

Release Date: October 30, 2020

NJ COVID-19 Disability Action Committee to Release Report on People with Disabilities and the Pandemic

A group of leaders and advocates representing the broad range of people who have disabilities in New Jersey are releasing the attached report about how COVID-19 has impacted the disability community. The report will be released on Friday, October 30, 2020, and describes how the State's preparation for and response to the COVID-19 pandemic failed to meet the critical needs of people with disabilities and their families. It also acknowledges the rights of the community as guaranteed by various State and Federal laws.

The New Jersey COVID-19 Disability Action Committee (DAC) is a 23-member panel that calls for changes in New Jersey's operating procedures, programs, and laws as well as the assumptions underlying them as they affect people with disabilities. The report cites severe deficits in the State's preparation, planning, and response efforts during the COVID-19 pandemic, which increased the risk of illness and death in our community. The report's 23 wide-ranging recommendations address critical areas that include:

- Ventilators and Do Not Attempt Resuscitation Orders (DNAR)
- Emergency Management and Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)
- Food Security and Representation

The DAC anticipates dangerous Fall, Winter, and Spring seasons for people with disabilities in New Jersey. This report should be used by the NJ Governor, legislature, agencies, advocates and people with disabilities to revise structures, programs, and laws to meet their health, safety, and independence needs.

A great debt of gratitude is owed to the diverse group of people with disabilities, advocates, parents, agencies, and volunteers who--during a time of crisis--chose to act to save lives and create a resilient future for citizens who have disabilities. The committee met bi-weekly and worked independently to develop this report. "Their sacrifices and experience were key to the completion of this report and offer invaluable insight," said Javier Robles, DAC Chairperson.

The DAC was organized by Robles in May of 2020, to mobilize individuals to develop a strategy for dealing with pandemic issues now and in the future on behalf of people with disabilities. Robles is well-known as a Disability Rights activist, professor, and Director for the Center for Disability Sports, Health, and Wellness in the Department of Kinesiology and Health at Rutgers University.

For more information please contact us at njdisabilityactioncommittee@gmail.com or call (732) 659-0175.