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Increasing Our Commitment To New Jerseyans With Developmental Disabilities

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Tags: [Budget and Spending](#)

Governor Christie has long spoken of the State's moral imperative to recognize the unique needs of every New Jerseyan with a developmental disability and has expressed a steadfast commitment to helping them lead richer and fuller lives. The Governor has fundamentally changed the way services and programs support individuals with developmental disabilities and their families by moving away from a system that has historically focused on institutionalization to one that emphasizes home and community-based services and supports. Governor Christie has refocused resources to provide people with disabilities the ability to live among family, friends and neighbors.

Recognizing the Unique Needs of Individuals with Developmental Disabilities

Symbolizing the Christie Administration's dedication to this community and real progress over the last three years in recognizing and protecting the civil rights of individuals with developmental disabilities, the State recently settled an eight year-old lawsuit filed by Disability Rights NJ, in which the advocacy group asserted that New Jersey was not complying with a Supreme Court decision requiring that people with developmental disabilities are able to live in the least restrictive environments. Advocates such as Disability Rights NJ fought to change perceptions and approach in care for decades without success. Today, the Christie Administration both acknowledges and continues to address the issues Disability Rights NJ and other advocates have raised on behalf of every New Jerseyan with developmental disabilities.

The fiscal year 2014 budget increases funding provided to support community housing and additional programs and services. In addition, a realignment of programs implemented in fiscal year 2013 for children with developmental and intellectual disabilities has enabled the Department of Children and Families (DCF) to provide family-oriented support services that care for the whole child.

Increasing Resources for Community-Based Care

In line with the Administration's efforts to meet the unique needs of individuals with developmental disabilities and their families, New Jersey has successfully transitioned hundreds of developmental center residents into community settings, and has not had to unnecessarily institutionalize anyone in a developmental center in over a year. This effectively advances the Christie Administration's goal to provide comparable programs and services where people with disabilities and their families want them: at home and in the community.

The Christie Administration will continue to expand its initiatives for community housing and programs. Governor Christie's fiscal year 2014 budget proposes to provide **\$41.8 million** of new State and federal funding to develop additional community placements and services, for a projected 788 individuals. This funding also supports clients who turn 21 and no longer are eligible for education entitlements.

An additional **\$21.3 million** is proposed to pay for placements that occurred during fiscal year 2013. Funding covers costs of the community placement and associated costs including housing, day programs and staffing.

In addition, a total of **\$19.7 million** new State and federal funding will support the Division of Developmental Disabilities' Olmstead initiatives.

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Under the Medicaid reforms made possible under the Comprehensive Waiver, adults with development disabilities who are living independently or with family will soon be eligible for substantially increased in-home support services for which the State will receive a federal match.

Increasing Funding for Support Services for Children with Developmental Disabilities

The creation of the Division of Children's System of Care within DCF is finally addressing the holistic needs and concerns of families with children with developmental disabilities in one place. The new division is now the departmental "home" for children with multiple needs, bringing together programs now scattered throughout State government. This will allow for a more family-centric approach.

As part of the continued integration of programs under the new Division of Children's System of Care an additional \$1.5 million has been provided in the fiscal year 2014 budget for placement services.

A National Leader in Identifying, Diagnosing and Caring for Children with Autism

New Jersey is a national leader in early intervention and education of children with autism, which impacts about 1 in 50 children across the Garden State and their families. Governor Christie and his Administration remain firmly committed to finding new and innovative ways to help New Jersey families impacted by autism spectrum disorders and improving the lives of their loved ones.

The Governor's Council for Research and Treatment of Autism has established the NJ Autism Center of Excellence that will develop and conduct clinical research projects.

*Through the fiscal year 2014 budget, Governor Christie is providing **\$86 million** for the Early Intervention Program, aimed at identifying, diagnosing and caring for children from birth to age three with autism and other developmental disabilities.*

Commitment to New Jerseyans with Developmental Disabilities

Governor Christie's fiscal year 2014 budget reflects his ongoing commitment to provide critical programs and services for individuals with developmental disabilities and their families:

Making Autism Outreach a Priority. In August 2010, the Christie Administration established the Office on Autism within the Department of Human Services' Division of Developmental Disabilities, creating a centralized location to coordinate autism-related information. The Office has organized an Interdepartmental Work Group, which includes the New Jersey Departments of Human Services; Health; Children and Families; Community Affairs; Education; and Labor and Work Force Development, to enhance coordination among agencies charged with providing services to persons with autism spectrum disorder.

Providing Transition Services for Adults. The Christie Administration has dedicated funding for young adults with developmental disabilities who age out of the Department of Education's special education entitlement by ensuring a seamless transition to the Department of Human Services' adult day-programming.

Protecting the Dignity of Those with Developmental Disabilities. In 2010, Governor Christie signed into law the "Central Registry of Offenders Against Individuals with Developmental Disabilities." This law exclusively applies to Department of Human Services' funded, licensed, contracted or regulated programs that provide services to people with developmental disabilities. It requires DHS to maintain a central registry - a confidential list of caregivers working in these programs who have been determined to have abused, neglected, or exploited an individual with a developmental disability.

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