



Applications Open Now for Excluded New Jerseyans Fund



Applications are now open for the Excluded New Jerseyans Fund (ENJF) cash assistance program at ExcludedNJFund.nj.gov.

"Eligible individuals will be able to apply for the Excluded New Jerseyans Fund and start the process to get this critical assistance," Acting Commissioner Sarah Adelman said. "If you did not receive federal stimulus checks and pandemic unemployment assistance, you may be eligible. If you were impacted by COVID and struggled to pay for basic needs including housing, you may be eligible. Visit our website, find out if you are eligible and apply today."

The \$40 million ENJF program will provide a one-time, direct cash benefit to eligible households that suffered an economic hardship due to COVID-19 and were excluded from federal stimulus checks and COVID-19 related unemployment assistance.

This includes undocumented individuals, residents returning from the justice system, and any other individuals otherwise excluded from pandemic-related financial help.

Households with annual incomes of up to \$55,000 with a documented hardship or lost income due to COVID-19 can apply for this assistance. Eligible applicants will receive a benefit of up to \$1,000 per eligible individual and a max of \$2,000 per household.

Applications will be processed in the order they are received and until funds are exhausted.

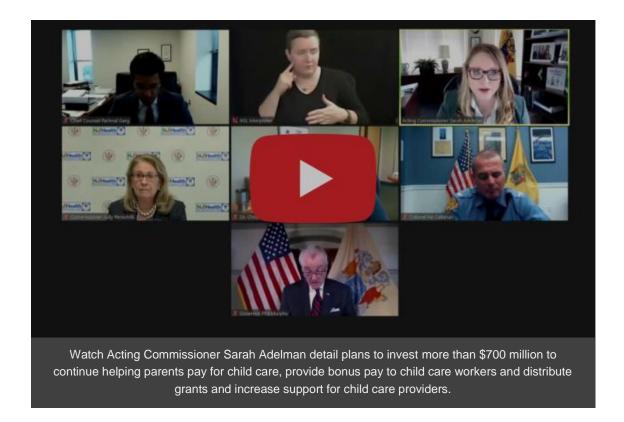
The ENJF program is run by the Department's Office of New Americans (ONA).

"We are glad we can extend this assistance to individuals who need it," Deputy Commissioner Elisa Neira said. "Eligibility requirements are on the ExcludedNJFund.nj.gov website. "We continue to encourage potential applicants to check if they are eligible and apply."

"This assistance will be available until funds run out so we urge individuals who meet the eligibility requirements for these benefits and who can provide the required documentation to apply once the application opens" said ONA Director Johanna Calle.

Learn more.

More Child Care Investments from NJ Human Services



Murphy Administration Announces Additional Child Care Investments to Support Working Families, Child Care Workers, & Providers

Governor Phil Murphy and Acting Commissioner Adelman announced plans to invest more than \$700 million to help parents pay for <u>child care</u>, provide bonus pay to child care workers and distribute grants and increase support for child care providers.

"We know that child care is one of the key challenges facing families - especially single moms - as they rejoin our workforce," Governor Murphy said. "Through these investments, we are committed to providing the necessary support to ensure that this challenge does not become an obstacle."

"As we continue to manage and recover from the challenges of the pandemic, child care continues to be a top priority to strengthening our economy and our workforce," Acting Commissioner Adelman said. "We know that affordable, reliable and quality child care is especially critical for working mothers who have been disproportionately affected by the impacts of the pandemic. We are committed to doing everything we can to strengthen and support every segment of child care in New Jersey. We also thank our Congressional delegation for their hard work and contributions to bringing these dollars to New Jersey families."

The initiative builds upon previous efforts by the Murphy Administration to support child care and reflects input from families served in the state's child care assistance program, child care providers and various

stakeholders through listening sessions, and parent roundtables the department held over the last few months.

With the announcement of this new funding, Governor Murphy and Human Services will have invested more than \$1 billion in child care over the course of the administration, after more than a decade of the child care industry receiving no new increases.

The initiative relies mainly on American Rescue Plan funding allocated to Human Services by the federal Administration for Children & Families and includes the following key areas:

Supporting Children and Families by reducing child care costs and putting dollars back into the pockets of New Jersey Families

- Continuing to help eligible families by covering the additional amount they may owe for fees or the difference between what the state pays and the provider charges. This assistance began in September and is now extended to December 2023. These additional payments provide up to \$300 for full-time care, or \$150 for part-time care, per eligible child, per month on top of the child care assistance rate paid by the state on behalf of the family.
- Waiving co-payments in the state's child care subsidy.
- Implementing financial incentives to increase the number of child care providers that offer non-traditional evening and weekend hours.

Recruiting and Supporting Child Care Workers

- To increase child care capacity, \$1,000 bonuses will be provided beginning this winter to help providers recruit new child care employees and retain current child care staff.
- Funding for an additional bonus will be provided in summer 2022.
- The bonuses will be partly funded from the Child Care Revitalization Fund signed into law by Governor Murphy that provides \$30 million to Human Services for child care workforce assistance.

Supporting Child Care Providers

- Child care providers will be eligible for two new rounds of pandemic stabilization grants to help stabilize and sustain their operations.
- For licensed child care centers, grant availability will range from \$20,000 to \$80,000 in the first round, depending on the number of children they serve. The grants will be \$2,000 for family child care providers.
- Providers can use these dollars to support their operating expenses such as wages and benefits, rent and utilities, cleaning and sanitizing, facilities maintenance and improvements.
- Grants will also again be made available for summer youth camp providers in 2022 and 2023 to help cover COVID-related costs and assist families with paying for summer camp.

The plan builds on the Murphy Administration's efforts to strengthen child care in New Jersey through new investments in child care.

Murphy Administration Announces \$83 Million Additional Investment in Child Care & Support for Working Families

Acting Commissioner Adelman also announced the state is investing \$83 million to increase reimbursement rates for child care providers serving children in the state's child care assistance program by an average of 25 percent.

The rate increase will be effective Nov. 1, and will include the \$6.4 million rate increase that would have gone into effect on Jan. 1 to help child care providers implement the January minimum wage increase.

"We know that accessing affordable, reliable, and quality child care is a top priority for New Jersey families, and it's critical to our state's economic health," Acting Commissioner Adelman said. "This new investment is another critical step forward to help families and build a stronger future for our state."

Human Services' child care assistance program helps families with lower incomes who are working, in school or in training programs.

"The Murphy Administration continues making significant investments in child care because child care is crucial to a strong economy and strong childhood development," Deputy Commissioner Neira said. "With this latest investment, we are giving families and child care providers even more vital support."

After this increase, monthly infant care rates for licensed centers will have increased by nearly 70 percent under the Murphy Administration - from about \$724 per month to \$1,224 and close to 50 percent on average for all other age groups.

For parents who select a provider with a rating from the state's Grow NJ Kids quality improvement program, that rate jumps even further. For instance, infant care at a <u>Grow NJ Kids</u> program will now be at least \$1,326 per month.

"We urge anyone seeking assistance with child care to learn more by visiting childcarenj.gov and contacting your local county Child Care Resource and Referral Agency," said Assistant Commissioner Natasha Johnson, who directs Human Services' Division of Family Development, which oversees the child care program. "We are here to support families with information about applying for assistance and finding quality child care."

Read more



First Lady Murphy & U.S. Health and Human Services Secretary Announce NJ FamilyCare Now Covers New Moms 365 Days Postpartum



First Lady Tammy Murphy and Health and Human Services Secretary Xavier Becerra announced that the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services will expand Medicaid coverage for 365 days postpartum to improve maternal and infant health and decrease the racial disparity in birth outcomes in New Jersey.

By extending this critical coverage, approximately 8,700 postpartum New Jerseyans annually will receive comprehensive access to healthcare for a full year through Medicaid. New Jersey is the second state in the nation and first state in the region to provide this Medicaid expansion with the goal of preventing postpartum related illness and death.

In January 2021, First Lady Tammy Murphy unveiled the <u>Nurture NJ Maternal and Infant Health Strategic Plan</u>, which aims to reduce maternal mortality in the state by 50 percent over five years and eliminate the racial disparities in birth outcomes, in which expanding <u>Medicaid</u> coverage was a key recommendation of the strategy. Additionally, Governor Murphy's Fiscal Year 2022 budget allocated funding to enable New Jersey to submit the federal request for the Medicaid extension.

"New Jersey is committed to ensuring the health and wellbeing of our mothers and babies," Governor Murphy said. "Expanding Medicaid coverage for a full year after delivery is an essential step toward solving our Black maternal health crisis and making sure that every mom and baby gets off to a healthy start. We are grateful for the leadership and vision of the Biden Administration, our federal partners, my wife First Lady Tammy Murphy, and so many others who championed this critical and commonsense policy change which will guarantee health care for nearly 9,000 mothers across New Jersey every year."

"As the second state in the nation to expand Medicaid coverage for mothers for a full year after delivery, New Jersey is now another step further on our mission to become the safest and most equitable state in the nation to deliver and raise a baby," First Lady Murphy said. "This expansion was a key recommendation in the Nurture NJ Maternal and Infant Health Strategic Plan, but any mother could tell you that access to health care for a year after delivery is a commonsense, necessary, and moral imperative for any state that values healthy families. I am grateful to the Biden Administration, our federal partners, and my husband, Governor Phil Murphy, for their vision, compassion, and dedication to the mothers and babies of New Jersey."

"Becoming a parent is among life's greatest milestones, but sadly paired with significant challenges for many in low-income communities," Health and Human Services Secretary Xavier Becerra said. "I applaud New Jersey for taking action to provide vital care for new parents and their precious babies. Expanding postpartum coverage will not only improve health outcomes among families of color— it will save lives. The Biden-Harris Administration encourages states across the country to follow New Jersey's example to support healthy parents and infants."

"We're very excited that the Biden Administration has approved our request to extend Medicaid coverage to 365 days postpartum," Acting Commissioner Adelman said. "Under the leadership of First Lady Murphy, New Jersey is working to become the safest and most equitable place in the nation to deliver and raise a baby. This extended coverage will be a critical step forward in that effort. Healthy moms with quality health coverage promote healthy families with access to the care they need to thrive."

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New Jersey to Invest \$634M to Enhance Medicaid Services for Older Adults and Individuals with Disabilities



Acting Commissioner Adelman announced the federal government has approved Department plans to invest \$634 million over the next three years to bolster efforts to strengthen and expand home and community-based Medicaid services for older adults and individuals with disabilities.

The plan will bring in \$329 million in federal funding, for a total state and federal investment of \$634 million in these programs. The wide-ranging plan will use federal matching dollars through the American Rescue Plan to enhance, expand and strengthen home and community-based services under the state's Medicaid program known as NJ FamilyCare.

"We are prioritizing independence, community options and person-centered care," Acting Commissioner Adelman said. "Importantly, this plan was devised with significant public input gathered during group calls, a public listening session and emails. It was vital that we listen and take advantage of this opportunity to make New Jersey a stronger and more resilient place to live. This plan reflects that goal, and we're thrilled by the approval."

"New Jersey has been recognized as a leader among states in expanding community options for people who need long-term services and supports," said Assistant Commissioner Jennifer Langer Jacobs, who directs the Medicaid program. "With this plan, we are strengthening existing home and community-based services and we are making exciting new investments that will support choice and independence for older adults and people with disabilities."

In addition to the announcements today, Human Services remains in discussion with the federal Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services on more than \$100 million in additional proposals, and remains optimistic that these will be approved in the coming months. Highlights of the approved initiatives include:

- Increasing the Personal Care Assistant rate to \$23 per hour to help the workforce that cares for older adults in need of home care services.
- Increasing the Personal Preference Program rate to \$19 per hour to help recipients who hire and manage someone to provide home care services.
- Increasing rates for support coordinators who work as case managers for Medicaid recipients with intellectual and developmental disabilities.
- Boosting rates for assisted living facilities, comprehensive care home and assisted living programs to strengthen these crucial facilities.
- Rewarding with higher daily rates assisted living facilities, comprehensive care home and assisted living programs that take on a higher percentage of Medicaid beneficiaries.
- Creating incentives to help transition individuals from nursing homes to home and communitybased settings.
- Creating incentives to recruit more and retain existing homecare workers.
- Helping traumatic brain injury care providers offset costs associated with COVID-19 health and safety protocols.
- Strengthening the educational and informational resources available to community members around the various home and community-based services available under NJ FamilyCare.

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NJ Human Services Announces Efforts to Improve Access
to Traumatic Brain Injury Services for Diverse
Communities



Human Services is working with leading community organizations and state agencies to strengthen access and improve cultural competency and language access to Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI) services.

The initiative, called Improving Access to Equitable, High Quality, Evidence-based Services and Supports for New Jerseyans with TBI and Their Families, is supported by a cooperative agreement with the Administration for Community Living (ACL), U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) as part a financial assistance award totaling \$335,578 annually for 5 years, with 60 percent funded by ACL/HHS and \$135,400, or 40 percent, by non-government sources.

"We appreciate the support from the U.S. Administration for Community Living for this initiative. Traumatic Brain Injuries impact people from different cultural, racial and linguistic backgrounds and making sure that our services are responsive and accessible to diverse communities is critical," Acting Commissioner Sarah Adelman said. "Through these efforts, TBI survivors and their families will gain better access to these supports."

The goal of the initiative is to increase access with a focus on the cultural and linguistic needs of our diverse communities and streamline access to TBI information and resources that can increase participation in TBI-related services among minority and non-English speaking communities, and enhance TBI screening to identify and better serve individuals living with TBI in the state.

"TBI supports are key to improving a survivor's quality of life and increasing their ability to live independently. And that is why it is so important that these supports are inclusive and responsive to the needs of all New Jerseyans regardless of their cultural/racial background or the language they speak. These efforts, through key partnerships, will create greater access to these services," Deputy Commissioner Elisa Neira said.

The <u>Division of Disability Services</u> is working with the following partners on the initiative over the next five years:

o New Jersey Advisory Council on Traumatic Brain Injury

- o Brain Injury Alliance of New Jersey (BIANJ)
- o NJ 211
- o New Jersey Department of Health (NJDOH)
- Center for Health Statistics and Informatics (CHS)
- Office of Minority and Multicultural Health (OMMH)
- New Jersey Commission on Brain Injury Research (NJCBIR)

"As the designated lead state government agency for brain injury, we look forward to the advancement of this project as our key partners work simultaneously over the course of this five-year initiative to positively impact New Jerseyans who have survived a traumatic brain injury," DDS Executive Director Peri L. Nearon said.

Read more

Coming Soon: New Increased Income Limits for Prescription Drug, Hearing Aid and Utility Assistance

Income Limits for NJ Prescription Drug, Hearing & Utility Assistance Increase by \$10,000 for Older Adults and Disabled as of January 1

	PAAD/HAAAD/Lifeline	Senior Gold	
Individual	\$38,769	\$48,769	
Couple	\$45,270	\$55,270	



Get ready - income limits for some important programs that serve older adults and individuals with disabilities are increasing soon.

Starting Jan. 1, 2022, the income limits to qualify for the <u>Pharmaceutical Assistance to the Aged & Disabled (PAAD)</u>, <u>Hearing Aid Assistance to the Aged and Disabled programs (HAAAD)</u>, <u>Lifeline Utility Assistance</u> and the <u>Senior Gold Prescription Discount Program</u> will increase by \$10,000. This means more people will potentially qualify for these programs.

Individuals who are 65 and older and adults with disabilities can apply now through the NJSave <u>online application</u> or by calling 1-800-792-9745.

Blindness Awareness Month 2021

Governor Murphy declared October 2021 as Blindness Awareness Month in New Jersey. Visit here-to-learn-more about Human Services' here-to-learn-more-about-Human Services' here-to-learn-more-about-Human-Services' <a



STATE OF NEW JERSEY EXECUTIVE DEPARTMENT



WHEREAS, the State of New Jersey became a trailblazer in 1910, with the establishment of the Commission for the Blind and Visually Impaired (CBVI), one of the nation's first State agencies dedicated exclusively to the unique educational, vocational and day-to-day life needs of people who are blind, deafblind or visually impaired; and

WHEREAS, it is estimated that over 259,000 New Jersey residents live with blindness or severe vision loss; and

WHEREAS, the mission of the CBVI is to promote and provide services in the areas of education, employment, independence and eye health through informed choice and partnership with persons who are blind, deaf-blind or visually impaired, their families and the community; and

WHEREAS, CBVI has always recognized the importance of providing services that facilitate access to opportunities that will enable people with vision loss to obtain their fullest measure of self-reliance and improved quality of life and also proactively endeavors to ensure their treatment as individuals with dignity and worth who are able to fully participate in and contribute to our society; and

WHEREAS, CBVI continues to work in partnership with consumers and all individuals and organizations that share their goal to prepare for the promise of the future while promoting the vast reservoir of talent and ability represented by people who are blind, deaf-blind or visually impaired;

NOW, THEREFORE, I, Philip D. Murphy, Governor of the State of New Jersey, do hereby proclaim:

OCTOBER 2021 AS BLINDNESS AWARENESS MONTH

in New Jersey.



GIVEN, under my hand and the Great Seal of the State of New Jersey, this twenty-seventh day of September in the year two thousand twenty-one, the two hundred forty-sixth year of the Independence of the United States.

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Human Services marked Blindness Awareness Month by spending time with Sumara Garner, a rehabilitation teacher for the Commission for the Blind and Visually Impaired.

"Many of us recognize that the problem of blindness is not a lack of eyesight, but rather one of lack of opportunity and societal misconceptions," she said. "We are mothers, fathers, spouses and good friends to others. We contribute to society in personal ways such as preparing a meal for a family in need, and through professions such as teacher, lawyers, auto mechanic, chiropractor and physician assistant, just to name a few."



As part of recognizing Blindness Awareness Month, Human Services also looked back at its video highlighting the importance and relevancy of braille in literacy for people who are blind or visually impaired. The George F. Meyer Center, run by the Commission for the Blind and Visually Impaired, provides accessible reading materials to thousands of students throughout New Jersey.

Human Services Announces Mobile App for Residents Receiving Food and Income Assistance Benefits



Human Services announced individuals enrolled in the state's <u>Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program</u> (SNAP) and <u>Work First New Jersey (WFNJ) General Assistance (GA) and Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF)</u> can now download the ConnectEBT mobile app to manage their electronic benefits transfer (EBT) cards on their mobile devices.

Recipients can use the ConnectEBT app to check their balance, review up to 12 months of transaction history, confirm their last benefit deposit and change their PIN. The mobile app is free and available for download in the Apple App Store and Google Play Store.

"This is another step to make SNAP and income assistance benefit information more accessible for NJ families. Through this app they can check their balance on the go and will have other helpful information regarding their benefits at their fingertips" Acting Commissioner Adelman said.

"Individuals can currently check some of this information online or by calling a customer service hotline and now the app provides another quick way for families enrolled in these programs to check balances, change their PIN and check receipt of new benefits at any time," Deputy Commissioner Elisa Neira said.

"We encourage families enrolled in these programs to download the free app which is already available and get quick and easy access to their benefit details" said Human Services Assistant Commissioner Natasha Johnson, who directs the Division of Family Development, which oversees NJ SNAP and WFNJ.

This is the latest effort by the Department to extend digital services to program recipients.

Last year, the Department launched <u>online grocery shopping</u> for SNAP recipients. Recipients can now use their EBT cards to grocery shop online at the following retailers: Amazon, participating Walmarts, ShopRites, The Fresh Grocers, ALDIs, Stop & Shop, Food Bazaar, Super Foodtown stores in Port Monmouth, Red Bank, Ocean, Atlantic Highlands and Sea Girt, and BJ's Wholesale Club, which is the latest company to make online grocery shopping available to SNAP recipients in the state.

Read more

Extra Food Assistance Continues

Meanwhile, the 447,000 New Jersey households who receive food assistance through SNAP received \$79.1 million in total extra benefits in October. Human Services has been providing NJ SNAP households with maximum benefits since March 2020 when the pandemic began.

Human Services has now distributed about \$1.1 billion in supplemental monthly SNAP payments to households since March 2020. The assistance will also continue in November.

Ida Virtual Town Hall with Governor Murphy and Senator Booker



Acting Commissioner Adelman on Oct. 4 joined Governor Murphy, U.S. Senator Cory Booker and others to discuss Ida assistance, including mental health resources for all residents:

NJMentalHealthCares: 866-202-HELP (4357) or text NJHOPE to 51684

ASL videophone mental health assistance: 973-870-0677

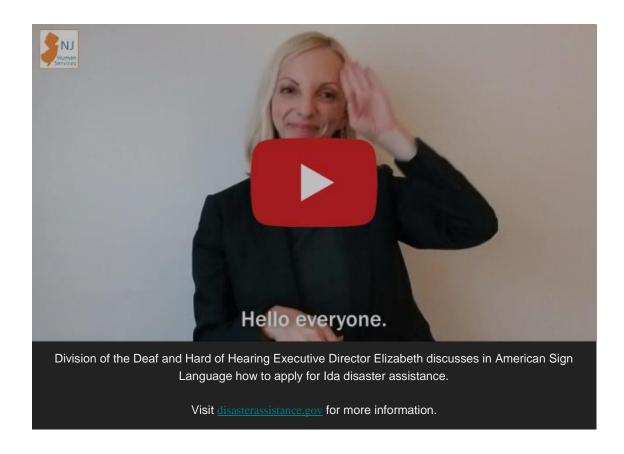
"The emotional toll of a disaster, especially on top of the pandemic, can feel like too much," Acting

Commissioner Adelman said. "Help is available, and it's confidential and free to speak with a trained counselor. It's just a call or text away."





Ida Disaster Assistance in American Sign Language



Murphy Administration Releases Final Climate Change Resiliency Strategy to Protect New Jersey from Climate Change



Governor Phil Murphy's Interagency Council on Climate Resilience today released the final <u>version</u> of the state's first Climate Change Resiliency Strategy, a science-based blueprint for protecting New Jersey's vulnerable communities, environment, economy, and infrastructure from the impacts of climate change.

The Climate Change Resilience Strategy outlines six state priorities to guide state and local government climate action and includes over 100 recommendations to strengthen New Jersey against climate impacts, including sea-level rise, chronic flooding, rising temperatures, and more frequent and intense storm events.

The plan, which was first released for public review and comment on Earth Day, will be a working document supported by a continued robust public engagement process to address the ongoing climate threats to New Jersey. I

n October 2019, Governor Murphy signed <u>Executive Order No. 89</u>, which appointed the state's first Chief Resilience Officer, established an <u>Interagency Council on Climate Resilience</u>, and directed the Department of Environmental Protection to develop the strategy.

"Climate change has far-reaching impacts and often tragically hits the most vulnerable residents the hardest, including lower-income families, older adults, those with pre-existing health conditions and individuals with disabilities," Acting Commissioner Sarah Adelman said. "With this plan, we are working toward more resilient communities and a stronger and safer New Jersey for everyone, no matter their circumstance."

Read more

Social Services at Libraries



Deputy Commissioner Neira (second row far right) on Sept. 22 was among those who joined the <u>Long</u>

<u>Branch Free Public Library</u> for a virtual forum on the value of offering social services at libraries. Long

Branch was the first New Jersey library to hire a full-time social worker.

Learn More About the Lifeline & Emergency Broadband Benefit



The Lifeline program and the Emergency Broadband Benefit programs help make phone and internet service more affordable for low-income individuals. Eligible individuals also qualify for a free smartphone through the Lifeline program. If you participate in certain assistance programs like Medicaid, NJ SNAP or SSI, you automatically qualify for both federal programs.

Learn more here.

Honors for NJDHS OEM



Congratulations to Office of Emergency Management Deputy Director Ed Conover (right) for being named Emergency Manager of the Year by the New Jersey Emergency Preparedness Association.

SPOTLIGHTS ON NJ HUMAN SERVICES PROGRAMS



NJ SNAP-Ed, a part of the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), is a nutrition and physical activity program aimed at helping residents how to make healthy, budget-friendly food choices and lead more active lives.

Learn more: Eat Healthy | Be Active



Provides personal care assistance to self-directing adults, ages 18-70, who have a permanent physical disability and who are working, in school, in vocational training, or volunteering in the community.







The PASP is a personal care assistance program that provides up to 40 hours per week of routine, non-medical personal care assistance to adults with permanent physical disabilities between the ages 18-70 who are employed, preparing for employment, attending school or involved in community volunteer work and who are able to self-direct their own services.

If you are interested in learning more about PASP or applying for the program, your County Coordinator is your first point of contact. County Coordinators screen and enroll eligible participants, work with participants to develop cash management plans, and support participants as they manage their monthly budgets. Use the link below to find the contact information for the Coordinator serving your county.

PASP County Coordinator Directory

DHS PROGRAM FLYERS

NJ SNAP - <u>ENGLISH</u> / <u>SPANISH</u> NJ FAMILYCARE - <u>ENGLISH</u> / <u>SPANISH</u>

NJHELPS - ENGLISH / SPANISH