



PROTECTED TOMORROWS TODAY!

Welcome to Our Community News

# January/February '24

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### Message from Mary Anne

Happy New Year to all of our Protected Tomorrows families and friends.

I am delighted to be kicking off the 2024 Parents University series, and our February newsletter provides several important updates on Social Security benefits and ABLE accounts.



An significant anniversary is approaching this year: the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Supreme Court's decision in [Olmstead vs. L.C.](#), which held in 1999 that, under the Americans with Disabilities Act, individuals with disabilities must have access to community-based services when appropriate and where they can be reasonably accommodated.

It marked the end of an era in which people with disabilities could be segregated or institutionalized for no other reason than their disability.

Inclusion of people with disabilities in schools, colleges and workplaces enriches not only their lives, but also the lives of those they are in contact with. Yet, the idea of inclusion (an aspect of DEI – diversity, equity and inclusion) is still an uncomfortable concept to some in corporate and political arenas.

People with physical and developmental disabilities are entitled to live their best lives. All of us at Protected Tomorrows fervently believe that, and we look forward to working with you this year to make that goal a reality for your families.

Yours truly,

Mary Anne Ehlert  
*President, Protected Tomorrows*

## 2024 Parent University Class 2: "Back to Basics and What's New"

**Thursday, February 15, Noon-1 p.m. (central time)**

This is for our new participants as well as those who have been with us before. We will review the basics and hear about what's new. What do you have to pay attention to and how will it change your plan? Government benefits, Special Needs Trusts, ABLE accounts, Secure Act 2.0, tax changes, and more. Hosted by Protected Tomorrows President Mary Anne Ehlert.



### "Back to Basics and What's New"

**Thursday, February 15, noon to 1 p.m. (central time)**

If you'd like the information, but can't attend, register, and we'll provide you with a link to the recorded video after the class.

For Zoom security, when you register, you'll receive an email with a link to the class and a passcode, which you'll be asked to enter when you log on. (To avoid disruption, we'll close the class at 12:05. If you're late, you'll be able to watch the video later.)

**Registration is required. [Click here to sign up!](#)**

Register

## Catch Up on Class 1, "Get Ready for 2024: A Review of What's to Come"

**View It Free Until February 25!**

If you missed our January Parents University class, it's available for free using coupon code **2024pu1ready** until February 25.

We have an exciting year ahead! In this class, we reviewed our progress from 2023, and together we set some goals for this year to help you become an active participant more than ever before.

To watch it using the coupon code:

- Click on the link below to access the class in our store
- Add the class to your cart
- Type in the coupon code **2024pu1ready** at checkout
- Click "Apply coupon"

Watch here

# Sneak Preview of Our 2024 Parent University Classes!



Here are the remaining **2024 Parent University** classes. All classes are from noon to 1 p.m. central time via Zoom. Even if you can't attend, register and you'll be able to view the video afterward.

**March 21**

**Class 3: "Our Toolbox is Full!! What Tool Do I Use When It's So Confusing? Help!"**

We hear from so many families about how they are confused as to how to use many tools we now have for planning for our

loved one. Let's talk about how to make it simple.

**April 18**

**Class 4: "We All Need a Vacation! Is It Possible to Make That Happen? Yes!"**

Let's meet some service providers that assist in vacation planning when you have a family member with unique needs.

**May 9**

**Class 5: "How and When to Introduce Future Guardians and Trustees Into Our Family Process"**

When to start bringing siblings, corporate guardians and trustees into your process.

**June 13**

**Class 6: "Father's Day Month at Its Best: The Important Role of Dad in Planning for the Future"**

Our guests from the Special Dads Network talk about their experiences and the importance of networking.

**July 18**

**Class 7: "Life Should Not Be All Work and No Play: The Importance of Friends"**

The value of social connections, and what do they mean for you and your child?

**August 15**

**Class 8: "Transportation – A Big Missing Link to Success"**

Who will do the driving if you are not around? Are there any companies creating solutions to address this need?

**September 12**

**Class 9: "Retiring for 3: How to Have Enough for Your Own Retirement and Theirs, Too"**

How much is enough for you, as the caregivers? How much is enough for your child? How to incorporate your child's plan into your own.

**October 10**

**Class 10: "The Myriad of Residential Options – What and Where Are They?"**

Let's hear more from people who have creative scenarios – DIY, campus, group homes, independent living.

**November 14**

**Class 11: "The Stress of Normal Live, Add in the Holidays and Future Worries: How Do You Cope?"**

Let's listen to professionals who will give us coping mechanisms. Send your questions to us in advance.

**December 12**

[Click here for the schedule and registration links.](#)

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## College Planning for the Special-Needs Student

Here are some expert tips on resources and questions to ask

*This [article from The Daily Herald](#) discusses a topic that sometimes gets overlooked: How should you be thinking about college for a special-needs child who qualifies for college admission -- and has their heart set on attending? It's a different landscape than they have experienced in high school.*

*The author is Teri Frykenberg RN, founder and CEO of [NShore Patient Advocates](#), who writes a consumer health column every Monday in The Daly Herald. -- Mary Anne Ehlert*



### How to help a college-bound student who has a disability

It's mid-winter. By now, high school juniors and seniors planning to attend college — along with their parents — are usually deep into the search process. Maybe you visited campuses last summer, are checking out the new FAFSA and are giving thought to an academic major.

It's a time that's fraught with emotion for most parents, and **if their child has a qualifying disability** and an IEP (individualized education program) in high school, parents have an additional reason for concern.

An emotional, developmental or physical disability can be a stumbling block in college, but it needn't be a roadblock. In fact, **students with disabilities make up one-fifth of the college population**, according to the National Center for Education Statistics. Samantha Bartek, a National Certified Counselor with [My College Planning Team](#), based in Naperville, says it just takes additional planning.

"In addition to identifying whether a college offers the academic program your child wants to pursue, provides the social life they're looking for and is affordable, you must also research what a college considers a qualifying disability and what support services it offers," she says.

**The most common disability among college students**, according to a survey by the American College Health Association, is attention deficit/hyperactivity disorder, or ADD/ADHD. On a typical campus, you will also encounter students with physical disabilities, those on the autism spectrum, and those who have low vision/blindness or are deaf/hard-of-hearing.

If your child takes medication to help manage their disability, you will want to be sure they understand that it's important to use it responsibly.

Samantha said some students are reluctant to disclose their disability to their college.

"Students who don't disclose a disability are cut off from support services that may well make the difference between graduating and not graduating," she says.

There are two major differences between high school and college when it comes to disability services, she advises.

The first is that **colleges are not required to accept a student's IEP or 504 plan** that ensured them equal access to education in their K-12 schools. But, Samantha notes, "Assuming your child is otherwise eligible for admission to two- or four-year school, colleges and universities cannot deny admission solely because a student has a disability."

In addition, the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) requires all public and private colleges to offer equal educational access. “What that looks like varies widely from campus to campus, but colleges and universities must offer appropriate academic adjustments, aids and services to students with qualifying disabilities,” she says.

This is where it’s important to have written documentation by your child’s doctor of their diagnosis, regardless of their IEP/504. It will be required to access services.

Another difference is that, **at age 18, your child is considered an adult** for the purposes of medical privacy. As I have written before, before they head off to college, make sure your child signs a HIPAA release giving you the ability to communicate with the college and medical practitioners about their health issues.

If your child is attending a college away from home, a patient health advocate could be a valuable addition to the student’s care team, assisting with health concerns and being the parents’ eyes and ears when it comes to medications, doctor appointments and emergencies.

This also means that your student will need to advocate for themselves due to privacy policies at the college level.

“Accommodations could be made, but their professors may be unaware of them unless the student shares them and requests the extra help they are entitled to,” Samantha says.

She recommends that families **identify the office that provides services and support to students with disabilities**. It could be called academic support center, office of disability services, office for accessibility services, student disability access center or something similar.

“If you’re planning a campus visit, be sure to **set up an appointment** to meet with the staff,” she says. “There will likely be an application process in addition to the application for the college itself.”

Discuss with them which services have worked well in the past for your child. Have they used assistive devices? Had the help of a note-taker? Needed extra time for exams or special proctoring?

I have worked with parents of children with disabilities, and they are a determined lot who understand the importance of advocacy.

Set your child up for success in college with additional research and planning.

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## News to Share



### 2024 Changes to Social Security

The Social Security website has some important updates for special-needs families and individuals.

For example, the Substantial Gainful Activity (SGA) went up from \$1,470 a month to



### Save More with ABLE Accounts in 2024

Individuals with disabilities are allowed to put aside more money than ever before in ABLE Accounts. **The federal gift tax exclusion rose to \$18,000** from \$17,000 last year, which is also the annual deposit

\$1,550 a month this year. Substantial gainful activity (SGA) marks the **salary threshold used by the Social Security Administration to determine eligibility** for disability benefits.

[Learn more](#)

limit for ABLE Accounts.

[Learn more](#)



## Upcoming Events 2024

SEE ALL OUR  
2024 EVENTS  
HERE!

*All times are Central*

**February 15**, noon to 1 p.m. (online)  
Parent University Class 2: "Back to Basics and What's New"  
Registration is required

[Register here](#)

**February 23**, 12:30 p.m.  
"Government Benefits"  
Stevenson High School, 1 Stevenson Dr, Lincolnshire, IL 60069

**March 8**, 9 a.m. to 3 p.m.  
SEDOL (Special Education District of Lake County) Foundation  
Resource Fair  
Laremont School, 17934 Gages Lake Road, Gages Lake, IL 60030

**March 21**, noon to 1 p.m. (online)  
Parent University Class 3: "Our Tool Box is Full – What Tool Do I Use When?"

**April 16**, 6 to 8 p.m.  
"Government Benefits"  
North DuPage Special Education Coop  
Peacock Middle School, 301 E. North Street, Itasca, IL 60143

**April 20**, noon to 4 p.m.  
Special Children's Recreation Resource Fair  
Mt. Greenwood Park, 3721 W. 111th St., Chicago, IL 60655

**April 23**, 6 to 8 p.m.  
The Future Begins Today Resource Fair  
Harper College, 1200 W. Algonquin Road, Palatine, IL 60067

For more information on these events and  
our complete calendar, [click here](#).



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