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NEWSLETTER | NOVEMBER / DECEMBER 2024

HAPPY Holidays

As 2024 draws to a close, we express our deepest gratitude and extend our heartfelt best wishes to the individuals and families we are privileged to serve, as well as to our dedicated provider, government, and community partners. Your unwavering commitment throughout the year ensures that our programs and services continue to reach those in need across New Jersey.

Together, we have accomplished so much. We remained steadfast in our focus on harm reduction, leveraging opioid settlement funding to save lives. We worked tirelessly to improve accessibility for individuals with disabilities and older adults. We took important steps toward expanding and enhancing home- and community-based services. And we continued to support and uplift our

direct care and childcare workforce, whose contributions are vital to the well-being of so many.

As we look ahead to the new year, we are excited about the opportunities to deepen our collaboration and further our mission to support those we serve.

Wishing you all a joyful holiday season and a bright, promising 2025.

Warmly,

Commissioner Sarah Adelman



**Commissioner Adelman Testifies in Support of Comprehensive
Legislative Package to Enhance Safety and Accountability in
Developmental Disability Services**

Commissioner Sarah Adelman testified before the Senate Health, Human Services and Senior Citizens Committee on Dec. 19 in support a legislative package aimed at enhancing the health and safety of individuals with developmental disabilities.

The legislation seeks to hold service providers accountable while ensuring that individuals receiving services and their families are treated with respect and dignity.

“These bills double-down on our promise to every family in New Jersey that we are committed to building a system of care that works for them,”

Commissioner Adelman testified. “A system where every individual with IDD is treated with the dignity and respect they deserve. Where providers are held accountable. And where families can trust that the State has their back. With the continued collaboration of all stakeholders, including the voices of those with disabilities and their families, we can ensure that these advances have a lasting, positive impact on the lives of New Jersey’s most vulnerable residents.”

Read [here](#) for the Commissioner’s complete testimony.



First Lady Tammy Murphy Hosts 7th Annual Nurture NJ Leadership Summit, Focusing on Building a Healthier & More Equitable Future for Maternal and Infant Health

First Lady Tammy Murphy held her 7th annual Nurture NJ Leadership Summit, bringing together more than 700 influential leaders, subject matter experts, community leaders, advocates across industries, and most importantly mothers to continue New Jersey's progress toward becoming the safest, most equitable state in the nation to deliver and raise a baby. Commissioner Sarah Adelman moderated a panel discussion on the theme of "A New Era of Care: Innovations in Maternal Health."

"Seven years ago, at the outset of our administration, New Jersey was grappling with a dire maternal and infant health crisis. A Black mother in our state was almost seven times more likely than a white mother to die of maternity-related complications and a Black baby was over three times more

likely than a white baby not to make it to his or her first birthday. We knew we had to take action to better understand what was driving this health crisis and to advance effective policy solutions to ensure all families in New Jersey benefit from the healthiest start possible,” **First Lady Murphy said.** “From the beginning, we have relied on our partners – including hospital CEOs, mothers, pastors, doulas and more – to inform our approach to effectuating lasting change. The progress we have made in lowering our maternal mortality rate and improving other crucial metrics is a testament to our collaborative efforts. While there is still much more work to be done, each convening brings us one step closer to making New Jersey the safest and most equitable state in the nation to deliver and raise a baby.”

“Improving maternal and infant health outcomes in New Jersey requires a collaborative approach in which everyone has a seat at the table. By working together with government representatives, policymakers, hospital administrators and community advocates, we can build a stronger, more equitable maternal care system that ensures all New Jersey families benefit from a healthy start. The Nurture NJ Leadership Summit serves as a vital platform for making this vision a reality. It is a privilege to lead the Maternal and Infant Health Innovation Authority and to be trusted to continue the important work of Nurture NJ beyond the Murphy Administration so that we can maintain progress for our communities,” **said Lisa Asare, President and Chief Executive Officer of the Maternal and Infant Health Innovation Authority.**

“First Lady Tammy Murphy’s leadership has been instrumental in reshaping maternal health through innovative policies and programs, helping define a future where New Jersey is the safest, most equitable state to deliver and raise a baby,” **Commissioner Adelman said.** “The Summit was another opportunity to highlight forward-thinking initiatives and strategies by hearing from a wide

range of leaders and experts. Through collaborative efforts between government, nonprofit, community, and parent leaders, New Jersey is advancing best practices and evidence-based policies that ensure better care for mothers and babies.”

Read more [HERE](#).



NJ Human Services Awards Contracts to Expand Access to Gambling Disorder Services for Individuals with Co-Occurring Mental Health and/or Substance Use Disorders

Human Services announced \$720,000 in state-funded contracts have been awarded to expand access to treatment and services to individuals with gambling disorders who are also experiencing mental health issues and/or substance use disorder.

The department awarded contracts of \$120,000 each to the following organizations: Legacy Treatment Services in Atlantic County, Legacy Treatment Services in Burlington County, Legacy Treatment Services in Camden County, Integrity Inc. in Essex County, Monmouth Medical Center in Monmouth County and Eva’s Village, Inc. in Passaic County.

“More than 90 percent of individuals with gambling disorders have a co-occurring behavioral health need, and the impact of these challenges affects families, workplaces, and our communities,” said Human Services **Commissioner Sarah Adelman**. “Through these provider partnerships we will widen the availability of mental health and substance use disorder providers in the state who also have the expertise to identify and treat gambling disorders.”

“This is about working more efficiently to reach people struggling with addiction. By integrating gambling disorder services, we hope to bring co-occurring gambling disorder into the mental health and substance use disorder treatment network, so more people can get the services they need to support their recovery,” **said Deputy Commissioner for Health Services Valerie Mielke**.

“We continue to work to expand access to treatment because we know recovery is possible with adequate support. These providers will now be able to deliver more comprehensive care, and offer support and resources to individuals in need of gambling disorder services, so they can rebuild their lives,” **said Assistant Commissioner Renee Burawski, who oversees Human Services’ [Division of Mental Health and Addiction Services](#)**.

Read more [HERE](#).



NJ Human Services & Labor Commissioners Announce Awards to Help Child Care Providers Recruit Staff to Work with Infants & Toddlers

Continuing State efforts to expand access to quality child care, New Jersey Human Services Commissioner Sarah Adelman and Labor Commissioner Robert Asaro-Angelo announced that awards totaling \$300,000 have been provided to 14 child care centers in 11 counties to help grow the capacity of the child care workforce serving infants and toddlers across the state.

The awards are part of the [NJ Early Childhood Apprenticeship Pilot Program](#). The program is being offered by Human Services' Division of Family Development and Labor, in partnership with the NJ Workforce Registry, to expand the number of child care staff with the Infant/Toddler Child Development Associate (CDA) certification, and increase the infant and toddler workforce. It is funded by the Preschool Development Grant Birth to 5 (PDG B-5) program.

“Quality child care programs rely on educators with specific knowledge and skills to serve our youngest residents. This funding will help these providers recruit staff for their infant and toddler classrooms by offering training at no cost and assistance acquiring the required credentials, while apprentices work full-time within the classroom. This will help providers meet staffing demands and the diverse child care needs of working families,” **said Commissioner Adelman.**

“This apprenticeship program will offer a pathway for individuals to gain the skills and credentials needed to work in the child care industry while earning a living wage. By investing in early childhood educators, this program not only strengthens the workforce but also enhances the quality of care for young children,” **said Human Services Deputy Commissioner for Social Services Michael J. Wilson.**

“This pilot program is a first step in exploring how we can further support child care staff by providing on-the-job training, mentorship, and educational opportunities. By helping these child care providers build a skilled workforce, we help ensure that high-quality child care is accessible to more working families,” **said Human Services Division of Family Development Assistant Commissioner Natasha Johnson.**

Read more [HERE](#).



New Jersey Human Services Awards Contracts to Create Community Housing & Services for Individuals with Mental Illness

Commissioner Sarah Adelman announced Human Services has awarded contracts to create community housing and services for adults diagnosed with a mental illness who are in a nursing facility, state or county psychiatric hospital or are experiencing homelessness.

The Department has awarded contracts to serve at least 24 adults.

The contracts – the latest in a series of initiatives by Human Services under Commissioner Adelman to focus on home- and community-based services - were awarded by the Division of Mental Health and Addiction Services (DMHAS) to Community Hope, NewBridge Services, Volunteers of America – Greater New York, and SERV Center of New Jersey.

“Access to timely wellness services and supportive housing in one’s own community can be transformational for individuals struggling with serious mental illness. That is why our approach to providing care for New Jersey residents includes bolstering home- and community-based services across the

state, allowing us to meet our residents where they are with the level of care they deserve,” **Governor Phil Murphy said.** “This funding builds on the continuum of care available to New Jersey families by helping individuals in institutions and experiencing homelessness reach critical supports. I am thrilled to see this funding go to our invaluable community partners.”

“Individuals who have a serious and persistent mental illness can achieve wellness and recovery and lead self-fulfilling lives as productive members of their community,” **Commissioner Adelman said.** “This principle is supported by a growing body of research and knowledge in the mental health recovery field, as well as first-hand accounts from people recovering from mental illness. We are committed to providing and promoting opportunities for individuals that will maximize their ability to live, rehabilitate and refine daily living skills, and integrate into the community.”

“We remain focused on effective, timely discharge of persons residing in nursing homes who are able to live in a more independent setting and for those who no longer require inpatient level of care in state and county psychiatric hospitals,” **Deputy Commissioner for Health Services Valerie Mielke said.** “We are also dedicated to helping communities fight homelessness. Supportive wellness-based housing is so important.”

“The individuals will be full partners in planning their own treatment, and may identify and direct activities that will most help them maximize opportunities for successful community living,” **Assistant Commissioner Burawski said.** “Meanwhile, these providers and their partners will work together to identify and combat barriers that may impede individuals from accessing services.” The awarded contracts total to approximately \$1.4 million.

Read more [HERE](#).



NJ Human Services Awards \$9 Million in Grants to Enhance Community Wellness Centers in all 21 Counties for Individuals with Serious Mental Illness

Commissioner Sarah Adelman announced that Human Services has awarded contracts to [Community Wellness Centers](#) in each county for the purpose of better serving the needs of individuals with serious mental illness.

“Community Wellness Centers are crucial resources that offer innovative support, peer assistance, social services, and education on mental health and substance use disorders—all at no cost,” **said Commissioner Adelman**. “We are pleased to award these grants to help expand their services to historically underserved areas, and ensure staff are well-supported. We look forward to witnessing the positive impact of this additional funding.”

This initiative will be supported by Human Services’ [Division of Mental Health and Addiction Services](#) and is funded through the state. Services began this month and will continue through June 2025.

“This initiative represents Human Services’ longstanding commitment to ensuring those with a mental health diagnosis have access to support in the community,” **said Assistant Commissioner Renee Burawski**, who oversees

the Division of Mental Health and Addiction Services. “New Jersey is proud of its commitment to help fund and support highly innovative and effective peer-based services, supports, and interventions for those with co-occurring substance use disorder.”

Commissioner Adelman reminds residents in need of mental health support to reach out for help through Human Services’ help lines.

Anyone experiencing thoughts of suicide or a mental health or substance use crisis can call the 988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline by dialing 988, which is free and available 24 hours a day, every day of the year. People can text to 988 and can chat 988 at 988lifeline.org/chat. 988 also offers TTY services.

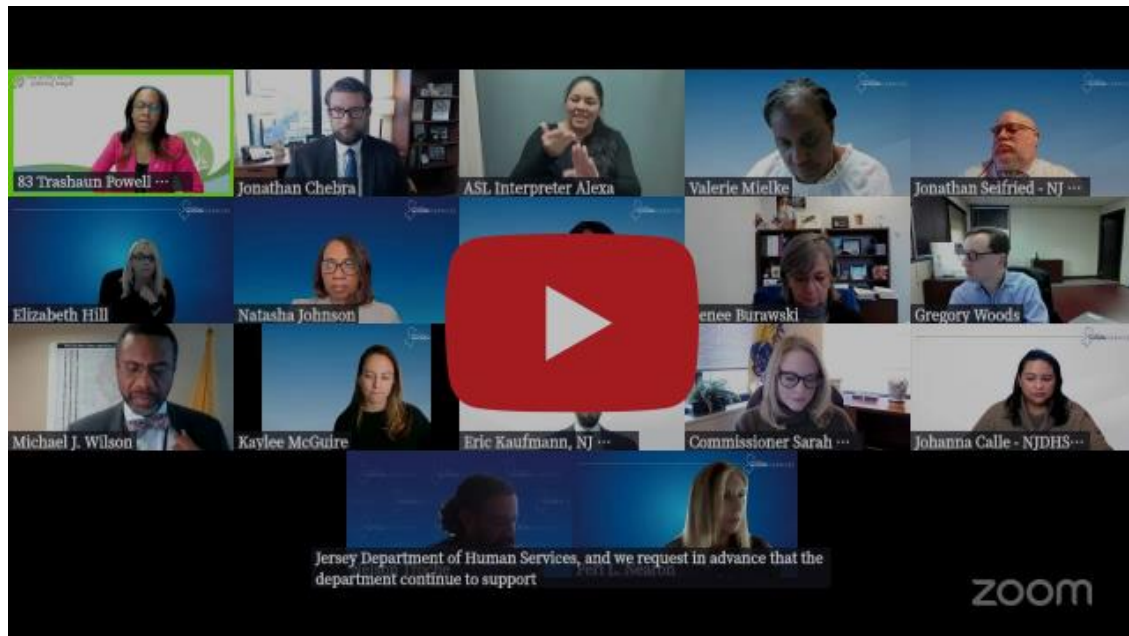
Those with substance use disorder can call 1-844-ReachNJ - a 24-hour-a-day, available every day of the year help line.

Human Services also provides the [NJMentalHealthCares](#) helpline at 866-202-HELP (4357). The line can also be reached by texting NJHOPE to 51684.

Deaf and hard of hearing individuals fluent in American Sign Language can take advantage of a videophone mental health help line at 973-870-0677.

“Please don’t hesitate to call if you are or a loved one is in need,” **Commissioner Adelman said**. “We are here to help.”

Read more [HERE](#).



NJ Human Services hosted its annual virtual Budget Listening Session on November 19th. This session helps our divisions hear directly from the community about urgent needs and priorities and are a vital part of ensuring that the voices of those most impacted are at the center of planning for the upcoming budget.

To watch online, visit [HERE](#).

TAKE FIVE INTERVIEW

Assistant Commissioner
Greg Woods
*New Jersey Department of
Human Services*



[Division of Medical Assistance and Health Services](#) Assistant Commissioner Gregory Woods talked to the [New Jersey Health Care Quality Institute](#) about [NJ FamilyCare](#), behavioral health services, and Medicaid innovations for their Take Five feature. Read more [HERE](#).



Commissioner Adelman delivered the keynote at the 154th [New Jersey Pharmacists Association](#)'s Annual Meeting. She shared tips on ways pharmacists can partner with NJ Human Services and highlighted the [Naloxone 365 program](#), which provides free overdose reversal kits to anyone 14 yrs or older.



THIS IS TO CERTIFY THAT THE

State of New Jersey

has created an action plan for becoming more age-friendly under the criteria established by AARP and has been renewed as a member of

The AARP Network of Age-Friendly States and Communities

THIS CERTIFICATION IS VALID UNTIL

November 22, 2027

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Nancy A. LeaMond", is positioned above a horizontal line.

Nancy A. LeaMond, Chief Advocacy and Engagement Officer
COMMUNITY, STATE AND NATIONAL AFFAIRS, AARP | WASHINGTON, D.C.

The AARP Network of Age-Friendly States and Communities,
a program of the AARP Livable Communities initiative,
is an independent affiliate of the World Health Organization Global Network
for Age-Friendly Cities and Communities.®



Age-Friendly Communities
Are Livable for
People of All Ages
aarp.org/livable

We're excited that [AARP](#) has certified NJ Human Services' efforts under [Governor Murphy](#) to promote age-friendly strategies and best practices that

communities can implement to better meet the needs of residents as they age.

Learn more about age-friendly efforts in New Jersey [HERE](#).



The [NJSave](#) application checks eligibility for several cost-saving programs. **Senior Save Navigators** help you fill out and submit your application for free.

If you need help with your NJSave application, find the **Senior Save Navigator** nearest you by visiting [HERE](#).



Commissioner Sarah Adelman moderated a robust conversation on the voice of patient advocacy in policymaking as part of the HINJ Advancing Women's Health forum.



Deputy Commissioner for Social Services Michael J. Wilson, Senior Policy Advisor Vineeta Kapahi and Governor's Fellow Gopna Shekaran toured the [Trenton Area Soup Kitchen](#) with CEO Joyce Campbell to see how it promotes food and economic security. Visit njsnap.gov to learn more about food assistance.



Deputy Commissioner for Social Services Michael J. Wilson joined [NYC Department of Health and Mental Hygiene](#)'s Senior Director for Research and Evaluation Christina Nieves, [Onondaga County](#)'s Department of Social Services Commissioner Sarah Merrick and [New York Health Foundation](#)'s Andrew Barrett for a panel discussion on extending the food safety net at the NY Health [Strengthening the Food Safety Net Conference](#).



Deputy Comm'r Wilson, DFD Assistant Commissioner Johnson and Larry Braasch joined Director Anibal Ramos and others for a tour of the Essex County Department of Citizen Services facility. They also discussed benefit application workflows.



NJ Human Services [Office of Emergency Management](#) recognized Jim Manski at the State Emergency Management Program Stakeholders meeting with a Certificate of Commendation from Commissioner Sarah Adelman. Jim deployed to NC as part of the State's All Hazard Incident Management Team to offer support in the aftermath of Hurricane Helene.





Congratulations to Officers Demayo and Wenal who successfully graduated from the Atlantic County Police Academy. They both will be assigned to our Southern Region Command. Congratulations also go out to Officer Connolly who successfully completed the Essex County Police Academy and Officer Noble who successfully completed the Monmouth County Police Academy. Officers Connolly and Noble will be assigned to our Central Region command.

Welcome to the [NJ Department of Human Services Police Force!](#)



In November, [Commission for the Blind and Visually Impaired](#) hosted their **Diabetes Health Fair** at the [Joseph Kohn Training Center](#). The fair provided free health screenings and info regarding diabetes to at least 75 individuals.

To learn more about CBVI and **Project BEST**, visit [HERE](#).



Deputy Commissioner for Aging and Disability Services
 Kaylee McGuire recently spoke about the ongoing work by the Division of
 Deaf and Hard of Hearing to make New Jersey a more inclusive state
 for all at [Hearing Loss Association of America](#) -New Jersey's
 annual meeting at the East Brunswick Public Library.



Deputy Commissioner for Aging and Disability Services Kaylee McGuire spoke
 at the [NJ/Eastern PA Therapeutic Recreation Association's annual conference](#) in
 Princeton. She shared updates on policy advancements to enhance services
 for people with disabilities, behavioral health needs, and those receiving long-

term care. Recreational therapists play a crucial role in empowering individuals through meaningful activities, promoting dignity, and reducing social isolation.



Deputy Commissioner for Aging and Disability Services Kaylee McGuire joined residents and families at the [Hunterdon Developmental Center](#) for their holiday party, which featured a tree lighting ceremony and special holiday activities.



Assistant Commissioner Jonathan Seifried and Deputy Commissioner of Aging and Disability Services Kaylee McGuire (not pictured) joined [New Lisbon Developmental Center](#) for their holiday “Grinch” party for residents and their families.



Deputy Commissioner for Aging and Disability Services Kaylee McGuire and Special Advisor Mollie Greene volunteered with staff at [Trenton Area Soup Kitchen](#) to help set up toys for their holiday party.



Officers from [Human Services Police](#) personnel Central Region command held a Holiday parade for clients at [Trenton Psychiatric Hospital](#).



Deputy Commissioner for Aging and Disability Services Kaylee McGuire joined [Woodbine Developmental Center](#) for their Glee Club Holiday Concert.



Staff from the [Division of Developmental Disabilities](#) Central Office team volunteered time during their lunch break to roll over 800 utensils for [Trenton Area Soup Kitchen](#) (TASK). These utensil sets will go out with meals served during the holiday season.

Are you a Direct Care Employer, Professional or Consumer?



New Jersey Human Services is hosting three public listening sessions for those who are engaged with the direct care workforce.



These sessions are an opportunity for you to speak about your needs, challenges, and successes as direct care workers and employers, or as individuals who receive direct care services. These listening sessions may help the Department develop new policies and programs to support those working in the field, as well as those who are employers and those receiving services.

Please note that there are three sessions:

January 14 (Direct Care Workers Only)

January 15 (Direct Care Employers Only)

January 16 (Direct Care Consumers Only)

Written testimony can also be submitted to
HumanServices@dhs.nj.gov.

Scan here to
register




State of New Jersey
Phil Murphy, Governor
Tahesha L. Way, Lt. Governor





Department of Human Services
Sarah Adelman, Commissioner

NJ Human Services is hosting three public listening sessions in January to hear about the needs, challenges and successes amid the direct care workforce. Register [HERE](#) to participate.



Governor's Proclamations



STATE OF NEW JERSEY
EXECUTIVE DEPARTMENT
Proclamation.

WHEREAS, for New Jerseyans to express their respect and appreciation to family members who have cared for and supported them throughout the years; and

WHEREAS, it is important to recognize the dedicated work of family caregivers - individuals who have provided support to loved ones who have disabilities, are chronically ill or elderly; and

WHEREAS, there are roughly 53 million family and informal caregivers in the United States according to a survey by the National Alliance for Caregiving and AARP, with over 1.75 million in New Jersey alone; and

WHEREAS, family caregivers assist in preventing and delaying costly institutional care for older adults and people with disabilities, chronic illness and mental health issues in our State and have increased the quality of life for these residents; and

WHEREAS, caring for a friend or family member with a disability, who is chronically ill or who is an older family member can be an enormously strenuous and stressful undertaking for both the caregiver and the person receiving the care; and


WHEREAS, family caregivers often prioritize the needs of loved ones and should be encouraged to care for themselves and be supported in doing so; and

WHEREAS, our communities must be made aware of the commitment of New Jersey's caregivers, so that they receive the tools and services they need to continue providing exemplary care to our most vulnerable residents;


NOW, THEREFORE, I, Philip D. Murphy, Governor of the State of New Jersey, do hereby proclaim:


NOVEMBER 2024
AS
FAMILY CAREGIVERS MONTH

In New Jersey,



GIVEN, under my hand and the Great Seal of the State of New Jersey, this eighth day of October in the year two thousand twenty-four, the two hundred forty-ninth year of the Independence of the United States.


LT. GOVERNOR


GOVERNOR

Family Caregivers Month



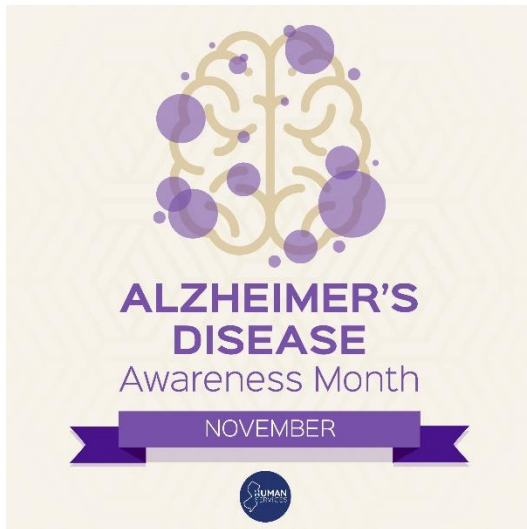
In recognition of **Hunger and Homelessness Awareness Week**, we revisit this interview with [Foodbank of South Jersey](#) President and CEO [Fred Wasiak](#), who talks about the team's amazing work to fight food insecurity in South Jersey.



Family Caregivers Month is a time to recognize and honor family caregivers across New Jersey and draw attention to the many challenges facing family caregivers. For helpful caregiver resources, visit the new [Division of Aging Services](#) Caregiver Hub [HERE](#).

November 25th was
Public Health Thank You Day!
We appreciate all the public health workers for their expertise, commitment and essential service. Thank you for making New Jersey and America safer and healthier!



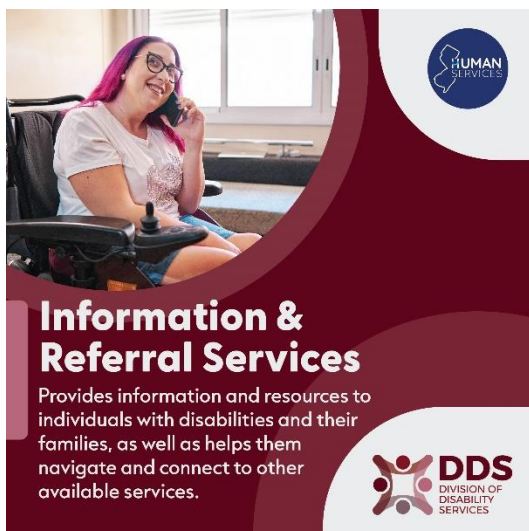


In honor of **Alzheimer's Disease Awareness Month**, we are happy to highlight [Division of Aging Services'](#) Statewide Respite Care Program. Respite care provides caregivers a temporary rest from caregiving call 1-877-222-3737 or visit our website [HERE](#).

November was **Diabetic Eye Disease Awareness Month**. All people with diabetes are at risk for vision loss and blindness from diabetic eye disease and diabetic eye disease often has no early symptoms.

For information about [Commission for the Blind and Visually Impaired](#) programs and services, 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.

November 16th was **National Information and Referral Services Day!**

Nationally Certified I & R Specialists are available during regular business hours, Monday through Friday, to provide information and to assist with navigating services available to people with disabilities.

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



★ HAPPY ★ VETERAN'S DAY

NOVEMBER 11



On **Veterans Day** Human Services honored all those men and women who serve and have served for their bravery and service to our country.

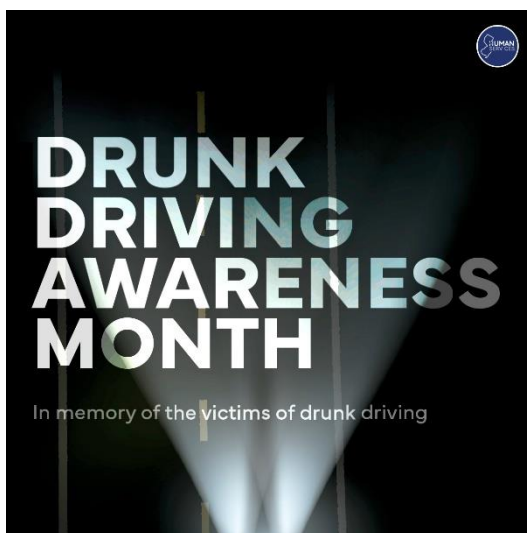
If you want to talk to someone who understands your life experiences and challenges, [New Jersey Vet2Vet](#) is a 24 hour/7-day a week helpline coordinated by Rutgers University Behavioral Health Care. The helpline features peer counseling for veterans, members of the Air/Army National Guard, and family members.

Call 1-866-838-7654 (1-866-VETS-NJ-4) and speak to someone who understands and can help. Reach out for free, confidential support.

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](#).



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: TreatmentATLAS.org





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

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