Supportive Housing Association of New Jersey

Toolkit for Municipalities

Integrated Community Project

Second Edition

Acknowledgements

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About SHA

The Supportive Housing Association of New Jersey (SHA) is a statewide, nonprofit membership organization, founded in 1998, whose mission is to promote and maintain a strong supportive housing industry in New Jersey serving people with special needs. SHA engages in education, advocacy and networking for and on behalf of its over 100 members

Supportive Housing Association of NJ (SHA) • (908) 931-1131 • www.shanj.org

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Welcome

The Supportive Housing Association of New Jersey is pleased to share with you our Integrated Community Project (ICP) Toolkit for Municipalities.

Municipalities across New Jersey are already using best and emerging practices to help all residents feel involved in the day-to-day life of their cities and towns. The Toolkit aims to enhance that work and offers recommended best practices and strategies to improve how individuals with disabilities and barriers can better participate in their communities. Information in this Toolkit addresses the needs of individuals with developmental, physical, and intellectual disabilities. mental illness and substance abuse challenges. and those who are aging or have experienced homelessness.

The Toolkit is organized around making the case for inclusion and how to include people with disabilities and the dimensions of community participation in the physical environment, cultural and recreational opportunities, civic participation and engagement, communication, transportation, and housing. The ICP strives to increase the capacity of people with disabilities and barriers to become fully engaged in their communities. The Toolkit works with the process used in the framework guiding the work of the ICP.

Using the ICP's framework in our work with individual municipalities has opened a dialogue illuminating the diversity of disabilities, the desire, regardless of disability type, to become more involved, and the untapped resources available that can help with integration. Relationships and partnerships have formed through which municipalities and community leaders will continue the mutual work towards improving community integration using this Toolkit.

We are interested in hearing about what resources and best and emerging practices are helping to make your municipality more integrated. We would possibly add them to our Toolkit! Please email your insights to Kate Kelly, Associate Executive Director at kate.kelly@shanj.org.

I encourage you to use this resource as you work to continue to expand the opportunities that will make a significant social impact on the lives of individuals with disabilities and barriers and their families.

Sincerely,

Katherine M. Kelly

Kate Kelly
Associate Executive Director

Introduction

An Overview of Individuals with Disabilities in New Jersey

Nearly 1 in every 4 adults in New Jersey live with a disability.

In total, there are over 950,000 adults represented across the Garden State who face barriers to inclusion based on living with a disability.

Depending on the source, it has been reported that as many as 23% of adults in New Jersey, roughly 1 in 4 people, have a disability. According to The Rutgers, NJAES Office of Research and eAnalytics, almost 950,000 people live with a disability in the state spread across each county and municipality.

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA): Over thirty years ago, the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) was signed into law, protecting the civil rights of those with disabilities.

Individuals with disabilities and barriers are old and young, all genders, and represent all races and ethnicities. Their disabilities and barriers may be different, including developmental, intellectual or physical, with diverse independent living skills and assistance needs. While many differences can be identified, the overall unifying theme that people with disabilities share is wanting to feel more connected and more involved where they live.

Municipalities across the state are already using best and emerging practices to help all residents feel involved in the day-to-day life of their cities and towns. The Toolkit aims to enhance that work and offers recommended best practices and strategies to improve how individuals with disabilities and barriers can better participate in their communities.

The Integrated Community Project (ICP)

For almost thirty-five years, communities have striven to follow the Americans with Disability Act (ADA) and provide access to community life to everyone. However, the notion of community participation has often yet to evolve beyond improved access to physical facilities in municipalities and there is a long way to go to ensure that everyone is included and integrated in the day-to-day life of their community.

Integration: The full participation of all people in community life through increasing the capacity of people with disabilities and barriers to become fully engaged in their communities.

The Integrated Community Project (ICP):

- Works toward the goal of increasing the capacity of people with disabilities and barriers to become fully engaged in their communities
- Helps communities shift from defining inclusion as simply making accommodations for individuals with disabilities to involving people with disabilities in every aspect of community life. You can learn more with this brief video about the Integrated Community Project.

More information about the ICP is available in **Appendix A**.

A complete list of the ICP Partners is available in **Appendix B**.

The ICP Toolkit

Lived experience: A representation of the experiences and choices of a given person, and the knowledge that they gain from these experiences and choices.

In 2022, the First Edition of the ICP Toolkit for Municipalities was created to provide practical advice and guidance to cities and towns in New Jersey. The experts truly guided decisions about the content of the Toolkit. They include the members of the ICP Leadership Teams in Bergen, Camden, and Ocean Counties made up of the individuals with lived experience and organizational leaders. In 2023, the Toolkit was updated with the help of three regional Leadership Teams that expanded to join Cumberland, Hudson, Middlesex, Passaic, Somerset, and Union Counties while still including the original three counties. Additionally, twenty-four municipalities that participated in the ICP Self-Assessment for Municipalities contributed new content to this update.

A list of municipalities that have completed the Self-Assessment is available in **Appendix C**.

The Self-Assessment for Municipalities is available in **Appendix F**.

What is in this Toolkit?

The resources and best practices in the toolkit will help municipalities build on their community integration work. The core content of resources and best practices are organized under the categories of: making the case for inclusion, including people with disabilities, the physical environment, cultural and recreational opportunities, civic participation and engagement, communication, transportation, and housing access.

These resources, which include best practices, guides, webinars, trainings and articles, are intended to help expand the work of community integration and inclusion.

Who Should Use This Toolkit?

Municipalities can use these resources to create change that improves the lives of their residents with disabilities and barriers. Advocates and individuals with lived experience may also find this information helpful in their work.

How To Use This Toolkit and Getting Started

Community integration can be an incremental process and there is no need to address all areas at once where your community would like to improve. Communities that adopt the activities in this Toolkit will better meet the needs in their communities. Strategies for improving community integration will continue to emerge and evolve and well-established processes for addressing community integration will continue to become more widely adopted.

To make the most of this Toolkit, a municipality can schedule an ICP Self-Assessment. Participating in the Self-Assessment helps municipalities recognize and celebrate the good work already being done to integrate people with disabilities and barriers into the community. The Self-Assessment may help communities prioritize areas where they would like to focus on improving community integration.

Any municipality interested in scheduling a one hour interactive virtual ICP Self-Assessment meeting, should email Kate Kelly, Associate Executive Director at kate.kelly@shanj.org.

Integrated Community Project

Making the Case for Inclusion

Ableism: Is the discrimination of and social prejudice against people with disabilities based on the belief that typical abilities are superior. At its heart, ableism is rooted in the assumption that disabled people require 'fixing' and defines people by their disability.

Individuals with disabilities experience bias, stigma, and exlusion. Inclusion means all people with lived experience with disabilities and barriers can participate in the day-to-day life of their communities, are employed in meaningful work, access community facilities, and live in affordable and supportive housing. All individuals should be able to have access to voting for their elected officials, inform policymakers, make recommendations, advocate about their needs, and hold elected office themselves. The following tools can help you better understand the need for and make the case for inclusion in your community.

Bias: Refers to stereotypes or beliefs that affect our actions in a discriminatory manner.

- The Disability Profile Snapshots from Rutgers, NJAES Office of Research and Analytics (also referenced in the introduction of this Toolkit) allow municipalities to see municipal and county data and statistics to give a picture of disabilities in a local area. This data, which covers many categories, provides a better understanding of the depth and breadth of the individuals in a community that would benefit from expanded inclusion.
- This recorded webinar Disability: 101 from RespectAbility gives an overview of the individuals who make up the 60 million+ people who live with some form of physical, cognitive, sensory, mental health or other disability in the United States. Viewers will gain a basic understanding of how disability intersects with multiple content areas, from employment and poverty to criminal justice reform and education. Connecting to the following section about How to Include People With Disabilities, the video shares 10 key tips on how you can welcome, respect, and include people with disabilities. Modeling **a best practice** around accessibility, this resource allows you to read the webinar transcript, download the accessible PowerPoint, and watch the webinar on YouTube with open captioning.
- The Case for Inclusion 2022: Blazing Trails to Sustainability for Community Disability Services from the Ancor Foundation and United Cerebral Palsy shares the scope of the challenges faced with ensuring that individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities are included in their communities. There is also a Case for Inclusion scorecard for the State of New Jersey.
- This "How and Why Disability Bias Remains Pervasive" blog comes from the New Jersey Council on Developmental Disabilities, an ICP grant partner. In order to understand the pervasiveness of bias towards people with disabilities, it is helpful to understand why it still exists. Bias can be more subtle or more obvious and individuals with disability experience ableism.

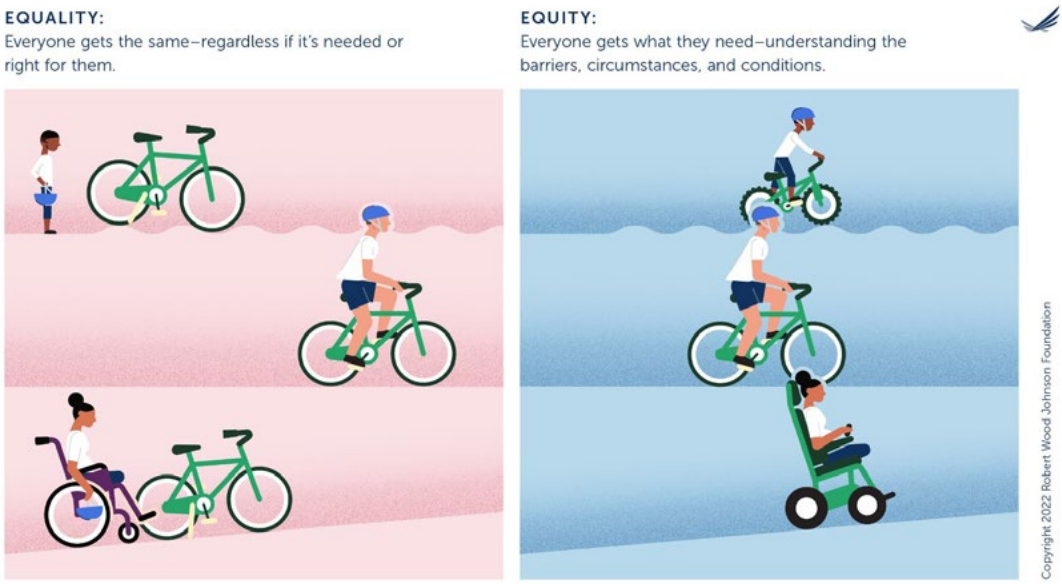
Cognitive bias: It is the tendency to misinterpret information and make decisions that are objectively irrational. It usually happens when we ignore relevant information, emphasize irrelevant information, or frame a situation in a certain way.

- The Inclusive Health Communities (IHC) website shares video recordings including Uncomfortable Truths: Unpacking Bias and Intersecting Identities. You can watch this webinar recording which contains many helpful resources and download the transcript.

Implicit bias: The process of associating stereotypes or attitudes toward categories of people without our conscious awareness.

- The Ford Foundation's Disability Demands Justice video series shares how breaking down discriminatory narratives and systems can unlock potential and value for everyone, and why social justice cannot be realized without inclusion.

- Implicit Biases & People with Disabilities from the American Bar Association (ABA) includes Questions to Ask Yourself. Reflect on each of the questions and consider your implicit bias around specific disabilities, scenarios for discussion, and a glossary of terms.



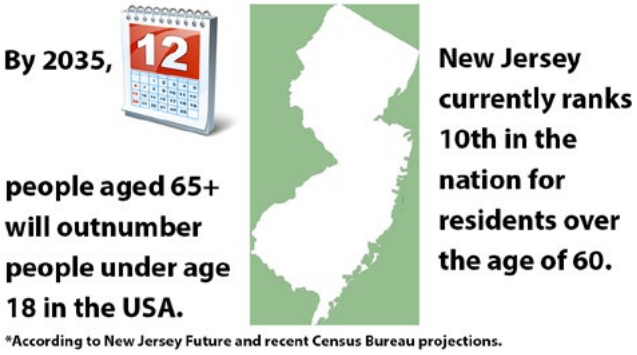
- **Equality vs. Equity:** Equality means that everyone is given the same resources or opportunities. Equity recognizes that everyone has different barriers, circumstances, and conditions and allocates the exact resources and opportunities that each person needs to reach an equal outcome.

Photo: Copyright 2022 Robert Wood Johnson Foundation.

The ability to have a healthy lifestyle is part of inclusion. The Mayors Wellness Campaign (MWC) is a statewide community health initiative in partnership with the New Jersey State League of Municipalities. The MWC provides evidence-based tools and resources to mayors and community leaders to support their work to improve the health and wellness of your communities. With the MWC, mayors have the platform and tools they need to make their community a healthier place to live, work, and play.

University Centers for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities: Work to achieve the goal of independence, productivity, self-determination, and opportunities for full participation in community activities for people with developmental disabilities and their families.

- Individuals who are aging often face barriers in their communities. People with lived experience shared that they had never thought about the similarities between the barriers faced by people with disabilities and people who are aging. Municipalities can examine what they offer to people who are aging and expand those offerings to people with disabilities.



- The Boggs Center for Developmental Disabilities, an ICP partner, is New Jersey's federally designated University Center for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities. The Center's website offers a variety of resources including information about person-centered approaches and supports, workforce development, and an array of national and New Jersey resources.

A person-centered approach: Selects and organizes the services and supports that an older adult or person with a disability may need to live in the community. Most importantly, it is a process that is directed by the person who receives the support.

To continue to meet the needs of their populations that are aging and have other barriers, communities can offer transportation resources (see section on Transportation below) to those who do not drive, physical and social activities, amenities such as parks and safe streets, and a mix of appropriate and affordable housing options. The report, Creating Great Places to Age for Every Person in Every Neighborhood, contains municipal level data.

- The report, Age-Friendly Community Initiatives in Northern New Jersey, by Rutgers University School of Social Work shares information about initiatives working to improve the social, built, and service environments in the local communities of municipalities across Northern New Jersey. These initiatives work to make New Jersey and its communities better places for people to live throughout the entirety of their lives. Age Friendly initiatives can work across silos with groups serving and representing a variety of disabilities and barriers to advance community integration efforts that benefit everyone.

A description of the methodologies and best practices used for the ICP focus groups and leadership teams is available in **Appendix D**.

Best Practices for How to Include People With Disabilities

Welcoming people with disabilities and showing them that you see them for who they are instead of reducing them to their disability is very important. **A best practice** for inclusive meetings and activities is to offer accessible virtual and hybrid opportunities to people with disabilities. The following tools can help you better understand how to include people with disabilities in your community. **A best practice** is providing closed captioning, or better yet, open captioning and a live transcript in real time. There are services available that provide transcription. Additionally, **a best practice** is that the presenters describe what happens during an event including the appearance of the speakers. **A best practice** to include people with disabilities is to ask them what they need to feel included which can be accomplished through a survey. People with disabilities said that the ability to attend events virtually expanded their involvement in the day-to-day life of their communities.

- Bergen County created its Disability Awareness Guide as a resource to provide awareness around various disabilities and shared helpful suggestions for positive interactions. Disability:IN shares Disability Etiquette: A Starting Guide.These guidelines are helpful in interacting with individuals with both visible and hidden disabilities along with individuals who are aging.

- The Partnering with Persons with Lived Experience Lessons Learned Webinar from the U.S. Dept. of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) Exchange shares the stories of individuals who experience the barrier of homelessness. **A best practice** modeled in this webinar for communities looking to strengthen partnerships with persons with lived experience is providing the opportunity to hear peoples' stories. Information about how the ICP ran focus groups and developed leadership teams is in **Appendix D**.

- Disability Rights New Jersey uses an Instagram Reel to demonstrate asking an individual how they choose to identify.

- Disability Information and Access Line (DIAL) helps people with disabilities access services for independent living. DIAL's trained staff offers assistance with health care benefits, financial assistance. A brief informational video about the services is available.

Open captions: Always are in view and cannot be turned off, whereas closed captions can be turned on and off by the viewer.

A best practice for including people with hearing loss is to use induction loop technology (also known as hearing loops) in meeting rooms and areas and provide captioning and live transcription in virtual events. **A best practice** for including people who are blind or visually impaired is to always describe yourself before you begin speaking.

Physical Environment

Physical environment: The physical environment is where individuals live, learn, work, and play.

People interact with their physical environment through the air they breathe, water they drink, houses they live in, and the transportation they access to travel to work and school.

The Chester County (Pennsylvania) Planning Commission shares information about how universal design works along with some practical case studies examples.

AARP has compiled Lessons from Livability Experts through videos, webinars, and panel discussions that share expertise on how a community can be more livable for people of all ages. AARP uses a Livability Index to determine a community's livability score.

Universal Design: Universal design moves beyond compliance with the law of ADA and access to a strategy for inclusion. Universal design is a design technique which creates public and private spaces for equal access by individuals of all ages and abilities. It positively impacts all users by increasing ease of common daily tasks. Include here a text box that defines private and public spaces: Private space might be described as space that is owned and maintained by a single individual, family or institution. Public space is space which is not only in the public domain but in public ownership.

Accommodations

In order to participate in events and activities, people with hearing loss need accommodations in their physical environment just as others with different disabilities and barriers need wheelchair ramps, automatic doors and other accommodations. The following tools can help you better understand the need for and also make the case for accommodations. For those with hearing loss, induction (hearing) looping, open captioning and good acoustics provide access without having to make special requests.

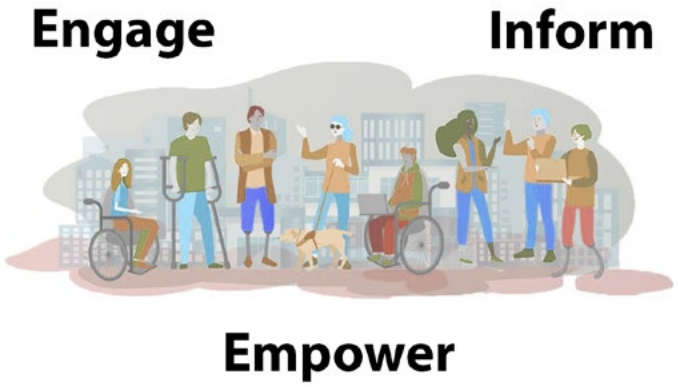
A best practice for ensuring the individuals with hearing loss feel integrated is to offer induction loop technology (hearing loops) , captioning and American Sign Language. You can learn more by reading Making Your Community Accessible to People with Hearing Loss from the Hearing Loss Association of America – New Jersey State Association. Additional resources for assisting individuals with hearing loss are available through the New Jersey Department of Human Services Division of Deaf and Hard of Hearing – Services, Resources, Education and Training.

In the past the State of New Jersey has accepted applications for community grants to promote communication and language access for deaf, hard of hearing, and deaf-blind residents of all ages. While the application deadline has passed, this press release NJ Human Services Opens Communication Access Grants to Help Make Communities More Inclusive for Deaf, Hard of Hearing, and Deaf-Blind Individuals from the NJ Department of Human Services includes important information. The State of New Jersey's Department of Human Services' Division of Deaf and Hard of Hearing maintains a sign language interpreting and captioning referral services page.

Hearing loss can affect people at any age and services and solutions can increase inclusion and accessibility. New Jersey Advocates for Aging Well (NJAAW) focused on hearing loss in an episode of its Aging Insights podcast - "Listen Up, NJ! An Honest Talk About Hearing Loss."

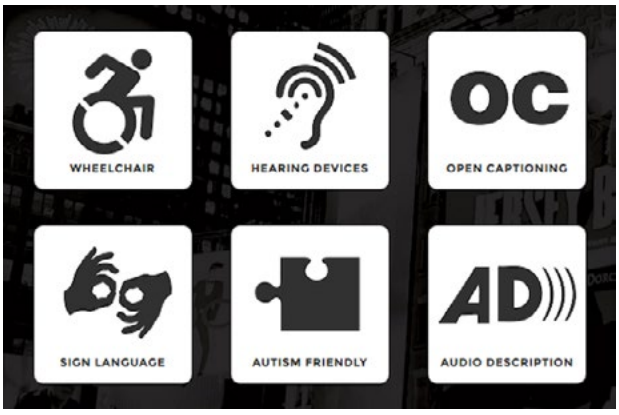
Read more for what is being done to expand access in some private spaces in the Movie Theatres Roll Out Enhanced Disability Access from The Disability Scoop. In this case, open captioning provides universal access for people with hearing loss.

Cultural and Recreation Opportunities



Opportunities for culture and recreation contribute immeasurably to the health and quality of life of individuals in a community. When accommodations are available, municipalities should think about how they are offered or publicized. **A best practice** is to include in communications about events and activities, information about how individuals with disabilities can access transportation, sign up or register, participate, and/or receive financial assistance to be involved. The New Jersey Division of Disability Service shares information about Accessible Arts Programming. The Cultural Arts Calendar provides a best practice sharing specific and descriptive accessibility information for specific events. **A best practice** is to include a contact number and email for questions in all communication about an upcoming event. Easy to find contact information can provide reassurance if an attendee is lost or has a last-minute question. The following tools can help you better understand community integration to make cultural and recreation activities more accessible.

The National Center on Health, Physical Activity and Disability (NCHPAD) offers a library of e-learning opportunities to educate disability and non-disability service providers in areas of community health inclusion (the NCHPAD e-learning website requires you to provide your name and email to log in). NCHPAD is a public health practice and resource center on promoting health for people with disabilities. Within this resource, the focused areas on fitness, recreation and sport and also disability and aging might be the most helpful e-learning opportunities for municipalities that want to improve the accessibility of their cultural and recreation opportunities to all residents. NCHPADs e-training on Holding Inclusive Events provides instructions and advice about how to make events, no matter their size, location or topic, accessible to all.



This event planning guide for engaging with people who are disabled from Equality Rights includes multiple checklists about what to consider when planning an event in which people with disabilities and barriers feel included. This Accessible Meeting & Event Checklist is another excellent resource in planning accessible events. **A best practice** is, when you send out the invitation or notice to an event, to include a welcome message to let invitees know who they can contact regarding any accommodations or accessibility that they may need. This checklist from Cornell University provides a comprehensive list of what to think about when planning for accessible meetings and events.

Providing access to individuals with disabilities to ball fields and park recreation is **a best practice**. Recreational facilities should be made American Disabilities Act (ADA) compliant to provide a range of play experiences to children and older citizens of varying abilities. Examples include accessible paths from a building and/or parking lot to the edge of the play area, an accessible path from the edge of the play area to the play facilities, and surfacing. This Summary of Accessibility Guidelines for Play Areas written by ICP Leadership Team member Art Delaney provides more detail.

A communication board allows individuals who are non-speaking or lack communication skills to communicate with others. A two-sided board can be placed centrally in a playground and recreation area and allows individuals to point to various symbols to effectively communicate with others. Fair Lawn and Stafford are examples of municipalities in New Jersey that have installed these boards. The Institute on Disabilities at Temple University provides these resources around Communication Boards & Resources for Recreation and this example of a Playground Communication Board. The image above with a child and caregiver at the park shows an example of a communication board in use.

Photo Credit: Montgomery County, MD.

Toms River Field of Dreams (TRFOD) is an example of a recreation area that provides opportunities for individuals of all ages and abilities to engage, explore, and socialize together. The Township of Toms River's Mayor's Advisory Committee on the ADA shares additional information. Through its Green Acres program, the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection offers municipal grant opportunities for Completely Inclusive Playgrounds.

Being outdoors in nature is good for eveyone's health and well-being. Northjersey.com reports that "NJ beaches are becoming more accessible, advocates say." The Citizens' Rights to Access Beaches is working to ensure that beaches in Ocean County are more accessible to individuals with disabilities. The Pinelands is for Everyone is working to make public open spaces more accessible for individuals with disabilities. The Pinelands Preservation Alliance's Accessible Trails Map shares accessible natural places in the Pinelands and South Jersey.

Civic Engagement and Participation

Image Credit: Respect Ability

Individuals with disabilities seek opportunities to attend meetings, serve on boards and committees, volunteer for their community, and share their talents and expertise in a meaningful way. Sustainable Jersey offers guidance on best practices for how municipal governments can engage with people with disabilities.

Sustainable Jersey and the New Jersey Institute for Disabilities share Municipal Engagement for People With Disabilities: Strategies for Inclusion and Communication. The purpose of this guide is to provide municipal governments with improved strategies for communication and engagement of residents with disabilities within decision-making and community planning efforts. (Communication from municipalities will be discussed later in this Toolkit.)

The ICP created a guide for conducting focus groups and creating leadership teams with individuals with disabilities and barriers which can be found in **Appendix D**. The Township of Wayne established a Special Needs Commission to be a voice for people with special needs who live in the community. You can read more about this new commission working to meet the needs of individuals over the age of 21 in the article, Wayne to form new panel to advocate for people with special needs. People with lived experience could lend their voices as one of the six "civilians" who will be appointed to the commission.

Municipalities can establish Access for All committees to consider and provide advice and counsel to the governing body regarding the concerns of people with disabilities, barrier-free facilities, employment practices, and specific compliance with the requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act. The Fair Lawn Access for All Committee, is just one New Jersey example, and its stated mission is to enhance the lives of individuals with disabilities and help remove the barriers and obstacles that hinder their everyday activities. Fair Lawn's Youth Volunteer Corps provides youth ages 14-18 with the opportunity to help older adult residents, veterans, and mobility challenged individuals with basic needs services.

Municipalities often civically engage their residents through councils,committees, and commissions that hold meetings. **A best practice** is to offer meetings in a hybrid format rather than solely virtual or solely in person. The University of Wisconsin-Madison shares this guidance for How to Hold Inclusive Hybrid Meetings.

The Inclusive Healthy Communities program offers a recorded webinar on Accessibility in Virtual Programming. Learn about methods of improving accessibility and quick actions that can be taken to improve virtual events for individuals with disabilities and barriers. RespectAbility shares specific best practices around Ensuring Accessibility During the Return of In-Person Events – And Why We Should Keep Doing Accessible Virtual Events. This webinar explains the accessibility of virtual events. As we return to in-person events, we should not stop hosting virtual events to maintain gains made in accessibility. Zoom has added automatic closed captioning in breakout rooms. This important accessibility feature is not automatically enabled but Zoom account administrators have the ability to enable this feature. The image above depicts a Zoom meeting with automatic transcription and captions enabled.

Every qualified individual with a disability should know their rights about voting and how to vote. Ensuring that all individuals with disabilities have access to voting is critical to civic participation and engagement. Disability Rights New Jersey shares resources around its Protection and Advocacy for Voter Access (PAVA) program. Anyone can use its Voting Hotline by calling **(866) 493-0023** from 8:00 am to 4:00 pm Monday through Friday or on Election Day from 6:00 am to 8:00 pm or emailing voterhotline@disabilityrightsnj.org. Voting: It's Your Right is a resource developed by partners in the developmental disabilities network in New Jersey that explains the process of voting, how to educate yourself on candidates and how to cast an independent ballot. The Alliance Center for Independence (ACI) organizes REV UP New Jersey which promotes the turn out of people with disabilities at the polls, removes barriers to voting, promotes accessible voting machines and polling places, educates voters about issues and candidates, and protects voters' rights to participate in elections.

Hiring People with Disabilities

Many people with lived experience told us that they are looking for meaningful employment and internships. Municipalities and counties are the home to agencies, organizations, and committees that serve a variety of individuals with disabilities and barriers which can make for excellent employers and partners in inclusion. Municipalities can also provide paid and unpaid internship opportunities for people with disabilities. **A best practice** for a municipality in integrating people with disabilities in their community is hiring them to do the work of the community. Municipalities can also provide paid and unpaid internship opportunities for people with disabilities.

In early 2022, the State of New Jersey implemented new legislation to increase opportunities for people with disabilities to work for the State. The first of these two laws established a fast-tracked hiring and advancement opportunity program to help qualified persons with significant disabilities participate in the competitive hiring and promotion process within the State workforce. Under the program, appointing authorities will be more efficient in hiring, promoting, retaining, and advancing qualified individuals with physical or mental disabilities. The second law, the State as a Model Employer of People with Disabilities (SAME) program raises awareness for employment opportunities for people with disabilities, removes barriers to the application and hiring process, and creates mechanisms to increase retention rates for people with disabilities employed by the State. The following tools can help you in hiring people with disabilities.

A best practice for hiring and offering internships to people with disabilities is ensuring the all technology and social media is accessible to them.

The U.S. Department of Labor provides a variety of resources around Hiring People with Disabilities. These resources including information about effective strategies for recruiting, hiring, retaining, and advancing people with disabilities, workplace accommodations, and resources specifically around internships.

NJ WorkAbility offers people with disabilities who are working and whose income would otherwise make them ineligible for Medicaid, the opportunity to receive full Medicaid coverage. New Jersey's Medicaid Workability program, expanded in 2023, enables individuals with disabilities to live more meaningful and productive lives by allowing them to work without fear of losing their Medicaid benefits.

In its report Advancing New Jersey's Employment First Practices and Policies, the New Jersey Council on Developmental Disabilities (NJCDD) highlights strengths to build on, challenges, and how to realize the vision of Employment First including how to improve employment outcomes.

Assistive technology can be helpful in making accommodations to individual disabilities in the workplace and also in allowing them to be involved in other aspects of community life.

Assistive Technology: Represents a wide range of technology that support people to live and work more independently.

The Richard West Assistive Technology Advocacy Center (ATAC) website provides valuable services, assistive technology, accessibility, conferences and webinars and resources. The Supportive Housing Association of New Jersey includes an Inclusive Technology Bulletin on its Housing Hub page. The New Jersey Council on Developmental Disabilities (NJCDD), offers many resources on its website along with other very helpful resources around employment, housing, transportation and voting.

Additional resources around employment include the Supportive Housing Association of New Jersey's Supportive Employment for Individuals with Disabilities in New Jersey bulletin. The National Center on Advancing Person-Centered Practices and Systems (NCAPPS) shared in their brief, Disability Employment and Being Person-Centered in the New Normal best practices around providing employment opportunities for people with disabilities that pay benefits and living wages, are flexible, person-centered, and that support self-sufficiency, independence, and self-determination.

Volunteering for municipalities is another way that individuals can be connected to their towns and cities in a meaningful way. Individuals with disabilities and barriers have communicated that they want to contribute both their time and talents to their communities. New Jersey Advocates for Aging Well (NJAAW) Aging Insights podcast episode, "The Power of Volunteering," discusses the two sides of volunteering - how you can help others by giving your time and talents and how you help yourself when volunteering.

The Inclusive Healthy Communities program offers a recorded webinar on "Creating Inclusivity in the Community and the Workplace." Learn about a tool developed by the Family Resource Network that can be used to assess environments for accessibility.

ROI-NJ.com reports "Did someone say, 'Labor shortage'?" on dispelling the myths around hiring individuals with disabilities and shares tips on recruiting and accommodations.

Access Ambassadors, Lincoln Center's career readiness program, is a school partnership that provides job skills development and exposure to careers in the arts for New York City high school students with disabilities. It offers a model in offering meaningful internship, volunteer, and employment opportunities for individuals with disabilities.

In a blog post from Asana, "The ladder of inference: How to avoid assumptions and make better decisions," Caeleigh MacNeil shares how the Ladder of Inference tool can address cognitive bias and help people to avoid jumping to conclusions such as those around interviewing and hiring people for a job.

Communication

Accessible communication ensures that individuals with disabilities and barriers learn about events, activities, and other opportunities in their community in a timely and accessible way. **A best practice** is sharing municipal level information through a variety of communication channels to ensure that all individuals feel included and involved in their community.

A best practice is clear communication that reaches people with a variety of disabilities and barriers. This includes all communication written in plain language, ensuring that event calendars posted on municipal websites are accessible, have a link for a "quick contact" about the event, and keep all information as up to date as possible. Clicking on a "bad link" or finding information that is out of date is frustrating.

Plain Language: Writing designed to ensure the reader understands as quickly, easily, and completely as possible. Plain language strives to be easy to read, understand, and use. It avoids verbose, convoluted language and jargon.

The following tools can help you better improve access and inclusion through communication.

The federal Social Security Administration shares a variety of helpful resources for writing in plain language, including Checklists and Handouts for writing in plain language. Another resource with tips and c hecklists for writing in plain language is available from Accessibility.com. The University of Arkansas Division of Agriculture shares a Plain Language and Accessibility Q&A and a brief three minute video about Plain Language for Everyone, Even Experts. A sample text of plain language can be found in **Appendix D**.

Due to shrinking local news coverage, municipalities use social media and web-based apps to communicate about events in their town to keep residents up to date about what is going on in their city or town. Neighbors can use "Nextdoor" to stay connected to each other, share local information, and provide rides to each other to municipal activities. Municipalities share information through their websites, email newsletters, email, and text alerts.

It is critical to communication that not only does everyone know how to use social media, or web-based apps, but that all communication channels are accessible to people with disabilities. **A best practice** is that municipalities can create and embed on their websites short "how to" videos that explain to residents with disabilities how to navigate various communication channels. **A best practice** is that municipal staff responsible for social media content and other communication staff should work to ensure that their messages reach the largest and widest audience, including those with disabilities. This recorded webinar on Making Social Media Accessible for People with Disabilities from Georgia Tech's CIDIaccess provides best practices for making social media accessible for individuals with disabilities and barriers. Harvard University shares best practices for using plain language on websites and web-based apps. This guide from digital.gov gives excellent tips for improving access to social media.

The Affordable Connectivity Program is a Federal Communication Commission (FCC) benefit program helping ensure that households can afford the broadband they need for work, school, healthcare and more.

During a disaster and in the event of an emergency, it is important for first responders and municipalities to be able to communicate with all residents. The Bergen County Sheriff's Office's Gold Star Identification Program allows individuals who are aging and with disabilities to provide first responders with vital medical information. Program participants are issued a photo identification card that corresponds to a file maintained by the Bergen CountySheriff's office. Register Ready, New Jersey's Special Needs Registry for Disasters, is a database designed to help emergency managers and first responders plan for and support people with disabilities and access and functional needs. Municipalities can publicize the database and encourage all eligible residents to register. Registration assistance with Register Ready is available by calling 2-1-1. The federal government offers additional resources, tips, and packing lists for emergency kits helping people with disabilities and their families prepare for emergencies and disasters at ready.gov.

Representation of the diversity of our communities is another key part of inclusion. When utilizing certain practices including social media for communication, including images that represent diverse communities of people is an important practice in communication planning. The following images below from Disability:IN depict a variety of people with different backgrounds and barriers that may affect their level of inclusion in their communities. Providing Alt text descriptions for images is **a best practice** whether on a media platform or embedded in the image itself. Alt text descriptions and licensing attribution details follow below these graphics.

Disability Inclusive Illustrations by Disability:IN

Suggested Alt Text on Individuals:
Black man using a wheelchair, an Asian woman with a white cane, a Latiné Little Person, a Black woman using a power chair, a white woman with a sunflower lanyard for Autism, and a Black amputee with a prosthetic leg. A white non-binary person with low vision, an Asian woman with a non-apparent disability, a Hispanic man using a wheelchair, a South Asian man with a service animal, a Black woman with a cochlear implant, and a white Little Person.

A note on Illustration Usage:
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Transportation

Individuals with disabilities and barriers report transportation is the largest barrier that keeps them from feeling integrated in their communities. Often activities in the day-to-day life of cities and towns happen at locations not accessible by public transportation, or at times of the day or week when transportation options are limited.

Barriers to transportation are often exacerbated when individuals do not have enough advance notice about meetings, events, and activities and need to quickly find a ride to get somewhere. **A best practice** is communicating about all municipal activities early, clearly, and often, so that people with disabilities have the advance notice they need to secure transportation. There are resources that can help municipalities connect their residents with improved access to transportation. The following tools can help make better connections to transportation.

Travel Instruction: A spectrum of services meant to teach safe independent travel skills on public transit: the bus, train, light rail, county and private systems.

The New Jersey Travel Independence Program (NJTIP) at Rutgers University provides training remotely to increase the independence and self-sufficiency of people with disabilities, older adults, and others by empowering them to use the public transit system safely and independently.

Complete Streets in NJ are designed and operated to enable safe access for all users – pedestrians, bicyclists, motorists, and transit riders of all ages and abilities. AARP offers a variety of walkability resources including the AARP Walk Audit Tool Kit that allows users to learn how to assess and report on the safety and walkability of a street, intersection or neighborhood. **A best practice** is that municipalities can adopt Complete Streets policies and The New Jersey Department of Transportation gives special consideration to municipalities with adopted Complete Streets policies when reviewing applications submitted for federal and most state grant funding opportunities. Municipalities share that when opportunities arise, they continue to strive to make their communities as walkable as possible. **A best practice** is to ask individuals with disabilities and barriers, as well as the organizations who serve them, where accommodations such as curb cuts are most needed.

This video from Ocean Ride shares case studies: the stories of those who drive Ocean Ride vehicles, the individuals with disabilities, and those who rely on rides to feel involved in their community. This video promotes accessible transportation as necessary for full community nclusion. Ocean Ride provides transportation services to individuals with disabilities (age 18 and over) and seniors (age 60 and over) within Ocean County. NJCDD's recorded event "A Community Discussion on Transportation from Barriers to Solutions for Community Inclusion" shares information about an innovative transportation program in Mercer County.

NJ 211's Ride United Transportation Access Program can be used for medical appointments, employment purposes, food access, education matters, and more. It is accessible by calling "211," including those with limited mobility who must travel with a collapsible wheelchair, a walker, or a personal aide.

Transportation services such as Uber and Lyft can help individuals with disabilities and barriers in your community get to meetings, events, and activities. Both provide information about their accessibility that you may want to share with your residents - Accessibility Using Uber and Lyft's Commitment to Accessibility.

The New Jersey Council on Developmental Disabilities (NJCDD) created a New Jersey Transportation Resources for Individuals Living with Disabilities Infographic (also available in Spanish.)

Housing

Supportive housing or special needs housing is affordable housing designed to serve people with barriers and/or disabilities. Often those who live in supportive housing receive services that allow them to live independently. Most people want to be able live in communities of their choice near family and friends or close to where they work. For people with special needs, this is even more important. At the same time, there is an enormous shortage of affordable housing in NJ. According to the National Low Income Housing Coalition, NJ faces a shortage of 224,531 affordable rental homes available for extremely low income renters. Therefore, **a best practice** is to include supportive housing in municipal planning. The following tools can help you better understand the need for and also make the case for affordable and supportive housing in your community.

Supportive Housing 101 from CSH shares the basics about supportive housing. The Fair Housing Act of 1985 asserted that each municipality had an obligation to foster some degree of affordable housing. Consequently, each municipality in the State of New Jersey is required to have an affordable housing plan. Fortunately, it can be advantageous for municipalities to include supportive housing in their affordable housing plan. By producing supportive housing, towns often can take advantage of a two for one credit bonus per bedroom, earning additional credits towards their affordable housing obligation.

The Supportive Housing Association of New Jersey (SHA) has developed a Building Supportive Housing FAQ which addresses why and how municipalities can include supportive housing in their planning. Some towns have long understood the benefit of including supportive housing in their planning. In a June 2019 article in NJ Municipalities Magazine the Mayor of Allendale, and Bergen County's United Way, a Developer, discuss key ingredients to their successful partnership to build special needs housing. The Township of Allendale's housing plan and the Township of Cherry Hill's housing plan include supportive housing developments. The Town of Westfield shares information about Affordable Housing opportunities in town. Evesham Township shares Affordable Housing Options and resources.

The National Low Income Housing Coalition's September 2021 Tenant Talk newsletter includes helpful information about universal design for seniors and people with disabilities (p.3), how people with can exercise their right to have their own home in their own communities (p. 7), Centers for Independent Living as an important resource and partner (p. 9), and a personal story about how housing leads to independence (12.)

SHA's Housing Hub includes a variety of resources that people with disabilities and their families may find useful to understand and explore options for supportive housing and community living. They include a housing guide, housing videos, resource bulletins, a list of housing navigators available to guide individuals and families seeking housing for someone with special needs, and other resources.

In December of 2020, SHA received an Inclusive Healthy Community Grant from the Division of Disability Services. The grant allowed SHA to establish the Integrated Community Project (ICP.) Initially, SHA led the ICP in partnership with the New Jersey Council on Developmental Disabilities and the New Jersey Coalition to End Homelessness. The ICP lays the foundation for systemic changes giving people, no matter their ability, the opportunity to be more strongly connected and more fully involved in all aspects of community life. Initially, the ICP worked in three selected counties, Bergen, Camden, and Ocean Counties. The ICP conducted a series of focus groups with people with lived experience in each county. Lived experience included having physical, intellectual, and developmental disabilities, having mental illness, being in recovery from substance abuse, aging, and/or having experienced homelessness.

The ICP Focus Groups informed the understanding of and how to address issues around integration and inclusion for individuals with disabilities and barriers. Leadership Teams were formed in the same three counties. Individuals with lived experience and leaders of organizations supporting individuals with a variety of disabilities were invited to join the Leadership Teams. The Leadership Teams guided the creation of two resources - the ICP Self-Assessment and the Toolkit for Municipalities. The Self-Assessment for Municipalities engages communities in discussions about their current successes and opportunities to grow their community integration, involvement, and engagement. The first edition of this Toolkit was released in July 2022 and has been widely distributed to our ICP partners and the municipalities and through SHA's communication channels. The Toolkit contains best practices, tools, and resources to help municipal leaders and communities advance their community integration work.

To date, with additional funding from The New Jersey Council on Developmental Disabilities (NJCDD) and the Henry & Marilyn Taub Foundation, the ICP has expanded its work to six new counties - Cumberland, Hudson, Middlesex, Passaic, Somerset, and Union. The Self-Assessment has been conducted with 24 cities and towns in the nine counties - three original and six new. Based on what was learned from the municipalities in the Self-Assessment meetings, the content areas for the ICP Toolkit were determined. The Toolikt was updated in 2024 with an expansion and improvement of available resources.

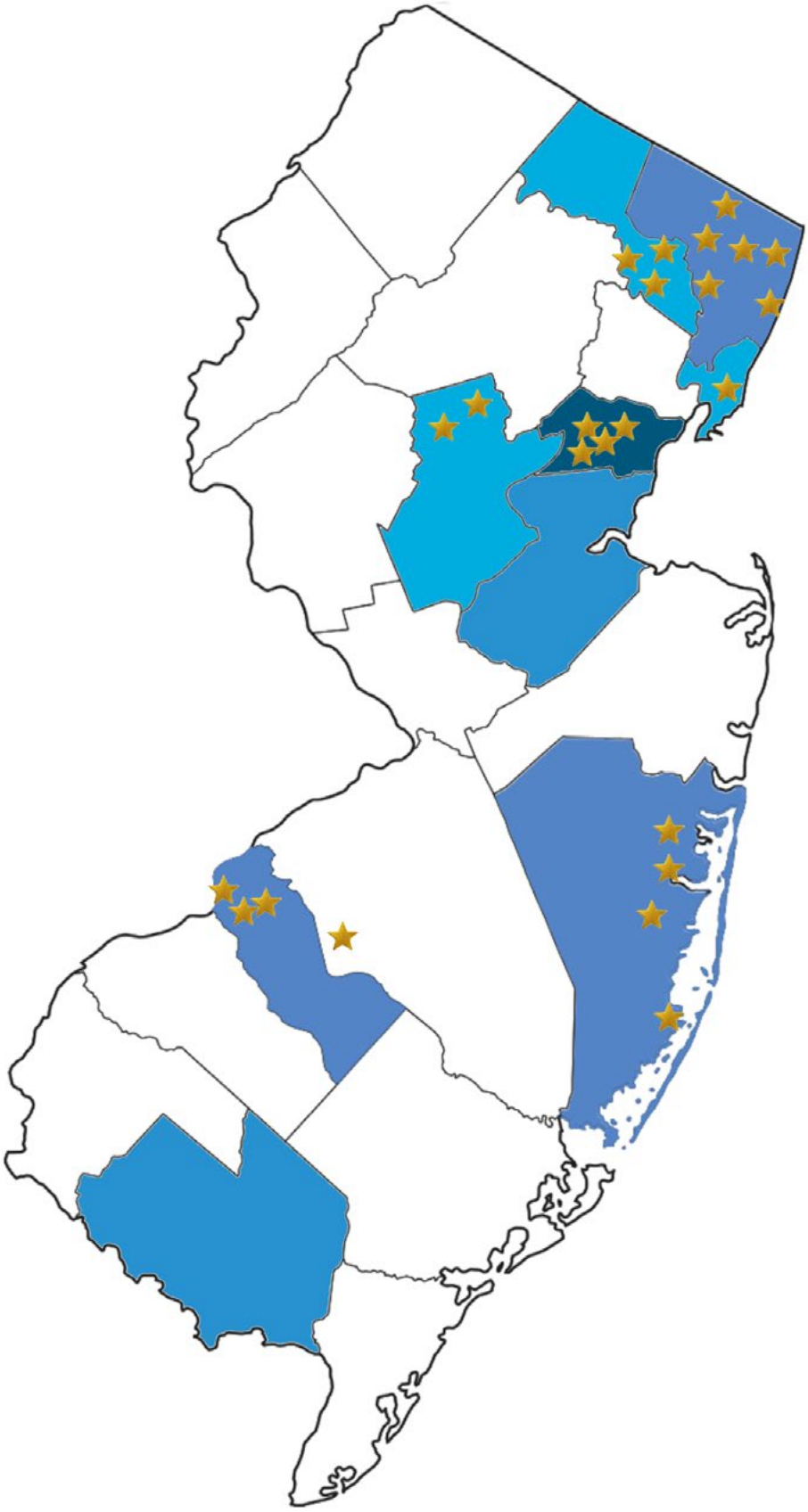
Integrated Community Project

Partners

AARP New Jersey
Alliance Center for Independence (ACI)
The Arc of Bergen and Passaic Counties
The Arc of Camden
Age Friendly Teaneck
Allendale Housing, Inc.
Bergen County
Bergen County Special Services School District
Bergen County's United Way
The Boggs Center on Developmental Disabilities
Camden City Independent Living Center
Camden Coalition
Camden County CIL
Camden County College Garden State Pathway Program
CSPNJ
Community Access Unlimited (CAU)
The Henry and Marilyn Taub Foundation
hip (Heightened Independence and Progress)
Disability Rights NJ
Easterseals New Jersey
Health Coalition of Passaic County
Jewish Association for Developmental Disabilities (J-ADD)
Jewish Federation of Southern New Jersey
Middlesex County, Office of Aging and Disability Services
Neighbours, Inc.
New Jersey Council on Developmental Disabilities (NJCDD)
New Jersey Coalition to End Homelessness
New Jersey Division of Disability Services (DDS)
New Jersey Institute for Disabilities
New Jersey State Independent Living Council (SILC)
Ocean County Department of Human Services Office for Individuals with Disabilities
Ocean Mental Health Services
Resources for Human Development
Triple C Housing
Volunteers of America Greater New York

Municipalities That Have Completed the ICP Self-Assessment

Borough of Allendale
Bedminster Township
Bernardsville Boro
Cherry Hill Township
Borough of Collingswood
City of Englewood
Evesham Township
Borough of Fair Lawn
City of Hackensack
Jersey City
Lacey Township
Township of Lakewood
Township of Little Falls
Borough of Mountainside
Borough of North Haledon
Village of Ridgewood
Borough of Roselle Park
Township of Saddle Brook
Township of Scotch Plains
Stafford Township
Township of Teaneck
Township of Toms River
Township of Wayne
Town of Westfield



Learning From People With Lived Experience Through Focus Groups and Leadership Teams

How to Learn About How Individuals with Disabilities and Barriers Feel and Don't Feel Included in Your Community

Individuals with disabilities and barriers are the experts on how they do and do not feel included in the day-to-day life in their community. Inviting them to participate in focus groups and leadership teams or advisory committees is an excellent way to learn more about what your community is doing well around community integration and also where there is room for improvement.

Setting Up and Running Focus Groups

- Cast a wide net in outreach to individuals with lived experience with disabilities and barriers who live in your community and the agencies and organizations who serve them
- Invite individuals with lived experience to participate in one hour focus groups
- Create a flyer written in plain language to use for focus group recruitment. A sample flyer is included n the following page
- Decide how many focus groups to hold (three is often a good number)
- Groups of eight to ten people make an ideal size for a focus group
- Focus groups can be held virtually on zoom (and transcripts can be recorded) or in person
- Compensate focus group participants with a gift card and advertise this when recruiting focus group participants

You Held Your Focus Groups, Now What? How to Set Priorities and Create Leadership Teams

- Summarize your focus group findings
- Determine what the major themes are around barriers to community integration that individuals in your community face
- Use what you heard through the focus groups to prioritize areas where community integration might be improved
- Create Leadership Teams or Advisory Committees to guide your municipality's community integration work. Invite individuals with lived experience to join teams and/or committees along with representatives from organizations who serve people with disabilities and barriers in your community (your local or regional partners in inclusion)
- Allow the expertise of people with lived experience to guide your community integration work

Supportive Housing Association of New Jersey

SHA-NJ Seeks Participation in Integrated Community Project Focus Group

The **Integrated Community Project (ICP)** is a project to expand the opportunities for people with disabilities to become fully involved in the activities of daily life in their cities and towns. To do this work, SHA-NJ will gather perspectives from people with disabilities living in our communities. **Click here for a description of the focus groups and how to apply to join**.

In the focus groups, we hope that you will tell us:

1. How cities and towns already involve people with disabilities in daily life in your communities
2. What is missing in your life in the city or town where you live
3. How cities and towns can do a better job in giving you connections to different parts of daily life

Who is SHA-NJ seeking to guide the work of the ICP?

Individuals who have different disabilities and/or face different barriers including any 1 or more of the following:

Physical disabilities • Intellectual and developmental disabilities • Individuals who are aging
Mental health and substance abuse disorders • Individuals who experience homelessness

How to Apply to Join the ICP Focus Group

Requirements: Applicants must live or work in **Bergen, Camden or Ocean County**
Complete & submit the focus group survey by **5:00 PM EDT on Friday, April 9, 2021**

Use this Google Forms link to apply to join the focus group:

https://forms.gle/RaAQg9QzuQqNkhbS8

- All applicants be notified by **Friday, April 23, 2021** whether they have been selected to participate.
- Two groups will be held in each County (**Bergen, Camden, and Ocean**)
- Focus groups may be convened virtually or in-person following the latest CDC protocols to accommodate the safety, needs, and/or preferences of all group participants.
- Group participants will be selected to ensure a variety of representation in each session
- Focus group participants will receive a gift card as a thank you for their time

If you know others who may be eligible to join,
please share this **focus group information page** and **application** with them.

Do you have additional questions?
Please email Kate Kelly at **kate.kelly@shanj.org**

DDS NJ DIVISION OF DISABILITY SERVICES

This initiative was funded by an Inclusive Healthy Communities Grant from the Division of Disability Services, New Jersey Department of Human Services.

Integrated Community Project Self-Assessment for Municipalities

Background Information

Why should our community assess itself around community integration and involvement?
People with a variety of disabilities and/or who face barriers who live in our municipalities have talents to share and their contributions can strengthen and enhance our communities. There is an opportunity to begin to think about how better integration and involvement can include everyone. (Please see ICP Summary for more information about the project.)

The ongoing COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated barriers than many individuals face. Many individuals have experienced periods of long-term isolation, anxiety, and physical health challenges. While virtual meetings and activities have felt self-isolating to some individuals, for others, they have provided increased opportunities to feel involved in and connected to a community.

We must change our viewpoint on disability and individuals with a variety of abilities. The issue is a societal issue. The "problem" is located within society, not the individual. How do we begin to think about everyone, no matter their disabilities or barriers, not as members of separate groups but as simply members of their community?

Disabilities impact all of us, in every community:

- Nationally, 61 million adults, one out of four adults (26%) live with a disability.
- In New Jersey, this number is about the same, with one out of four adults (23%) having a disability.
- It is estimated that about 90% of all individuals will experience a temporary or permanent disability in their lifetime.

The highest percentage of adults with disabilities have mobility or cognitive challenges. However, there are additional disabilities and barriers such as physical, intellectual, and developmental disabilities, individuals struggling with mental health, substance abuse disorders, and individuals individuals who experience homelessness, and/or individuals who are aging.

What does inclusion mean?

Inclusion means that individuals with or without disabilities and barriers can live, work, and play in their community. By improving inclusion for all, everyone can be involved and we can work together to continue to transform our communities into places where all members:

- Are presumed competent,
- Are recruited and welcome as valued members of their community,
- Fully participate and learn with their peers, and
- Experience reciprocal social relationships.

We recognize that there are things that municipalities already do to promote community involvement but we also anticipate that you will find areas in which you would like to improve.

Instructions for Completing Self-Assessment

The self-assessment's goal is to help communities continue to identify ways they can help individuals to be fully involved in your community. The questions in this self-assessment came from the feedback about inclusion received from people with lived experience and leaders of organizations that support them.

In answering the series of questions, consider "all individuals" to refer to individuals with a variety of disabilities or barriers including a variety of physical, intellectual, and developmental disabilities, as well as individuals struggling with mental illness, substance abuse disorders, individuals who are aging, and/or who have experienced homelessness. We understand that you may not have responses to every question.

Upon completing the self-assessment, we will work with and support your municipality to provide resources and tools to create further opportunities for involvement in your community and address areas where you would like to improve. We will work with you to connect you with potential local partners who can help you in your work to improve opportunities for inclusion.

Introduction

- What is one area of strength of your municipality's around communicating with, providing services and outreaching to individuals with disabilities in your city or town? And why do you consider this a strength?
- What might be some barriers that would prevent an individual from being involved in your community?
- In what ways have you intentionally welcomed people with disabilities to your community?
  - o Outreach to organizations within your community that support people with disabilities
  - o Extend a clear invitation to participate in activities to members of groups that support individuals with disabilities
  - o Encourage all residents, no matter their disabilities or barriers to feel connected – please elaborate
  - o Other _____
- In what ways have you welcomed (beyond giving assistance) to your community, people with barriers such as individuals who have experienced homelessness?
  - o Activities are available free or charge and/or "scholarships" are provided
  - o Activities occur at a variety of times to accommodate varied work schedules
  - o Other _____
- Does the municipality have staff who are individuals with a variety of disabilities?
- Is someone on the municipality's staff in a role dedicated to be a liaison between community and those who have varying disabilities and/or face barriers? Please elaborate

Recreation Activities and/or Clubs

- Are non-physical activities, clubs and recreational activities offered for those who have a variety of abilities and/or adults of all ages?
  - o Are they offered at a variety of times and days of the week? Please elaborate
- Are parks, playgrounds and activity areas accessible to all (including adults who accompany children)?
  - o Bathrooms (including grab bars in all bathrooms) and pathways accessible
  - o Community gardens and/or craft tables are accessible
  - o Facilities are well lit
  - o They are offered a variety of times/days of the week – please elaborate
  - o Equipped with hearing loop technology
  - o Other _____
- Are recreation activities and clubs offered virtually and/or in-person? Please elaborate.
- Are there opportunities in your community for all who would like to share a talent or skill?
- How are people invited to share their talents and skills? Please elaborate
- Have municipal employees taken disability inclusion workshops or courses? Have they taken neurodiversity workshops or courses? Please explain.

Cultural Activities

- Are opportunities open to individuals with a variety of disabilities in the community to enrich lives with music, other entertainment, culture, and continuing education opportunities?
  - o Bathrooms (with grab bars in all bathrooms) and pathways accessible
  - o Facilities are well lit
  - o Offered a variety of times/days of the week – please elaborate
  - o Facilities equipped with hearing loop technology
  - o Other _____
- Are individuals with all abilities given the opportunity to share their talents in the areas of music, other entertainment, and/or cultural enrichment? Please answer yes/no. If yes, please elaborate.

Municipal Council and Committee Meetings

- Are all municipal meetings i.e., board of education, town council, planning, and zoning committee meetings accessible to individuals with a variety of disabilities?
  - o Offered in-person
  - o Offered virtually
  - o Transcription and/or close captioning is provided for virtual events
  - o Virtual meetings are recorded and recordings are accessible
  - o Bathrooms and pathways accessible
  - o Facilities are well lit
  - o Offered a variety of times/days of the week – please elaborate
  - o Equipped with hearing loop technology
  - o Other _____
- Is information about when meetings occur clearly communicated?
  - o How are the details about meetings and/or the regular meeting schedule communicated?
  - o How much advance notice about meetings is given?
- People with a variety of disabilities in my community are:
  - o Involved in municipal committees and commissions
  - o Involved in the development, implementation and evaluation of policies, programs and initiatives
  - o Consulted or recruited to consult in the development, implementation and evaluation of policies, programs and initiatives
  - o If you answered yes to any of the above questions:
    - ➢ Are accommodations provided to prepare them for the meetings?
    - ➢ Is there cross-representation of people with a variety of disabilities?
    - ➢ Are the people with disabilities from diverse backgrounds and/or of different genders?

Advocacy, Leadership and Volunteer Opportunities

- Are there opportunities for all individuals to advocate for themselves and for social issues that are important to them?
  - o Opportunities through an age-friendly initiative
  - o Opportunities through a disability caucus or commission
  - o Other _____
- Are leadership development programs i.e., internships (non-academic and academic) available to all individuals? How are these opportunities offered and communicated? Please elaborate

Advocacy, Leadership and Volunteer Opportunities (continued...)

- Are the following opportunities to volunteer in purpose driven activities available?
  - o Local park or beach clean-ups
  - o Serving at the library or community center
  - o Other _____
- Related to advocacy, leadership, and volunteer opportunities, please check all that apply:
  - o Meetings are offered in-person
  - o Meetings are offered virtually
  - o Bathrooms and pathways accessible
  - o Facilities are well lit
  - o They are offered a variety of times/days of the week – please elaborate
  - o Facilities are equipped with hearing loop technology
  - o Transcription and/or close captioning of meetings is provided for virtual events
  - o Virtual meetings are recorded and recordings are accessible
  - o Other _____

Who are your partners in inclusion?

- Have your first responders and/or staff had access to training and resources around how to assist people with disabilities?
- Are there organizations that you partner with that serve individuals with disabilities?
  - o Schools
  - o Healthcare institutions
  - o Centers for Independent Living
  - o Other _____

Communication

- Does the municipality ask residents with all abilities how they would like to receive communication? Please elaborate.
- If an individual is new to your municipality, which social media sites/groups should they join to use as one way to learn about events and activities in town?
- What communication channels and/or vehicles are used to publicize events and activities in your municipality?
  - o Flyers posted in public spaces i.e. libraries and grocery stores? If yes, are these flyers written in plain language? In braille? In a variety of languages?
  - o Social Media such as facebook? If yes, are their facebook pages that offer service such as mutual aid?
  - o Through a social platform such as Nextdoor
  - o An electronic billboard in the center of town that publicizes events and activities
  - o Local newspapers and magazines
  - o Emergency radio station
  - o Local cable access channel
  - o Nixle
  - o Word of mouth/grassroots networks
  - o Other _____

Transportation

- What accessible transportation is available to all individuals who would like to participate in activities are available to individuals in our municipality?
  - o Access Link (through NJ Transit)
  - o Community ride sharing
  - o Transportation vouchers and/or other reimbursement
  - o Ride sharing platforms i.e., Uber and Lyft
  - o NJ Transit
  - o Para Transit
  - o Willing to Go program
  - o Shuttle services offered through the municipality, housing provider, or other entity?
  - o County provided transportation services
  - o Other _____
- How is information about accessible transportation shared though the municipality?
  - o On social media
  - o In newsletters
  - o Other
- What percentage of your community is walkable with sidewalks? Do you have a process for the evaluation of and maintenance of sidewalks?

Conclusion

- What things is your municipality doing to promote inclusion and involvement? What did we forget to ask you about?

SHA
Supportive Housing Association of New Jersey