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NEWSLETTER | MAY 2026





New Jersey Human Services leadership testified in front of the Assembly and Senate budget committees in May. Commissioner Stephen Cha spoke on how Governor Sherrill's budget plan addresses federal cuts to [NJ FamilyCare](#) and [SNAP](#) while investing in vital services.

"Taken together these changes will create more paperwork, more deadlines, and more opportunities for eligible residents to lose access," **Commissioner Cha said.** "Our responsibility for this year therefore remains clear and urgent: no eligible resident should lose coverage or access to food because of administrative hurdles. We are, in many ways, sailing full speed toward a hurricane...and we need to turn. Congress could choose to repeal these cuts. And I'd join anyone to advocate for such a repeal. But we can't count on Congress to save us. If we wait too long or do not move boldly, our only choices will be to cut benefits, cut people, and cut reimbursements. The Governor's budget reflects that responsibility through a series of strategic

investments."

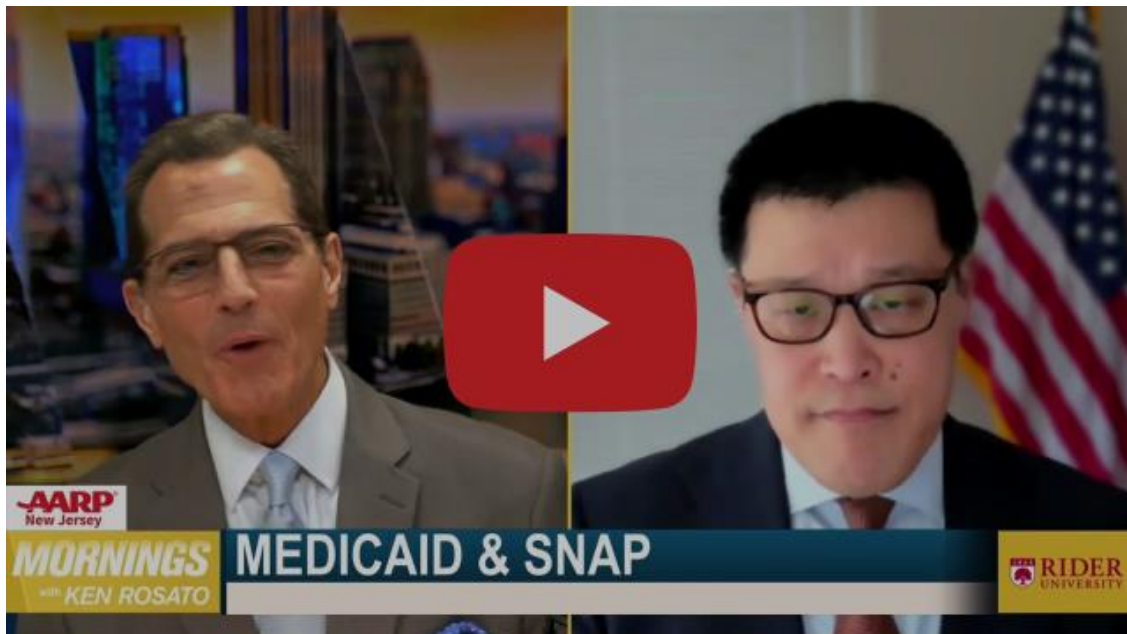
Read the Commissioner's complete testimony [HERE](#).

[Key Direct New Jersey Medicaid and SNAP Impacts of H.R. 1](#)

Commissioner Stephen Cha joined [On New Jersey](#) on to discuss the upcoming federal changes to [NJFamilyCare/Medicaid](#) and [SNAP](#) and what people need to know as changes take effect:

"We're here to help support people."

Watch below:





Human Services Launches Direct Care Professional Advisory Council

The Advisory Council stems from the [State's Direct Care Workforce Strategic Plan](#), which is a comprehensive roadmap to support, grow, and stabilize the workforce that provides essential care to older adults, individuals with disabilities, and residents with behavioral health needs. Over the next year, the Advisory Council will convene to provide its feedback on state programs and policies related to strengthening New Jersey's direct care workforce.

"I was pleased to hear directly from direct care workers during our first meeting as we begin this important process," **Commissioner Stephen Cha said.** "Direct care workers make independence possible for hundreds of thousands of New Jerseyans, and their work is fundamental to the health, safety, and dignity of the people we serve. We look forward to the valuable insights and collaborative efforts that will emerge from this Advisory Council."

“Direct care professionals do complex, deeply human work that is both essential and challenging, and they bring a frontline perspective that is invaluable,” **Deputy Commissioner for Aging and Disability Services Kaylee McGuire said.** “This Advisory Council ensures that workers’ voices keep policy decisions grounded in reality and strengthen efforts to improve job quality and stability across New Jersey’s direct care workforce.”

Direct care workers, including direct support professionals, personal care aides, self-directed employees, home health aides, certified nursing assistants, youth development specialists, and certified peer recovery specialists, provide essential support and respite for individuals with developmental disabilities, aging individuals, and people with substance use disorder and/or behavioral health challenges, as well as their families and caregivers.

“For individuals living with substance use disorder and/or mental health disorders, direct care workers provide a wide range of support that fosters long-lasting recovery. Mental health is a fundamental element for overall health and contributes to our quality of life and well-being,” **Deputy Commissioner for Health Services Valerie Mielke said.**

The Advisory Council will be guided by the Department of Human Services in collaboration with the Department of Labor and Workforce Development, and Rowan University’s Early Childhood Leadership Institute.

“Direct care workers act as the backbone of long-term care for older adults. When workers are heard, valued, and empowered, older adults can receive the consistent, dignified care they deserve,” [Division of Aging Services](#) **Assistant Commissioner Louise Rush said.**

“Supporting direct care workers is essential in ensuring New Jerseyans can live and age with dignity, stability, and choice,” [Division of Developmental Disabilities Assistant Commissioner Jonathan Seifried](#) said. “Advisory councils like this one are crucial, providing platforms for workers to advocate for recognition and improved conditions. We look forward to working with our fellow agencies to facilitate progress.”

Learn more [HERE](#).

Read the full New Jersey Direct Care Workforce Strategic Plan, [HERE](#).





Highlighting **National Police Week**, New Jersey Human Services held a ceremony honoring the men and women of the [Human Services Police](#) for their efforts to protect New Jersey's most vulnerable residents. New officers took their oaths while other officers were honored for meritorious service.



New Jersey Human Services Addiction Services Promotional Campaigns Win Four Telly Awards

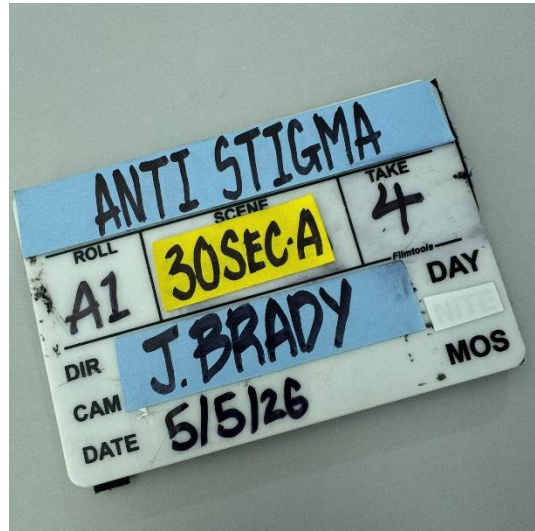
New Jersey Human Services earned national recognition at the 2026 Telly Awards for a series of [Division of Mental Health and Addiction Services](#) public awareness campaigns focused on addiction support, fentanyl prevention, and expanding access to free naloxone. The Telly Awards honor excellence in television and video advertising across all screens.

The department's "[Your Story](#)" anti-stigma campaign for the [844-ReachNJ](#) addiction helpline received a Silver Telly Award in the Products & Services category. The "[Stay in the Picture](#)" fentanyl awareness [campaign](#) earned the People's Telly Silver Award in the Local TV category.

In addition, another 844-ReachNJ campaign – "[There's More To My Story](#)" - received a Bronze Telly Award in the Craft–Use of Color category, while the "[Their Life Is In Your Hands](#)" campaign [promoting free naloxone](#) at participating pharmacies earned a Bronze Telly Award in the Craft–Art Direction category.



NJ Department of Human Services leaders joined [Assembly Majority Leader Louis Greenwald](#) to visit [Weisman Children's](#) to learn more about the organization's work supporting children and families through specialized, community-based healthcare services.



A behind-the-scenes look at [Division of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing](#) Executive Director Liz Hill and American Sign Language (ASL) interpreter Monica Ayrrer filming ASL for soon-to-be newly updated [Reach NJ](#) and [fentanyl awareness](#) campaigns, continuing efforts to make information as accessible as possible for everyone in New Jersey.



To highlight **Older Americans Month**, [Division of Aging Services](#) Deputy Director Melissa Chalker visited grantees of the [Age-Friendly Grants Program](#). Big Brothers Big Sisters of Coastal & Northern NJ, the Toms River Department of Senior Services, and Age-Friendly Ocean County held events to promote making New Jersey a better place to grow older.



[Division of Aging Services](#) Deputy Division Director
Melissa Chalker and fellow staff were recognized with two awards
at the [New Jersey Digital Government Summit](#).



Employees from the [Division of Aging Services](#) staffed a resource table
at the [Woodbridge Township 2026 Mayor's Senior Summit & Older Adults Expo](#).
The community outreach team spoke to attendees about the
department's various programs and services.



Employees from the [Division of Aging Services](#) also staffed a resource table at the the Gloucester County Senior Spring Picnic hosted by the [Gloucester County Division of Senior Services](#).

Forum on Language and Disability Access

LIVE 01:18:03

Panelists Questions

2. What led your agency to implement language proficiency testing for bilingual staff, and how long has your program been in place?

CardinalCare

18 of 25

Proficient in sign language and part of that is to ensure that we have a proficiency rating score.

Hill, Elizabeth

EH Or rating scale that shows that you are in fact.

Hill, Elizabeth

EH Able to communicate in this language. So those two things in particular in language instruction program originated in 2019 and then the Civil Service title for the Deaf and hard of hearing specialist was a couple of years later.

[Division of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing](#) Executive Director Elizabeth Hill presented at the [Language and Disability Access Forum](#), organized by Virginia's Department of Medical Assistance Services.

Learn more about this event [HERE](#).



Commissioner Stephen Cha, Deputy Commissioner for Aging and Disability Services Kaylee McGuire, and policy advisor Jack Teters visited [BOLDAge PACE](#) site in Oceanport to meet with the [NJ PACE Association](#), and leadership for a tour of their site and a broader discussion about the future of PACE in New Jersey.

PACE has become a growing and accessible model across New Jersey and the nation helping older adults who meet nursing home level of care age in place in their homes and communities.

Learn more about PACE [HERE](#).



Commissioner Cha, Deputy Commissioner for Aging and Disability Services
Kaylee McGuire, [Division of Disabilities Services](#) Interim Executive Director
Jacqueline Moskowitz and policy advisor Jack Teters recently visited
[MOCEANS Center for Independent Living](#) to discuss the value and diversity of the
grass roots, disability-lead centers for independent living. Advocates with
disabilities and staff shared their life-changing and meaningful experiences with
the centers.



Commissioner Stephen Cha and Deputy Commissioner for Aging and Disability Services Kaylee McGuire met with the New Jersey Association of Community Providers as part of the ongoing discussion about the value of home- and community-based services.

"Home- and community -based services are key to the dignity and health of so many, especially people with intellectual and developmental disabilities," Commissioner Cha said. "So important to have open discussions with partners. Thanks to NJACP for the chance to talk and listen about the challenges and the opportunities to serve together."

May was **Older Americans Month**.

Assistant Commissioner Louise Rush took a moment to highlight the programs and services that the [Division of Aging Services](#) offers that make it easier for older adults to live in the community with independence, dignity and choice.

For more information watch our video below and visit our website [HERE](#).





Governor's May Proclamations



STATE OF NEW JERSEY
EXECUTIVE DEPARTMENT
Proclamation

WHEREAS, the month of May 2026 has been designated by the United States Administration for Community Living as Older Americans Month and the State of New Jersey observes the national theme for this month, "Celebrate Your Abilities"; and

WHEREAS, the State of New Jersey is home to 2.2 million individuals aged 65 and older; and

WHEREAS, the State of New Jersey is committed to helping all older adults and recognizing their ongoing life achievements; and

WHEREAS, the diverse older adults in New Jersey play an important role by continuing to contribute experience, knowledge, wisdom, and encouragement; and

WHEREAS, our older adults are active community members involved in volunteering, mentorship, and civic and civic engagement; and

WHEREAS, recognizing the contributions and successes of older adults encourages their ongoing participation and further involvement; and

WHEREAS, the State of New Jersey, through the Department of Human Services, Division of Aging Services, the 23 county-based Area Agencies on Aging/aging 65 Disability Resource Commission, and the network of aging services community-based organizations, are committed to ensuring older adults have access to a comprehensive system of supportive services that include and promote their independence; and

WHEREAS, the State of New Jersey recognizes that it is the month to recognize older adults and the people who care and support them as successful and vital citizens who greatly contribute to the community;

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

**MAY 2026
AS
OLDER AMERICANS MONTH**

in New Jersey

GIVEN, under my hand and the Great Seal of the State of New Jersey, this twentieth day of May, 2026, at Trenton, New Jersey, the year of our Independence the four hundred and ninety-eighth year of the Independence of the United States.

LT. GOVERNOR

GOVERNOR

Older Americans Month

STATE OF NEW JERSEY
EXECUTIVE DEPARTMENT
Proclamation

WHEREAS, crisis professionals are trained professionals who engage with people who are experiencing a crisis; and

WHEREAS, crisis professionals directly engage with people when they are most vulnerable, often when a crisis of illness and trauma, in an effort to de-escalate the crisis using methods that center emotional stability, support, and care; and

WHEREAS, when engaging with a person who is experiencing a crisis, the crisis professional assesses the situation and implements a care plan so that the individual, adults, and families involved can attain the treatment and support they need and deserve; and

WHEREAS, crisis professionals that high-stress situations on a regular basis and as a result have earned the nation's highest respect and gratitude; and

WHEREAS, as a critical part of the crisis care that New Jerseyans receive across the State, crisis professionals engage with New Jerseyans during the most traumatic, stressful, and challenging times of their lives; and

WHEREAS, the implementation of the national 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline has expanded public access to immediate behavioral health support, with crisis professionals playing a critical role in responding to calls, texts, and text-based communications; and

WHEREAS, it is fitting to recognize and honor the life-changing and life-saving services that crisis professionals provide, as well as the invaluable contributions they have provided to thousands of New Jerseyans throughout the State;

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

**MAY 27, 2026
AS
CRISIS PROFESSIONALS DAY**

in New Jersey

GIVEN, under my hand and the Great Seal of the State of New Jersey, this twenty-seventh day of May, 2026, at Trenton, New Jersey, the year of our Independence the four hundred and ninety-eighth year of the Independence of the United States.

LT. GOVERNOR

GOVERNOR

Crisis Professionals Day

STATE OF NEW JERSEY
EXECUTIVE DEPARTMENT
Proclamation

WHEREAS, mental health is essential to personal life and well-being and optimal health, happiness, and the ability to thrive; and

WHEREAS, mental health is a complex, multifaceted concept, involving physical, social, emotional, and cognitive aspects, and is a critical component of overall well-being; and

WHEREAS, mental health professionals are essential to the well-being of our citizens, and their expertise and compassion are vital to the lives of those who seek their help; and

WHEREAS, the State of New Jersey is committed to supporting mental health professionals and ensuring they have the resources and support they need to provide the highest quality of care; and

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WHEREAS, the State of New Jersey is committed to supporting mental health professionals and ensuring they have the resources and support they need to provide the highest quality of care; and

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

**MAY 2026
AS
MENTAL HEALTH AWARENESS MONTH**

in New Jersey

GIVEN, under my hand and the Great Seal of the State of New Jersey, this twentieth day of May, 2026, at Trenton, New Jersey, the year of our Independence the four hundred and ninety-eighth year of the Independence of the United States.

LT. GOVERNOR

GOVERNOR

Mental Health Awareness Month

STATE OF NEW JERSEY
EXECUTIVE DEPARTMENT
Proclamation

WHEREAS, May is designated as National Osteoporosis Awareness and Prevention Month, and the State of New Jersey recognizes this honor as a health priority for persons of all ages; and

WHEREAS, osteoporosis, "the silent disease," is a serious condition that weakens bones, heightens the risk of falls, and results in half of all women and 20% of all men being at risk of fractures during their lifetimes; and

WHEREAS, osteoporosis can have devastating effects, impacting an individual's ability to walk unaided and live independently, participate in personal activities, and maintain an active life; and

WHEREAS, osteoporosis is largely preventable for most people through healthy behaviors such as a balanced diet rich in calcium and vitamin D, regular weight-bearing exercise, and bone density testing and medications when appropriate; and

WHEREAS, being active is a key factor in osteoporosis and being active is an essential part of the health and well-being of our citizens; and

WHEREAS, the State of New Jersey Department of Human Services, through its network of public health agencies, including the Division of Aging Services, the Division of Public Health, the Division of Health Services, the Division of Health Care Regulation and Enforcement, the Division of Health Planning and Statistics, the Division of Health Care Quality Improvement, the Division of Health Care Access and Equity, and the Division of Health Care Workforce Development; and

WHEREAS, the State of New Jersey Department of Health, through its network of public health agencies, including the Division of Aging Services, the Division of Public Health, the Division of Health Services, the Division of Health Care Regulation and Enforcement, the Division of Health Planning and Statistics, the Division of Health Care Quality Improvement, the Division of Health Care Access and Equity, and the Division of Health Care Workforce Development; and

WHEREAS, it is fitting to support the goals of Osteoporosis Awareness and Prevention Month to increase public awareness of the disease and its prevention;

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

**MAY 2026
AS
OSTEOPOROSIS AWARENESS AND PREVENTION MONTH**

in New Jersey

GIVEN, under my hand and the Great Seal of the State of New Jersey, this twentieth day of May, 2026, at Trenton, New Jersey, the year of our Independence the four hundred and ninety-eighth year of the Independence of the United States.

LT. GOVERNOR

GOVERNOR

Osteoporosis Awareness and Prevention Month

STATE OF NEW JERSEY
EXECUTIVE DEPARTMENT
Proclamation

WHEREAS, Global Accessibility Awareness Day is observed annually on the third Thursday of May to encourage people, organizations, and communities to look, think, and learn about digital access and inclusion for people with disabilities; and

WHEREAS, accessible technology and inclusive design means that solutions, services, mobile applications, digital documents, online services, and learning materials can be used by all people, including individuals with visual, auditory, mobility, cognitive, and other disabilities; and

WHEREAS, Americans with disabilities have made and continue to make invaluable contributions to the civic, cultural, educational, scientific, military, and economic life of this State; and

WHEREAS, it is fitting and proper to honor people with disabilities, recognize their dignity, talents, and achievements, and explore the importance of removing barriers so that every individual may fully participate in our community life; and

WHEREAS, accessibility benefits everyone, including older adults, families, students, and individuals in temporary or situational circumstances, by promoting safety, security, innovation, and more equitable access to information, services, and opportunities; and

WHEREAS, building a more accessible and inclusive future requires continued innovation, education, and collaboration among government agencies, schools, employers, business organizations, technology developers, and community partners;

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

**MAY 21, 2026
AS
GLOBAL ACCESSIBILITY AWARENESS DAY**

in New Jersey

GIVEN, under my hand and the Great Seal of the State of New Jersey, this twenty-first day of May, 2026, at Trenton, New Jersey, the year of our Independence the four hundred and ninety-eighth year of the Independence of the United States.

LT. GOVERNOR

GOVERNOR

Global Accessibility Awareness Day



May 3rd - 9th was **Hurricane Preparedness Week**, and a great time to remind people about [Register Ready](#), which gives NJ residents with disabilities an opportunity to voluntarily provide information to agencies so responders can better plan to serve them in an emergency. Find out more about this free, voluntary service [HERE](#).

May 19th - 25th was **Brain Injury Awareness Week** in NJ. The [Traumatic Brain Injury Fund](#) provides eligible residents of any age, who've survived a traumatic brain injury, the opportunity to access brain injury related services they need to live in the community.
Visit [HERE](#) for more information.





May 6th - 12th was
National Nurses Week.

Human Services thanks all of the nurses that help the department care for the many people we serve. Their work and devotion is valued, not just during Nurses Week, but every day.

Thank you!



May was **Hepatitis C Awareness Month** in New Jersey.

Did you know that NJ FamilyCare covers Hepatitis C curative drug treatment?

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

May was **Osteoporosis Awareness and Prevention Month.**

Osteoporosis is a loss of bone density that can occur as we age. It's responsible for over a million broken bones yearly, along with numerous issues leading to loss of independence. For more information about how to prevent or minimize the effect of osteoporosis, visit [HERE](#).

MAY IS
OSTEOPOROSIS AWARENESS AND PREVENTION MONTH

Help treat and prevent osteoporosis with

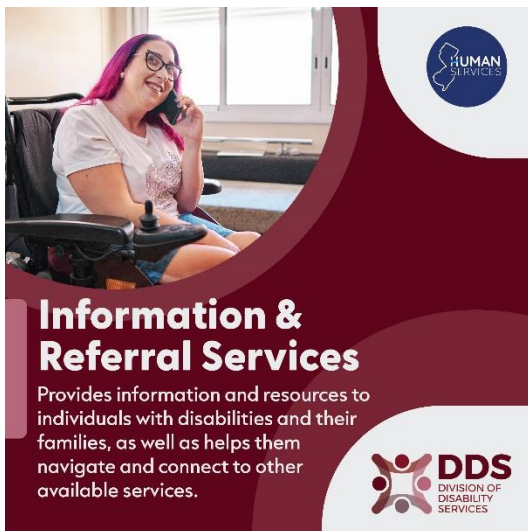


HEALTHY DIET

EXERCISE

MEDICINE

VITAMINS



Information & Referral Services

Provides information and resources to individuals with disabilities and their families, as well as helps them navigate and connect to other available services.

HUMAN SERVICES

DDS
DIVISION OF DISABILITY SERVICES

May was **Adult Onset Disability Awareness Month.**

These are disabilities that occur at age 21 and older and affect an individual's ability to complete day-to-day tasks. Call DDS to assist with navigating State & County Services. **1-888-285-3036**. Take a moment to download your copy of the NJ Resources Guide [HERE](#).

May was **Better Hearing and Speech Month.**

The [Division of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing](#) provides education, [Hearing](#) provides education, advocacy and direct services to eliminate barriers and promote increased accessibility to programs, services, and information routinely available to the state's general population.

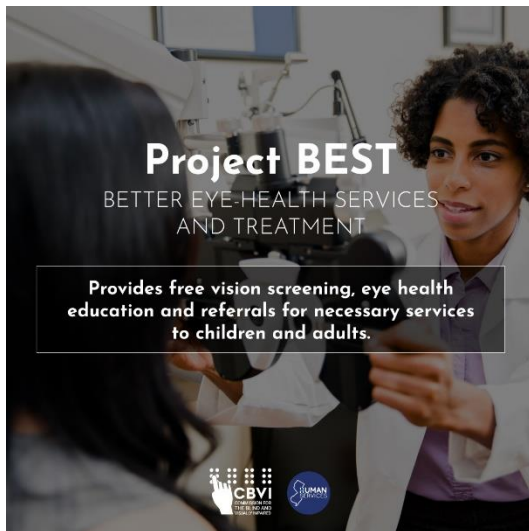
For more on its programs and services, visit [HERE](#).

NEW JERSEY DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES DIVISION OF THE DEAF AND HARD OF HEARING

Are You Deaf or Hard of Hearing and Need Services?

-  **Mental Health Videophone Helpline:**
Call 973-870-0677
-  **Healthcare Resources:**
Visit nj.gov/humanservices/ddhh/education/healthcare/
-  **Information Regarding Sign Language Interpreters or Real-Time Captioning:**
Visit nj.gov/humanservices/ddhh/services/caption/
-  **Equipment Distribution Program:**
Visit nj.gov/humanservices/ddhh/services/edp/
-  **Hearing Aid Programs:**
Visit nj.gov/humanservices/ddhh/services/hearingaid/
-  **Language Instruction Services, Ages 0-5:**
Visit nj.gov/humanservices/ddhh/services/leveling/
-  **Deaf and Hard of Hearing Sensitivity Training:**
Visit nj.gov/humanservices/ddhh/education/dst/

For more information about our services, call 609-588-2648, 609-503-4862 vp, or email ddhh.communications2@dhs.nj.gov



May was **Healthy Vision Month.** The [Commission for the Blind and Visually Impaired's ProjectBEST](#) program works to save sight and restore vision for adults and children. Free eye screenings have continued at schools, medical centers and fixed sites around New Jersey. For more information on screenings, visit [HERE](#).

May was **ALS Awareness Month**, a time to bring attention to challenges that families with Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis (ALS) face. If you or someone you love has been diagnosed with ALS and need help navigating services, contact [Division of Disability Services Community Resource Specialists](#) at 1-888-285-3036.



May was **National Mobility Awareness Month**, which encourages people with disabilities to enjoy an active, mobile lifestyle by making them aware of the many automotive mobility solutions available. The [National Mobility Equipment Dealers Association](#) offers resources to assist in understanding and navigating automobility equipment. Visit [HERE](#) for more information.



Doula coverage is part of
NJ FAMILY CARE

Doula care is associated with better birth outcomes.

For more information, visit
www.njfamilycare.org



**Healthy.
Secure.
Supported.**

NURTURE NJ



NJ FAMILY CARE

**365 Days of
Postpartum Coverage**

Visit NJFamilyCare.org



PLAN FIRST



The Plan First Program administered by NJ FamilyCare provides a full range of family planning services to men and women who do not have access through insurance. Learn more at njfamilycare.org

NJ FAMILY CARE

May 10th - 16th was **Women's Health Week.**

New Jersey Human Services is committed to improving maternal health through multiple programs to improve health outcomes for all women in New Jersey.

Visit [HERE](#) for more information.

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

FOLLOW US!

