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NEWSLETTER | JANUARY 2026



A Message from Acting Commissioner Stephen Cha

Dear partners, advocates, and stakeholders,

I'm honored to introduce myself as Acting Commissioner of the New Jersey Department of Human Services and grateful to Governor Mikie Sherrill for the opportunity to serve the people of New Jersey.

Throughout my career as a physician, a public servant, and a healthcare leader I've been driven by the belief that government has a responsibility to show up for people, especially during moments of challenge. Those experiences shape how I approach this role. Policy must be grounded in real lives, and how we can heal and support people. Human Services does exactly that every day. Our programs help people put food on the table, access healthcare, receive supports, and age with dignity. For millions of New Jerseyans, Human Services is a lifeline.

We are stepping into a period of real change and uncertainty, particularly as federal decisions affect programs like [NJ FamilyCare](#) and [SNAP](#). In the face of these challenges, the Sherrill–Caldwell Administration is committed to delivering effective, compassionate services and protecting access to care for our neighbors who need it most.

One principle will guide my leadership: every person who turns to Human Services deserves to be treated with dignity, respect, and compassion. That commitment also extends to how we work with you: our partners and advocates whose expertise and advocacy strengthen this department and the communities we serve.

I look forward to listening, learning, and working together. Thank you for all you do on behalf of New Jersey's families, seniors, and individuals.

With appreciation,

Stephen Cha, MD

Acting Commissioner

New Jersey Department of Human Services

Learn more about Acting Commissioner Cha [HERE](#).

Click below to hear more from Acting Commissioner Cha.





Human Services Expands PACE to All 21 Counties

New Jersey has reached a significant milestone in its commitment to care for older adults by awarding funding to Program of All-Inclusive Care for the Elderly (PACE) organizations to serve residents in every county across New Jersey.

[PACE](#) provides individuals aged 55 years and older who meet clinical eligibility with comprehensive medical and social services to help them remain in their homes and continue living in the community. Each PACE participant receives customized care that is planned and delivered by a coordinated, interdisciplinary team of professionals. The care is provided in both home- and community-based settings.

“This achievement marks a major step forward in our vision to provide comprehensive, statewide access to PACE for all older adults, a priority for Human Services since the start of the Murphy Administration,” **said Deputy Commissioner of Aging and Disability Services Kaylee McGuire.** “PACE

provides vital health and social services that can help individuals remain in their homes and communities for as long as possible, delaying or avoiding the need for nursing home care altogether—something we know families prefer.”

“Having the ability to remain at home provides many health benefits for older residents. Much of our work at the Division of Aging Services focuses on programs and resources that can help older adults stay healthy and maintain their independence. Anyone interested in learning more about these services should visit our website at aging.nj.gov,” **said Assistant Commissioner for Aging Services Louise Rush.**

Learn more [HERE](#).



The graphic features a dark blue background on the left with the title "LANGUAGE INSTRUCTION PROGRAM" in large, white, bold, sans-serif capital letters. Below the title, a horizontal white line separates it from a paragraph of text: "Helping deaf, hard of hearing, and deaf-blind children 0-5 receive language acquisition services in child care settings." To the right of the text is a large white circle containing a line-art illustration of four hands in various orientations, some with fingers spread and others with fingers curled. In the top right corner of the graphic, there is a small circular logo with the text "HUMAN SERVICES" and a stylized human figure icon.

New Jersey Human Services Announces Codification of the Division of Deaf and Hard of Hearing's Language Instruction Program

A new state law ([S3764/A4986](#)) codifies the [Division of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing's](#) (DDHH) [Language Instruction Program](#) (LIP) into law as P.L.2025, c.257.

This critical program supports deaf, hard of hearing, and deafblind children from birth to age five by providing essential language acquisition and development services, helping them to develop American Sign Language (ASL) skills. This marks the action effort in Human Services' efforts under the Murphy Administration to enhance inclusivity of the deaf, hard of hearing, and deafblind community.

"Starting as a small pilot with two deaf toddlers, our Language Instruction Program has evolved into a robust statewide initiative, setting a national standard," **said Division of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing Executive Director Elizabeth Hill.** "Thanks to this law, families across New Jersey now have access to this free service, enabling their deaf, hard of hearing, and deafblind children to achieve bilingualism, be prepared for kindergarten, and avoid the adverse effects of language deprivation."

Learn more [HERE](#).



New Jersey Releases First Annual Language Access Report Highlighting Progress, Ongoing Efforts to Enhance Accessibility for New Jerseyans with Limited English Proficiency

New Jersey Human Services, the Office of the Attorney General, and the New Jersey Office of Information Technology released the first annual report on New Jersey's Language Access Initiative, which offers an overview of the state's progress in implementing the law signed by Governor Phil Murphy in 2024 to expand language access to government information, services, and benefits.

"Removing language barriers in a state as diverse as New Jersey, where so many different languages are spoken, is just smart policy. This report highlights achievements, identifies opportunities for growth, and provides recommendations to help state agencies fully realize the spirit of the law," **Deputy Commissioner for Social Services Michael J. Wilson** said.

“Most immigrant children have served as translators and interpreters for their families, navigating complex government documents and services on their behalf. New Americans can relate to the stress and challenges that come with engaging with government entities in a new country while facing communication barriers. These experiences highlight why this work is so important. I look forward to continuing to collaborate with partner agencies to ensure they have the support they need to provide meaningful language access, so all residents can benefit from state information and services,” **said Office of New Americans Director Johanna Calle.**

Read the report [HERE](#).



New Jersey Adopts Landmark Regulatory Change to Promote Health Care Integration and Improve Patient Care

The New Jersey Department of Health announced the adoption of rules creating a single, integrated license for outpatient health care facilities.

This landmark reform – achieved in conjunction with the New Jersey Human Services – cuts historical red tape and enables 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 experiences.

Key improvements include:

- Allowing facilities to maintain unified medical records for patients
- Eliminating requirements for separate physical spaces and entrances
- Enabling shared treatment spaces and infrastructure
- Expanding access to withdrawal management services and medications for addiction treatment like buprenorphine
- Enabling qualified physicians to deliver reproductive health services without unnecessary barriers and eliminating the requirement of a staff OB/GYN to provide essential care
- Allowing integration of counseling and therapy into primary care without full behavioral health licensure

Learn more [HERE](#).

Landmark Legislation to Strengthen Protections, Oversight, and Accountability for Providers Serving Individuals with Intellectual

and Developmental Disabilities Now Law

Governor Phil Murphy on Jan. 17 signed three bipartisan bills into law to strengthen oversight, expand protections, and reinforce quality standards for providers serving individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities across New Jersey.

The three new laws:

- Enhance the New Jersey Department of Human Services' authority to enforce quality standards among residential and other service providers for individuals with developmental disabilities. Human Services will be able to impose civil penalties and fines on providers for serious violations, including failure to meet health and safety requirements, inadequate internal investigations, and operating without proper licensure. In addition, the law establishes the Residential Facility Quality of Care Improvement Fund to collect proceeds from fines to be reinvested in enhanced monitoring, regulatory actions, and quality improvement initiatives across the system.
- Revises the legal definition of child abuse or neglect to include individuals up to age 21 years in certain regulated settings, including institutions and day schools overseen by the Department of Children and Families. This change transitions the responsibility of investigations of incidents involving young adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities from DHS to DCF, which funds and regulates services for young adults under the age of 21 years.
- Creates the Disability Mortality and Abuse Prevention Advisory Committee within Human Services. This Advisory Committee is charged with conducting an in-depth review of selected cases involving abuse,

neglect, exploitation, or mortality of adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities. The Advisory Committee will analyze trends, evaluate systemic responses to allegations, and recommend improvements to prevention strategies, reporting processes, and accountability measures. It will include individuals with lived experience, family members, medical professionals, advocates, and state agency representatives.

Learn more [HERE](#).

NEW JERSEY HUMAN SERVICES



Office of Program Integrity & Accountability

Human Services Announces Launch of Redesigned Office of Program Integrity and Accountability Website

New Jersey Human Services launched a redesigned Office of Program Integrity and Accountability (OPIA) website. This update is part of Human Services' ongoing commitment to transparency, offering information in a clearer and

more user-friendly format. Visitors will find expanded, easy-to-navigate content detailing OPIA's role and responsibilities, including what to expect during investigative and compliance processes, as well as insights into how the office works to protect individuals.

The site features a dedicated section for consumers and families, explaining their rights, what occurs during an investigation, and how OPIA ensures services are delivered safely, appropriately, and in compliance with state and federal standards. Additionally, the website enhances access to data on incidents, oversight activities, and compliance trends, reinforcing our role in enhancing public understanding.

We invite you to explore the new OPIA website and share it with colleagues and stakeholders who may benefit from this information, as we continue to uphold accountability and trust across New Jersey Human Services providers.

The OPIA has also launched its own email listserv as another way to keep stakeholders updated on important news and information.

[Visit the OPIA Website](#)

[Subscribe to the OPIA Listserv](#)



NEW JERSEY HUMAN SERVICES

DMHAS

Division of Mental Health
and Addiction Services

Division of Mental Health and Addiction Services Launches New Website

New Jersey Human Services is also pleased to announce the launch of the newly redesigned Division of Mental Health and Addiction Services website. This update is part of an effort to provide a more user-friendly, easy to navigate format. Those visiting the site will find that it provides detail on the Division's role, including resources for providers, individuals, and families.

The site features a dedicated section for those seeking assistance, as well as information and resources for our stakeholders/providers.

This includes information on funding opportunities, reports, and updated information on topics of interest.

We invite you to explore the new site [HERE](#).



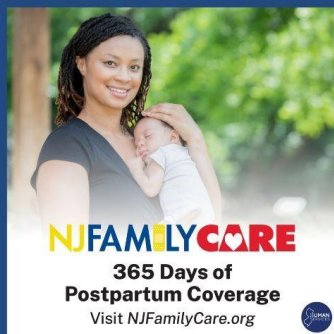
Recruits Dakota Chestnut, Domenick Lettini, Danielle D'Ambrosio, Devin Males and Brandon Chevrier were sworn to the [Human Services Police \(HSP\)](#).

At the same ceremony, Officers Darren Smith and Salvatore Pollara were sworn-in as new Sergeants.

Congrats to all!



Staff from the [Division of Developmental Disabilities' Office of Transition to Adult Life](#) got a roaring welcome from the Bloomfield High School Unified Bengals mascot at the second annual Bloomfield HS Special Olympics Unified Alumni Night. For more on the Office of Transition, visit [HERE](#).



January 23rd was **Maternal Health Awareness Day**. NJ Human Services is committed to improving maternal health by implementing:

Familycare365 one year of post-partum coverage;
PlanFirst increases access to family planning services; and
Doula services for better birth outcomes.

Visit NJFamilycare.org to learn more.

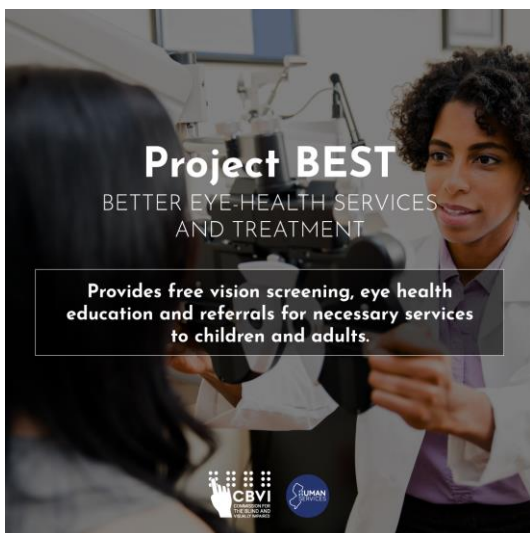


On **Law Enforcement Appreciation Day** on Jan. 9, then-Commissioner Adelman honored the NJ State Human Services Police: "There is no greater honor than public service and I am grateful for every officer who has taken on the responsibility of serving & protecting the most vulnerable amongst us."

World Braille Day was January 4th.

[The Meyer Center](#), run by the [Commission for the Blind and Visually Impaired](#), provides accessible reading materials to more than 2,000 students by transcribing textbooks into large print, braille or electronic formats, and provides adaptive materials and equipment.

Call 973-648-2547



January was
National Eye Care Month.
The Commission for the Blind and Visually Impaired's [ProjectBEST](#) program works to save sight and restore vision whenever it is medically possible. Free eye screenings have continued across NJ at schools, medical centers and other fixed sites. Visit [HERE](#).

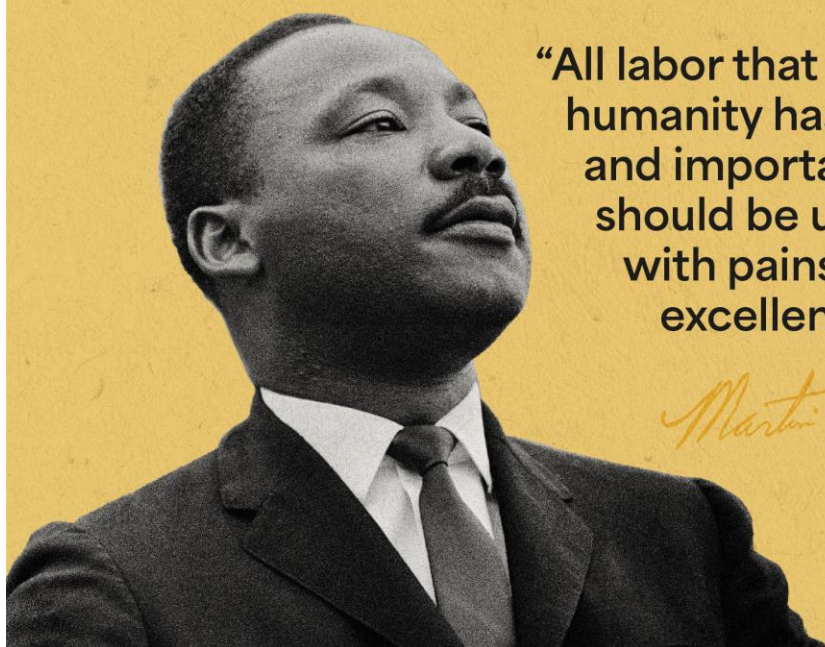


⠠ ⠠ ⠠ ⠠ ⠠ January was **National Braille Literacy Month**.

[The Meyer Center](#) run by the Commission for the Blind and Visually Impaired provides accessible reading materials to 2,000+ students in NJ. Check out our video with AUDIO DESCRIPTION showing the important work the center does for people who are blind or visually impaired.

CELEBRATING

Martin Luther King Jr. Day



**"All labor that uplifts
humanity has dignity
and importance and
should be undertaken
with painstaking
excellence."**

Martin Luther King Jr.



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

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