

BY PROGRESSIVE CENTER *Forward*

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

SNAP BENEFICIARIES WILL SEE A CHANGE COME MARCH 1ST

Those receiving benefits through NJ Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) will see a change starting the 1st of March. The emergency allotments from the federal government offered throughout the COVID-19 pandemic will end in February. This original allotment provided households with higher monthly food assistance during the pandemic. In the beginning of March, all households eligible for SNAP will now receive a minimum \$95 monthly benefit loaded onto their EBT card. Recognizing that food security is still a high concern for many families, those that received the \$23 minimum before the pandemic, will now see their regular monthly benefit and an additional state supplement to bring them to a total of \$95.

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SNAP BENEFICIARIES WILL SEE A CHANGE COME MARCH 1ST

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The regular benefit and the extra benefit will be listed separately. It is encouraged for all SNAP recipients to also check their benefit detail any time online at www.njfamiliesfirst.com, with the Connect EBT mobile app or by calling (800) 997-3333. SNAP recipients worried about the overall reduction in benefits should check their eligibility for other food assistance programs

including WIC for women and children under 5, free or reduced school meals, or the commodity supplemental food program for older adults over 60 years of age. For more information about additional food resources, visit nj211.org/food-programs-and-community-resources or text your zip code to 898-211.



To learn about more changes coming with the end of the public health pandemic, please see page 15.



DON'T FORGET YOUR 2023 PCIL MEMBERSHIPS

As a PCIL member, you can enjoy benefits throughout the year. Membership runs from January 1st through December 31st. Members receive reduced rates on recreational events.

PCIL MEMBERSHIP PRICING

Individual --- \$15.00
Couple --- \$25.00
Family --- \$50.00
Organization --- \$100.00



MEET NEWEST BOARD MEMBER: THOMAS K. BELDING, CFP®



Tom is a Financial Advisor at Belding Financial Planning, providing fee-only financial planning for individuals and families, including those with special needs. He is also an

Investment Advisor Representative of and offers investment advisory services through CGN Advisors, a fee-only SEC registered investment advisor.

A Cleveland native who has lived most of his life on the East Coast, Tom has over thirty years' experience in financial planning at the organizational and personal level, including positions in consulting, financial data services, international trade, and education. Before entering the business world, he did research in medical genetics and health economics. He has taught financial literacy and been the CFO of a school for children with learning disabilities, where he developed innovative approaches to financing special needs education. He has broad experience in the administration of benefits, including retirement plan origination and implementation. Employers have included Johns Hopkins University, Harvard University, Automatic Data

Processing, Inc., BELKO, Inc., and The Newgrange School of Princeton, Inc., among others. He has served in numerous elected and appointed positions on public and private boards and advisory panels, and he has done business in over 30 countries. He was recognized as a Paul Harris Fellow by Rotary International and is the Chair of the Investment Committee of the Chatham United Methodist Church. He holds master's degrees in Applied Economics, Health Services Administration and Human Genetics from the University of Michigan, and a B.A. in zoology from the University of Maine.

In his spare time, Tom likes to combine his love of sports and travel. You may be just as likely to find him and his wife Meg on an exciting ballroom dance floor – particularly on New Year's Eve – as you would kayaking the Hudson.

Investment advisor representative of and investment advisory services offered through CGN Advisors, a fee-only SEC registered investment advisor. Tel: (910) FEE-ONLY. Belding Financial Planning may offer investment advisory services in the State of New Jersey, and in other jurisdictions where exempted.



DIVISION OF VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION SERVICES THROUGH PCIL

■ STEPHANIE WILMOT & YANIRA MEDINA

PCIL partners with the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR) to provide consumers with various transition and employment services. These services are available to individuals beginning at age 14 and are broken into two categories of Pre-ETS and A La Carte. Eligibility for these services are based off of age and documentation of a disability that affects workability. DVR aims to encourage and assist individuals in gaining skillsets to help them obtain and maintain a competitive paying position. Services through PCIL aim to focus on helping the youth or young adult understand how their disability may impact employment, discovering their interests and abilities and relating them to careers, becoming more aware of careers especially those in demand, employer expectations, steps necessary in searching and securing employment and counselling on post-secondary options.

Sessions are normally hosted individually however more recently we have begun hosting group settings within the local school district within Mercer and Hunterdon County. Currently, staff has been assisting students

that attend Delaware Valley School for Exceptional Children where meetings are held once a week. We plan to continue assisting in group format within Hunterdon County, working closely with Hunterdon Central High School as well into the spring season. As we prepare for this upcoming summer please keep in mind PCIL will be offering DVR group sessions at our local Mercer County office. Any individuals who may be eligible and interested in participating can contact PCIL's transition team, Stephanie Wilmot or Yanira Medina to schedule a meeting for intake. Be sure to grasp hold of the opportunity while you can!

We look forward to assisting you and your needs as best as we can,

Stephanie Wilmot
stephanie.wilmot@pcil.org
609-581-4500 ext. 129

Yanira Medina
yanira.medina@pcil.org
609-581-4500 ext. 117

DMV PREPATORY PROGRAM IS UNDERWAY

■ YANIRA MEDINA

Progressive Center for Independent Living is proud to announce the upcoming DMV Preparatory course for individuals with disabilities. The class began on January 11th and is expected to end March 2nd.

This course is designed to help individuals who are currently struggling to pass the written state exam for the New Jersey Motor Vehicle Commission.

Next class is scheduled to begin on April 2023. If you're interested in registering for the next DMV Preparatory Course, please contact

instructors Stephanie Wilmot or Yanira Medina at 609-581-4500.

PCIL would like to encourage all individuals who are eligible to take advantage of this opportunity. These services will help individuals gain a sense of independence and improve their overall lifestyle. This is great for individuals who are struggling with transportation barriers which may prevent them from obtaining or maintaining successful employment. PCIL would like to be a helping hand along your road to success.

FUNDRAISER FOR OUR READY TO ACHIEVE MENTORING PROGRAM

■ RENEE PFAFF

It's always a great feeling to receive a call asking if one of our programs can be spotlighted and become a focus for a fundraiser for PCIL. A few months back, Elaine Phillips, shared that residents from the Gathering at Lawrence, where she lives, offers a fundraising opportunity for agencies in their community through their Charity Café events. On November 19th, two of our Transition Specialists had the pleasure to speak in detail about our Ready to Achieve Mentoring Program (RAMP) along with other programs PCIL has available. Our PCIL staff were offered a wonderful brunch and the opportunity to engage in conversation with many of the delightful residents eager to learn about the programs PCIL offers and our goal to increase independence to those living with disabilities.

We want to send out a huge shout out to all residents who supported us that day where we collected over \$1,000 that will directly support our RAMP youth program.



■ *RAMP Coordinator Stephanie Wilmot, Louisa Pelkey, Transition Specialist Yanira Medina, Mary Ann Reale, Bernie Olear, and Pam Fairman.*



Above: In December we took a group to the NJ Museum and Planetarium.

RECREATION CORNER

▪ RENEE PFAFF

During this edition many of our recreation activities through Community Connections were focused on the upcoming holidays. In October, we started off with a fun round of Music Trivia hosted by our longtime friend, Jim Gaven of Key to Awesome Music. This activity was brought back due to multiple requests. Jim entertained us using several musical instruments and made sure to throw in a few favorite Halloween themed songs. For our in-person activity, we held the event at the United Presbyterian Church in Yardville. United Presbyterian is a newer partner of PCIL and allows us to conduct activities within their community hall. Going with the fall theme, staff planned a Pumpkin Painting/Costume Contest. In addition to enjoying the painting and Halloween music, participants voted for best costume within the categories of 'Too Cute to Spook,' 'Scary,' 'Funny' and 'Most Creative,' with the winners receiving gift cards.

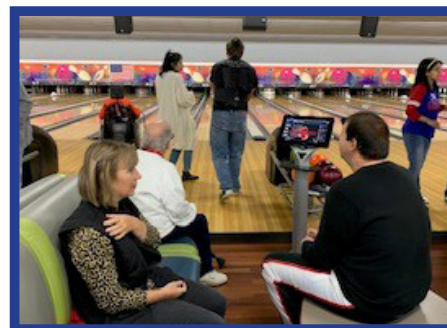
We started November out by bringing back Marcia LeBeau, who once again brought out the poet in everyone. During this activity Ms. LeBeau helped our virtual participants create poems in which they reflected on things they were grateful for. By popular demand from our

Recreation Committee, we found ourselves at the Hamilton Bowling Lanes later in the month to enjoy two rounds of bowling and some great interaction in each lane.

In December we brought on a new agency, Creative Change Counseling, Inc. who provides various counseling and activities focusing on youth and young adults. Staff from Creating Change offered step by step instructions on how to create a wreath using everyday materials found around the house. To get ourselves into the holiday spirit, a group met at the NJ Museum and Planetarium to enjoy the Laser Holiday Magic, which offered an awesome laser show and was accompanied by a variety of holiday music. After the show, participants had time to take a stroll around the museum to enjoy the sites. Lastly, in December, our friends at the Princeton Symphony Orchestra generously donated tickets for our PCIL friends to enjoy a night with the orchestra who entertained us during their Holiday Pops performance.

We still have room on our Recreation Committee! If you are interested, please call for more details at 609-581-4500.

**STRIKE UP
SOME FUN!**



Above: November fun included a bowling outing with lots of laughs!



SCARY FUN WITH PGIL!

Below: Winners of the Costume Contest held during our Fall Recreation Event in October.



POETS IN THE MAKING

***Sampling of a poem created by T. Provost during our virtual activity with poet, Marcia LeBeau, in December.*

Happy Meal

With family and friends
In a lovely restaurant
Which put me at ease
Warm tea also warmed my heart
Delicious food served
The smell of orange lingered on long
after the meal
Great food, great company

ALL ABOUT JESSICA



I AM JESSICA and I like to write and do art projects. I also love animals, especially cats. I have a cat named Sasha. She loves to play with her toy mouse and catnip toys and also loves treats, especially from Temptations.

I like PCIL and use DDD Support Coordination services through this agency. I like Christine, who is my Support Coordinator. With my DDD budget, I have the support I need to live in my own apartment. I have support staff and services the budget pays for. I like hanging out with Megan, my SDE (support staff) who helps me during the day. We go out to different places like Barnes and Nobles and other places such as the mall, the gym, and even day trips to Lancaster and Peddlers Village! I also cook and clean with Megan. I get to attend Mosaics class by Carrie on Mondays and I really enjoy working with Carrie. I recently made a mosaic of my friend's dog and my cat. I also made a mosaic of baby Yoda and Christmas ornaments.

My other SDE, Elizabeth, assists me at night. When she comes over, we like to watch shows and we enjoy tea and apples. I feel pretty lucky for all of this to be possible.

NEW YEAR, FRESH START

■ TERESA PIRRETTI

The New Year is a chance to start fresh. This can be a welcome change for many people.

Tori was glad to see the year 2022 end. In July 2022, Tori lost her fiancé due to COVID-related health issues. While Tori was devastated, she persevered; knowing that she wanted to live her best life.

With the support of her mom, brother, aunts, and her supports, Tori was able to find a Community-Based Support Staff. She and her support Laurie, enjoy spending their time together. Tori usually spends about six hours a day with Laurie three days a week. While together, Laurie and Tori cook different

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foods and recipes that Tori never cooked before. Tori has enjoyed learning to cook a tuna casserole, and roast ham, among many other things. She is even learning to use the crock pot on occasion. Tori is also learning to crochet. Tori has recently decided to pursue employment and is hoping to get a job caring for animals.

During her free time, Tori enjoys going to the gym at Robert Wood Johnson to work out by

using the track and weights. Tori is also an avid artist and enjoys playing the video game Road Blox.

While Tori admits there are days that the grief sneaks up on her, she remembers the good times she shared with her fiancé and looks forward to her future. There's no stopping her now, 2023 is going to be her year!

THE MEDICAID BUY-IN PROGRAM

■ LAURA TAPP

Medicaid “buy-in” allows workers with disabilities access to Medicaid community-based services not available through other insurers. Nationally, workforce participation among people with disabilities is significantly lower than those without disabilities.

Some individuals with disabilities who want to work face barriers achieving their employment and earnings potential because they need to choose between healthcare and work. Medicaid “buy-in” breaks down barriers to employment for people with disabilities

What is the Medicaid “buy-in” program?

The Medicaid “buy-in” program is the

nickname used to collectively refer to the Medicaid eligibility groups that serve workers with disabilities who are earning income and against whom states may charge premiums as a condition of Medicaid eligibility. The vast majority of states cover at least one of the “buy-in” groups.

Is the Medicaid “buy-in” program new?

No. The amendments to federal law that authorized these particular Medicaid eligibility groups were enacted in the late 1990s and early 2000s. These Medicaid eligibility groups promote and support employment for people with disabilities, and states often have a specific program name for

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their Medicaid coverage of these eligibility groups.

Is the Medicaid “buy-in” the only way workers with disabilities can access Medicaid?

There are multiple ways in which Medicaid beneficiaries with disabilities who work can preserve their Medicaid, some of which are independent of a state’s coverage of the “buy-in” eligibility groups. However, generally speaking, there is a limit on how much earned income an individual may have for purposes of his or her Medicaid eligibility for non-Medicaid “buy-in” eligibility groups. The “buy-in” Medicaid eligibility groups typically have the most generous income and financial eligibility standards.

What if a person with a disability is on Medicaid and they want to work? Could they move to the Medicaid “buy-in” if they get a job?

Medicaid beneficiaries who have disabilities and are interested in working and maintaining access to Medicaid should contact their Medicaid agency to learn about their state’s Medicaid options for workers with disabilities.

What if a state doesn’t have a Medicaid “buy-in”? Could a state add a Medicaid

“buy-in” to their Medicaid program?

Yes. The few states that do not presently cover one of the “buy-in” eligibility groups may adopt one of them at any time. State Medicaid agencies can work with the CMS to add or make changes to their Medicaid program.

What if an individual has private insurance or Medicare? Would they still need Medicaid “buy-in”?

Medicaid beneficiaries enrolled in the “buy-in” eligibility groups may still benefit significantly from their Medicaid coverage in spite of coverage they might have under Medicare or private insurance. Medicaid beneficiaries frequently are provided coverage for services that may not be available from private insurance or Medicare, such as personal care attendant services and other community-based long-term care services. Workers with disabilities may enroll in Medicaid to supplement Medicare and/or private insurance.

How do workers with disabilities and others interested in learning more about Medicaid “buy-in” find more information?

Each state that covers one of the Medicaid “buy-in” groups has its own rules about income, assets, and premiums. Some states have no income or asset limits for its “buy-

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in” eligibility groups in order to promote employment and earnings for beneficiaries. Some states charge premiums. There is also general information on the CMS website: [medicaid.gov/medicaid/ltss/employment/index.htm](https://www.medicaid.gov/medicaid/ltss/employment/index.htm)

What if my state has a lower income or asset limit?

Could they change it to allow workers with disabilities to work and earn more?

Yes. States that presently cover one of the Medicaid “buy-in” eligibility groups can make changes to their income and asset rules by submitting a request to the CMS. Like other proposed Medicaid changes, CMS reviews state requests for approval.

What happens if a person enrolled in the Medicaid “buy-in” gets a job in another state and wants to move there? Could they stay enrolled?

Each state covering a Medicaid “buy-in” eligibility group has its own specific eligibility rules. Individuals who move should contact their new state to find out if their new state covers one of the Medicaid “buy-in” eligibility groups and obtain information about eligibility rules. If an individual wants to remain enrolled in Medicaid they would need to apply within their new home state.

What if a worker enrolled in Medicaid “buy-in” is no longer employed but still needs Medicaid?

Individuals who experience a change in their Medicaid eligibility status must report their changes to their state Medicaid agency. The state Medicaid agency must determine if the change impacts the individual’s Medicaid eligibility, and if it adversely impacts such eligibility, determine whether there are other Medicaid eligibility groups covered under the state’s Medicaid plan that the individual might qualify under. An individual who loses eligibility under a Medicaid “buy-in” eligibility group due to the loss of earned income might still be eligible under a separate eligibility group covered under the state’s plan.

How is the Medicaid “buy-in” good for employers?

When workers with disabilities don’t need to suppress their income to ensure access to critical healthcare services, employers are able to attract and retain more workers. Employers can support employee skill development and promote high performers with less concern that a person’s health care needs will impact their ongoing employment. This benefits the business community.



NJ CHILDREN'S SYSTEM OF CARE

■ RENEE PFAFF

One of my favorite parts of this job is having the ability in sharing resources with families that can impact them greatly. One such resource Progressive Center for IL feels is under utilized within the disability population is New Jersey Children's System of Care (CSOC). CSOC falls under the NJ Department of Children and Families. Many times, this agency is misunderstood with families believing one is only eligible if the child is involved with child protective services, which is not the case. CSOC offers services to youth with high medical needs, behavioral health needs, and/or intellectual/developmental disability diagnoses (IDD).

PerformCare contracts with the state and facilitates access to funds through CSOC to serve those with disabilities up to age 21. In this article, we will be focusing on services for those living with intellectual/developmental disabilities. For all services, you can access more information at <https://www.performcarenj.org/>.

Several times we have come across an individual living with a significant disability that has service needs but are not yet eligible for Division of Developmental Disabilities

(DDD). In this situation, we provide information on CSOC and PerformCare. It is important to understand you must be determined eligible for services and certain requirements must be met. An application is required to be sent to PerformCare which is the single access point into CSOC for those under the age of 18. For young adults ages 18 to 21, to apply for services, you will need to complete an application through the Department of Human Services, DDD. More information on this process can be found at www.performcarenj.org/IDDservices. You can also review their Frequently Asked Questions on CSOC's website for valuable information.

Once determined eligible through PerformCare, youth living with an IDD are able to tap into various services to support their ability to live with their caregiver. Services available are; intensive in-home services including clinical and therapeutic interventions, applied behavior analysis, and individual support services (ISS). Individual support services offer skill development support for daily living activities which include self-care and independence within the community. This is similar to community-

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based support in the adult DDD system, but also engages family members to support these skill learning techniques when staff aren't in the home. Family support services include cost assistance for summer camps, respite, educational advocacy, and assistive technology with home and vehicle modifications falling under this category. Out-of-Home treatment such as residential or group home placement may be available, but is always considered as a last resort measure.

So remember, if you have a loved one under age 21 living with an IDD and feel they need more support, visit the website mentioned earlier or feel free to call 1-877-652-7624.



Looking for Resources, Check This Out: www.mercerresourcenet.org
 ResourceNet through Mercer County Care Management Organization offers a free online directory of programs, supports, services and events for families.

PROGRESSIVE CENTER FOR INDEPENDENT LIVING

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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

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Mercer County Office on Aging/ ADRC

McDade Admin. Building
640 South Broad St.
P.O. Box 8068
Trenton, NJ 08650-0068



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





End of the COVID-19 Public Health Emergency

By Reed Thomas

COVID-19 has impacted our lives in a myriad of ways, from adaptations to how we work and shop to dealing with the fears, uncertainty, and loss nearly all of us have faced. As we continue to learn to live with the virus, there are still hurdles to overcome, and for many members of our community, those include understanding how COVID-19-relief legislation affects their eligibility for crucial programs that provide access to healthcare and food resources. In late January 2020, the U.S. Secretary of the Department of Health and Human Services declared a Public Health Emergency (PHE), something that has been renewed every 90 days since and is still in effect today. This declaration, and later relief legislation, included some major changes and expansions of public benefits programs. Now, three years later, it is expected that these relief efforts will soon conclude, which has some major potential impacts on members of the community who rely on these programs.

One of the concerning impacts is to those who receive Medicaid. To receive Medicaid benefits, a person must meet financial eligibility terms as well as a range of other caveats, such as having no other form of health coverage, being employed and living with disabilities, or even having a particular level-of-care need, depending on the specific Medicaid program. Not only must you meet these conditions upon initial application, you must also renew your Medicaid eligibility annually, demonstrating that you still meet the conditions to receive benefits. Since early 2020, the PHE suspended the termination of anyone from Medicaid, which means many millions of Americans should have completed their annual renewal process, but if they did not respond to the correspondence about renewal or if their situation indicated they were not eligible (such as earnings are now too high or they've gotten another source of health insurance including Medicare or coverage via employment), benefits were

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not terminated. As we look to the end of the PHE, everyone in this situation must renew their eligibility or risk losing their Medicaid coverage.

You may wonder if you're only receiving benefits because of the PHE and what can you do to maintain those benefits. One of the first things you should do is to contact NJ FamilyCare at 800-701-0710 to make sure your contact information is up-to-date, something of particular importance to anyone who has moved within the last three years. NJ FamilyCare and the managed care organizations that provide the coverage under NJ FamilyCare will send notices by mail to all who need to renew so having accurate contact information is crucial. To that end, make sure to open and read any correspondence you receive from NJ FamilyCare. If you are 60 years old or older, if you are living with a disability, or if you are a caregiver for an older adult or a person living with a disability and you don't understand what you've received or are unsure how to respond, please contact the Mercer County Office on Aging/ADRC at 609-989-6661; we're happy to provide guidance and support in both completing the renewal process or exploring potential eligibility for other Medicaid programs if you are ineligible for your current program. If there are no options, you may be eligible for discounted coverage through GetCoveredNJ. Visit <https://nj.gov/getcoverednj/> to explore

your potential eligibility.

Eligibility for Medicaid is not the only impact of the PHE to medical assistance and services. Coverage and costs for COVID-19 testing and treatment are tied to the PHE, as is the coverage for telehealth services and some Medicare payment and coverage flexibilities. To learn about how these coverages may be affected, you should contact the customer service number on your health insurance card(s). To learn about the impacts to Medicare, you may also contact the State Health Insurance Program (SHIP) to speak with a trained counselor at 609-273-0588.

Medicaid is not the only program to be directly affected by the PHE. The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP, formerly Food Stamps) also has seen changes and expansion during the last three years. Benefits were expanded to amounts greater than for which the existing program allowed. Online use of your SNAP EBT card to purchase groceries from several large stores began, and several pieces of the application and renewal process were modified. SNAP Interim Reporting Forms and recertifications were paused, but have been reinstated. You must complete both to maintain eligibility. Even if you've completed your Interim Reporting Forms and recertifications, it is possible that the end of the PHE will mean a reduction in monthly benefit amounts. To

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ATTENTION

**MEDICAID &
SNAP RECIPIENTS**

CHECK YOUR STATUS

**If your status has
changed, let us help.**

Please contact the Mercer County Office on Aging/ADRC at 609-989-6661 or ADRC@mercercounty.org for help understanding how these changes may affect you.

learn about how you might be impacted or any steps needed to maintain your SNAP benefits, you can contact the statewide customer service number, 800-997-3333, although please understand that caller volume may be higher at this time, so please be patient. You may also contact the county Board of Social Services; for Mercer County residents, that number is 609-989-4320.

With an understanding of some of the major PHE-impacted programs, all we need to know now is when it will end. There has been conjecture for many months that the announcement from the federal government was coming soon. That finally came to fruition when the Biden Administration announced in late January that the official end of the PHE will be May 11, 2023. Despite that newly announced date, legislation enacted a few weeks prior allows states to begin disenrolling people from Medicaid as

early as April 2023.

This article is not intended to scare you, but instead the hope is you will be motivated to take proactive steps to understand how you'll be affected and to take whatever steps you need to maintain needed benefits programs. You do not have to take action now; however, to wait may have serious ramifications. If everyone who needs to renew program benefits waits until their hand is forced, the log-jam effect at the community processing centers may cause massive delays and potential lapses in crucial services with potentially disastrous consequences. If you rely on the support of programs like Medicaid and SNAP, please look into your status now. For help understanding what to do, please contact us at the Mercer County Office on Aging/ADRC at 609-989-6661 or ADRC@mercercounty.org; we're happy to help.

DONT MISS YOUR
NJ FAMILY CARE
RENEWAL PACKET!

- 1 Update your contact information with NJ FamilyCare at 1-800-701-0710 (TTY: 711)
- 2 Watch for mail related to NJ FamilyCare and make sure to reply on time



Call NJ FamilyCare at 1-800-701-0710 (TTY: 711) or
visit www.njfamilycare.org.



State of New Jersey
Phil Murphy, Governor
Sheila Oliver, Lt. Governor



Department of Human Services
Sarah Adelman, Commissioner

NJ FAMILY CARE

NJ Human Services Partners with GetSetUp to Offer Free Online Courses for Older Adults

By Reed Thomas

To combat social isolation, the New Jersey Department of Human Services and its Division of Aging Services are partnering with GetSetUp, an interactive online learning community, to provide free, live virtual classes for New Jerseyans age 60 or older.

The GetSetUp platform offers live classes taught by peers who are experts in their field, social hours hosted by community members, and special events with speakers who directly address areas of interest to older adults. Older New Jerseyans can choose from more than 500 available classes on topics including aging in place, computers, budgeting, mental fitness, and more. Classes are offered in English, Spanish, Hindi, and Mandarin. Classes are available 24 hours a day. To reach the New Jersey GetSetUp site, visit getsetup.io/partner/NJ.

“We are so excited to provide this opportunity to older New Jerseyans who want to learn a new skill or simply stay connected,” says NJ Human Services Commissioner Sarah Adelman. “Older adults often face social isolation that can be detrimental to their physical, mental, and emotional health. Exploring new activities and interacting and connecting with others can help enhance their quality of life and

help prevent the health risks associated with isolation.”

Individuals can join GetSetUp classes from any computer, laptop, or mobile device with an Internet connection. To learn how to create a GetSetUp account, visit <https://getsetup6054.zendesk.com/hc/en-us/articles/5856245152155-How-to-Create-a-GetSetUp-Profile>.

“One of our goals at the Division of Aging is to bridge the technological gap for older adults,” says NJ Division of Aging Services Director Louise Rush. “GetSetUp offers technology and social media classes that can help older New Jerseyans be more comfortable with technology, so they can use it to their benefit. Older New Jerseyans who lack internet access can check their eligibility for discounted internet service through the federal Affordable Connectivity Program. Those eligible can also qualify for a one-time discount on the purchase of a tablet or laptop.” The Affordable Connectivity Program helps many low-income households pay for broadband service and internet connected devices. For more information, visit <https://www.affordableconnectivity.gov/>.

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“We hear learner feedback daily about how technology is helping to connect older adults not only to friends and family, but also to opportunities to learn and age healthier,” says Lawrence Kosick, President and Co-Founder of GetSetUp. “GetSetUp empowers older adults to learn about technology and how to use their smart devices in a safe environment that connects them with a vibrant community of peers that are passionate about similar topics. It’s great to partner with the New Jersey Division of Aging Services to offer services that allow for equity and diversity which enables their older population to live happy, healthy, and more connected lives.”

The GetSetUp partnership is the latest in a series of efforts by the NJ Department of Human Services as part of Governor Murphy’s administration’s support to older New Jerseyans.

Last year, the State increased income limits for the Pharmaceutical Assistance to the Aged

and Disabled and the Senior Gold Prescription Discount drug assistance programs, making more people eligible for prescription drug assistance. In 2021, the State joined the AARP Network of Age-Friendly Communities, which helps participating states and communities adopt practices such as safe, walkable streets; better housing and transportation options; access to key services; and opportunities for residents to participate in community activities. The Age-Friendly State Advisory Council, created by Executive Order No. 227 in 2021, works to identify opportunities for creating livable communities for people of all ages in New Jersey, recommend best practices for age-friendly work, and promote community inclusion across the state.



Free Virtual Classes for Older Adults

The New Jersey Division of Aging Services has partnered with GetSetUp to provide free virtual classes for older adults taught by peers - ask questions, make new friends, learn new things and have fun.



GetSetUp

Try an Online Class Today!
www.getsetup.io/partner/NJ

Live Classes Taught by Older Adults Across Multiple Categories

Aging in Place
Communication
Cooking
Creativity
Financial Planning
Health and Wellness
Fitness

Music
Photography
Social Hours
Social Media
Technology
Travel
Business



State of New Jersey
Phil Murphy, Governor
Sheila Oliver, Lt. Governor



Department of Human Services
Sarah Adelman, Commissioner



WINTER SAFETY



BE SAFE OUTDOORS THIS WINTER

1. Dress for the weather.
2. Check your traction.
3. Be aware of winter weather conditions.
4. Don't rush.
5. Find the safest path.
6. Be aware of what you carry.
7. Winterize your gear.



Tips For Staying Safe Outdoors In Winter Conditions

By Lauri Harbison

It's that time of year when venturing outdoors can sometimes seem more treacherous than worthwhile; however, we are all aware of the importance of staying active, and there are occasions when leaving home during foul weather is necessary. Here are a few tips for maximizing safety when the weather turns cold and icy:

1. **Dress for the weather.** Wear loose layers of clothing. The air between the layers helps to keep you warm. Top off with a waterproof and/or wind resistant coat. Wearing a hat and scarf can prevent the loss of a lot of body heat from the head and neck. Change your clothes right away if they get damp or wet.
2. **Check your traction.** Wear boots and shoes with a good grip. Shoe soles should be sturdy and slip-resistant. A sole that is too smooth can be slippery. A good grip is crucial to keep one steady in all types of weather conditions.
3. **Be aware of winter weather conditions.** Let people know your plans and take a cell phone or whistle with you or wear an alert system when you leave your house.
4. **Don't rush.** Make sure you have enough time to get where you're going. Your chances of falling increase when you're running late and rushing. Take time to observe your surroundings and potential pitfalls.
5. **Find the safest path.** Use the safest route to your location and the safest route into the building—even if it is not the shortest route. Find a clear path around snow or ice when you can. Be careful of hidden ice and dark areas on pavement as they can be slippery and dangerous. Assume all wet, dark areas on pavement may be slippery or icy.
6. **Be aware of what you carry.** Use a backpack, making sure that it fits, or a crossbody handbag to keep your hands free. Avoid carrying anything heavy that may make you lose your balance or that blocks your view as you walk.
7. **Winterize your gear.** If you use a cane, buy and attach an ice tip. Check with your medical equipment supplier to see if there are any adjustments or attachments available for ice, rain, or snow safety.

By taking a few preventive measures and staying mindful about what you are doing in the moment, you can maximize your chances of staying safe and avoiding injury or harm.

SHOW YOUR STRIPES[®]



ON RARE DISEASE DAY[®]
FEBRUARY 28TH

NORD's Rare Disease Day Event

By Patricia Geurds

Each year, we gather together to celebrate Rare Disease Day on the last day in February. People across the world celebrate patients living with a rare disease while honoring caregivers, doctors, nurses, scientists, and those dedicated to research and finding cures to provide the best quality of life.

There are more than 7,000 rare diseases known to date and 95 percent are incurable. Living with a rare disease comes with its challenges, but shining light on all the positives and advancements made is what Rare Disease Day is all about.

NORD, the acronym for National Organization for Rare Disorders, will celebrate its 40th anniversary this year, and NORD team members look forward to continuing their work in research development and community outreach.

My daughter went undiagnosed for almost nine years, receiving her diagnosis this past November. We are filled with gratitude to have a path now. A diagnosis can be hard to find, but each year through the efforts of scientists, researchers, and doctors, those living with unnamed rare diseases get closer.

I joined NORD in 2019 while working with legislation to pass a bill that would help patients with rare diseases receive the expedited care prescribed by their physicians without delays and denials impeding care. I was named ambassador for NORD's Rare Action Network (RAN), the grassroots volunteer program involved with community outreach, and I am honored to be hosting Rare Disease Day this year.

We will celebrate with music, face painting, an art exhibit, food, and other talents. Our keynote speakers will be sharing their rare

▪ *Continued on next page.*



journeys, research, and resources. Information booths will be displayed throughout with people available to answer questions.

Our most exciting attraction is our zebra; he will be out front greeting guests. We will ask those who attend our event for help finding the perfect name for him. The zebra is our symbol as it is noted for black and white stripes that represent characteristics that make each individual distinct. We encourage you to wear your stripes on Rare Disease Day.

Our event will take place on Tuesday, February 28, 2023, from 5:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. at the Make A Wish New Jersey castle located at 1384 Perrineville Road in Monroe Township, N.J. The building is handicap accessible. Everyone is welcome to join us, and admission is free. For more information on the upcoming event please contact me at Patrica.geurds@rareaction.org or 609-498-4760.



Above: Make a Wish Castle located in Monroe Township, NJ.

Above: An inside look of the Make a Wish Castle.



January is

CERVICAL CANCER

Awareness Month

January is Cervical Cancer Awareness Month

What is Cervical Cancer?

Cervical cancer is cancerous cells growing rapidly in an area of a female's body called the cervix, which is located in the lower portion of the uterus.

What is a Cervical Cancer Screening?

The most common cervical cancer screenings are pap (papanicolaou) smears and human papillomavirus (HPV) tests. Both exams can detect changes in cervical cells. Detecting these abnormal cells early is the first step in halting the possible development of cervical cancer.

When Should I Get Screened?

Most patients are recommended to start screening at age 21 and then get screened every three to five years. If a screening result is abnormal, the provider will recommend follow-up steps.

Early detection saves lives. Get screened with NJCEED!

In collaboration with the New Jersey Department of Health, the Trenton Health Team (THT), as part of the New Jersey Cancer Education and Early Detection (NJCEED) program, provides free comprehensive screening services for qualifying uninsured or under-insured Mercer County residents for breast, cervical, prostate, and colorectal cancer.

Call 609-888-6189 to check your eligibility and to schedule your free screening appointment today.





GRANTS for the SERVICES YOU NEED

PASP offers consumers choice, flexibility, control and the opportunity to manage their personal care services through a cash allowance.

CONTACT US NOW!

Mercer County ADRC
Reed Thomas 609-989-6459
rthomas@mercercounty.org
640 South Broad St.
P.O. Box 8068
Trenton, NJ 08650-0068



Statewide Respite Care Program



Let us give you *a Hand*



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.



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VOLUNTEERS NEEDED

The Long-Term Care Ombudsman Volunteer Advocate Program Needs Your Help!



**TRAIN TO BECOME A LTCO
VOLUNTEER ADVOCATE
TO HELP NURSING HOME RESIDENTS**

WE NEED YOUR HELP

Volunteers are needed to advocate for people living in long-term care facilities by investigating and resolving complaints to ensure that they are being treated with dignity and respect.

Each Volunteer Advocate undergoes 36 hours of training and is required to pass a certification exam.

If you are interested in having a direct impact on the lives of vulnerable New Jersey citizens living in nursing homes please call **1-877-582-6995**, option #3, or email at volunteer@ltco.nj.gov.

VOL 80 WINTER 2023

One place, many services.

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