



2024 LIFE CONFERENCE SESSION DESCRIPTIONS

Wednesday, January 24, 2024

Welcome Remarks

8:30am-8:45am

Speaker:
Dielle De Noon, Advocate

Speaker Bio:

Dielle De Noon is a young advocate who advocates for people with disabilities, for their rights and independence. Born with Campomelic Dysplasia; a severe genetic disorder that affects development of the airway, lungs, bones, and reproductive organs; a type of dwarfism, which causes several types of short stature (dwarfism) involving abnormal bone and cartilage growth, Dielle is a member of the Delaware Disabilities Council along with some of the committees. She works at Delaware Technical Community College in Dover as an IT Technician. Dielle's hobbies are cooking, baking, tinkering with technology, and being outside in nature. Despite challenges, she wants people to know that anything is possible, even though it might take a while, and it may come with some obstacles, however, embrace those challenges and obstacles and do not let anything stop you from chasing your dreams.

2024 Keynote Address – Living Informed, Feeling Empowered!

8:45-9:45am

Speaker:
Haley Shiber, Founder, Haley's Rays of Sunshine

Keynote Address Description:

Knowledge is POWER! You are smart, you are worthy, you are unique, and you deserve to live your absolute best life, however you choose to define or envision it! In order to achieve the goals you set for yourself, YOU must take action! Leading the way for yourself and opening the doors to what is possible for others along the way!

Do not let your obstacles define you or limit you, find innovative solutions and create accommodations. Surprise the doubters and naysayers by achieving what some may say is unthinkable! Apply this mindset in all aspects of your life and never let anyone tell you anything different!

Haley's goal today is to share bits and pieces of her story, her best life, to show the power in asking questions, the power in demanding a high standard, the power in advocating for yourself, and never, ever taking "NO" for an answer!

Speaker Bio:

Haley Shiber is a young advocate, artist, small business owner, and boss lady on wheels. Born with a genetic neuromuscular disorder, Pontocerebellar Hypoplasia (PCH) Type 1B, she embraces her zebra

stripes and shares a day in her life with all those who are willing to lend a listening ear. She is so passionate, she founded her own small business, Haley's Rays of Sunshine (HROS). Through HROS she spreads literacy to all, advocates for many, encourages use of technology for independence, shares her love of art, and community.

In her day-to-day life she relies on skilled caregivers to aid with her many medical complexities and empowers her to live in her home. She loves creating art, exercising, social media and being a part of duo teams in 5k races, all thanks to adaptations. She embraces her challenges, allows nothing to stop her. Fearless!

10:15am – 11:30am Concurrent Session 1

A Seat at the Table: Make Your Voice Heard by Key Delaware Decision Makers!

Speakers:

DE State Senator Russell Huxtable

DE State Representative DeShanna Neal, MS, CFLE

DE State Representative Michael Ramone

DE State Representative Michael Smith

Session Description:

The “table” can be looked at as a symbol of a safe place to talk, listen, ask questions and share as a group or community. Offering a seat at the table gives individuals a chance to be heard and respected. A seat at the table creates a place to make a difference and a place to share only what you know, your experiences. Those who share the table know it is only for individuals who share the responsibility to be certain their influences are for the good of everyone.

Please join us in meeting with some of the important individuals in Delaware who are able to assist with making decisions about laws and regulations, especially as they relate to those with disabilities. Make your voice heard! Ask questions! Come and share a “seat at the table” to speak up or advocate for yourself and others, join the conversation!

Speaker Bios:

Senator Russell Huxtable represents the Sixth Senate District, which includes Milton, Lewes, Rehoboth Beach and Dewey Beach. Prior to joining the DE Senate, Russ spent 2 ½ decades with local nonprofits committed to affordable housing & community development efforts. Through this work, Russ became a nationally recognized leader in rural affordable housing. He has served as a member of the DE Governor’s Council on Housing, a member of the Federal Home Loan Bank of Pittsburgh’s Affordable Housing Advisory Council as well as other national boards and committees.

Senator Huxtable currently serves as Chair of the Agriculture Committee, Vice Chair of the Environment, Energy & Transportation, and the Housing & Land Use committees, as well as a member of the Banking, Business, Insurance & Technology, the Legislative Oversight & Sunset, and Veterans Affairs committees.

Representative DeShanna Neal, MS, CFLE, is a mother of four, an activist for social justice reform, and an author. They have recently become the first non-binary elected official in Delaware. DeShanna and their oldest child, Trinity, became public figures back in 2016 after news about their battle with Medicaid to cover Trinity’s gender affirming care, got around. They are responsible for the creation of Nemours pediatric gender clinic, New Castle County’s LGBTQ Youth Pride Day (Sept. 30th), and Delaware’s first ever Drag Queen Story Hour. Prior to running for office last November, DeShanna

finished their Master's in Applied Family Science at Wilmington University and became a Certified Family Life Educator. They also founded their Delaware-based nonprofit, Intersections of Pride Foundation, which works to bridge the gaps faced by the LGBTQ community.

Representative Michael Ramone works tirelessly for his community, securing funding for projects throughout his District. He is committed to many nonprofit organizations; the local fire companies, Ministry of Caring, Boy Scouts of America, Special Olympics, Police Athletic Leagues, Donate Delaware, Easter Seals, Faithful Friends, Leadership Delaware, YMCA of DE, DE Regional Dream Center, DE Make-a-Splash Foundation. He was treasurer for DE Chemo-Care Foundation and is Past President of Hockessin-Greenville Rotary. Mike is a Board Member of the World Trade Center Delaware. As House Minority Leader, Mike serves on the House Administration, Ethics, Rules, and Veterans Affairs Committees. He is co-chair of the House Small Business Caucus, and past co-chair of the Kids Caucus in the House. Mike owns 6 businesses, and is a husband, father, and grandfather.

Representative Michael Smith of Newark represents the Pike Creek Valley and parts of Hockessin and Newark. He believes strongly in family and community. Along with his wife, Christy, they have three handsome and active sons. Mike participates in numerous community organizations, such as Kids with Confidence, Newark Morning Rotary, Christ Community Church, New Castle County Chamber of Commerce, and Delaware State Chamber of Commerce. In addition, he is a coach for teams with Western YMCA U7 Flag Football, Piedmont Baseball, and Rush Soccer. On the legislative side, Mike serves on the Joint Capital Infrastructure (Bond) Committee, as well as the House Education, Health & Human Development, Revenue & Finance, Economic Development, and Veterans Affairs Committees.

How Did Our Community Adapt to the Phaseout of Sheltered Workshops

Speakers:

Sue Brewster, M.Ed., Ed.S., Transition / Supported Employment Liaison, Division of Vocational Rehabilitation / Division for the Visually Impaired
Allen Burke, Self Advocate

Session Description:

Delaware passed House Bill 122 so that it was not allowed for people with disabilities to be paid less than minimum wage through the 14(c) certificate. People with disabilities were being paid through the 14(c) certificate in sheltered workshops. The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) was created to help individuals get training and support services that may be needed to be successful in having a job. This session will focus on how WIOA and the end of the sheltered workshop programs has made the lives of people with disabilities and their families better. Come listen to several success stories of those who made this happen for them, both in work and the community. In addition, learn how to connect with others to see how you can do the same things they have done and what opportunities may be out there for you!

Speaker Bios:

Sue Brewster, M.Ed., Ed.S. holds a M.A. in Special Education from the University of Toledo and a B.S. in Education and Therapeutic Recreation from The Ohio State University. Sue was a dedicated Special Education Teacher and Transition Coordinator at a large school district in Toledo for 35 years, and then worked as an Employment Specialist at the University of Toledo.

In December 2015 Sue moved to Delaware and decided her passion to provide services to people with disabilities was not over! She began employment at the University of Delaware as an Employment

Specialist for the Career and Life Studies Certificate program and Swank Employment Group, and Supervisor for graduate level Special Education students. Sue joined the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation in 2018 as a Supported Employment Liaison and started her own consulting business in 2020 to support businesses, agencies, schools, and families to create environments for people with disabilities to work and live in their community.

Sue loves yoga, walking in the parks, and is an avid Ohio State fan!

Allen Burke is an individual with disabilities and is currently employed as a Customer Service Associate at Home Depot in Lewes. Allen attended Chimes workshop in Delaware, as well as two workshops in Pennsylvania before moving to Delaware, prior to transitioning into competitive employment. Allen is a Special Olympics athlete and has won gold medals! He likes using the computer, playing Nintendo games, and can drive a boat. His neighbors call him the “Mayor of Pot-Nets Delaware” as he drives his golf cart around to socialize with everyone. Allen is very proud of the fact that he purchased the golf cart a few months ago with his own money! Allen also likes to help his neighbors by mowing the grass and taking care of their dogs.

Voting Rights and Accessibility for Delaware Voters with Disabilities

Speakers:

Joann Kingsley, M.A., Voting Rights Advocate, Disabilities Law Program, Community Legal Aid Society, Inc. (CLASI)

Carol King-Ries, M.S., Legislative Director, National Federation of the Blind of Delaware

Session Description:

The right to vote is one of the most important and powerful rights of American citizens. One of the major voting rights laws says that voters with disabilities must have the opportunity to participate fully in getting ready to vote, and to have accessible polling places. We will talk about the requirements to vote in Delaware, when and where you can vote, and the different methods of voting. We will talk about some of the improvements that can make voting easier and more accessible – whether you choose to vote in person or from home. We will also explain some of the recent changes to Delaware’s voting laws and discuss some of the accessibility challenges and possible solutions. There are resources and support available, and you will learn how to find help if you need it.

Our objective is to encourage and inspire you to register to vote if you have not already, to learn about the candidates and the issues, and make a plan to use the power of your vote. This session is meant to provide ample time for attendees to get their questions answered.

The panelists are advocates and have expertise in the legal aspects of disability as well as the lived experience of visual impairment / blindness.

Speaker Bios:

Joann Kingsley, M.A. is the Voting Rights Advocate within the Disabilities Law Program (DLP) at the Community Legal Aid Society, Inc. (CLASI). She is a graduate of the University of Delaware, with Bachelor and Master of Arts degrees in International Relations. Prior to joining CLASI, Joann spent 24 years working in humanitarian relief operations around the world, focused on human rights protection of civilians displaced by armed conflict. She also monitored elections in Bosnia, Kosovo, Afghanistan, Timor-Leste and Kazakhstan. Joann represents the Disabilities Law Program in the Delaware Voting Rights Coalition (DVRC), and she chairs the newly formed Accessibility Committee within the DVRC. Joann is on the Planning Committee for the LIFE Conference.

Carol King-Ries, M.S., who is blind, is the Legislative Director and President of the Northern Delaware Chapter of the National Federation of the Blind of Delaware. In her roles, she seeks to improve education, access to technology, employment, and advocacy for the blind. This also includes working on improving blind Delawareans' access to the vote. She received her BS in Industrial Engineering from the University of Illinois Urbana, and her MS Administration of Human Services from Wilmington University. She is an active participant in the Accessibility Committee of the Delaware Voting Rights Coalition where she hopes to make voting more accessible to all Delawareans regardless of their different abilities.

1:30pm – 2:45pm Concurrent Session 2

ADA for Beginners – Overview of the Americans with Disabilities Act

Speakers:

Ann Deschamps, Ed.D., Director, Mid Atlantic ADA Center

Braden Walker, ADA Information Specialist, Mid-Atlantic ADA Center

Session Description:

Come join Dr. Deschamps and Braden Walker to discuss the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)! The ADA is a civil rights law that prohibits discrimination against individuals with disabilities in all areas of public life, including jobs, schools, transportation, and all public (government owned) and privately owned spaces. The purpose of the law is to make sure that people with disabilities have the same rights and opportunities as everyone else

This session is for everyone to learn the basics of the ADA and how the law applies to them, with a focus on LIFE - Living Informed, Feeling Empowered! Dr. Deschamps will give an overview and examples of Title 1 Employment/Work Accommodations, Title 2 State & Local Government, Title 3 Public Accommodations, Title 4 Telecommunications, and Title 5 Miscellaneous. Braden Walker will share what the ADA means to him and his personal story of how it has impacted his life.

Speaker Bios:

Dr. Ann Deschamps, Ed.D. is Director of the Mid-Atlantic ADA Center, a project of TransCen Inc. whose mission is meaning work and community inclusion of people with disabilities. The Mid-Atlantic ADA Center provides training and technical assistance on the Americans with Disabilities Act to the Mid-Atlantic region. She has a long history of consulting with schools systems and others on best practices in transition and employment for youth with disabilities. Her 32 year career has focused on full implementation of the ADA and successful school to work transition for youth with disabilities.

Braden Walker is an ADA Information Specialist with the Mid-Atlantic ADA Center. As a person born with a disability and former advocate with Disability Options Network (a Center for Independent Living), he has had first-hand experience with the obstacles that people in the disability community face on a day-to-day basis, and how the ADA can be applied to overcome those barriers.

Begin with the End in Mind: Planning Early for the Life You Dream Of!

Speakers:

Cindy Mathews, Advocate

Jillian Mathews, Public Speaker, Advocate

Leanne Thomas, MA, CRC, Certified Rehabilitation Counselor, Division of Vocational Rehabilitation

Session Description:

How do we work as a team to make sure our students turning into young adults can live a fun and fulfilling life in work, the community, and have overall physical and mental health? Exiting from school and looking for support for a young adult with a disability can be hard. If you begin with the end in mind and work backwards by planning early, dreams and goals will be within your reach. An Individualized Education Plan (IEP), with Transition Post School Goals can provide a map to get you there! Supporting organizations like the Division of Developmental Disabilities Services, (DDDS), Division for the Visually Impaired (DVI), Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR) and others provide help with work support, clothing for work, transportation, housing, camps, etc.

Find out more from a young adult who has transitioned to adulthood and her mother who have gone through the process. Jillian works part time at DeIDOT and is active in the Special Olympics. She will talk about how to find the right fit with an adult agency for support, how to be involved with the Special Olympics, and how to be an advocate.

Speaker Bios:

Cindy Mathews is a proud parent of Jillian, her two older brothers, and a grandparent of two. She is a retired medical assistant. The entire family is very involved in Jillian's activities...especially Special Olympics. Cindy is the Mentor for the Kent Wild Kats Athlete Leadership Council, as well as a volunteer for various sports and activities. She has also just become a member of the Board of Directors of The ARC of Delaware. Cindy and her husband Bill are happy to help other families in any way that they can through this sometimes hard and confusing, but wonderful journey.

Jillian Mathews is a 2016 graduate of the Charlton Program through Caesar Rodney High School and Wesley College. While at Charlton she loved performing, along with students from KCSS (and also as an alumnus), in the VSA Delaware performances. In 2018, she was a member of the legacy cast of "Boundless! A Musical Journey." Jillian has enjoyed working for DeIDOT in the Planning Department since 2017. In her spare time, she stays active with Special Olympics Delaware where she is a 5-sport athlete and an Athlete Leader for the Kent Wild Kats. She also speaks on behalf of Special Olympics Delaware at various events across the state. Jillian is looking forward to sharing her experiences on how she transitioned from school to a productive and busy life after school.

Leanne Thomas, MA, CRC, is a Delaware Native who has served people with disabilities for over 35 years. She obtained her Bachelor's Degree in Behavioral Science from Wilmington University and her Master's Degree in Education and Human Development from The George Washington University. Her passion for helping others introduced her to the State of Delaware, Department of Labor, Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR), where has worked for over 21 years. While employed at DVR, she has worked as Benefits Counselor, Employment Navigator, Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor with a specialty in Transition, and in her current position as a Transition Coordinator. Leanne currently oversees pre-employment transition services (Pre-ETS), Project SEARCH, Supported Employment, and transition services for students with disabilities.

Enhancing Independence at Home through Technology

Speakers:

Madeline Laquer, ATP, Sr. Assistive Technology Manager, Delaware Assistive Technology Initiative, Center for Disabilities Studies

David Miller, Philadelphia Independence Network

Session Description:

Smart Home Technology is a growing field that can benefit the disability community. The technology can help individuals with disabilities live independently and older adults to age in place. Smart Home Technology can assist with tasks such as cooking, medication management, safety, controlling one's environment, and so much more. For individuals who may need remote support from a caregiver or loved one, smart home devices can provide immediate support while still promoting independence. This session will provide an overview of available smart home devices as well as their common features and skills. Additionally, guidance on where to start and what to consider before purchasing devices will be discussed. Information covered will also include how to implement smart home technology as part of an individual's support plan.

Speaker Bios:

Madeline Laquer, ATP, is an Assistive Technology Specialist for the Delaware Assistive Technology Initiative, operated by the Center for Disabilities Studies. Her areas of practice include Smart Home Technology, workplace accommodations, and independent living. Madeline helps individuals, families, and care teams identify tools and devices that will support the user to accomplish their desired outcome. A RESNA (Rehabilitation Engineering and Assistive Technology Society of North America)-credentialed assistive technology specialist, Madeline holds a Bachelor of Arts degree from Arcadia University in Medical Science and Education. She is currently pursuing her Master of Education with a concentration in Assistive Technology from George Mason University. Madeline previously worked for JEVS Human Services, a non-profit human services agency, providing assistive technology services to PA and NJ residents.

David Miller resides with his partner Chrissy in Narberth, PA where he is an active member of the community. He is a graduate of the Vocational Independence Program (VIP) at the New York Institute of Technology (NYIT). After graduating from NYIT, he returned to Narberth where he and his parents founded the Philadelphia Independence (PIN) program. The PIN program is an independent living program for young adults with disabilities. He is a Special Olympics athlete and competes in several sports, including Track and Field, Long Distance Running, and Basketball.

3:00pm – 4:15pm Concurrent Session 3

Mental Health Outpatient Therapy for Individuals with Developmental Disabilities

Speakers:

Lauren Bauer, LCSW, Mental Health Clinician, Center for Counseling & Student Development, University of Delaware

Alyssa Cowin, Operations Support Specialist, Department of Health and Social Services

Brian Freedman, Ph.D. – Director, Swank Autism Center, Nemours

Sarah Mallory, Ph.D., Assistant Professor School of Education, Director, Health and Wellness Unit Co-Director, Leadership Education in Neurodevelopmental and Related Disabilities (LEND) Center for Disabilities Studies, University of Delaware

Session Description:

Anxiety, depression, and other mental health concerns can affect people with disabilities at any time. But it is often more difficult for people with IDD (intellectual and developmental disabilities) to access mental health services including finding therapists that have the knowledge and training to provide quality care. This session will consist of panelists who are experts in the mental health field. You will hear from community experts who are aware of the “gap” from a system-wide perspective, a therapist who specifically treats individuals with disabilities, and a self-advocate who will speak to the lived experience of accessing psychotherapy in Delaware. This panel will provide guidance for self-advocates, caregivers, and mental health professionals who seek to find therapy for themselves, a loved one or a client. Together we can work to improve mental health services for people with disabilities in Delaware.

Speaker Bios:

Lauren Bauer, LCSW, is a Licensed Clinical Social Worker and is currently a Mental Health Clinician at the University of Delaware, Center for Counseling and Student Development. Within her career, she has worked with Autistic individuals and families, since 2011. Lauren has a proficiency certification in DIR/Floortime and is trained in both PEERS and Project ImPACT. Lauren’s theoretical backgrounds are in systems, human development, and relationship-based therapies. Lauren is passionate about social justice and advocacy for the neurodiverse community and has a history of training and supervision.

Alyssa Cowin is currently an Operational Support Specialist for the Delaware Department of Health and Social Services for almost 10 years. She has diverse administrative support responsibilities and strives to continue to learn new skills. Prior to her current role Alyssa is a 2010 graduate of John Dickinson High School in Wilmington. Subsequently she participated in various personal career developmental programs such as “Partners in Policy Making” and the inaugural class in Delaware for “Project Search”. Alyssa’s lifelong journey has been one that faced many challenges for recognizing individual learning opportunities and dispelling old outdated systemic paradigms. She continues to promote / strive for self advocacy with focus on individual’s ability working toward inclusion for all. With her free time, she enjoys sewing, craft shows and volunteer opportunities.

Brian Freedman, Ph.D., is the Director of the Swank Autism Center at Nemours Children’s Health. Throughout his career, he has led a variety of clinical, research, advocacy, and training initiatives on mental health for people with I/DD. This work has taken place at Kennedy Krieger Institute, the University of Delaware Center for Disabilities Studies, and now at Nemours. The central tenet of his work is the empowerment of autistic people and others with disabilities to embrace their identities,

advocate, and lead. Through the promotion of inclusion, self-advocacy, and leadership, he believes we can achieve stronger overall mental wellness in the disability community. Brian has a Ph.D. in Clinical Psychology.

Sarah B. Mallory, Ph.D., is an Assistant Professor with a joint appointment at University of Delaware's School of Education and Center for Disabilities Studies (CDS). At CDS, Dr. Mallory serves as the Director of the Health and Wellness unit, overseeing projects related to individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities in the realms of developmental monitoring and screening, public health, mental health, emergency preparedness, and professional development. Dr. Mallory also serves as Co-Director of the Delaware Leadership Education in Neurodevelopmental and Related Disabilities (LEND) program, where she works with self-advocates, families, and early career professionals.

Dr. Mallory received her Ph.D. from Teachers College, Columbia University. Before entering academia, Dr. Mallory was a special education teacher working with children and their families in home and school environments.

Strive to Thrive

Speakers:

Leanne Evans, Disability Advocate

Christina O'Connor, Training Administrator I, Division of Medicaid and Medical Assistance

Michelle Saunders, Training Administrator II, Division of Medicaid and Medical Assistance

Jennifer Tozer, Manager of Family Engagement, Division of Developmental Disabilities Services

Session Description:

The State of Delaware offers programs and services designed to support the needs of disabled Delaware residents offered through Long Term Care Medicaid. Programs such as Children's Community Alternative Disability Program (CCADP), Division of Developmental Disabilities (DDDS) LifeSpan Waiver, and Elderly & Disabled (E&D) Home and Community Based Services Waiver will be explored in this session.

Children's Community Alternative Disability Program (CCADP) is a program for children under the age of 19 with significant disabilities. This program is designed to serve children, either at home, or in a non-institutional setting with the support, direction, and involvement of caring parents and/or guardians.

For individuals with disabilities who are over the age of 18 there are two options available: DDDS LifeSpan Waiver, and E&D Home and Community Based Services Waiver. While these programs may serve members within the same age group, the services that are provided are different, depending on the individual's intellectual & developmental, or physical needs.

Hear from Leanne Evans, an individual who has utilized the services of the DDDS LifeSpan Waiver program. Leanne will share her stive for independence, and her thrive with some wonderful accomplishments!

Speaker Bios:

Leanne Evans is a first-time participant at the LIFE Conference – at any speaking event for that matter!! But she loves to talk about her job and her social activities. Leanne attended school in several districts throughout the state, so her family has experience working with different educational arenas.

Leanne lives in Smyrna, DE with her parents but travels to the University of Delaware for work. She rides the DART Bus to work and can share lots of stories about her many trips since she has worked

at the same job for 20 years! She works in the dish room and also in the Dining Hall greeting students, wiping tables, and making sure the students follow the rules!!

In her spare time, Leanne acolytes at her church, performs in the TAP group at The Delaware Theatre Company and participates in Special Olympics. Her favorite and best sport is swimming in which she recently won 3 silver medals and 2 gold medals!

Christina O'Connor is currently the Training Administrator for the Division of Medicaid and Medical Assistance (DMMA). Prior to this position, Christina was a Sr. Social Worker with DMMA where she worked with community members to help find the best Medicaid program that would meet their needs. She has fifteen years' experience with the Division of Social Services and DMMA working with the community, discussing program options, and determining eligibility for many programs. Christina has a passion for using her knowledge and experience to help Delawareans reach their best quality of life.

Michelle Saunders began her career with the State of Delaware in 2001, working first for the Division of Social Services and then for the Division of Medicaid and Medical Assistance as a Senior Social Worker. She determined financial eligibility for Medicaid Programs including Nursing Home, Elderly and Disabled Waiver, Assisted Living, Children's Community Alternative Disability Program, Medicare Savings Programs and SSI Medicaid. In 2014 she was promoted to Supervisor for a Long-Term Care financial unit. Michelle remained in the position until she retired in October of 2021. She came back to the State in June of 2022 as a Trainer/Educator with the Division of Medicaid and Medical Assistance. Michelle is also a certified Yoga, Barre and Tia Chi instructor and currently teaches group fitness classes at The Ice House Wellness and Community Center.

Jennifer Tozer began her career in Human Services in 2004, joining the Division of Developmental Disabilities Services in 2015. She currently serves as Manager of Family Engagement and is the State Facilitator for the Division's Community of Practice. Jennifer's passion to work within the Disability Community was sparked as a teenager while volunteering for Special Olympics; that transitioned into a career driven by the belief that every person has the right to live life as their authentic selves. Outside of the professional arena, Jennifer is a musician, artist, avid disc golfer, as well as the mother of two very kind humans, two dogs, and a very ornery kitty.

What is the Client Assistance Program (CAP) and How CAP Can Help

Speakers:

Dielle De Noon, Advocate

Karen DiNardo, B.A., Director of Advocacy and Peer Training & Outreach, Mental Health Association of Delaware

Elisabeth Furber, M.S., Client Assistance Program Coordinator, Community Legal Aid Society, Inc.

Session Description:

This conference session will give you an overview of the Client Assistance Program (CAP) at Community Legal Aid Society, Inc. and explain how CAP can help. The speaker will talk about laws that help workers with disabilities be treated fairly at work.

During the session, the speaker will talk about the resources available in Delaware to help people with disabilities get ready for a job, find a job and keep a job. The speaker will also give tips on how to speak up for ourselves and suggest things we can do to make things better at work.

By the end of the session, you will have a better understanding of what CAP is, how CAP can help and what resources are available to people with disabilities to find a good job and make sure they are treated fairly at work.

Speaker Bios:

Dielle De Noon is a young advocate who advocates for people with disabilities, for their rights and independence. Born with Campomelic Dysplasia; a severe genetic disorder that affects development of the airway, lungs, bones, and reproductive organs; a type of dwarfism, which causes several types of short stature (dwarfism) involving abnormal bone and cartilage growth, Dielle is a member of the Delaware Disabilities Council along with some of the committees. She works at Delaware Technical Community College in Dover as an IT Technician. Dielle's hobbies are cooking, baking, tinkering with technology, and being outside in nature. Despite challenges, she wants people to know that anything is possible, even though it might take a while, and it may come with some obstacles, however, embrace those challenges and obstacles and do not let anything stop you from chasing your dreams.

Karen DiNardo, B.A., is a graduate of the University of DE, obtaining a Bachelor of Arts degree in History in 1985. Prior to working for the Mental Health Association of DE (MHA), Karen was a Vice-President at JP Morgan Chase. Karen entered the field of Peer Support in 2010 and has worked at MHA for the past 12 years where she is the Director of Advocacy and Peer Education. Her team is responsible for providing Peer Certification training for DSAMH providers in DE, The Peer Internship Program, and WRAP Training.

Additionally, Karen has served on statewide councils & committees, including The State Rehabilitation Council (member 2017-present, Vice Chair 2018-2020, Chair 2020-2023) and The State Council for Persons with Disabilities (2018-present).

Elisabeth Furber, MS, is a graduate of Wesley College, obtaining a Bachelor of Science degree in Legal Studies in 2000. Elisabeth later achieved a Master of Science degree in Administration of Human Services from Wilmington University in 2008. Elisabeth has worked at CLASI for 23 years as a Paralegal in the Disabilities Law Program. In October 2023, Elisabeth accepted the new position of Client Assistance Program Coordinator. In this role, Elisabeth advocates for individuals with disabilities who want to obtain, maintain, regain or advance in employment.

In addition, Elisabeth has served on many statewide councils and committees, including but not limited to the State Rehabilitation Council, the Vocational Rehabilitation Advisory Council, and the Employment First Oversight Commission.