



NJ HUMAN SERVICES | July 2022

New 988 Suicide Prevention Lifeline Launches



New Jerseyans can now use the new, three-digit number 988 to reach the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline.

The 988 number is available for anyone experiencing thoughts of suicide or a mental health or substance use crisis. It provides free and confidential support to people in suicidal crisis or mental health-related distress via call, text or chat 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, across the U.S.

"988's launch marks an important milestone in timely access to mental health services and 988 will help save lives," Commissioner Sarah Adelman said. "988 is more than just an easy-to-remember number. It is a direct connection to accessible and compassionate support and resources, available 24/7 to anyone experiencing psychiatric or emotional distress or those worried about a loved one. Anyone experiencing a mental health crisis only needs to remember these three numbers to reach trained counselors who can help."

988 was designated as the new three-digit dialing code for the existing National Suicide Prevention Lifeline in 2020 by the Federal Communications Commission. To support 988, the budget signed by Governor Murphy includes nearly \$29 million for call line infrastructure and services that some callers may be connected to after they call

988 is available for call, text, or chat for those experiencing a mental health-related or suicidal crisis, or those looking to help a loved one through a crisis. It provides easier access to the Lifeline network – a national network of over 200 local, independent crisis centers equipped to help people in mental health related distress or experiencing a suicidal crisis. Some callers may be connected to services or other resource lines depending on their needs.

988 provides live crisis center calling services in English and Spanish and uses Language Line Solutions to provide translation services in over 250 additional languages. At this time, the text and chat features are available in English only.

"988 expands access to critical mental health services and ensures we are connecting individuals in distress with the most adequate assistance," said Valerie Mielke, Assistant Commissioner for the Division of Mental Health and Addiction Services. "We know the Lifeline makes a difference, and with an easier number to call, text or chat, we hope more people in need of support for themselves or loved ones reach out for help."

[Read more](#)



Commissioner Adelman joined Lieutenant Governor Sheila Oliver, Speaker Craig Coughlin and Senator Joe Vitale at Hackensack Meridian Raritan Bay Medical Center to discuss the new 988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline.



Division of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing Director Elizabeth Hill provided a message in American Sign Language about the new 988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline.

Commissioner Adelman Announces New Additions to Senior Leadership Team

Commissioner Adelman recently announced new additions to and reorganization within the Department's senior leadership team, including the naming of three new Deputy Commissioners.

"I am deeply grateful for the hard-working and compassionate leaders and employees across Human Services who work every day to help others, and who make it possible for our Department to provide life-enhancing services and programs to one in three New Jersey children, and one in four adults," Commissioner Adelman said. "And I'm thrilled to announce the expansion of the Department's senior leadership team under a new structure and to welcome our newest team members. Each of these leaders bring diverse experiences and expertise to our Department, they are passionate about our mission, and I look forward to all we will accomplish together for the residents of New Jersey."



Lisa Asare has joined the Department as Deputy Commissioner of Health Services overseeing the Division of Medical Assistance and Health Services, which administers NJ FamilyCare, and the Division of Mental Health and Addiction Services, and will lead the Department's work on First Lady Murphy's Nurture NJ maternal health initiative. Asare will also support the Catastrophic Illness in Children's Relief Fund.

Asare comes to Human Services from the Department of Health, where she was Assistant Commissioner for the Division of Family Health Services. Asare oversaw units that provide public health programs and services, including Maternal and Child Health, Special Child Health, Early Intervention Services, WIC Nutrition Services and SNAP-Ed. This work included addressing Black infant and maternal mortality through the First Lady's NurtureNJ plan.



Kaylee McGuire will join the Department as Deputy Commissioner for Aging and Disability Services overseeing the Division of Aging Services, the Division of Disability Services, the Division of Developmental Disabilities and will support the New Jersey Council on Developmental Disabilities and the Office of the Public Guardian.

McGuire comes to Human Services from Governor Murphy's office, where she led on the administration's health and human services policy agenda and COVID-19 response efforts as a Senior Policy Advisor. Before joining the Murphy Administration, Kaylee served as a health policy analyst in the Assembly Majority Office under Speaker Craig Coughlin, and formerly held a management role at one of the largest pediatric rehabilitation systems in the nation.



They join Elisa Neira, Deputy Commissioner for Social Services, who has been with Human Services since 2018 and continues to oversee the Office of New Americans, the Division of Family Development, the Division of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing and the Commission for the Blind and Visually Impaired. Neira will also serve as the Department's liaison for county human services directors.



Andrea Katz, who had been chief of staff, is now the Deputy Commissioner of Operations overseeing human resources and employee relations, department operations, legal and regulatory affairs, facilities, the Office of Emergency Management and the Human Services Police.

Katz has served as chief of staff at Human Services since 2018 and has spent most of her professional career working in human services policy and legislative affairs as associate general counsel at the Assembly Majority Office and chief of staff for Assemblywoman Valerie Vainieri Huttie. Katz also worked in private practice as an attorney.



Jonathan Chebra is now Chief of Staff. Chebra, who had been deputy chief of staff, joined Human Services in 2020. He will also continue to oversee legislative affairs, policy, outreach and constituent relations.

Previously, Chebra worked for the New Jersey Hospital Association, Assembly Health Chairman Herb Conaway, M.D. and U.S. Senator Frank Lautenberg.



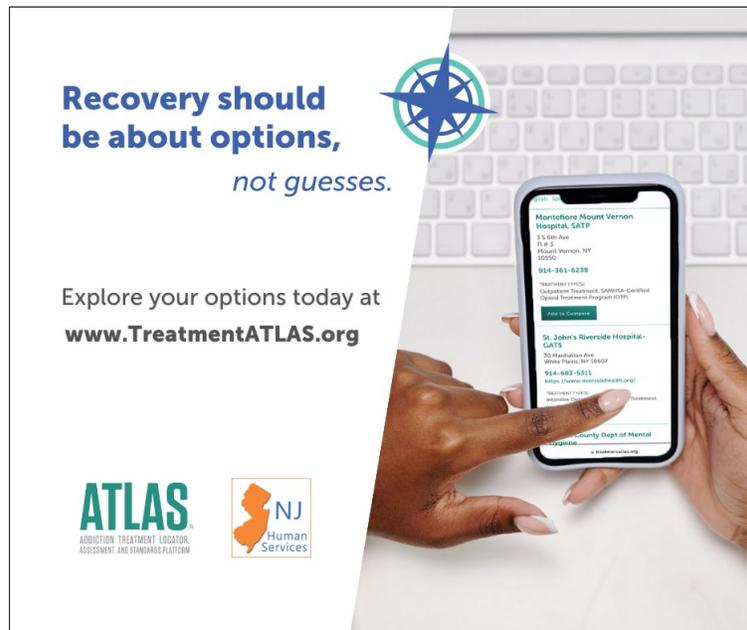
Eric Kaufmann, who had been Director of Special Projects, is now Senior Advisor to the Commissioner. In this role, Kaufmann will support the Commissioner's priorities and will oversee the offices of Research, Evaluation and Special Projects; Information Systems; and Boards and Commissions.

Kaufmann began his career at the Office of Management and Budget in 2005 and joined Human Services in 2010, where he has worked in various finance, operations and policy roles, including as the Department's assistant chief financial officer.

Also recently joining Human Services as deputy policy directors are Vineeta Kapahi who comes to Human Services from New Jersey Policy Perspective and Michael Petruzzelli from the National Council for Mental Wellbeing.

[Read more](#)

Human Services Launches Online Substance Use Disorder Treatment Reference Guide



Human Services has launched a free, confidential, first-of-its-kind on-line tool to connect New Jerseyans in need with appropriate addiction treatment care and deliver user-friendly information about the quality of available programs.

ATLAS, or Addiction Treatment Locator, Assessment, and Standards Platform, at www.TreatmentATLAS.org, offers an easy-to-use dashboard to allow individuals with substance use disorder and their loved ones to search for and compare participating programs using criteria such as location, services offered, and insurance accepted so they can find the best treatment for their unique needs.

ATLAS was created by Shatterproof, a national nonprofit organization dedicated to reversing the addiction crisis in America. ATLAS has been made possible in New Jersey through a partnership with Human Services and funding from Horizon Blue Cross Blue Shield of New Jersey.

"It's vital to empower individuals and families confronting substance use disorder and help them make informed decisions," Commissioner Adelman said. "This is yet another tool in our collective work to make addiction treatment as accessible as possible so individuals and families can get the help they need – because treatment works and recovery is attainable. Our goal, always, is to save lives. This is another way to do so."

"During a time when our nation's addiction crisis is tragically at an all-time high and access to quality treatment is often hard to find, ATLAS is a critical new resource. When my son Brian needed addiction treatment, my family agonized trying to find him the right care. It was impossible to know who to trust," Shatterproof Founder and CEO Gary Mendell said. "ATLAS is a sea change in the addiction world. It will give those in need and their families the transparent and trustworthy information my family never had and will help put more people on the path to recovery."

"Horizon is thrilled to be able to provide the funding needed to bring Shatterproof's ATLAS to New Jersey," said Suzanne Kunis, Vice President of Behavioral Health for Horizon BCBSNJ. "No one in crisis, dealing with substance use disorders, or worse, an overdose, should have to hope they guess right to find good care. The ATLAS Quality Measurement System gives New Jerseyans looking for treatment options the same kind of evidence-based quality and outcomes information they are used to getting about primary care doctors, specialists, and acute care hospitals. This is long overdue. We appreciate the providers who have joined us so far in sending a clear message that we are united here in New Jersey in our commitment to evidence-based treatment and to giving people meaningful information that helps them choose the right program and treatment partner."

[Read more](#)

Murphy Administration Launches Naloxone Distribution Program

NALOXONE SAVES LIVES

Naloxone Distribution Program

Naloxone is now directly available to eligible agencies and providers via online ordering at no cost.

The graphic features the text 'NALOXONE SAVES LIVES' in large blue letters. Below it is an orange banner with 'Naloxone Distribution Program'. Underneath, a paragraph states: 'Naloxone is now directly available to eligible agencies and providers via online ordering at no cost.' To the right is an illustration of a white naloxone kit with a red cap and a white box labeled 'NALOXONE NARCAN 4mg'. To the left of the kit are several orange shipping boxes. A blue line with red circles at the ends connects the boxes to the kit, suggesting a shipping process. In the bottom left corner is the New Jersey Department of Human Services logo.

Human Services has launched a [Naloxone Distribution Program](#) in partnership with the Department of Health and the Office of the Attorney General. The program allows eligible agencies the opportunity to request direct shipments of naloxone online anytime they need it.

“With nearly 3,000 New Jerseyans lost to overdoses each year, my Administration understands the critical importance of promoting harm reduction measures that can save the lives of countless residents struggling with substance use disorder,” Governor Phil Murphy said. “This distribution program is another way we are working to increase access to naloxone so that it will be on-hand whenever and wherever it is needed. My Administration will not stop seeking solutions to help the many people throughout our state who have been impacted by the opioid epidemic.”

“This program builds on existing efforts to get naloxone into as many hands as possible. Reducing barriers for first responders and community organizations to obtain naloxone will help ensure this life-saving antidote will be available when it is needed most,” Commissioner Adelman said. “We look forward to eligible agencies registering for this essential program and expanding the availability of this medication. With the collaborative work of the agencies, together we can continue to turn the tide in our efforts to combat the opioid epidemic.”

“Through this collaborative effort, EMS organizations, libraries and other organizations now will be able to directly access critical medication through this ordering portal,” Department of Health Commissioner Judith Persichilli said. “Broadening the availability of naloxone puts it into more hands for rapid intervention and will help to save more lives.”

“Having an ample supply of Naloxone is essential to our efforts to bring an end to the opioid epidemic and prevent overdose deaths,” Acting Attorney General Matthew J. Platkin said. “Getting this life-saving medication into as many hands as possible is critical to saving lives, and this program does just that. It not only ensures that law enforcement officers are able to keep enough naloxone on hand to treat individuals experiencing an opioid overdose, it also allows them to leave behind naloxone kits for future overdose emergencies.”

The distribution program allows for agencies including law enforcement, first responders and certain community organizations to register through a new website and easily request direct shipments of naloxone at no charge. Once approved, naloxone will be shipped on-demand directly from the manufacturer to minimize delay and maximize shelf life. The program supports a new state [law](#) that authorizes a recipient in possession of an opioid antidote to distribute the antidote, without fee, to any person at risk of experiencing an overdose or who may be in the best position to administer an opioid antidote. This is to make opioid antidotes as easily accessible and widely available as possible. The law also requires first responders to leave behind naloxone to individuals in certain circumstances when responding to an overdose. The naloxone is paid for through federal State Opioid Response dollars.

“The sooner an antidote can be administered, the more likely it is that we can save a life, and the creation of this website raises those chances,” Deputy Commissioner Asare said. “One overdose is one too many, and the Department is dedicated to making sure medication is available when and where it is needed.”

“Our driving goal has always been to save lives, and to do this we must make sure the opioid overdose reversal medication naloxone is readily available to as many people as possible,” Assistant Commissioner Mielke said. “We know that every minute counts when it comes to opioid overdoses and direct distribution of this life-saving tool will make a difference. We look forward to seeing the impact this program will have in saving lives.”

[Read more](#)

Reproductive Rights Roundtable with Vice President Harris



Commissioner Adelman, second from upper left, was among those joining Vice President Kamala Harris in Atlantic City on July 18 for a roundtable discussion on reproductive rights. The Vice President hailed New Jersey’s efforts and called it a [leader](#) in protecting reproductive rights. The Commissioner [added](#) that it “was an honor” to join the Vice President to discuss “women’s freedom, our rights and our health care, which are in danger across the country.”

Human Services Bolsters Efforts to Reduce Occurrence of Preventable Intellectual & Developmental Disabilities



The Department is funding three new projects to help reduce the incidence of intellectual and developmental disabilities (I/DDs) and improve infant health outcomes in the state.

"This funding will support the Department's ongoing work to help prevent developmental disabilities through public awareness, education, and other effective prevention efforts, and provide better health outcomes for families and future generations of New Jerseyans," Commissioner Adelman said.

The grants were awarded by the Office for the Prevention of Developmental Disabilities within the Department's Division of Developmental Disabilities. Vendors were encouraged to submit proposals that address the prevention of developmental disabilities that are novel or unique to the current developmental disability prevention work in the state."

"Educating new or young parents on the harmful impact of ingesting lead paint, for example, is one simple yet effective way to help prevent these types of disabilities," said Assistant Commissioner Jonathan Seifried, who leads the Division of Developmental Disabilities. "We look forward to the implementation of these innovative proposals and the impact they will have on the quality of life of parents and children."

Funding was provided to these organizations for the following projects:

- **Partnership for Maternal and Child Health of Northern NJ** will work with school districts in Bergen, Essex, Hudson, Morris, Passaic, Sussex and Warren counties to implement a nationally recognized K-12 Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder Education and Prevention Curriculum to educate young students about FASD. The project will also provide IDD prevention education to college students, and provide screening and early intervention education to school nurses.
- **New Jersey Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics** will educate primary care clinicians and community stakeholders about the importance of prevention, early identification and referral of children with elevated blood lead levels. It will also educate pediatric providers about the Department of Community Affairs' remediation program so that they can refer families to receive free home inspections to identify potential sources of lead.
- **SPAN Parent Advocacy Network** will focus on maternal, paternal and children's health and mental health by providing leadership training and education, and community engagement for women and men of childbearing age to prevent IDD, specifically Fetal Alcohol Syndrome/Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder. The project will address the social determinants of health including poverty, language barriers, Adverse Childhood Experiences, societal and environmental stress, access to service systems, immigration, language barriers, and others that influence issues such as smoking, substance use, and nutrition.

The three organizations will receive funding for three years. A maximum award of \$185,000 per year will be available to each organization to implement their proposals.

[Read more](#)

Human Services Office of Emergency Management Mass Care Shelter Training

Human Services' Office of Emergency Management on July 16 conducted an orientation exercise at The College of New Jersey to support mass care and state evacuation shelter operations in the event New Jersey is impacted by a large scale disaster requiring the evacuation and sheltering of our residents.

The exercise reinforced and enhanced training and offered an opportunity to walk through and review a state evacuation shelter site.



Human Services Director of Emergency Management Joseph Geleta observes the training session.



The team gets ready for the training.



The Red Cross discusses sheltering registration.



Commissioner Adelman opens the training session.



Rich Sensi of Human Services' Office of Emergency Management leading a tour of the sheltering site.



Rich Reyes from the Division of Mental Health and Addiction Services' Disaster and Terrorism Branch discussing crisis counseling.



From left to right, Lynn Robinson and Tim Johnston from the Red Cross; Dan Posluzny, Chris Nitti and Kevin McCullough of The College of New Jersey; Jamie Bodrog-Powell of DHS' Disaster and Terrorism Branch; Ed Conover, Rich Sensi and Joe Geleta DHS' OEM, Rich Reyes of the Disaster and Terrorism Branch; Dr. Sandra Strilec of the Department of Agriculture; and Colleen Ekey of DHS OEM.

Welcome New Human Services Police Officers



Human Services Police Officer Richard Burke Jr. graduated from the Camden County Police Academy on July 7. Celebrating left to right: Detective Sergeant Kelli Baker, Chief Edward Fuller, Captain Justin Kurczeski, Police Officer Jeffrey Raines, Burke Jr., Lieutenant Duane Brown and Lieutenant Geoffrey Hoffman.



Human Services Police Officers Joseph Mastrangelo and Christopher Kelly graduated from the Mercer County Police Academy on July 14. Left to right, Director Timothy J. Gallagher, Detective Sergeant Roberto Negron, Captain Justin Kurczeski, Kelly, Mastrangelo, Chief Edward Fuller, Lieutenant Duane Brown, Police Officer Steven Meckel and Police Officer Joseph Brandecker.

Disability Pride Month



Governor Murphy declared July to be Disability Pride Month, which promotes the independence and inclusion of residents with disabilities across New Jersey.

Click here to watch a series of videos on the importance of Disability Pride Month:
[NJ DHS Disability Pride Month Videos](#)

Americans with Disabilities Act Anniversary



Governor Murphy recognized the 32nd anniversary of the Americans with Disabilities Act.

SPOTLIGHTS ON NJ HUMAN SERVICES PROGRAMS



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