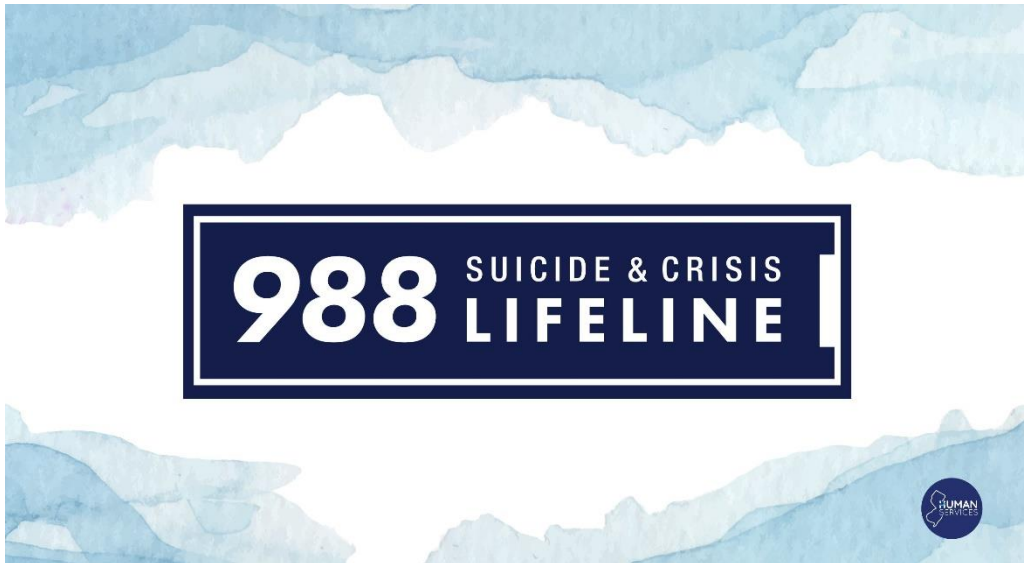


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NEWSLETTER | APRIL 2025



Human Services Launches 988 Mobile Crisis Outreach Response Teams

Human Services announced that the [988](#) Mobile Crisis Outreach Response Teams (MCORTs) are now operational. MCORTs are a voluntary service

available statewide to individuals ages 18 years and older in non-life-threatening situations who have contacted the 988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline.

MCORTs respond to non-life-threatening mental health, substance use, and suicidal crises without law enforcement or other emergency personnel when it is safe to do so. They work in coordination with the state's 988 Lifeline centers and are dispatched when a 988 Crisis Counselor assesses that community outreach would be helpful and the person calling 988 is interested in such services for themselves or a loved one.

"Timely behavioral health supports set our residents up for the best possible long-term outcomes. That is why we have made it a priority to invest in our 988 system of care," **said Governor Phil Murphy**. "With our newly operational Mobile Crisis Outreach Response Teams, we are building on our already robust continuum of supports to ensure New Jerseyans have access to services they need to de-escalate crises and access needed resources. Today's announcement underscores that – in New Jersey – help is truly only a phone call or text message away."

The Murphy Administration has made historic investments in mental health crisis response services across departments, including the MCORTs under Human Services, the [ARRIVE Together](#) program under the Department of Law and Public Safety, and Children's Mobile Response Stabilization Services under the Department of Children and Families.

"I am proud of the work we have done to strengthen 988 in New Jersey, and how we respond to behavioral crises in the community. The need for mental health, substance use, and suicide crisis services remains high. People in distress who call, text, or chat 988 will tap into a system of care that extends past that initial outreach. This help ensures we meet people where they are and connect them to the most appropriate care to meet their needs," **said Human Services Commissioner Sarah Adelman**.

“By working closely with the 988 contact centers, MCORTs ensure individuals experiencing a crisis receive the right support and services, while reducing the need for law enforcement involvement. This initiative strengthens New Jersey’s 988 system, offering families a reliable resource when facing a mental health or substance use emergency,” **said Deputy Commissioner for Health Services Valerie Mielke.**

“The takeaway here is that 988 can help when you’re struggling, with no judgment, and refer you to other helpful services and treatment. Anyone experiencing mental health struggles or emotional distress, should call or text [988](#) or chat at [988Lifeline.org](#) chat, which is available 24 hours a day, every day,” **said Renee Burawski, Assistant Commissioner of the Division of Mental Health and Addiction Services.**

Read more [HERE](#).

Protect your SNAP and WFNJ benefits from theft with our new EBT Lock/Unlock feature



Human Services Launches New Lock Feature on EBT Cards to Protect Against Benefit Theft

Human Services announced a new security feature that allows individuals who receive cash and food assistance benefits to lock their Electronic Benefits Transfer (EBT) cards to protect against the national problem of skimming.

Residents who receive Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program ([SNAP](#)) and Work First New Jersey ([WFNJ](#)) benefits can use the new EBT Lock/Unlock tool on the [NJFamiliesFirst.com](#) website or the ConnectEBT app to lock their EBT cards when they are not in use. Choosing the “Lock My Card Everywhere” option blocks all purchases while your card is locked. Residents will still receive benefits or refunds — even if their card is locked — but no online or in-store purchases can be made.

"With this new tool, residents can now proactively safeguard their benefits from scammers. This feature ensures that, between purchases, cards are secure and protected from potential theft. I encourage all residents who receive SNAP

or WFNJ benefits to start using this feature immediately,” **said Commissioner Sarah Adelman.**

“This new feature is a vital step in protecting the benefits of those who rely on them,” **said Deputy Commissioner for Social Services Michael J. Wilson.**

“By giving residents the ability to instantly lock their cards after every transaction, we can help reduce the risk of theft and provide a greater sense of security for families who depend on these critical resources.”

“This simple yet effective feature provides an extra layer of security that can be activated on the go. We are glad we can make this available to residents so they can avoid falling victim to scammers,” **said Assistant Commissioner Natasha Johnson**, who directs Human Services’ [Division of Family Development](#), which is responsible for the SNAP program.

Read more [HERE](#).



New Jersey Announces Proposed Regulatory Change to Promote Health Care Integration and Improve Patient Care

[The New Jersey Department of Health](#) announced proposed rules creating a single, integrated license for outpatient health care facilities. This landmark reform – achieved in conjunction with New Jersey Human Services – will cut historical red tape and enable providers to deliver integrated primary care, mental health, and addiction treatment services. This comprehensive, whole-person approach is proven to deliver improved health outcomes and better patient experience.

“Mental health is health. Patients deserve to get the care they need in a fully coordinated way, and without having to jump through unnecessary hoops of an overcomplicated system,” said then-**Health Commissioner Kaitlan Baston, MD, MSc, DFASAM**. “For too long, separate rules for primary care, mental health, and addiction treatment created artificial barriers between types of care. The integrated license breaks down those walls to support truly patient-

centered care, a major win and a big step toward tackling the mental health crisis in our country.”

“Integrating care is essential for supporting a person’s physical and behavioral health needs and we know it improves patient experience and health outcomes, particularly for individuals receiving treatment for mental health and substance use,” said **Human Services Commissioner Sarah Adelman**. “This new approach simplifies access to care by removing unnecessary barriers, enabling providers to deliver the comprehensive services that individuals need in one convenient location. It’s a crucial step forward in enhancing our state’s behavioral health system and ensuring that all New Jerseyans receive the compassionate, coordinated care they deserve.”

Read more [HERE](#).



NJ Celebrates National Apprenticeship Day with Launch of Groundbreaking Early Childhood Program

New Jersey Human Services joined the [Department of Labor and Workforce Development](#) to recognize [National Apprenticeship Day](#) with the launch of New Jersey's first-ever Registered Apprenticeship program in infant and toddler care, marking another milestone in the Murphy Administration's ongoing commitment to increasing apprenticeship opportunities.

"As we approach nearly \$100 million in state investments in apprenticeships, New Jersey continues to set a national standard for workforce development and innovation," **said Labor Commissioner Robert Asaro-Angelo**. "By making apprenticeships available in non-traditional sectors like early childhood education, we are not only nurturing our youngest citizens but also ensuring a diverse and dynamic workforce. And by bolstering the child care sector we're in turn providing vital support to parents and caregivers who depend on child care to work and support their families."

"I thank the Department of Labor for their partnership in expanding this apprenticeship program to help address workforce shortages in the child care industry. By launching the state's first apprenticeship in infant and toddler care, New Jersey is taking another step toward ensuring that child care centers are equipped with well-trained staff, providing stability and high-quality care for working families. I look forward to our continued efforts to strengthen the early childhood workforce and ensure that high-quality child care is accessible to more working families," **said Commissioner Sarah Adelman**.

Read more [HERE](#).



Governor Murphy and Murphy Administration to be Honored for Age-Friendly Efforts

New Jersey Advocates for Aging Well (NJAAW) is recognizing Governor Murphy and the Murphy Administration with its Carl F. West Award, which honors excellence through innovations and improvements that provide long-term benefits for older adults.

Governor Murphy in [March 2021](#) announced that New Jersey was applying to become an age-friendly state under the AARP Network of Age-Friendly Communities.

By doing so, NJAAW stated, the Governor “set a path and structure for the Department of Human Services to develop, expand and support communities

that are welcoming and livable not only for older residents, but people of all ages.”

New Jersey created an Age-Friendly State Advisory Council comprised of representatives from state and local government, academic institutions, nonprofit organizations, businesses, and community groups.

In [May 2024](#) Human Services published [the Age-Friendly Blueprint](#), which outlines strategies and practices that municipalities, counties, and business organizations can undertake to create age-friendly communities.

Since the release of the Blueprint, the [Division of Aging Services](#) opened the [Age-Friendly Grants Program](#) for new age-friendly communities and projects and began awarding funding.

Commissioner Sarah Adelman will accept the award on May 16.

Learn more [HERE](#).



Inclusive Playground Funding Announced

Deputy Commissioner for Aging and Disability Services Kaylee McGuire joined the [Department of Environmental Protection](#) in New Brunswick to commemorate Earth Week by announcing more than \$131 million in Green Acres investments for parks, recreation, and open space preservation projects, including funding for completely inclusive playgrounds.

This round of Green Acres funding includes \$28.2 million dedicated to 40 local completely inclusive playgrounds under [Jake's Law](#).

“Access to nature and play should never be limited,” **Deputy Commissioner for Aging and Disability Services McGuire**. “As we celebrate Earth Week, it’s inspiring to see communities across the state embracing inclusivity in their parks and playgrounds. This dedication signals that everyone is welcome. Through Green Acres and Jake’s Law, we’re preserving open space and

ensuring that all residents have a place to connect, play, and thrive. New Brunswick's commitment to a completely inclusive playground is a powerful step toward that vision."

Read more [HERE](#).



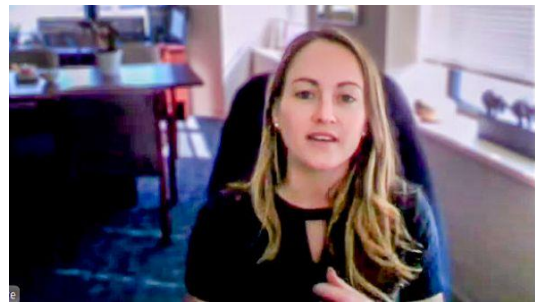


Human Services celebrated Bring Your Child to Work Day this month. Children of Human Services employees had a day full of activities that helped them learn more about our various divisions and programs.

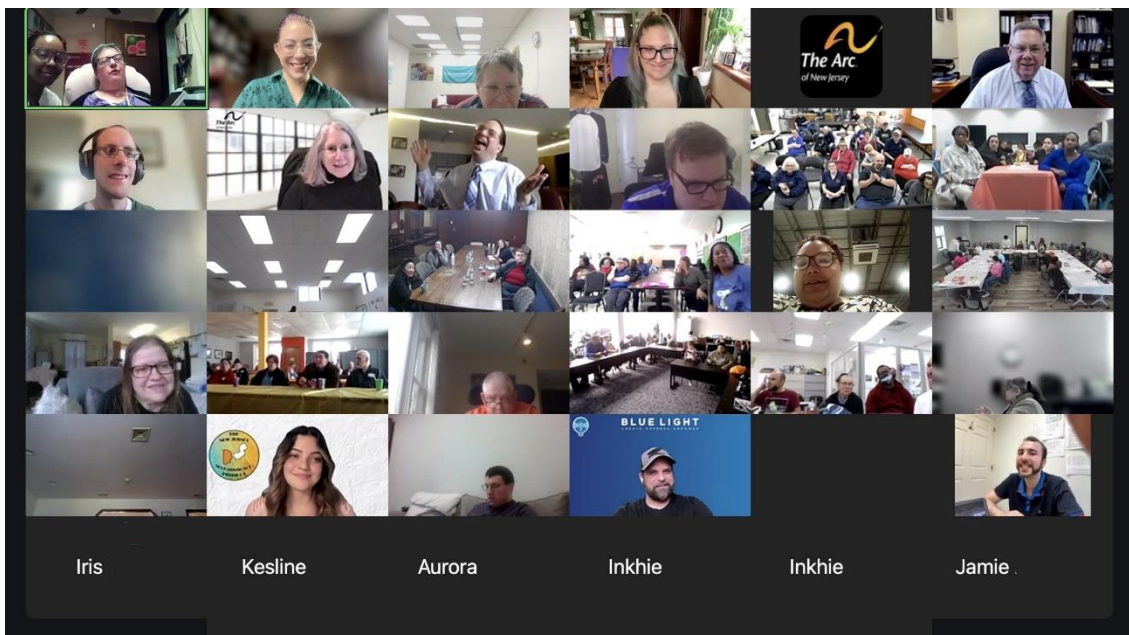
View the complete photo gallery [HERE](#).



Deputy Commissioner for Aging and Disability Services Kaylee McGuire joined the New Jersey PACE Association to highlight NJ Human Services efforts to support PACE - or [Program of All-Inclusive Care for the Elderly](#) - and expand the innovative program statewide. Learn more [HERE](#).



Deputy Commissioner of Aging and Disability Services Kaylee McGuire and [Division of Deaf and Hard of Hearing](#) Executive Director Liz Hill presented at the Inclusive Mental Health Symposium, hosted by Nutley Family Service Bureau. The symposium's part of the [Inclusive Healthy Communities grant program](#), sponsored by the [Division of Disability Services](#). They discussed services provided by NJ Human Services and improved service delivery for our consumers with disabilities.





Deputy Commissioner for Aging and Disability Services, Kaylee McGuire and Assistant Commissioner Jonathan Seifried joined the [Arc of New Jersey](#) for the [NJ Statewide Self-Advocacy Network](#) Spring Luncheon, during which they hailed self-advocates for promoting respect and belonging for individuals with IDD.



In April we celebrated 134 years of the [NJ Human Services Police Force](#)! We thank them for their tireless dedication to protecting and serving New

Jersey's most vulnerable residents. Their service makes a difference in the lives of so many, and we are grateful for all that they do.

Happy Birthday DHS Police!



Congratulations to Officer Jacquelyn Martino who successfully completed the Passaic County Police Academy, Class 24-62. Officer Martino will be assigned to our Northern Region Command. Welcome to [NJ Human Services Police](#).

and services for people with
Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD).
To learn more about the office, visit
our website [HERE](#).

Governor Phil Murphy


officially declared April to be
Deaf History Month in New Jersey!

This is a time to honor the
contributions, culture, and history of
the Deaf and Hard of Hearing
community. Learn more [HERE](#).



World Autism Awareness Day is an internationally recognized day, observed on April 2nd each year, that helps to raise awareness about people with autistic spectrum disorders including autism and Asperger syndrome throughout the world. Learn more [HERE](#).





NJABLE
A member of The National ABLE Alliance

HUMAN SERVICES

**“With NJ ABLE,
I’m more
confident about
my financial
future.”**

April is **Able to Save Month**.

[NJ ABLE](#) is a tax-advantaged savings account for NJ residents with disabilities. Use it for expenses like housing and transportation and for long-term savings. NJ ABLE won't affect SSI or Medicaid eligibility. Learn more [HERE](#).

April is **Alcohol Awareness Month**.

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

Take a confidential assessment and find quality providers in your area today:

APRIL IS

**ALCOHOL
AWARENESS
MONTH**



TreatmentATLAS.org

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

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