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NEWSLETTER | APRIL 2026

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## **New Jersey Human Services Announces Appointments to Disability Mortality and Abuse Prevention Advisory Committee**

The Department of Human Services announced the appointment of members to the newly established Disability Mortality and Abuse Prevention Advisory Committee, a key initiative aimed at strengthening protections and improving outcomes for adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD).

The Advisory Committee will conduct in-depth reviews of selected cases involving abuse, neglect, exploitation, or mortality of adults with IDD. Through this work, the Advisory Committee will identify trends, assess systemic responses, and recommend actionable improvements to prevention strategies, reporting processes, and accountability measures.

The Advisory Committee reflects a broad and inclusive approach, bringing

together individuals with lived experience, family members, medical professionals, advocates, and representatives from state agencies.

“This Advisory Committee represents an important step forward in our ongoing work to strengthen oversight, accountability, and support across our system,”

**Human Services Commissioner Stephen Cha said.** “We are committed to building a culture of continuous improvement, one that listens, learns, and acts.

By closely examining these difficult cases, we can better understand where systems succeed, where they fall short, and how we can do better to protect and support individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities.”

The Advisory Committee stems from a [legislative bill package](#) introduced in 2024 and signed into law in January by then-Governor Phil Murphy to strengthen oversight, expand protections, and reinforce quality standards for providers serving individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities across New Jersey.

“Behind every case the Advisory Committee reviews is a person’s life, and a painful experience,” **Deputy Commissioner for Aging and Disability Services Kaylee McGuire said.** “This work is difficult, but it is profoundly important to prevent future harm. This Advisory Committee brings together individuals with lived experience and their families alongside clinical and policy experts—voices that together, help illuminate a path to meaningful change.”

“The systematic review and root cause analysis done by this Advisory Committee will help ensure that insights from these reviews lead to stronger safeguards and a system that better supports people with intellectual and developmental disabilities,” [Division of Developmental Disabilities Assistant Commissioner Jonathan Seifried said.](#) “With both compassion and collaboration, we can do the hard work required to ensure that people with IDD

are treated with dignity, respect, and the highest standard of support.”

Read more [HERE](#).

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## Human Services Fully Reopens Child Care Assistance Program

Human Services Commissioner Stephen Cha announced that the Department has fully reopened the Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP), restoring access to all eligible families seeking child care assistance.

“Child care isn’t a luxury for most New Jersey families, it’s a necessity,” **Commissioner Cha said**. “The Child Care Assistance Program serves as a vital economic lifeline, helping to pay for quality early childhood education and allowing parents to continue their careers. That is why we are

grateful to fully reopen this key program. We encourage families to review the eligibility criteria and apply at [ChildCareNJ.gov](https://www.childcarenj.gov).”

“Child care is a necessary expense that often strains household budgets,” **Deputy Commissioner for Social Services Michael J. Wilson** said. “By fully reopening applications we are able to provide essential relief to families. This allows more families to work with confidence, knowing their children are in safe, enriching environments. By continuing to invest in this program, we are investing in affordability.”

CCAP provides child care assistance to income-eligible parents who are working, attending school, or participating in job training, ensuring support is available to families who need help affording child care.

“We encourage families to visit [ChildCareNJ.gov](https://www.childcarenj.gov) to learn about the CCAP and review eligibility requirements. When ready to apply, families will be directed to the State’s secure online application system, [MyNJHelps](https://www.mynjhelps.com), to complete and submit their application,” **said Division of Family Development Assistant Commissioner Natasha Johnson**. “Families can also connect with their local [Child Care Resource and Referral \(CCR&R\) agencies](#) for guidance and support in accessing affordable child care options.”

Read More [HERE](#).

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Congratulations to Commissioner Stephen Cha, who was joined by Governor Mikie Sherrill, family and friends to take the oath as Human Services Commissioner.

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**Governor Sherrill and Human Services  
Commissioner Cha Call for Elimination of Trump  
Administration's Flawed SNAP Cost Shifts**

Governor Mikie Sherrill and Commissioner Stephen Cha are calling for Congress and the Trump Administration to eliminate or delay harmful Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) cost shift provisions tied to USDA's fundamentally flawed Payment Error Rate (PER). If these changes are not at least delayed until FFY2030, the cost burden could jeopardize the State's progress in combating food insecurity and create unnecessary barriers for residents accessing food assistance.

"Because of the Trump Administration's policies – namely H.R. 1 – our progress in driving down food insecurity is at risk. In New Jersey, our priority is feeding our families. Rather than creating unnecessary red tape and barriers to benefits, we prioritize real payment accuracy and streamlining," **said Governor Sherrill.**

The Sherrill Administration argued that the cost shift provisions place increased burdens on New Jersey without adding significant value to the SNAP program.

Under the Trump Administration's H.R. 1, utilizing the PER – which is an inappropriate and flawed metric for this purpose – to calculate the State's contributions to the cost of SNAP benefits could force New Jersey taxpayers to absorb hundreds of millions of dollars.

“The H.R.1 PER-based cost shift provisions do not improve payment accuracy nor address waste, fraud, and/or abuse, and create a substantial burden on our State and County administrations that threatens our ability to address the critical needs of low-income families across our State. While we urge the elimination of cost shift provisions entirely, we recommend at minimum postponing the implementation of the SNAP cost shift to allow sufficient time to address the many concerns and inconsistencies in its implementation,” **wrote Human Services Commissioner Cha.**

For a copy of the letters sent by Governor Sherrill and Commissioner Cha to each member of New Jersey's congressional delegation, click [HERE](#).

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## **Human Services and Rutgers Cut Ribbon on New Jersey's First Crisis Receiving Stabilization Center**

Human Services and Rutgers University hosted a ribbon-cutting ceremony to mark the opening of the state's first Crisis Receiving Stabilization Center (CRSC) in Essex County.

As part of the [988 continuum of care](#), the Newark CRSC will offer a no-wrong-door access to crisis stabilization, meaning anyone in distress can go there and get immediate help.

CRSCs are home-like, non-hospital centers that provide short-term (under 24 hours), community-based support for individuals experiencing suicidal, mental health, or substance use crises.

“CRSCs grow the state's 988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline continuum of crisis services in New Jersey—someone to call, someone to respond, and

somewhere safe to go. This center represents years of dedication and careful planning to create a system that meets people where they are and helps stabilize crises before they escalate. The Newark center is the first of five planned locations throughout the state that aims to bring urgent, community-based behavioral health care directly to the people who need it most,”  
said **Human Services Commissioner Stephen Cha.**

“CRSCs are a safe alternative for individuals in crisis, connecting people directly to care and support without relying on costly emergency rooms or unnecessary law enforcement involvement. By providing a community-based alternative, these centers can help reduce unnecessary ER visits and hospitalizations while ensuring people get the right level of care when they need it most. We are proud to bring this impactful resource to the community, knowing it delivers timely support and connects individuals with the services they need,” said **Valerie Mielke, Deputy Commissioner for Health Services at the Department of Human Services.**

Read more [HERE.](#)

More event photos below. ↘





NJ Certified  
**Home Health  
Aide Career**



*Supported in part by the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS)*

## **Human Services Certified Home Health Aide Pilot Programs Strengthen Workforce, Certify Over 250 New Home Health Aides**

Human Services' Certified Home Health Aide Career Program, developed in collaboration with the John H. Heldrich Center for Workforce Development at Rutgers University, has certified more than 250 new Certified Home Health Aides (CHHAs), who will provide crucial support for older adults and individuals

in need of home-based care. The initiative also led to increased participant confidence, professional growth, improved workforce readiness, and fewer financial and educational barriers to successful employment.

“This pilot project demonstrated that, with the right support, we can motivate individuals to enter this field. Human Services will continue its efforts to support individuals in joining the home health care workforce, ensuring that residents who require care receive the quality support they deserve in our communities,” **said Commissioner Stephen Cha.**

“The results across the three pilot programs show that targeted investment in training and support leads directly to workforce success. Certified Home Health Aides are essential to helping people with disabilities and older adults live full, independent lives in the community.

Growing and supporting the direct care workforce is an investment in New Jersey’s future and our aging population,” **said Deputy Commissioner for Aging and Disability Services Kaylee McGuire.**

“New Jersey’s older population is growing rapidly. The Division has made significant efforts to support people remaining in their homes and communities as they age. CHHAs are an important part of this effort. Continued investment in this sector can help ensure we have a strong workforce that can meet rising demand and help keep older New Jerseyans healthy,” **said Louise Rush, Assistant Commissioner for the Division of Aging Services.**

Read more [HERE](#).

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# TAKE FIVE INTERVIEW

Stephen Cha, MD  
*Commissioner, New Jersey Department of  
Human Services*



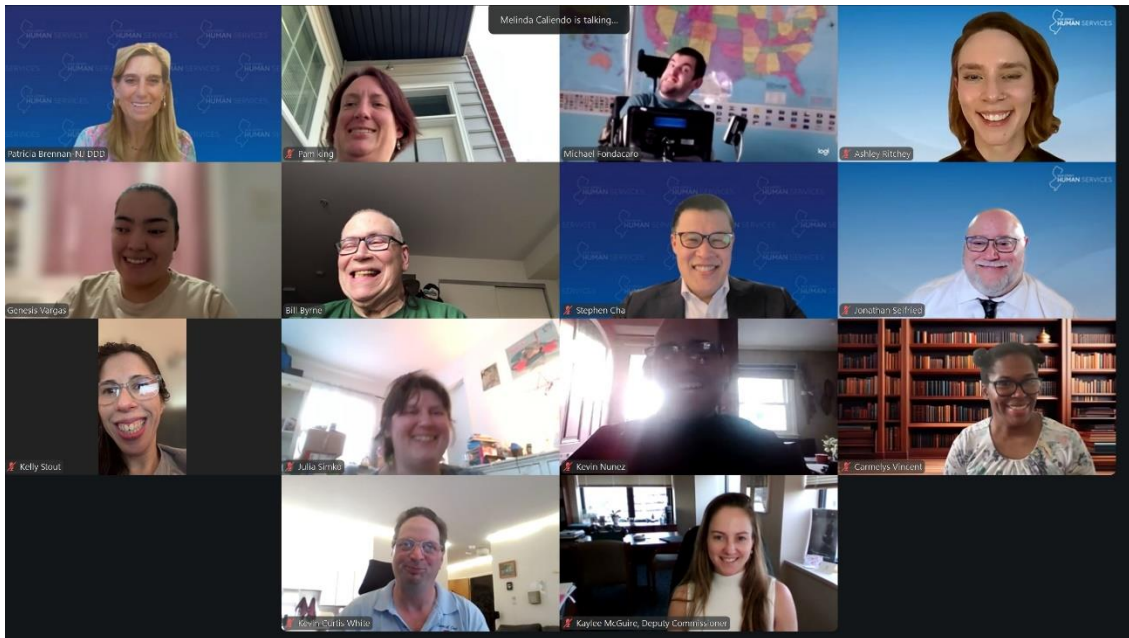
Commissioner Stephen Cha spoke to the [New Jersey Health Care Quality Institute](#) about federal cuts to [Medicaid](#) and [SNAP](#) and the experience he brings to the commissioner's job.

Read more [HERE](#).





Commissioner Stephen Cha and Deputy Commissioner for Health Services Valerie Mielke toured New Jersey's only freestanding cancer hospital, the [Jack and Sheryl Morris Cancer Center](#) in New Brunswick along with [RWJ University Hospital](#).



Commissioner Stephen Cha heard from the [Division of Developmental Disabilities' Self-Advocacy Committee](#)

about their work to educate medical students and  
advocate for language access.

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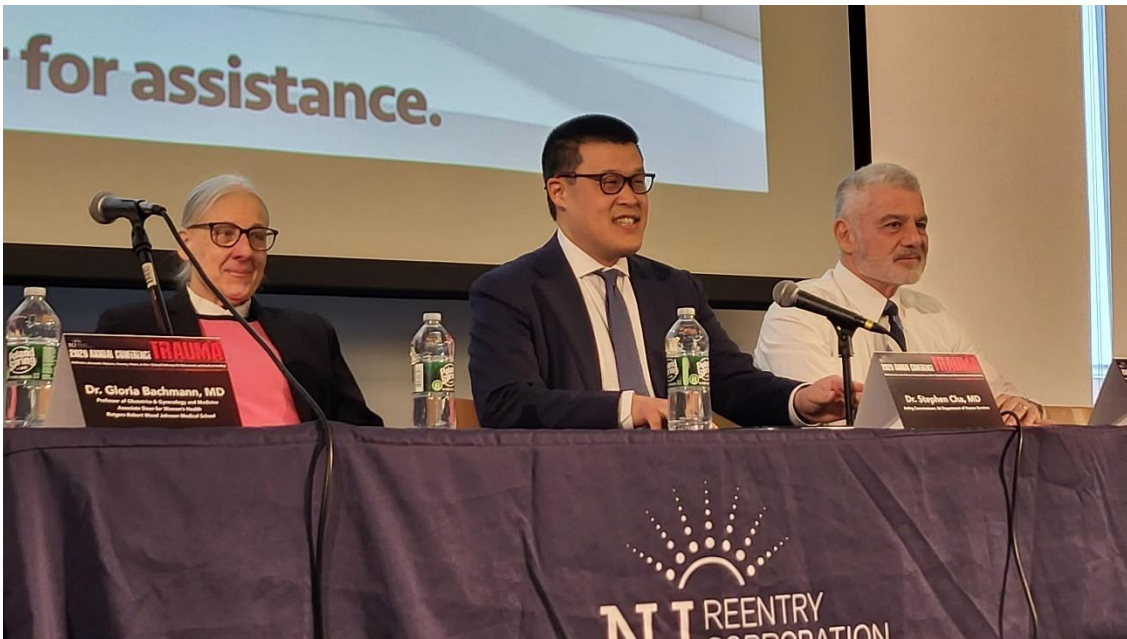
Dialogue, partnership, and keeping humanity at the center of services provided - these were the themes discussed at the [New Jersey Association of Mental Health & Addiction Agencies, Inc. \(NJAMHAA\)](#) Spring Conference. Commissioner Stephen Cha, Deputy Commissioner Valerie Mielke, and [Department of Children and Families](#) Deputy Commissioner Carmen Diaz-Petti shared the agencies' thinking about addressing future challenges.

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Commissioner Stephen Cha and Deputy Commissioner for Health Services Valerie Mielke toured [Hackensack Meridian Carrier Clinic](#) behavioral health facility with CEO Robert Garrett. They visited the Cohen Community Resource Center, the East Mountain School and other facilities on the campus dedicated to mental health and addiction services.





Commissioner Stephen Cha joined Governor Mikie Sherrill and a panel of physicians to open the New Jersey Reentry Corporation's annual conference, led by former Governor James McGreevey, the corporation's executive director and chairman. The panel focused on trauma and the physical and mental effects it has on the body. Commissioner Cha shared how Human Services respects and dignifies the experiences of everyone who comes to the Department for assistance.

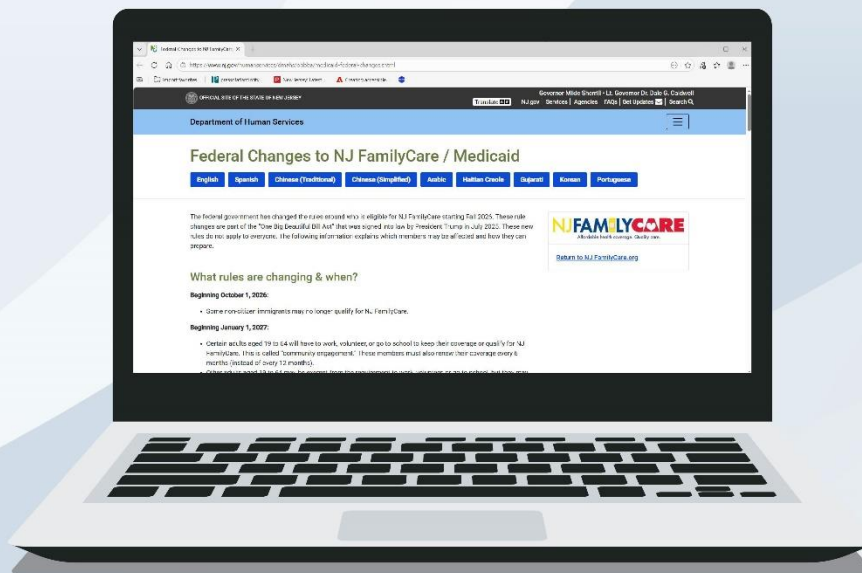
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Commissioner Stephen Cha joined a room of entrepreneurs, healthcare pros, researchers, and corporate partners at [SciTech Scity](#)'s meeting to talk about innovating for longer HEALTHspans - helping people thrive with dignity their entire life.

# Federal changes are coming to **NJ FAMILY CARE.**

## What members need to know.



New federal changes are coming to [NJ FamilyCare](#) eligibility starting fall 2026.

These updates may affect your coverage or application status.

Find out [HERE](#) what's changing, who may be impacted, and how to prepare.

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Commissioner Stephen Cha swore-in the newest recruit, Faith Mascari, into the [Human Services Police force](#). Human Services Police protect the people of the state with a focus on children, families, individuals with disabilities and special needs.

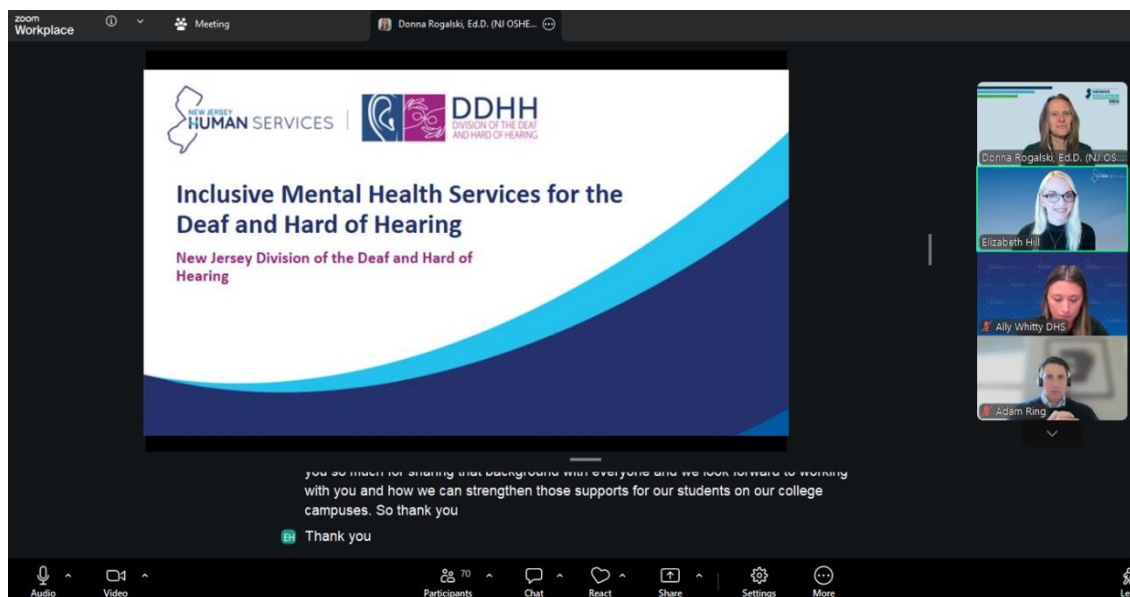
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## Welcome to the New Jersey Commission for the Blind and Visually Impaired's Website



The Commission for the Blind and Visually Impaired has launched a [newly upgraded website](#) designed to better serve residents seeking support and

resources. The refreshed site offers comprehensive information about all available programs and services, including vocational rehabilitation, independent living support, and educational assistance. The update aims to make it easier for individuals, families, and partners to quickly find the information they need.



[NJ Department of Human Services'](#) Division of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing Executive Director Elizabeth Hill joined the [New Jersey Office of the Secretary of Higher Education](#) (OSHE) and [Uwill](#)'s mental health convening and presented about inclusive mental health services for the deaf and hard of hearing individuals.

Beginning in 2023, OSHE established a first-in-the-nation partnership with mental health and wellness solution, Uwill, to provide college students in New Jersey with free, 24/7 access to virtual mental health services.

For more information visit [HERE](#).

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## Take Your Child to Work Day 2026





[Human Services](#) celebrated **"Bring Your Child to Work Day"** in April! Children of DHS employees had a day full of activities that helped them learn more about our various divisions and programs.

Click [HERE](#) to see all of our photos from the day.

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# Governor's April Proclamations



  
STATE OF NEW JERSEY  
EXECUTIVE DEPARTMENT  
*Proclamation.*

WHEREAS, Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD), a neurodevelopmental disorder, is the fastest growing developmental disability in the United States, affecting more than three million people; and

WHEREAS, the lifelong nature of ASD and other developmental disabilities have a serious impact on the thousands of individuals across New Jersey; and

WHEREAS, the number of children affected by autism nationally is now approximately 1 in 37, and approximately 1 in 39 children in New Jersey are diagnosed with autism according to the national Centers for Disease Control and Prevention; and

WHEREAS, the New Jersey Autism Registry has identified over 58,000 children with autism and provides information on the characteristics of, and the services needed by, children with autism for policy and planning in New Jersey; and

WHEREAS, a variety of public and private organizations and agencies strive to provide quality care, support, or services to children and adults with ASD to enable them to live as independently as possible and to reach their full potential; and

WHEREAS, each organization has a role in identifying, assessing, or supporting those with ASD and their families; and

WHEREAS, the Governor's Council for Medical Research and Treatment of Autism provides funding to support the NJ Autism Center of Excellence which conducts biomedical and clinical research on autism; and

WHEREAS, the Office on Autism in the Department of Human Services provides a central location to address ASD issues and to enhance communication and coordination among our state agencies; and

WHEREAS, the New Jersey Department of Children and Families' Children's System of Care serves children and adolescents with emotional and behavioral health care challenges and developmental and medical disabilities and their families; and

WHEREAS, the New Jersey Department of Human Services' Division of Developmental Disabilities serves adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities and their families; and

WHEREAS, April 2<sup>nd</sup> has been designated World Autism Awareness Day to raise public awareness of this disorder and the myriad of issues surrounding it;

NOW, THEREFORE, I, Mike Shimell, Governor of the State of New Jersey, do hereby proclaim:

**APRIL 2026**  
AS  
**AUTISM ACCEPTANCE MONTH**

In New Jersey

  
GIVEN, under my hand and the Great Seal of the State of New Jersey, this twenty-second day of March in the year first thousand nine hundred and twenty-six, the two hundred fifty-sixth year of the Independence of the United States.

  
LT. GOVERNOR

  
GOVERNOR

Autism Acceptance  
Month

  
STATE OF NEW JERSEY  
EXECUTIVE DEPARTMENT  
*Proclamation.*

WHEREAS, Deaf History Month commemorates significant milestones in deaf history, including the recognition of American Sign Language as a complete and legitimate language; and

WHEREAS, New Jersey is home to approximately 62,000 residents with varying degrees of hearing loss, including individuals who are born deaf and those who experience hearing loss later in life; and

WHEREAS, the State of New Jersey has a rich history of supporting and celebrating the deaf and hard of hearing communities; and

WHEREAS, the Division of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (DDHH), within the Department of Human Services (DHS), upholds this rich history by playing a vital role in enhancing the lives of deaf and hard of hearing individuals through communication access services, distribution of hearing aids, assistive technology, advocacy, infrastructure and cultural, training, and education; and

WHEREAS, the Commission for the Blind and Visually Impaired, within DHS, provides education, vocational rehabilitation, independent living, assistive technology, and eye health services for the estimated 20,000 residents of the state who are blind, vision impaired, or deaf-blind; and

WHEREAS, opened in 1955, Marie Batteaschek School for the Deaf (MSDS), New Jersey's only state school for the deaf, has over 100 years of experience educating deaf, hard of hearing, children, and deaf-blind children, and in 1986, the Bruce Street School for the Deaf, one of the oldest deaf programs in this country, alongside the numerous other educational programs serving deaf, hard of hearing, and deaf-blind children, play key roles in education and community development; and

WHEREAS, MKSD/New Jersey School for the Deaf Museum honors artifacts and exhibits related to the history of the school and the lives of its alumni; and

WHEREAS, deaf history is an essential part of the collective story, including the courage, creativity, and advocacy of a community that has long fought for equality, equity, and the right to communicate freely in their own language; and

WHEREAS, recognizing the immense contributions of New Jersey advocacy organizations led by and for diverse deaf, hard of hearing, and deaf-blind communities is important; and

WHEREAS, this month provides an opportunity to honor the achievements, culture, language, and resilience of the deaf and hard of hearing communities throughout New Jersey and across the nation;

NOW, THEREFORE, I, Mike Shimell, Governor of the State of New Jersey, do hereby proclaim:

**APRIL 2026**  
AS  
**DEAF HISTORY MONTH**

In New Jersey

  
GIVEN, under my hand and the Great Seal of the State of New Jersey, this twenty-second day of March in the year first thousand nine hundred and twenty-six, the two hundred fifty-sixth year of the Independence of the United States.

  
LT. GOVERNOR

  
GOVERNOR

Deaf History  
Month

## APRIL IS LANGUAGE ACCESS AWARENESS MONTH

*A glimpse at New Jersey's linguistic and cultural diversity*

### OVER 2 MILLION

Immigrant and Refugees

### 1 in 8

report speaking English less than very well

### 1 in 3

residents speak a language other than English at home



## APRIL IS LANGUAGE ACCESS AWARENESS MONTH

*Commonly Spoken Languages in New Jersey*

- Spanish
- Portuguese
- Korean
- Gujarati
- Mandarin, Cantonese
- Haitian Creole
- Arabic
- Polish
- Russian
- Vietnamese
- Italian
- Filipino, Tagalog
- Bengali
- Turkish



April was **Language Access Month**.

New Jersey thrives on its incredible linguistic and cultural diversity.

To learn more about the Human Services' [Office of New Americans](#)

Language Access Initiative, visit our website [HERE](#).



April 2nd was

**World Autism Awareness Day!**

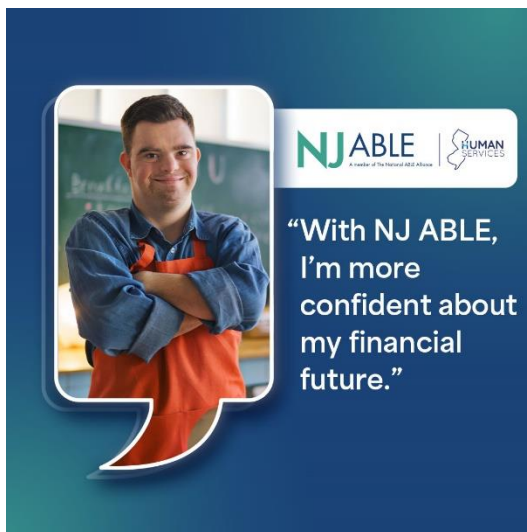
An internationally recognized day every year that helps to raise awareness about people with autistic spectrum disorders including autism and Asperger syndrome throughout the world.

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April was **Alcohol Awareness Month.**

ATLAS® is a free, online tool available to New Jersey residents interested in finding trustworthy addiction treatment.

Take a confidential assessment [HERE](#) and find quality providers in your area today.



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April was **Able To Save Month!**

Considering opening a savings account, but worried about losing eligibility for public programs?

[NJABLE](#) allows individuals with disabilities to save tax-free.

See how you can save with NJABLE [HERE!](#)

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April 25th was **National Prescription Drug Take Back Day**, an opportunity to help prevent addiction and overdose deaths. To find a DEA Take Back collection site visit: [takebackday.dea.gov](https://takebackday.dea.gov). You can also find a NJ Project Medicine Drop location [HERE](#).



In April, we celebrated 135 years of the [NJ Human Services Police](#)! Thank you for your tireless dedication to protecting and serving New Jersey's most vulnerable residents. Your service makes a difference in the lives of so many, and we are grateful for all that you do.

***Happy Birthday DHS Police!***

[NJ SNAP](#) | [NJ FAMILYCARE](#) | [NJSAVE](#) | [NJ HELPS](#)

FOLLOW US!

