

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

2021-2022



**NJACP-JESPY Model
Inclusive Healthy
Community Project**

South Orange,
New Jersey

WHAT IS THE INCLUSIVE HEALTHY COMMUNITIES GRANT PROGRAM?



The Inclusive Healthy Communities Grant Program is an initiative-based program designed to provide funding opportunities to communities and organizations in New Jersey. This grant offers inclusive practices that support the health and well-being of individuals with disabilities in their communities. This grant is possible thanks to the combined effort of the Division of Disability Services and the Bloustein School of Planning and Public Policy at Rutgers University.

WHO IS INVOLVED?



The New Jersey Association of Community Providers (NJACP) is the leading Association of Community Providers in New Jersey and represents a dynamic community of diverse providers dedicated to advancing sustainable community-based services and supports that enrich lives and build futures for people with intellectual, developmental, and other disabilities across the state. NJACP began work with JESPY House on the IHC grant in January of 2021.



ADVANCING INDEPENDENCE FOR ADULTS WITH DISABILITIES

JESPY House is a nonprofit organization that enables adults with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (I/DD) to achieve their full potential and lead independent lives. Their philosophy promotes choice, self-direction, and independent community living for their clients. JESPY House has been a member of NJACP for years, working together to improve services for people with disabilities within the South Orange community.



SRS Strategic Associates is a consultant that assists organizations that serve individuals with disabilities and special needs to become and remain sustainable.

WHERE WE ARE NOW

NJACP-JESPY MODEL INCLUSIVE HEALTHY COMMUNITY PROJECT

The NJACP-JESPY Model Inclusive Healthy Community (IHC) (NJACP-JESPY TEAM) Project is focused on community accessibility and enhanced community inclusion. A partnership among the New Jersey Association of Community Providers (NJACP), JESPY House, and SRS Strategic Associates, the Model was made possible by a grant from the New Jersey Department of Human Services, Division of Disability Services (DDS).

The NJACP-JESPY Model was developed by and for adults with intellectual and/or developmental disabilities (IDD), though the model is applicable for all people with disabilities. It is anchored in the inclusive, healthy community work of JESPY House in the Township of South Orange Village (SO).

South Orange is an ideal community for this project because of the years of cooperation of the local government and business community with JESPY clients and JESPY leadership. The town's motto, "Everybody Belongs Here," reinforces the community's commitment.

Since its inception in 1978, with limited resources, JESPY House stakeholders have worked toward creating a more inclusive community, particularly in the areas of the residential, day program, community-based supports, and employment opportunities. While progress has been made, SO participants still face significant barriers to participating in ordinary community life – barriers are physical, mobile, as well as social, such as a lack of inclusion in community events and the local decision-making process.

The Model now allows JESPY House, on behalf of the IDD Community, to heighten awareness about the need for additional advancements in inclusion and accessibility. One outcome of the NJACP-JESPY Project is the development of an action plan.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS

IN ITS FIRST YEAR, THE PROJECT TEAM:

- Formed a community coalition to garner input, share findings, and collaborate to elicit changes in the SO village community. Coalition members include JESPY clients (SO residents), JESPY board members, local SO business owners, as well as members of SO Township, the planning board, and village committees.
- Undertook assessments regarding shopping, mobility, and community accessibility for people with disabilities. Small groups composed of JESPY House clients and staff and NJACP staff conducted 16 Inclusive Healthy Communities (IHC) survey assessments, using the NCHPAD Community Health Inclusion Index (CHII) as the survey tool. (<https://www.nchpad.org/1273/6358/Community~Health~Inclusion~Index>)

The assessments were designed to be observational and anecdotal, not a scientific study. The results and findings are based on the opinions of specific individuals at specific points in time when the assessment was conducted. The findings are meant to be informative and actionable, not a disparagement or judgment of SO or any of the community locations that are mentioned in this report.

The results of the assessments indicate several positive findings, such as the presence of accessible local shopping locations, and negative findings, such as mobility and walkability difficulties caused by uneven surfaces and construction areas. Participants in the assessment found that sidewalks were the most significant concern, especially in the Sloan Street/Train Station corridor.



Photo on left: JESPY client Roger B. is employed as a copywriter and social media content creator at Impact Consulting Enterprises.

Photo on right: JESPY client Jeanine P. is employed as a cashier and in customer service at Walgreens.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED FOR GREATER INCLUSION

The NJACP-JESPY Model partners have developed the following recommendations related to pedestrian mobility, opportunities for increased visibility of IDD individuals, and establishing a significant impact on local policies and practices by including persons with disabilities in decision making:

- Make improvements to crosswalks, walkways, and bus stops related to physical accessibility, shelter, and other weather/environmental protection.
- Need to increase local community participation through self-advocacy and influence on decision making. JESPY clients will pursue becoming members of SO committees such as the Shade Tree Commission and the Health and Public Safety Committee.
- Add other stakeholder members to the Community Coalition including additional local government officials, local business owners, and local involved residents.
- Need for physical infrastructure improvements that enhance accessibility/walkability; environmental changes that place people with IDD on committees where they are visible and have a meaningful impact on policy/practice and community decision-making; and, continued adaptations to our model so it's applicable across New Jersey.



NJACP-JESPY TEAM COMMUNITY COALITION AND NEXT STEPS:

1. Disseminate Community Access Report.
2. Disseminate Community Access Executive Report to SO Board of Trustees, SO Downtown, Community Coalition, NJACP membership, and through social media.
3. The NJACP-JESPY TEAM will continue to engage additional partner entities to develop a sustainable community action plan.
4. The NJACP-JESPY TEAM is developing the sustainable SO Community Action Plan that will include:
 - Determining which local government committees to target for client participation
 - Making requests to be on committees or participate in a meaningful way
 - Reaching out to members of the SO Board of Trustees
 - Continuing involvement in the Shade Tree Commission and SO Orange Downtown
 - Providing local community education on disability/inclusion awareness
 - Establish a relationship with the SO ADA coordination officials
 - Continuous utilization of social marketing for IHC messaging
5. Continue the SO IHC Engagement Program: Engage community leaders and other community members. We will have a continued presence at community events and include inclusive IHC education/awareness.
6. Adapt model to create change in multiple NJ communities - present the 1st cycle accomplishments to IDD service providers.

For more information about the NJACP-JESPY MODEL INCLUSIVE HEALTHY COMMUNITIES PROJECT, SOUTH ORANGE, NEW JERSEY, please contact Colleen Klepser at cklepser@njacp.org or Audrey Winkler at awinkler@jespy.org.

