

# 13th Annual Informational Seminar

PRESENTED BY THE ARC OF ILLINOIS FAMILY SUPPORT NETWORK AND  
THE LIGAS FAMILY ADVOCATE PROGRAM

March 26, 2025

VIRTUAL CONFERENCE

## 9:00 - 9:10 am Welcome and Overview

Presented by Shirley Perez, Program Director, Ruth Aguilar, Senior Family Advocate  
Annie Bruno, Family Advocate, Shakari Asbury, Family Advocate

## 9:10 am – 10:10 am Planning for the Future: What you need to Know about guardianship and alternative and an update on ABLE –

Presented by Brian Rubin, JD and Benji Rubin, JD, Rubin Law

## 10:10 am – 11:15 am SSA-101

Presented by Shahzaib (Shazz) Shakeel, Public Affairs Specialist with the Social Security Administration

The SSA-101 session will be covering the fundamental concepts and key points about some of the most common Social Security Benefits and programs, including Retirement, Spousal/Survivors, Disability, and SSI. The SSA-101 will be designed for a beginner audience with minimal prior knowledge or SSA programs.

## 11:15 -11:25 Break

## 11:25 -12:20 pm Ligas Consent Decree update – What’s Next

Presented by Sujatha Jagadeesh Branch, Equip for Equality

## 12:20 – 1:00 pm Lunch Break

## 1:00 pm– 2:15 pm Keynote Speaker – Update on what happening at DHS/DDD, DDD Budget and more

Presented by Tonya Piephoff, Director Division of Developmental Disabilities

## 2:15 pm – 2:30 pm The Arc of Illinois Update

Samantha Alloway, Executive Director Arc of Illinois

## 2:30 pm – 3:00 pm Meet The Aaron Family

Presented by Senior FAP Ruth Aguilar in the form of an interview with the family.

A family’s transition experience from the DRS to the DDD waiver. The Aaron’s family shares their unique perspective on community access, to job readiness and living with Autism and developmental disabilities.

## 3:00 pm – 4:00 pm Conversation with Your Fiscal Agency- Aces\$

Presented by Tasha Whiteside, Illinois Program Director, Aces\$

## 4:00 pm – 4:15 pm Wrap Up and Thank you

## ABOUT THE PRESENTERS

**Suzanne Aaron** Suzanne is an Information and Outreach Specialist for the Illinois Life Span program for Northern Illinois. She has worked and volunteered in the areas of disability advocacy and family support since 2008. She and her husband are the proud parents of a young adult with I/DD and Autism. Her passion is helping families access and understand services that are available to them, so they are empowered to build an included and meaningful life with their loved one with disabilities. She is a 2018 graduate of Illinois Partners in Policymaking and has navigated disability services in the states of Illinois, Ohio, and Indiana.

**Ruth Aguilar** has over eighteen years of combined experience advocating for people with disabilities. She holds a B.S. in Psychology from the Illinois Institute of Technology and Professional Graduate Studies in Non-Profit from Harvard University. Ruth's professional experience stems from working previously in an ISC Agency and then as a Self-Directed Assistant serving the community with intellectual and developmental disabilities. Moreover, with her personal expertise as a mother of a teen girl with Rett Syndrome and a Seizure Disorder, Ruth brings a wealth of knowledge to families by assisting them in obtaining services and understanding their options by being assertive, yet professional. Ruth is inspired by her husband and her daughter to be a servant leader who helps those around her without hesitation.

**Samantha M. Alloway** is an accomplished and influential leader, known for her expertise in government relations, advocacy, and human services. Samantha has served as a CASA/GAL for Kane County, advocating for the rights of children in the foster care system. Additionally, she has worked as an advocacy coordinator and operations manager at Lazarus House, providing support to unhoused individuals. Samantha is also a certified Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault advocate through the Illinois Coalition Against Domestic Violence. Samantha is also a member of the Illinois Women's Institute for Leadership Training Academy, class of 2024. This prestigious membership highlights her commitment to personal and professional growth, and it positions her as a promising leader with a forward-thinking mindset for the state of Illinois. As a mother of three sons, Samantha encountered a pivotal moment when her middle child was diagnosed with Autism Spectrum Disorder at the age of three. This deeply personal experience has driven her to become a passionate advocate for disability rights. She has emerged as a highly effective and influential communicator, successfully engaging with families, participants, and legislators at both the federal and state levels.

**Sujatha Jagadeesh Branch** is the Vice President for Civil Rights and Systemic Litigation at Equip for Equality, the Protection and Advocacy system for Illinois. She is an attorney with 30 years of public interest experience litigating both systemic class actions and individual cases in three states: California, Washington, and Illinois. For 12 years, she worked at Disability Rights California, where she litigated several class actions, including Capitol People First v. DDS, a case similar in scope to the Ligas case. Her areas of expertise include nonprofit leadership, training, community integration, disability rights, children's advocacy, and health care. She has been at Illinois for 1.5 years. She has a Bachelor of Arts degree from The Ohio State University and a Juris Doctor degree from Columbia University.

**Tonya Piephoff** is the Director for the Division of Developmental Disabilities for the State of Illinois. She has a bachelor's degree in social work and a Master's in Mental Health Counseling and has dedicated her career to serving individuals with developmental disabilities and mental illness. The majority of her career has been spent working with individuals with Developmental and Intellectual Disabilities in both the state-run Intermediate Care Facilities (SODC) or in community services through the waiver programs. She has also worked for many years in the Forensic Psychiatric system and with those who have dual diagnosis. Before coming to Illinois Department of Human Services, Tonya served as Director of the Kentucky Division of Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities, and as the Chief Operating Officer of the Missouri Division of Developmental Disabilities. With over 20 years' experience in assisting individuals and their families to find the best living environment to meet their individual needs and goals.

**Benjamin (Benji) Rubin, JD**, Brian's youngest son, Mitchell's "little/big" brother, has been a member of the Law Firm since 2010. Benji graduated from the University of Illinois College of Law, Magna Cum Laude, received his undergraduate degree from Northwestern University, and his Graduate Law Degree, an LLM (Tax), with honors, also from Northwestern University. Benji is a member of the Academy of Special Needs Planners, a member, by invitation, of the Special Needs Alliance, is Chairman of the American Bar Association Special Needs Planning Committee, and serves on the SIBS Board (Supporting Illinois Brothers and Sisters), the Illinois chapter of the national Sibling Leadership Network. Having Mitchell as a brother profoundly shaped who Benji is today, and thus the type of law he chose to practice.

Attorney **Brian Rubin** is the founder of Rubin Law, a former IRS Agent, and former IRS Attorney, has been a practicing attorney since 1976, has been married to his wife Linda for the past 45 years, and is the parent of three children, one of whom, Mitchell, 41, has Autism. Brian's law practice, for four decades, since Mitchell was one year old, has been dedicated to serving the legal and future planning needs of his fellow Illinois families of children and adults with intellectual disabilities, developmental disabilities, and/or mental illness.

**Shahzaib (Shazz) Shakeel** is a Public Affairs Specialist with the Social Security Administration, located in Chicago Illinois. As a Public Affairs Specialist, he aims to educate and inform the public about their Social Security benefits by participating in public speaking engagements, resource fairs, webinars, & radio and television interviews. Over the past 10 years with Social Security, Shazz has held many technical positions, taught entry-level training classes, and mentored new employees. Shazz is a native New Yorker, born and raised in Brooklyn, NY. He completed undergrad studies in Brockport, NY and graduated from law school in 2013 in Grand Rapids, MI. He began his Social Security career in 2014 at their Jamaica, Queens New York office and moved to Chicago in 2017.

Since 2014, **Tasha Whiteside** has held the role of Program Director of Operations at ACES\$, demonstrating exceptional skills in ensuring a high-quality experience for contract administrators, participants, and stakeholders. She has been instrumental in fostering a service-oriented culture within the organization and among her reporting staff. In her capacity, Ms. Whiteside oversees Illinois FMS operations for approximately 11,600 participants enrolled in the HBS waiver program. Ms. Whiteside holds a Bachelor of Arts degree in Psychology from Governors State University and is a licensed Nursing Home Administrator. Her career journey began as a direct support person at Frances House, where she later advanced to the position of Residential Services Director. Throughout her career, she has served in various roles such as Traumatic Brain Injury Case Manager, life skills instructor, and program administrator for disability-related program. Beyond her professional responsibilities, Ms. Whiteside is actively engaged in volunteer work, contributing to projects such as Meals on Wheels, KABOOM, Toys for Tots, and Chicago Coat drives. Additionally, she is a charter member of the Evergreen Park, IL Silhouette.

## COST & REGISTRATION

**Virtual Seminar**  
March 26, 2025  
9:00 am to 4:15 pm

### Registration Fees for Participants are:

#### The Arc of Illinois Members:

Professional.....\$50.00  
Exhibitors .....\$100.00  
Self-Advocate/Family Member.....\$0.00

#### Non Members of The Arc of Illinois:

Professional.....\$80.00  
Exhibitors .....\$130.00  
Self-Advocate/Family Member.....\$0.00

Professionals and Exhibitors, please complete the attached registration form, fax to 815.464.1832, then mail the hard copy along with your check to:

**The Arc of Illinois**  
7550 W 183rd St  
Tinley Park, IL 60477  
815-464-1832

Or register online at  
[www.thearcofil.org/events](http://www.thearcofil.org/events)

**Notice of any special accommodations is required two weeks prior to the event. Please contact The Arc of Illinois at 815.464.1832**

### FAMILIES and SELF-ADVOCATES

THIS IS A FREE EVENT for Families and individuals with disabilities. However, registration is required. Please register online at [www.thearcofil.org/events](http://www.thearcofil.org/events). If you need assistance, please contact Shakari at [shakari@thearcofil.org](mailto:shakari@thearcofil.org) or call 708.331.7370!

### CEUs

CEUs will be offered for this training. Licensed Social Workers, Licensed Nursing Home Administrators and QIDP's signing in and out on the day of the event are entitled to five (5) credits.

### CANCELLATIONS & REFUNDS

Participants canceling their registration 72 hours in advance will be entitled to a credit or refund, less a \$25.00 administrative cost. No refund or credit will be given for cancellation less than 72 hours before the seminar.

## REGISTRATION FORM

**13th Annual Informational Seminar**  
March 26, 2025

**One form per person, please print legibly.**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Job Title: \_\_\_\_\_

Agency: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_

State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

ACCOUNT PAYABLE: \_\_\_\_\_

### METHOD OF PAYMENT:

\_\_\_\_ Fax form and mail check to The Arc of Illinois  
(815-464-5292)

\_\_\_\_ Check enclosed payable to The Arc of Illinois

\_\_\_\_ P.O. or State Voucher #

\_\_\_\_ Charge to my Credit Card

Name as it appears on credit card:

Credit Card Number: \_\_\_\_\_

Expiration Date: \_\_\_\_\_ CVV Code: \_\_\_\_\_

Billing Zip Code: \_\_\_\_\_

Card holder's signature:

\_\_\_\_\_



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held  
VIRTUALLY**

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