



RUTGERS HEALTH

The Boggs Center on Disability and Human Development

Robert Wood Johnson Medical School

Developmental Disabilities Lecture Series



SPRING 2026 WEBINARS



Friday, March 27, 2026 | 10:00 AM – 12:00 PM

In This Moment: Disability Policy, Systems, and the Power of Story



Emily Voorde, MEd, MPP

Founder and CEO
INTO Strategies, South Bend, IN

Friday, April 10, 2026 | 10:00 AM – 12:00 PM

FASD & IDD: Two Overlapping Developmental Disabilities



Natalie Novick Brown, PhD

Clinical Assistant Professor
University of Washington, Federal Way, WA

Friday, April 17, 2026 | 10:00 AM – 12:00 PM

Supporting Autistic People to Thrive in Adulthood: Lessons Learned from Research on Adult Transitions and Mental Health



Anne V. Kirby, PhD, OTR/L

Researcher
Salt Lake City, UT



Friday, May 8, 2026 | 10:00 AM – 12:00 PM

Alternatives to Guardianship for People with Developmental Disabilities



Zoe Brennan-Krohn, JD

Director, Disability Rights Program
American Civil Liberties Union, San Francisco, CA

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Friday, March 27, 2026 | 10:00 AM - 12:00 PM | Webinar

In This Moment: Disability Policy, Systems, and the Power of Story

When systems shift, lived experience becomes one of our most reliable forms of policy intelligence. In a time of evolving policies, funding debates, and administrative change, disability systems are being tested in both visible and subtle ways. This session explores how disability policy shapes experiences across the lifespan — from education and employment to healthcare and aging — and what this moment reveals about the stability of those systems. Participants will reflect on the power of storytelling and affirming language to shape public understanding and strengthen systems by centering disabled voices and lived expertise.

Emily Voorde, MEd, MPP

Founder and CEO

INTO Strategies, South Bend, IN



Emily Voorde is the Founder and CEO of INTO Strategies, a Disabled-led firm bringing people into moments, movements, and campaigns. Emily's personal passions and professional expertise center on justice for individuals with disabilities and equitable access to education. Her career began as an AmeriCorps member and 2nd grade teacher in Pascagoula, Mississippi. In the summer of 2019, she returned to her hometown of South Bend, Indiana to support then-Mayor Pete Buttigieg's run for President, serving as Chasten Buttigieg's full-time body woman on the campaign trail. During the first year of the COVID-19 pandemic, she served as an Associate Director with the University of Notre Dame's Sara Bea Center for Students with Disabilities. In 2021, she joined the White House Office of Public Engagement as the Biden-Harris Administration's liaison to Disabled Americans and K-12 educators. In this role, Emily had the opportunity to brief and advise Secretary Buttigieg on the inequities faced by people with disabilities while flying. Emily holds a Bachelor of Arts from the University of Notre Dame, a Master of Education from the University of Notre Dame, and a Master of Public Policy in Education from Vanderbilt University.

Friday, April 10, 2026 | 10:00 AM - 12:00 PM | Webinar

FASD & IDD: Two Overlapping Developmental Disabilities

Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD) and Intellectual Developmental Disorder (IDD) share core similarities in neurocognitive functioning, self-regulation, and adaptive behavior symptoms. Current diagnostic frameworks emphasize adaptive functioning rather than IQ in determining disability severity, and emerging research indicates that FASD can impact daily functioning just as much as, or even more than, IDD. This presentation offers an overview of both conditions and examines areas of overlap and distinction, including scope of functional impairment, severity, screening and diagnostic considerations, planning for adulthood, and evidence-based interventions across the lifespan.

Natalie Novick Brown, PhD

Clinical Assistant Professor

University of Washington, Federal Way, WA



Natalie Novick Brown recently retired as a clinical assistant professor at the University of Washington and private clinical/forensic psychologist, is a licensed psychologist in Washington State. During her 30-year career in forensic psychology, Dr. Brown specialized in fetal alcohol spectrum disorders (FASDs), which began with a postdoctoral fellowship at the University of Washington with pioneer FASD researcher Dr. Ann Streissguth. In 2007, Dr. Brown and colleagues founded FASD Experts, a multidisciplinary team of mental health professionals who conducted over 200 FASD assessments in state and federal courts around the United States. In 2012, she was invited to contribute to the American Bar Association's Resolution on FASD. Her publications on FASD include nearly 50 peer-reviewed articles, multiple book chapters, and two books: *Evaluating Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders in the Forensic Context* (2021) and *The Parkland School Shooter: Culpability and FASD* (2024). In 2016, she and her colleagues introduced the concept of functional equivalence between FASD and Intellectual Disability, which recent research is beginning to support. Recognized as an FASD expert in state and federal courtrooms around the nation, Dr. Brown also is considered an international expert on the forensic application and implications of FASD.

Friday, April 17, 2026 | 10:00 AM - 12:00 PM | Webinar

Supporting Autistic People to Thrive in Adulthood: Lessons Learned from Research on Adult Transitions and Mental Health



Research on autism in adulthood has grown over the last two decades, while still representing only a small portion of autism research. Notable advancements in the field include the direct involvement of autistic people in research and focusing on topics identified as important by the community. This presentation will delve into two high-priority areas of research — supporting successful transitions to adulthood and promoting mental health — to examine ways to support autistic people to thrive in adulthood. The presenter will share key concepts from two research-informed, community-based programs that can be integrated into service provision. Both programs were based on extensive interviews with autistic individuals and their family members, providing critical guidance on ways to support autistic people to thrive.

Anne V. Kirby, PhD, OTR/L

Researcher
Salt Lake City, UT



Anne V. Kirby is an occupational therapist and researcher with expertise in autism. Her research has spanned topics including understanding autistic people's sensory experiences, transitions to adulthood, and mental health needs. She is currently an Assistant Professor of Occupational Therapy at Trinity College Dublin (Ireland), having recently moved from the University of Utah. Dr. Kirby is a principal investigator with the Academic Autism Spectrum Partnership in Research and Education (AASPIRE), a leading autism community-based participatory research group. She partners with autistic people to conduct research that is important to the community and will support meaningful change.

Friday, May 8, 2026 | 10:00 AM - 12:00 PM | Webinar

Alternatives to Guardianship for People with Developmental Disabilities

Medical providers, families, and schools often treat guardianship as the default for adults with developmental disabilities, viewing it as harmless and inevitable. There are risks and downsides to guardianship, even when the guardian is acting in good faith. There are numerous formal and informal alternatives to guardianship that allow people with developmental disabilities to communicate preferences and direct their own lives, while still receiving support from family, friends, and professionals. This presentation will discuss alternatives to guardianship, why alternatives are important, what the alternatives are, and practical tools for implementing these tools in professional and family settings.

Zoe Brennan-Krohn, JD

Director, Disability Rights Program
American Civil Liberties Union, San Francisco, CA



Zoe Brennan-Krohn is the Director of the Disability Rights Project at the American Civil Liberties Union. A nationally recognized expert on disability rights issues, Brennan-Krohn serves as a prominent voice in calling for alternatives to guardianship. She has led litigation challenging the systemic failure of prisons, parole, and probation systems to ensure effective communication for people who are deaf and hard of hearing. She has brought disability rights claims in a wide range of ACLU litigation. She has also worked to protect the rights of parents with disabilities, addressing issues in states that fail to provide legally required support before seeking to remove children from their care. Brennan-Krohn received her JD from Harvard Law School and is also a graduate of Brown University. Before going to college, she worked for two years at Camphill Ballytobin, an inclusive community in Ireland for people with and without disabilities. Before law school, Zoe was a Fulbright Scholar in Bosnia-Herzegovina. Zoe clerked for the Honorable Judith Rogers of the U.S. Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia Circuit, and for President Theodor Meron at the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia.

Developmental Disabilities Lecture Series

SPRING 2026 WEBINARS

The Boggs Center's Developmental Disabilities Lecture Series is a community and continuing education program provided for professionals, policymakers, individuals with disabilities, and family members to enhance their knowledge and skills in innovative approaches and state of the art practices for people with developmental disabilities. Nationally known speakers with expertise in their field serve as faculty for the program. Eight sessions of the Developmental Disabilities Lecture Series are held each year, four in the Fall, and four in the Spring.

Funding for the Series is provided by the Division of Developmental Disabilities, Department of Human Services, State of New Jersey and the Administration on Disabilities, US Department of Health and Human Services.

REGISTRATION

The Spring 2026 Developmental Disabilities Lecture Series will be held on the Zoom Webinar platform.

To access the webinars, you must register in advance on The Boggs Center Online Registration System at: <https://boggscenterregistration.rwjms.rutgers.edu/index.php/event/lecture>

The webinars are free of charge. Space is limited for each of the sessions. Open to people who live or work in New Jersey.

For additional information about DDLS Webinars, including system requirements, please view [Frequently Asked Questions](#)

CONTINUING EDUCATION AND CERTIFICATES OF ATTENDANCE

As part of Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey, The Boggs Center offers this program for general social work continuing education credit per NJAC 13:44G6.4.c(5). The Boggs Center is a registered NJ Department of Education Professional Development Provider. The Spring 2026 sessions have been submitted to the Commission on Rehabilitation Counselor Certification (CRCC) for continuing education program approval.

Each session is eligible for 2 hours of continuing education recognition. **To demonstrate completion and receive a Certificate, you must be logged into the webinar from start to finish and complete a survey at the webinar's completion.** Certificates of Attendance will be emailed to all participants who meet these eligibility requirements the week following the event.