

# THE SERVICE NETWORK

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## Medicare Open Enrollment October 15—December 7



Every year, Medicare Open Enrollment begins October 15 and ends on December 7 for coverage effective in January. This is every beneficiary's opportunity to review their current coverage and/or change plans.

The Union County Division on Aging strongly urges Medicare beneficiaries to contact the Senior Health Insurance Assistance Program (SHIP) to begin this review. The benefits of speaking with a SHIP counselor are many as the counselors are highly trained and certified to assist people in obtaining coverage through options such as Original Medicare, Medicare Advantage, Medicare Prescription Drug Coverage, and Medicare Supplement (Medigap) plans that may vary every year with each company, benefit changes, and premium/co-pay schedules. Even if beneficiaries are happy with their current coverage it is a wise choice to discuss what new plans/companies will be available in the coming year.

In Union County, the SHIP Program is administered by SAGE Eldercare in Summit. Callers can request a Zoom appointment or make a telephone appointment with a counselor by calling **908 273 6999**.

This year, SHIP has organized a live Zoom Question & Answer session every Thursday during open enrollment from 6:00 p.m. to 7:30 p.m.

E-mail Tenisha Morgan at [tmorgan@sageeldercare.org](mailto:tmorgan@sageeldercare.org) to RSVP to the Q&A.

Open enrollment is the perfect time to review Medicare benefits and the SHIP program has made it easier than ever for beneficiaries to learn about those benefits.

## County of Union COVID In-Home Vaccination Program

The County of Union has partnered with Mobile Medical Services & Technology to provide homebound vaccines to county residents unable to attend events in the community.

Mobile Medical Services & Technology can typically schedule a home visit in five days or less of receiving an appointment request.

The highly infectious Delta variant may cause a new wave of COVID infections in New Jersey and elsewhere. The Union County Commissioner Board strongly urges residents who have not been vaccinated to get their jab as soon as possible.

**To schedule a COVID-19 vaccination at your home call 1 833 256 2478**

Mobile Medical Services & Technology are providing boosters in the home only for those who are immunocompromised, regardless of age, free of charge.

## Meals on Wheels

As anyone who receives a home delivered meal in Union County knows, the Meals on Wheels kitchen was destroyed during storm Ida in August and must be restored. The Division on Aging made temporary arrangements with another vendor to ensure residents who require a meal have been receiving one. Sadly, new clients cannot be accepted at this time.

The County of Union, Department of Human Services, and the Division on Aging ask that home delivered meal recipients continue to be patient during this work in progress.



## Compassionate Care Visitation—an underused tool

The NJ Office of the Long-Term Care Ombudsman (LTCO) is an independent state agency whose sole mission is to advocate for the rights of residents of long-term care facilities.

The staff and volunteers are trained to help residents receive quality care and the quality of life everyone deserves. As such, the LTCO wants to make sure that residents, their families, and facility staff are aware of Compassionate Care visits, what they are, and how to access them.

Compassionate Care (CC) is a designation created by the federal government last year, and since expanded, allows visitation for residents who are suffering physically or emotionally, even when the facility is closed to indoor visitation. Examples of where CC should be granted include: residents grieving the loss of a friend/relative; residents who need reminders or encouragement to eat/drink; residents who are losing weight; and residents who are emotionally distressed. These are just examples, and facilities must consider each request for Compassionate Care visits in a person-centered way. The facility can designate more than one visitor for CC; however, during an outbreak visitors may be asked to alternate visits. During a CC visit, social distancing is not necessary.

Based on their work, the LTCO believes that many residents who have lived through the COVID crisis are suffering from isolation and emotional distress and fit the definition. This definition is included in both federal and New Jersey guidance on long-term care visitation that all facilities must follow.

For more information regarding Compassionate Care visitation, call the Long-Term Care Ombudsman  
1 877 582 6995



## Union County Resumes Guided Nature Walks for Seniors

Union County welcomes back seniors aged 55+ to participate in a series of free guided walks at Trailside Science Center in Mountainside this fall, every Friday from 11:00 to 12:00 beginning on October 8.

The walks offer an excellent opportunity for senior residents to take part in and enjoy an outdoor activity.

Each walk is led by a Trailside naturalist and highlight a different topic including Reptile Ramble; Migratory Birds; a Fall Nature Walk; Plant This, Not That; Ecosystem Invaders; a Deserted Village tour; Lenape Native Americans; and an Early Winter Walk.

Trailside’s Sensory Friendly Trail quickly became a popular destination as it winds gently through the woods with guide ropes and interpretive signs to learn about the local flora and fauna, with 3-D reliefs and Braille for the visually impaired.

Social distancing will be practiced and face coverings are recommended.

Pre-registration is required through Trailside website:  
[ucnj.org/trailside](http://ucnj.org/trailside)

For more information call 908 789 3670



## Register for Emergency Alerts

With winter weather fast approaching Union County, this is an excellent time for residents to sign up online for Union County First Alert by visiting [ucfirstalert.org](http://ucfirstalert.org).

This free service will enable you to receive emergency updates by text or email on your mobile devices.

Keep up with local news reports by tuning in to your radio, television, or online weather reports.

Residents with special needs and their families should sign up for [NJ Register Ready](#), a state initiative that helps to identify people who may need additional assistance.

For more information call the Division on Aging

908 537 4870 Spanish 908 527 4863  
Toll Free 1 888 280 8226

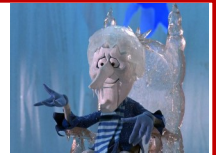
## Union County Division on Aging

The entire staff at the Division on Aging is in the office and working for our senior residents. The Farmers’ Market program was, as always, a huge success and the Division encourages everyone who received the vouchers to spend them as soon as possible to get the best of the harvest.

The Division would be happy to provide Zoom presentations to groups. Call Donna Farrell at 908 528 4858/4870.



## Home Energy Assistance Programs



It may only be October but it won't be long before Old Man Winter and Mr. Snow Miser come pounding on our homes, making us dress in layers for warmth, and very tempted to turn the thermostat higher & higher, which can become quite costly during an especially cold winter. There are several programs available for New Jersey residents to assist with utility bills. The recommendation is to not allow the charges to become overwhelming, and if customers can't pay the entire bill every month, to at least make good faith payments. Customers should also call their utility company to let them know they are struggling with the bills.

The **Low Income Home Energy Program (LIHEAP)** is designed to help low income families and individuals meet home heating and medically needy cooling costs. To be eligible for LIHEAP benefits, the applicant household must be responsible for home heating or cooling costs, either directly or included in the rent. People who live in public housing and/or receive rental assistance are not eligible for assistance unless they pay their own heating costs directly to the fuel supplier. The amount of LIHEAP heating benefit is determined by income, household size, fuel type, and heating region.

The **Universal Service Fund (USF)** is a program to help make natural gas and electric bill more affordable for low income households. If eligible, USF can lower the amount paid for gas and electric; applicants must pay 3% of their annual income on gas and 3% on electric. If the home is heated with electric the applicants must spend 6% of their income for heating. Since no one really knows what percentage they pay for gas and electric, it is recommended to apply for everything and let the state determine eligibility.

Call PROCEED at 908 351 7727 or the Division on Aging at 908 527 4870 for more information. **See income page 4**

The **Payment Assistance for Gas & Electric Program (PAGE)** provides relief on gas and electric bills for low to moderate income households. Eligible applicants must have an overdue balance of at least \$100.00 and not have more than \$15,000 or more in liquid assets.

For more information on the PAGE program visit [www.njpoweron.org](http://www.njpoweron.org) or call 732 982 8710.

**New Jersey Comfort Partners** is an energy saving and education program that directly installs energy savings measures free of charge for qualified, low-income customers.

For more information visit [www.njcleanenergy.com/CP](http://www.njcleanenergy.com/CP) or call 1 800 915 8309.

**NJ SHARES** is a non-profit organization that provides assistance to income-eligible household for paying their energy, telephone, broadband (internet), and water bills.

For more information visit [www.njshares.org](http://www.njshares.org) or call 1 866 657 4273.

The **Winter Termination Program**, administered by the New Jersey Board of Public Utilities, protect specific categories of customers from having their gas or electric shut off between November 15 and March 15 of each year. Those enrolled in certain other programs are also protected by the Winter Termination Program as are customers unable to pay their utility bills because of circumstances beyond their control, such as unemployment or illness.

For more information call 1 800 624 0241.

The **Lifeline** program, administered by the NJ Department of Human Services (DHS), provides an annual energy benefit to qualified seniors and those with disabilities. The benefit can help homeowners and renters with electric and/or natural gas costs.

Apply for Lifeline by using the NJSave application, available at [www.aging.nj.gov](http://www.aging.nj.gov) or call 1 800 792 9745.

New Jersey American Water	1 877 652 9426	<a href="http://www.amwater.com">www.amwater.com</a>
Public Service Electric & Gas	1 800 436 7734	<a href="http://www.nj.pseg.com">www.nj.pseg.com</a>
Jersey Central Power & Light	1 800 663 3115	<a href="http://www.firstenergycorp.com">www.firstenergycorp.com</a>
Elizabethtown Gas	1 800 242 5830	<a href="http://www.elizabethtowngas.com/residential">www.elizabethtowngas.com/residential</a>

Union County residents can also call the Division on Aging for information on home energy programs.

Call toll free 1 888 280 8226

908 527 4870

908 527 4863 Spanish

**2022 LIHEAP/USF Income Guidelines**  
Monthly Pre-Tax Income

<b>Household Size</b>	<b>LIHEAP</b>	<b>USF</b>
1	\$3,348	\$ 4,293
2	\$4,379	\$ 5,807
3	\$5,409	\$ 7,320
4	\$6,439	\$ 8,833
5	\$7,470	\$10,347
6	\$8,500	\$11,860
7	\$8,693	\$13,373
8	\$8,886	\$14,887

**Property Tax Relief Filing Deadlines**

**2020 SENIOR FREEZE:**  
November 1, 2021

**2018 HOMESTEAD BENEFIT:**  
November 30, 2021

For additional information go to:  
[njtaxation.org](http://njtaxation.org)  
[njseniorcouncil.com](http://njseniorcouncil.com)

NJ State Senior Freeze            1 800 882 6597  
NJ Homestead Benefit            1 888 238 1233  
NJ State Treasurer’s Office      1 877 658 2972

**MANDATORY 10-Digit Dialing**

Effective October 24, 2021 for NJ Area Codes 908 and 856

Beginning October 24, 2021, in order to complete all local calls, you will need to dial area code + telephone number in the following New Jersey area codes:

- 908: Union, Somerset, Warren, Hunterdon, and parts of Morris counties
- 856: Cumberland, Salem, Gloucester, Camden, and parts of Atlantic and Burlington counties

All automatic dialing equipment will require reprogramming such as life safety systems or medical monitoring devices, fire or burglar alarm and security systems, speed dialers, call forwarding services, internet dial-up and other similar functions to ensure the area code is included.

The price of a call, coverage area, or other rates and services will not change due to the dialing change.

**For any questions, contact your telephone carrier**



**Six Out of Ten People with Alzheimer’s Will Wander**

Since 2003, the Union County Sheriff’s Office, in cooperation with Project Lifesaver International, continue to bring Union County residents a valuable service in Project Lifesaver.

Project Lifesaver is a valuable tool for law enforcement to assist in locating lost or wandering individuals who have been diagnosed with Alzheimer’s disease or related dementia; Down syndrome; or those on the autistic spectrum.

A lost person with Alzheimer’s disease, dementia, or autism is classified as a critical emergency. The first minutes after a person has gone missing can be extremely stressful for the family and the individual sometimes will not call out for help or respond to those who are searching for their safe return.

Project Lifesaver relies on proven battery operated radio transmitter technology and specially trained Sheriff’s Officers from Search & Rescue. Once a tracking unit is placed on the wrist of a participant, a pulse wave radio frequency is emitted from the device 24/7; the radio signal frequency is unique to the person wearing the tracking unit.

For non-emergent issues regarding Project Lifesaver call the Union County Sheriff’s Office at 908 527 4450

[www.projectlifesaver.org](http://www.projectlifesaver.org)



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