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From The Desk Of

Roberta Kestenbaum



These past few months have been stressful and unsettling - first with the coronavirus pandemic and quarantine and then followed by the brutal murder of George Floyd that has devastated us and sparked protests around the world. We abhor the racism and violence against people of color. The Spina Bifida Resource Network stands in solidarity with those who fight for change, social justice, economic opportunity and equality for all, regardless of race, ethnicity, disability, gender, sexual orientation or religion. It is essential for all of us, no matter the color of our skin, to fight against racism and other forms of inequality in our society.

This issue of the Empowerment Zone will focus on these events, providing COVID-19 resources, as well as information and thought pieces to educate ourselves about systemic racism and how we can work towards change and a society where everyone is treated equally and fairly.

It's the ADA's 30th Anniversary!

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) was signed into law on July 26, 1990. This landmark legislation has helped increase access and opportunity for people with disabilities in workplaces and communities. Celebrate the 30th anniversary!

ADA30 
Americans with Disabilities Act
Celebrate the ADA! July 26, 2020

Understanding Systemic Racism and How We Can Advocate for Change

These past few months have been stressful and unsettling – first with the coronavirus pandemic and quarantine and then followed by the brutal murder of George Floyd that has devastated us and sparked protests around the world. We abhor the racism and violence against people of color. The Spina Bifida Resource Network stands in solidarity with those who fight for change, social justice, economic opportunity and equality for all, regardless of race, ethnicity, disability, gender, sexual orientation or religion. We can and should educate ourselves about systemic racism, white privilege, intersectionality and how we can advocate for equality and justice. It is essential for all of us, no matter the color of our skin, to fight against racism and other forms of inequality in our society. Below we provide resources to help us on this journey.

WHAT IS SYSTEMIC RACISM AND WHITE PRIVILEGE?

“Racism that infects the very structure of our society is called systemic racism...it is about everyday decisions made by people who may not even think of themselves as racist.” ([7 Ways We Know Systemic Racism is Real](#))

- > [What is systemic racism? Here's what it means and how you can help dismantle it](#)
- > [Talking About Race](#)
- > [Eight Lessons for Talking about Race, Racism & Social Justice](#)
- > [What is Police Violence? A plain language booklet about anti-Black racism, police violence, and what you can do to stop it](#)

“White privilege doesn’t mean all white people live charmed lives. It simply means that the color of your skin is not one of the reasons you may experience personal or professional hurdles.” ([6 Things White People Say that Highlight their Privilege](#))

INTERSECTIONALITY: HOW ARE RACISM AND ABLEISM INTERTWINED?

Disability advocates point out that race needs to be a part of the disability dialogue:

“In the disability community, we also need to talk about and understand intersectionality, which is a person who is affected by a number of discriminations and disadvantages. Intersectionality takes into account people’s overlapping identities and experiences in order to understand the complexity of the prejudices they face. So, for example, a black person with a developmental disability will face even greater discrimination and devaluation.” ([We Need To Talk About Anti-Racism and Disability](#))

Understanding Systemic Racism . . . (continued)

“As a society, we do a poor job of talking about, never mind understanding, intersectional oppressions, particularly the intersectional oppressions of racism and disability. Cases of discrimination and abuse against people with disabilities often receive more media attention if the victim is white—for instance, the [Ethan Saylor case](#) or [Tracy Latimer case](#). However, when the victim is Black or another race, disability often falls by the wayside. For instance, though the case of Freddie Gray in Baltimore received massive media attention in the early summer, it was rarely mentioned that [Gray was disabled](#) due to lead poisoning as a child.” ([At the Intersection of White Privilege and Disability](#))

From a thought piece on police violence: “While the passage of the [ADA](#) in 1990 enabled many disabled people’s access to education, transportation, employment and various other services, it did not eliminate state violence against disabled people who were multiply marginalized. Today, nearly [50 percent](#) of the individuals who are assaulted or killed by law enforcement are disabled, while constituting only [12.7 percent](#) of the population overall. [Moreover](#), Black and Brown people are grossly overrepresented victims of police violence, and the risk is escalated when the person is also disabled. By the age of 28, [55 percent](#) of Black men with disabilities are arrested by law enforcement, compared to their white counterparts’ 40 percent.” ([More Trainings Are Not the Answer to Police Violence Against Disabled People](#))

Amplify Black Disabled Voices: [8 Influential Black Disabled Men to Follow](#)

Amplify Black Disabled Voices: [8 Influential Black Disabled Women to Follow](#)

WHAT CAN WE DO TO ADVOCATE FOR CHANGE?

There are many different ways to join the movement, make your voice heard and work towards systemic change. You can take to the streets or you can help from home – there are many actions that will have an impact.

“Community organizing includes a myriad of processes including making phone calls to supporters, creating signs, planning, developing strategy, feeding other organizers by ordering food, writing letters to your legislator or trans women in prison, raising bailout funds for people in jail for not paying traffic tickets, setting up healing circles for other organizers and more.” ([7 Ways to Make Your Activism More Inclusive of Activists with Disabilities](#))

- > [From Donating to Volunteering: Here’s How to Support Black Lives Matter, Protesters and Equality Initiatives](#)
- > [26 Ways to be in the Struggle Beyond the Streets](#)
- > [How to Be an Activist When You're Unable to Attend Protests](#)

COVID-19 Resources: Some Financial Tips

Credit Card Debt - For many, the coronavirus pandemic has led to increased financial instability and some have relied on credit cards to get them through this difficult period. Although it can be helpful to meet basic needs, it can lead to debt that is difficult to get out from under. If you are impacted by credit card debt as a result of the pandemic, many credit card companies are willing to work with you if you are having difficulty making payments. The Consumer Financial Protection Bureau (CFPB) explains your options and gives advice on or how to request help from your credit card company:



[Credit Card Debt during Coronavirus: Relief Options and Tips.](#)

If you receive your Stimulus Payment as a prepaid debit card – If the IRS does not have your bank account info available to deposit your payment, they will send your payment as a prepaid VISA debit card, issued by MetaBank, through the mail. Be careful not to throw it away! The card will come in a plain envelope from “Money Network Cardholder Services” along with information about the card, how to activate the card, and information about fees. The Consumer Financial Protection Bureau answers common questions and provides tips on how to access your money with minimal fees: [How to use your Economic Impact Payment prepaid debit card without paying a fee.](#)

ABLE Accounts and Stimulus Payments - If you have received your Stimulus Payment and don't need to use it all right away, you may want to consider putting some or all of it in an Achieving a Better Life Experience (ABLE) account. If you receive SSI, the Stimulus Payment will not count towards the \$2,000 asset limit but only for the first 12 months. If you put it in an ABLE account, it will not be counted towards your asset limit after the 12 months, and you will be able to spend it when you wish. Find out more about ABLE accounts: [ABLE Accounts and Stimulus Payments.](#)

Check the National Disability Institute's [Financial Resilience Center](#) for additional resources regarding finances during the coronavirus pandemic.

Go to the SBRN's [Coronavirus Resources](#) page for more information including general information, national and New Jersey specific resources, and information related to spina bifida and disabilities.

SBRN's DERA Fund Helps People with Emergent Needs

SBRN has funding to help people living with spina bifida in New Jersey who have emergent needs during the pandemic. The SBRN Disaster/Emergency Rapid Assistance (DERA) Fund was initially started to provide emergency assistance to people with spina bifida following an event such as a natural disaster, fire, accident or other emergency. ***During this time of public health crisis, the fund is now focusing on emergent needs during the coronavirus pandemic.***

The DERA Fund helps individuals from NJ with acquiring medical supplies, covering non-reimbursable medical costs, assisting with adaptive equipment or other basic needs (e.g., food or other supplies) in response to an urgent need during the pandemic. There is a maximum award of \$300 and this is one-time only assistance. Due to limited funding, we may not be able to fund all requests.

[CLICK HERE FOR MORE INFORMATION](#)

A graphic for the DERA Fund. It features a yellow rectangular background. In the center is a grey rectangle containing the text "THE NJ DISASTER/EMERGENCY RAPID ASSISTANCE (DERA) FUND" in yellow and white capital letters. Below this, on the left, is a black rectangle containing a white-bordered box with the text "SUPPORT FOR EMERGENT NEEDS DURING THE PANDEMIC" in yellow capital letters. On the right, there is a maroon rectangle with white text: "Questions? Contact us at info@theSBRN.org or visit www.thesbrn.org". At the bottom right is the Spina Bifida Resource Network logo, which includes a stylized spine graphic and the text "SPINA BIFIDA RESOURCE NETWORK" in white capital letters on a dark red background.

THE NJ DISASTER/EMERGENCY
RAPID ASSISTANCE
(DERA) FUND

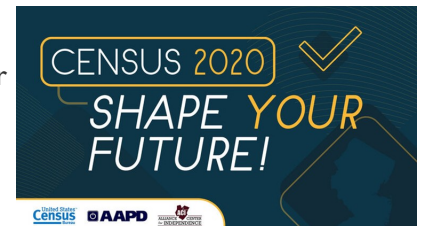
SUPPORT FOR
EMERGENT
NEEDS
DURING THE
PANDEMIC

Questions?
Contact us at
info@theSBRN.org
or visit www.thesbrn.org

SPINA BIFIDA
RESOURCE NETWORK

Don't Forget! Fill Out Your 2020 Census!

Have you filled out your 2020 Census yet? It's important that everyone be counted. Why? Census responses determine how federal funds are spent each year including many key programs that support and protect people with disabilities, including: Medicaid, Statewide Independent Living Councils, Education Grants to States for Students with Disabilities, Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Programs, Vocational Rehabilitation State Grants Programs and others.



You can fill out the census online <https://2020census.gov/> or call 844-330-2020.

People with disabilities have historically been under-represented. So be sure to fill yours out and be counted!

~ Afternoon Conversations ~



The Spina Bifida Resource Network

Afternoon Conversations

3 p.m. on Mondays
July 6, 13, 20 & 27
via Google Meet

Connect with other members of the disability community to share stories, laughs and resources, and take a virtual break from physical distancing.

Free. RSVP online:
tinyurl.com/sbrn-virtualchats7

SBRN's Virtual Chats continue in July:

Free. RSVP online: tinyurl.com/sbrn-virtualchats7

Open to all individuals with disabilities, even if you are not a member of SBRN.

Captioning is available through Google Meets.

Login information will be shared with those who register via email and will be posted on SBRN's Facebook Events page:
<https://www.facebook.com/pg/TheSBRN/events> prior to the event.