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NEWSLETTER | MARCH 2026

## Governor Sherrill's Budget Plan Prioritizes Key Human Services Initiatives

Governor Mikie Sherrill's budget plan for the fiscal year that starts July 1 prioritizes several key New Jersey Human Services initiatives, including responding to federal changes to [NJ FamilyCare](#) and [SNAP](#), child care, and investing in supports for individuals with disabilities and older adults.

"The Governor's budget answers first to people at their kitchen tables, not the boardroom or backroom," **Commissioner Stephen Cha said**. "Even as we face federal policy changes that create real challenges, our focus remains on protecting residents, supporting families, and strengthening partnerships with counties and providers."

Key federal deadlines loom:

- October 1, 2026: New standards will remove eligibility for some immigrant populations currently covered under NJ FamilyCare.
- January 1, 2027: Adults aged 19–64 who became eligible under the Affordable Care Act must meet work or activity requirements to maintain Medicaid coverage. Eligibility renewals will also shift from once a year to

every six months, creating additional paperwork and administrative demands.

“These changes are more than theory. They are happening,” Commissioner Cha said. “Over time, federal policy shifts could place hundreds of thousands of New Jersey residents at risk of losing health coverage. Our responsibility is to make sure eligible residents don’t lose coverage simply because of paperwork barriers.”

For example, the budget includes \$34.6 million in additional state costs caused by a federally mandated reduction in the Medicaid match for emergency services, where the federal share drops from 90 percent to 50 percent. But emergency rooms will continue providing care. New Jersey taxpayers must now cover a much larger share of the cost.

“This represents one of the clearest examples of absorbing federal cost shifting in this proposal,” Commissioner Cha said.

The Governor’s budget also includes over \$10 million to strengthen partnerships with other state agencies, counties, and vendors, modernize data and IT systems, and improve program integrity.

Major changes to SNAP administration also take effect. Currently, the federal government and counties each cover 50% of administrative costs. Beginning next year, counties will be responsible for 75% of costs. To ease this transition, the budget provides \$71 million to county social service agencies, ensuring continued access to benefits and shielding property taxpayers from additional financial pressure.

“Counties are the front door for residents seeking nutrition assistance and health coverage,” Commissioner Cha noted. “This investment ensures they can continue serving their communities without passing costs onto taxpayers.”

Even amid federal pressures, the budget continues to invest in New Jersey families and communities:

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- Child Care: An additional \$18 million will reopen [Child Care Assistance Program](#) applications for all eligible parents.
- Direct Care Workforce: Funding supports wage increases for nursing home staff, [Personal Preference Program](#) workers, and [Personal Assistance Service Program](#) workers.
- [Deaf and Hard-of-Hearing](#) Services: The budget adds \$132,000 to expand family support services and increase [Language Instruction Program](#) enrollment by nearly 40%, serving children and families with early American Sign Language instruction. An additional \$108,000 will pilot on-demand sign language interpretation and visual reader services for state employees.
- Individuals with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities: The budget includes \$154 more for the Division of Developmental Disabilities to continue to meet the needs of adults served by the [Division of Developmental Disabilities](#).

Other key investments include:

- \$30.2 million to maintain a minimum [\\$95 SNAP benefit](#) for 40,000 households
- \$397 million growth to meet increasing NJ FamilyCare long-term care needs
- \$22.4 million for the [Pharmaceutical Assistance to the Aged and Disabled](#) and [Senior Gold](#) programs

The budget also supports mental health crisis services through [9-8-8](#), [opioid recovery efforts](#), \$147 million in federal Rural Health Transformation Program funding in partnership with the Department of Health, and legal and translation services through the [Office of New Americans](#).

While federal policy changes introduce uncertainty, Human Services remains focused on protecting essential services, supporting families, strengthening county partnerships, and maintaining care for New Jersey's most vulnerable residents.

“Even with these pressures, I remain confident that we can navigate the uncertainty ahead by working together,” Cha said. “Our mission is clear: to minimize disruption, ensure systems are ready, and keep New Jersey residents connected to the services they need.”



**SUPPORTING CHILD CARE**  
*Helping families afford the child care they need*  
Ensures eligible parents receive the assistance they need  
**\$18M**  
added to bolster Child Care Assistance Program

The infographic features a background image of three young children in a classroom setting. At the top left is the 'HUMAN SERVICES' logo. The text is centered and uses a mix of white and light blue colors.



**SNAP**  
*Ensuring families can keep food on the table*  
**\$30.2 M**  
to continue \$95 SNAP benefit for 40,000 households

The infographic features a background image of various fresh vegetables like bell peppers, tomatoes, and broccoli. At the top left is the 'HUMAN SERVICES' logo and at the top right is the 'NJSNAP' logo. The text is centered and uses white and light blue colors.



NJ FAMILY CARE



# RESPONDING TO FEDERAL CHANGES TO NJ FAMILYCARE AND NJ SNAP

*Protecting health coverage and food assistance  
as federal policies change*

**\$34.6M** to cover federal cut for emergency health care

More than **\$10M**  
to partner with state agencies,  
counties and vendors to  
prepare for NJ FamilyCare  
eligibility changes


**\$71M**  
to help counties with  
decreased federal support  
for SNAP costs




## PRESCRIPTION DRUG ASSISTANCE (PAAD & SENIOR GOLD)


# \$22.4 M

to provide prescription drug assistance for 158,000 older adults




## DIRECT CARE WORKER WAGE INCREASES


*Investing in the workers who care for New Jersey's most vulnerable residents*



Nursing home staff



Personal Preference Program



Personal Assistance Service Program



## DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES

*Expanding opportunities and independence*

# \$154M

more to continue to support adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities




## DEAF AND HARD OF HEARING

*Improving communication access*



### \$132,000

more to expand family support and enrollment in the Language Instruction Program



### \$108,000

for new on-demand American Sign Language and visual reader service across state government



## Beyond the Title: [A Get-to-Know-Him Q&A](#) [with Commissioner Cha](#)



Commissioner Stephen Cha, Deputy Commissioner for Social Services Michael Wilson and Mercer County Executive Dan Benson joined leaders and volunteers at [The College of New Jersey](#) for a mass evacuation training. Led by [Human Services' Office of Emergency Management](#) and its director, Joseph Geleta, participants toured how the shelter would be set up and learned skills for assisting in a major emergency.

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Deputy Commissioner for Aging and Disability Services Kaylee McGuire provided remarks at [New Jersey Association of Community Providers'](#) annual conference. This year's conference was themed "Meeting the Challenge, Seizing Opportunities, and Moving Forward" and brought together providers, professionals, and stakeholders in the IDD community for two days of learning, networking, and recognition. Commissioner Stephen Cha also provided remarks via video.



The [New Jersey Council for Developmental Disabilities \(NJCDD\)](#) hosted Commissioner Stephen Cha and Deputy Commissioner for Aging and Disability

Services Kaylee McGuire at a recent meeting. Time was spent meeting the council members, staff, advocates, and families. Commissioner Cha noted he is looking forward to continued partnership with this engaged and passionate group.

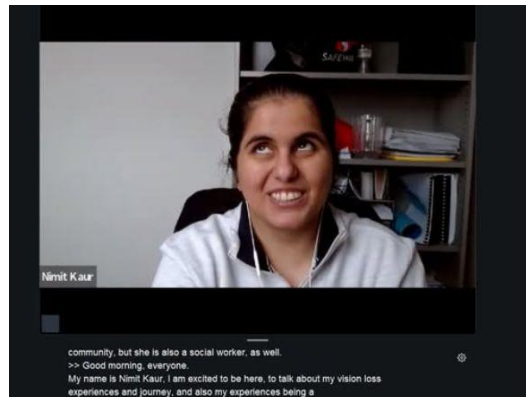
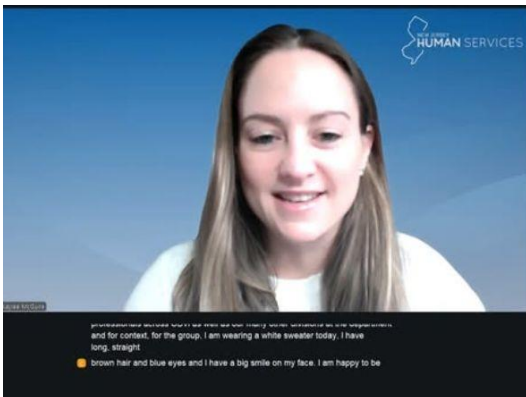


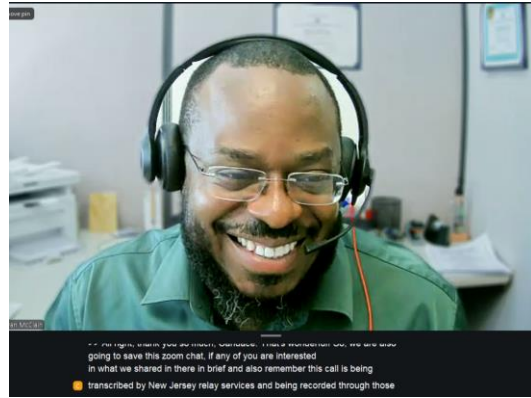
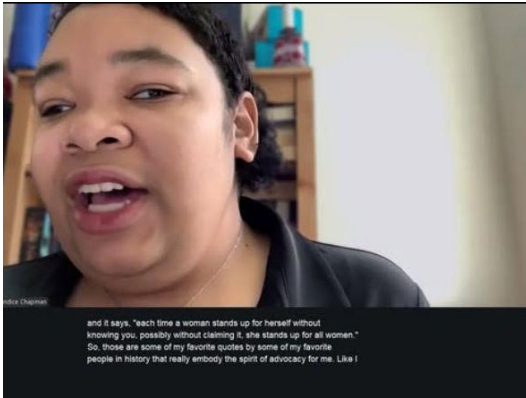
Commissioner Stephen Cha spoke to health care leaders at the [RWJBarnabas Health](#) Leadership Summit about his professional journey, leadership style, work on the Affordable Care Act, and how he plans to ensure the state meets the needs of New Jersey's most vulnerable amid federal cuts.



Commissioner Stephen Cha, Deputy Commissioner for Aging and Disability Services Kaylee McGuire and [Division of Developmental Disabilities](#) Assistant Commissioner Jon Seifried visited Community Options' Red Ribbon Day Program in Hillsborough.

The program provides medical, therapeutic and recreational supports to Individuals with Developmental Disabilities.





***"To be in service of others is a path that requires unwavering empathy, altruism, and the sincere desire to help those in need. I am honored to be among you all."— Deputy Commissioner for Aging and Disability Services Kaylee McGuire***

March was Social Work Month and Women's History Month.

In honor of this, Deputy Commissioner for Aging and Disability Services Kaylee McGuire presented Governor Mikie Sherrill's proclamation declaring March as Social Work Month during the [Commission for the Blind and Visually Impaired's \(CBVI\)](#) Community Connection Call.

During this year's Women's History Month, CBVI observes 70 years of community building and change making by social workers across New Jersey, as they continue to leave lasting impacts statewide.



**Congratulations** to [Human Services Police](#) Officer  
Nicholette Voci, who successfully completed the Atlantic County Police  
Academy. Officer Voci will be assigned to our Southern Region Command.  
Welcome to the Human Services Police!





Human Services' [Division of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing \(DDHH\)](#) Executive Director Elizabeth Hill recently provided opening remarks at the Newark Public Library's "Signing with Cops" events where officers took the time to learn basic American Sign Language and understand Deaf culture. She was joined by deaf advocate Thyson Halley.

Learn more about the programs and services DDHH offers [HERE](#).



The [Office of Program Integrity & Accountability](#) joined a New Jersey Alliance for Safety and Prevention summit that included more than 75 licensed provider agencies to share successes, demonstrations and best practices to prevent abuse and neglect and improve outcomes for adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities in community settings.



Assistant Commissioner Jonathan Seifried joined the [Arc of Middlesex County](#) at an event to highlight March as **Developmental Disability Awareness Month**.

## Women's History Month 2026



# Women Leading the Charge - NJ Human Services

In March, Human Services kicked off a month-long video series: “**Women Leading the Charge - NJ Human Services**” spotlighting Human Services women leaders advancing child care, health care, food assistance and more.

Click above to watch the [full series](#) and hear directly from these leaders as they share their stories.

The graphic features a dark blue background with the title "Governor's March Proclamations" in white, accompanied by a pencil icon. Below the title are three white rectangular boxes, each containing a formal proclamation from the Governor of New Jersey. Each proclamation includes the state seal, the text of the proclamation, and the signature of Governor Phil Murphy. The proclamations are for World Down Syndrome Day, Senior Nutrition Program Month, and Problem Gambling Awareness Month.

## Governor's March Proclamations

**World Down Syndrome Day**  
MARCH 21, 2026  
AS  
WORLD DOWN SYNDROME DAY

**Senior Nutrition Program Month**  
MARCH 2026  
AS  
SENIOR NUTRITION PROGRAM MONTH

**Problem Gambling Awareness Month**  
MARCH 2026  
AS  
PROBLEM GAMBLING AWARENESS MONTH



**Developmental Disabilities Awareness Month**



**Social Work Month**



**Brain Injury Awareness Month**

March was  
**Brain Injury Awareness Month.**  
The Traumatic Brain Injury Fund provides eligible residents of any age who've survived a traumatic brain injury access to brain injury related services they need to live in the community.  
Learn more [HERE](#).

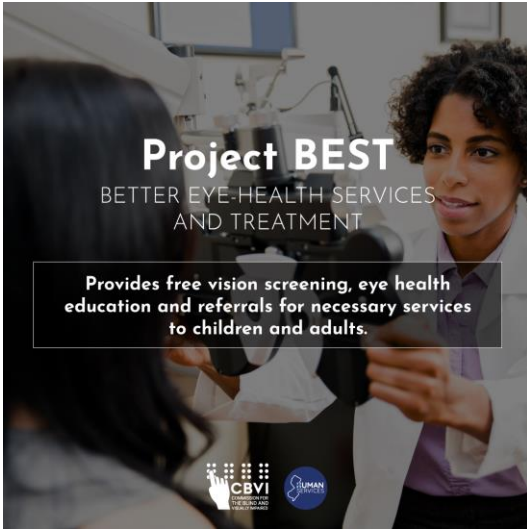
March is  
**BRAIN INJURY AWARENESS MONTH**



**NEW JERSEY  
TRAUMATIC BRAIN  
INJURY (TBI) FUND**

Provides services and supports that enable individuals with brain injuries to live in the community and maximize their independence.





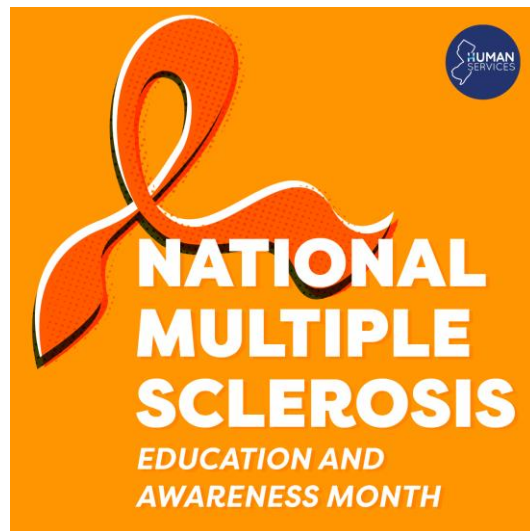
In March Human Services highlighted **World Glaucoma Day** and **Save Your Vision Month**.

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 are happening across New Jersey at schools, medical centers and other fixed sites. Find screening locations [HERE](#).

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March was **National Multiple Sclerosis Education and Awareness Month**.

If you or someone you love has been diagnosed with multiple sclerosis, contact the [Division of Disability Services](#) to learn more about available services.



# International Wheelchair Day



March 1st was **International Wheelchair Day.**

The Division of Disability Services' Inclusive Healthy Communities (IHC) Grant program helps communities across the state support the health and well-being of individuals with disabilities where they live, work, learn, and play. Learn more [HERE](#).

 **k-9 Logan**



**K-9 Appreciation Day**



**k-9 Hunter**



**k-9 Jupiter**



**k-9 Spike**



March 13th was **K-9 Appreciation Day!**  
Human Services is happy to highlight its [Human Services Police](#)

K-9 Unit dogs who help our officers protect and serve the state's most vulnerable citizens. Many thanks to Logan, Spike, Hunter and Jupiter for their dedicated service!

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THE DDD RESOURCE TEAM PRESENTS THE 3<sup>RD</sup> ANNUAL:  
**CHOKING PREVENTION AWARENESS MONTH**

**National Choking Awareness Day is March 28, 2026**

**In-Person Trainings for Stakeholders**

Join the DDD Resource Team for a comprehensive series of live, in-person mealtime safety trainings focused on choking prevention, risk reduction, and best practices for supporting individuals in community setting at 5 Commerce Way, Hamilton, NJ. These sessions will feature hands-on demonstrations of modified diet textures and liquid consistencies, along with practical strategies to reduce choking risks. Participants will also learn about resources available through the Choking Prevention Unit, including individualized consultations, prevention strategies, and specialized trainings.

**Virtual Workshops**

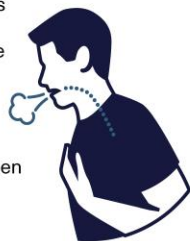
Can't make it to a live-in-person training? No problem! There will also be virtual workshops throughout March. In addition to the topics above, additional trainings will include:

- Managing Dysphagia in the Community
- Mealtime Supervision
- Mealtime Safety and Documentation
- Choking IRs & Choking Checklist Webinar
- Danielle's Law Refresher

**Choking Round Table Discussion**

*(invite only)*

Select Residential Providers and Support Coordination Agencies will be invited to join a group discussion to share experiences with the prevention of choking events. This interactive dialogue will allow attendees to share best practices regarding mealtime safety, discuss staffing needs and challenges, and explore the intersect between providers and SCAs.



**Three Sessions in March** | 10:00 am - 2:30 pm

Please utilize the links below to register for live, in-person trainings. Space is limited.

- [Wednesday, March 11, 2026](#)
- [Wednesday, March 18, 2026](#)

**Trainings for these two sessions will include:**

- Managing Dysphagia in the Community
- Diet Textures
- Liquid Consistencies
- Mealtime Risks of Regular Diets
- Mealtime Supervision

**Special Focus – Wednesday, March 25, 2026**

This session will focus on in-person BCBA and RN facilitated workshops related to mealtime safety.

**Trainings for this session will include:**

- Prevention of Food Grabbing
- Introduction to Pica
- Aspiration and GERD



Contact [ddd.resourceteam@dhs.nj.gov](mailto:ddd.resourceteam@dhs.nj.gov) if you have additional questions.



Please see our website for a complete list of Choking Prevention Awareness Month events and registration links: [www.nj.gov/humanservices/ddd/individuals/healthsafety/](http://www.nj.gov/humanservices/ddd/individuals/healthsafety/)



State of New Jersey  
Mikie Sherrill, Governor  
Dr. Dale G. Caldwell, Lt. Governor



Department of Human Services  
Dr. Stephen Cha, Acting Commissioner



Division of  
Developmental  
Disabilities

The [Division of Developmental Disabilities](#) Resource Team is dedicated to **Choking Prevention Awareness**. Promoting safe eating practices is important for people with intellectual and/or developmental disabilities.

Trainings for caregivers were held throughout March.  
More information on trainings available [HERE](#).

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

FOLLOW US!