NAVIGATING DISABILITY SERVICES IN NEW JERSEY

By Dianna Maurone
Administrator of Information and Referral Services
It is estimated that one in five people - about 1.75 million New Jerseyans - has a disability that may limit their physical or cognitive function.

Through our toll free hotline -- 1-888-285-3036 – DDS responds to as many as 15,000 requests each year for Information and Referral Assistance on issues affecting people with various disabilities across the State.
• What is a Disability?
• Definitions
• NJ Disability Network – Services & Programs
• Resources
WHAT IS A DISABILITY?

- Disability is the broad term used to define an impairment that substantially limits one or more of an individual's major life activities.
- Impairment may be physical, cognitive, emotional, sensory, or developmental in nature.
- An individual may have one or multiple disabilities.
- A disability can be inherited, congenital, acquired, or of an unknown origin and does not necessarily imply ill health.
- In New Jersey, disability determination is defined on a case by case basis, using various definitions depending on the service for which an individual is applying.
The World Health Organization (WHO) developed the international classification of functioning, disability, and health (ICF), which defines a disability as:

- Multi-dimensional; affecting body structure, function, activity, and participation.
- Accounts for the fact that biological, psychological, and social factors all play a significant role in how the person with a disability views him/herself and is perceived by others.

Social Security law defines disability as:

- The inability to engage in substantial gainful activity by reason of any medically determinable physical or mental impairment, which can be expected to result in death or which has lasted or can be expected to last for a continuous period of not less than 12 months.

VARYING DEFINITIONS OF DISABILITY
The Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 defines disability as:

• A physical or mental impairment that substantially limits a major life activity.

A developmental disability is:

• A condition that involves physical or intellectual impairment having developed before age 22, which is expected to continue throughout the individual’s lifetime, and is manifested through impairments in at least three of the following life activities: self-care, learning, mobility, communication, self-direction, economic self-sufficiency, and the ability to live independently.
New Jersey has an extensive array of resources to support and provide services to people with disabilities.

Services are available at state, county, and local government levels, as well as through various community organizations.
NJ Department of Human Services (DHS)

- Provides services across the lifespan to protect, assist, and empower people and families to achieve their maximum potential.

- DHS serves seniors, individuals and families with low incomes; people with mental illnesses, addictions, developmental disabilities, or late-onset disabilities; people who are blind, visually impaired, deaf, hard of hearing, or deaf-blind; parents needing child care services, child support and/or healthcare for their children; and families facing catastrophic medical expenses for their children.

- Consists of eight major divisions, one fund, and various other administrative offices

- [www.state.nj.us/humanservices](http://www.state.nj.us/humanservices)
Commission for the Blind and Visually Impaired (CBVI)

- Promotes and provides services in the areas of education, employment, independent living and eye health through informed choice and partnership with persons who are blind or visually impaired, their families and the community.

- Services Provided: Information and referral, vocational rehab., funding for assistive devices, access to the Library for the Blind, and prevention outreach in the form of vision screenings and community education.

- 877-685-8878 OR
  www.state.nj.us/humanservices/cbvi/home/index.html
Division of Aging Services (DoAS)

Serves as a single point of access for seniors, people with disabilities, and their caregivers regardless of Medicaid eligibility.

- Allows for continuum of coordinated and integrated disability and long-term supports and services.
- Promotes aging in place.
- www.state.nj.us/humanservices/doas/home/index.html

Aging and Disability Resource Connection

- Provides intake and screening to the elderly, disabled, caregivers and professionals looking for services or programs.
- 1-877-222-3737 OR www.adrcnj.gov
Office of the Public Guardian and Elder Rights (OPG)

- Makes legal, financial and healthcare decisions for individuals aged 60 and older who have been determined by a Superior Court judge to be incapacitated.

- 609-588-6500 OR http://www.state.nj.us/humanservices/doas/services/pg/

Adult Protective Services Program (APS)

- Investigates allegations of abuse, neglect, and/or exploitation of adults 18+ years old, living in the community.
- Contact County Office to report an allegation.
  http://www.state.nj.us/humanservices/doas/home/adultpsp.html
Division of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (DDHH)

- Advocates for people in NJ who are deaf or hearing impaired to assist them in accessing programs and services routinely available to others.

- Services Include:
  - Sign language interpreter and caption service directories
  - Assistive communication device demonstration centers
  - Assistive listening loan program via county libraries
  - Equipment distribution program (telephone devices, alerting devices, speech devices)
  - Hearing aid project: refurbished hearing aids for eligible low-income seniors

- 609-588-2648 OR
  [www.state.nj.us/humanservices/ddhh/home/index.html](http://www.state.nj.us/humanservices/ddhh/home/index.html)
Division of Developmental Disabilities (DDD)

- Provides services and supports to adults (21+) with developmental disabilities
- Promotes community based alternatives to institutional care and maximum level of independence.
- Case management/support coordination, day, residential, and family support services.
- Adult mobile response: SCCAT 888-393-3007
- Contact the Community Services Office serving your county.
  [link](https://www.state.nj.us/humanservices/ddd/home/index.html)

Division of Disability Services (DDS)

- Provides information and referral services to people with disabilities and their families.
- Focuses on people who have become disabled as adults, “adult onset disabilities”, but serves all ages and disabilities.
- Currently oversees Medicaid waivers and other programs to support people with disabilities (ACCAP, TBI, CRPD)
- Publishes New Jersey Resources.
- 1-888-285-3036 OR [link](https://www.state.nj.us/humanservices/dds/home/index.html)
Division of Family Development (DFD)

- Provides leadership and supervision to the public and non-profit agencies that deliver financial assistance and critical safety net services to individuals and families in New Jersey.

- Directs Work First New Jersey/Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (WFNJ/TANF) and WFNJ/General Assistance (WFNJ/GA) – the two programs that make up the state’s welfare program; NJ SNAP (formerly Food Stamps); Child Support services and Child Care services.

- The agencies responsible for administering DFD programs are: the county and municipal welfare agencies, One-Stop Career Centers, Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies (CCR&Rs), court and probation offices.

- [www.state.nj.us/humanservices/dfd/home/index.html](http://www.state.nj.us/humanservices/dfd/home/index.html)
Division of Medical Assistance and Health Services (DMAHS)

• Administers the state-and federally-funded Medicaid and NJ FamilyCare programs for certain groups of low- to moderate-income adults and children.
• Maintains the Medical Assistance Customer Centers (MACCs) throughout the state (divided by counties served)
• 1-800-356-1561 OR www.state.nj.us/humanservices/dmahs/home/index.html

Division of Mental Health and Addiction Services

• A combined system of services and supports for people with mental health and addiction disorders
• Offers outcome-oriented treatment and resources to assist people in achieving wellness and recovery
• Mental Health Services: 1-800-382-6717
• Addiction Services: 609-292-5760
• www.state.nj.us/humanservices/divisions/dmhas
Catastrophic Illness in Children Relief Fund (CICRF)

- Financial assistance program for New Jersey Families whose children have expenses related to an illness or condition that remain otherwise uncovered by insurance, State or Federal programs, or other sources, such as fundraising.

- Managed by the CICRF Commission

- Funded by fees collected from state employers who contribute an amount per employee; not tax dollars

- Independently screens and distributes funds to families facing catastrophic medical expenses for their children

- 1-800-335-FUND (3863) OR [Link to website]
Department of Children and Families (DCF)

- Ensures the safety, well-being, and success of children, youth, women, families, and communities through the provision of comprehensive services.
- [www.state.nj.us/dcf](http://www.state.nj.us/dcf)

**Highlights of DCF Divisions**

- **Children’s System of Care (formerly the Division of Child Behavioral Health Services)**
  - Provides behavioral health and developmental disability services for children and youth under the age of 21.
  - Children’s mobile response and stabilization
  - Performcare-24/7 Hotline: 1-877-652-7624
- **Child Protection and Permanency (formerly DYFS)**
  - Centralized child abuse/neglect hotline: 1-877-NJ ABUSE (652-2873)
Highlights of DCF Divisions - continued

- Institutional Abuse Investigation Unit
  
  A child protective service unit that investigates allegations of child abuse and neglect in out-of-home settings such as foster homes, residential centers, schools, detention centers, etc. 609-888-7440

- Offices of Education, Adolescent services, Family and Community Partnerships
Department of Community Affairs (DCA)
• Provides administrative guidance, financial support, and technical assistance to local governments, community development organizations, businesses and individuals to improve the quality of life in New Jersey.
• [www.state.nj.us/dca](http://www.state.nj.us/dca)

- Division of Housing and Community Resources
  • Oversees programs that prevent homelessness and offer affordable housing.
  • (609) 633-6286

- Sandy Recovery Division
  • Manages the majority of the federal funds that will be used to assist New Jersey in recovering from Superstorm Sandy.
  • (609) 633-1328
The Office of Special Education Programs, within the Division of Student and Field Services, has oversight responsibilities for the provision of education and related support services to students with disabilities aged 3 to 21.

www.state.nj.us/education/specialed/
STATE GOVERNMENT
PROGRAMS & SERVICES

Department of Law and Public Safety

- Division on Civil Rights
  - Investigates issues/complaints of discrimination in accordance with the LAD.
  - Works closely with advocacy groups for the disabled.
  - www.state.nj.us/lps

- Office of Emergency Management
  - Provides support to individuals with access and functional needs as part of the “whole community” planning process.
  - Register Ready – New Jersey’s Special Needs Registry for Disasters.
  - www.state.nj.us/njoem
Department of Military and Veterans’ Affairs

- Assists veterans in community reentry, employment, housing, health services, and accessing social services.
- Ensures federal benefits are appropriately utilized before state benefits.
- VETERANS HOTLINES
  - Benefit Hotline: 1-888-8NJ-VETS
  - Counseling Hotline: 1-866-VETS-NJ4

Division of Veterans’ Healthcare Services
- Operates long-term care nursing homes for Veterans.
- www.state.nj.us/military
Division of Property Management and Construction

- The Office Of Disabilities Management
- Responsible for issues of compliance with the American with Disabilities Act (ADA) in state-owned buildings and state-run programs.
- Provides technical assistance concerning accessibility standards and adaptive devices to promote full inclusion.
- 609-292-7299 or www.state.nj.us/treasury

Office of the Ombudsman for the Institutionalized Elderly

- Protects the health, safety, welfare, civil and human rights of older people living in institutions
- The Office is in, but is independent of, the NJ Department of the Treasury.
- Intake Line: 1-877-582-6995
- www.state.nj.us/ooie
Department of Labor and Workforce Development

- Division of Vocational Rehabilitation Services (DVR)
  - Provides employment placement and training for individuals with disabilities.
  - Contact your county office to initiate services.
  - [www.state.nj.us/labor](http://www.state.nj.us/labor)
Boards of Social Services

- Provide information about and/or access to government assistance programs
- [www.mynjhelps.org](http://www.mynjhelps.org)

Centers for Independent Living (CILs)

- Community-based, consumer driven organizations
- Offer peer counseling, skills training, advocacy, and a variety of services based on individual needs
- Many funded through DVRS
- [www.njsilc.org](http://www.njsilc.org)
OFFICES ON AGING: AREA AGENCY ON AGING (AAA)

- Designated office in each of the state’s 21 counties
- Responsible for developing comprehensive, coordinated systems of community-based services for older adults
- Serve as Aging and Disability Resource Connection (ADRC) lead agencies to ensure seniors, adults with disabilities, and caregivers have access to information and long-term services and supports
- [www.state.nj.us/humanservices/doas/home/aaaaa.html](http://www.state.nj.us/humanservices/doas/home/aaaaa.html)

OFFICES FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

- Empower people with disabilities to self-advocate and live independently in the community
- Provide information, referral, and technical assistance on a local level on issues of concern including, but not limited to the following: accessibility, housing, financial assistance, and transportation
- [www.state.nj.us/humanservices/dds/home/cntyofficeindex.html](http://www.state.nj.us/humanservices/dds/home/cntyofficeindex.html)
## LOCAL SERVICES & PROGRAMS

### Municipal Offices
- Information and technical assistance regarding local programs and resources
- May have grants dedicated to particular population
- May require residents to share costs of certain services

### Community Organizations
- Provide formal and informal supports and services
- YMCA/YWCA
- Religious organizations
- Service organizations
- Neighborhood groups

### Disability Specific Groups
- Offer support and/or technical assistance to individuals and/or caregivers
- Promote information, education, and additional resources
ADDITIONAL RESOURCES
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**Agency Services**

**Advocacy**
Disability Rights New Jersey (DRNJ)  [www.drnj.org](http://www.drnj.org)

**Education**
Disability Rights New Jersey (DRNJ)  [www.drnj.org](http://www.drnj.org)
Educational Law Center  [www.edlawcenter.org](http://www.edlawcenter.org)

**Legal Services**
Community Health Law Project: (CHLP)  [www.chlp.org](http://www.chlp.org)
Disability Rights New Jersey (DRNJ)  [www.drnj.org](http://www.drnj.org)
Legal Services of New Jersey (LSNJ)  [www.lsnj.org](http://www.lsnj.org)

**Social Service, Immigration, and Refugee Matters**
Lutheran Social Ministries  [www.lsmnj.org](http://www.lsmnj.org)
ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Recycled Durable Medical Equipment (DME)/Medical Equipment/Assistive Technology

Back in Action www.backinaction.org
Goodwill Home and Medical Equipment www.goodwillhomemedical.org
Help Kids Hear www.helpkidshear.org

Cultural Resources

New Jersey Statewide Network for Cultural Competence www.state.nj.us/njsncc

Utility Services

Board of Public Utilities (BPU) www.bpu.state.nj.us
QUESTIONS?

Please contact

1-888-285-3036 (M-F 9AM – 5PM)

Speak with an Information and Referral Specialist to confidentially discuss your situation and to request a current Resource Directory

Thank You!