

# Forward

BY PROGRESSIVE CENTER

QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER | SERVING OUR COMMUNITY SINCE 1996.

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## FEDERAL CHANGES EXPAND ACCESS TO ABLE ACCOUNTS, OFFERING NEW FINANCIAL OPPORTUNITIES FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

■ By PCIL Staff Writer

Recent federal legislation has introduced major updates to ABLE (Achieving a Better Life Experience) accounts, significantly expanding eligibility and enhancing how ABLE accounts can be used as a financial planning tool for individuals with disabilities and their families. These updates are critical, particularly in helping individuals save money without jeopardizing benefits, when program rules are followed.

Under the ABLE Age Adjustment Act, eligibility for ABLE accounts has been broadened to include individuals whose disability began before age 46. Previously, the age of onset was capped at 26, which excluded many adults who acquired disabilities later in life.

*This publication is brought to you by staff of Progressive Center for Independent Living and Mercer County ADRC.*

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The annual ABLE contribution limit continues to align with the federal gift tax exclusion, which was \$19,000 in 2025, and adjusts periodically for inflation. In addition, the ABLE to Work provisions which allows employed individuals with disabilities to contribute additional income beyond the standard limit, have been made permanent, providing greater flexibility for workers who want to save.

Another notable change is that ABLE contributions may now qualify for the Saver's Credit, a federal tax credit designed to benefit low- to moderate-income individuals and families who meet income and filing requirements.

Families may also benefit from new rules allowing tax-free rollovers from 529 education savings plans into ABLE accounts, subject to annual contribution limits and other applicable rules. This is particularly useful for families who set aside education funds that are no longer needed for their original purpose.

Advocates stress several important reminders: ABLE contributions are not federally tax-deductible, though some states may offer state-level tax benefits. Consumers with tax-specific questions should refer to a qualified tax professional.

ABLE accounts are designed to help individuals with disabilities save funds

for qualified disability-related expenses—such as housing, transportation, education, and healthcare—without jeopardizing eligibility for SSI or Medicaid, when used in accordance with program rules.

PCIL encourages consumers to consider an ABLE account when they begin working, receive gifts or settlements, explore ways to save without losing benefits, have unused 529 accounts, or were previously told they were “too old” to qualify.

These federal updates mark a significant step forward in promoting financial independence and long-term stability for people with disabilities and their families.

Reach out to one of our Community Resource Specialists for more information at 609-581-4500.







# FOR THE LOVE OF POTTERY

■ By Catherine Septak, PCIL Consumer

*The following passage was written by Catherine Septak, a consumer at PCIL and student at Mercer County Community College. One class quickly turned into a hobby, which spawned a goal and, in the end, a wonderful story that she was willing to share.*

Prior to taking a Pottery class, I had no knowledge or interest. The first day of class changed everything. Once I got my hands on the clay, I fell in love with making pottery. I realized I could make anything with it: cups, bowls, plates or pitchers and so much more. That is when I decided to make cups for everyone I know for Christmas. I ended up making 24 cups, after that I will make bowls and plates; my goal is to make everyone a complete set.

When I'm making pottery, I am very happy because I take a piece of clay and within 2-3

weeks, I have finished the whole process. But first, I start with a clay wedge. Then I center it, cone it up, press it down, open it up, then pull the walls and shape it. Then I wait until it's leather hard so I can trim. Trimming is one of my favorite steps, because the piece really begins to take shape. After trimming, the piece is then bisque fired, then I glaze it. After that, the piece is sent into the kiln for the final firing, and that's it, the final product!

I really enjoy making pottery. I feel like I am in my own little world and can stay there as long as I want. Even though I have a disability (ADHD), when I am making pottery pieces, it makes me feel like I don't have a disability and it goes away. I am so focused and listening to my music that I forget there are other people in the room, and a class is going on.

# CLOSING THE CHAPTER ON THE PPL TO ACUMEN TRANSITION: WHAT IT MEANS FOR SUPPORT COORDINATION IN NEW JERSEY

■ By Batool Bokhari, Support Coordination Assistant Supervisor

Over the past year, Support Coordinators, individuals, families, and providers across New Jersey have navigated one of the most significant operational changes within the Division of Developmental Disabilities (DDD): the transition of Fiscal Intermediary (FI) services from Public Partnerships LLC (PPL) to Acumen Fiscal Agent (Acumen). While this process came with challenges, the Division has now confirmed that the transition has officially concluded.

According to the most recent update from DDD, the Vendor Fiscal/Employer Agent (VF/EA) Self-Directed Services model has fully transitioned to Acumen. For the small number of plans that still reflected PPL services, DDD administratively updated those service end dates to December 31, 2025, (or earlier) and approved the revised plans. This formally closed out the remaining PPL services and marked the completion of the transition.

Although this update may be released weeks or even months after the official conclusion, it is important to acknowledge the scope and impact of this change. The move from PPL to Acumen was not a simple administrative switch. It required coordination across multiple systems, updates to service plans,

clear communication with individuals and families, and consistent follow-through from providers and employers of record. For many, it involved learning new processes, portals, timelines, and points of contact — all while continuing to ensure that critical supports remained in place.

Support Coordinators and their supervisors played a key role throughout this transition, assisting individuals and families with understanding the new fiscal intermediary requirements, resolving issues as they arose, and helping to prevent interruptions in services. DDD has formally expressed appreciation for the hard work, patience, and partnership demonstrated during this period, and that recognition is well deserved.

Equally important is the acknowledgment of the individuals, parents, guardians, and providers who actively participated in the transition process. Your responsiveness, flexibility, and collaboration with Support Coordinators made it possible to move through a complex change while maintaining essential services. This was a shared effort, and its success reflects the strength of that partnership.

For anyone who believes their services may





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not have fully transitioned or who continues to experience unresolved transition-related issues, DDD has advised that concerns first be addressed through Acumen. If issues cannot be resolved directly, details may be forwarded to DDD at [DDD.FeeForService@dhs.nj.gov](mailto:DDD.FeeForService@dhs.nj.gov) for further review.

As the system moves forward, the completion of the PPL to Acumen transition allows Support Coordinators and stakeholders to refocus on what matters most: supporting individuals with developmental disabilities in achieving their goals, maintaining choice and control in self-directed services, and strengthening the overall service delivery system in New Jersey.

This transition was not without difficulty, but its conclusion represents progress, adaptability, and the collective commitment of everyone involved. Moving ahead, the lessons learned from this experience will continue to inform and improve how we support individuals and families across the state.

# WE'RE HIRING!

At PCIL, you won't just have a job—you'll be part of a mission-driven team supporting people with disabilities as they build skills, access resources, and live more independently in their communities.

PCIL is currently looking for:

## **NJ SNAP Navigator Support Coordinators**

This might be the right fit for you if you are someone who...

- Believes people with disabilities deserve choice, dignity, and independence
- Enjoys helping people navigate systems and reduce barriers
- Is organized, compassionate, and a strong communicator
- Wants a career that makes a difference in the lives of people with disabilities in NJ

Interested?  
Visit [www.pcil.org](http://www.pcil.org)  
to learn more and apply.



## **COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS** **RECREATION PROGRAM HAPPENINGS**

■ By Ruth Roberson of PCIL

This season was filled with meaningful opportunities for connection, creativity, and community participation through PCIL's recreation programming. Each event provided participants with the opportunity to explore new environments, express themselves, and build confidence alongside peers in welcoming and supportive settings.

One highlight of the season was a day trip to the Philadelphia Zoo, where participants from multiple counties traveled together, encouraging social connection and shared experiences right from the start. Once there, zoo education staff led a guided experience that balanced structure with independence, allowing individuals to explore exhibits, ask questions, and engage at their own pace. From observing animals in immersive habitats to trying new experiences like virtual reality and giraffe feeding, the day supported curiosity, choice-making, and confidence in navigating a large public space.



*Above: Halloween Costume Party was a night to remember!*



Seasonal celebrations continued with a Halloween Costume Party, transforming a community space into a lively and inclusive gathering. With music provided by a DJ, themed desserts, a photo backdrop, and a costume contest, participants had many ways to engage based on their comfort level. The event encouraged self-expression through costume choices, social interaction with peers, and confidence-building through movement and participation in group activities.

To keep the Halloween spirit going, PCIL hosted Spooky Trivia, where participants gathered for a themed Kahoot game that blended learning and socialization. The activity promoted attention, problem-solving, and discussion, while shared refreshments helped create a relaxed and welcoming environment for conversation and connection.

Creativity took center stage during a painting workshop, where participants selected from pre-outlined canvas designs and worked at their own pace. The workshop supported focus, fine motor skills, and following multi-step instructions while allowing for personal expression. The shared art-making experience also encouraged collaboration and peer interaction, reinforcing confidence in trying something new within a group setting.

As the year ended, participants gathered for Holiday Bingo Night, which blended classic game play with creative expression. Bingo supported listening, number recognition, and turn-taking, while a karaoke intermission

gave participants the option to sing solo, with peers, or simply enjoy the music. Staff joined as well, fostering a strong sense of community and shared participation. Warm drinks, desserts, music, and prizes helped make the evening both engaging and welcoming.

To kick off the new year, PCIL brought back a highly requested favorite, The Winter Ball. Held at the Hibernians, the evening offered a festive and elegant atmosphere where participants enjoyed a night of dancing and celebration. A DJ kept the dance floor moving throughout the night, creating an energetic and inclusive space for everyone to participate at their own comfort level. A beautifully arranged dessert tray added a special touch to the evening, giving participants a chance to relax, socialize, and celebrate together. Due to its popularity, the return of the Winter Ball was a memorable way to start the year and set the tone for continued community connection.

Through these seasonal events, PCIL reinforced its mission to promote independence, inclusion, and community engagement. Recreation programming continues to serve as a meaningful pathway for building skills, fostering relationships, and supporting participation beyond PCIL's walls.

*Join Us Next Time!*

Find all our upcoming events

[www.pcil.org/events](http://www.pcil.org/events)

[www.facebook.com/progressivecenternj](https://www.facebook.com/progressivecenternj)





*Participants dressed up for some square dancing fun in October with R.E.C.C.*

## HUNTERDON HAPPENINGS

■ By Bette Ann Sinclair of PCIL Hunterdon

### Square Dance Fun at the Progressive Center for Independent Living

In October, The Progressive Center for Independent Living (PCIL) in Hunterdon hosted a lively square dance at the Flemington Presbyterian Church through the R.E.C.C. Program. Mary Moody, along with dedicated volunteers from Flutterwheels, helped attendees learn the basic calls of Modern Western Square Dancing. Participants had a great time mastering moves like the Do-SI -Do, Swing and Right and Left Grand, among others.

The festive fall atmosphere made the evening even more enjoyable. Everyone came dressed for the occasion-cowboy hats, bandannas, and boots added to the fun! It was a fantastic night of dancing, laughter, and community, as PCIL members and local residents came together to mingle, socialize and celebrate in true Western style.



*Above: R.E.C.C. participants having fun at the square dancing event.*



*Above: R.E.C.C. participants posing at the Magical Music Mountain theater.*

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## Holiday Ornament Painting

In November, the Hunterdon office in Lebanon got into the holiday spirit with a festive ornament painting activity. Tara from Color Me Mine, located in the Bridgewater Mall, joined us at the PCIL office to guide everyone in creating their own hand-painted ceramic Christmas ornament.

After firing the ornaments in her studio, Tara returned them-and each one turned out beautifully! Participants enjoyed a relaxing evening listening to the smooth sounds of John Coltrane, sharing appetizers, and engaging in pleasant conversation.

We're grateful for Tara for bringing this creative event to PCIL, and we're excited that she's offered to return for future art projects.

## Magical Music Mountain Theater

To close out the year, PCIL attended the musical adaptation of *A Christmas Carol* at Music Mountain Theater in Lambertville. This timeless classic offered a wonderful opportunity to enjoy live theater in an inclusive setting surrounded by a welcoming audience. Through music, storytelling and engaging performances, the show delivered messages of kindness, forgiveness, and reflection. Colorful, lively and full of holiday spirit, the performance was a fun and meaningful way to celebrate the season together.



*Above: Participants enjoying getting craft at the holiday ornament painting event hosted by the R.E.C.C. program.*

*Join Us Next Time!*

Find all our upcoming events

[www.pcil.org/events](http://www.pcil.org/events)

[www.facebook.com/progressivecenternj](https://www.facebook.com/progressivecenternj)



# PEER GROUP IS COMING TO HUNTERDON!

■ By Bill Donohue

We're excited to announce that our popular Peer Group is now available in Hunterdon! This program is all about building meaningful connections, bringing together individuals with disabilities and members of the broader community to share experiences, learn from one another, and grow together. It's a welcoming space where friendships are formed, skills are developed, and, most importantly, everyone has fun.

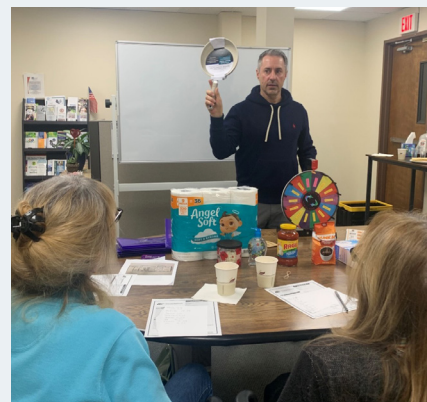
Peer Group will meet on the second Monday of every month, with a fresh and exciting topic each session. We kicked things off with a subject everyone can relate to: personal finance. Our guest speaker, Fatima Latif, from Financial Resources, guided the group through a discussion on budgeting, Green Light accounts, understanding the difference between needs and wants, and even included a Price is Right-style game to reinforce the concepts. Everyone left the first session smiling, saying they not only learned something new, but had a great time doing it.

On February 9, we'll be celebrating Heart Healthy Month with special guest, acclaimed dietician Claudia Shore from ShopRite. This can't miss session will feature recipe sharing, hands-on healthy snack-making, and Claudia

has generously offered to schedule a free personal consultation to every attendee there that night.

And mark your calendar for March 9, when we dive into vision boards, a creative session where everyone will design their own to help manifest their goals, wishes, and dreams in 2026.

Join us every second Monday at our Hunterdon Office — 1220 State Highway 31, Suite 14, in Lebanon, 08833. To reserve your spot, call Bette Ann at 908-782-1055 or visit [www.pcil.org/events](http://www.pcil.org/events). We can't wait to see you there!



*Bill brings the fun with a Price is Right-style game during our first Peer Group session in Hunterdon, turning budgeting into a hands-on, laughter-filled experience!*



# PCIL PEER GROUP UPCOMING TOPICS

FEB  
9

## Heart Healthy Snacks

5 - 6:30 PM | HUNTERDON OFFICE | Lebanon, NJ

Join us for a discussion with Nutritionist Claudia Shore. We'll be making a healthy snack and sharing healthy recipes.

FEB  
17

## Dollars & Sense

5 - 6:30 PM | MERCER OFFICE | Hamilton, NJ

Budgeting doesn't have to be overwhelming! Join us as we break down easy-to-follow budgeting strategies.

MAR  
3

## Stretch Your Dollar

5 - 6:30 PM | MERCER OFFICE | Hamilton, NJ

Saving doesn't have to feel impossible. Learn easy, real-world saving tips to stretch your dollar further.

MAR  
9

## Vision Boards

5 - 6:30 PM | HUNTERDON OFFICE OFFICE | Lebanon, NJ

Join us in making vision boards to help identify and accomplish your goals in 2026.

MAR  
17

## Smart Choices, Strong Boundaries

5 - 6:30 PM | MERCER OFFICE | Hamilton, NJ

Join us in a peer-led discussion on self-protection and personal safety. We'll discuss online safety, relationship boundaries, spotting fraud, and self-care.



## DRIVE-ABILITY: MORE THAN A PERMIT. A PATH TO INDEPENDENCE.

■ By Bill Donohue

Do you want to become more independent? Do you want the freedom to go where you want, when you want? Are you looking to open the door to new job opportunities? Drive-Ability can help get you there.

Drive-Ability is a 15-week, classroom-based course designed to help people with disabilities prepare for the New Jersey Learner's Permit exam. Classes blend interactive instruction with inclusive learning tools so participants don't just memorize information, but truly understand it.

What sets Drive-Ability apart is that it is intentionally designed around how people with disabilities learn. Instruction is paced, accessible, and responsive to different learning styles. Questions are encouraged, concepts are reinforced in multiple ways, and participants are supported until the material truly clicks rather than rushed through.

Participants learn the rules of the road, safety awareness, and real-world travel skills that unlock greater independence, increased

confidence, and access to employment. One participant shared, "I learned things about driving that I had never learned before, and now I have the confidence to pass my exam." Not only did he pass, but so has every participant who has taken the test so far.

Another participant added, "Drive-Ability is helpful, and I really enjoy coming each week. It's a good time." The program is both informative and engaging. All materials are provided, practice exams are included, and staff can assist with scheduling the Motor Vehicle Commission test appointments.

The next Drive-Ability cohort begins in early 2026, and enrollment is now open. Cohorts will be offered in both Mercer and Hunterdon Counties. Space is limited, so early registration is encouraged.

To get started, participants may contact their DVRS-assigned counselor, or reach out directly to Stephanie Wilmot at [stephanie.wilmot@pcil.org](mailto:stephanie.wilmot@pcil.org), Bill Donohue at [bill.donohue@pcil.org](mailto:bill.donohue@pcil.org), or call 609-581-4500.

# RESOURCES TO KNOW

■ By Yvette Ragsdale

If you receive SNAP benefits, your EBT card may give you access to discounts, free services, and community programs you might not know about.

Here are some benefits you may already qualify for just by having SNAP.

## **Save on Everyday Essentials**

SNAP recipients can get 50% off a Walmart+ Assist membership, which includes free grocery delivery on eligible orders, free shipping with no minimum, and fuel discounts at participating gas stations.

## **Stretch Your Food Budget**

With Good Food Bucks, SNAP users can double their spending power at participating New Jersey farmers markets. For every \$1 in SNAP benefits used, you receive an extra \$1 for fresh fruits and vegetables.

## **Phone and Internet Discounts**

SNAP recipients may qualify for free or low-cost phone and internet service through federal programs like Lifeline and the Affordable Connectivity Program. Availability and providers vary by location.

## **Travel and Documentation Savings**

Some SNAP recipients may qualify for a U.S. passport application fee waiver, which can reduce the cost of applying. Certain processing fees may still apply.

## **Free or Low-Cost Family Activities**

Through Museums for All, SNAP participants can receive free or reduced admission—usually \$0 to \$3 per person—at museums nationwide, including zoos, aquariums, and science centers. Simply show your EBT card and photo ID.

New Jersey residents can also use the Families First Discovery Pass for free or discounted admission to participating NJ museums, historic sites, theaters, and cultural institutions with a Families First EBT card.

## **Support for Children and Families**

Children in SNAP households are automatically eligible for free school breakfast and lunch, with no separate application required.

New Jersey households may also qualify for Summer EBT, which provides extra food benefits during summer months when school is not in session.

## **Free Tax Help**

SNAP recipients can receive free tax preparation services through VITA programs, helping them file accurately and claim refunds or credits at no cost.

## **Need Help or Have Questions?**

Contact us at 609-581-4500 or [SNAP@pcil.org](mailto:SNAP@pcil.org).



The Progressive Center for Independent Living

# PATHWAYS TO PREPAREDNESS

Empowering people with disabilities and seniors to plan ahead and stay safe during emergencies. Learn how to build a Go-Bag, create a personal action plan, and connect with local emergency resources to stay confident and prepared in any situation.

**February 20<sup>th</sup> 2026**

**2:00 pm – 3:30pm**

**Mercer County  
Library: Lawrence  
2751 Brunswick Pike,  
Lawrence Township,  
NJ 08648**



**Yvette Ragsdale**  
*EP Coordinator*

(609) 581- 4500  
[www.pcil.org](http://www.pcil.org)



Inclusive Healthy  
Communities  
NJ Division of Disability Services





E-mail: [info@pcil.org](mailto:info@pcil.org)  
Site: [www.pcil.org](http://www.pcil.org)  
FB: [@ProgressiveCenterNJ](https://www.facebook.com/ProgressiveCenterNJ)

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# **your DOORWAY**

## **QUARTERLY**

**A quarterly publication written by the Mercer County Office on Aging/Aging & Disability Resource Connection to help support older adults, those living with disabilities, and their caregivers**

### **ARTICLES BY ADRC**

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**Mercer County Office  
on Aging/ ADRC**

2210 Hamilton Ave.  
Hamilton, NJ 08619



ADRC	(609) 989-6661
Nutrition	(609) 989-6650
TOLL FREE	(877) 222-3737



# Mercer County Reaffirms Commitment to Fighting Against Food Insecurity in New Year

■ By Dan Benson, Mercer County Executive

The disruption to Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits caused by the Federal Government shutdown this past fall was a stark reminder that many of our residents struggle with food insecurity. My administration has made it a top priority that no family in Mercer should go hungry, and during the past year we've taken significant steps that leave us better prepared to face the daunting challenges that lie ahead.

In 2024, I worked in collaboration with our Board of County Commissioners to establish the Mercer County Office of Food Security, which is tasked with coordinating the work of agencies and organizations across the county, expanding access to fresh food for lower-income residents, and cultivating innovative strategies to address hunger among our residents.

Last year, the Board of County Commissioners authorized the Office of Food Security to use funding from an American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) grant to invest over \$600,000 into local organizations on the frontline of the battle against hunger. The centerpiece of this investment is the Food Hub Pilot Grant, which awarded \$250,000

to Trenton-based Mercer Street Friends to establish a Mercer County Food Hub. The hub will serve as a central location for food storage and distribution, coordinating efforts by emergency food providers around the County. The hub will also house dedicated case management staff to connect clients with wraparound services, including housing assistance, job training, and mental health services. During the government shutdown, we collaborated with Mercer Street Friends to distribute food to pantries, shelters, soup kitchens, and meal sites throughout the County, so that every Mercer resident could access food during this emergency.

The Office of Food Security also awarded over \$200,000 through its Food Security Innovation Pilot Grant, created to encourage data-driven and consumer-focused approaches that will improve food access, particularly in food deserts, while going beyond a traditional food distribution model. The varied initiatives funded by the grant include urban agriculture and home gardening programs that support communities to grow food, a partnership with local hospitals to provide food delivery to recently discharged patients, using new food trucks to establish

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mobile distribution sites in food desert communities, and a home-delivery project that routes surplus meals directly to the homes of Trenton families with limited mobility. The grant recipients are Arm In Arm (located in Hamilton) for their Hudson Pantry Expanded Hours Program, HomeFront (Lawrence) for their Homegrown Garden Support Project, Jewish Family & Children's Service (West Windsor) for their DoorDash Delivery for Recently Discharged Hospital Patients Program, Muslim Center of Greater Princeton (West Windsor) for their Hunger Van Program, Outdoor Equity Alliance (Trenton) for their City Roots program, Share My Meals (Princeton) for their Trenton Home Delivery Project, and Trenton Area Soup Kitchen (Trenton) for their TASK Community Meal Site Expansion Project.

The Office also distributed over \$200,000 through its Meat and Dairy Purchasing Pilot Grant, which provides direct financial assistance to food pantries and other nonprofits to purchase and distribute fresh food to residents in need. The grant was awarded to ten Mercer County organizations: Arm In Arm; Catholic Charities, Diocese of Trenton (Trenton); NJ Rise's Community Action Service Center (Hightstown); CYO of Mercer County (Hamilton); Homefront; Hopewell Valley YMCA (Pennington); Jewish Family & Children's Service; Meals on Wheels of Mercer County (Ewing); Princeton Mobile Food Pantry (Princeton); and Princeton Nursery School (Princeton).

The Office of Food Security has also promoted awareness of the Mercer County Free Food Finder, a comprehensive list of soup kitchens, pantries, free meal programs, grocery distribution sites, and more. Developed and maintained by Trenton Health Team and Mercer Street Friends, the Food Finder, found online at [bit.ly/mercerfoodfinder](https://bit.ly/mercerfoodfinder), can serve as a valuable tool to connect residents with the support that they need.

There are other County resources that I encourage you to use to your benefit. The Mercer County Office on Aging/Aging and Disability Resource Connection (ADRC) has a dedicated staff member who can help anyone 60 or older, or anyone living with disabilities, apply for SNAP benefits. You can contact the Office at [adrc@mercercounty.org](mailto:adrc@mercercounty.org) or at 609-989-6661. In addition, the Mercer County Library System's Lawrence Headquarters Branch works with Arm In Arm to provide a mobile food pantry on most Monday afternoons from 2 p.m. to 4 p.m. For more information about the food pantry, visit [arminarm.org](https://arminarm.org) or call 609-882-9246. The Headquarters Branch of our library system is located at 2751 Brunswick Pike, Lawrence Twp.

2026 will present new challenges for the approximately 38,000 Mercer residents who rely on SNAP, nearly half of whom are children. The Federal OBBA Act, passed in the summer of 2025, made significant cuts to SNAP, eliminating the program's funding for nutrition education, placing new barriers on

| Continued to next page. |

participation in the program, and ending eligibility for certain categories of legal immigrants including refugees, asylees, and survivors of human trafficking. The bill also shifts an estimated \$6.5 million in annual administrative costs from the Federal Government to Mercer County taxpayers.

The Federal Government isn't making it easy, but the County of Mercer remains committed to the principle that food is a basic human right, and no Mercer resident should go hungry. We are proud to work alongside dedicated community organizations as we continue to push forward in our fight against food insecurity.

*Dan Bu*



## STATE OF NEW JERSEY DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES

### Personal Assistance Services Program (PASP)



## GRANT SERVICES YOU NEED

PASP provides routine, non-medical personal care assistance to adults with permanent physical disabilities 18 years of age or older and are employed, preparing for employment, attending school, or involved in community volunteer work and who are able to self-direct their services. The goal of this program is to support individuals with physical disabilities so that they may remain active participants in their community. The PASP offers participants choice, flexibility, control, and the opportunity to manage their personal care assistance services. Eligibility is not income based, but there is a cost share based on income.

### CONTACT US NOW!

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rthomas@mercercounty.org  
640 South Broad St.  
P.O. Box 8068  
Trenton, NJ 08650-0068



**DDS**  
NJ DIVISION OF  
DISABILITY SERVICES



# Introducing Woods Primary And Behavioral Health Center At Hamilton

■ By Carrie Adkins-Ali, Senior Director, Strategic Communications, Woods System of Care

Woods Services, an affiliate of Woods System of Care, has partnered with RWJ Barnabas Health to open a practice that offers integrated primary care and behavioral health services to individuals living with autism, intellectual and developmental disabilities, and complex behavioral and medical needs.

Located inside Robert Wood Johnson University Hospital Hamilton, an RWJ Barnabas Health facility, Woods Primary and Behavioral Health Center at Hamilton (Woods at Hamilton) provides all standard primary care services, such as wellness care, chronic disease management, injury care, psychiatric evaluations, and medication management for children and adults. The space is designed to be sensory friendly and has accessible equipment such as a wheelchair scale, electric exam tables, and large rooms. Specially trained providers help patients feel comfortable, listen to their concerns and needs, and provide the bedside manner that is often lacking for this population. Because the practice is in the hospital, providers can easily make warm handoffs and referrals to hospital specialists located on-site as needed.

Woods at Hamilton offers integrated care, which means that an individual's providers work together to provide seamless communication and whole-person care.

This practice improves health outcomes, increases convenience, and reduces costs. Woods at Hamilton fills a huge gap in healthcare for people with complex needs.

Dr. Stephen J. Kolesk, Chief of Family Practice, Woods System of Care and Woods Primary and Behavioral Health Center at Hamilton, brings decades of experience caring for patients with disabilities. "I believe, deep in my heart, that this is what I was meant to do," he noted at the center's grand opening ceremonies in November 2025.

"Many of the families who come in say they can't believe this exists right in their backyard," says Ethan Diamond, Practice Manager. "And they comment on how caring and supportive Dr. Kolesk is."

Please call 888-628-9661 or email [hamilton@woods.org](mailto:hamilton@woods.org) for more information, to schedule an on-site tour or meeting with the practice providers, or to make an appointment. We also invite you to visit us at <https://woodshealthcare.org/hamilton>.

Woods System of Care is the leading provider of services for individuals living with intellectual and developmental disabilities. RWJ Barnabas Health is New Jersey's largest and most comprehensive academic health system.



## TRADE Transportation to VA Hospitals

TRADE provides transportation for Mercer County veterans to and from VA hospitals:

- *Every Tuesday to Lyons VA Medical Center*
- *Every Wednesday to East Orange VA Medical Center*

Pick up is behind Trenton City Hall's building at 319 East State Street at 8:20 a.m. on these days. TRADE will provide rides back to this location after these appointments.

City Hall security staff will assist with parking and allow vehicles with veterans to enter the employee parking lot. Please contact the security staff at 609-989-3081 when you arrive.

*Registration with TRADE is not required for these trips.*

*For additional information, please call TRADE at 609-530-1971 and press 1 for assistance.*



**MERCER**  
COUNTY

Executive Dan Benson  
The Board of County Commissioners



## The Hamilton Area YMCA Expands Inclusive Summer Opportunities with Support From Children's System of Care

■ By Denise M. Wyers, Chief Communications Officer, Hamilton YMCA

The Hamilton Area YMCA is proud to be a qualified Children's System of Care (CSOC) summer camp provider, expanding access to inclusive summer experiences for youth living with developmental disabilities and their families. This designation allows families served by the CSOC to request financial support for approved summer programs through PerformCare.

As a qualified provider, we offer summer camp and alternative recreational services, with options designed to promote belonging, independence, and meaningful participation in a safe, nurturing environment.

We encourage and support the participation of individuals with diverse abilities at our summer camp programs, which include a CSOC-supported summer program of up to 10 days of traditional day camp. During the camp day, children have opportunities to build self-esteem, form friendships, develop greater

independence, and explore their creative potential through engaging activities.

Our Diverse Abilities Summer Camp provides additional support and maintains a minimum counselor-to-camper ratio of 1:4. Offered weeks align with Mercer County's Extended School year (ESY) Program, and families must complete a prescreening before enrollment.

The Diverse Abilities Camp is located at the Hamilton Area YMCA Sawmill Branch at 185 Sawmill Road. 2026 camp dates are June 22 through 26, June 29 through July 3, August 10 through 14, and August 17 through 21. The camp runs Monday through Friday from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. – pre-camp and post-camp care are not available – and is \$460 per week.

We are developing exciting recreational offerings for the summer, including 20 sessions of alternative recreational services.

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These sessions will provide additional opportunities for engagement, enrichment, and fun. Families are encouraged to visit our website in the spring for full program details.

One-to-one aide support services may also be requested through CSOC to help ensure participants can engage in programs in ways that meet their individual needs.

Families interested in learning more about eligibility, funding, or program options are encouraged to contact Rudy Turner at [rturner@hamiltonymca.org](mailto:rturner@hamiltonymca.org).

More details about CSOC summer camp support can be found at <https://www.performcarenj.org/families/disability/summer-camp>.

Together, we are committed to removing barriers, expanding access, and creating inclusive summer experiences where every child feels supported, connected, and valued.



Jersey Assistance for Community Caregiving

To learn more or start applying, please contact the Mercer County Office on Aging / Aging and Disability Resource Connection at (609) 989-6661 or [ADRC@mercercounty.org](mailto:ADRC@mercercounty.org).

### ABOUT JACC

Jersey Assistance for Community Caregiving (JACC) is a program that provides in-home services to seniors at risk of placement in a nursing home. It includes an array of services designed to supplement the assistance given by the individual's caregiver network. Qualified individuals may have the opportunity to hire their own eligible family, friends, or neighbors to provide the care they need.



# Provider Spotlight: Active Day of Hamilton

■ By Eira Santiago, Active Day of Hamilton Center Director

At Active Day of Hamilton, the days are full of laughter, connection, and care that feels as if staff and members are family. Our center supports older adults who want to remain living at home while enjoying a safe, welcoming place to stay active, socialize, and receive the support they need during the day. Just as importantly, we support caregivers by giving them peace of mind, knowing their loved ones are in good hands.

As soon as members arrive, they're greeted

by a team who knows them, cares about them, and enjoys spending the day together. While our nursing team provides daily health monitoring, medication support, and coordination with families and healthcare providers, what members often notice most is how comfortable and at home they feel.

Families regularly share how much Active Day of Hamilton mean to them. One caregiver spoke about her 87-year-old mother living with Alzheimer's disease, explaining how her

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mom looks forward to coming each day to spend time with friends, play games, and get creative with crafts. She described the center as her mother's "second home" and praised our team for the kindness and attention they show every single day.

Another family shared a story that speaks to the heart of what we do. A daughter caring for her mother at home shared that she never wanted to place her in a long-term care facility. With the daily supervision, engagement, and support provided at Active Day of Hamilton, she was able to continue working while knowing her mother was safe and cared for. She was grateful that our services allowed her to spend meaningful time with her mother until her mother's final day. Moments like these remind us why this work matters.

No two days at Active Day of Hamilton are exactly the same. Members stay active with group exercise, enjoy supervised walks outdoors, and take part in activities that keep minds sharp and spirits high. Trivia, bingo, puzzles, themed events, music, movies, and games spark conversation and laughter, while arts and crafts encourage creativity and self-expression. Culturally themed celebrations and social activities help everyone feel included and connected. Check out the fun on our Facebook page, <https://www.facebook.com/ActiveDayofHamilton>.

In addition to daily programming, members have access to on-site physical therapy in a familiar and comfortable setting; Active Day plans to expand services to include

occupational and speech therapy. Social work support also is available to help members and families navigate benefits, referrals, and care coordination. Reliable transportation helps ensure members can attend consistently, easing stress for caregivers.

Active Day of Hamilton is proud to be a diverse and inclusive community. Our team reflects the families we serve, with staff members who speak English, Spanish, Tagalog (Filipino), and Urdu. The center is also the only facility in the area with controlled access, offering an added layer of safety and peace of mind for families.

At its core, Active Day of Hamilton is about connection: helping members stay active, supported, and engaged, while giving families the confidence to continue caring for their loved ones at home. We invite families to visit the center, meet the team, and see firsthand how care, community, and compassion come together every day.

For more information, visit [www.activeday.com/locations/active-day-of-hamilton](http://www.activeday.com/locations/active-day-of-hamilton) or call 609-883-0200.





# NJ SNAP ASSISTANCE

New Jersey's Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) provides food assistance for groceries to individuals and families with low incomes.

The Mercer County Office on Aging/Aging and Disability Resource Connection (ADRC) can help anyone aged 60 or older or living with a disability to apply.



In New Jersey, the minimum monthly SNAP benefit is \$95.



There are no work requirements for anyone aged 60 or older.



Benefits are issued on a Families First Electronic Benefits Transfer (EBT) card that works like a debit card.



You can apply for or complete your SNAP application in person or via a phone call. For more information, please contact the **Office on Aging/ADRC** at **ADRC@mercercounty.org** or **609-989-6661**. You may also visit the office at **2210 Hamilton Avenue, Hamilton, 08619**.

**Let the Office on Aging/ADRC help you stretch your grocery budget!**



**MERCER**  
COUNTY

**DAN BENSON, COUNTY EXECUTIVE**



# STATEWIDE RESPITE CARE PROGRAM

**Services To Provide Short-Term,  
Intermittent Relief to New Jersey's Caregivers**

Caring for anyone is a huge job. The Statewide Respite Care Program offers services to the person who needs care so that you, the caregiver, has respite - that much needed break.

To learn more or start the application process, please contact the Mercer County Office on Aging / Aging and Disability Resource Connection at **(609) 989-6661** or **ADRC@mercercounty.org**.



## **ADMINISTRATIVE STAFF**

*Deputy Director, Mercer County  
Department of Human Services,  
and Executive Director, Mercer  
County Office on Aging/ADRC*

Erica Saganowski

*Administration Support Staff*

Karina Turek

## **NUTRITION STAFF**

*Nutrition Program Director*

Jenifer Williams

## **ADRC STAFF**

*Area Planner*

Bridget Maximonis

*Assistant Program Coordinator  
Aging & Disability*

Monica Maldonado

*Assistant Program Coordinator  
Aging & Disability*

Tina Spoto

*PASP Coordinator/ Program  
Coordinator Aging & Disability*

Reed Thomas

*Senior Fiscal Analyst*

Santosh Gyawali

*SNAP Navigator/ Assistant  
Program Coordinator Aging &  
Disability*

Janka Maya

# Become a PCIL Member Today!

Join or renew your 2026 PCIL Membership to enjoy a full year of benefits for people with disabilities in Mercer County and Hunterdon County, NJ. Members receive discounted rates on events and access to exclusive Members-Only activities throughout the year.

Sign up now and your membership is good through the end of 2026—don't miss out!

## 2026 PCIL MEMBERSHIP PRICING

Individual ----- \$20.00  
Couple (2)----- \$30.00  
Family (up to 5) --- \$60.00

[www.pcil.org  
/pcil-membership](http://www.pcil.org/pcil-membership)

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*A PCIL & ADRC NJ Collaboration*

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FREE MATTER FOR  
THE BLIND AND  
HANDICAPPED

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