

OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR

NEWS RELEASE

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Gov. Christie Whitman Kicks Off *NJ EASE* System in Monmouth County

MIDDLETOWN -- Gov. Christie Whitman today announced that Monmouth County has become the sixth New Jersey county to implement a streamlined system for seniors to receive information and services under the New Jersey Easy Access, Single Entry (*NJ EASE*) project.

"For Monmouth seniors and their families, one-stop shopping for information and services has arrived," said Whitman. "*NJ EASE* will promote wellness, independence, dignity and choice for older adults and help put an end to the confusion often experienced by those seeking senior services."

NJ EASE is a state initiative developed in partnership with a number of county governments to create a new and easy way for seniors and their family members to learn about services within their communities. Instead of contacting many agencies, individuals in Monmouth County through *NJ EASE* can now call one toll-free telephone number in their community to receive help in learning about and applying for services.

"*NJ EASE* will make it easier for the 100,000 seniors who call Monmouth County home to get the information and services they need to remain independent far into their later years," said State Health and Senior Services Commissioner Len Fishman. "Whether you want to apply for an established program like PAAD or find out about an emerging option like assisted living, the answers to your questions are as close as the nearest phone."

Freeholder Theodore J. Narozanick, liaison to the Monmouth County Department of Human Services, said " In this complicated world it's important that we make getting information and services simple. My fellow freeholders and I welcome this opportunity to provide one-stop service for our senior citizens."

By calling Monmouth County's new toll-free number, 1-800-246- 9292, seniors and their families can obtain:

Information about a wide range of vital services and programs, such as PAAD (Pharmaceutical Assistance to the Aged and Disabled), Lifeline and Medicaid

Referrals to other agencies and help in contacting them Assistance in a local office or their homes to complete applications for services

One-stop benefits screening for programs with income and resource limits

Home visits to help with paperwork or check on seniors who may be having trouble taking care of themselves

In-home comprehensive assessments to determine an individual's need for supportive services

Development of a care plan to identify and arrange for services

The assistance of care managers to obtain and monitor services and to periodically review and adjust an individual's care plan to ensure it continues to address the person's changing needs.

In addition to Monmouth County, Atlantic, Morris, Ocean, Somerset and Union counties have begun serving seniors through the *NJ EASE* program. Bergen, Burlington, Camden, Cumberland, Essex, Hudson, Mercer, Passaic, Salem, Sussex and Warren counties are currently planning to implement *NJ EASE*.

Monmouth has established access points for *NJ EASE* services at the main offices of the Office on Aging and Division of Social Services in Freehold, at Division of Social Services satellite offices in Atlantic Highlands and Neptune, and at nine senior centers located in Asbury Park, Howell, Keansburg (Bayshore Senior Center), Keyport, Long Branch, Manalapan, Middletown, Neptune and Red Bank. The county also retrained and redesignated 13 workers as geriatric care managers, giving them the tools necessary to work with and address the needs of older adults.

State planning for *NJ EASE* is supported by a \$238,251 Robert Wood Johnson Foundation grant and \$400,592 in matching state money.

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