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NEWSLETTER | FEBRUARY 2025



**Human Services, Office of the Attorney General and Motor Vehicle
Commission Announce Efforts to Assist Law Enforcement when
Interacting with Residents with Autism and Communication Disorders**

Commissioner Sarah Adelman, State Attorney General Matthew J. Platkin, and

Acting Motor Vehicle Commission Chief Administrator Latrecia Littles-Floyd announced new efforts underway to assist law enforcement officers to communicate effectively and avoid misunderstandings during encounters with individuals who have autism spectrum disorder (ASD) or a communication disorder.

The officials held a press conference at the Hunterdon County Historic Courthouse where they announced the release of new guidance to help law enforcement identify individuals with ASD or a communication disorder so they can adjust their communication approach as needed; and unveiled the new designation available to individuals with ASD or a communication disorder who want to indicate their diagnosis on their driver's license or non-driver ID. They were joined by Hunterdon County Prosecutor Renée Robeson, Hunterdon County Chief of Detectives Timothy Drew, Hunterdon County Sheriff Frederick W. Brown, local Hunterdon County Chiefs of Police, and representatives from Hunterdon Medical Center and The ARC of Hunterdon.

In 2023, Governor Phil Murphy signed [legislation](#) allowing New Jersey residents with ASD or a communication disorder to request through the Motor Vehicle Commission an official indication of their diagnosis on their state driver's license or non-driver identification. The law also tasked Human Services and the AG's Office to create related guidance for law enforcement.

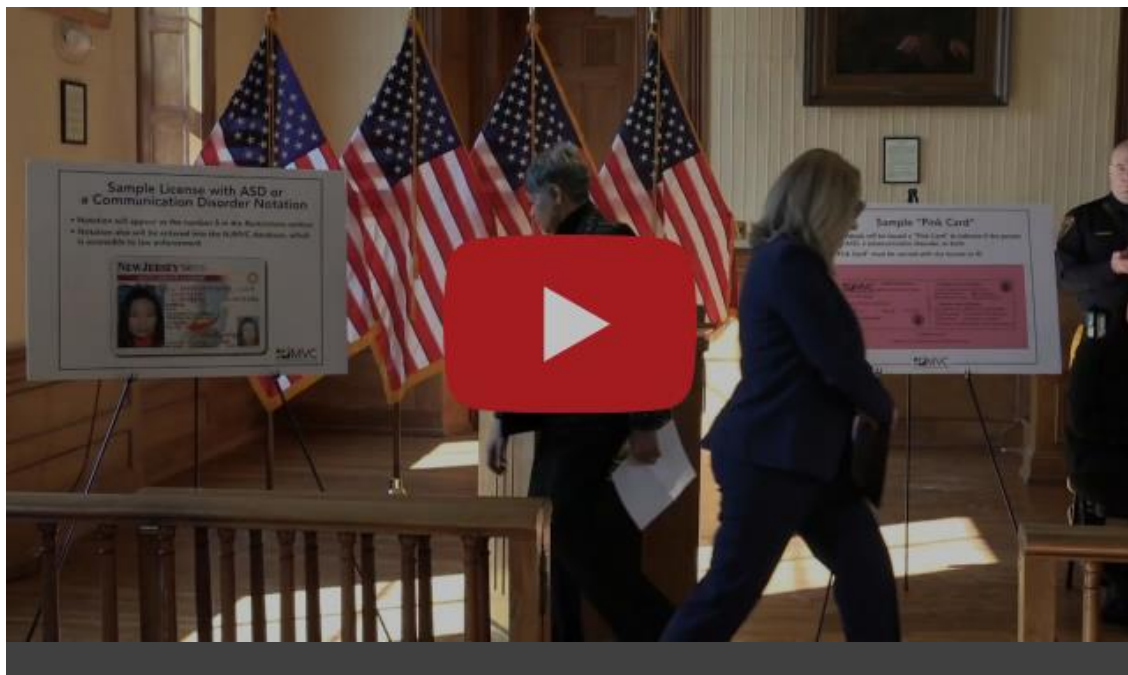
The guidance can be found [here](#).

“Law enforcement often interact with individuals in stressful circumstances, making clear communication essential. Individuals with autism and other communication disorders often have different communication needs they may not be able to express and which may go unrecognized today. This guidance provides law enforcement with information and education that can help prevent

potential misunderstandings or conflict, as well as build trust and understanding. Recognizing when individuals may need accommodations to help them communicate effectively and having the knowledge and tools to modify communication helps prevent escalation and leads to better outcomes,”
said Commissioner Adelman.

“This effort aims to expand the perspectives of law enforcement officers by redefining what is considered 'typical' versus 'suspicious' behavior. Interactions improve when officers recognize and adapt to diverse communication needs, ensuring that all individuals are truly understood,” **said Deputy Commissioner for Aging and Disability Services Kaylee McGuire.**

Read more [HERE](#).



FROM COMMISSIONER SARAH ADELMAN:

“ The proposed federal Medicaid funding changes would have devastating consequences for New Jersey residents, health care systems and providers. Our Medicaid program ensures that 1.8 million New Jerseyans - children, working families, older adults, and individuals with disabilities - receive critical health care services. Reductions in federal funding, whether through cuts to matching rates or eligibility restrictions, could result in billions of dollars in lost support, jeopardizing access to care, forcing difficult choices in provider payments, and straining our state's health care infrastructure.

It's crucial for stakeholders, advocates, policymakers, and recipients to fully understand the potential repercussions on health care and services if these proposals are enacted into law. We urge Congressional leaders to protect the integrity of Medicaid and uphold the commitment to those who rely on it every day.



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Human Services Seeks Proposals to Expand PACE to Serve Older Adults in All 21 Counties

Human Services issued two requests for proposals to establish a [Program of All-Inclusive Care for the Elderly \(PACE\)](#) in Hunterdon County and in Morris, Sussex, and Warren Counties, the remaining counties currently without a PACE program.

PACE is an innovative program that provides individuals 55 years of age or older with comprehensive medical and social services. The care is coordinated and provided by an interdisciplinary team of professionals in a community-based center and in their homes.

“PACE connects older residents with specific health needs to vital health and social services that can help delay or avoid admission to long-term care facilities. This is the last step to achieving our goal of expanding PACE as an option to older adults in every county of New Jersey,” **said Commissioner Sarah Adelman.**

“Expanding PACE means more older New Jerseyans will have access to critical services that can help them remain in their homes longer. I encourage qualified providers to apply,” **said Deputy Commissioner of Aging and Disability**

Services Kaylee McGuire.

“The Division manages PACE and many other programs beneficial to older residents and caregivers. People interested in more information can scroll through our [program guide](#) or our website at aging.nj.gov,” **said Assistant**

Commissioner for Aging Services Louise Rush.

Read More [HERE](#).

**Inclusive Healthy
Communities**
NJ Division of Disability Services



**NJ Human Services Opens Fourth Round of
Grant Funding to Create Inclusive and Healthy Communities
for Individuals with Disabilities**

New Jersey Human Services called on non-profits and local county or municipal government agencies to apply for the 2025 [Inclusive Healthy Communities Grant Program \(IHC\)](#) to help communities across New Jersey support the health and well-being of individuals with disabilities where they live, work, learn and play.

First launched in January 2021, the IHC Grant Program is an initiative spearheaded by the Human Services' [Division of Disability Services \(DDS\)](#) to support communities and ensure that the voices and needs of people with disabilities are included in healthy community planning. A core principle of the IHC grant program is the concept of advancing policy, systems and environmental change. The grantees work towards systemic change.

[The Bloustein School of Planning and Public Policy](#) at Rutgers University partners with DDS to manage the program and provide technical assistance to grant recipients in implementing projects across New Jersey.

“Since the launch of the IHC Grant Program four years ago, forward-thinking organizations have made significant progress in advancing disability inclusion and improving health outcomes for individuals with disabilities in the places in which they live and work,” **said Commissioner Sarah Adelman.**

“This additional investment further strengthens New Jersey’s position as a national leader in inclusion, where individuals with disabilities can live free from stigma and barriers. At Human Services, we believe that through inclusion we help improve our communities and the health of all New Jerseyans,” **said Deputy Commissioner for Aging and Disability Services Kaylee McGuire.** “It is through collaborative action that foundational and meaningful change can be made.”

“Nearly one in four adults in New Jersey lives with a disability and, across the United States, approximately 61 million individuals face similar challenges. People with disabilities often encounter disparities in critical areas that impact their health and well-being—disparities we are committed to addressing. Through this ongoing initiative, we are working to empower communities to develop inclusive resources and practices, enabling individuals with disabilities to achieve better health outcomes,” **said DDS Executive Director Peri L. Nearon.** “We take pride in our ongoing efforts to enhance the quality of life for

all New Jersey residents. We look forward to a fourth cohort joining our efforts to continue driving foundational change across the state.”

Letters of intent were due by Feb. 14, with further grant announcements to be made soon.

Read more [HERE](#).

Turn Compassion into a Career!

BECOME A CERTIFIED HOME HEALTH AIDE



NJ Certified
**Home Health
Aide Career**



*Supported in part by the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services
(CMS) of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS)*

Human Services and Rutgers University Launch Scholarship, Mentoring, & Training Programs to Recruit and Retain More Certified Home Health Aides

As part of continued efforts to grow New Jersey's home - and community-based services workforce, the Department of Human Services has partnered with the John J. Heldrich Center for Workforce Development at Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey to offer scholarships to individuals interested in

becoming certified home health aides (CHHAs) and provide specialized training to supplement the skills of those currently in the field.

Through \$2.8 million in federal funds, the Certified Home Health Aide Career Program will offer scholarship, mentoring, and specialized training programs to help recruit and support current and future CHHAs.

“Through this partnership, we are empowering individuals to pursue meaningful careers in care,” **said Commissioner Sarah Adelman.** “If you are interested in helping and caring for people as a career path, this program will cover training costs and certification fees; provide financial incentives to help with expenses like child care, transportation and food; and will connect you to a job once the training is complete. I encourage anyone who wants to join this critical workforce—and those already in the field who want to gain new skills—to take advantage of this opportunity and apply.”

“Growing this workforce is essential for our communities. By removing potential barriers and making it easier for people to become CHHAs, we can improve access to care and enhance quality of life for people with medical needs and older residents,” **said Deputy Commissioner for Aging and Disability Services Kaylee McGuire.**

"Certified home health aides provide a critical service to older residents who wish to remain in their homes. They not only provide care and support, but also companionship. If you or someone you know has an interest in this work, this is a great opportunity to enter a competitive field and make a lasting impact,” **said Louise Rush, Assistant Commissioner for the Division of Aging Services.** Read more [HERE](#).



**Learn more about the Certified Home Health Aide
Career Program - English**



**Aprenda más sobre el Programa Profesional de
Asistentes de Salud en el Hogar Certificados:
Español**



**Learn more about the Certified Home Health Aide
Career Program - Audio Description**



NEED HELP WITH CHILD CARE?

New Jersey's child care assistance program helps eligible families pay for child care costs, find available child care options and more.

Visit **www.childcarenj.gov** to learn more.

Governor Murphy Unveils Proposal to Align Preschool and Child Care Facilities Standards, Bolstering State's Mixed Delivery Model

Governor Phil Murphy announced a cross-agency effort spanning the New Jersey Department of Education, the New Jersey Department of Children and Families, and the New Jersey Department of Human Services to align preschool and child care square footage requirements to a single standard.

This move aims to bolster the state's mixed delivery model by addressing one of the most frequently cited barriers faced by local education and child care officials as communities across New Jersey look to establish or expand state-funded preschool and child care programs. Mixed delivery refers to serving three-to-four-year-old children in classroom settings that meet all State regulations, and are operated by a combination of school districts, Head Start programs, and private providers.

“Our mixed delivery model has played a key role in our rapid expansion of preschool seats. By working together, school districts, Head Start administrators, and licensed private providers are able to better meet the diverse needs of our communities. We know that access to local, high-quality preschool and child care options is crucial for New Jersey families. Not only do these services ease financial burdens on working parents, they also help our young children start to develop social skills and an educational foundation that will aid them throughout their academic careers,” **said Governor Murphy..**

“Aligning standards makes preschool expansion accessible across the early childcare industry, helps futureproof the state’s early childhood ecosystem, and represents another step we’re taking to keep New Jersey as the best place to raise a family.”

“Affordable, high-quality child care is essential to the state’s economic health and crucial for New Jersey families to thrive. This proposed rule will expand access to care through the ability of more private providers to partner with local school districts under the State’s Pre-School Program,” said **Commissioner Sarah Adelman said**. “The change to the classroom space requirement is a perfect example of how state agencies can work together to adjust to the changing landscape of care for our three- and four-year-old children. Parents will now have more choices when considering where their children play, learn, and grow during this crucial developmental period.”

Read more [HERE](#)



Human Services' [Division of Family Development](#) and New Jersey Courts hosted the 43rd annual Child Support Training Conference in Atlantic City. This past year, the child support workforce collected nearly \$1 billion for New Jersey children and modernized technology to make it easier for parents and employers to participate.



Deputy Commissioner for Health Services Valerie Mielke and Deputy
Commissioner for Social Services Michael J. Wilson joined
Governor Phil Murphy and First Lady Tammy Murphy at Drumthwacket for
a celebration of Black History Month.



[The Division of Aging Services](#) hosted a listening session on February 12th for New Jersey residents to provide input into the state's plans for services to older residents and their caregivers for 2025-2029.

To watch, visit [HERE](#).



The [New Jersey State Human Services Police](#) welcomed Officer Michael Brown to its ranks. Officer Brown successfully completed the Ocean County Police Academy – Basic Course for Police Officers Class #119.



Commissioner Adelman and Deputy Commissioner for Health Services Valerie Mielke joined [Rutgers Health University Behavioral Health Care](#) President & CEO Dr. Frank Ghinassi, Vice President Mary-Catherine Bohan MSW, and [Rutgers Biomedical and Health Sciences \(RBHS\)](#) Chancellor Brian Strom to cut the ribbon on the Center for Recovery and Wellness in Plainfield. Commissioner Adelman provided remarks about the importance of the 44-bed substance use recovery facility to the community.



Executive Director of the [Division for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing](#) Elizabeth Hill joined officials at the [Newark Public Library](#) for a ribbon cutting introducing a pair of new rooms intended to provide people with hearing and visual impairments expanded access to information with the addition of 40 workstations.



Deputy Commissioner for Aging and Disability Services Kaylee McGuire, [Division of Developmental Disabilities](#) (DDD) Assistant Commissioner Jonathan Seifried, and DDD staff members rolled 476 packets of utensils in support of the Trenton Area Soup Kitchen (TASK).

To support visit TASK, visit [HERE](#).



NJ Human Services in coordination with [Burlington County Office of Emergency Management](#) and [Ocean County College](#) recently delivered the Pathways to Preparedness - Train the Trainer course. Attendees of the course will be able to deliver the training to their respective communities, which focuses on disaster preparedness for the disabilities, access and functional needs community. The training was developed in coordination with the [NJ Statewide Independent Living Council](#).

For more information on this training, please contact our [Office of Emergency Management](#) at 609-631-4363 or email eocesf6@njsp.gov.

KNOW YOUR RIGHTS:

Every person who lives in or visits New Jersey has rights regardless of their citizenship or immigration status.



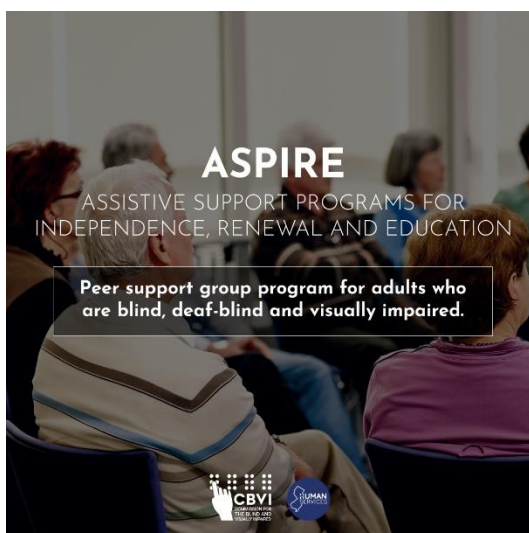
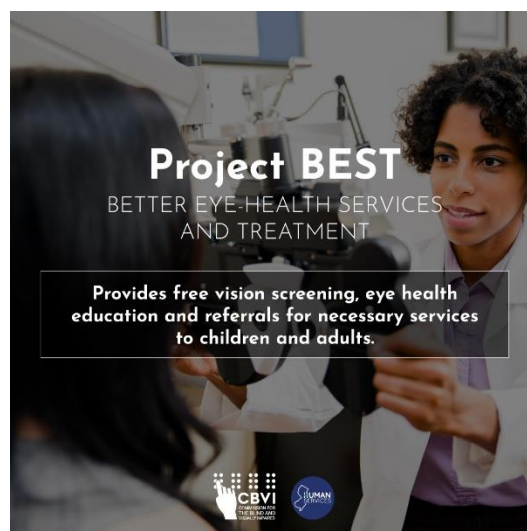
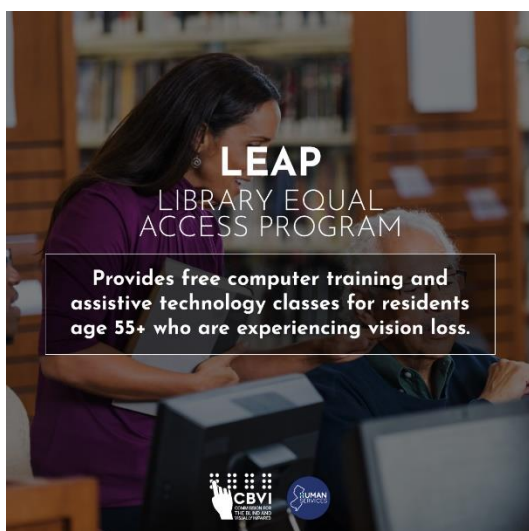
Understand your rights and responsibilities when interacting with immigration enforcement officers, primarily ICE or U.S. Customs and Border Protection officers. Learn more [HERE](#).

February 21st was

National Caregivers Day.

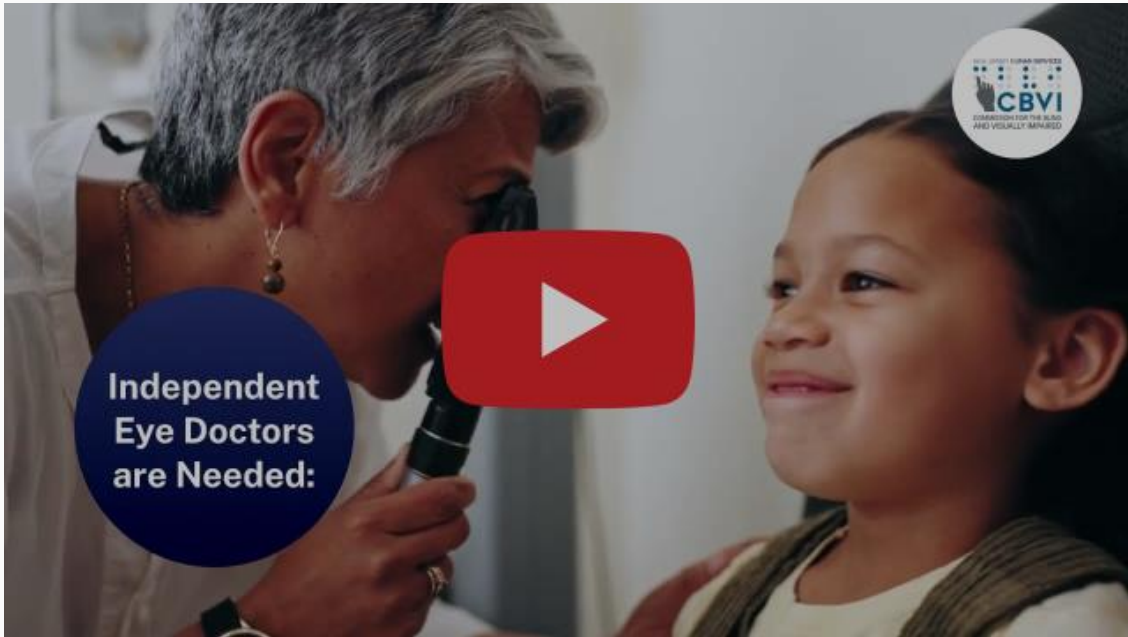
NJ Human Services thanks all caregivers for providing dedicated support to people with disabilities, older adults & those who are chronically ill, often at great cost to themselves. For resources & supports visit [HERE](#).





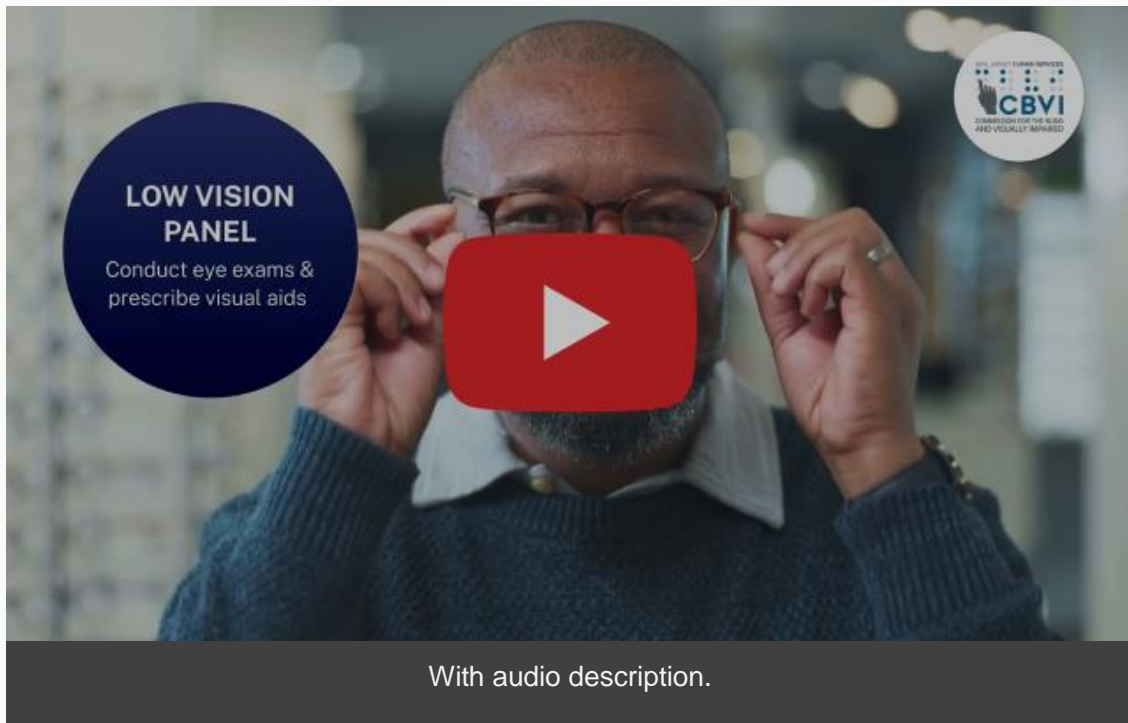
February was **Low Vision Month**. Low vision is the term used to describe significant visual impairment that cannot be corrected fully with glasses, contact lenses, medication or eye surgery. [The Commission for the Blind and Visually Impaired \(CBVI\)](#) will help people with low vision acquire visual aides appropriate for their degree of vision loss in social situations, at work, school, and when involved in leisure time or recreational activities.

For more info on the CBVI programs above, visit [HERE](#).



The Commission for the Blind and Visually Impaired's Project B.E.S.T. program works to save sight and restore vision when medically possible. It's looking to contract optometrists and ophthalmologists to work with its mobile eye examination unit to help improve vision health in NJ.

Learn more [HERE](#).



Create a **Disability Inclusive Workplace**



From hiring qualified employees to workplace accessibility assessments, CBVI's Business Relations Unit can help you create an inclusive work environment for deaf, deaf-blind, and vision impaired individuals. Learn more [HERE](#).

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

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