

WELCOME TO OUR PRESENTATION

Office of the Ombudsman for Individuals
with Intellectual or Developmental
Disabilities and Their Families



WHO WE ARE LEADERSHIP TEAM

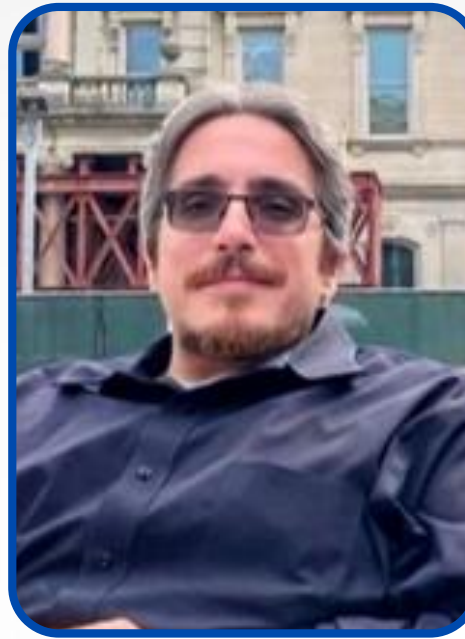


Lisa Montalbano, **Ombudsman**



Christine Bakter, **Deputy Director**

REINTRODUCING THE PROFESSIONAL OFFICE TEAM



Charles Dodge – **Outreach Operations Manager** (2022)

Maintains our website and supports outreach events, supports Office's operational needs, and provides information & referrals for select topics.



Suhani Purohit – **Intake Operations Coordinator** (2023)

Primary intake staff person, offers frontline information & referrals. Supports casework.



Amanda Slaughter LSW – **Consituent Relations Manager** (2022)

Works with individuals/families on complex casework, liaises with certain DHS divisions, manages social media and data quality.

REINTRODUCING THE **PROFESSIONAL** **OFFICE TEAM**



Leah Huges – **Intern** (2025)
Rutgers University,

Major in Public Policy,
supporting demographic
data collection



Hanna Golub – **Intern** (2026
Summer)
Boston University

Major in Political
Science, supporting in
legislative and policy
research

1

Operations Leadership assumed under the Deputy Director (January 20 – June 4, 2026).

2

Casework handoff from the former Ombudsman to the team was substantial (80 active cases).

3

Outreach activities were suspended for 60 days to divert the resources to casework and intake.

4

Social media posting frequency was intentionally reduced.

5

New casework was limited to CSOC, DDD and transition related issues, with imminent peril situation prioritized.

OMBUDSMAN LEADERSHIP GAP

JANUARY - MAY 2026

The Team Made it Work!

3 KEY FUNCTIONS

OF OUR OFFICE

1

Resource Guidance – Advising, Supporting, Troubleshooting

- **Information & Referral**
- **Options Counseling**
- **Communications Coaching**
- **Advocacy**
- **Meeting Support**

2

Improve systems.

3

Ensure people who are affected are included in policy and discussion.

OUR SERVICE TO

INDIVIDUALS AND FAMILIES

1

Listen and learn.

2

Ask how they'd like our office to assist.

3

We're proactive with our actions. High % of callers seek assistance with implementing aspects of care (connecting dots).

4

With permission, we seek answers and advocate for implementation of needed services.

WE HAVE REGULAR COMMUNICATION WITH



DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES (DHS)
DIVISION OF DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES (DDD) + OTHER DIVISIONS



DEPARTMENT OF CHILDREN AND FAMILIES (DCF)
CHILDREN'S SYSTEM OF CARE (CSOC)



NEW JERSEY COUNCIL ON DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES (NJCDD)



DISABILITY RIGHTS NEW JERSEY



NEW JERSEY LEGISLATURE

Now What?

SYSTEMIC IMPROVEMENTS!

A FOCUS ON OUR DATA

WHAT DO WE DO WITH ALL THIS INFORMATION?

- Look at the trends, frequency, data, numbers of occurrence.
- Is it a systemic issue? Our statute says this:

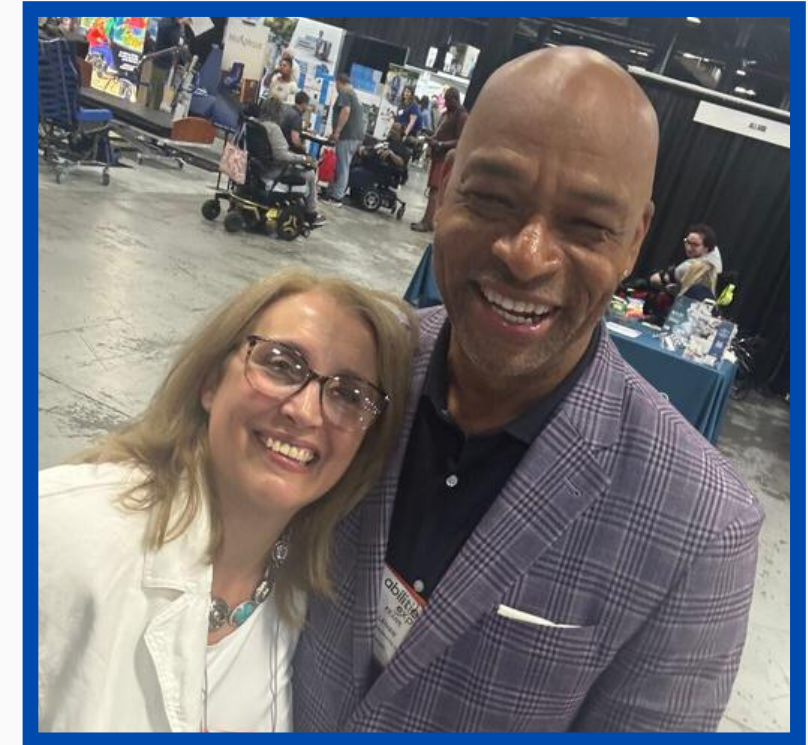
"Identify any patterns of complaints that emerge regarding rights and services of individuals with intellectual or developmental disabilities, and to recommend strategies for improvement to the Division of Children's System of Care and the Division of Developmental Disabilities or the Department of Children and Families and the Department of Human Services"

- We are developing positive working relationships and have standing meetings of regular frequency with these divisions to help resolve immediate issues and discuss systemic issues.

WHY ARE WE **MEETING SO OFTEN?**



Assist the divisions with developing improvement plans and revisit action items.



Christine with NJCDD Youth Leadership and People First Coordinator , 2026

To help maintain consistency of services. We ALSO communicate what works well in our state and ways of preserving the good systems.



All Staff at Abilities Expo, 2026

WHAT ARE WE HEARING & SEEING FROM DISCUSSIONS (The Good)

1

More involvement, communication from state agencies in support processes.

2

Providers finding hiring the right person takes less time now than in the past six years.

3

Families feel seen, heard and assisted by our office.



Staff at the Abilities Expo, 2026

WHAT NEEDS IMPROVEMENT

TOP 3 AREAS SEEN IN LISA'S FIRST 90 DAYS



CJAP Justice Summit, 2026

Transparency of Disability Services

- More frequent/detailed info has to be delivered to parent/guardian
- From Providers and State agencies

Medicaid Benefit Assistance

- Termination/Reinstatement
- Renewals
- Lack of Communication



SCHI School Visit, 2026

Short/Long-Term Residential Services for People with Significant Medical or Behavioral Challenges (Families in Crisis)

As evidenced by:

- Long wait periods
- Increased severity of behavior/medical care
- Parents and family stress



1

Scheduled standing monthly meetings with both DHS (DDD) & DCF (CSOC) leadership to communicate needs, issues and trends.

2

Extended our efforts to assist with developing and implementing plans to improve outcomes.

3

Visiting programs and residential services across the state.

4

Assisting individuals/families through processes of acquiring services that more than adequately meet their and their family's needs.

5

Office participation in working groups with NJ Council on Developmental Disabilities (NJCDD).

LET'S DISCUSS
**TURNING THIS
AROUND**

COLLABORATION IS IMPORTANT **INDIVIDUALS AND FAMILIES ARE THE KEY**

Our Plan:

Schedule listening sessions for individuals and families to communicate their needs and concerns.

- **We Will Be Planning:** September
- **We Will Begin Implementing:** Q1 2027



2025 ANNUAL REPORT

Our team will be sharing data that reflected the work performed by the former Ombudsman and office staff during 2025.

This will include:

- Numbers of inquiry types
- Case status
- Assistive actions performed by staff

Expect this communication during the Fall of 2026.



Christine at the Catastrophic Illness Fund Town Hall Meeting, 2026

Lisa at the Alternatives Inc. Group Home, 2026



CONTACT

The Ombudsman's Office for Advocacy,
Support & Positive Change

VISIT US

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