

Clearinghouse Connections

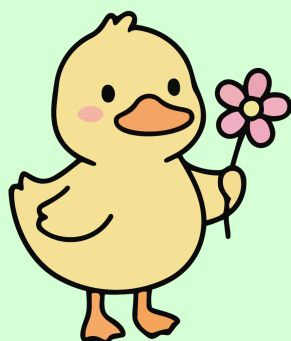
Your Quarterly E-Newsletter
Update From the New Jersey
Self-Help Clearinghouse



NJ SELF-HELP CLEARINGHOUSE
NJGROUPS.ORG



Creating Connections: Supporting Individuals with Developmental Disabilities



The days are getting warmer, the birds are chirping, and my eyes are starting to feel itchy... Spring is here! The NJ Self-Help Clearinghouse team wishes you and your loved ones a joyful and refreshing season. 🌸 And if you also get pretty bad allergies during this time of year, I'm right there with you!

March is also a time filled with many important awareness efforts, from autoimmune conditions to brain injury to self-injury and beyond. Each of these observances plays a crucial role in promoting visibility, education, and action. While we may not be able to give each one the focus it rightfully deserves in this newsletter, we recognize the value they all bring in strengthening our communities. The way we will show up for these awareness efforts is by sharing relevant support group information towards the bottom of this newsletter, so make sure to see this newsletter through until the end!

For this edition, we want to highlight **Developmental Disabilities Awareness Month**, a period dedicated to amplifying the unique experiences, contributions, and needs of individuals with developmental disabilities. It also serves as an important reminder of the value of inclusion, accessibility, and ensuring that individuals and their families have direct access to support within their communities.

What's Inside?

1. SHCH Update and Preview of What's to Come
2. Developmental Disabilities Awareness Month: Background, Barriers, and Resources
3. Community Flyers

SHCH Update



Before we get into the main event, we have a bit more to share than usual from the SHCH! We're actively exploring different newsletter formats to see what works best, and we thought that providing more detail about what we've been up to would give you a better sense of what our program is all about!

As usual, it's been a busy quarter connecting individuals and families to support groups, hosting trainings and webinars, and building partnerships with other amazing programs and organizations throughout the state whose missions align with ours own.

So, what exactly have we been up to lately? **Here's a snapshot of our recent work:**

Support Group Requests:

- **140+** people reached out looking for connection this quarter! Common requests typically include those for grief, mental health, caregivers, substance use, and chronic conditions—this quarter was no different, taking up the majority of requests we received.
- **6** students reached out looking to observe a support group as part of an assignment.
- Unique requests included those for natural/man-made disasters, grandparents raising children, immigrants, women diagnosed with autism, and childless not my choice—just to name a few!
- The NJ county with the most requests by far was **Bergen** 🏆
- **6** individuals reached out interested in starting support groups of their own. Ideas focused on providing groups for loneliness, survivors of assault, caregivers of loved ones with dementia, community re-entry after exiting the criminal justice system, and mental health for youth!

Trainings & Workshops:

- We delivered **2** SHCH overviews: 1 virtually and 1 in-person
- We were reached out to by a member of **United Advocacy Group** – Forest Lakes Family Success Center down in Cumberland County, who has known about our program for years and was happy to learn that we're still going strong! SHCH team members Kelly U. and Megan M. journeyed southwest to deliver a SHCH overview and were greeted by around 25 members of the UAG team eager to learn about our services, as well as a lovely invitation to eat lunch with them! Special shout out to United Advocacy Group for allowing us the opportunity to spread the word about our mission!
- Kelly U. delivered a SHCH overview as part of Consumer Connections' Wednesday Webinars!

- Kelly U. delivered a PADs training (Psychiatric Advance Directive) as requested by the members of **Catholic Charities, Diocese of Metuchen**, for their SPIRIT Program!
- SHCH team members Kelly U. and Megan M. led a 4-day virtual WRAP® (Wellness Recovery Action Plan) **Seminar 1** in January!

Community Outreach:

- This past winter season was *EXTRA cold*, which meant in-person outreach wasn't exactly at the top of the to-do list. That being said, SHCH team member Megan M. (**that's me!**) braced the winter elements and trudged through deep snow to tell people about our services... Okay, perhaps not quite battling freezing temps... but still! 🥶
- Megan M. went out into the community to *post SHCH flyers and brochures on local community boards around her hometown*. This idea came after noticing how many great resources are shared in spaces like local coffee shops—so naturally, it seemed like the perfect opportunity to add SHCH into the mix. (And, admittedly, a pretty great excuse to keep visiting some of my favorite spots.) **(shown below)**
- Megan M. represented the SHCH as a vendor at the **Harrison/Mantua/Clearview SEPAG Special Education Community Fair** in Gloucester County! It was a wonderful opportunity to meet with families of students with disabilities and to talk about the available support group resources for both parents and children. She also had a GREAT view of the therapy pets. Thanks to the coordinators of this event for the opportunity! **(shown below)**



SEPAG Special Education Community Fair





What's Next for the SHCH?

Looking ahead, there's a lot in the works!

Here's a preview:

- The next WRAP® workshop will be towards the end of April! For those of you interested in joining a FUTURE WRAP® and for any other questions, please contact us by using the following email address:
wrap@mhanj.org
- Registration for our next workshop in June opens on **Monday, April 6th at 12:00PM. Click here to register.**
- As a reminder, WRAP® workshops are provided under a contract from NJ DMHAS. Therefore, participants of these workshops **MUST** reside in New Jersey, and either identify as a peer OR be a support group leader.
- Towards the end of May, we'll be hosting a 2-part, 8-hour training, **Group Facilitation for Self-Help Support Group Leaders.**
- Topics covered may include:
 - Foundations of peer-led self-help support groups
 - The role of the facilitator vs. the role of group members
 - Creating safe and inclusive group environments
 - Managing group dynamics and difficult situations
 - Encouraging balanced participation and respectful dialogue
 - Handling conflict, dominant participants, and silence
 - Boundaries, ethics, and facilitator self-care
 - Preventing facilitator burnout and sustaining leadership
- For more information and to register, use the link on our website homepage (www.njgroups.org) or email us directly!
- More opportunities to attend trainings and workshops are in the works! Towards the 2nd half of 2026, we're planning to have bi-monthly webinars under the SHCH. Keep your eyes peeled!
- Megan M. will be attending the **2nd annual Transitions Resource Fair**—hosted by **Bombers Beyond**. Bombers Beyond is an 18-21 (years old) transitional program through the Sayreville Public School District that offers job training and life skills at their public café and apartment. They aim to connect families and educators with valuable resources and support services that empower students to thrive. Check out the flyer for more



information! Thanks to the members of Bombers Beyond for the chance to vendor! (flyer shown above)

Now that we've shared an extensive SHCH update, let's turn our attention back to this month's focus. In recognition of **Developmental Disabilities Awareness Month**, we'd like to highlight the importance of this month as well as several support group information and related resources.

Developmental Disabilities Awareness Month



Observed each March, Developmental Disabilities Awareness Month is a time to recognize the rights, experiences, and the meaningful participation of individuals with developmental disabilities in all aspects of society. It is also a chance to raise awareness about the importance of breaking down barriers that continue to stand in the way of their basic rights for direct access to what they need to live full, meaningful lives within their communities.

This has its roots as far back as 1987, the year that President Ronald Reagan issued Proclamation 5613, officially designating March 1987 as National Developmental Disabilities Awareness Month. Over time, advocacy efforts led primarily by individuals with lived experience—with the help of families, friends, and community organizations—have helped shift the landscape toward greater visibility and inclusion.

What are developmental disabilities?



According to the CDC, developmental disabilities are defined as a group of conditions due to an impairment in physical, learning, language or behavioral areas that occur from birth to the first few years of development, may have an impact on daily functioning, and are typically lifelong diagnoses.

Common developmental disabilities include:

- Hearing and vision impairments
- Learning or intellectual disabilities
- Autism spectrum disorder
- Cerebral palsy

Note: the term “developmental disability” is more of a blanket term that encompasses several types of disabilities, which are often very different from each other.

Source: <https://www.cdc.gov/child-development/about/developmental-disability-basics.html>

This observance is led by organizations such as the **National Association of Councils of Developmental Disabilities (NACCD)**, a national organization that works to promote policies, practices, and partnerships that improve the lives of individuals with developmental disabilities. The NACCD plays an important role in expanding visibility, providing leadership and education on national issues and policies, and amplifying the voices of individuals with lived experience.

This year's campaign theme is “**We're Here: Then, Now, Always.**” Through the power of personal stories, this campaign serves as a reminder that people with developmental disabilities have always been participants in our communities—working, learning, playing, caregiving, etc.—and ALWAYS will be. To learn more about this campaign, head to their website: <https://nacdd.org/2026-dd-awareness-month-were-here-then-now-always/>



Language Matters!

Words shape how we see each other. Choosing inclusive language can go a long way! Many people prefer person-first language, while others prefer identity-first language. Acknowledging that both preferences exist is a step in the right direction.

**For more on disability language etiquette, it may be helpful to start here:
<https://www.nea.org/words-matter-disability-language-etiquette>**

While progress has been made, individuals with developmental disabilities may still encounter barriers when it comes to accessing services, navigating systems of care, and fully participating in the community.

Because of this, access to community resources is essential. Whether it's information about local services, opportunities for skill-building and employment, or support for caregivers and loved ones, these resources play a critical role in helping individuals live with self-determination.

Peer support and self-help groups can be especially meaningful for individuals with developmental disabilities and their families. These spaces provide opportunities to share experiences, learn from others navigating similar challenges, and build a sense of community!

Barriers still exist Barriers still exist Barriers still exist

According to the CDC,
common barriers include:

Physical
Communication
Attitudinal
Transportation
Policy
Programmatic
Social

Time and again, more than
one barrier is presented.

Source:

<https://www.cdc.gov/disability-inclusion/barriers/index.html>

Featured Resources



Several of these resources offer
support groups!

- **National Association of Councils on Developmental Disabilities (NACDD):** <https://nacdd.org/> - Offers national advocacy, educational materials, and tools that support awareness and inclusion efforts across communities.
- **The Arc of New Jersey:** <https://www.arcnj.org/> - NJ's largest non-profit advocacy and service organization dedicated to serving children and adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities and their families - Offers multiple programs as well as opportunities to join support groups both in-person and virtually through local county Chapters
- **Association for Autism and Neurodiversity (AANE):** <https://aane.org/> - Offers a wide variety of support groups specific to the identity of community members. Groups are led by facilitators who have both the professional and lived experience to bring the greatest level of understanding and empathy to the groups - Some groups are free, most single groups cost around \$10, and multi-session groups can cost \$100-180 depending on the group.
- **Hearing Loss Association of America:** https://www.hearingloss.org/findachapter_state/new-jersey/ - nationwide community offers education, connection and support to the growing number of people with, and at risk of, hearing loss. They offer in-person and virtual meetings throughout the state.
- **Deaf and Hard of Hearing:** <https://deafandhoh.com/> - features hearing loss news, a discussion forum, resources for financial aid and other services, search directories for audiologists, hearing care facilities, speech-language pathologists, and more. They offer an open

chat night (text-based) where they encourage free and open communication between members with similar experiences.

- **Center for Independent Living (CILS):** <https://acl.gov/> - nonprofit organizations that serve as local hubs for disability resources and community support. CILS provide opportunities to join support groups!
- **Family Resource Network:** <https://www.familyresourcenetwork.org/> - a family-focused umbrella of organizations designed to address the growing need for community-based programs and services meant to serve individuals and families with a variety of disabilities and chronic conditions. Offers educations, training, assistance for employment, recreational activities and events, etc.

Looking for support? Connect with us to find a self-help group near you!

The **NEW JERSEY SELF-HELP CLEARINGHOUSE** provides education, training, support, and technical assistance to a broad range of self-help support groups across all 21 counties in New Jersey.

WHAT WE OFFER

- Technical Aid for New and Established Self-Help Groups
- Trainings and Workshops
- Self-Help Group Referrals
- WRAP Training
- Community Psychiatric Advanced Directives (PAD) Education

CONTACT US

- ✉ njgroups@mhanj.org
- ☎ 732-451-4457 or 800-367-6274
- 📘 NJSelfHelpGroupClearinghouse

Visit Our Website: www.njgroups.org

Mental Health Association in New Jersey, Inc.

**Don't know where to begin?
Looking to start a group of
your own? Looking for
something else?
Reach out to us and we'll do
our best to assist!**

As we move further into the season of growth, it feels quite natural to think about what it means to be connected and part of the community.

While we chose to focus on Developmental Disabilities Awareness Month, March also brings attention to many other important observances that deserve a little shout out! This includes:

- **Brain Injury Awareness Month**
- **Self-Injury Awareness Month**
- **Women's History Month**
- **Cerebral Palsy Awareness Month**
- **Colorectal Cancer Awareness Month**
- **Social Work Month**
- **And many others!**

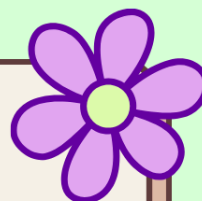
Each of these efforts helps bring visibility to experiences that are often overlooked, and they remind us how crucial having access to resources is.

At the SHCH, that's what we aim to achieve! We want to help people feel a little less alone in whatever they may be going through and further give them the opportunity to participate in the community.

We hope you take some time to enjoy the warmer days ahead! And if you happen to pass a community board along the way... you never know, you might just spot one of our flyers :) - **Megan M.**

The NJ Self-Help Clearinghouse Team

Community Flyers



- Here are a few flyers that have come our way! We love being able to share what others are doing and help connect more people to the resources they deserve.
- HUGE thanks to everyone who's sent in a flyer! If we missed yours—no worries! Outside of newsletters and support group requests, we're doing our best to get your support groups known using social media :)



CEREBRAL PALSY SUPPORT GROUP

Last Thursday
of Every Month
4:00 to 6:00 PM



1090 King Georges Post Rd
(Building 12, Suite 1201)
Edison, NJ

Join our new Cerebral Palsy Support Group! Created by and for individuals living with CP, this group offers a safe, welcoming space to share experiences, offer support, and celebrate our strengths together.

The group meets monthly both in-person and virtually via Google Meet, making it easy for everyone to stay connected.

You're not alone on this journey...
we're here to uplift and empower
each other every step of the way!



QUESTIONS
& RSVP

adacil.org
732-738-4388
trowe@adacil.org



LGBTQ+ & Disabled!



VIRTUAL PEER GROUP

**JOIN OUR
MEETINGS ON
GOOGLE MEET!**

ACI
**FACILITATED BY
SAM GAVRON**

RSVP



**SECOND AND
FOURTH MONDAY
OF EVERY MONTH
6:30 TO 7:30 PM**

- adacil.org
- 732-738-4388
- acaba@adacil.org

Protect Medicaid Coalition

Third Thursday of Every Month 1 to 2 PM

Back in February, ACI launched the Protect Medicaid Coalition. From the 800 people who attended our Medicaid rally to town halls, press conferences, voter registration drives, calls to Congress, and testimony at public hearings...we showed up, spoke out, and demanded to be heard.

While federal cuts to Medicaid ultimately went through, our advocacy made an impact at the state level. And we're just getting started...

As we head into the new year, we face:

- Medicaid and SNAP cuts taking effect
- A new Governor and state legislature
- An urgent need to protect disability services and programs

ACI is ready to fight and we need YOU with us!

The Protect Medicaid Coalition will be having virtual meetings every month to build our strategy and take action.

Together, we will protect vital programs and rights. Let's keep the pressure on!

Join the Coalition!

adacil.org | 732-738-4388 | lkoppisch@adacil.org



Talk and Walk

PEER GROUP

ACI's **Talk and Walk Peer Group** is back!

Spring is here and so is one of our favorite traditions! Join your friends at ACI for the return of our **Talk and Walk Peer Group**, a great way to enjoy the fresh air, get moving, and connect with one another.

Come stroll with us around the complex as we enjoy **good company, light conversation, and the beauty of spring!**

Water and snacks will be provided. Please wear sneakers/comfortable shoes and comfortable warm temperature clothing. Feel free to bring your own sunscreen and/or hat.



**Second Wednesday
of Every Month
10:00 to 11:00 AM**

ACI
1090 King Georges Post Rd,
(Building 12, Suite 1201)
Edison, NJ

**Limited to
12 participants.**



QUESTIONS AND RSVP

adacil.org • 732-738-4388 • lkoppisch@adacil.org



PARENT

SUPPORT GROUP

When like-minded people come together to share their thoughts, concerns and experiences, there is a sense of community. ACI is inviting parents and loved ones of adults with disabilities (ages 18+) to join us on the fourth Tuesday of each month from 5:30 to 7:30 PM.

*Light snacks and refreshments will be served.
Feel free to bring something to share!*

**REGISTRATION IS REQUIRED.
LIMITED TO 18 PARTICIPANTS.**

**FOURTH TUESDAY
OF EVERY MONTH**
5:30 to 7:30 PM

ACI
1090 King Georges Post Road
Edison, NJ

**QUESTIONS
& RSVP**

adacil.org
732-738-4388
vromanienko@adacil.org





MIDDLESEX & UNION COUNTY



CORE ADVISORY GROUP (CAG)

For Individuals with Access and Functional Needs

ACI

**THIRD MONDAY
OF EVERY MONTH**
1:00 TO 2:30 PM

ACI
629 AMBOY AVE
EDISON, NJ

DIAL-IN #:
605-313-4179
ACCESS #: 700-387

A disaster can happen at any time! This is a great opportunity to work together with emergency managers to make effective changes in how emergency services are provided to people with disabilities and access and functional needs in Middlesex and Union Counties.

THE PURPOSE OF THIS GROUP IS TO...

- Promote inclusive emergency management by encouraging collaboration and partnership between community disability stakeholder and emergency managers.
- Identify emergency management challenges facing people with disabilities and others with access and functional needs before, during and after a disaster.
- Develop strategies to build resilience in the disability community.

QUESTIONS & RSVP

adacil.org • 732-738-4388 • ctonks@adacil.org



Women's PEER SUPPORT GROUP



First Thursday of Every Month
4:00 to 6:00 PM



1090 King Georges Post Rd
(Building 12, Suite 1201)
Edison, NJ

Join us for our next meeting of our monthly **Women's Peer Support Group** on the **first Friday of every month** at ACI!

Light refreshments will be served.

This group is for women with disabilities.



QUESTIONS & RSVP

adacil.org / 732-738-4388 / twashington@adacil.org



Just One Big Happy Family, LLC
Women's Support Empowerment Group

*New Beginnings: It's Time for a Change. What you
don't change, you choose!*

Let's address your issues before they address you.

REAL TALK NO JUDGEMENT!!

Saturdays 9:00 am

Zoom

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/81204121432>

Phone: 646-558-8656

Meeting ID: 812 0412 1432

TOO MUCH STUFF?



DO YOU STRUGGLE WITH:

- ▷ CLUTTER CHALLENGES?
- ▷ TOO MUCH STUFF?
- ▷ HOARDING DISORDER BEHAVIORS?

YOU ARE MORE THAN YOUR BELONGINGS

This free, peer group offers a safe, respectful space- where participation is voluntary and guided by compassion, choice, & lived experience. Share at your own pace, build connection, and explore supportive strategies for change—without judgment or pressure.

- ▷ **FOURTH THURSDAY EACH MONTH!**
- ▷ **6-7:30PM**
- ▷ **MHAOC ADMIN
1747 HOOPER AVE
UNIT 15, TOMS RIVER**



- ▷ **RSVP TO:** (OR JUST SHOW UP)
CGALESKY@MHANJ.ORG





"STRENGTH THROUGH SUPPORT"

IN PERSON STROKE SUPPORT GROUP MEETINGS

IN-PERSON MEETINGS ARE EVERY LAST
WEDNESDAY OF EACH MONTH FOR
STROKE SURVIVORS AND CAREGIVERS

MORRIS COUNTY LIBRARY
30 EAST HANOVER AVE
WHIPPANY, NJ

TIME: 1:00 - 3:30 PM

PLEASE CALL OR EMAIL FOR MORE INFORMATION

Lois - Stroke Caregiver
908-578-0812
loisfirz@yahoo.com

Rich - Stroke Survivor
201-230-8204
rchclr@gmail.com

Better Future

Self-Help Center

Better Future Self-Help Center is a peer-run, peer-operated wellness center providing support, connection and recreation for adults with mental health issues who seek community, friends, social outlets, and relaxation.

At Better Future Self-Help Center there is a focus on health and wellness with specialized services and activities, including:

- Support groups
- Activities such as BINGO, arts and crafts, recreational trips, and more
- Access to a computer lab, fitness center, nutritious meals and health-focused seminars
- Smoking cessation services
- Transportation



Better Future Self-Help Center is open to adults experiencing mental health issues living in Warren County and offers support, connection, and recreation in a community setting.

This program is a walk-in center, however, initial enrollment and daily attendance calls are recommended.

21 West Washington Avenue,
Washington, NJ 07882

Scan the QR code for an up-to-date schedule.



centerffs.org

908.835.1180

(please call if transportation is needed)

access@centerffs.org

Funded by the Division of Mental Health and Addiction Services

Welcome!



We have a new schedule:

Tuesdays (online): 7:00 - 9:00 pm
Wednesdays (in person): 11:00 am - 1:00 pm
Thursdays (in person): 7:00 - 9:00 pm
Meetings often end early, but never late.

In-person Location

First Presbyterian Church of Somerdale
142 W. Somerdale Rd.
Somerdale, NJ 08083

Park in lot on right side of church. (Entrance is driveway next door.) If door is locked, text us to let you in.

Supportive family and friends are welcome to attend.

We also find time to relax with fun activities throughout the year.

Call or text: (609) 471-0676
NewBeginningsNJ@gmail.com
NBgroup.org
facebook.com/NBpeersupport

New Beginnings Mission Statement

Our mission is to support one another as we empower ourselves to live successfully with mood disorders.



You are not alone...

- A mood disorder is a real health issue. It is not a weakness or character flaw, and we can't just "snap out of it". It takes strength and courage to seek help.
- At a support group, you can share with others who have had similar experiences.
- You are welcome to be a part of our group. We can help one another achieve and maintain wellness.

Call or text: (609) 471-0676
NewBeginningsNJ@gmail.com
NBgroup.org
facebook.com/NBpeersupport

For more information:

We are happy to answer questions!

Call or text: (609) 471-0676
NewBeginningsNJ@gmail.com
NBgroup.org
facebook.com/NBpeersupport

In-person Location

First Presbyterian Church of Somerdale
142 W. Somerdale Rd.
Somerdale, NJ 08083

Park in lot on right side of church. (Entrance is driveway next door.) If door is locked, text us to let you in.

New Beginnings is not equipped to help someone in immediate crisis.

If you have an emergency or feel like hurting yourself or others, do one of the following NOW:

- Call 911
- Go to the emergency room
- Call one of these hotlines:
 - 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline
988 (call or text)
 - NJ Hopeline
1-855-654-6735

Group Guidelines

1. Confidentiality: What is said in group stays in group. We respect privacy.
2. Safety: Observe boundaries and respect others with language and actions. See a facilitator if you have any concerns.
3. Medicine & Doctors: We do not prescribe, diagnose, or give advice. Advice only comes from professional care givers. We do not name medications of any kind.
4. Participation: You have the right to pass. Participation is voluntary.
5. Unrelated Activities: No cell phones, texting, or food during group. Cell phone must be on vibrate.
6. Listening: Listen to others without interrupting. Raise your hand to respond. One person speaks at a time.
7. "I" Statements: Use "I" statements and share from your own positive experiences, insights, and coping skills.
8. Judgment: We do not judge or criticize each other.
9. Sharing: Our time is limited, and we start and stop on time. We need to give equal opportunity, for sharing as well as feedback, to all group members.
10. Accountability: We are responsible for ourselves, our actions, and our wellness.

New Beginnings



Supporting peers with mood disorders since 1987

If you experience symptoms of depression, anxiety, bipolar, or related mood disorders, we invite you to our free peer support group.

Come and share support and coping strategies with others like you!

Tuesdays (online): 7:00 - 9:00 pm
Wednesdays (in person): 11:00 am - 1:00 pm
Thursdays (in person): 7:00 - 9:00 pm
Meetings often end early, but never late.

Call or text: (609) 471-0676
NewBeginningsNJ@gmail.com
NBgroup.org
facebook.com/NBpeersupport



More About Us

- We strive to successfully manage our disorders and live well.
- We share positive support, encouragement, and coping strategies in a safe, confidential environment.
- All meetings are free.
- All meetings start on time. Meetings may end early, but never late.
- Everyone present must be at least 19 years old.
- All participation is voluntary.
- We offer peer support, not therapy or education.
- The facilitators are peers from the group.
- We are not professionals, nor is our group a substitute for professional treatment.
- We maintain a positive environment. We want to feel better when we leave a meeting than we did when we arrived!



Mental Health Association in New Jersey | 673 Morris Ave. Suite 100 | Springfield, NJ 07081 US

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