

FAMILY-TO-FAMILY FALL SYMPOSIUM

Uniting Healthcare, Advocacy, and Disability

October 1, 2026 | 9:15 AM – 4:00 PM | Virtual Conference

WHO SHOULD ATTEND?

FREE for families and self-advocates!

This one-day virtual conference connects healthcare, advocacy, and disability while providing valuable information for families, self-advocates, and professionals.

Some sessions focus on birth to age 22, but much of the information applies across all ages and stages.

WHAT YOU'LL LEARN

- Emergency preparedness
- School services and ABA therapy
- Disability programs and family advocacy
- Medicaid appeals and insurance denials

CEU CREDITS AVAILABLE

CEU credits are available for professionals who register in advance.

REGISTER FOR THE SYMPOSIUM



Scan or click
to register

qr.link/mRs2cP

SPEAKERS & SESSIONS



Samantha Alloway

Executive Director,
The Arc of Illinois

Welcome and
Introduction



Susan Agrawal, PhD

Symposium Welcome
Medicaid Waiver and
Insurance Appeals
Ask The Arc Panelist



**Suzanne Aaron,
CRS-A/D**

Ask The Arc Panelist



**Annie Bruno, MSW,
LCSW, QIDP**

Ask The Arc Panelist



**Brigid McCormick,
MA, BCBA, LBA**

Understanding ABA
Therapy



Megan Mutti, MA

Related Services Under
IDEA



Erica Stearns

Advocacy in Action



**Tiffany Steinhauser,
M.Ed., CRS-A/D**

Ask The Arc Panelist



**Dr. Ebonie
Zielinski, DNP, RN**

Emergency
Preparedness

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AGENDA

9:15–9:30 AM

Welcome and Introduction

Presented by Samantha Alloway, Executive Director; Susan Agrawal, PhD, Director of Family-to-Family; and staff members of The Arc of Illinois

Meet the Family-to-Family team and learn what to expect throughout the day.

9:30–10:30 AM

Ready Together: Emergency Preparedness for Families with Complex Needs

Presented by Dr. Ebonie Zielinski, DNP, RN, Assistant Director of Research and Practice, University of Illinois Chicago Division of Specialized Care for Children

Explore essential planning considerations for power outages, evacuations and service disruptions. The session concludes with a family panel and Q&A.

10:30–10:45 AM | BREAK

10:45–11:45 AM

Understanding ABA Therapy: What It Is, What to Look For, and What to Question

Presented by Brigid McCormick, MA, BCBA, LBA

Get an honest introduction to applied behavior analysis, what quality ABA looks like in practice and what families should ask when choosing a provider.

11:45 AM – 12:00 PM

Advocacy in Action

Presented by Erica Stearns, Home Care Family Outreach Associate, University of Illinois Chicago Division of Specialized Care for Children

Hear how family-led advocacy efforts are making a difference.

12:00–12:30 PM | LUNCH BREAK

12:30–1:30 PM

Ask The Arc: Your Disability Services Questions Answered

Presented by The Arc of Illinois staff: Suzanne Aaron, CRS-A/D, Senior Illinois Life Span Information and Outreach Specialist; Susan Agrawal, PhD, Director of Family-to-Family; Annie Bruno, MSW, LCSW, QIDP, Family Advocate for Central & Southern Illinois; and Tiffany Steinhauser, M.Ed., CRS-A/D, Information and Outreach Specialist and Educational Support Coach.

Get answers about SSI, Medicaid, PUNS, waivers, transition, and special education, followed by audience questions.

1:30–2:30 PM

Therapies, Transportation and More: Related Services Under IDEA

Presented by Megan Mutti, MA, Executive Director, Family Matters Parent Training and Information Center

Learn how related services are included in an Individualized Education Program (IEP) and how families can advocate for needed services.

2:30–2:45 PM | BREAK

2:45–3:45 PM

Navigating Medicaid Waiver Appeals and Insurance Denials

Presented by Susan Agrawal, PhD, Director of Family-to-Family, The Arc of Illinois

Learn practical strategies for challenging Medicaid waiver reductions, nursing-hour and home-services decisions, and Medicaid or private-insurance denials.

3:45–4:00 PM

Closing Remarks

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10:00 – 10:05 AM

Welcome and Conference Overview

Presented by Shirley Perez, Program Director; Ruth Aguilar, Senior Family Advocate; and the Family Advocate Program and Family Support Network Team

Meet the team and learn what to expect throughout the day.

10:05 – 10:15 AM

The Arc of Illinois Updates

Presented by Samantha Alloway, Executive Director, The Arc of Illinois

Explore essential planning considerations for power outages, evacuations and service disruptions. The session concludes with a family panel and Q&A.

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ABOUT THE PRESENTERS

Suzanne Aaron, CRS-A/D, 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.

Susan Agrawal, PhD, is a parent, advocate, and writer who began serving as the Director of the Family-to-Family Health (F2F) Information Center in 2024, assisting families of children and young adults with disabilities and special healthcare needs to navigate the health care and disability systems in Illinois. She has lived experience through her daughter Karuna, who had multiple disabilities and complex health issues throughout her eleven years of life. Susan is the founder of MFTD Waiver Families and spent more than a decade advocating for children in the Medically Fragile Technology Dependent Waiver. In addition, she is an independent researcher on children's Medicaid waivers and programs, including the website Kids' Waivers. She is a Charting the LifeCourse Ambassador and a Board Certified Special Education Advocate.

Annie Bruno, MSW, LCSW, QIDP, is the Family Advocate for Central & Southern Illinois. She holds a Master's Degree from the University of Illinois in Social Work and is a Licensed Clinical Social Worker, as well as a Qualified Intellectual Disabilities Professional. Annie has over fifteen years of experience working with individuals with disabilities and their families. She has spent time as a Service Facilitator in the Home Based program and as an Independent Service Coordinator at an ISC agency. Annie has a background in consulting and is passionate about assisting families with navigating complex service systems and connecting to available resources.

Brigid McCormick, MA, BCBA, LBA, is the Founder and Clinical Director of Precision ABA, a Precision Teaching learning center and practice in Naperville, Illinois. Her work is grounded in assent-based care, self-advocacy, and the belief that children thrive when the people supporting them take the time to understand what matters most to the child themselves. Before earning her Master of Arts in Applied Behavior Analysis from The Chicago School of Professional Psychology, Brigid received her teaching certification in Secondary Education from Illinois State University. She is also the Founder of Educational Momentum, a school supplement program focused on executive function, academic, and social-emotional skill development. Recognizing that the quality of ABA services depends heavily on the quality of the clinicians providing them, Brigid founded The Institute for Clinical Excellence at Precision ABA: a professional training initiative focused on developing strong clinical judgment, instructional design, and ethical practice in behavior analysts.

Megan Mutti, MA, is the Executive Director of Family Matters Parent Training Center. She was most recently a member of the Ligas Family Advocate Team at the Arc of Illinois. Megan is a 2023 graduate of the Illinois Partners in Policymaking Program and a 2020 graduate of the LEND Program at UIC, where she participated as a Family Fellow. She is an Ambassador for the Charting the LifeCourse Nexus.

Erica Stearns serves as the statewide Home Care Family Outreach Associate for the University of Illinois Chicago's Division of Specialized Care for Children (UIC-DSCC), where she supports families of children and youth with special health care needs (CYSHCN). With a childhood shaped by special healthcare needs and medical complexity, and now as the parent of two children with medically complex disabilities, Erica brings a rare depth of lived experience to her work. She has held family leadership positions, including serving as a member and chair of various Family Advisory Councils and committees. Previously, she worked as a statewide advocate with The Arc of Illinois, amplifying the voices of individuals with disabilities and their families. Erica is a cofounder of Caffeinated Caregivers, a virtual network that connects pediatric caregivers with resources, peer support, and research opportunities. Through her work, Erica is passionate about championing peer support and empowering caregivers to use their lived experiences to drive meaningful change for the CYSHCN community.

Tiffany Steinhauser, M.Ed., CRS-A/D, was a special educator for 26 years in Central Illinois before becoming a full-time Information and Outreach Specialist and Educational Support Coach with Illinois Lifespan. She has been with The Arc of Illinois for almost 4 years. Advocacy is something that is close to her heart and has led her to spend her life teaching, advocating, and supporting parents and individuals with disabilities. As an educator of children with disabilities for many years, she found there to be a huge need for more family resources and supports. Tiffany is a Nationally Board Certified Special Education Advocate. She is also a certified Community Resource Specialist for Aging and Disability. She holds a bachelor's degree in Special Education from Quincy University (IL) and a master's degree in Educational Leadership from Williams Wood University (MO).

Dr. Ebonie Zielinski, DNP, RN is the Assistant Director of Research and Practice Initiatives for the Division of Specialized Care for Children (DSCC), which administers Illinois' Title V Children and Youth with Special Healthcare Needs (CYSHCN) program. With more than 20 years of nursing experience, she leads statewide efforts to strengthen population health strategies and programs for CYSHCN and is committed to advancing equitable care for medically complex children and strengthening the workforce who supports them. This includes a statewide emergency preparedness initiative focuses on ensuring CYSHCN and their families are planned, before, during, and after emergencies.

COST & REGISTRATION

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Registration Fees for Participants are:

The Arc of Illinois Members:

Professional.....\$80
Self-Advocate/Family Member.....FREE

Non-Members of The Arc of Illinois:

Professional.....\$140
Self-Advocate/Family Member.....FREE

Groups of more than 7 from one agency are entitled to a 10% discount. Please complete the attached registration form, fax it to 815-464-5292, then mail the hard copy along with your check to:

The Arc of Illinois
7550 183rd Street
Tinley Park, IL 60477

SPECIAL ACCOMMODATIONS:

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

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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:
