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NEWSLETTER | DECEMBER 2025



New Jersey Releases Comprehensive Direct Care Workforce Strategic Plan to Strengthen Recruitment, Retention and Training

New Jersey Human Services, in partnership with seven state agencies, announced the release of the [New Jersey Direct Care Workforce Strategic Plan](#), a comprehensive roadmap to support, grow, and stabilize the workforce that provides essential care to older adults, individuals with disabilities, and residents with behavioral health needs.

“Direct care workers make independence possible for hundreds of thousands of New Jerseyans, and their work is fundamental to the health, safety, and dignity of the people who we serve,” **Commissioner Sarah Adelman said.** “This strategic plan reflects our commitment to building a stronger, more supported, and more sustainable workforce - one that is valued for its skill, compassion, and essential role in New Jersey’s communities and economic success.”

The plan outlines more than 40 data-driven strategies to improve recruitment, strengthen training and career pathways, and support the long-term retention of direct care workers including direct support professionals (DSPs), certified home health aides (CHHAs), personal care assistants, certified nursing assistants (CNAs), peer recovery specialists, youth support professionals, and self-directed employees.

Developed through more than a year of collaboration among Human Services and the departments of [Labor & Workforce Development](#), [Children and Families](#), [Education](#), the Office of the Attorney General’s [Division of Consumer Affairs](#), the [Office of the Secretary of Higher Education](#), and the [Higher Education Student Assistance Authority](#), the plan draws on workforce data and extensive engagement with stakeholders. Input came from listening sessions with direct care workers, employers and consumers, and support from the [Direct Care Workforce Strategies Center](#) and partners such as [PHI](#).

“If we want New Jerseyans to live and age in their community with dignity, stability, and choice, we must ensure the workers who make that possible have the support, respect, and opportunities they deserve,” **Commissioner Adelman said.** “This strategic plan reflects what we heard directly from families, workers, and providers across the state, and it outlines actions that will strengthen pathways into the field and better support workers on the job.”

Read more [HERE](#).



Human Services Opens Registration for Child Care Assistance Program

Commissioner Sarah Adelman announced that eligible families can now register to apply for Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP) benefits. The Department is reopening the program for a limited number of slots, with the goal of allowing applications in January for new children.

Families will need to complete a registration form by entering some basic information and will be notified when they can complete the full application.

Information on how to register is available on [ChildCareNJ.gov](https://www.childcarenj.gov).

“We know high child care costs can strain families and force parents to make difficult decisions. New Jersey’s Child Care Assistance Program provides critical financial support to lower income families across the state, and we are grateful to be able to reopen enrollment, even on a limited basis. We encourage families to review the eligibility criteria and register to apply as soon as possible,” **said Commissioner Adelman.**

Once families have completed the registration process, they will be invited to apply

based on the number of slots available. Families with incomes at or below 100% of the federal poverty level, families experiencing homelessness, and families needing care for children with special needs will be invited to apply first in accordance with Federal and State law.

Applications will remain open on a rolling basis as children join and exit the program, with enrollment capped at 75,000 children at any given time. Registered families who are not enrolled during this limited reopening will remain on the registration list and be contacted as slots become available.

CCAP helps income-eligible parents who are working, in school, or in job training to pay for child care. The program stopped accepting new applications as of August 1, 2025, due to limited funding. The pause in applications affected only new enrollees; children who were already enrolled and being served by the program continue to receive assistance.

“Child care is a necessity for working parents, but it can be a real strain on family budgets. Reopening this application at a time when many are struggling with rising costs will help provide some relief to eligible families who need it most,” **said Deputy Commissioner for Social Services Michael J. Wilson.**

“Families who are not CCAP-eligible can find information about other affordable child care services through their local Child Care Resource and Referral (CCR&R) agencies, which are available to all New Jersey families,” **said Division of Family Development Assistant Commissioner Natasha Johnson.** “Families can find contact information for their local agency on our [website](#).”

Continue to visit www.ChildCareNJ.gov for information and updates.



Human Services Opens \$4 Million Grant Opportunity to Address Social Isolation Among Older Adults & Individuals with Disabilities

Human Services announced that local government and nonprofit entities can apply for grants totaling \$4 million to administer the Senior Wellness Pilot Program, designed to strengthen social connections and support for older adults and people with disabilities at risk of social isolation in their communities.

“Older residents and people with disabilities can face a variety of barriers creating and maintaining the social lives and connections they desire. The Senior Wellness Pilot Program will help create opportunities to bolster social inclusion and engagement, so these individuals can avoid isolation, stay connected, and ultimately live more fulfilling lives in their communities,” **said Commissioner Sarah Adelman.**

Grants are available to government or nonprofit entities to implement new initiatives that improve socialization and support the health and well-being of older adults, individuals with disabilities who are homebound, and residents of institutional settings.

The Department will award grants of up to \$250,000 per grantee. The deadline to submit grant proposals is January 13. To review the request for proposals, click [here](#).

“As we face increasing complexities in social needs among our older adult population, this program will fund initiatives that reimagine support for seniors and disabled individuals that foster a stronger sense of belonging for those who feel alone,” **said Deputy Commissioner of Aging and Disability Services Kaylee McGuire**. “Loneliness among adults is rising at an alarming rate- so now is the time to invest in our communities and strengthen the ties that bind us.”

“Helping older adults socialize with other age groups and cultures in their communities is a mutually enriching endeavor. These grants can help create opportunities for social connection for older residents who wish to remain engaged but may not be able to do so without some assistance and support,” **said Division of Aging Services Assistant Commissioner Louise Rush**.

Read more [HERE](#).

Joint Statement from NJ Departments of Health, Human Services, and Children and Families and Office of the Attorney General on HHS’s Actions Related to Gender-Affirming Care and Youth

The Trump Administration took another step toward limiting access to gender-affirming care going against public health, science, and justice in the process. By chilling the provision of care, the restrictions proposed by the federal administration will have dire consequences for young people across the country and cause unnecessary suffering and trauma.

Leading medical and public health organizations recognize the spectrum of gender-affirming care as medically necessary to improve outcomes and reduce distress, especially for our transgender community. Limiting access to gender-affirming care does not protect patients. It increases stigma, creates barriers to

well-being, and takes away the autonomy of patients and families along with their health care providers to make deeply personal health decisions based on evidence, professional judgement, and compassion.

Everyone deserves to live long, healthy lives.



Governor Murphy Announces Nearly \$50 Million in Opioid Settlement Investments to Expand Housing, Treatment, and Maternal Health Supports

Building on the Murphy Administration's efforts to combat the opioid crisis, Governor Phil Murphy announced the allocation of nearly \$50 million from New Jersey's Opioid Recovery and Remediation Fund to support critical programs, connect New Jerseyans with tools to reduce overdoses and other harms of substance use, and support residents' treatment and recovery.

With this new allocation, New Jersey has now allocated more than \$324 million in state-level opioid settlement resources toward prevention, treatment, recovery, and community supports. The new investments will allow the State to expand its

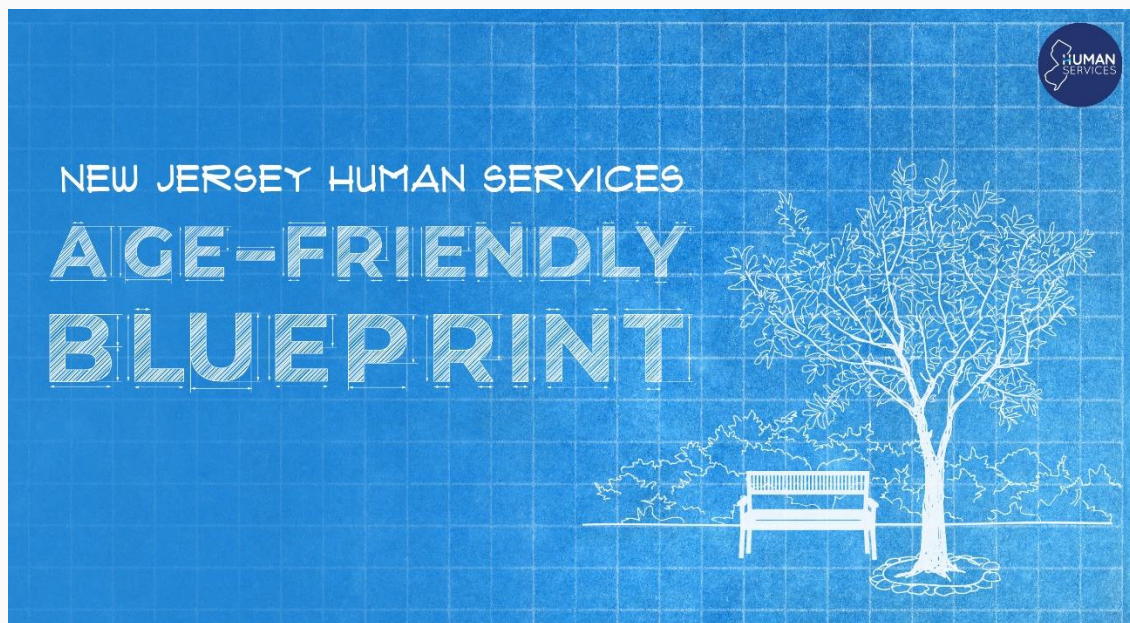
treatment infrastructure, reduce barriers to care, and enhance services that improve long-term stability and health for residents.

“The opioid epidemic has had a devastating impact on every corner of our state and nation. My Administration has made it a priority to bring together public health experts, service providers, clinicians, and those with lived experiences to help us better understand this crisis and maximize the use of our opioid settlement funds,” **Governor Murphy said**. “With today’s announcement, we are building on our historic investments into life-saving and life-altering programs that have had a tangible impact on New Jerseyans combating addiction. Together, we have infused more than \$324 million into our most vulnerable communities to reduce harm, empower families and individuals, and support sustained recovery.”

“These investments reflect New Jersey’s unwavering commitment to saving lives and expanding access to compassionate, evidence-based care,” **said Commissioner Sarah Adelman**, who chairs the Advisory Council. “By investing in stable housing, strengthening access to timely treatment, bolstering harm reduction and recovery supports, and expanding maternal health services, we are directing resources to programs that make a meaningful difference to help individuals and families achieve long-term health and stability.”

The new \$47.84 million allocation includes a mix of expansions to evidence-based programs, capital investments to serve more patients, family health-focused innovative programs, and strategic planning initiatives.

Read more [HERE](#).



Human Services Awards Grants to Implement Age-Friendly Community Enhancements

Commissioner Sarah Adelman announced \$720,000 in grants have been awarded to local government and nonprofit organizations to assess, plan, and develop local age-friendly initiatives that support the health and well-being of older adults.

The Age-Friendly Communities grants will be used to build community partnerships, execute a community needs assessment, create an action plan to become an Age-Friendly Community, and enroll in the [AARP Network of Age-Friendly States and Communities](#).

“Aging is a lifelong process, and community planning that considers the needs of residents as they age benefits everyone. I commend the local governments and organizations that are joining us in our commitment to being an Age-Friendly State.

We've prioritized new funding to help local communities implement our Age-Friendly Blueprint, ensuring it's not just a document on a shelf, but an active guide that drives real change throughout New Jersey. This investment will help make our communities more inclusive and accommodating for people at every stage of

life,” **said Commissioner Adelman.**

“The projected increase in our older adult population over the coming decade offers a unique opportunity for leaders across all levels of government and within communities to implement intentional changes and strategic plans. This moment allows us to foster more inclusive and integrated environments for individuals of all ages and abilities. By investing in age-friendly communities, we can ensure that everyone in New Jersey has the opportunity to thrive as they grow older, alongside friends and family,” **said Deputy Commissioner for Aging and Disability Services Kaylee McGuire.**

“It is exciting to see this work being put into action in communities across the state. I hope this will inspire more towns and counties to make inclusivity part of their community planning and motivate all of us to reexamine how we view getting older and the value that comes with age and experience,” **said Division of Aging Services Assistant Commissioner Louise Rush.**

Read more [HERE](#).

NEW JERSEY HUMAN SERVICES



**Division of
Developmental
Disabilities**

New Jersey Human Services Launches START Crisis Prevention & Intervention Program for Individuals with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities and Mental Health Needs

Commissioner Sarah Adelman announced the official launch of a new START program to provide evidence-based, community crisis prevention and intervention services for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD) and co-occurring mental health needs.

The START (Systemic, Therapeutic, Assessment, Resources, and Treatment) Model is now active in 11 counties across New Jersey: Atlantic, Burlington, Camden, Cape May, Cumberland, Gloucester, Mercer, Middlesex, Monmouth, Ocean, and Salem. The program is operated by YAI (Young Adult Institute) under a \$3.2 million contract awarded by Human Services' [Division of Developmental Disabilities](#) (DDD).

“We are proud to officially launch this essential program that brings high-quality, community-based crisis services to individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities and mental health needs,” **said Commissioner Adelman**. “START is a nationally recognized model that helps individuals and families get the right support at the right time, reducing reliance on emergency rooms and law enforcement. This launch marks a major step forward in our efforts to provide compassionate, effective care and to build a more responsive and inclusive system.”

“We are expanding the options and resources available to individuals with complex needs, and their families and support networks,” **said Kaylee McGuire, Deputy Commissioner for Aging and Disability Services**. “This launch reflects our commitment to delivering innovative and proactive services that empower individuals and intervenes in crises before they escalate.”

“This program will help fill gaps in crisis support for individuals with dual diagnoses,” **said Jonathan Seifried, Assistant Commissioner of the Division of Developmental Disabilities**. “With START Services NJ now active, families and providers have a dedicated resource to turn to—one grounded in evidence

and committed to person-centered, trauma-informed care.”

Read more [HERE](#).



First Lady Tammy Murphy Announces Efforts to Strengthen Doula Workforce and Streamline Access to Care

First Lady Tammy Murphy announced cross-government efforts to further bolster New Jersey’s doula workforce. This includes recent innovations such as the NJ Doula Assistant Tool and the State Rubric Assessment Tool to eliminate barriers to entry and enable more doulas to participate in NJ FamilyCare.

“Through Nurture NJ, we have embraced a whole-of-government approach to transforming our maternal and infant health care landscape. Parents in New Jersey

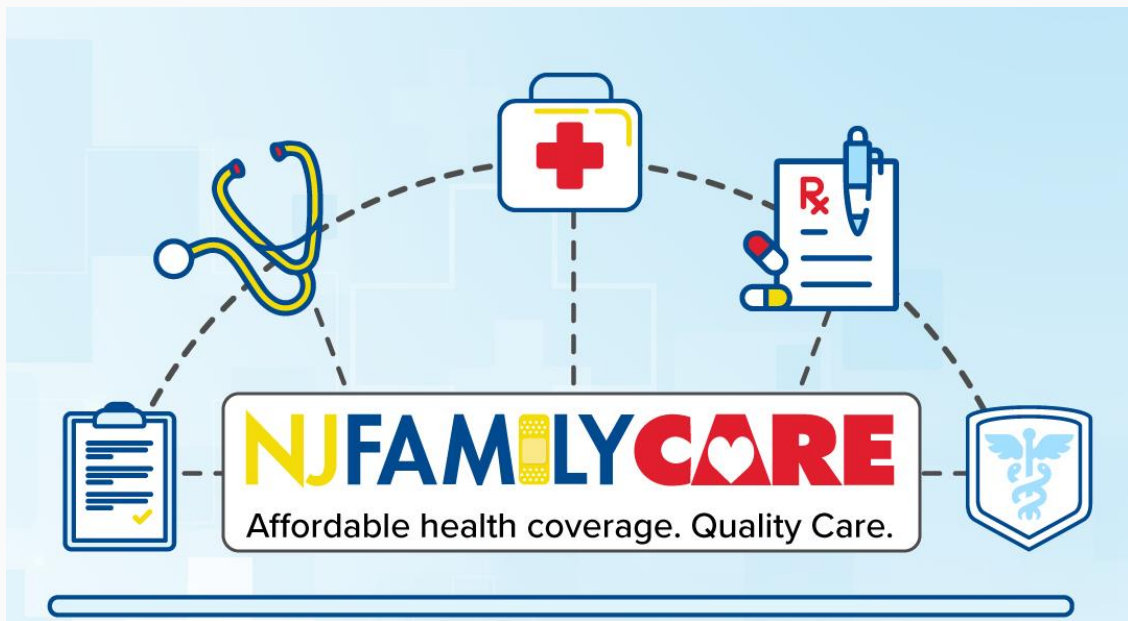
deserve access to the best care our state has to offer and, since the beginning, we have explored every avenue at our disposal to bring about positive change,” **First Lady Murphy said.** “By prioritizing innovation and out-of-the-box thinking, we are strengthening our state’s critical doula workforce and streamlining access to care for countless moms and babies. I commend our partners across government for continuing to build on our work to make New Jersey the gold standard in maternal and infant health care.”

The NJ Doula Assistant online tool helps doulas complete the application paperwork to become fee-for-service providers of NJ FamilyCare quickly and confidently. NJ FamilyCare staff, along with prospective doulas, were involved in the design process to ensure the tool is accurate and user-friendly. In addition to this innovative resource, NJ FamilyCare continues to offer “Doula Guides” who provide support to doula applicants with questions or who need assistance completing the application.

“This tool streamlines the NJ FamilyCare provider application process to make it easier for doulas to serve NJ FamilyCare families,” **Commissioner Sarah Adelman said.** “NJ has been a leader in innovating ways to support doulas as Medicaid providers, and the launch of this new type of tool is another step we’re taking to increase access to doula care. Community doulas provide essential support to mothers and babies before, during, and after childbirth, and can improve birth outcomes. I am grateful to the First Lady and every agency that collaborated on this ongoing work to make New Jersey the safest and most equitable state to deliver and raise a baby.”

New Jersey is also introducing a new process to expand the number of NJ FamilyCare-approved doula trainings.

Read more [HERE](#).



New Jersey Expands Access to Hospital Care and Outpatient Services for State's Most Vulnerable Residents

New Jersey announced that the federal government has approved approximately \$540 million in funding to help hospitals care for uninsured residents and to improve outpatient services for Medicaid patients.

This major investment strengthens New Jersey's commitment to ensure that every patient, regardless of income or insurance status, can access essential health care services. The funding comes through the [Medicaid Outpatient State-Directed Payment Program](#) and supports hospitals that serve large numbers of low-income patients and communities with the greatest health needs.

"Access to high-quality outpatient and hospital care is essential for the well-being of the individuals and families we serve," **Commissioner Sarah Adelman said.** "These investments strengthen our safety net, support the providers who care for Medicaid and uninsured patients, and help ensure that New Jersey's most vulnerable communities can rely on the care they need to live healthy, stable lives."

"Every New Jerseyans deserves access to health care, regardless of their ability to pay," **Acting Health Commissioner Jeff Brown said.** "With this investment, we

are supporting hospitals that serve on the front lines and ensure that our communities can rely on strong, stable health care services.”

The Medicaid Outpatient State-Directed Payment Program rewards hospitals for delivering high-quality outpatient care to Medicaid and charity care patients.

Read more [HERE](#).



Mercer County and NJ Human Services Host Event Celebrating Progress for Deaf and Hard of Hearing Community

Mercer County Executive Dan Benson and Commissioner Sarah Adelman hosted a roundtable to discuss progress in expanding services for Deaf and Hard of Hearing residents. The conversation included governmental leaders, educators, and community advocates, and reviewed the significant steps that the Murphy Administration has taken over the past eight years to improve accessibility and opportunities.

“During my time in the State Assembly, I had the opportunity to work with advocates from the deaf community and with the Administration to pass important legislation, including codifying a Deaf Student’s Bill of Rights, expanding the coverage offered by Grace’s Law, and securing the first appropriations for DHS’ landmark Language Instruction Program,” said **Mercer County Executive Dan**

Benson. “When I became County Executive, one of our early achievements was securing a Communication Access Grant to install hearing induction loops in County buildings. I’m really pleased that we can host this discussion here at Mercer County, and thanks to the state’s support this is now a space where all our residents have the ability to participate.”

“The progress made in Mercer County reflects the statewide advancements the Department has implemented to ensure deaf and hard of hearing New Jerseyans can thrive in their communities. By removing communication barriers and enhancing access to essential programs, services, and information, we empower these individuals to fully participate and contribute, ensuring they have ease of access to vital resources,” **said Commissioner Adelman.** “We are proud to have a community partner such as Mercer County Executive Dan Benson in our continued work to think of inclusivity first, not as reaction.”

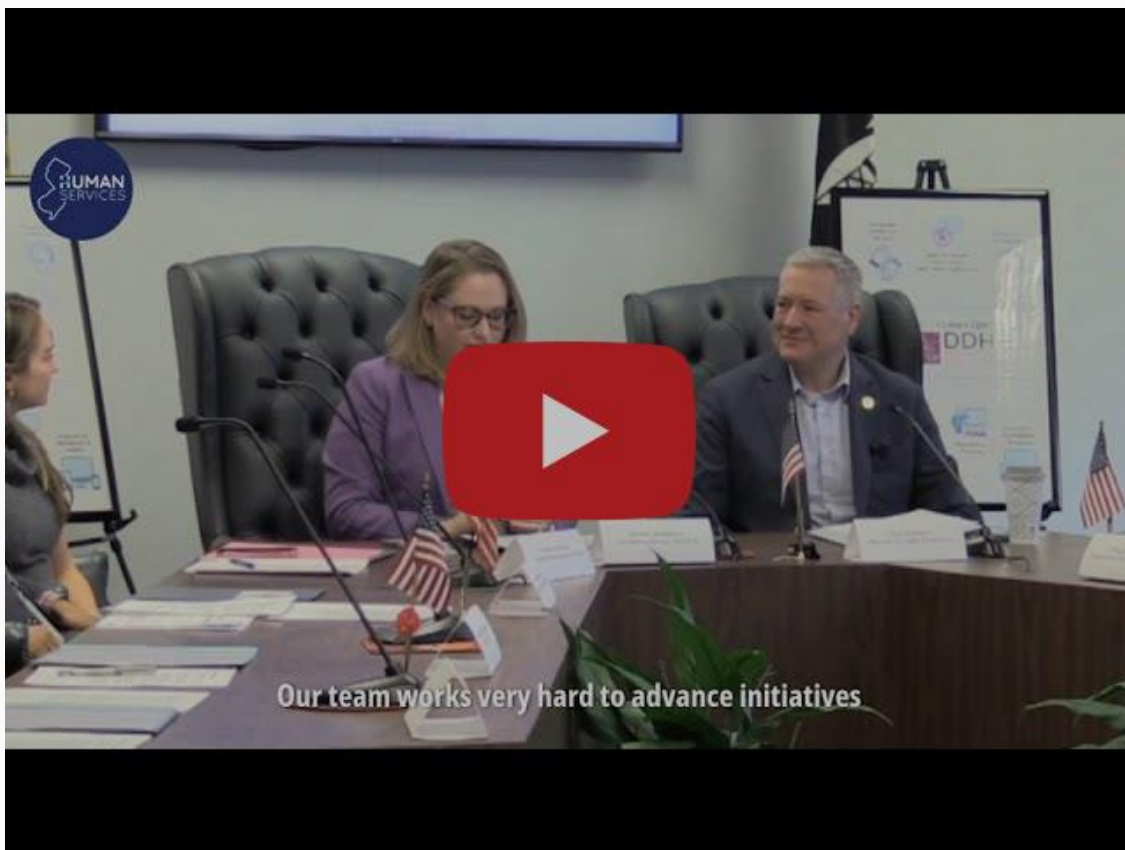
“With 850,000 deaf and hard of hearing residents in our State, we are committed to empower these individuals through comprehensive training, education, outreach, and direct services. We have made significant strides in these recent years, thanks in part to the Murphy Administration’s enhanced support and dedicated community partners. We are setting new standards for digital accessibility and public health guidance, ensuring that deaf and hard of hearing New Jerseyans have the support and resources needed to live, work and play in their communities,” **said Deputy Commissioner for Aging and Disability Services Kaylee McGuire.** “Together, we will continue to drive meaningful change, making the Garden State inclusive for all.”

“Beginning with a small pilot with two deaf toddlers, and made possible through a budget appropriation from then-Assemblyman Benson, our Language Instruction Program has grown into a robust statewide program, setting the standard nationwide,” **said Division of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing Executive Director Elizabeth Hill.** “With this program, families throughout New Jersey are entitled to this free service, making it possible for their deaf children to achieve bilingualism, be kindergarten-ready, and avoid the potential consequences of language deprivation. I am beyond proud of the positive impact this program and other

DDHH initiatives has had on those who are deaf and hard of hearing and look forward to further developing innovative solutions to better serve those in need.”

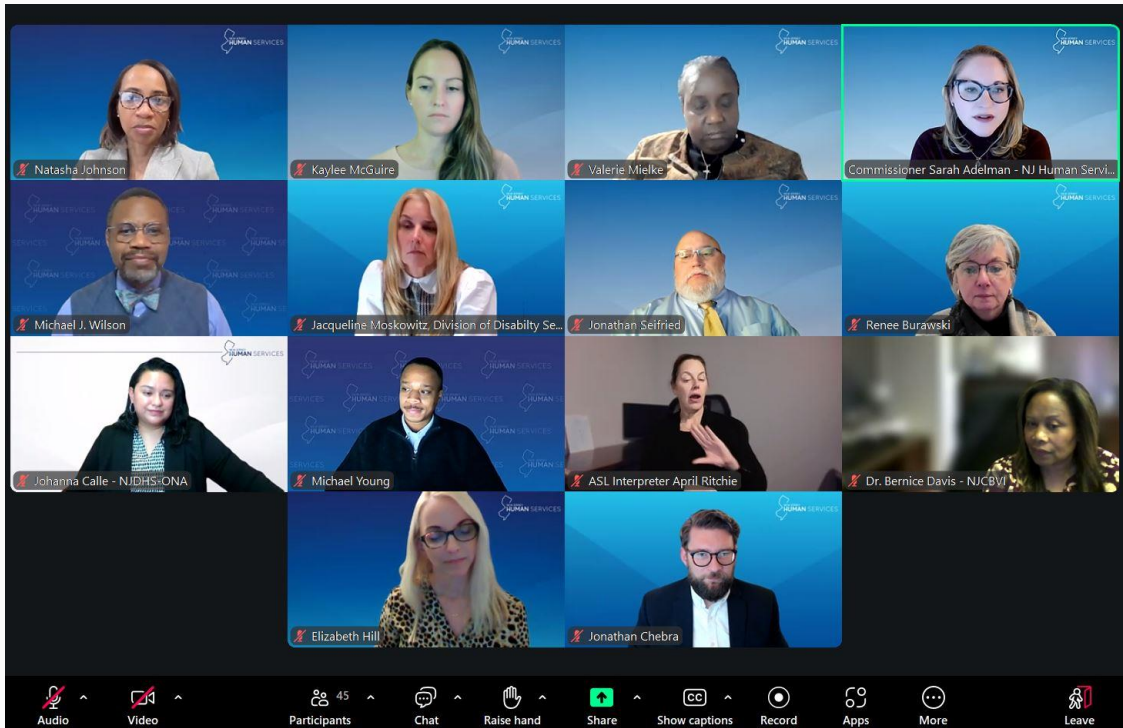
Read more [HERE](#).

► Watch our video to learn more.





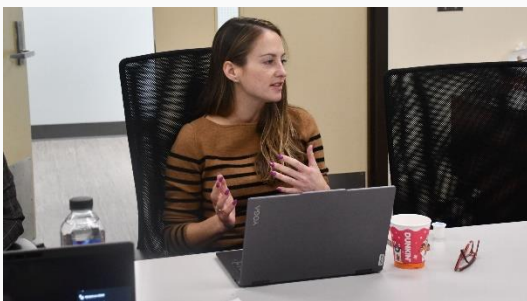
🎧 Listen to **Deputy Communications Director Eva Loayza-McBride** discuss New Jersey Human Services programs in a Spanish-language interview with radio station [*De Todo un Poco*](#) including mental health and addiction services, assistance programs for residents living on fixed incomes, support for older adults and individuals with disabilities and Know Your Rights resources [HERE](#).



Watch the Virtual Budget Listening
Session for 2026-27 [HERE](#).



Check out Governor Phil Murphy's video detailing how the Murphy Administration has invested nearly \$2.3 billion to support adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities – including increasing the hourly wages for direct support professionals from \$12.66 to \$21 an hour.



Deputy Commissioner for Aging and Disability Services Kaylee McGuire recently participated in the [Commission for the Blind and Visually Impaired's \(CBVI\) State Rehabilitation Meeting](#). During the meeting, Deputy Commissioner McGuire discussed numerous policy changes and program expansions implemented by NJ DHS to empower and support individuals with disabilities in the employment sector and beyond. CBVI Executive Director Dr. Bernice Davis and Assistant Division

Director Pat McKenna also provided remarks.
Learn more about CBVI's services and program [HERE](#).

Green Brook Regional Center Holiday Party





✳ NJ HUMAN SERVICES SEASON OF SERVICE ✳



NJ Human Services ***Season of Service*** took place all month long throughout the department.

Staff from the **Outreach and Policy** teams volunteered at the [Community Food Bank of NJ](#) in Hillside sorting donations and readying food boxes for delivery to people in need.

The [Human Services Police Officers](#) and **Security Officers** volunteered serving food and assisting at the [Joseph Kohn Training Center](#).



Commissioner Sarah Adelman, Deputy Commissioner for Aging and Disability Services Kaylee McGuire and the [Division of Developmental Disabilities](#) (DDD) Trenton Staff took a "Winter Break" and rolled nearly 800 utensil packets that were delivered to the [Trenton Area Soup Kitchen](#). These items go with every meal distributed by TASK.



[Commission for the Blind and Visually Impaired](#) - Newark Regional Office staff collected food this month and donated to [Habitat for Humanity](#) in Washington, NJ. This organization hires individuals with disabilities and does a lot of work in the local community.

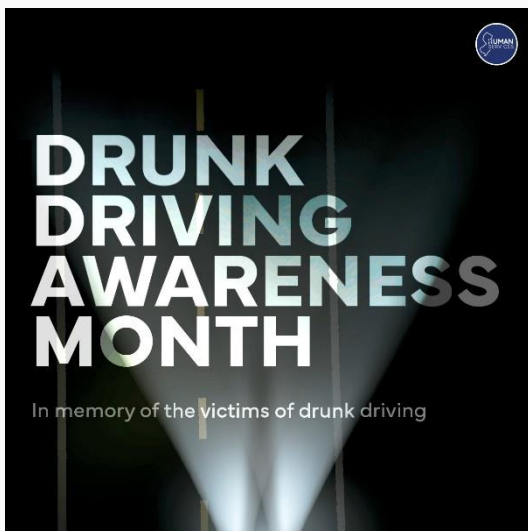
And staff from both the **Legal and Research teams** volunteered at the [Food Bank of South Jersey](#). They helped with tasks like sorting and delivery prep in the warehouse.



Deputy Commissioner for Social Services Michael J. Wilson, Deputy Chief of Staff Jade Bechelli, [Office of New Americans](#) staff and members of the communications team volunteered their time at the [Food Bank of South Jersey](#). The team sorted food donations and assembled food boxes for delivery to people in need.



Deputy Commissioner Valerie Mielke for Health Services joined staff from Central Office and the [Office of New Americans](#) as they volunteered their time prepping food at the [Nourish Foodbank](#) in Dover.



December was **Drunk Driving Awareness Month** in memory of individuals who were killed by drunk drivers.

Addiction help is available. ATLAS is a free tool for NJ residents to find treatment options & providers.

Try a confidential assessment [HERE](#).

December 3rd was
**International Day of Persons
with Disabilities.** The Division of
Disability Services works to
streamline access to services and
information that promote and
enhance independent living for
individuals with all disabilities.

Download our
Resource Guide [HERE](#).





HUMAN RIGHTS DAY

DECEMBER 10



[NJ SNAP](#) | [NJ FAMILYCARE](#) | [NJHELPS](#)