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NEWSLETTER | MAY 2024



Valerie Mielke

Deputy Commissioner for Health Services



Michael J. Wilson

Deputy Commissioner for Social Services

Commissioner Adelman Announces Two New Deputy Commissioners for NJ Human Services

Commissioner Sarah Adelman announced two new Deputy Commissioners will join NJ Human Services' senior leadership team to oversee medical and behavioral health services, social services and emergency management. Commissioner Adelman named Michael J. Wilson as Deputy

Commissioner for Social Services and Valerie Mielke as Deputy Commissioner for Health Services.

Wilson joins Human Services after serving as executive director of Baltimore-based Maryland Hunger Solutions since 2013, where he developed and led efforts to increase access to nutritious foods and eliminate hunger in schools and communities. He has worked with state agencies on the [Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program](#) (SNAP) and the Women, Infants and Children program (WIC), including successfully advocating before the Maryland General Assembly for expanded school meals.

In his new role, Wilson will oversee the [Division of Family Development, Office of New Americans](#) and Human Services' [Office of Emergency Management](#).

“Michael brings decades of leadership experience and policy expertise that align so perfectly with the NJ Human Service mission,” **Commissioner Adelman said.** “Michael is visionary and solutions-focused and will be a valuable asset in New Jersey as he has been in Maryland. We are excited to welcome him to New Jersey and to our team.”

“New Jersey is a national leader when it comes to addressing hunger and food insecurity, providing social services and ensuring our newest neighbors have access to vital services for which they are eligible, and I’m excited to continue this great work,” **Deputy Commissioner Wilson said.** “I’m thrilled to be joining these efforts and building upon this strong foundation.”

Mielke has been the Assistant Commissioner leading Human Services' [Division of Mental Health and Addiction Services](#), where she has been responsible for the coordination, administration, management and supervision of the community mental health system, and regulating, monitoring, planning and funding of substance use prevention, treatment and recovery support services.

Mielke holds a Bachelor of Arts degree from Fairfield University and a Master of Social Work degree from Rutgers University, and has been with the state for 20 years.

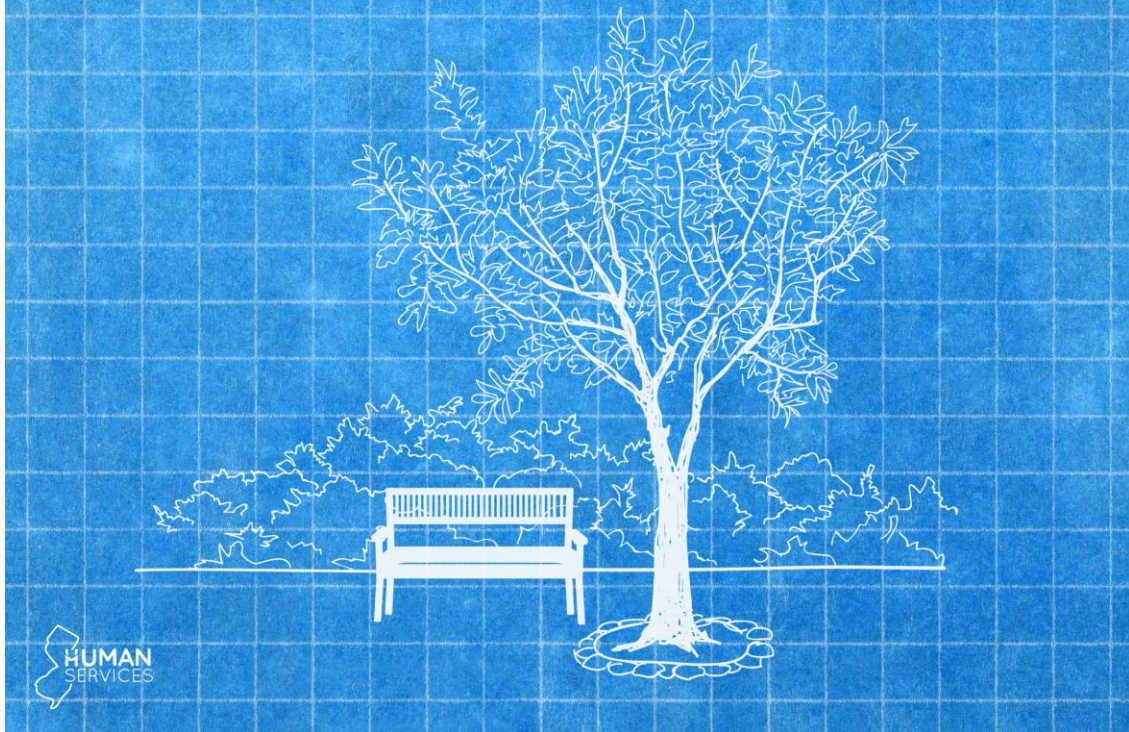
In her new role, Mielke will oversee the Division of Mental Health and Addiction Services and the [Division of Medical Assistance and Health Services](#), which manages the [NJFamilyCare](#) health insurance program that serves about 2 million residents. NJ FamilyCare is New Jersey's Medicaid program. She will also oversee the Department's work on First Lady Murphy's Nurture NJ maternal health initiative and will support the Catastrophic Illness in Children's Relief Fund.

"Valerie's experience and commitment to the health of New Jersey residents is second to none, and her leadership, compassion and innovative approach have kept New Jersey on the cutting-edge of services, including our innovative naloxone distribution programs and the successful launch of the 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline," **Commissioner Adelman said.** "As a long valued leader on our team, I'm thrilled to announce Valerie's expanded role."

"I look forward to continuing our efforts to ensure all New Jerseyans have as much barrier-free access to mental health, addiction and health care services as possible," **Deputy Commissioner Mielke said.** "I thank Commissioner Adelman for showing this trust in me, and look forward to our future efforts to build a healthier New Jersey for everyone."

Read more [HERE](#).

NEW JERSEY HUMAN SERVICES AGE-FRIENDLY BLUEPRINT



Human Services Releases Age-Friendly Blueprint, Announces Grant Program to Help Communities Implement Strategies to Make NJ More Age-Friendly

With New Jersey's older adult population steadily growing, Human Services released the [NJ 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.

The Department also announced the dedication of \$5.5 million to launch an Age-Friendly Community Grant Program to help communities advance Age-Friendly practices, prioritizing those in the Blueprint. The grant program is expected to launch later this year.

"The NJ Age-Friendly Blueprint and grant program reaffirms our commitment to supporting New Jerseyans at every stage of life," said **Governor Phil Murphy**. "These important strategies and best practices will help us ensure that New Jersey's communities are age-friendly, accessible, and inclusive. In New Jersey, we will continue to work to help enhance the quality of life for every resident, regardless of age."

Human Services Commissioner Sarah Adelman made the announcement at the Brookdale Senior Apartments in Teaneck during an event to commemorate Older Americans Month. She was joined by Teaneck Mayor Michael Pagan, Department of Community Affairs Commissioner Jacquelyn A. Suarez, Department of Health Deputy Commissioner Jeff Brown, Age-Friendly Teaneck Executive Director Elizabeth Davis, and AARP New Jersey State Director Chris Widelo.

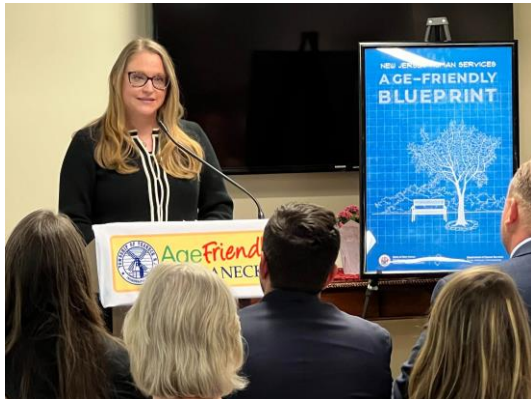
"New Jersey, like the rest of the country, is at the threshold of an enormous demographic shift. The growth in our older adult population is an opportunity to make our communities more inclusive and integrated – it is not a problem to solve, but a chance to rethink how we want to live, work, and engage in our communities throughout the lifespan," said **Commissioner Adelman**. "The Blueprint coupled with the grant program will enable communities to make strategic changes that will have a lasting impact, and make it easier for residents to remain independent, stay in their homes and participate in the community as they grow older."

“The practices highlighted in this report can help communities make enhancements that make sense for their residents so they can continue to enjoy living in the community in their own home,” **said Kaylee McGuire, Deputy Commissioner for Aging and Disability Services.** “Comprehensive policies that support aging communities will enhance health, well-being, satisfaction, and quality of life for all. We are glad we can provide funding to help communities plan for and adopt policies and practices that will benefit all residents.”

“Older adults play a valuable role in our community and economy, and an age-friendly New Jersey will ensure their involvement and contributions are fully utilized,” **said [Division of Aging Services](#) Assistant Commissioner Louise Rush, who also served on the Council.** “As New Jersey's population ages, age-friendly communities benefit everyone, enhancing the state as a fulfilling place to live.” Read more [HERE](#).

Livestream and photos from event below.

NJ Human Services Age-Friendly Blueprint Livestream







Governor's Fiscal Year 2025 Proposed Budget Rewards Quality Nursing Staffing Through Medicaid Bonus Payments to Nursing Facilities

In a continued effort to improve care at nursing facilities, Governor Phil Murphy's proposed budget for next fiscal year nearly doubles maximum bonus payments for facilities achieving quality performance goals, and gives the largest add-on bonuses to facilities that focus on retaining nursing staff and maintaining higher nurse staffing levels.

The proposed budget significantly updates the [Quality Incentive Payment Program \(QIPP\)](#) for nursing facilities to promote high-quality care for residents.

Under QIPP, based on how many quality benchmarks they achieve, each facility can earn up to an additional \$12.60 per resident per day on top of their normal rate for [NJ FamilyCare](#) member residents.

The proposed budget increases the maximum daily bonus add-on to \$23.25.

The proposed changes come after Human Services over the last year convened a working group with industry representatives, consumer advocates,

health plans, and health policy experts to contemplate changes to QIPP that would further incentivize facilities to improve quality of care for residents.

After reviewing recommendations from the working group, Human Services is, among other changes, proposing the addition of three new metrics upon which facilities will be measured: total nurse staffing hours, nurse staffing retention, and inappropriate weight loss.

“Staffing levels and staff retention both have a major impact on quality of care, so we will now begin incentivizing facilities by financially rewarding achievement and improvement in their staffing ratios and retention,”

Commissioner Sarah Adelman said. “I applaud the efforts of advocates and legislators who championed the mandate for stronger staffing ratios in nursing homes. Let’s raise the bar and reward those that invest in higher nurse staffing levels that well exceed minimum requirements.”

“Our goal is to continue to use this program as leverage for improvement and hope to see real changes in facility staffing levels for the benefit of residents.

These changes would build on our previous efforts to enhance the program including the use of stricter benchmarks and withholding bonuses from facilities who fail to adhere to minimum standards of care,” **Deputy Commissioner for Aging and Disability Services Kaylee McGuire said.**

Read more [HERE](#).

Thank you



PUBLIC SERVICE RECOGNITION WEEK 2024



This Public Service Recognition Week, I want to recognize and celebrate our dedicated staff at Human Services who work tirelessly to make the lives of the people we serve better.

As the largest department in the state, we serve some of New Jersey's most vulnerable populations and manage a wide array of services and programs.

This work can be demanding and unrelenting, and I am so grateful to work with such a committed and capable team who fiercely meet challenges head on and rise to the occasion every time. The work that you do is impactful and in many cases life-changing.

We help provide food assistance, health coverage and many other important services essential to people's health and well-being. We provide resources that help enhance the quality of life for people with disabilities,

and provide hope for lasting recovery to those afflicted by addiction.

Understanding that diversity is our strength, we are also working to make our communities more inclusive and equitable so all New Jerseyans can fully enjoy the benefits of living in the Garden State.

I am proud of the work we have accomplished together and the difference that it makes.

As public servants, we have a responsibility to the people we serve. I am honored to do this work alongside you, and I am grateful for your continued dedication to not just meeting but exceeding expectations. On behalf of Human Services, thank you for all of your extraordinary work.

New Jersey is better because of you.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

Commissioner Sarah Adelman



Senate and Assembly Budget Hearings

From left to right, Assistant Commissioner Natasha Johnson, Assistant Commissioner Jennifer Langer Jacobs, Deputy Commissioner for Aging and Disability Services Kaylee McGuire, Commissioner Sarah Adelman, Deputy Commissioner for Health Services Valerie Mielke and acting Chief Financial Officer Eric Kaufmann testified in May before the Senate Budget and Appropriations Committee and, as pictured here, the Assembly Budget Committee, highlighting Gov. Murphy’s continued investments in human services programs.

“We are, exactly as our name suggests: Human Services,” Commissioner Adelman testified. “Our mission is to support New Jerseyans living to their fullest opportunity at every stage of life, and to serve people with commitment, clarity, and empathy. Since the beginning of Governor Murphy’s Administration, our department has invested billions of dollars in workforce development, expanding supports for residents, and modernizing our services so that, even in tough budget years, we are able to support more New Jerseyans than ever before. We are encouraged that

the
Governor's Fiscal Year 2025 budget continues this strong support for the
individuals and communities we serve.”

Read the Commissioner's testimony [here](#).

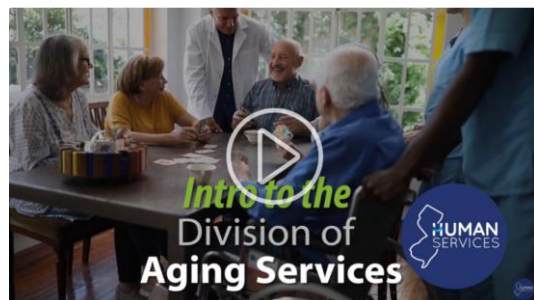


Older Americans Month

NJ Human Services is happy to highlight the services and supports available to older New Jerseyans to help them live independently at home, as long as

possible, while staying connected to friends, loved ones & the community. With [NJSave](#), older residents and people with disabilities can save money on Medicare premiums, prescription costs and other living expenses.

Click on the videos below  to learn more!





NJ Human Services Commissioner Sarah Adelman, Deputy Commissioner of Aging and Disability Services Kaylee McGuire and [Division of Aging Services](#) Assistant Commissioner Louise Rush met with Area Agencies on Aging (AAA) directors at the [Robert Wood Johnson Wellness Center](#) in Hamilton, where they presented Governor Murphy's proclamation declaring May as Older Americans Month in New Jersey.



NJ Department of Human Services Commissioner Sarah Adelman joined [Center for Medicare and Medicaid Services](#) Region 2 Administrator Kathleen Otte, Medical Officer Dr. Tanya Raggio, and CMS Region 2 staff on the CMS Rural Road Trip, to hear concerns and successes from providers serving New Jersey's rural residents.

Mom 2 Mom Adult Helpline
1-833-NJ ADULT 8:30 a.m.-8 p.m. daily

Jonathan Seifried
Assistant Commissioner
Division of Disability Services

and compassionate space to get the support they need.
Happy Mother's Day!

A Mother's Day message from [Division of Developmental Disabilities'](#) Assistant Commissioner, Jonathan Seifried, reminding everyone about the NJ Human Services Help Line for Caregivers of Adults with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities. For more information on this program, visit [HERE](#).

2024 NEW JERSEY ABILITIES EXPO



Human Services Police Appreciation Ceremony





NJ Department of Human Services held its [Human Services Police](#) Appreciation Ceremony during Police Week 2024. This ceremony honors the men and women of the Human Services Police Force for their efforts to protect some of NJ's most vulnerable residents. New officers and recruits also took their oaths which were administered by Commissioner Adelman.

See more photos [HERE](#).



The NJ [Human Services Police Force](#) congratulates Officer Bryant Correa, Officer Sharlyn Matos-Ramos & Officer Michael Wiel who graduated from the Atlantic County Police Academy, Class #28. We are proud of their accomplishments and excited to have them join our ranks.

Welcome to NJ HSP!



[NJ Human Services Police](#) Officer Scott Fancher departed with the Police Unity Tour from New Jersey to Washington DC. The riders of the Police Unity Tour, ride to honor Law Enforcement Officers who have died in the line of duty.



NJ Human Services' [Office of Emergency Management \(DHS OEM\)](#) team participated in the national mass care exercise at Shippensburg University in PA. The event was attended by over 300 people from around the nation representing federal, state and local agencies.

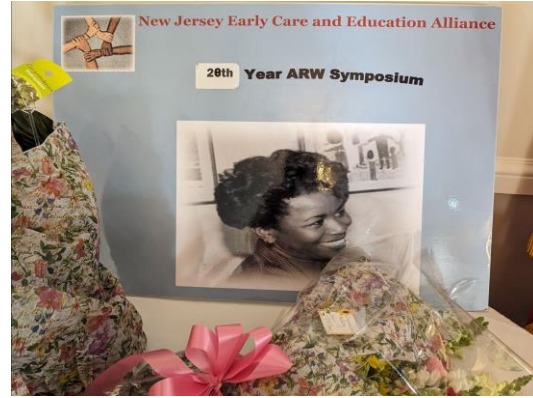


NJ Human Services Deputy Commissioner for Aging and Disability Services Kaylee McGuire was honored to give the keynote address at the [Advocates for Aging Well](#) 2024 Conference, highlighting efforts to make NJ more affordable for older adults.



NJ Human Services' [Division of Disability Services](#) NJ Able Program Representative Cristine Chickadel was invited to the National ABLE conference in Pittsburgh. She joined a discussion about Able accounts, which are savings accounts for people with disabilities.

For more information on NJ Able accounts, visit [HERE](#).



[Division of Family Development](#) Assistant Commissioner Natasha Johnson represented the Department of Human Services at the Aletha R. Wright Award for Excellence in Early Care and Education Symposium this month. Natasha joined other panelists to discuss the importance of child care in New Jersey. Panelists included Director of Preschool Education, Department of Education, Kimberly Friddell, President Public Policy, New Jersey Association for the Education of Young Children (NJAEYC), Meghan Tavormina, Early Childhood Policy Specialist, National Institute for Early Education Research (NIEER), Karin Garver and National and State Family Child Care Representative, Beverly Lee.

The discussion was moderated by former CEO of Program for Parents Dr. Beverly Lynn.



[Division of Disability Services](#) Executive Director Peri Nearon presented at the 11th Annual Culture of Health Conference which aims to advance health & mental health equity through inclusion of people with disabilities. Peri joined IHC grantees from Nutley Family Services, Rowan University, Woods Services & Freehold Borough.



Elizabeth Family Festival





NJ Human Services' [Division of Aging Services](#)' Outreach Team was at the 2024 Mayor's Senior Summit & Older Adults Expo in [Woodbridge, NJ](#). Our resource table was staffed by DoAS experts with lots of information about our programs and services for older New Jerseyans.

For more information, visit [HERE](#).



Governor's Proclamations



Older Americans Month



Mental Health Awareness Month



Osteoporosis Awareness and Prevention Month

May is Better Hearing And Speech Month

NJ Human Services' [Division of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing](#) provides education, advocacy & direct services to eliminate barriers and promote increased accessibility to programs, services, & information routinely available to the state's general population. For more information, click on the program graphics below, or visit our website [HERE](#).

NEW JERSEY DIVISION OF THE
DEAF AND HARD OF HEARING



**NJ HEARING
AID PROJECT**

*Providing free refurbished
hearing aids for eligible
New Jersey older adults.*



NEW JERSEY DIVISION OF THE
DEAF AND HARD OF HEARING



INFORMATION AND REFERRAL

*Connecting New Jersey residents with
resources about hearing loss.*



NEW JERSEY DIVISION OF THE
DEAF AND HARD OF HEARING



**LANGUAGE
INSTRUCTION
PROGRAM**

*Helping deaf, hard of hearing,
and deaf-blind children 0-5
receive language acquisition
services in child care settings.*



NEW JERSEY DIVISION OF THE
DEAF AND HARD OF HEARING



**EQUIPMENT
DISTRIBUTION
PROGRAM**

*Providing specialized
telecommunications and home
safety equipment to New
Jersey residents with low
incomes.*



Woman's Health Week

The Murphy Administration is committed to improving maternal health by implementing multiple programs to improve health outcomes for all women in New Jersey! To learn more, click the program graphics below or visit [HERE](#).

PLANFIRST



The Plan First Program administered by NJ FamilyCare provides a full range of family planning services to men and women who do not have access through insurance. Learn more at njfamilycare.org

NJFAMILYCARE 



NJFAMILYCARE

**365 Days of
Postpartum Coverage**

Visit NJFamilyCare.org



**Healthy.
Secure.
Supported.**

NURTURE  NJ



**Doula coverage is part of
NJFAMILYCARE**

Doula care is associated with better birth outcomes.

For more information, visit
www.njfamilycare.org





Hurricane Preparedness Week

This is a good time to talk about Register Ready! Register Ready is an important service which gives NJ residents with disabilities an opportunity to voluntarily provide information to emergency response agencies so responders can better plan to serve them in a disaster or emergency..

Find out more about this free, voluntary service [HERE](http://www.registerready.nj.gov).



Traumatic Brain Injury Fund

Provides services and supports that enable individuals with brain injuries to live in the community and maximize their independence.



Brain Injury Awareness Week

NJ Human Services' Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI) Fund provides eligible residents, of any age, who've survived a traumatic brain injury, access to brain injury related services they need to live in the community.

More [HERE](#).



National Nurses Week

NJ Human Services would like to thank all of the nurses that help our department care for the many people we serve. Their work and devotion is valued, not just during Nurses Week, but every day.

Thank you!

NATIONAL POLICE WEEK

THANK YOU TO ALL WHO SERVE



Our Human Services Police have specialized skills and are the essence of community policing. We thank and honor their service and remember all police who lost their lives in the line of duty for the safety and protection of others.



National Police Week

During National Police Week, we like to celebrate our dedicated [Human Services Police](#) Force! They proudly protect facilities across the state which are open and operated by NJ Human Services 24/7. Thanks for all you do to serve the most vulnerable citizens in NJ with respect & sensitivity.

NJ FAMILY CARE

TREATING HEPATITIS C
Covering medications to
treat Hepatitis C without
limitations

HUMAN SERVICES

Hepatitis C Awareness Month

Governor Phil Murphy expanded Hepatitis C coverage for Medicaid recipients through [NJ Familycare](#).
For more information, visit [HERE](#).



Information & Referral Services

Provides information and resources to individuals with disabilities and their families, as well as helps them navigate and connect to other available services.

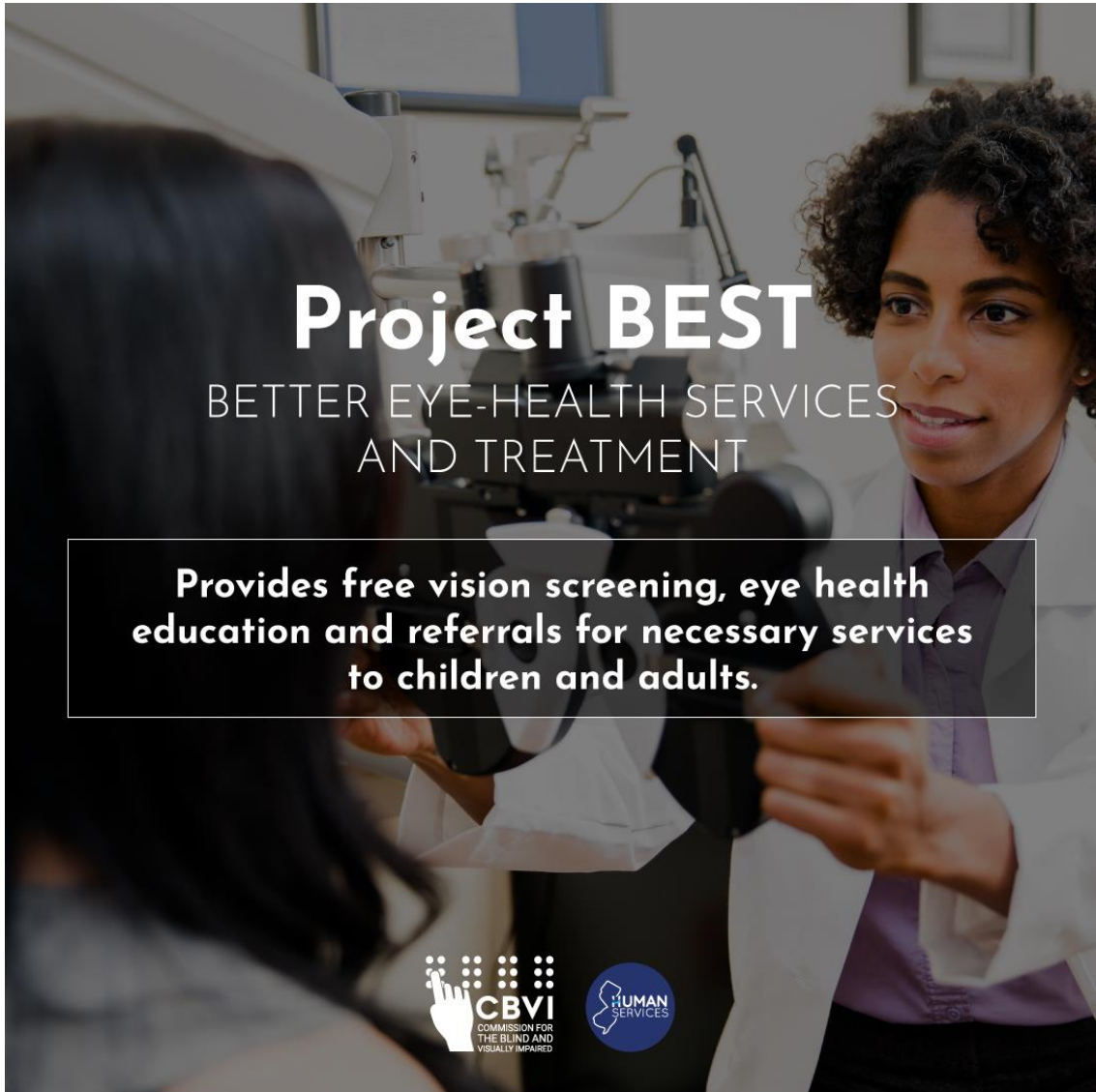


Adult Onset Disability Awareness Month

These disabilities occur at age 21 and older and affect an individual's ability to complete day-to-day tasks.

Call our Division of Disability Services to assist with navigating State & County Services at 1-888-285-3036.

And take a moment to download your copy of the new NJ Resources Guide [HERE](#).



Project BEST

BETTER EYE-HEALTH SERVICES
AND TREATMENT

Provides free vision screening, eye health
education and referrals for necessary services
to children and adults.



Healthy Vision Month

Our Commission for the Blind and Visually Impaired's [Project BEST](#) program works to save sight and restore vision for adults and children. Free eye screenings have continued at schools, medical centers, and fixed sites around the state. For more information on screenings, visit [HERE](#).



ALS Awareness Month

May is a good time to bring attention to challenges that families with Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis (ALS) face. If you or someone you love has been diagnosed with ALS & need help navigating services, contact The [Division of Disability Services](#)' Community Resource Specialists at 1-888-285-3036.



National Mobility Month

National Mobility Awareness Month encourages people with disabilities to enjoy an active, mobile lifestyle by making them aware of the many automotive mobility solutions. The [National Mobility Equipment Dealers Association](#) offers

resources to assist in understanding & navigating automobility equipment. For more information, visit [HERE](#).

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

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