Rutgers Disability Awareness Month · October 20, 2026

Creating Systems Change to Advance Disability Inclusion

The Inclusive Healthy Communities grant program and systems change

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Kaplen JCC on the Palisades

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Neighborhood Connections to Health

NEW JERSEY HUMAN SERVICES

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RUTGERS–NEW BRUNSWICK
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Center for Urban Policy Research

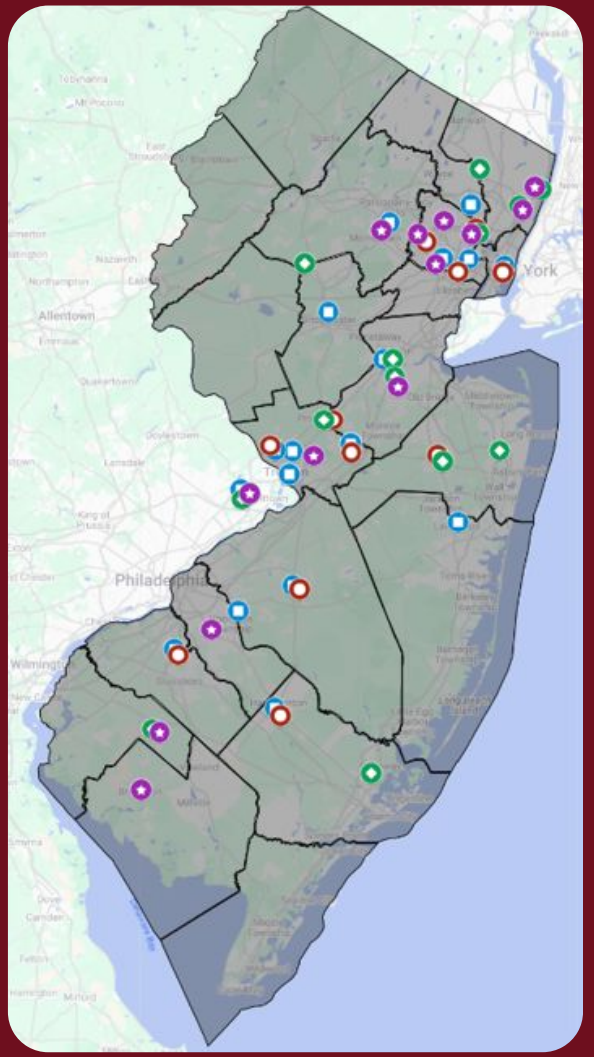
Our hour together

Today's agenda

1. IHC and Systems Change
2. Overview: Systems change at the Kaplen Jewish Community Center on the Palisades
3. Overview: Systems change at the Freehold Family Health Center
4. Panel discussion
5. Questions & Answers

Intro

Me and IHC



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Intro

About Me

Rebecca L. Martin, LSW, MSW, MDes

Associate Program Manager

Public Health Policy group, Center for Urban Policy Research, Rutgers Bloustein School

PhD Candidate

Rutgers School of Social Work

Education

MSW, Rutgers, Certificate in Aging and Health

MDes with Honors, The Hong Kong Polytechnic University

BA, Media Arts & Design, James Madison University

Inclusive Healthy Communities (IHC) grant program

Inclusive Healthy Communities
NJ Division of Disability Services
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NJ Division of Disability Services grants for policy, systems, and environmental change that bring people with disabilities into healthy community planning.

NJ Age-Friendly Grant Program

(concluded in June 2026)

NEW JERSEY HUMAN SERVICES
NEW JERSEY AGE FRIENDLY

NJ Division of Aging Services grants helping municipalities, counties, and nonprofit partners build partnerships, assess needs, plan for age-friendly communities, and complete projects supporting older adults living in community.

Cohort 1

- Abbot Leadership Institute (ALI)
- Allies in Caring
- American Academy of Pediatrics, NJ Chapter
- Children's Specialized Hospital
- City Green
- The College of New Jersey (Sustainable Jersey)
- County of Hudson
- Evesham Township
- Family Resource Network
- Hanover Township
- New Jersey Association of Community Providers
- Ocean County Board of Health
- Pinelands Preservation Alliance
- Rowan-Virtual Regional Integrated Special Needs (RISN) Center
- Shimon and Sara Birnbaum JCC of Somerset
- Supportive Housing Association
- Trenton Health Team
- Woods Services

Cohort 2

- Allies in Caring
- Borough of Freehold
- County of Hudson
- Family Resource Network
- New Jersey Association of Community Providers
- Newark Beth Israel Medical Center
- Nutley Family Service Bureau
- Pinelands Preservation Alliance
- Rowan-Virtual Regional Integrated Special Needs (RISN) Center
- Township of Livingston
- Trenton Health Team

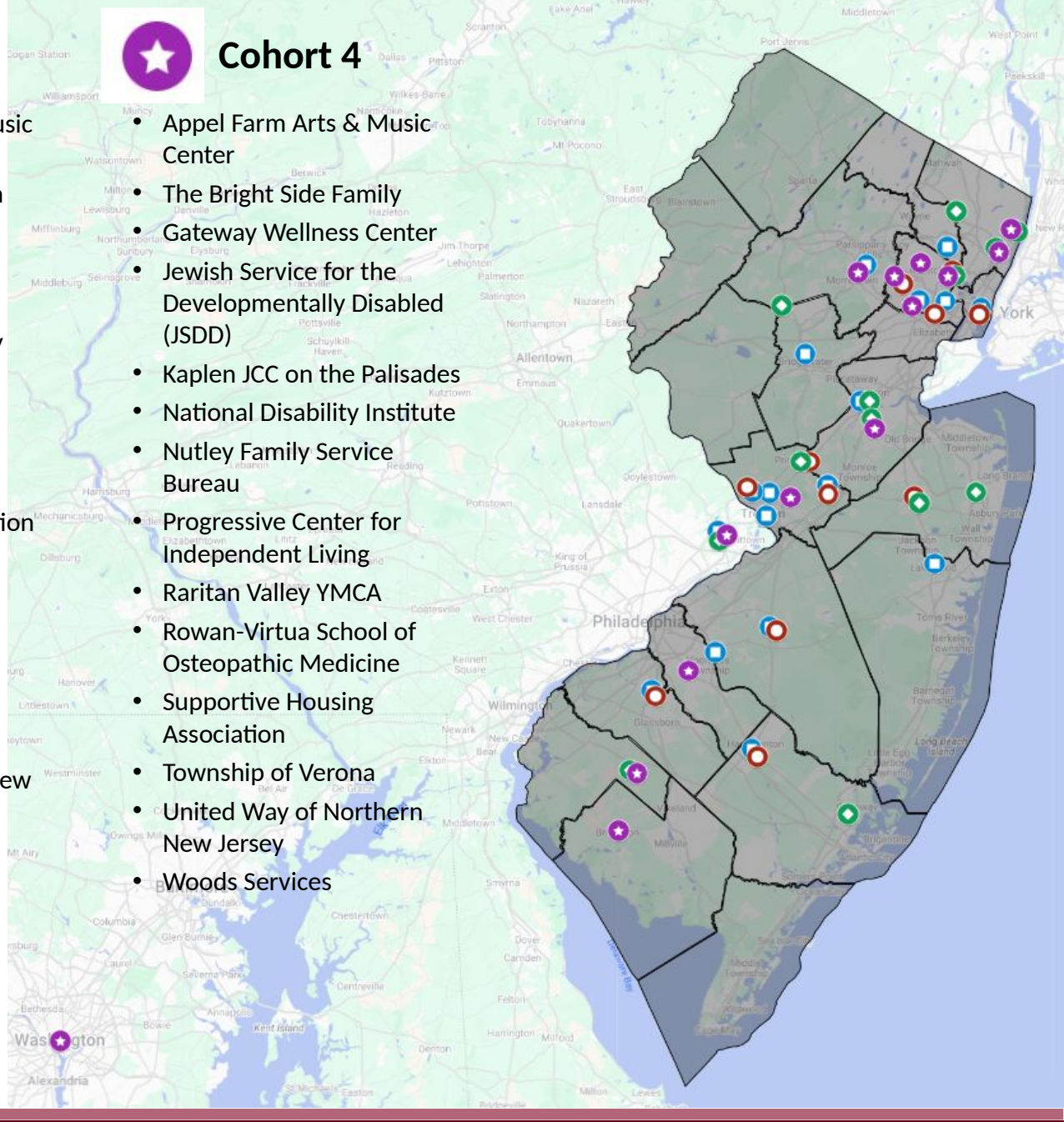
Cohort 3

- Appel Farm Arts & Music Center
- The Arc of Monmouth
- Atlantic Center for Independent Living
- Borough of Freehold
- The Bright Side Family
- Children's Specialized Hospital
- Kaplen JCC on the Palisades
- New Jersey Conservation Foundation
- Nutley Family Service Bureau
- Raritan Valley YMCA
- Spectrum for Living
- Woods Services
- Young Audiences of New Jersey & Eastern PA

Cohort 4

- Appel Farm Arts & Music Center
- The Bright Side Family
- Gateway Wellness Center
- Jewish Service for the Developmentally Disabled (JSDD)
- Kaplen JCC on the Palisades
- National Disability Institute
- Nutley Family Service Bureau
- Progressive Center for Independent Living
- Raritan Valley YMCA
- Rowan-Virtua School of Osteopathic Medicine
- Supportive Housing Association
- Township of Verona
- United Way of Northern New Jersey
- Woods Services

Visit an interactive map of grantees:
https://go.rutgers.edu/d7fyo7pv



An introduction to IHC



The grant program

Inclusive Healthy Communities

PSE change for health equity

Funded by NJ DDS since 2021, centering policy, systems, and environmental change initiatives in integrated community settings

Multi-sectoral

Lead grantees are from municipal or county government, or 501(c)3 organizations, who partner with organizations from other sectors.

Nothing without us

People with disabilities are partners at every stage, in integrated settings, through a Universal Design lens

A community of practice

Trainings, peer exchange, and cross-sector partnerships; newer grantees build on earlier wins

Coming soon: A new IHC request for proposals (RFP) is expected in early 2027.

Join the IHC mailing list!

https://go.rutgers.edu/zgbwm0h5

Lessons from the program

Things we've learned along the way

Trust takes time

It can be hard to get buy-in from people with disabilities because many have had negative experience engaging in the past. Relationship building and follow through build trust.

"All are welcome" isn't enough

Seek advisors who reflect the community's diversity, including other marginalized identities. Be explicit in your inclusive focus.

Pay for expertise

Lived experience deserves fair pay. Sometimes this provides challenge regarding benefits. Find a way to compensate.

"No gotchas" grantmaking

Barriers become shared learning, and grantees can shift outcomes after hearing from advisors.

Source: Martin, R. (2023). Social Innovations Journal · Inclusive Healthy Communities

Systems Change

Individual accommodations open a door once. Systems change keeps it open.

Even after the funding ends.

The framework

What PSE change means

Policy

The written rules: laws, ordinances, organizational policies, and procedures.

Systems

How organizations work: roles, partnerships, decision-making, and resources.

Environment

The physical, digital, and communication spaces people move through.

The framework

Why are we talking about systems change?

Policy

Takes time, authority, and sometimes consensus. Can be held up by political motivations or public perceptions.

Ultimately, the goal is that all strong systems will eventually become official policies.

Systems

Facilitates more efficient and values-aligned work, with multiple stakeholders can create a network of support and collaboration, and can create sustainable change even after funding has stopped, or without funding

Environment

Important changes to physical spaces. Often require financial support to make changes and additional financial support for maintenance or repairs.

Two levels of work

One-off fixes and lasting change

	Individual accommodation	Systems change
Who benefits	One person, one time	Everyone who comes next
Who carries it	The person who asks	The organization
When funding ends	Often stops	Built into how things run
Role of disabled people	Requesters	Decision-makers

Macro-level work doesn't replace direct service and advocacy. It makes them stronger, because each win stays won.

Why it matters

Every change starts with a champion



Meet Maria

Every organization has one

She's the one who knows how to book ASL interpreters, fix an inaccessible PDF, and answer every access question. Things work because she cares.

But when it all depends on Maria, it all depends on Maria.



Systems lighten the load

When the work lives in roles, procedures, and partnerships, Maria isn't carrying it alone, and she has room to push for the next change.



Systems keep supports in place

When Maria retires or moves on, interpreters still get booked and access questions still get answered.

Champions start the change. Systems make it last.

In practice

What systems change can look like

Interagency committee

Agencies and partners serving the same people meet regularly to coordinate, share information, align services, and solve problems together.

Advisory council with real authority

People with disabilities sit on an advisory council that makes decisions, not just one that gives feedback.

Inclusion training in onboarding

Every new hire completes disability inclusion training, so the knowledge stays even when people move on.

Each of these takes more commitment than money, and keeps working after the funding ends.

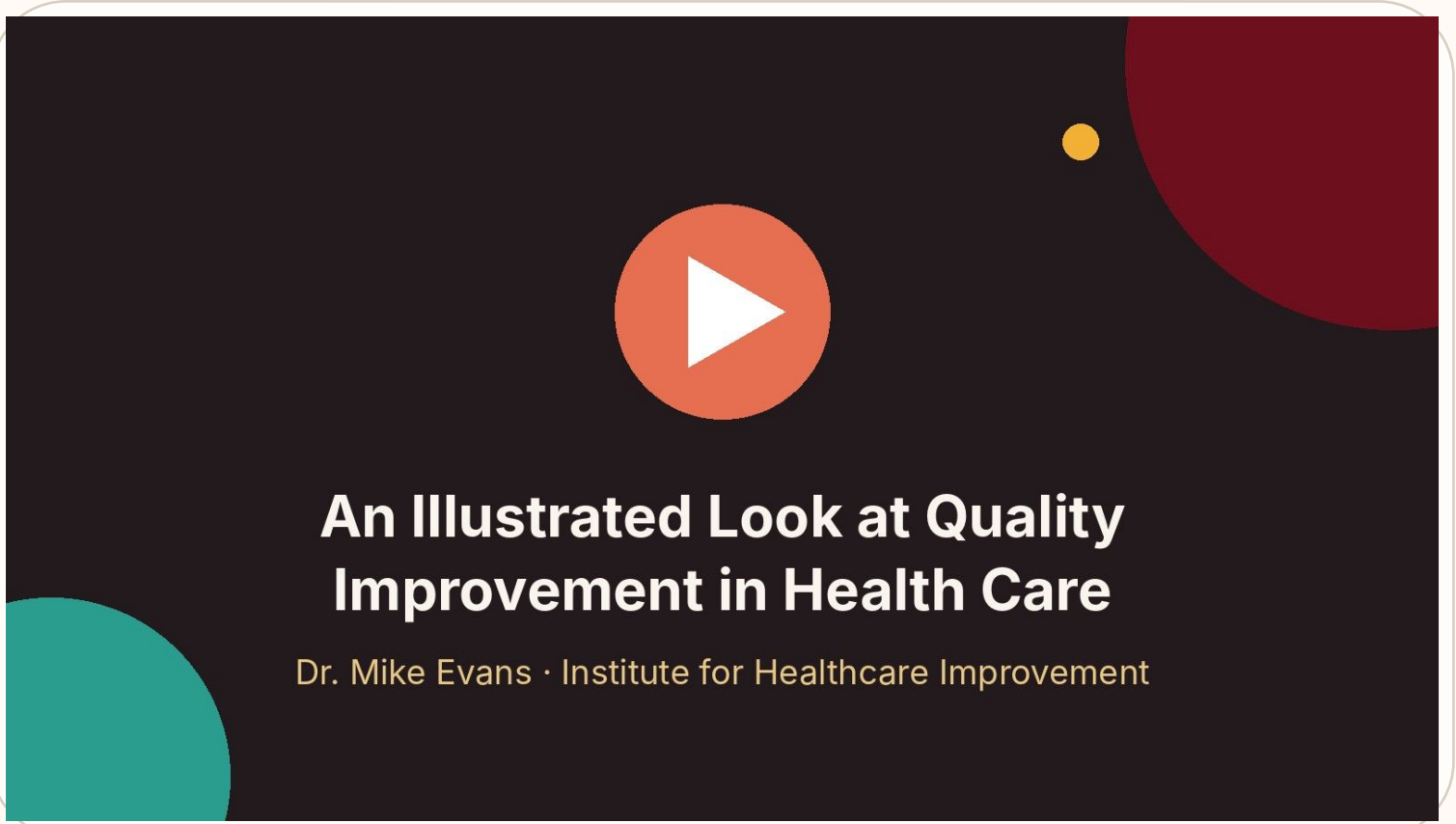
Across IHC grantees

What makes change stick

1. **Write it down.** Put it in **policy**, procedures, and onboarding.
2. **Spread ownership.** Inclusion belongs to every department, not one champion.
3. **Share power.** Build trust over time, and pay people for their expertise.
4. **Partner across sectors.** Link health, recreation, government, and community.
5. **Learn together.** Treat barriers as shared lessons and build on past wins.

Watch

An illustrated look at quality improvement



TL;DR

How quality improvement works

Systems get the results they are designed to get. To change the results, change the system.

1 Aim

What are we trying to accomplish?

Set a clear goal and a deadline, like 70% of staff washing hands with every patient by December 1.

2 Measure

How will we know a change is an improvement?

Choose measures that are doable and reliable, such as observation, self-report, or feedback.

3 Change

What changes can we try?

Test one change at a time with Plan, Do, Study, Act, then adapt it, adopt it, or drop it.

Example: St. Michael's Hospital in Toronto redesigned its hip fracture pathway. Surgery within 48 hours rose from 66% to over 90%.

Start small: What can I do by next Tuesday?

Source: Dr. Mike Evans, An Illustrated Look at Quality Improvement in Health Care (Institute for Healthcare Improvement)

Test before you scale

Try it small before rolling it out

Why test first?

- See who the change works for, and who it misses
- Fix problems while they are small and cheap
- Build the evidence and buy-in to scale up

Test in cycles

Do | Study | Act

Example: Bail reform in New Jersey

1. **2017: Cash bail ends statewide.**
   A risk-based system cut the number of people held in jail before trial.
2. **Then a gap shows up.**
   Release decisions come within 48 hours, often within hours, leaving little time to connect people with serious mental illness to treatment.
3. **2022: The fix is tested small.**
   A Morris County pilot served 23 people, then expanded to Camden, Essex, and Middlesex counties.

Small tests show who a change works for, and who it misses, before it reaches everyone.

Sources: NJ Department of Human Services (2022); Center for Justice Innovation, Beyond Bail Reform (2023)

Take it with you

Building systems change into your work

Spot the pattern

Which accommodation do you arrange again and again? That repeat is a system waiting to change.

Find the lever

Name the policy, system, or space behind the barrier, and who controls it.

Plan for after

From day one, ask what keeps this going without the grant or without you.

Reflect: What is one barrier in your work you could move from a one-off fix to a lasting change this year?





75 YEARS KAPLEN JCC on the Palisades

Shelley Levy, Program Coordinator
Cohorts 3 and 4

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COHORT 3
A Focus on Health and Wellness: With the Social Determinants of Health



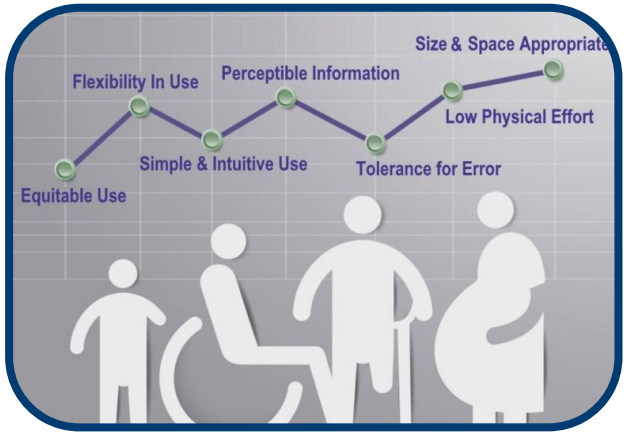
Objective 1:
Install a Multi-Sport Court.



Objective 2: Pave accessible pathways and ramp from building to court.



Objective 3: Provide sitewide training to staff and volunteers.



Objective 4: Develop policy and procedures under the Universal Design Model



Objective 5: Implementation of the Healthy Relationships Curriculum: A Guide Into Adulthood

IHC Grant Cohort 4-

Creative Connections: Elevating Inclusion through the Arts: Enhancing and expanding inclusivity and accessibility within our Arts & Culture programs and Departments

Our initiative will impact three key areas:

Increase Accessibility in our Arts & Culture Center:

Provide:

- Assistive listening devices for community members
- ASL interpreters,
- and closed captioning in our main auditorium, theater and large program spaces.
- Cultural Arts classes will be assessed and adapted to accommodate all abilities, with instructors trained in inclusive teaching methods.
- Partner with Young Audiences of New Jersey and Pennsylvania to provide appropriate professional development sessions, artists residencies and performances to enhance inclusion and access within our Cultural Arts Programs
- Partner with the New Jersey Reelabilities Film Festival to become a partner venue and screen important films focusing on disabilities within the greater community

Expand Trainings and Create a Resource Center:

- Transition to an advisory group to include Task Force Members and Young Adults with Disabilities
- We will partner with Inclusion U to establish an Inclusion Ambassador program.

Build organizational capacity:

- We will update our accessibility guide to reflect new practices and guidelines.
- We will assess and update the organization’s website to ensure it is fully accessible.

What is Inclusion U Online?

- An online training where you learn the foundations of inclusion and how to use the Inclusivity Assessment Tool
- Nine modules that you complete online at your own pace
- Take the final exam to become a Certified Inclusivity Assessor (CIA)
- 10 contact hours of training



What is a Certified Inclusivity

- A Certified Inclusivity Assessor (CIA) has completed Inclusion U Online and is trained to use the Inclusivity Assessment Tool
- Use the Inclusivity Assessment Tool to assess a recreation site for its physical and social inclusion
- Only CIAs can use the Inclusivity Assessment Tool, developed by the Inclusive Recreation Resource Center



What do I get when I register?

- 10 hours of training that you can access for as long as you like
- The Inclusivity Assessment Tool User Manual eBook
- A CIA card and a certificate of completion
- Access to the online/electronic and PDF versions of the Inclusivity Assessment Tools and specialty checklists
- Access to the CIA App assessment tool for mobile data entry





Young Audiences

ARTS FOR LEARNING

New Jersey & Eastern Pennsylvania

Technology Updates and Improvements to Accessibility

- Increase Assistive Listening Devices in large group areas (Auditorium, EBT, 207/208
- Provide ASL translators when requested
- Screen all films with closed captioning
- Assess accessibility features of our website
- Enhancements to the website – i.e. color contrast universal accessibility icon, statement of reasonable accommodations and request

KAPLEN JCC on the Palisades

The Kaplen JCC extends its thanks and appreciation to IHC,
NJ Department of Human Services, Division of Disability Services
And,
The EJ Bloustein School of Planning and Public Policy for all of the support
that has helped us realize our goal(s) as we move to a fully inclusive, healthy community!

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Improving Patient Access to Health Care For People with Disabilities at Freehold Family Health Center

October 20, 2026

NEIGHBORHOOD CONNECTIONS TO HEALTH

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BOROUGH OF FREEHOLD 1778

RUTGERS Robert Wood Johnson Medical School

COMMUNITY HEALTH CENTER Visiting Nurse Association of Central Jersey

CentraState Healthcare System® ATLANTIC HEALTH SYSTEM PARTNER

HealthCARES Advisory Council (Community Accessibility Resiliency & Equality Services)

- Community Led- gaining feedback (determine shared vision, continuous PDSA cycles, defined roles, create trust through transparency
- Creating Long Term Impact
  - Increased Access
  - Eliminating barriers for people with disabilities
  - PSE changes
  - Social program opportunity







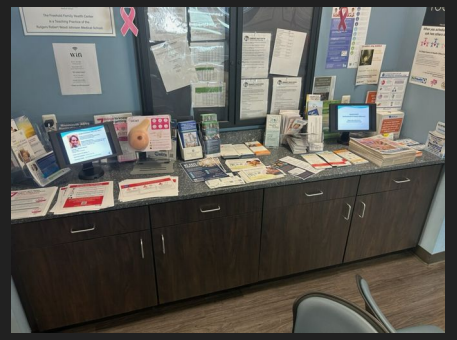




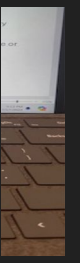


Policy Systems & Environmental Change at a Federally Qualified Health Center





















Panel Discussion

Shelley Levy and Jenna Sistad

We value your feedback

Tell us how we did!

Scan the QR code to share your thoughts on today's session in a quick questionnaire.

Link: https://tinyurl.com/355envsx

NEW BRUNSWICK

Disability Awareness Month 2026

Students

Get Arc points for today's session

Scan the QR code with your phone, or use the direct link below.



Direct link: https://app.suitable.co/#/getcredit/772553/MqyhWefU8T7FWlXB