

RWJBarnabas Health–Monmouth Medical Center, Longbranch, NJ

Special Needs Ambassador Program

Joseph Jaeger; Alex Puma; Margaret Fisher; Juliet Gossett; Patricia Gossett; Johanna Rosario; Penny Stechman; Sweatha Kasala; Erum Khalil; Sayee Alagusundaramoorthy; Danielle Hilliard; Kristin Kuhi; Laura Parshelunis; The Arc of Monmouth

Background: Research studies commissioned by the Special Olympics have found that people with intellectual disabilities have poorer health profiles than their neurotypical counterparts and that doctors report a lack of competency to treat them. As New Jersey’s largest integrated healthcare delivery system and a premier partner of Special Olympics New Jersey, RWJBarnabas Health is committed to reducing these differences. Our goal was to engage the community and GME in the establishment of a Special Needs Ambassador Program (SNAP) to support individuals and families throughout their experience at Monmouth Medical Center.

Methods: We secured academic, clinical, and administrative support from GME, the C-suite, and board-level leadership and collaborated with community partners plus local, regional, and national experts in developmental medicine to identify unmet patient needs. We issued a communitywide request for information about ideas to improve the patient experience and developed and administered a resident survey about preparedness to deliver competent care to patients with intellectual and/or developmental disability (IDD). Based on this information, we launched a SNAP in September 2016.

Results: We successfully established a SNAP to address unmet patient needs and identified gaps in resident preparedness to deliver IDD-competent care. We will use patient, caregiver, and SNAP ambassador surveys to gather quantitative and qualitative feedback for regular 360° evaluation of the program. Patients utilizing SNAP services will be identifiable within administrative datasets, allowing for future investigations about impact on selected measures of importance (eg, length of stay, patient satisfaction scores).

Conclusion: A SNAP can support individuals and families affected by IDD in overcoming impediments to receiving care, and with resident involvement, may help to close gaps in trainee knowledge and performance about a patient population that they will undoubtedly care for.

PROJECT MANAGEMENT PLAN – Special Needs Ambassador Program

Vision Statement	Our vision is to provide the highest quality care to all individuals affected by an intellectual and/or developmental disability (IDD) through healthcare excellence, superior service, and compassionate care.
Team Objectives	<p>Our objectives were as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify strengths and weaknesses in IDD education and experience in GME programs • Understand and prioritize areas for IDD community health and IDD community engagement • Engage hospital administration and GME in review of IDD community health needs • Develop and implement a Special Needs Ambassador Program (SNAP) • Advance Monmouth Medical Center’s engagement through GME significantly and measurably • Participate in a collaborative national effort to identify and share best practices • Author one or more manuscripts
Success Factors	The most successful part of our work was securing buy-in from hospital leadership. We were inspired by the resilience and perseverance of individuals and families affected by IDD.
Barriers	The largest barrier encountered was the lack of clinical expertise in IDD. We worked to overcome this challenge by engaging local, regional, and national experts.
Lessons Learned	The single most important piece of advice to provide another team embarking on a similar initiative is to engage radically with the communities that you serve.