



# State of New Jersey

**MIKIE SHERRILL**  
*Governor*

**DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES  
DIVISION OF FAMILY DEVELOPMENT  
PO BOX 716**

**STEPHEN CHA, MD, MHSR**  
*Commissioner*

**DR. DALE G. CALDWELL**  
*Lt. Governor*

**TRENTON, NJ 08625-0716**

**NATASHA JOHNSON**  
*Assistant Commissioner*

The following Decision is distributed for your information. This Decision has been made in consideration of the specific facts of this case. This Decision is not to be interpreted as establishing any new mandatory policy or procedure otherwise officially promulgated.

STATE OF NEW JERSEY  
DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES

## FINAL DECISION

OAL DKT. NO. HPW **06437-26 M.B.**

AGENCY DKT. NO. **C116612011 (MERCER COUNTY BOARD OF SOC. SVCS..)**

Petitioner appeals from the Respondent Agency's denial of Emergency Assistance ("EA") benefits. The Agency denied Petitioner's EA benefits, in the form of Temporary Rental Assistance ("TRA"), contending that her apartment is over the Fair Market Rent ("FMR") for Mercer County. Because Petitioner appealed, the matter was transmitted to the Office of Administrative Law for a hearing. On April 28, 2026, the Honorable Carl V. Buck III, Administrative Law Judge ("ALJ"), held a telephonic plenary hearing, took testimony, and admitted documents.

On April 29, 2026, the ALJ issued an Initial Decision, affirming the Agency's determination. Here, the ALJ found, and the record substantiates, that at the time of Petitioner's application for EA benefits on March 26, 2026, her monthly rent was \$2,200, plus monthly utilities estimated to be \$365 average per month, which put Petitioner's total monthly rent over the FMR of \$2,338 in Mercer County for a three-bedroom housing unit, and as such, she is ineligible for EA/TRA benefits. See Initial Decision at 2-4; see also Exhibits R-1, R-2, R-4, R-5, R-6, R-8, R-21; see also N.J.A.C. 10:90-6.3(a)(7)(i)(1). Based on the foregoing, the ALJ determined that Petitioner is ineligible for EA/TRA benefits. See Initial Decision at 4-5. Accordingly, the ALJ concluded that the Agency's denial of EA/TRA benefits to Petitioner on April 1, 2026, was proper and must stand. *Ibid.*; see also Exhibit R-8. I agree.

No Exceptions to the Initial Decision were received.

As Assistant Commissioner, Division of Family Development, Department of Human Services, I have considered the ALJ's Initial Decision, and following an independent review of the record, I concur with the ALJ's final conclusion in this matter and hereby ADOPT the Findings of Fact and Conclusion of Law.

By way of comment, should Petitioner's circumstances change, such as securing housing which is within the FMR for Mercer County, she may reapply for EA/TRA benefits.

Accordingly, the Initial Decision is hereby ADOPTED, and the Agency's determination is AFFIRMED.

Officially approved final version. May 07, 2026

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Natasha Johnson  
Assistant Commissioner

