



*"The conceptualizations she has created as part of our understanding of the term 'developmental disability' have been transformative of the way we look at the world. Elizabeth has helped all of us to see the complexities at many different levels simultaneously: the personal, the policy, the legislative, and the social."*

**Deborah M. Spitalnik, PhD**  
**Founding Executive Director - Retired, The Boggs Center**  
**Professor Emerita**

Elizabeth Monroe Boggs was born in Cleveland, Ohio, the daughter of Elizabeth McNairy Monroe and Frank Adair Monroe, Jr. Her brothers, Allyn Adair Monroe and Willis Lathrop Monroe, died in 1984 and 1920, respectively. In 1941, Elizabeth married Fitzhugh Boggs (1911-1971). Their son, Jonathan David Boggs, was born in 1945 and resided at Hunterdon Developmental Center in Clinton, New Jersey, near where Elizabeth lived in Hampton, New Jersey. David passed away in 2000.

In 1935, Elizabeth graduated from Bryn Mawr College, summa cum laude, with distinction in Mathematics. She earned a PhD in Theoretical Chemistry from Cambridge University, England, in 1941. Subsequently, Elizabeth received honorary degrees from the University of Medicine and Dentistry of New Jersey, Kean College, and The Ohio State University.

With David's birth in 1945, Elizabeth shifted her focus from the career in Mathematics for which she had prepared, to advocacy and the development of public policy for people with disabilities. A founder of the National Association for Retarded Children, Elizabeth served as the Association's first woman President. Throughout her career, she had continually been involved with The Arc's Governmental Affairs Committee and its activities.

Elizabeth's involvements and contributions were far-ranging. She was appointed to President Kennedy's Panel on Mental Retardation and was Vice-Chair of its Task Force on the Law, 1961-1963, and subsequently on the President's Committee on Mental Retardation. Working with the International League of Societies for the Mentally Handicapped, she was a principal author of the United Nations Declaration of General and Special Rights of the Mentally Retarded. With Justin Dart, Elizabeth co-chaired the congressionally appointed Task Force on Rights and Empowerment of People with Disabilities, an important impetus to the development of the Americans with Disabilities Act. Elizabeth served on the SSI Modernization Project and, at the time of her death, was serving on the Social Security Administration's Task Force on Representative Payees.

Elizabeth's many awards and recognitions include The Arc of New Jersey's Humanitarian Award, the Kennedy International Award for Leadership, the Distinguished Public Service Award HEW, the Distinguished Service Award UCPA, the Wallace Wallin Award CEC, and the N. Neal Pike Prize for Service to People with Disabilities. She was also recognized by the American Association of University Affiliated Programs, The Arc-US, and the President's Committee on Employment of People with Disabilities. Elizabeth was a Life Fellow of AAMR, and an Honorary Fellow of the American Psychiatric Association and the American Academy of Pediatrics.



**RUTGERS HEALTH**

**The Boggs Center  
on Disability and Human Development**

Robert Wood Johnson Medical School

Department of Pediatrics  
Robert Wood Johnson Medical School  
Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey  
Liberty Plaza, 335 George Street  
New Brunswick, NJ 08901  
[boggscenter.rwjms.rutgers.edu](http://boggscenter.rwjms.rutgers.edu)

p. 732-235-9300  
f. 732-235-9330



**Elizabeth Monroe Boggs, PhD**

April 5, 1913 – January 27, 1996

*Parent, Internationally Renowned Policymaker,  
& Advocate for People with Developmental Disabilities*



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# Elizabeth Monroe Boggs, PhD

## *Contributions to the Evolution of Disability Policy*

Elizabeth Boggs is considered to have been the leading authority in the field of developmental disabilities policy. She coined the term developmental disabilities, spearheaded efforts to create legislation benefitting persons with developmental disabilities, and helped to shape the role of Medicaid and Social Security for people with disabilities.



Jonathan David Boggs, the only child of Elizabeth and Fitzhugh is born. A neonatal illness leaves David with a lifelong disability.	Elizabeth becomes known as the "First Lady" of the Arc, serving as its first female president.	As part of a small workgroup, Elizabeth helps to draft what we know today as the Developmental Disabilities Act and works to pass it through Congress; it is ultimately signed by President Nixon. The act contains the first definition of developmental disabilities.	Elizabeth is a member of the President's Committee on Mental Retardation, whose priorities emphasized the acceptance of persons with developmental disabilities in the community, strengthening family and community services, and enhancing legal and human rights.	Elizabeth co-chairs the Congressional Task Force on Rights and Empowerment of People with Disabilities, created to make recommendations which served as the final impetus to the passage of the Americans with Disabilities Act.	To honor her memory, New Jersey's federally designated University Affiliated Program is renamed the "Elizabeth M. Boggs Center on Developmental Disabilities."
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1913      1939      1945      1950      1956      1961      1970      1975      1988      1990      1996      1997

Elizabeth Monroe Boggs is born into an era where segregation of those with developmental disabilities was commonplace and use of the institutional model of care was rapidly expanding.	Elizabeth graduates from Cambridge University with a PhD in Theoretical Chemistry, her doctoral work focusing on the precursor to the computer. Soon after, she is recruited to work on war-related explosives research at Los Alamos. She marries Fitzhugh Willets Boggs, a fellow scientist, two years later.	Having returned to school to take classes in special education and social work, Elizabeth organizes the first classes for children with developmental disabilities in Essex County. That same year she plays an integral role in founding the National Association for Retarded Children, now The Arc of the United States.	 <p>Elizabeth is appointed to President Kennedy's Panel on Mental Retardation, the beginning of the career she described as "nonprofessional mover and shaker." The panel's recommendations lead to legislation that provided funding for developmental research centers in university affiliated facilities, community facilities for people with developmental disabilities, and studies on the status of services for people with developmental disabilities in each state.</p>	Elizabeth becomes the acting Director of New Jersey's Office of Prevention of Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities, her only paid position in the field.	At the time of her death, Elizabeth was serving on the Social Security Administration's Task Force on Representative Payees, which reviewed the features and vulnerabilities of the Representative Payee Program.
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