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*Office of the Governor*  
**NEWS RELEASE**

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Governor Christie Whitman today signed legislation that requires criminal history record background checks for certain individuals working with the developmentally disabled.

“We need to protect our most vulnerable residents from being in preventable situations where they might come in contact with individuals who have criminal records,” said Gov. Whitman. “This piece of legislation also offers reassurance to family members and other care givers that their loved ones are being well taken care of while at any public or private community agency under contract with the state.”

Caring for a developmentally disabled individual is enough of a responsibility without having to additionally worry about this. The bill is one more step in making New Jersey a better place to live, work and raise a family by offering this piece of mind to our citizens,” continued Gov. Whitman.

The bill requires the Department of Human Services (DHS) to initiate criminal history record background checks on current employees or applicants for employment of any public or private community-based agency, with which DHS contracts to provide services for developmentally disabled persons. Individuals may be disqualified from employment if a background check shows a conviction for certain listed crimes or disorderly persons offenses.

In addition, DHS is authorized to exchange fingerprint data with and receive criminal history record information from the appropriate divisions of the Federal Bureau of Investigation and the New Jersey State Police. The DHS commissioner must also report to the Governor and the Legislature no later than three years from the effective date of this act on the effectiveness of the criminal history background checks in screening out persons with criminal history records which render them unfit for employment.

The bill, **A-815**, was sponsored by Assembly Members Anthony Impreveduto (D-Bergen/Hudson) and Nicholas R. Felice (R-Bergen/Passaic).