



PLAN|NJ Announces Leadership Transition

PLAN|NJ Executive Director **Ellen B. Nalven** announced her retirement and transition to Senior Advisor on September 1, 2025.

"Collaborating with the incredible staff and board members of PLAN|NJ has been a true privilege. I'm deeply grateful for the strong and stable organization we've built together, all in service of our vital mission," Ellen said.

Board of Directors President Liz Farishian remarked, "We're so pleased that Ellen will be staying on as Senior Advisor during the transition to continue contributing to the excellent services we're committed to providing."

Jason Miller, M.A. LPC, has been appointed Executive Director. A loyal PLAN|NJ employee since 2007, he served as Director of Social Services for 10 years and as Associate Executive Director since 2024.

"It is an honor to be asked to step into this role as chief advocate for the hundreds of individuals and families we serve," remarked Jason.

Ellen remarked, "Jason will be a fantastic leader. He will ensure that PLAN|NJ will continue delivering on the highest quality standards for fiduciary and social services that disabilities and their families have come to expect from PLAN|NJ."

In honor of Ellen's considerable contributions to PLAN|NJ and to disability rights, we have established Ellen's Love and Light Legacy Fund. To donate, visit <https://plannj.org/donate/>



PHOTO BY FRANK DIGIOVANNI

WE'VE MOVED!

PLAN|NJ held a ribbon-cutting ceremony to commemorate new offices at Green Brook Business Park in Somerset County. Special guests included (Front Row, L to R) New Jersey Assemblywoman Nancy Munoz; PLAN|NJ former Executive Director Ellen Nalven (retired); Board President Liz Farishian; Somerset County Commissioner Deputy Director Melonie Marano; Board Secretary Carla Ponn; Board Member Beth Manes. (Back Row: Left to Right) Immediate Past Board President Peter Phillips; Board Member Jeremy Rosenbaum; PLAN|NJ Current Executive Director Jason Miller; Board Member William Spiro; Board Treasurer Thomas Zesk; Board Vice President Joseph Young.

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2025 PLAN|NJ BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Executive Committee:

Elizabeth G. Farishian, RN, MA *President*
Joseph B. Young, Esq. *Vice-President*
Thomas J. Zesk *Treasurer*
Carla Ponn *Secretary*
Peter A. Phillips, CPA *Immediate Past President*

Board:

Linda Buch, RN, BSN
Theodore R. Goyins, Jr.
Giselle Lassalle
Beth C. Manes, Esq.
Kristi Phillips, M. Ed.
Jeremy Rosenbaum
Billy Spiro
Louise A. Tagliareni, RN, MSN

Jason Miller, M.A. LPC, *Executive Director*

SAVE THE DATE: 2026 PLAN|NJ Celebration of Abilities

Please plan to attend our bi-annual event on **May 13, 2026**, where we will honor individuals for their contributions to the disability rights community. Awardees include Tom Baffuto, former Executive Director, Arc of New Jersey (retired); Shirley Whitenack, Esq.; Patrice Jetter, Gary Wickham and Ted Passion, makers of the Emmy Award-winning documentary *PATRICE: the Movie*; and more to come! Sponsorship opportunities are available now; contact Kerry Lee, Director of Operations at 908-575-8300 ext. 21 or kerry.lee@plannj.org.



Using an Individualized Education Program in Guardianship Applications

ASK AN
EXPERT

By Lisa McCauley Parles, Esq.

In New Jersey, prior to a person's eighteenth birthday, parents are, as a matter of law, the person's guardians. As a result, a minor is presumed to lack capacity in a number of areas and are legally unable to engage in activities such as signing a contract or consenting to a medical procedure. For individuals with developmental disabilities, a court ordered guardianship may be appropriate if the individual is unable to make decisions for themselves after their eighteenth birthday. Guardianship is not automatic and requires proposed guardians to file an application with the court.

Generally, a guardianship proceeding requires two certifications from medical professionals such as licensed physicians or psychologists. However, in 2016 the law was amended to allow a guardianship application for a person who is "Eligible For and/or Receiving Services from the Division of Developmental Disabilities" to use only one physician's certification and the alleged incapacitated person's most recent Individualized Education Program (IEP). The IEP must be no more than two years old. When using an IEP in place of a medical professional's certification, the evaluations summarized in the IEP must also be submitted. Before using an IEP in a guardianship proceeding it is critical to make sure the IEP accurately reflects the individual's history, support needs, deficits, and areas where they need instruction. There are other situations when an accurate IEP is necessary such as when applying for SSI, Medicaid, or services from DDD. As a result, obtaining essential evaluations before the developmentally disabled individual's eighteenth birthday is an important part of planning. Evaluations can also assist in developing an appropriate transition plan which must be in the IEP by the time a student is sixteen years old.

A well-crafted IEP, in addition to identifying appropriate goals and services, can demonstrate an individual's need for guardianship. In addition, obtaining quality evaluations is a key part of the process of planning for adulthood and can be essential for developing effective IEP's, implementing appropriate goals, and assisting in other applications for services and benefits.

Lisa McCauley Parles, Esq., is a partner in the law firm Parles Rekem, LLP and the parent of an adult son with autism. Her practice focuses on representing individuals with disabilities and their families, as well as non-profit organizations, in a variety of areas including special education, guardianship, and other services.

PLAY BALL!

Thanks to all who beat the early summer heat to attend our 5th Annual Family Night Out at the Somerset Patriots ballgame. Here are a few quick pics! Sarah B. threw out the ceremonial first pitch, and Trust Administration Director Nancy Dilliplane greeted special guest Councilwoman Theresa Bonner from Borough of Somerville. A slideshow of the festivities can be found at <https://plannj.org/events/>



PHOTOS BY FRANK DIGIOVANNI



FOUNDATION SUPPORTERS TO DATE

Bank of Princeton
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New Jersey State Bar Foundation
Fred C. Rummel Foundation
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More PLAN|NJ News

PLAN|NJ's educational events on the need for legal and estate planning are free to the public and related professionals. Check for events in your area at <https://plannj.org/events/>.



All episodes of our **Together We PLAN** Podcast Series are now available wherever you get your podcasts or at <https://plannj.org/together-we-plan/>. Hosts include members of the PLAN|NJ leadership team and board of directors; guests include many of New Jersey's disability rights leaders.

E1: Advocacy in Action: Empowering Families and Individuals with Disabilities with Paul Aronsohn and Hazeline Pilgrim

E2: Navigating Special Needs Trusts and ABLE Accounts: A Guide for Families with Shirley Whitenack, Esq.

E3: Beyond Guardianship: Exploring Supported Decision Making with Nina Weiss, Esq.

E4: Unlocking Supportive Housing: Navigating Resources and Solutions for Individuals with Disabilities with Diane Riley

E5: The Challenge to Change: Learning from Lived Experiences with Disabilities with LeDerick Horne and Hazeline Pilgrim

E6: One Mother's Journey: Securing Residential Services for a Daughter with Autism with Maria Fischer, Esq.

E7: Toward Better Mental Health Supports and Services with Joyce Benz and Michael

E8: Available Public Benefits and Services for Comprehensive Supports with Crystal West Edwards, Esq.

E9: Your Legacy of Love: Estate and Financial Planning for Families with Disabilities with Tom Begley, Jr., Esq. and Emily Schurr, Esq.



Planned Lifetime Assistance Network of New Jersey

P.O. Box 706

Green Brook, NJ 08812

Join the
global giving
movement on
GIVING TUESDAY,
December 2, 2025,
with an online
donation to
PLAN|NJ!

YES! I want to help PLAN|NJ support individuals and their families with the legal and social service planning, care coordination, and self-determination assistance they need and deserve. Enclosed is my tax-deductible donation of:

☐ \$150 ☐ \$100 ☐ \$50 ☐ \$35 Other _____

☐ In Honor of or ☐ In Memory of (please check one and print name): _____

☐ I wish to donate directly to Ellen's Legacy of Love and Light Fund

☐ I would like to learn more about establishing a bequest

☐ I have included PLAN|NJ in my estate plans or I would consider including PLAN|NJ in my estate plans

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Phone _____ Email _____

Please make your donation today!

Visit plannj.org, click on 'Donate,' or, make your check payable to PLAN|NJ and mail it to **our new mailing address at PLAN|NJ, P.O. Box 706, Green Brook, NJ 08812.** We reserve the right to publish donor names in the PLAN|NJ Annual Report unless otherwise requested. If you would like your name removed from the donor list, please check here: _____