

NEW JERSEY HUMAN SERVICES



Governor Murphy Nominates Sarah Adelman as New Jersey Department of Human Services Commissioner



Governor Phil Murphy has nominated Sarah Adelman as the Commissioner of the New Jersey Department of Human Services. Adelman has served as Acting Commissioner since January 2021.

"Sarah stepped into the role of Acting Commissioner amidst the COVID-19 pandemic and her leadership has successfully guided the New Jersey Department of Human Services throughout this challenging year," Governor Murphy said. "Sarah's unwavering dedication, coupled with her extensive knowledge of the Department and its programs, is absolutely essential as we help New Jersey families deal with the challenges presented by the pandemic. I look forward to her confirmation by the Senate and continuing to serve New Jersey's most vulnerable communities together."

"I thank Governor Murphy for this honor, and am deeply grateful for the trust he has shown in me to lead New Jersey's largest state department," Acting Commissioner Adelman said. "New Jersey is stronger, resilient and moving forward under Governor Murphy, and Human Services is a central part of his work to make New Jersey the opportunity state. Together, we've made significant investments in child care and food assistance, enhanced services for older adults and individuals with disabilities, protected health coverage for more than 2 million residents, and expanded access for those needing mental health and addiction services. I look forward to continuing this vital work as part of Governor Murphy's team and alongside the dedicated staff at Human Services. We have more great work to do. I look forward to getting it done."

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New Higher Income Limits

for NJ Prescription Drug Assistance for Older Adults and Disabled Individuals

Individual \$38,769 \$48,769
Couple \$45,270 \$55,270

Governor Phil Murphy recently announced that income limits for the Pharmaceutical Assistance to the Aged and Disabled (PAAD) and the Senior Gold Prescription Discount drug assistance programs have increased by \$10,000, making drug prices more affordable and benefitting over 20,000 seniors.

Raising the income threshold, which was part of Governor Murphy's Fiscal Year 2022 budget, is the largest one-time increase in the history of both the PAAD and Senior Gold Prescription Discount drug assistance programs. This initiative is a part of the Governor's ongoing and broader commitment and programming to make health care more affordable for New Jersey residents across provider, insurance, and prescription drug costs.

"Few issues have a greater financial impact on New Jersey families than the ever-increasing cost of prescription drugs," Governor Murphy said. "Making New Jersey a more affordable place to call home means working to address the cost of prescription drug medicine. I am extremely proud of the progress we have made with this historic benefit increase that will expand benefits to thousands of New Jerseyans."

"We know when budgets are tight, individuals are faced with difficult decisions like stretching their medication or leaving prescriptions unfilled," Acting Commissioner Adelman said. "This historic benefit increase will allow many older residents and individuals with disabilities to qualify for the first time for prescription savings. If you need assistance affording medication and think you may be eligible, we encourage you to apply,"

"Cost should not be a barrier to medicine," Division of Aging Services Director Louise Rush said. "By expanding the income eligibility to the PAAD and Senior Gold prescription assistance programs, we are opening these savings to more residents who need the help."

The PAAD and Senior Gold Prescription Discount drug assistant programs are available to residents 65 and older and those with disabilities. PAAD cuts drug prices to \$5 for covered generic drugs and \$7 for covered name brands. Senior Gold cuts prices in half after a \$15 copay for covered prescriptions. The <u>PAAD program</u> income limits are now \$38,769 if single and \$45,270 for a couple. <u>The Senior Gold</u> <u>Prescription Discount program</u> limits are now \$48,769 if single and \$55,270 if married. Assets are not an eligibility consideration for either program.

Income limits for the <u>Lifeline utility assistance program</u> and the <u>Hearing Aid Assistance to the Aged and</u> <u>Disabled (HAAAD) program</u> have also increased by \$10,000, as those programs are tied to PAAD.

Eligible older residents and individuals with disabilities are urged to apply now through the <u>NJSave online</u> <u>application</u>, download an application from the <u>NJSave webpage</u>, or ask for a paper application by calling 1-800-792-9745. Online and paper applications are available in English and Spanish.

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NJ FamilyCare to Further Enhance Services for Older Adults and Individuals with Disabilities,

Including Innovative Affordable Housing Investment



The federal government has approved additional Department plans to strengthen and expand home and community-based NJ FamilyCare services for older adults and individuals with disabilities, including plans to develop affordable housing for members across the state.

The latest approvals represent a combined state and federal investment of \$144.6 million over three years. The plan partly uses federal matching dollars through the American Rescue Plan to benefit NJ FamilyCare members. NJ FamilyCare is New Jersey's Medicaid program.

In <u>October</u>, the federal government approved Department plans to invest \$634 million in state and federal money to bolster home and community-based Medicaid services for older adults and individuals with disabilities, so this new round of approval boosts the total new investment over the next three years to about \$780 million.

"We are thrilled to announce these newest approvals which strengthen and prioritize independence, community options and person-centered care across New Jersey," Acting Commissioner Adelman said. "The shelter and safety of housing is fundamental to good health and our innovative Healthy Homes initiative is a game-changing, first-time Medicaid investment in affordable housing for individuals at risk of homelessness or institutionalization."

"Our federal partners have affirmed New Jersey's plan to strengthen existing home and community-based services and invest in creative new approaches," said Assistant Commissioner Jennifer Langer Jacobs, who directs the Medicaid program. "We are supporting independence for older adults and people with disabilities with a strategy that includes services, resources, workforce development and an unprecedented investment in affordable housing. Our community partners are central to our plans, and we will be collaborating with them as we move forward."

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NJ FamilyCare Providing Eight Free Over-the Counter COVID-19 Tests Per Month to Members at Participating Pharmacies

NJ FamilyCare: Providing Members Eight Free Over-the-Counter Covid-19 Tests per Month at Pharmacies

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Human Service's NJ FamilyCare health coverage program is covering eight over-the-counter COVID-19 tests per month at no cost to its members.

NJ FamilyCare provides health coverage to about 2 million residents.

NJ FamilyCare members can go to a participating pharmacy for up to four test kits without a prescription per month, with each kit containing two tests. Coverage includes specific test kits offered by BinaxNow, CareStart, InteliSwab and QuickVue. Additional kids may be covered in the future.

"Helping NJ FamilyCare members through the ongoing pandemic has been a top priority, from maintaining coverage and eliminating premiums to ensuring availability of telehealth and free smartphone access," Acting Commissioner Adelman said. "Providing free at-home self-tests is the next step in that effort as we combat the omicron surge. We urge NJ FamilyCare members to get their vaccines and booster shots – and to take advantage of this free at-home testing when possible to protect themselves, their families and others."

The free over-the-counter tests for NJ FamilyCare members supplement COVID-19 testing that is available for free to all New Jersey residents. Testing sites can be found by visiting <u>How To Get Tested</u> <u>For COVID-19 In New Jersey</u>.

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Child Care Stabilization Grants Available to Help with Operational Expenses



Child care providers can <u>apply</u> for American Rescue Plan-funded stabilization grants to help pay for operational expenses amid ongoing pandemic concerns. Applications will be accepted through April 30.

"We're pleased to make these grants available and to have paid the first round of bonuses to our valued child care workers," Acting Commissioner Adelman said. "This is yet another step forward in our commitment to supporting providers through this challenging time, which in turn supports working families. I urge providers - who are so important to our families and our economy - to learn about and apply for the grants. We are here to help."

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Additional American Rescue Plan Funding Allocated to Excluded New Jerseyans Fund; Application Deadline Extended



Additional funds are being allocated by Governor Phil Murphy to the Excluded New Jerseyans Fund, allowing for up to \$40 million in total benefits, and the application period will be extended through the end of February.

Under new federal rules released this month for the American Rescue Plan - State and Local Fiscal Recovery Funds, the U.S. Treasury now permits the State to forego certain documentation requirements that were required under prior sources of funding. Under the new rules, individuals with annual household incomes at or below \$55,000, who live in New Jersey, are over 18 years of age and were excluded from federal COVID stimulus payments and pandemic unemployment assistance can apply to the ENJF without additional documentation demonstrating COVID-related impacts.

Benefit amounts will continue to be \$2,000 per eligible individual and a maximum of \$4,000 per household. These new rules will also apply to pending applications and the Department will evaluate previously denied applications and contact those with expired applications to make sure they are aware of the new program criteria.

"The pandemic has posed challenges for residents across New Jersey, but those who were previously excluded from federal assistance have been unable to get the help they need," Governor Murphy said. "By continuing to fund the Excluded New Jerseyans Fund and simplifying the application process, we are making sure more families who are eligible for this program receive much-awaited assistance."

"We are glad to be able to extend the application period and offer this assistance to more New Jerseyans," Acting Commissioner Adelman said. "We continue to urge eligible residents to apply for the program and hope even more families will receive needed assistance now that there is more funding, simplified eligibility and more time to apply."

"The Latino Action Network thanks Governor Murphy for renewing his commitment to provide \$40 million to the Excluded New Jerseyans Fund, and for taking action to ensure that more people can take part in this critical program," said Christian Estevez, president of the Latino Action Network. "We look forward to working with the Department of Human Services and Murphy Administration to get this funding to those who need it. We will continue to work with the Administration and Legislature to find a way to address the unmet remaining need in the community."

"We are pleased to be able to extend the program with additional funding and use new federal rules to streamline the application process," Deputy Commissioner Elisa Neira said. "Individuals can continue to apply for this direct cash benefit at <u>ExcludedNJFund.nj.gov</u>."

"We continue to urge all potential applicants to visit the ENJF website and apply," Office of New Americans Director Johanna Calle said. "We are dedicated to providing as much assistance as possible to New Jersey families in need."

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Now Available: Communication Access Grants to Help Make Communities More Inclusive for Deaf, Hard of Hearing, and Deaf-Blind Individuals



New Jersey counties can now begin applying for grants to promote communication and language access for deaf, hard of hearing, and deaf-blind residents of all ages.

"We encourage counties to learn about this exciting opportunity and apply for these grants," Acting Commissioner Adelman said.

The \$400,000 program will be funded through Human Services' <u>Division of the Deaf and Hard of</u> <u>Hearing</u>. Award amounts will vary and counties can receive a maximum award of \$75,000.

"Enhancing accessibility to community-based services, vital health information and public services is critical for deaf, hard of hearing, and deaf-blind residents, and we are proud to help do so by making these grants available," Deputy Commissioner Neira said.

"We urge New Jersey counties to apply for this funding and help strengthen our ongoing efforts to create a better quality of life for all New Jerseyans. This can be achieved by installing public videophones at county libraries or expanding interpreter services at local community organizations," Division of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing Executive Director Elizabeth Hill said. "We look forward to seeing what counties will propose to help create a lasting impact for deaf and hard of hearing residents throughout New Jersey."

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Division of Disability Services Opens Next Round of Grant Funding to Create Inclusive and Healthy Communities for Individuals with Disabilities



Nonprofits, and local county or municipal government agencies can now apply for the 2022 Inclusive Healthy Communities Grant Program (IHC) to help communities across the state support the health and well-being of individuals with disabilities where they live, work, learn and play.

First <u>launched</u> in January 2021, the IHC Grant Program is an initiative spearheaded by the Human Services' Division of Disability Services to support communities and ensure that the voice and needs of people with disabilities are included in healthy community planning. Click <u>here</u> for a look at the program published in the New Jersey State League of Municipalities' January 2022 magazine.

"We are proud to announce this program once again and make grants available to strengthen inclusion and accessibility for individuals with disabilities across New Jersey," Acting Commissioner Adelman said. "We look forward to receiving applications and seeing the creative and innovative solutions proposed."

The program aims to promote change at the local level by addressing pre-existing physical, environmental, social and economic challenges that prevent people with disabilities from having full access to the conditions that support their health and well-being.

"With the inaugural launch of this program, <u>18 communities are already working</u> on a range of solutions to create more healthy and inclusive communities for all. From taking steps to create fully accessible community spaces to developing plans to assess and evaluate current community practices, we are already seeing the impact of our work and look forward to enhancing this. I urge those interested to <u>learn</u> about and apply for the program so we can continue our work in creating a stronger and fairer New Jersey for all," Deputy Commissioner Neira said.

Applicants can submit proposals for capacity building grants of up to \$60,000 or implementation grants of up to \$150,000, which will fund efforts for 12 months.

New to this funding cycle is a collaboration with the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection. Additional funding is available to enhance proposals targeted to increasing access to coastal resources for people with disabilities. An additional \$30,000 is available for these types of proposals for planning efforts.

"Data illustrates that people with disabilities are disproportionately impacted by chronic diseases. Through this initiative we aim to help communities create inclusive community resources and practices so that people with disabilities can achieve better health outcomes. We are proud to help improve the quality of life for all New Jerseyans," DDS Executive Director Peri L. Nearon said.

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Applications Open for the Commission for the Blind and Visually Impaired's 2022-23 Scholarship Program



Students can now <u>apply</u> to the 2022 Board of Trustees Scholarship program, which provides college scholarships to individuals who are blind, deaf-blind and visually impaired.

The program, run by Human Services' Commission for the Blind and Visually Impaired (CBVI), is open to high school seniors and college students, of any age, who are registered to attend the 2022-2023 academic year. Students must be active or eligible CBVI clients. For full eligibility requirements please visit <u>here</u>.

"We have <u>seen the impact this program</u> has among blind, deaf-blind and visually impaired individuals in advancing their career and academic goals," Acting Commissioner Adelman said. "We are proud to launch this program once again for the 2022—2023 school year and look forward to receiving applications to help the next generation of students."

"Having access to college education opens opportunities and beneficial experiences that would otherwise have not been available. We understand the impact financial burden can have in limiting this," Deputy Commissioner Neira said. "We are happy to provide the opportunity to help reduce financial burden for blind, deaf-blind and visually impaired students pursing higher education so they can experience these benefits."

"We are delighted to once again make this program available, as we have done for over 20 years, and help advance higher education for students who are blind, deaf-blind or visually impaired," CBVI Executive Director Dr. Bernice Davis said. "All should have the financial means necessary to pursue education. I urge CBVI clients to check their eligibility and <u>apply</u>."

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Human Services to Enhance Community Supports for Individuals with Serious Mental Illness in Cape May, Gloucester and Salem

NJMentalHealthCares

If you're concerned about your mental health or the mental health of someone you love, **NJMentalHealthCares** can help. The **free helpline** offers telephone counseling, emotional support, information and assistance.

866-202-HELP (4357) • TEXT NJHOPE TO 51684

7 days per week, 8am - 8pm



Human Services t has awarded contracts to enhance community support services to adults with serious mental illness in Cape May, Gloucester and Salem counties.

The \$500,000 plan will provide opportunities for a minimum of 20 individuals, with priority given to individuals in community or inpatient settings who are homeless or at risk of homelessness and meet eligibility criteria for the community support services (CSS). They can be at risk of homelessness because they're facing eviction or residing at different places nightly, among other concerns. The program will also provide housing subsidy options.

"Human Services has long been committed to developing and expanding community integration opportunities for individuals with serious mental illness," Acting Commissioner Adelman said. "As part of that commitment, we're always looking for new ways to support the needs of individuals and enhance community support. With this plan, we're expanding critical direct supports for high risk individuals, many of whom have co-existing medical conditions or substance use disorders and have experienced periods of long-term institutionalization that they may be reluctant to leave. Our goal is to help these individuals become fully integrated into their communities."

The contracts have been awarded to Jewish Family Services (JFS) for Cape May and Collaborative Support Programs (CSP) for Gloucester and Salem counties.

Under the plan, providers and their system partners will identify and combat barriers that may impede individuals with serious mental illness from seeking and accessing clinical and rehabilitative services. The awardees will collaborate with system partners to ensure coordination, equity, and inclusion of care; deliver services in a culturally competent manner; ensure services meet the language access needs of individuals served by this project; and coordinate and lead efforts to reduce disparities in access, quality, and program outcomes.

"The services and supports will be provided in a holistic manner that enables individuals diagnosed with a serious mental illness to develop the skills necessary to become fully integrated into their communities, particularly in the areas of housing, employment, and social contexts," said Assistant Commissioner Valerie L. Mielke, who leads the Division of Mental Health and Addiction Services.

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Extra Food Assistance Continued in February



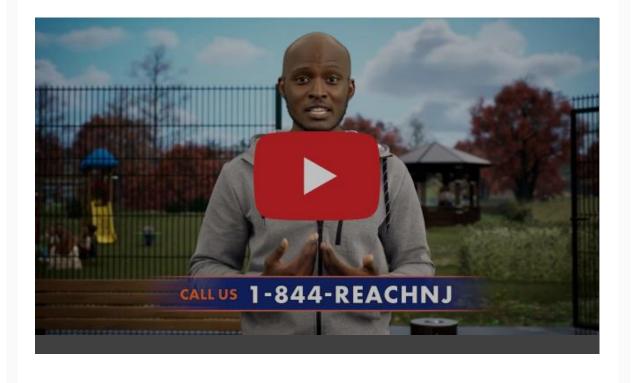
All New Jerseyans who receive food assistance through New Jersey's Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, or SNAP, received extra benefits in February to help address food needs related to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Recipients can always check their balance at <u>NJFamiliesFirst.com</u>, the ConnectEBT app or by calling the number on their card.

Human Services has been providing NJSNAP households w/ max benefits since March 2020, and ha now distributed about \$1.4 billion in supplemental monthly SNAP payments.

Learn more about New Jersey's SNAP program at njsnap.gov.

Learn More about Medication that Can Support Addiction Recovery: 1-844-ReachNJ





REMINDER: Wireless Devices Pilot Program for Eligible Deaf and Hard of Hearing Residents

NJ Division of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing

Smartphone and Tablets Available for Eligible Deaf and Hard of Hearing Residents

Noting the importance of expanding digital access for all, the New Jersey Department of Human Services is encouraging deaf and hard of hearing New Jersey residents to check their eligibility for a wireless devices pilot program that provides eligible residents with a free tablet or smartphone.

Since the pilot program launched this past August, residents have been supplied essential devices and are now able to access critical information, services and supports being delivered virtually through online platforms. This includes vital communication needs such as telehealth services, emergency information, telecommunications, and more.

Those interested may check their <u>eligibility</u> and apply <u>here</u>.

"We are pleased that we have been able to help close technology gaps and increase essential digital access for deaf and hard of hearing residents who applied for the program and were found eligible, but we want to help more individuals," Acting Commissioner Adelman said. "I encourage everyone who may be eligible for this program to learn more and, if eligible, apply as soon as possible."

The program is being administered by Human Services' Division of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (DDHH) and supplies a limited number of wireless devices to eligible deaf and hard of hearing residents. For eligible applicants, devices are free of charge. There is a limit of one device per eligible household. The supply of devices is subject to availability and funding.

"Communication access is critical in making informed choices and we have been working since August to ensure vulnerable individuals have essential devices that allow them this access," Deputy Commissioner Neira said. "We encourage deaf and hard of hearing residents to check their eligibility and apply for this essential program so more lives can be enriched with improved access to key supports."

"It is amazing to see the impact this pilot program has had thus far for the deaf and hard of hearing community. As communications and services continue to transition to online platforms, it is now more critical than ever for these devices to go into the hands of those in need," Executive Director Hill said.

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A Call for Entries: 2022 New Jersey Teen Media Contest Celebrates Dreams and Achievements



Teens across the state can begin submitting entries for the 27th Annual New Jersey Teen Media Contest, which highlights Human Services' mission to support families.

The contest, run by Human Services' Division of Family Development, is open to all New Jersey middle and high school-age students. This year, the contest will once again accept entries in the hand-painted/hand-drawn and written word categories.

This year's contest challenges teens is to illustrate - through art or the written word - the following theme: What is your dream and how are your parents/loved ones helping you get there?

"We are excited to once again extend this opportunity to students to express themselves through art. We know the stress that this pandemic has put on young people and we hope this will help shift their focus on the goals they hope to achieve, and serve as good reminder of the love and support that surrounds them," Acting Commissioner Adelman said.

"Every year we are impressed by the thoughtfulness of the entries and the talent of these young artists. As the pandemic continues to present challenges for many families, this is a creative way for young people to think about the dreams they hope to achieve and the importance of having a strong family and community foundation," Deputy Commissioner Neira said.

"As we continue to navigate the current public health emergency, we recognize that these unprecedented times have had a massive impact on our children, relationships and family life," Division of Family Development Assistant Commissioner Natasha Johnson said. "The Teen Media Contest is a way for students to engage in creative ways of thinking and expressing their ideas. We are continually amazed by New Jersey teens and their ability to portray their family dynamics through art and the written word."

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Assistant Commissioner Mielke: Mobile Medication Units Help Fill Gaps in Opioid Use Disorder Treatment



Acting Commissioner Adelman (fourth from left) and Assistance Commissioner Mielke (third from left) were among those who toured a mobile medication-assisted treatment van in June at the John Brooks Recovery Center in Atlantic County during a visit by the Drug Enforcement Agency.

In June, the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) <u>came to New Jersey</u> to announce that it would allow all <u>opioid treatment programs to add mobile units</u> to help increase access to medications for opioid use disorder, lifting a 13-year moratorium on new vehicles.

Assistant Commissioner Mielke of the Division of Mental Health and Addiction Services recently talked to <u>Pew</u> about how the decision can benefit those with opioid use disorder (OUD).

"I would say that mobile units are literally a great vehicle to reach individuals with OUD who may be reticent to go to a clinic setting for treatment—and that the vehicles provide an opportunity to bring not just medication but also education about the disease of addiction and recovery support to people in need," Assistant Commissioner Mielke said.

Read more here.

Helping Open The Francine A. LeFrak Wellness Center



Acting Commissioner Adelman was among those attending the Jan. 25 opening of the The Francine A. LeFrak Wellness Center, which provides medical, behavioral, and dental diagnostic screenings, referrals, as well as, nutrition and healthy lifestyle support to New Jersey Reentry Corporation

Governor Murphy Launches New Jersey Health Care Cost Benchmark Program



Governor Phil Murphy recently signed an executive order launching the New Jersey Health Care Cost Growth Benchmark Program.

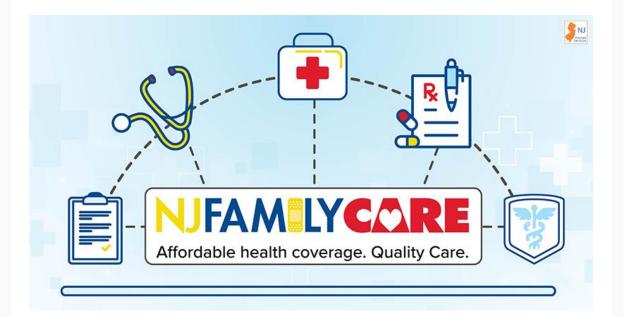
The Governor also announced a stakeholder compact that unites New Jersey insurers, health care providers, and health care advocates in support of the new program and the goal of working together to provide more affordable health care for all New Jerseyans.

"The COVID-19 pandemic underscores just how important it is that New Jersey continues to work to lower the cost of health care for residents, and we recognize that affordable, quality health care is a critical part of our COVID-19 recovery," Governor Murphy said. "Making New Jersey a more affordable place to call home for our residents and businesses means working to address the cost of high health care prices. New Jersey has world class health care institutions and providers, and we want to ensure that New Jerseyans have more affordable access to these services."

"All New Jerseyans deserve access to quality health care," Acting Commissioner Adelman said. "However, the high cost of health care remains a deterrent for too many families. Making health care more accessible has been a top priority for this administration, and this is another step forward towards that goal. Lower health care costs means more New Jerseyans will have access to life-saving health care when they need it. We remain committed to this vision and look forward to working with all stakeholders to make health care more affordable and accessible to all New Jerseyans."

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Governor Murphy Signs Key Telehealth Legislation



Governor Murphy yesterday signed legislation (S-2559) that extends for the next two years the requirement adopted at the outset of the COVID-19 pandemic that health benefits plans reimburse health care providers for telehealth and telemedicine services at the same rate as in-person services, with limited exceptions.

At the same time, the legislation charges the Department of Health with conducting an in-depth study of the utilization of telehealth and telemedicine and its effects on patient outcomes, quality and satisfaction, and access to care in order to inform future decisions on payment structure for these services.

"Telehealth and telemedicine have proven invaluable during the pandemic, providing flexibility and expanding access for vital services ranging from routine care to mental health services," Acting Commissioner Adelman said. "We're pleased that the current telehealth services will continue through the end of 2023 to benefit NJ FamilyCare beneficiaries, patients seeking mental health services and providers alike. We look forward to assisting with the upcoming assessment in any way possible and look forward to its recommendations as we all work toward our shared goal of ensuring continuity of care for patients and support for providers."

Acting Commissioner Adelman: Get Your Booster!



Acting Commissioner Adelman got her COVID-19 booster <u>"to help protect myself, my loved ones, my</u> coworkers & my community."

Learn more here.

SPOTLIGHTS ON HUMAN SERVICES PROGRAMS



Social isolation may have varying effects on someone's quality of life and well-being.

Take the Survey: http://tiny.cc/njsocialisolation Survey will be open until Feb. 28

For questions about the survey, email *Oresp@dhs.nj.gov*

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