County's Senior Director of Development and Communication, Heather Comstock, at hcomstock@arcessex.org or (973) 535-1181 ext. 1224. We look forward to seeing you on Saturday, April 29th.

Day Programs Celebrate First Annual Valentine's Day Party

Love was in the air on Tuesday, February 14th as over 100 participants from The Arc of Essex County's day programs celebrated Valentine's Day at the Maplewood Women's Club. Decked out in red and pink apparel, attendees enjoyed writing valentines to family and friends, making valentine's themed jewelry, a buffet meal from Bella Casa Caterers, music, dancing, and a full candy bar.



In addition to their regularly scheduled activities, day program attendees look forward special events planned throughout 2017. Upcoming activities include a March Madness basketball tournament, a Fit Walk in April, Bowling and Kickball leagues, the fourth annual Prom, and a highly-anticipated fishing derby to name a few.

Do you have a loved one interested in The Arc of Essex County's Adult Day Services? Check out our Adult Day Services brochure, [available here](#), then reach out to The Arc of Essex County's Senior Director of Support Program Services, Melissa Soules, to learn how you can enroll - msoules@arcessex.org or (973) 535-1181 ext. 1262.

The Stepping Stones School Celebrates the 100th Day of School

For the past 100 days, Stepping Stones students have been identifying numbers and counting by tens in anticipation of celebrating the 100th day of school. The 100 days of school mascot, Zero the Hero, visited every tenth day with a fun activity or game. Activities included adding 10 beads every 10 days of school to create a 100 bead necklace.



On Tuesday, February 7th Stepping Stones Students celebrated the 100th day by completing "100" themed exercises, making "100" glasses, and creating a gumball machine with 100 stamps (gumballs). Every child received a certificate for being 100 days smarter, enjoyed a cookie cake with the number 100 on it, and celebrated with a balloon drop and dance party.

The Arc of Essex County and the Stepping Stones School celebrate the 100th day of school annually

by making learning fun. The theme is incorporated when teaching numbers, counting, and math.

To learn more about requesting an out-of-district placement so your child can attend the Stepping Stones School, contact Director of Education and Early Childhood, Sue Brand, at sbrand@arcessex.org or (973) 535-1181 ext. 1271.

DDD to Request Individual and Family Participation in National Core Indicators Surveys



Division of
Developmental
Disabilities

Originally issued by the Division of Developmental Disabilities on February 17, 2017. If you or a family member are receiving services from The Arc of Essex County, are invited to participate in the National Core Indicators surveys, and have questions, contact The Arc of Essex County's Senior Director of Quality Improvement and Consumer Supports, Erin Koropsak, at ekoropsak@arcessex.org or (973) 535-1181 ext. 1246.

As you may know, New Jersey's service system for adults with intellectual/developmental disabilities, age 21 and older, has undergone and is continuing to move forward with a number of significant reforms. At the heart of these reforms is a strengthened commitment to ensuring the delivery of high quality services in the community that support and reflect individual choice.

As national best practices demonstrate, ensuring quality services is a process that begins with the measurement of key performance indicators. The [National Core Indicators \(NCI\)](#) is a national project whose purpose is to develop standard performance measures for state systems that provide services to adults with developmental disabilities.

The New Jersey Division of Developmental Disabilities is excited to participate in the NCI project through utilization of three of NCI's voluntary surveys. The **Adult Consumer Survey** is a face-to-face conversation between individuals receiving services and trained interviewers. The **Adult Family Survey** and **Family/Guardian Survey**, both of which are anonymous, are completed online (or via a paper version if necessary).

Invitations to complete the online surveys will be mailed by the Division to family members/guardians in early February, along with a [National Core Indicators Overview](#). At the same time, Division staff will call randomly selected individuals to request their voluntary participation in a face-to-face interview.

If you are an individual who receives Division-funded services:

- You may receive a phone call in the coming weeks from a DDD staff person asking if you would be willing to participate in a face-to-face conversation about your experiences with the Division.
- If you choose to participate, we will schedule a time and place to meet that is convenient for you.
- While you will be talking with an interviewer face-to-face, your responses will be confidential.
- It is your choice whether or not you would like to participate, but please know **we are very interested in hearing about your experiences with the Division!**

If you are a family member/guardian of an individual who receives Division-funded services:

- You may receive a letter in the mail indicating you have been selected to participate in one of the NCI family surveys. **THE MAILING WILL BE RECOGNIZABLE AS IT WILL BE PRINTED ON BRIGHT YELLOW PAPER, which will show through the window in the envelope.**
- In this letter, there will be a web address (URL) where you will access the survey. **This web address will be unique to you and cannot be shared.** There will also be contact information if you prefer to request a paper copy.
- It is your choice whether or not you would like to participate, but please know **we are very interested in hearing about your experiences with the Division!**

If you are a Support Coordinator, Service Provider, Division staff, or other community partner, I ask for your support and assistance to:

- **REMIND** the individuals and families in your networks to expect a mailing on bright yellow

paper with a link to one of the two surveys, and possibly a phone call to schedule an interview.

- **EDUCATE** the individuals and families in your networks about **the importance of the survey.**
- **ENCOURAGE** the individuals and families in your networks to participate in the survey!

Service providers and community partners should be aware that you may see individuals being interviewed by DDD staff at your locations.

The success of this survey project, and of any quality improvement strategies that may emerge as a result, is directly proportional to our ability to elicit thoughtful, honest participation by individuals and families.

Your participation, assistance, and support are greatly appreciated, and we look forward to continuing to work with you to improve Division-funded services for adults with intellectual/developmental disabilities in New Jersey.

If you have questions or concerns about the surveys, please contact us by email at DDD.NCI@dhs.state.nj.us or by phone at 609.631.4626.

Purchase Your Camp Hope and Arc of Essex County Gear Today

Want to rock apparel from Camp Hope and The Arc of Essex County all year round? New merchandise items, short and long sleeve t-shirts, and sweatshirts are available in a variety of children and adult sizes.

To view apparel options and to place your order today, visit www.arcessex.org/merchandise. For questions, contact Heather Comstock at (973) 535-1181 ext. 1224 or via email at hcomstock@arcessex.org.



Embassy Suites Acknowledges The Arc's Candes Reid During Customer Appreciation Event

On Tuesday, February 28, the Embassy Suites of Parsippany acknowledged Candes Reid, Assistant Director of Day Services at The Arc of Essex County during a customer appreciation event. As the manager of The Arc of Essex County's Hotel Overnight Respite Program, Candes has maintained a 16+ year relationship with Embassy Suites fostering awareness and acceptance of individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities amongst the property's staff.

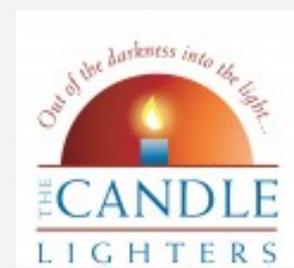


The Arc of Essex County's Hotel Overnight Respite program is hosted for adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities one weekend per month. Extending from Friday evening to Sunday afternoon, consumers are provided with opportunities to participate in community and hotel based activities to fill their weekend. During this time, families are able to take time to relax, recharge, and manage family life while their loved ones enjoy themselves with their peers.

For additional information regarding The Arc of Essex County's Hotel Overnight Respite program, visit <http://arcessex.org/services/adult-services/respite/overnight-respite/> or contact Senior Director of Supports Program Services Melissa Soules at msoules@arcessex.org or (973) 535-1181 ext. 1262.

Reserve Your Seats Today

The Candle Lighters Annual Trick Tray - March 12th



Seats are still available for The Candle Lighters' 23rd Annual Tricky Tray on Sunday, March 12 at Mayfair Farms in West Orange, NJ. If you are interested in attending, be sure to reserve your seat today as the event is expected to sell out. Proceeds from the event will go towards unfunded and underfunded programs of The Arc of Essex County like Stepping Stones Early Intervention and Camp Hope.

More than 350 baskets will be up for grabs including these highly-coveted prizes:

- \$1,000 Amazon Gift Card
- \$1,000 Gift Card to Maialino Restaurant in The Grammercy Park Hotel with an overnight stay in New York City
- Four Disney Park Passes
- Designer Hand Bags
- Two Overnight Stays in Morristown

Two registration options are available: a basic package includes one sheet of 26 regular prize tickets and a deluxe package that includes 4 sheets of regular-prize tickets (104) and 10 large-prize tickets. All packages include lunch. To register, visit www.thecandlelighters.org.

Susan Wright Memorial Golf Outing to Raise Funds for The Arc on Monday, May 15th

The family of Susan "Sue" Wright, a parent and long-time volunteer of The Arc of Essex County will host a golf outing in her memory on Monday, May 15th at the Montclair Golf Club at Rock Spring. Featuring a full day of golf, lunch, and dinner, the event will raise funds for The Arc of Essex County and its Special Young Adults (SYA) day program. Registration for the full day, dinner only, and sponsorships are now available on the event website at www.susanwrightmemorial.com.



Sue and her family were first introduced to The Arc of Essex County more than 30 years ago when they enrolled in the Stepping Stones program with their son Billy. Sue would volunteer at Stepping Stones, and later SYA, when bringing Billy to and from program. She was instrumental in the success of The Arc's annual golf outing, running it for many years. The family hopes that funds raised from this golf outing will honor Sue's memory and serve as a thank you to The Arc and SYA for the happiness she found there and the love Billy continues to receive.

To register for the Susan Wright Memorial Golf outing on May 15th at the Montclair Golf Club at Rock Spring, visit www.susanwrightmemorial.com.

► [Donate Now](#)

The Arc of Essex County

123 Naylor Avenue, Livingston, NJ 07039
(973) 535-1181
www.arcessex.org

Stay Connected

