

# Office of the Governor

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## NEWS RELEASE

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### **Governor's Weekly Radio Message Addresses Senior and Community-Based Care**

Gov. Christie Whitman provides a weekly radio message to radio stations throughout the state. Each week, the message focuses on a different concern or event of interest to New Jerseyans.

This week the Governor discusses the State's Caregiver Assistance Program. New Jersey's 1.4 million men and women over the age of 60 are a vital part of making New Jersey all it can be. The Caregiver Assistance Program will allow seniors to remain part of their community by helping those who are in nursing homes and hospitals move back into the community. It also will expand resources available to qualified caregivers who provide assistance to their elderly relatives at home, making it easier for the elderly to remain in the surroundings that are familiar to them.

Attached is the text of the message.

The radio message can be accessed by calling the Governor's actuality line at 609-292-3249. It will be available today, beginning at noon, and will run through the weekend.

#### **GOVERNOR'S WEEKLY RADIO ADDRESS FEBRUARY 26, 1999 SENIORS AND COMMUNITY-BASED CARE**

New Jersey's 1.4 million men and women over the age of 60 are a vital part of making New Jersey all it can be. And our seniors are one of the fastest growing populations in our state.

Of course, this growth is part of an overall national shift in life expectancy. In the past 100 years, we have seen the average life span increase by nearly three decades. American men now live into their seventies, and women live an average of 80 years.

Longevity is redefining our concept of aging. It means that we have to take a closer look at the kind of community we have, and at how we continue to ensure that our older adults are part of that community experience.

We'd all like our senior years to be the best they can be. But with so many of us living longer, we must prepare for the many challenges that can accompany the gift of longevity.

For example, in New Jersey, one out of every four households is caring for an elderly relative. Sixty-four percent of caregivers are juggling a full- or part-time job with the demands of their caregiving role.

To help address this situation, the State will provide assistance to qualified family caregivers who provide needed services to their elderly relatives at home. This Caregiver Assistance Program will expand the resources available to caregivers. It will enlist county care managers to provide assistance to certain family caregivers of an elderly Medicaid beneficiary rather than placing that elderly person in a nursing home.

We'll start with a commitment in four counties, but by the end of my term, we intend to take this program statewide.

For me, this program just makes good sense. It keeps our seniors in the communities and the surroundings they know best. And it helps families care for those they love in the familiar surroundings of home.

The Caregiver Assistance Program is just part of the 60 million dollars plan I have over the next three years to give seniors and their families every possible option for long-term care.

We will start this year by helping at least 1,000 seniors who are now in nursing homes receive care in the community instead. Over the next three years, we also expect to interview 43,000 seniors in hospitals and nursing homes and help as many as possible move back into the community.

We also want to make it easier to find out about respite care, assisted living, or for that matter, any senior service.

That's why we've set up one New Jersey EASE toll-free number for all of the Garden State. That number is 1-877-222-3737. When you call, you get answers from a real person, not a recording. And that makes a world of difference. Again, the number is 1-877-222-3737.

The poet Robert Browning wrote: "Grow old along with me! The best is yet to be." By expanding the services New Jersey has to offer its seniors, we will make growing old all that it can be. We will ensure our older adults that the future will provide them the best New Jersey can offer.