



Home | Newsroom | Media | Administration | NJ's Priorities | Contact Us

Press Releases | Public Addresses | Executive Orders | Press Kit | Reports

Home > Newsroom > Press Releases > 2010 > Governor Christie Signs Landmark Legislation to Protect Individuals with Developmental Disabilities from Harmful Caregivers

# Governor Christie Signs Landmark Legislation to Protect Individuals with Developmental Disabilities from Harmful Caregivers

Friday, April 30, 2010 • Tags: [Pension and Health Benefits](#)

**Westville, NJ** - Governor Chris Christie today signed landmark legislation creating a Central Registry of Offenders Against Individuals with Developmental Disabilities within the Department of Human Services (DHS). New Jersey is among a growing number of states to use this type of registry in order to better protect individuals with developmental disabilities and relying on assistance from caregivers. Other states that have enacted similar legislation are Delaware, Louisiana, Ohio, Missouri, New Mexico and Tennessee.

"Abuse at the hands of a caregiver is a reprehensible action," Governor Christie said. "The legislation that I am signing today is an important tool to help safeguard those with developmental disabilities from harmful caregivers taking advantage of their position. Equally important, this new law will prevent these custodians from gaining re-employment or continuing participation in human services funded programs."

The legislation requires the Department of Human Service to maintain a confidential registry of paid caregivers and volunteers who have been determined to have abused, neglected, or exploited any service recipient of the DHS' Division of Developmental Disabilities (DDD). This includes those employed as caregivers in facilities licensed, contracted or regulated by the Department of Human Services.

This law calls for the DHS' Special Response Unit (SRU) to investigate allegations of abuse, neglect, or exploitation. If the SRU substantiates the allegations against a caregiver, it would forward the findings to the Commissioner of Human Services to be considered for inclusion on the registry.

"We owe it to our most vulnerable residents to ensure they are given every protection from being unknowingly placed in the care of an abuser," said Senate President Sweeney. "This registry will give New Jersey families of individuals with developmental disabilities peace of mind that they don't have to worry about whether the person caring for their loved one truly has their best interests at heart."

"Governor Christie and state legislators have taken action that this department has advocated for and supports," said Human Services Commissioner Jennifer Velez. "People with developmental disabilities, family members, advocates and service providers agree that this registry will provide a fair and formal way to reduce the risk of potentially re-hiring, individuals who have been found to have neglected, abused or exploited individuals who had been entrusted to their care."

"One of government's primary objectives is to protect those who cannot protect themselves," said Assemblyman Angel Fuentes (D-Camden). "Creating a registry of abusive caregivers allows us to better protect individuals who must rely on the care of others to survive."

Currently, caregivers that work in state administered developmental centers, licensed Community Agencies, and licensed Community Care Residences are, by statute, fingerprinted and undergo Criminal History Record Information (CHRI) background checks that vary according to the type of facility.

Caregivers that are contracted to provide services at programs such as day programs or visiting nurses are not fingerprinted by the Department and may or may not have undergone a CHRI background check, depending upon their employers' protocols or professional licensing requirements.

"This registry will help root out abusive caregivers who may currently be flying under the radar," said Assemblywoman Valerie Vainieri Huttle (D-Bergen). "We must send a clear, strong message that abuse of these individuals will not be tolerated in New Jersey."

This new law becomes effective in 180 days and requires the DHS Commissioner to report to the Governor and Legislature in two years regarding the effectiveness of the registry.

Legislative sponsors of S-825/A-2038 include Senate President Stephen M. Sweeney (D-Salem, Cumberland, Gloucester), Senator Jennifer Beck (R-Mercer, Monmouth) as well as Assemblypersons Angel Fuentes (D-Camden, Gloucester), Valerie Vainieri Huttle (D-Bergen), Ruben J. Ramos, Jr. (D-Hudson), Frederick Scalera (D-Bergen, Essex, Passaic), and Linda R. Greenstein (D-Mercer, Middlesex).

More information on S825 can be found on <http://www.njleg.state.nj.us>

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