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NEWSLETTER | JULY 2026



Human Services Launches EBT Chip Card Pilot in Cumberland, Essex, and Mercer to Combat EBT Fraud

Human Services Commissioner Stephen Cha announced that residents of Cumberland, Essex, and Mercer counties who participate in either the [Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program \(SNAP\)](#) or the [Work First New Jersey \(WFNJ\)](#) program will begin receiving Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT) chip cards this summer as part of the first phase of a planned statewide transition to chip-enabled EBT cards.

After the approximately four-week pilot phase, the Department will issue new chip cards to SNAP and WFNJ cardholders in all remaining counties. Effective immediately, any cardholder who requests a replacement card—regardless of county—will receive a new chip card.

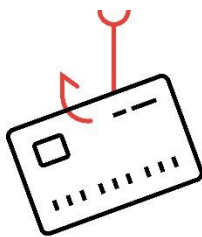
“New Jersey is helping lead the fight against fraud while expanding access to food assistance, joining only a handful of states that have transitioned or are transitioning to chip cards. Under current federal law, electronically stolen benefits cannot be replaced, leaving families who experience this type of theft without recourse. The new chip cards provide enhanced security to help prevent that kind of loss in the first place, keeping benefits in the hands of the people who need them,” **said Commissioner Cha.**

EBT card skimming has been an ongoing problem for EBT cardholders nationwide. It occurs when devices illegally installed on or inside point-of-sale terminals capture card data and record cardholders’ PIN entries. Criminals then use this data to steal from victims’ accounts. While there was a period of time when states were authorized and funded under federal law to replace electronically stolen SNAP benefits, that ended in December 2024.

“Benefit theft adds to the financial hardship many SNAP and WFNJ beneficiaries are already facing. Upgrading to chip-enabled cards is an important step in strengthening security for cardholders and their benefits, and we are pleased to extend this added protection to beneficiaries,” **said Deputy Commissioner for Social Services Michael J. Wilson.**

“We have worked hard to ensure everything functions as intended and look forward to issuing the new cards to all beneficiaries. Families are seeing grocery prices rise each time they shop. Having benefits stolen, with no means to replace them, only adds further strain to already stretched households. The chip cards will give beneficiaries peace of mind when they shop, helping reduce the incidents of benefits being stolen,” **said Division of Family Development Assistant Commissioner Natasha Johnson.**

Read more [HERE](#).



Skimming is a nationwide crime where criminals target EBT cards to steal people's food benefits.

In 2024, skimming stole

\$9.4 in SNAP **\$2**
MILLION benefits **BILLION**
from the

provided to support New Jersey households. While fraud is not widespread in New Jersey, every stolen dollar takes support away from families who rely on SNAP.



**Over the past year, SNAP
benefit theft has impacted:**

1,000

households every month

\$500,000

in benefits lost monthly



**Learn more about the new
chip cards and how to **protect**
your benefits from theft:**

**[nj.gov/humanservices/dfd/
chipcard/](https://nj.gov/humanservices/dfd/chipcard/)**



SNAP fraud isn't about widespread misuse by recipients. Fraud represents a small share of overall benefits, but New Jersey Human Services remains vigilant. Criminals stealing benefits through skimming hurt families who rely on SNAP, which is why New Jersey is introducing EBT chip cards to help protect benefits.

Learn more [HERE](#).



NJMIHIA Convenes Doulas and Birth Workers from Across New Jersey for The Village Moves Forward Doula Town Hall

The [New Jersey Maternal and Infant Health Innovation Authority](#) (NJMIHIA) convened doulas, birth workers, community leaders, and maternal health advocates from across the state on July 9 for The Village Moves Forward, a statewide Doula Town Hall focused on strengthening collaboration, advancing birth equity, and supporting healthier outcomes for New Jersey families.

“Doulas are trusted partners in improving maternal and infant health outcomes and advancing more equitable care for families across New Jersey,” **said Lisa Asare, NJMIHIA President and CEO.** “The Village Moves Forward reflects our commitment to listening to the birth workers who support families every day. Their lived experiences, expertise, and leadership help inform stronger policies, programs, and partnership that improve maternal and infant health outcomes statewide.”

The event is part of NJMIHIA's quarterly Doula Town Hall series, hosted in collaboration with the New Jersey Department of Health and New Jersey Department of Human Services. The series supports NJMIHIA's broader efforts to strengthen the perinatal workforce, foster community-rooted innovation, and ensure that the voices of doulas and birth workers help shape maternal and infant health initiatives across the state. Since the series launched in January, more than 220 perinatal workers have participated in the town halls, reflecting growing interest in collaboration, shared learning, and community engagement.

[NJ FamilyCare covers doula services](#) for all pregnant and postpartum members at zero out-of-pocket cost.

"Every family deserves access to the support and resources needed for a healthy start," Commissioner Stephen Cha said. "Doulas play an essential role in connecting families to care, navigating services, and advocating for their needs during one of life's most important transitions. By supporting and investing in this workforce, we strengthen the continuum of care and help improve outcomes for mothers, babies, and families across New Jersey."

The next town hall will be on October 8 at 12PM. See [here](#) for more information.

Read more [HERE](#).



COMMUNICATION ACCESS GRANTS

To expand language access for Deaf and Hard of Hearing individuals including ASL interpreting and captioning services, hearing loops and more.

NEW JERSEY HUMAN SERVICES



New Jersey Human Services Awards More Grants to Expand Communication & Language Access for Individuals Who Are Deaf or Hard of Hearing

Human Services Commissioner Stephen Cha announced that the Department has awarded additional communication and language access grants to continue to strengthen accessibility and equitable access to critical health and social services for individuals who are Deaf or hard of hearing.

The county grants from the [Division of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing](#) were awarded to Burlington, \$80,000; Mercer, \$80,000; and Monmouth, \$70,000. The Division has now provided \$1.76 million in communication access grants to counties since 2022.

The county initiatives will expand the availability of accessible communication technologies, including Video Remote Interpreting (VRI), American Sign

Language (ASL) interpretation, hearing induction loop systems, captioning services, and other accessibility tools. The projects will also strengthen language access infrastructure within county facilities, community programs, mobile outreach services, and public events.

“Everyone deserves equal access to the programs and services that support their health, independence, and well-being,” **Human Services Commissioner Stephen Cha said**. “These grants will help ensure that residents who are deaf or hard of hearing can communicate more effectively with county staff, access critical services without unnecessary barriers, and fully participate in their communities.”

“These grants are making New Jersey a more inclusive state where disabled residents can fully participate in community life,” **Deputy Commissioner for Aging and Disability Services Kaylee McGuire said**. “These investments will improve accessibility across a wide range of county programs from healthcare to homelessness services and public events, making it easier for residents to receive the information and support they need. We thank the county leaders who have been steadfast partners in supporting residents of all abilities.”

“Communication access is fundamental to independence, inclusion, and equitable access to services,” **said Elizabeth Hill, Director of the Division of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing**. “These grants will help counties strengthen their ability to communicate effectively with residents who are Deaf or hard of hearing by expanding access to interpreting services, assistive technology, and other communication supports. By investing in accessible communication, we're helping ensure that every resident can fully participate in their community and access the services they need with dignity and confidence.”

Read more [HERE](#).



New Jersey Human Services Honors Blind and Visually Impaired Individuals at Trenton Thunder Game

Celebrating the accomplishments of individuals who are blind, deafblind, and visually impaired, Human Services' Commission for the Blind and Visually Impaired (CBVI) today announced college scholarships for five blind, deafblind, or visually impaired students and recognized other blind and visually impaired students for their academic achievements.

Some of the honorees were celebrated during Wednesday night's Trenton

Thunder game as part of Blindness Awareness Night.

"For more than 20 years, CBVI has worked to foster full community inclusion and raise awareness of the potential and accomplishments of individuals who are blind, deafblind, and visually impaired," **said Human Services Commissioner Stephen Cha**. "We were thrilled to celebrate the success of these exemplary individuals at a special Trenton Thunder game. Their accomplishments demonstrate that anything is possible and inspire a brighter, more inclusive future for New Jersey."

"These scholarships help alleviate the financial challenges associated with pursuing higher education and ensure access to education," **said Deputy Commissioner for Aging and Disability Services Kaylee McGuire**. "Beyond financial support, they also serve as a celebration of the exceptional talents and achievements of these students. We congratulate them and look forward to their future achievements."

"It is both a privilege and a fundamental commitment to acknowledge the achievements of students who are blind, deafblind, and visually impaired," **said Commission for the Blind and Visually Impaired Executive Director Dr. Bernice Davis**. "We are honored to shine a spotlight on these outstanding individuals, celebrating their success alongside their families, friends, and supporters. As we welcome them into the 2026 cohort of scholarship recipients, we wish them continued success as they pursue and reach their goals."

Learn more [HERE](#) and see more photos from event below.





Commissioner Stephen Cha joined [Department of Health](#) Commissioner Dr. Raynard E. Washington and Governor Mikie Sherrill for a press conference highlighting the state's extreme heat preparedness plans.

Extreme Heat Tool Kits:

Behavioral Health [English/Spanish](#)

Individuals with Disabilities [English/Spanish](#)

Older Adults [English/Spanish](#)



Commissioner Stephen Cha shared his career journey and ideas about policy with summer interns from Governor Mikie Sherrill's office. Great questions about language access, health care transformation, and his federal experiences.



Commissioner Stephen Cha joined Governor Sherrill's Chief Operating Officer Kellie Doucette and Henal Patel from the New Jersey Institute for Social Justice for a discussion on "Leadership in Action: AAPIs Shaping the Future of Public Service" at the Asian American Leadership Summit at Princeton University.



Commissioner Stephen Cha, Lt. Governor Dale Caldwell, Deputy Commissioner for Aging and Disability Services Kaylee McGuire and [Commission for the Blind and Visually Impaired](#) Executive Director Dr. Bernice Davis visited the LIFE101 and PUMP summer programs

[Joseph Kohn Training Center](#) in New Brunswick. The summer programs help adolescents and teens who are blind and visually impaired build independence, prepare for academic and career success, and form meaningful lifelong friendship.



Commissioner Stephen Cha and Deputy Commissioner for Health Services Valerie Mielke joined [Bergen New Bridge Medical Center](#) President and CEO Debbie Visconi for a tour of the facility and a discussion on the [impact of H.R.1](#) and the future of safety net health care in NJ.



Commissioner Stephen Cha and Deputy Commissioner for Social Services Michael J. Wilson visited [Cathedral Kitchen](#) in Camden to learn more about their work to help people out of food insecurity. The nonprofit provide meals, job training, employment and supportive services to people in need in Camden and the surrounding community.



[Division of Family Development](#) Assistant Commissioner Natasha Johnson and representatives from multiple state agencies and advocacy organizations attended the [State Policy Academy on Early Childhood Governance in Nashville](#). Hosted by The [Prenatal-to-3 Policy Impact Center](#) at Vanderbilt University's Peabody College, the academy examined how governance structures can improve outcomes for children and families during the prenatal-to-3 period.



Deputy Commissioner for Health Services Valerie Mielke participated in an H.R. 1 "Know Your Rights" panel discussion hosted by the [NJ Reentry Corporation](#) to provide residents, service providers, advocates, and community organizations with timely information about the [impact of HR1](#) on SNAP and Medicaid benefits.



New Jersey Human Services Community Outreach and [Office of New Americans](#) staff distributed multilingual resources to attendees at the [FIFA](#)

[World Cup NJ Fan Zone](#) at the Sports Illustrated Stadium in Harrison, helping connect residents and visitors with valuable information and services.



Commissioner Stephen Cha swore-in new recruits Johan Tellez Sanchez and Alexander Carey to the [NJ Human Services Police](#) (HSP).

Congratulations and welcome to HSP!

HSP officers protect the people of the state with a focus on children, families, individuals with disabilities and special needs.



Congratulations to Police Officer Eric Weigel, who successfully completed the Mercer County Police Academy, Class 35-26. Officer Weigel will be assigned to our Southern Region Command. Welcome to [NJ Human Services Police!](#)



Extreme heat can affect mental health. High temperatures can increase stress, anxiety, irritability, and worsen existing behavioral health conditions. Stay cool. Stay hydrated.

Check on loved ones. Call or text 988 if you need support.

Learn more [HERE](#).

Extreme heat can pose extra risks for people with disabilities. Stay cool, have a plan for power outages and medical equipment, and know where to find accessible cooling. Meanwhile, check on loved ones and neighbors who may need extra support.

Learn more [HERE](#).





Older adults are at greater risk during extreme heat. Stay hydrated and spend time in air-conditioned spaces. Meanwhile, check on older family members, friends, and neighbors, especially those who live alone or have chronic health conditions.

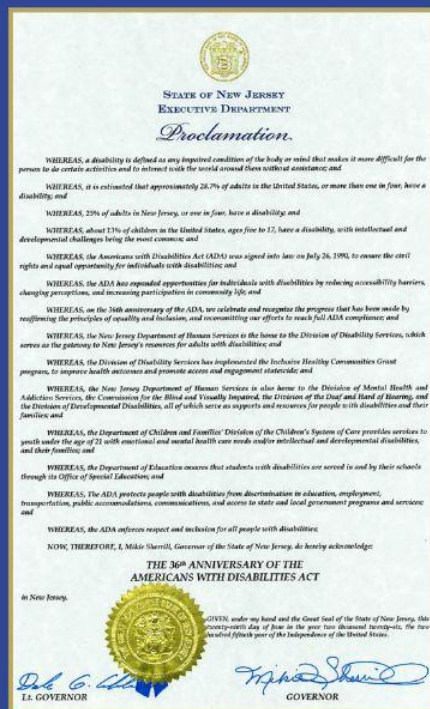
Learn more [HERE](#).



Governor's July Proclamations



Disability Pride Month



Americans with Disabilities
Act 36th Anniversary

WORLD HEPATITIS DAY

NJ FamilyCare covers **#HepC**
drug treatment once someone
is diagnosed with the virus.

#NOHep



July 28th was **World Hepatitis Day**.

NJ Human Services provides Hepatitis C coverage for

Medicaid recipients through [NJ Familycare](#).

For more information, visit our website [HERE](#).

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

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