

May 15, 2026

Rooted in Care: Resources for Every Child, Every Ability

2026 NJ CPAC Annual Conference



Hosted by



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NJ CPAC Welcomes You

Dear Conference Attendees,

On behalf of the Executive Board, I am delighted to welcome you to the New Jersey Child Placement Advisory Council's (NJ CPAC) Annual Conference, *Rooted in Care: Resources for Every Child, Every Ability*. In partnership with **embrella**, we are proud to convene a diverse group of professionals, advocates and community members dedicated to improving outcomes for children and families across New Jersey.

For those who may be new to our community, NJ CPAC is a statewide council comprised of Child Placement Review (CPR) board members – citizen volunteers who review cases of children placed outside their homes and make recommendations to the Court to promote their safety, stability, and well-being. These reviews are completed by the CPR Board within the first 60 days of a child's removal from the home – a critical and often traumatic period in the child's life. Recruited through the New Jersey Courts in all 21 counties, these volunteers work in partnership with the Courts to help ensure that each child's needs remain at the forefront of decision-making. To learn more, please visit www.njcpac.org.

Established in 1978 under the Child Placement Review Act, NJ CPAC operates under the auspices of the New Jersey Administrative Office of the Courts (AOC). Our mission is to foster collaboration among the courts, social services and the communities we serve.

In addition to hosting this annual conference, NJ CPAC prepares and submits an Annual Report to the Legislature, the Governor and the Courts, providing critical insights into policies affecting children in placement.

Today's program is designed to inform, engage and inspire. You will hear from leaders across the legal, social service and community sectors, offering perspectives on best practices, policy developments and collaborative approaches that support children of all abilities. We hope this conference provides you with practical insights, meaningful connections and renewed energy for the important work you do.

Thank you for your dedication and for being part of this important gathering. Together, we can continue to make a meaningful difference in the lives of New Jersey's children, families and communities.

Warm regards,

Eunice Salton
Chair, NJ CPAC
NJCPAC.MBX@NJcourts.GOV



Agenda

8:00 A.M. – 9:00 A.M.

Check-in and Continental Breakfast

9:00 A.M. – 9:15 A.M.

Opening Remarks

Presented by: NJ CPAC, embrella

9:15 A.M. – 9:45 A.M.

Opening Activity with embrella

9:45 A.M. – 11:45 A.M.

Workshop 1: *Advancing Autism-Friendly Practices in Law Enforcement and the Courts*

Presented by: Autism New Jersey

11:45 A.M. – 1:00 P.M.

Lunch

1:00 P.M. – 3:00 P.M.

Workshop 2: *From First Contact to Lasting Impact: Strengthening Police and Mental Health Relationships for our Children*

Presented by: Care Plus NJ

3:00 P.M.

Closing Remarks

Presented by: NJ CPAC, embrella

About **embrella**



Founded in 1972 and incorporated in 1974, **embrella**, formerly Foster and Adoptive Family Services, serves foster, adoptive and kinship parents in communities throughout NJ. We provide services, support and training opportunities for foster, adoptive and kinship families. We help foster children by offering programs to support them from childhood to young adulthood.



About Your Co-Hosts, embrella



Corissa Kazar **Director of Family Support** **embrella**

Corissa Kazar is a seasoned professional serving as the Director of Family Support at embrella. With a career spanning over a decade in child welfare, Corissa has dedicated herself to advocating for, supporting, and educating families, state

workers, and external agencies throughout New Jersey.

Prior to her role at embrella, Corissa contributed significantly to New Jersey's Division of Child Protection and Permanency (CP&P), where she played a pivotal role in safeguarding the well-being of vulnerable children and families.

Corissa is actively involved in various professional affiliations, including the Child Welfare League of America and the New Jersey Task Force on Child Abuse & Neglect's Family Support and Child Wellbeing Committee. She is also involved in diversity, equity, and belonging initiatives at embrella and serves as a Public Policy member for the organization. In this capacity, she leverages her extensive knowledge to inform policy decisions and drive meaningful change in child welfare.

About Your Co-Hosts, embrella



Chanel Dupree Manager, Family Support embrella

Chanel is a Family Support Manager at embrella. Chanel began her career working for corporate America at a Fortune 500 company, which started her on a path to working with children and families. She has spent more than 15

years working with vulnerable children and families, which allowed her to gain a wealth of knowledge regarding the Children's System of Care.

Chanel has worked as a caseworker and a counselor who has served as a family advocate and educator. In addition, she volunteered as a Court Appointed Special Advocate in both Essex and Bergen counties, a Behavioral Assistant for Hudson County, and even worked for CP&P.

She is a certified trainer for Suicide Prevention, Connection Matters, ACEs, NJ Victims Academy, Drug and Alcohol Counseling, and Emergency Medical Services. Chanel is also an unofficial/official foster child who happens to be a testament to the journey of teen parenthood and is a parent of a deaf individual.

Chanel's goal is to make sure individuals feel supported when they need it. She believes the best way to see change is through education, advocacy, and support.

Workshop 1: Autism New Jersey

Advancing Autism-Friendly Practices in Law Enforcement and the Courts

Doreen A. Yanik, Esq., Law Enforcement Initiative Director,
Autism New Jersey

Jon Gottlieb, Esq., Helpline and Family Advocacy Director,
Autism New Jersey

Autism New Jersey will offer an overview of the first-of-its-kind Law Enforcement Initiative designed to encourage law enforcement adoption of autism-friendly practices. This multi-phase initiative operates at the municipal, county and state levels and ultimately seeks to effect statewide policy to ensure safe and positive interactions between law enforcement and the autism community. An initiative progress review will be discussed acknowledging the work of our assembled Law Enforcement Advisory Committee with significant input from the autism community. Specific autism-friendly practices will be highlighted with physical items provided to the audience for review. Vignettes will be presented to the audience for discussion on what best practices can be deployed in a given scenario.

The presentation will also include an in-depth exploration of judicial best practices for individuals with autism in the courtroom, with a special attention to family court issues. Participants will walk away with an understanding of the many considerations that judges, lawyers, and resource parents should keep in mind when determining the best interests of an autistic child and will learn how to advocate for and implement meaningful accommodations for autistic litigants.

Workshop 2: Care Plus NJ

From first contact to Lasting Impact: Strengthening Police and Mental Health Relationships for our Children

Jen Velten, Senior Director of Trauma Services, Center for Trauma Services, Care Plus, Inc.

Sheriff's Officer John Johnson, Patrol Division, Bergen County CIT NJ Law Enforcement Coordinator

At times it may seem that the NJ Children's System of Care and our criminal justice system are at odds with one another or at the very least not working hand in hand with one another. Recent directives and guidance from the Attorney General's office in conjunction with care and dedication from law enforcement officers and their mental health partners are aiming to turn this around within our communities.

Care Plus NJ and the Bergen County Sheriff's Office will demonstrate how Crisis Intervention Team (CIT) training with New Jersey Law Enforcement can make a difference for children who may be at-risk, youth and adults with mental illnesses, their family members, and police officers. Building community partnerships is the key to helping our youth and families. We will discuss what makes CIT work, how law enforcement and mental health partner with Children's Mobile Response and Stabilization Services, ARRIVE Together program and various other initiatives. At the crux of our healing is community engagement. Join us to continue this important discussion and partnership.

Speakers



Doreen A. Yanik, Esq.

Law Enforcement Initiative Director
Autism New Jersey

Doreen Yanik serves as the Director of Autism New Jersey's Law Enforcement Initiative which seeks to raise autism awareness and the adoption of autism-friendly practices by law

enforcement agencies statewide to ensure safe and positive interactions. She brought to this initiative 28 years of law enforcement experience and more than 34 years of legal experience.

Doreen retired from the Union County Prosecutor's Office where she served as a front-line assistant prosecutor and was promoted to numerous leadership positions within that Office. Throughout her years of law enforcement experience, Doreen has coordinated various initiatives designed to bridge gaps between law enforcement, the criminal justice system, and underserved and vulnerable communities.

Doreen served on Chief Justice Rabner's Interbranch Advisory Committee on Mental Health Issues and the Union County Human Relations Commission and was appointed to the Union County Mental Health Board.

One of her proudest accomplishments was introducing statewide trainings on safe and effective law enforcement interaction with the autism community where nearly 1,000 police officers were trained. She also was successful in adding autism training to the police recruit curriculum at the John Stamler Police Academy and coordinating local law enforcement and first responder mental health and autism trainings.

Speakers



Jon Gottlieb, Esq.

Helpline and Family Advocacy Director
Autism New Jersey

Jon Gottlieb, Esq. is the Helpline and Family Advocacy Director at Autism New Jersey, where he leads the 800.4.AUTISM Helpline team, authors

website content, delivers trainings, and solves complex problems for individuals, families, and the professionals that support them.

Before joining Autism New Jersey, Jon built a private law practice dedicated to helping parents of children with disabilities. His background in the law and his familiarity with the needs of the autism community enable him to explain sophisticated legal concepts in easy-to-understand ways.

Jon earned his law degree from Georgetown University and is admitted to the New York State Bar.



Speakers



Jen Velten, MA, LPC, ACS, CCTP, DRCC, CFRC

Senior Director of Trauma Services,
Center for Trauma Services, Care Plus,
Inc.

Jen Velten graduated John Jay College of Criminal Justice in 2015 with an MA in Forensic Mental Health Counseling and became a Licensed

Professional Counselor in 2019. She is licensed in the State of New Jersey with 11 years of experience working with youth, families, trauma survivors and first responders in the mental health field.

Jen has extensive training on trauma treatment modalities. She has been trained in Prepare/Enrich, TF-CBT, Somatic Experiencing, ARC, and most recently became an EMDR consultant. Jen is a trained trauma informed specialist and is certified in PFA and YMHFA. Jen is additionally a graduate of Crisis Intervention Training in Bergen County. Jen has focused her expertise on helping children and adults to overcome complex trauma experiences as well as work with the LGBTQ+ community.

Jen is the Coordinator for the Bergen County Traumatic Loss Coalition (TLC), a member of the Bergen County Crisis Negotiation Team, and a Disaster Response Crisis Counselor. Jen is a professional trainer and provides seminars and consultation services on vital mental health topics to help improve social and emotional functioning. Jen was additionally an adjunct professor of Social Psychology for Ramapo College of New Jersey for 4 years.

Speakers



Sheriff's Officer John Johnson

Patrol Division, Bergen County CIT NJ
Law Enforcement Coordinator

John Johnson is a highly adaptable and diverse professional. With a robust background as a Sheriff's Officer at Bergen County Sheriff's Office, he brings over 8 years of experience in the field, specializing in emergency response,

conflict resolution, and critical thinking. In February 2024, John graduated from the FBI Hazardous Devices School and achieved his certification as a Public Safety Bomb Technician with the Bergen County Bomb Squad. In August of 2022, John successfully graduated from the FEMA's Center for Domestic Preparedness and obtained his Hazmat Technician Certification. In June of 2019, John graduated from the Bergen County Law and Public Safety Institute where he obtained his Basic Law Enforcement Certification and his New Jersey Fire Fighter Certification in 2009. John also previously attended St. Peter's University where he studied Criminal Justice and Biology.

Throughout John's recent roles, he has honed his skills in effectively managing high-stress situations and resolving conflicts diplomatically. In 2022, he was awarded CIT-NJ, Center of Excellence, Law Enforcement Officer of the Year for actions taken when he responded to an individual in crisis with a knife. In that same year John also received a Life Saving Award for actions taken at the scene of a medical emergency. These experiences have equipped John with a profound understanding of law enforcement's challenges and demands. His new role as the Bergen County CIT Law Enforcement Coordinator has enabled him to significantly contribute to the advancement of how Law Enforcement Officers respond to individuals in crisis while fostering community trust, safety and security.



Thank you for joining us at the **2026 NJ CPAC Annual Conference**. Have a wonderful summer, and we can't wait to see you again next year!"