



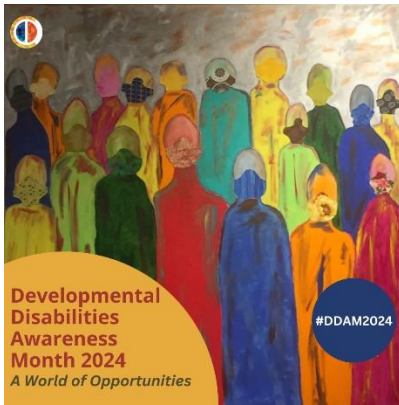
OFFICE FOR INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES

All Abilities Newsletter

March 2024 Edition

In honor of **Developmental Disabilities Awareness Month**, and **World Autism Month**, the Office would like to highlight important information, events and programs, to support our community.

March- Developmental Disabilities Awareness Month



- ✚ About one in six children in the U.S. have one or more developmental disabilities or other developmental delays.

What is a Developmental Disability?

In short, the CDC defines Developmental Disabilities as “a group of conditions due to an impairment in physical, learning, language, or behavior areas. These conditions begin during the developmental period, may impact day-to-day functioning, and usually last throughout a person’s lifetime.”

- ✚ **Helen Keller** was the first Deafblind person to graduate from college (Radcliffe College, cum laude, 1904). She was also an activist who fought for disability rights. She was a co-founder of the American Civil Liberties Union and an early and lifelong leader of the [American Foundation for the Blind \(AFB\)](#). You can find out more about her [HERE](#).
- ✚ **The Evolution of Smart Home Technology for People with Disabilities**- The beginning of modern-day smart home technology can be traced back to 1975, but in 2024, so many individuals with disabilities rely on tools like “Alexa” to control lights, devices and appliances around the home. You can read more about Smart Home Technology [HERE](#).

April - World Autism Month



What is “Autism Spectrum Disorder”?

According to the CDC, “Autism spectrum disorder (ASD) is a developmental disability caused by differences in the brain. Some people with ASD have a known difference, such as a genetic condition. Other causes are not yet known. Scientists believe there are multiple causes of ASD that act together to change the most common ways people develop.”

- ✚ **Alexis Wineman** was the first woman with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) to participate in the Miss America competition. You can read about her story [HERE](#).
- ✚ Actor, **Dan Aykroyd** was a young boy when he was diagnosed with Tourette's and later on, Asperger's. You can read about his story [HERE](#).
- ✚ The **National Autism Association** offers free informational toolkits, for families, first responders, care providers and local community members to provide support, prepare emergency plans, and assist individuals with Autism. Resources can be found at: <https://nationalautismassociation.org/resources/wandering/>

Public Meetings:

All information regarding meetings can be found on the [OPWDD Events page](#).

- ✚ **March 5, 2024:** Developmental Disabilities Advisory Board Meeting
- ✚ **March 6, 2024:** Family Support Services Quarterly Meeting
- ✚ **May 14, 2024:** Autism Spectrum Disorders Advisory Board Meeting



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The President's Committee for People with Intellectual Disabilities Meeting

When: Thursday, March 21, 2024

Time: 12 p.m. – 5 p.m.

On March 21, 2024, from 12:00 PM - 5:00 PM EST, the President's Committee for People with Intellectual Disabilities (PCPID) will discuss issues with Home and Community Based Services (HCBS) that will be included in the Committee's Report to the President. The committee will also discuss the recommendations identified by four PCPID workgroups as they relate to the HCBS areas of direct support professionals, employment, community living, and Federal support programs. This discussion will help develop a framework for the preparation of the PCPID Report to the President.

To register:

https://www.zoomgov.com/webinar/register/WN_HnpxBCCsSUGJv6SX_O_YIQ?j=2288092&sfmc_sub=311132089&=6707_HTML&u=52944349&mid=515008575&jb=0#/registration

This meeting will include CART and American Sign Language (ASL) services.

If there are additional reasonable accommodation requests, please contact jwelborn@sensisagency.com and jokim@sensisagency.com by Thursday, March 7th.

OPWDD Requests for Feedback:



The NYS Office for People With Developmental Disabilities (OPWDD) has announced the start of the National Core Indicators (NCI) In-Person Survey for 2023-2024. This survey asks adults aged 18+ who are receiving services about their quality of life and how they feel about the services they receive. This year they are surveying over 1,700 people across New York State. The NCI In-Person Survey is optional and will not impact the current services or supports a person receives from OPWDD.

Letters to eligible participants were sent out in early February 2024, letting them know that they may be asked to participate in the NCI In-Person Survey. The OPWDD interview team is starting to contact people to schedule a HIPAA-compliant Zoom interview.

<https://opwdd.ny.gov/news/national-core-indicators-nci-person-survey-2023-2024-0>

For commonly asked questions about the project, you can view the NCI IPS Frequently Asked Questions below or visit the project website:

<https://vitalresearch.com/newyork/nci/index.html>

New York National Core Indicators (NCI) In-Person Survey- Frequently Asked Questions

What is the NCI In-Person Survey?

- A voluntary effort by the New York State Office for People with Developmental Disabilities (OPWDD) to measure and track their own performance.
- "Face-to-face" interviews via HIPAA-compliant Zoom video conference with adults with developmental disabilities
- The survey gathers the opinion and experiences of people who receive services from OPWDD.

What is the purpose of the NCI In-Person Survey?

- The survey is not an assessment or review of your program.
- The survey only asks for people's opinions about their quality of life and the services they receive (e.g., choices of activities, employment, health and safety and direct support professionals).
- Feedback gathered will be used to continue making the services and supports more responsive to the support needs of people who receive services.

What is support staff's role in the NCI In-Person Survey?

- Staff may help participants schedule interviews, set up Zoom, connect to the Internet, or interact with the Interview team.

Where can I get more information about the NCI In-Person Survey?

- More information about this survey project can be found in the following links:
 - New York NCI In-Person Survey project website: www.vitalresearch.com/newyork/nci
 - The National Core Indicators (NCI) website: <https://www.nationalcoreindicators.org/>

Who at OPWDD can I contact with questions about the NCI In-Person Survey?

- Olivia Popiel, NCI State Coordinator: NCIAdultInPerson@opwdd.ny.gov



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Learning/Training Opportunities/Information Sessions:

PNW BOCES:

Link to register: [Diploma and Credential Options for Students with Disabilities](#)

Overview: There are many opportunities to earn diplomas, credentials and in some cases - both! Join us as we explore the Multiple Pathway (4+1) options available to students seeking to earn Regents as well as local diplomas. We will also discuss requirements to earn the Career Development and Occupational Studies (CDOS) Commencement Credential and the Skills and Achievement Commencement Credential. This is a half-day workshop.

When: April 25, 2024 (Registration Deadline- April 16, 2024)

Location: 200 BOCES Drive, Yorktown Heights, NY 10598

Audience: Special Education Administrators, General Education and Special Education Teachers, School Counselors and Other Related Service Providers, Principals, Pupil Personnel Directors, Special Education Directors, CSE Chairpersons, Transition Specialists and Family Members

Also on this date:

Link to register: [Agency 101: Connecting Individuals with Disabilities to Adult Agencies](#)

Overview: Join to learn about NYS agencies and community-based organizations and the services they provide to individuals with disabilities. Adult agencies such as Office for People with Developmental Disabilities (OPWDD), Adult Career and Continuing Education Services - Vocational Rehabilitation (ACCES-VR), and the Office for Mental Health (OMH) will be discussed. You will explore ways to collaborate with community partners to help students as they move into the adult world. Learn about how students apply for services, eligibility requirements, the types of programs available and how you can make referrals.

When: April 25, 2024 (Registration Deadline- April 23, 2024)

Location: 200 BOCES Drive, Yorktown Heights, NY 10598

Audience: Special education and general education teachers, school counselors, school social workers and psychologists, transition specialists and CSE chairpersons

Westchester and Putnam Independent Living Centers/Services (WILC/PILS):

I Wish I Had Known Sooner: Understanding your Child's Rights & Responsibilities under Special Education Law Family Empowerment Advocacy Series

Overview: Parents and family members, join WILC/PILS for a FREE in-depth training to learn about child's rights, the special education process, and how to effectively advocate for your child and other children. Topics include Educational Records Binder, Advocacy Skills, NYS Rules & Regulations, Understanding the CSE Process, AIS & 504s, Understanding Evaluations, Communicating with the District, Assistive Technology, Things Said at a CSE Meeting (They did not just say that) and How to Respond, Transition, Come ask the Advocate Q&A session and much, much more.

Link:

<https://files.constantcontact.com/21f22cd4201/ab4997c6-cd03-47a5-8eba-a10ac6bacee9.pdf?rdr=true>

Registration:

https://us02web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_qM5rwHsKRaOjyuMVdN8adA#/registration

When: Tuesdays via Zoom

- March 5th, 2024
- March 12th, 2024
- March 19th, 2024
- March 26th, 2024
- April 9th, 2024
- April 16th, 2024



Artwork of Ryan Smoluk- Autistic visual artist via the Art of Autism. Find more on Ryan's story and work [HERE](#).



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K. Lisa Yang and Hock E. Tan

Institute on Employment and Disability



The Institute on Employment and Disability engages in research and produces scholarly articles, develops training materials, conducts training sessions domestically and internationally, and offers technical assistance on a wide array of disability-related matters.

Upcoming Webinar:

You Need to Call for Help, Now What?

When: March 9, 2024, 6-8 pm

- In this webinar geared towards people with disabilities and their families and caregivers, participants will learn what to expect if you dial 911 for assistance and police respond.
- The webinar will include police perspectives and tips for communication followed by a mock call for assistance.

To register:

<https://events.yangtaninstitute.org/e/10420/register>



Preventing Parent Burnout for Parents of Children with Special Needs

When: March 6, 2024- 9:30 am - 10:30 am
(Other dates and times also available)

Extraordinary parenting responsibilities create extraordinary pressures on parents. At the same time, parenting a child with special needs requires energy, focus, and enthusiasm to be effective in our role. The better off parents are emotionally and physically, the better off families will be. Join this webinar on Preventing Parent Burnout and discover positive ways to cope with and effectively manage stress.

To register:

https://us02web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_Vdbdq6nFQb-l7KmdsGkieA#/registration

From the New York State Department of Health-Bureau of Early Intervention

Learn more about your family's rights in the Early Intervention Program in a series of videos featuring Kimberly Weisbeck from Disability Rights New York (DRNY).

Each video covers a family's rights during different steps in the New York State's Early Intervention Program, from referral to transition, and answers some frequently asked questions. Visit the Early Intervention Information for Families webpage under the "Know Your Rights!" section to view these videos:

Link:

https://www.health.ny.gov/community/infants_children/early_intervention/families.htm

In the news:

Ed Department Warns Schools Not To Overlook Assistive Technology In IEPs (via Disability Scoop)



"With new guidance, the U.S. Department of Education is pushing schools to ensure that all students with disabilities have the assistive technology they need and the supports to use it effectively.

The agency issued a "[Dear Colleague](#)" letter and a 24-page "[myths and facts](#)" document this week aimed at clarifying schools' responsibilities to provide various aids.

Under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, the agency said that every time an individualized education program team meets to develop, review or revise a student's IEP, they are required to factor whether the child needs assistive technology devices and services."

To read the full article, see [HERE](#).



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Study Finds Widely Available Drug May Lower Anxiety in Those with Autism (via Disability Scoop)



"New research suggests that a decades-old drug can alleviate anxiety issues in kids and young adults with autism. Individuals on the spectrum who took the blood pressure medication propranolol exhibited significantly less anxiety after three months compared to those given a placebo, according to findings published recently in the journal Psychopharmacology.

For the study, 69 participants with autism between the ages of 7 and 24 were randomly assigned to take propranolol or a placebo. They were assessed at the outset and then again after 12 weeks. The researchers found that anxiety declined in those in the propranolol group, but no changes were observed in social communication skills."

To read the full article, see [HERE](#).

Recreational events/activities:

Camp SkyWild

Dates: August 25-30, 2024

Location: Camp Reimagined
160 Big Pond Road,
Huguenot, NY 12746

Camp SkyWild is an overnight summer camp in Orange County, New York offering one-week camp sessions to children on the autism spectrum (age 7-17) and their neurotypical siblings (age 6-13). Campers can expect to have the traditional summer camp experience complete with cabin sleeping, dining hall meals, campfires, lake swimming, archery, singing, dancing, lots of silliness and special new friendships. Their low staff ratio offers support for campers across the autism spectrum, with requirements for independence with toileting, showering, and an absence of regular aggressive behavior. Staff are highly trained to support transitions, offer accommodations to maximize camper access to activities, and scaffold social interactions to facilitate relationship building. They will have a nurse on camp at all times, accommodations for most dietary

restrictions, and financial aid available to families needing support in paying camper tuition.

If you have any questions about the program or want to discuss if SkyWild would be a good fit for your camper, contact:

Kristin "Breezy" McMaster at 734-436-1453 or kristin@campskywild.org.

Rates: Spectrum Program \$1299

Siblings Program \$699

*Scholarships are available

Website: <https://www.campskywild.org/>

Camper Registration:

<https://campskywild.campbrainregistration.com/>

Staff Application:

<https://campskywild.campbrainstaff.com/>

JOIN US THIS SUMMER AT
CAMP SKYWILD
AN OVERNIGHT SUMMER CAMP
FOR KIDS WITH AUTISM (AGE 7-17)
AND THEIR NEUROTYPICAL
SIBLINGS (AGE 6-13)
AUGUST 25-30
AT CAMP REIMAGINED
IN HUGUENOT, NY
LEARN MORE AT CAMPSKYWILD.ORG
OR EMAIL [KRISTIN@CAMPSKYWILD.ORG](mailto:kristin@campskywild.org)

WHY SKYWILD?

- STRUCTURED SCHEDULE
- SENSORY, COMMUNICATION, AND DIETARY ACCOMMODATIONS
- LOW STAFF RATIOS
- FRIENDSHIP FACILITATION
- CHALLENGE BY CHOICE
- EXCEPTIONAL STAFF



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In the community:



The Autism Society- Greater Hudson Region is launching a podcast!

"Speaking of the Spectrum" will release new episodes every two weeks starting February 16th, providing a steady stream of content you can enjoy on YouTube, Spotify, and Apple Podcasts.

What to Expect:

Inspiring Stories: A stellar roster of guests, including advocates, educators, and entrepreneurs, celebrating the remarkable individuals making a difference.

Inclusive Conversations: No matter your background, whether you're a seasoned autism advocate or a curious listener, "Speaking of the Spectrum" is your go-to destination for all things spectrum-related.

Follow on Instagram: [@speakingspectrumautismpodcast](https://www.instagram.com/speakingspectrumautismpodcast) for the latest updates and exclusive content!



Artwork of Raquel Quezada- via the National Association of Councils on Developmental Disabilities

Guiding Eyes for the Blind

Putnam County location in Patterson, New York



A link to the NY Giants

"Eli Manning officially hung up his cleats four years ago. While he may no longer be leading the Giants to victory, his work off the field continues to be just as important.

The two-time Super Bowl MVP teamed back up with Guiding Eyes for the Blind, an organization that provides seeing eye dogs to people with vision loss and presented CEO Thomas Panek with a guide dog named Ten in their first-ever Guide Dog Draft.

Manning has been a long-time supporter of Guiding Eyes for the Blind. He first got involved with the organization nearly 20 years ago, and since then, the former quarterback has helped raise over \$300,000 for the cause."

To read the entire article, see [HERE](#).

Guiding Eyes has also opened up adoptions for those dogs not selected for guide work that can make great companions. Guiding Eyes dogs that are adopted for pets cannot be used or trained as guide dogs or other service animals with public access privileges. Breeds available include Labrador Retrievers and German Shepherds.

For a limited time, they are accepting new applications to adopt puppies aged 8-12 weeks old. Only families who are prepared to welcome a puppy into their home between now and the end of March 2024 should apply.

For more information on Guiding Eyes and Adoption, see [HERE](#).

While Guiding Eyes for the Blind may be located right here in the Hudson Valley, they have success stories, of dogs being placed all around the country, and even outside the U.S.

Read about the guide dogs and all of their success stories [HERE](#).