

New Student Loan Redemption Program to Support Home and Community-Based Workers

As part of a continued effort to improve and expand the home and communitybased services workforce, the Department of <u>Human Services</u>, Department of Children and Families, and the Higher Education Student Assistance Authority unveiled a new student loan redemption program to benefit health care, behavioral health, and social services professionals serving those with medical needs, behavioral and/or mental health conditions, and disabilities.

Under the new Home and Community-Based Services Provider Loan Redemption Program, eligible workers can receive up to \$50,000 in loan relief in exchange for one year of service at an approved home- and communitybased services provider agency or as a self-directed employee.

Applications open July 1 for a 30-day period. Eligible program participants who submit a complete and accurate application will be selected by October 1 on a first-come, first-serve basis.

For more information on the program and to apply once the application opens, visit <u>here</u>.

"Uplifting our healthcare workers is mission-critical to delivering on the needs of New Jersey residents. This student loan redemption program further bolsters our home and community-based services workforce, and it is key in supporting qualified service providers to bring their skills and expertise to communities across the state," **Governor Phil Murphy said.** "In addition to alleviating the financial burdens of this workforce, this program also builds the capacity to deliver care in the community for more New Jerseyans. I applaud DHS Commissioner Sarah Adelman, DCF Commissioner Christine Norbut Beyer, and HESAA Executive Director Margo Chaly for their work to make this program a reality."

"We continue to invest in innovative approaches to strengthen and prioritize independence and person-centered care that will help individuals live in their own homes and remain active in their communities," **Commissioner Sarah Adelman said**. "This new student loan redemption program will benefit caregivers who provide vital supports to people with disabilities and with behavioral health needs, as well as older adults living in the community. Supporting our care workers must be a priority."

"At the Department of Children and Families, we are committed to a robust network of in-community and in-home services, so that families can stay together while they access the treatment or support solutions that best meet their needs," <u>Children and Families</u> Commissioner Christine Norbut Beyer, **MSW, said.** "In partnership with DHS and HESAA, offering this loan redemption program is one part of a multi-level strategy to ensure that our contracted service providers can compete for the highly competent, well-trained workforce that New Jersey children, youth, and families deserve. These care workers help our families to heal from adversity and trauma, to strengthen the bonds of family and community, and to achieve their utmost potential – to be safe, healthy, and connected in all that they do."

"Our team is pleased to work in partnership with DHS and DCF to help bolster social services and health care workforces in New Jersey," <u>Higher Education</u>

<u>Student Assistance Authority</u> Executive Director Margo Chaly, Esq. said. "As with all student loan redemption programs that HESAA administers, the goal of this new program is to encourage professionals to start and continue working in high-need fields. By incentivizing eligible experts to serve in home and community-based settings, our state will ensure more residents can receive the mental health and social supports that they need."

Professionals eligible to apply include psychiatrists, licensed psychologists, licensed social workers, licensed clinical social workers, psychiatric nurse mental health clinical specialists, board certified behavior analysts, board certified behavior analysts-doctoral, licensed clinical or certified alcohol and drug counselors, licensed professional and associate counselors, licensed or associate marriage and family therapists, DCF care managers, registered nurses, and licensed practical nurses. Self-directed employees are also eligible to apply.

"We are proud to offer this new benefit to dedicated workers who support individuals with disabilities and older adults in the community," Deputy
Commissioner for Aging and Disability Services Kaylee McGuire said.
"Creative steps such as a loan redemption program will help attract and retain workers and build a stronger foundation for the future."

Read more <u>HERE</u>.

NEW JERSEY HUMAN SERVICES



NJFAM LYCARE

Human Services Commissioner Names Two New Assistant Commissioners to Oversee Mental Health & Addiction Services and NJ FamilyCare

Commissioner Sarah Adelman named new leaders for two critical Human Services divisions. Assistant Commissioner Renee Burawski will lead the Division of Mental Health and Addiction Services, and Assistant Commissioner Gregory Woods will lead the Division of Medical Assistance and Health Services that administers NJ FamilyCare, the state Medicaid program.

Burawski becomes Assistant Commissioner following Valerie Mielke, who was <u>recently</u> elevated to Deputy Commissioner for Health Services. Woods replaces Jennifer Langer Jacobs, who after five years leading the state's Medicaid program is leaving state service for new opportunities.

"I am thrilled to announce Renee and Greg as new Assistant Commissioners

and I am grateful for their continued and expanded leadership within NJ Human Services," **Commissioner Adelman said**. "Both have been invaluable members of our team, and their knowledge and experience has fueled many of our most important initiatives. I look forward to their continued contributions as they oversee two vital divisions of Human Services."

"I thank Commissioner Adelman for this opportunity, and am excited at the chance to follow in Deputy Commissioner Mielke's footsteps and help guide New Jersey through the challenges of making quality mental health and addiction services available to those in need," **Assistant Commissioner Burawski said**. "Deputy Commissioner Mielke's steadfast leadership has helped countless New Jersey residents through many difficult challenges, and we will work hard to build on her legacy. The great thing about DMHAS is it's all about saving lives, and we have taken strides to eliminate barriers to care and make resources accessible, but we know there's always more work to do. I look forward to working with the amazing team at DMHAS to continue finding ways to improve and save lives and ensure quality care is available for New Jerseyans in need."

"I thank Commissioner Adelman for her confidence in me, and look forward to working with the talented team that oversees NJ FamilyCare to make sure our programs and services continue to meet our members' health care needs in the best way possible," **Assistant Commissioner Woods said**. "I also thank Assistant Commissioner Jacobs for being an exemplary friend, mentor and leader who has strongly positioned DMAHS for success going forward. We have much work to do, and I'm excited to get started and continue to find new approaches to provide high quality care for those who rely on NJ FamilyCare." Commissioner Adelman praised Jacobs' services to the people of New Jersey and noted she will be missed.

"Jenn's leadership has been nothing short of extraordinary as she guided NJ FamilyCare and its more than 2 million members through a global pandemic while continuing to advance many of our most important initiatives and accomplishments here at NJ Human Services," Commissioner Adelman said.
"Jenn has improved Medicaid vendor performance, advanced managed care accountability and turned innovative ideas into reality, such as Cover All Kids and expanding coverage for pregnant women as part of our efforts to make New Jersey the safest place to have a baby. The work has been challenging, but Jenn was always up to the task, with a seemingly never-ending supply of knowledge, experience and patience. She will be missed and her legacy will be long-lasting. Thanks to Jenn, we will have generations of healthier New Jerseyans positioned to succeed and thrive."

Read more <u>HERE</u>.



New Jersey Distributes Summer EBT Benefits

With already more than 550,000 children across the state receiving their Summer EBT benefits, New Jersey Secretary of Agriculture Ed Wengryn has encouraged families who have not already done so to apply for the new Summer Electronic Benefit Transfer (<u>Summer EBT</u>) program.

New Jersey is one of the 37 states participating in this new, permanent, nationwide USDA program to provide food dollars to low-income families with school-aged children over the summer months.

Human Services' <u>Division of Family Development</u> has been issuing eligible families new benefit cards. Each eligible child will be provided with a card. Families will be able to use the \$120 per child on each card immediately.

Recipients can check their account balance by

visiting <u>www.NJFamiliesFirst.com</u> or by calling the phone number on the back of their card. This funding will be issued only one time and can be used over the summer months to purchase all SNAP eligible food items.

"School meal programs are vital for New Jersey's children and families, so we are thrilled to be able to make a summer meal benefit available in partnership with the Departments of Agriculture and Education," **Commissioner Sarah**

Adelman said. "The Summer EBT program will help families purchase groceries during the summer months, so children continue to have access to healthy meals while they are out of school. Families enrolled in SNAP, TANF or the school lunch programs are automatically eligible for Summer EBT. Families who do not participate in these programs, but may benefit from this assistance, can visit the Summer EBT website to check their eligibility and learn how to apply."

Read more <u>HERE</u>.

Council on Compulsive Gambling of NJ 800-GANBLER®

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Governor Phil Murphy recently signed Executive Order No. 360 establishing a Responsible Gaming Task Force responsible for providing advice and recommendations to the Governor's Office and to the Attorney General regarding reforms to support responsible gaming and to address problem gambling in New Jersey.

A rise in problem gambling has been observed over the past few years, according to a <u>2023 report</u> from the Rutgers University Center for Gambling Studies. The Rutgers study estimated that 6 percent of New Jersey residents are at high risk for problem gambling, which is significantly higher than the national average of 1-2 percent, with the highest rates affecting Black/African American or Hispanic residents. "New Jersey is known to be a gaming destination with historic locations like Atlantic City, amusement gaming at the Jersey Shore, notable horse racing venues, and more," **Governor Murphy said.** "This Task Force will see to it that we maintain our global leadership in gaming by ensuring that we have the tools needed to address problem gaming for our residents."

Members of the Task Force will consist of seven government representatives or their designees, including:

- 1. The Attorney General, who shall serve as Chair;
- 2. The Commissioner of the Department of Human Services.
- 3. The Chair of the New Jersey Casino Control Commission;
- 4. The Director of the New Jersey Division of Consumer Affairs;
- 5. The Director of the New Jersey Division of Gaming Enforcement;
- 6. The Director of the Division of State Lottery; and
- 7. The Executive Director of the New Jersey Racing Commission.

A final report from the Task Force will be due to the Governor's Office by March 31.

To view Executive Order No. 360, <u>click here</u>.



NJ Human Services Awards Contracts to Expand Access to Crisis Services in Morris, Bergen, Essex, Monmouth & Camden Counties

Human Services Commissioner Sarah Adelman announced the Department has awarded \$37 million in contracts to create new Crisis Receiving Stabilization Centers (CRSC) in Morris, Bergen, Essex, Monmouth and Camden counties to provide services to people in need of immediate in-person crisis intervention and stabilization for behavioral health crises.

Contracts of \$6.9 million each were awarded to Center for Family Services in Morris County, Care Plus NJ in Bergen County, Rutgers Health, UBHC in Essex County, Monmouth Medical Center in Monmouth County and Legacy Treatment Services in Camden County. Each award includes up to \$400,000 in one-time start-up funds for items such as medication refrigerators and furniture to create a safe and welcoming environment; and up to \$166,666 in capital funds for acquisition, construction, reconstruction, development, and leasehold improvements. This initiative is funded with state and federal funds. "These centers offer a no-wrong-door access to crisis stabilization, meaning anyone in distress can go there and get immediate help," **said Commissioner Sarah Adelman.** "This initiative continues our efforts to address the three pillars of the 988 continuum of crisis services in New Jersey—someone to call, someone to respond, and somewhere safe to go. These CRSCs, 'the place to go,' will expand access to treatment in these counties and connect residents experiencing a mental health or substance use-related crisis with services and supports to mitigate that crisis."

"Psychiatric emergency data shows that less than 40 percent of the individuals who go to the emergency room in psychiatric crisis require inpatient treatment," said Assistant Commissioner Renee Burawski, who oversees the Division of Mental Health and Addiction Services. "CRSCs reduce unnecessary visits to the emergency department and hospitalizations by providing alternatives to traditional crisis services. They also help reduce the need for police involvement." Read more <u>HERE</u>.



Hudson County Uses NJ Human Services Inclusive Healthy Communities Grant to Prepare Young Adults with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities for the Workplace

<u>The Hudson County Office of Inclusion and Accessibility</u>, in collaboration with local partners, has expanded employment training for young adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities (I/DD). The initiative is funded in part by an Inclusive Healthy Communities grant from the Human Services' <u>Division of Disability Services</u>.

Inclusive Healthy Communities (<u>IHC</u>) is a grant program that was established in 2020 to help communities and organizations engage in projects that promote the health and well-being of individuals with disabilities (I/DD) in the communities where they live.

"We are proud to partner with Hudson County on this innovative initiative where

young adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities have the opportunity to go through a workforce training program as they transition from school to a professional work setting," **Human Services Commissioner Sarah Adelman** said. "Through this program, individuals with I/DD will learn key skills to have autonomy and independence over their lives in the places where they live, work, and play."

"Through the IHC grant program, we are working to ensure spaces throughout the state are accessible for all, and that includes employment settings," **Human Services Deputy Commissioner for Aging and Disability Services Kaylee McGuire** said. "Diversity in our workforce leads to a more inclusive and dynamic society, where young adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities will be able to thrive in their chosen careers."

"The transition from school to work can be extremely difficult for young people with intellectual and developmental disabilities, especially if it's been some time since they graduated from the school system, and they no longer have the structure of a day-to-day routine," said **Peri L. Nearon, Division of Disability Services executive director**. "Project SEARCH bridges that gap and is helping create a more inclusive workforce by providing an opportunity to gain essential skills in a supportive, real-world work environment."

Read more <u>HERE</u>.



Commissioner Sarah Adelman went on <u>"Think Tank with Steve Adubato"</u> to discuss Murphy Administration <u>plans</u> to allocate more than \$95 million from New Jersey's Opioid Recovery and Remediation Fund to support critical programs tackling the opioid crisis, connecting New Jerseyans with tools to reduce overdoses and other harms of substance use, and supporting the treatment and recovery of residents struggling with substance use disorders. At the recommendation of the State's Opioid Recovery and Remediation Advisory Council and with extensive input from the public, six programs addressing four priority areas – harm reduction, prevention and recovery support, treatment, and housing – have been identified to receive funding over the next two to three years.



WNJ Age-Friendly Blueprint Announcement

NJ Human Services announced the statewide Age-Friendly Blueprint which provides strategies and best practices to improve New Jersey's communities for older adults and enable people to remain in their homes and communities as they age. Also announced was a grant program which dedicates \$5.5 million dollars to help NJ communities advance Age-Friendly practices, prioritizing those in the Blueprint. The grant program is expected to launch later this year.

Read the blueprint <u>HERE</u>.

Commissioner Sarah Adelman was joined by <u>NJ Department of</u> <u>Community Affairs</u> Commissioner Jacquelyn A Suárez, <u>NJ Department of</u> <u>Health</u> Deputy Commissioner Jeff Brown, Teaneck Mayor Michael Pagan, <u>Age-Friendly Teaneck</u> Executive Director Elizabeth Davis and <u>AARP NJ</u> State Director Chris Widelo to release the NJ Age-Friendly Blueprint.

World Refugee Day Celebration

NJ Human Services Commissioner Sarah Adelman, Deputy Commissioner for Social Services Michael J. Wilson and Office of New Americans Director Johanna Calle and staff, celebrated the day with a ceremony highlighting refugees who call New Jersey home and thanking resettlement agencies and social services networks who welcome refugees settling across New Jersey. Check out our highlight video and photos below!



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To see photo album of the World Refugee Day Ceremony, click <u>HERE</u>.



NJ Human Services Commissioner Sarah Adelman and Deputy Commissioner for Aging and Disability Services Kaylee McGuire joined The Arc of NJ to help celebrate its 75th anniversary and hail it for promoting the rights of individuals with intellectual & developmental disabilities. Governor Phil Murphy was honored with The Arc of New Jersey's President's Award.









Commissioner Sarah Adelman

and Deputy Commissioner for Health Services Valerie Mielke were honored to join the ribbon cutting of the Brandt Behavioral Health Treatment Center & Retreat at <u>Rutgers University–New Brunswick</u>.

They also toured the innovative facility, which will serve youth & young adults. Learn more about the

Brandt Behavioral Health Treatment Center & Retreat HERE.











Commissioner Sarah Adelman, Deputy Commissioner for Aging and Disability Services Kaylee McGuire, <u>Commission for the Blind and Visually Impaired</u> (CBVI) Executive Director Dr. Bernice Davis, CBVI staff, and Green Brook Regional Center leadership and staff hiked the Watchung Reservation Sensory Friendly Trail in Union County.

The Sensory Friendly Trail is accessible to all visitors and is designed with features that enable individuals with disabilities to experience their natural surroundings. Features include signs with braille, accessible trails, and a sensory garden.





Staff from the <u>Division of Developmental Disabilities' (DDD) Office of Transition</u> <u>to Adult Life and Employment</u> volunteered this weekend at the Special Olympics NJ 2024 Summer Games, held at The College of New Jersey in Ewing. Coordinated by DDD Statewide Transition Director Nkechi Okoli, DDD volunteers assisted with the bocce and swimming events and shared information about DDD services available to NJ adults age 21+ with intellectual and/or developmental disabilities to support them to live, work and participate in their communities. To learn more about DDD services visit <u>HERE</u>.



Congratulations to NJ Human Services Deputy Commissioner for Health Services Valerie Mielke, who was the recipient of The <u>National Association of</u> <u>State Alcohol & Drug Abuse Directors</u> (NASADAD) Service Award for 2024. The NASADAD Service Award is given to a single state agency who has contributed outstanding service to the Association.



New Jersey has been in a leader in disaster response programming and innovation, so please check out the latest edition of <u>SAMHSA</u>'s 'The

Dialogue' for an article by **Steve Crimando** of Human Services' <u>Disaster and</u> <u>Terrorism Branch</u> on the impact of climate change on behavioral health. Read it <u>here</u> starting on page 5.



A look at NJ Human Services <u>Division of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing</u> Executive Director Elizabeth Hill at the 6th <u>International Conference on Family-</u> <u>Centered Early Intervention</u> (FCEI) for Children who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing in Bad Ischl, Austria. Director Hill and Dr. Matt Hall, with Temple University, presented a poster session on DDHH's Language Instruction Program. Learn more about our Language Instruction Program <u>HERE</u>. Learn more about FCEI <u>HERE</u>.



NJ Human Services' <u>Division of Aging Services</u> was on hand for Burlington County 22nd Annual Senior Expo. Staff was on hand to help older adults get information on our various programs and services.



AUTISTIC PRIDE DAY

JUNE 18TH

June 18th was Autistic Pride Day! It's a day meant to promote awareness and increase understanding of autism. Learn more about the services and programs NJ Human Services provides to individuals diagnosed with <u>autism spectrum disorder</u> throughout the year. For more information visit <u>HERE</u>.



NJ Human Services is committed to a more equitable future for all. We commemorate not only the historic significance of Juneteenth, but acknowledge the ongoing work that must be done to eradicate systemic racism and inequity.



Statewide **RESPITE CARE** Program

Provides respite care services to relieve caregivers of stress from providing daily care. This respite may be provided for a short time, or once in a while. Services can include adult day care, home care, companion services, campership, or a short stay in a facility.

For more information, call the Aging and Disability Resource Connection at 1-877-222-3737

In honor of **Alzheimer's And Brain Awareness Month**, NJ Human Services is happy to highlight the <u>Division of Aging Services</u>' Statewide Respite Care Program. Respite care provides caregivers a temporary rest from caregiving, call 1-877-222-3737 Or visit our website <u>HERE.</u>



NJ Human Services offers numerous services and supports for our children throughout the state. Healthcare and Autism Services - njfamilycare.org

Child Care childcarenj.gov

Child Support njchildsupport.org

DDHH Language Instruction https://bit.ly/3xoQRXq

CBVI Educational Services https://bit.ly/3xlxxKJ

Immigration Legal Help https://bit.ly/3WXUD6A

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