

The Arc of Benton County, as a local chapter of The Arc U.S., has a strong record of accomplishment, fostering innovation and creativity in providing support to individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD). John Gotchall, MD, a Justice Advocate for The Arc of Benton County, reached out to the Criminal Justice Advocacy Program (CJAP) regarding their chapter's efforts to develop a pilot program inspired by the CJAP model. Driven by his passion for supporting individuals with IDD in the criminal justice system, the chapter drew inspiration from The Arc of NJ and its expertise.

During the initial stages of developing their Personalized Justice Plan (PJP), best practices and insights on achieving systemic outcomes was discussed, including the focus on addressing the needs of specific populations, such as FASD. To guide the development of the PJP, various examples and templates were provided for reference. On May 17th, Mr. Gotchall reported significant success with their first CJAP client, describing it as "kind of miraculous." The individual was initially facing a serious felony charge that could have resulted in life-altering consequences. However, utilizing the PJP based on the provided template, the minds and hearts of court personnel were changed, leading to a more just and rehabilitative outcome. The prosecutor's note, which highlighted the impact of the PJP and the individual's disability and history of abuse, played a crucial role. After careful review and consultation with the team, the outcome resulted in a substantially reduced charge that would not necessitate jail time or lengthy probation, with appropriate wrap-around services in place. Mr. Gotchall expressed gratitude to our program, including the input from the previous CJAP director, acknowledging the significant impact we had on their replication of CJAP. In his view, the use of the PJP may have saved the individual's life.