

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**NJCDD Kicks Off *We're Here: Then, Now, Always* to Celebrate  
Developmental Disabilities Awareness Month**

**Trenton, NJ**—This March, the New Jersey Council on Developmental Disabilities is proud to celebrate Developmental Disabilities Awareness Month with the launch of the *We're Here: Then, Now, Always* campaign. The national campaign recognizes a simple truth: people with developmental disabilities have always been part of our communities—and always will be.

The campaign builds on last year's successful *We're Here All Year* initiative and expands the message by connecting past, present, and future. Through powerful storytelling and visuals, *We're Here: Then, Now, Always* highlights how far the disability community has come and why continued advocacy efforts have strengthened the commitment to inclusion and community living.

NJCDD Executive Director Mercedes Witowsky commented, "While we celebrate individuals with developmental disabilities all year, we are especially excited to highlight their presence in the community during Developmental Disabilities Awareness Month. We are eager to kick off *We're Here: Then, Now, Always*, and look forward to engaging people with and without disabilities in this campaign."

The campaign connects past, present, and future through a powerful storytelling framework:

- **Then:** A time when many people with developmental disabilities were hidden, segregated, or excluded from community life.
- **Now:** Individuals living full lives—working, building friendships, parenting, volunteering, participating in faith communities, and contributing to their neighborhoods.
- **Always:** A future where community living is protected, expected, and funded—and not viewed as a program, but as part of a whole life.

The community will also have an opportunity to participate. *We're Here* will launch a relationship-building campaign to provide individuals with DD, family members, and the community-at-large with the resources needed to build relationships with key decision-makers at the local, state, and federal levels. It will then open a national portrait collection to show the faces of the DD community across the country and share their "Always."

The campaign, organized by the National Association of Councils on Developmental Disabilities, launches in March 2026 and will run until February 2027.

"People with intellectual and developmental disabilities have always been here—part of the fabric of our nation—even when systems kept them out of sight and out of community life," said Jill Jacobs, Executive Director of the

National Association of Councils on Developmental Disabilities. “This month is not about awareness as a one-time event. It’s a reminder that people with IDD are always here, and that all of us have a responsibility to keep learning, engaging, and building communities where everyone belongs—every day of the year.”

Community members, businesses, faith organizations, schools, and local governments are encouraged to participate by sharing campaign materials and local “Then / Now / Always” stories.

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**About NJCDD:** The New Jersey Council on Developmental Disabilities (NJCDD) is a federally mandated organization located in but not of the NJ Department of Human Services. NJCDD works to ensure individuals with intellectual/developmental disabilities (I/DD) and their families participate in the design of and have access to needed community services, individualized supports, and other forms of assistance that promote self-determination, independence, productivity, integration, and inclusion in all facets of life through culturally competent programs. Visit <https://njcdd.org/> for more information.

**About NACDD:** The National Association of Councils on Developmental Disabilities (NACDD) is the national membership association for the 56 Governor-appointed State Councils on Developmental Disabilities (SCDD or DD Councils) across the United States and its territories.

The DD Councils receive federal funding to support policy change and programs that promote self-determination, integration, and involvement in everyday life for all people in the United States with intellectual and developmental disabilities. [www.nacdd.org](http://www.nacdd.org)