

Farewell to Denise Balderas, ABLE NM Coordinator

As I transition my work and focus back to education with New Mexico, it has been an honor and a privilege to work alongside each of you and for you as the ABLE NM Coordinator. I look forward to our continued work together as the Professional Development School (PDS) Clinical Residency Director for our rural schools and communities. I have been blessed to have the opportunity to serve our rural communities by bringing wonderful professionals and friends, which are all of you, to help them with resources and important information that impacts their daily lives.

I will be working within New Mexico Highlands University to continue serving our communities on a much deeper and larger scale. I now have the opportunity to seek my PhD in education. As Dr. Seuss says, "Oh, the places you'll go!"

I am so grateful to all of you for working with me and every day I am humbled by your kind words of support, encouragement, and love. I will be reaching out to all of you with my new contact information so we can continue our work together.

I have also included the article that New Mexico Highlands University has shared about the great work I was able to accomplish while at the New State Treasurer's Office: <https://www.nmhu.edu/attorney-general-hector-balderas-and-denise-balderas-give-back-to-highlands/>

*With Much Love
and Many, Many
Blessings,
Denise V
Balderas ✚*



Advocate for the ABLE Age Adjustment Act (S. 651/H.R. 1814)

*By ABLE National
Resource Center*

What is the ABLE Age Adjustment Act?

The ABLE Age Adjustment Act (S. 651/H.R. 1814) would amend Section 529A(e) of the Internal Revenue Code to increase the eligibility threshold for ABLE accounts for onset of disability from prior to age 26 to prior to age 46. ABLE (Achieving a Better Life Experience) accounts are tax-advantaged accounts that are designed to enable individuals with disabilities to save and pay for qualified disability expenses.

Previously introduced in the 114th and 115th Congresses, the bipartisan ABLE Age Adjustment Act has been reintroduced in the 116th Congress by Senators Bob Casey (D-PA), Jerry Moran (R-KS), Chris Van Hollen (D-MD), and Pat Roberts (R-KS). A House version was also recently reintroduced

(continued on page 2)

(continued from page 1)

by Representatives Tony Cardenas (D-CA) and Cathy McMorris-Rodgers (R-WA).

Why is an increase in the age of eligibility necessary?

As currently written, the existing ABLE Act prevents otherwise-eligible individuals with disabilities (many of whom spent years advocating for the Act) from realizing the benefits of ABLE accounts. By passing the ABLE Age Adjustment Act, more than 14 million people with disabilities would be allowed to open ABLE accounts, nearly doubling the currently eligible population.

Passing this critical legislation will increase the financial security of people across the spectrum of disabilities without jeopardizing their much-needed public benefits.

Why is it important that the ABLE Age Adjustment Act be passed this Congress?

There are now over 40 state ABLE programs that empower individuals with disabilities, either in their own states or nationwide, to achieve and maintain health, independence and quality of life. However, the long-term sustainability,

availability, and affordability of these programs are in doubt without this expansion of eligibility. Data from the National Association of State Treasurers (NAST) in 2017 showed that passage of the ABLE Age Adjustment Act is critical for the sustainability of ABLE programs. According to the NAST's Sustainability Report, the "age increase legislation...will be paramount to achieving ABLE sustainability..."

How can you help?

Advocates should reach out to each of their two U.S. Senators and their member of the U.S. House of Representatives and urge them to cosponsor the ABLE Age Adjustment Act, S. 651 in the Senate, and H.R. 1814 in the House. Members of Congress need to hear that it is imperative that the legislation be enacted immediately both to bolster the national viability of state ABLE programs and to dramatically expand the reach and benefit of ABLE accounts to individuals who experience disability for the first time before the age of 46.

The Honorable Martin Heinrich, U.S. Senator

303 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

(202) 224-5521

<https://www.heinrich.senate.gov/contact>

The Honorable Ben Ray Luján, U.S. Senator

B40C Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510
(202) 224-6621
<https://www.lujan.senate.gov>


The Honorable Debra Haaland, 1st Congressional District

1421 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515
(202) 225-6316
<https://haaland.house.gov/contact>

The Honorable Yvette Herrell, 2nd Congressional District

1305 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515
(202) 225-2365
<https://herrell.house.gov/contact>

The Honorable Teresa Leger Fernandez, 3rd Congressional District

1432 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515
(202) 225-6190
<https://fernandez.house.gov/contact> 

ABLE New Mexico Presentation Available

Do you know a person or an organization who would be interested in an ABLE New Mexico presentation? For more information, contact:

Heather Benavidez at (505) 639-3525 or heather.benavidez@state.nm.us

ABLE National Resource Center Presents: “IRS Final ABLE Regulations and Tax Incentives: Leveraging Your ABLE Savings”

The Internal Revenue Service (IRS) published the final regulations for the ABLE Act in the federal register under Section 529a of the IRS code in November 2020. Join ABLE NRC on Thursday, February 25, 2021, at 2:00 pm ET to learn how the regulations provide guidance to ABLE plans regarding ABLE, and how you may maximize your ABLE savings and qualify for tax credits which may result in tax savings. Join the ABLE National Resource Center and the IRS for timely information.

- Review key IRS regulations regarding ABLE accounts
- Utilize tax incentives to build your ABLE savings
- Learn more about free-tax filing options.

Webinar presenters:

- Don Dill, IRS Senior Tax Analyst with SPEC Headquarters (who will provide an introduction and overview)
- Miranda Kennedy, Director, ABLE NRC
- Laurie Schaller, Manager, Financial Empowerment with National Disability Institute +

<https://www.ablenrc.org/irs-final-able-regulations-leveraging-your-able-savings/>



THE ARC OF NEW MEXICO HIGHER EDUCATION SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM

 **DEADLINE MARCH 1**
www.arcnm.org

<https://www.arcnm.org/the-arc-new-mexico-higher-education-scholarship-program/>



“
Thank you to the scholarship committee.
I’m really enjoying college!”

EZRA SHELHAV
2020–2021 Scholarship Awardee

APPLY FOR THE CONTINUING EDUCATION SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM TODAY!
www.arcnm.org

 **The Arc**
For people with intellectual and developmental disabilities

Parents Reaching Out Workshops for Families

Learn about resources for your child and connect with other families. All families are welcome! All workshops are no cost to families and held via Zoom. Preregistration is required. Please contact us if you need help registering, accommodations or Spanish-language interpretation. If you are unable to attend and would like access to a recording of a workshop, please email jdonelli@parentsreachingout.org.

Keeping it all Together— Organizing Your Child’s Records

Tuesday, February 23, 10:00 am-11:30 am

Learn about recordkeeping for your child’s healthcare and education information. Learn how to organize and utilize these documents in advocating for your child.

[Click here to register.](#)

Grupo de Apoyo*

Miércoles, 24 Febrero, 10:00 am-11:30 am

En este grupo encontrarán un ambiente amigable y seguro donde podrán compartir sus preocupaciones y logros. Topic: Las 11 Consideraciones para los Estudiantes con Autismo. *no ser grabado

[Haga clic para registrarse.](#)

Making Connections— Support Group*

Wednesday, February 24, 11:00 am-12:30 pm

Share your experiences parenting your child or grandchild with disabilities and connect with other parents.

*not recorded

[Click here to register.](#)

Special Education Clinic with DRNM

Thursday, February 25, 1:00 pm-3:00 pm

Learn about advocacy, communication strategies, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), how to navigate federal regulations, and the Individualized Education Program (IEP) process and requirements.

This workshop is presented in partnership with Disability Rights New Mexico (DRNM).

[Click here to register.](#)

Parents Reaching Out

2501 Yale Boulevard SE,
Suite 200

Albuquerque, NM 87106
(505) 247-0192

<https://parentsreachingout.org/>



Free Virtual Legal Clinics Throughout 2021

The Second Judicial District Court’s Pro Bono Committee will host monthly Legal TeleClinics throughout the year 2021.

These clinics will allow individuals who cannot afford to hire attorneys to get advice on a wide range of legal matters, including:

- Family law
- Landlord/tenant and other housing issues
- Public benefits
- Employment
- Consumer law
- Criminal record expungement
- Real ID/name change
- Wills, estate, and probate
- Property/real estate
- Immigration
- Bankruptcy
- Contracts


“The global pandemic has changed the way courts operate—causing most hearings to be held virtually—but it hasn’t stopped people from having to deal with legal issues. It has, however, made it more difficult for many people to get professional assistance with those issues,” said Judge Jane Levy, co-chair for the Second Judicial District Court’s Pro Bono Committee. “That is

(continued on page 5)

(continued from page 4)

why the committee adopted the TeleClinic model last year, and we are continuing it this year.”

The clinics, scheduled for the first Thursday of each month starting February 4, will allow individuals to speak with attorneys about their specific legal issues. There will be no charge for these consultations. The Volunteer Attorney Program of New Mexico Legal Aid has recruited attorneys who have agreed to donate their time to staff the clinics.

Anyone wishing to attend one of the legal clinics can request a registration form by sending an email to audreym@nmlegalaid.org or calling (505) 521-6129. 

ABLE on YouTube

“Saving for the Future of Your Child with a Disability”
by ABLE New Mexico
<https://youtu.be/5KzieaoyKSQ>

New Mexico ABLE Online Demo

With Ronn Yaish



Special Needs

Ronn Yaish, “New Mexico ABLE Online Demonstration”

<https://youtu.be/kcDx0en7khc>

You can email Ronn at info@ABLEreport.com

Elevate the Spectrum Asks for Support of House Bill 222, the Special Education Ombudsman Act


Elevate the Spectrum joins the New Mexico Developmental Disabilities Planning Council (NMDDPC), Disability Rights New Mexico (DRNM), and other advocacy groups in asking members of the community to call their legislators in support of HB 222: Special Education Ombudsman Act.

The Special Education Ombud Act establishes the Office of the State Special Education Ombud within the NMDDPC. The Act requires the Ombud to ensure that its staff, contractors, and volunteers are trained and certified to provide Ombud services. The Act requires schools to notify students of the Ombud and authorizes the Ombud to take corrective action when schools do not work with the Ombud to address special education concerns.

“It’s especially important to stress that we also need funding to support HB 222,” said Elevate the Spectrum’s Policy Chair, Joel Davis. “If you have a legislator that is on



the House Appropriations and Finance Committee (HAFC) or the Senate Finance Committee (SFC), please contact them as soon as possible.” [Click here to view the proposed legislation.](#)

Elevate the Spectrum is a 501(c)3 dedicated to the empowerment of individuals on the autism spectrum and their families through inclusion, advocacy, and friendship. In addition to legislative initiatives, the group has kept families engaged throughout the COVID-19 pandemic through safe, socially distant activities including drive-in movie nights and online meetings for self advocates, parents, and siblings. For more information, please visit <https://elevatethespectrum.org/>. 

**ABLE New Mexico
Now Has 681
Active Accounts.
Go, New Mexico!**

