



Joint 2015 Annual Report
Washington County Department of Social Services
Tammy L. DeLorme Commissioner
and
Washington County Office For the Aging
Gina Cantanucci-Mitchell Director



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Additional copies of the 2015 Annual Report are available at www.washingtoncountyny.gov/



A Message From Commissioner, Tammy L. DeLorme

Greetings-

Many people have strong beliefs and impressions about the programs that are administered through the Department of Social Services. Challenging the beliefs and impressions of others can be a hazardous endeavor. Without risking harm, I do hope that you will find the material within this report to be informative, encouraging and enlightening.

Regardless of your beliefs, everyone finds at least one of our programs to be worthwhile. Some are strongly interested in the welfare of children and vulnerable adults, while others are greatly concerned with the medical coverage of a chronically ill or elderly family member or friend. There continues to be an increase in pervasive mental illness and drug addiction that follows no socioeconomic line and has given rise to the “Heroin Epidemic”. At the same time all manner of dire conditions are present, the efforts of our staff working across program areas has continued to thrive and provide the most effective, collaborative intervention for the residents of this county.

It is the collaboration amongst DSS staff and other Departments across the county that makes us distinctive. We may not be the most sophisticated nor prosperous of people, but we are progressive and work together for the good of our community. Having sustained a substantial wave of staff member transition within DSS during 2015, we have pulled together to provide on the job training and balance the demands of our regulations. Moving into 2016 the outlook is good for the stability of our workforce.

Within this report you will see statistics and narrative explanations on the wide array of programming provided by DSS. Through the Memorandum of Understanding with the Office for the Aging this report is provided jointly by our two agencies and covers an even more expansive program lineup. You will see data and descriptions of the work that is accomplished daily in Washington County, regardless of staff transition or dire conditions.

If you have specific areas of interest please read on for that, but also “challenge” yourself by checking out other program descriptions as well. Members of the staff are available for outreach on specific programs and we are able to pull together information on less common topics upon request. Please let me know if you have an interest in providing an informational session to a group within Washington County.

Thank you to all of the staff. I am honored by the compassion and integrity with which you complete your duties. Thank you to the Departments and Agencies that we collaborate with; thank you to the (Board of) Supervisors who support our commitment to serving the needy and vulnerable within our County.

I proudly present the following detailing of the great work that is done within DSS,

DSS Commissioner

Mission Statement & Values

Mission

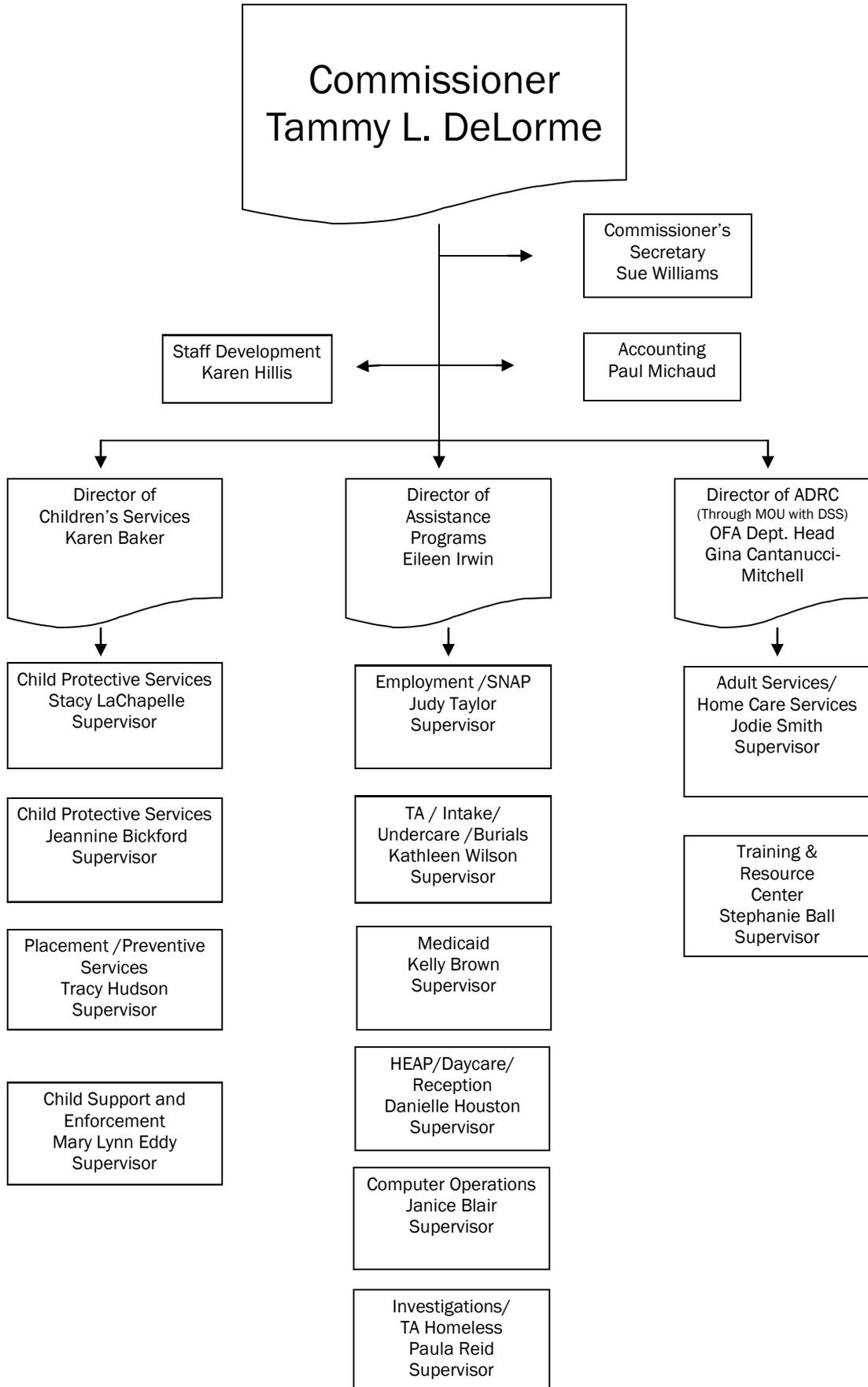
The mission of the Washington County Department of Social Services is to protect those in need and to help individuals and families achieve and maintain independence and self-sufficiency. Our responsibility is to maximize resources and to achieve optimal outcomes for the residents of Washington County.

Values

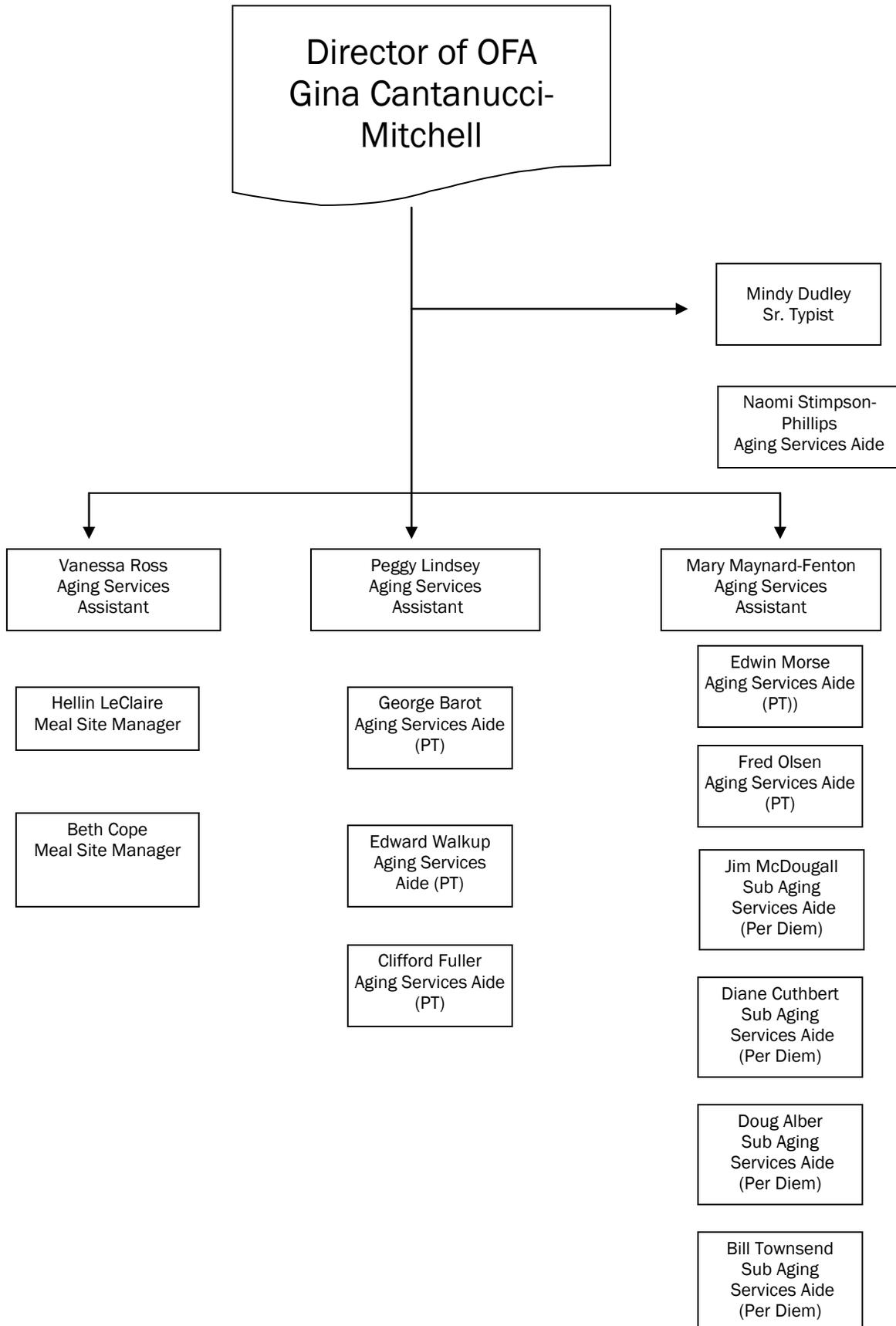
- We believe that our clients and employees are valuable, worthwhile, and deserving of respect.
- We maintain the highest levels of integrity, discretion, professionalism, and the highest ethical standards.
- We are accountable and efficient in providing services in support of this mission.
- To create and maintain a concept of single-agency across all levels and Divisions focused on the delivery of service to clients without regard to program. We will provide the most effective, collaborative intervention for clients which will result in maximizing self-sufficiency and independence .

DSS Organizational Chart

Updates effective 2016



2015
OFA Organizational Chart
 Updates effective 2016



Washington County Department of Social Services

Main line 746-2300

Title/Program	Name	Extension
Commissioner	Tammy L. DeLorme	2322
Administrative Secretary	Susan Williams	2323
Staff Development	Karen Hillis	2435
Accounting	Paul Michaud	2433
Director of Assistance Programs	Eileen Irwin	2424
Senior Typist	Ami Burnell	2427
TA Intake/Undercare/Burials	Kathleen Wilson	2351
Employment / SNAP	Judy Taylor	2361
Medicaid	Kelly Brown	2426
HEAP/Daycare/Reception	Danielle Houston	2346
Investigations/TA Homeless	Paula Reid	2350
Computer Operations	Janice Blair	2466
Director of Services	Karen Baker	2434
Senior Typist	Cathy McMurry	2555
Child Protective Services	Jeannine Bickford	2337
Placement/Preventive Services	Tracy Hudson	2341
Child Protective Services	Stacy LaChapelle	2336
Child Support Enforcement	Mary Lynn Eddy	2353
Director of ADRC	Gina Cantanucci-Mitchell	2421
Senior Typist	Mindy Dudley	2565
Home Care Services	Jodie Smith	2342
Training & Resource Development	Stephanie Ball	2572

Effective 1/2016

Legal Services

Agency staff work in collaboration with the Washington County Attorney's Office on matters involving all areas of legal representation.

A summary of the 2015 legal activities is as follows:

Type of Petition	Total No. of Petitions
Child Abuse	3
Child Neglect	58
Application for Access to Home	1
Applications for Removal of Children	0
Applications to Restore	1
Applications to Extend Order of Supervision/Suspended Judgment	3
Extension/Review of Foster Care	3
Permanency Hearing Reports	52
Violation of Court Order	8
Termination of Parental Rights	2
Termination of Placement	0
Other Misc. Petitions	0
Total Number of Petitions	131
Total Child Removal Cases	5
Recoveries	
Estates	\$223,899.94
Accident Liens	\$59,783.54
Public Assistance	\$3,666.22
Total	\$287,349.70

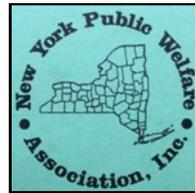
Child Support Statistics	
Total Court Appearances	1,138

Staff Development

The Staff Development Coordinator (SDC) works closely with the County Personnel/Civil Service office in onboarding new workers. The SDC also ensures that workers receive thorough training for their position, abiding by time requirements and seeking out offerings through a statewide network. The SDC manages a training budget that is provided to us through the state to meet the mandates as well as provide the opportunity for continued professional development.

Looking back at computerized training records for 2015, it appears as though there were over 300 various training offerings provided to the employees of DSS and OFA. The variety of learning experiences that are provided to our staff are a combination of mandatory & program specific trainings provided by State agencies, locally sponsored continuing development trainings, and annual conferences sponsored through various associations that support our functions. There has been a movement of utilizing webinars (also referred to as Computer Based Training, Web Based Training and LearnLinc) that may be “attended” by an individual seated at their own desk or in a conference room with a team of colleagues. This is a great way to eliminate travel time and is effective for shorter, well guided topics.

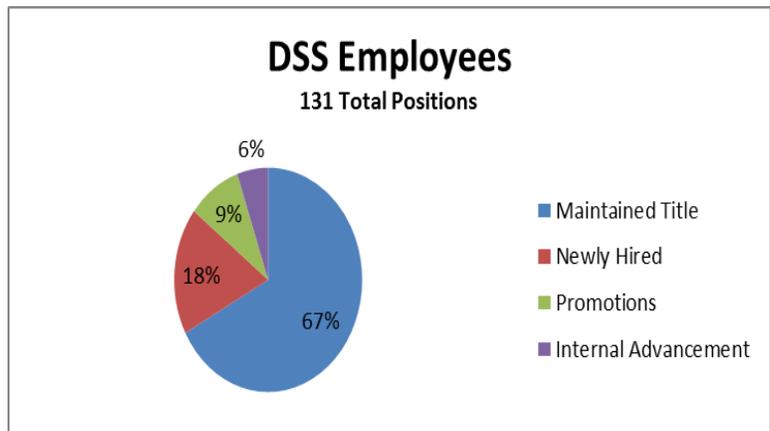
The Washington County Department of Social Services and Office for the Aging actively participate in the following associations:



Many of these associations include one of our staff members on their executive boards. Paula Reid, Supervisor of Investigations, is the 3rd Vice President for the New York Welfare Fraud Investigators Association (NYWFIA) Board. Tammy DeLorme, Commissioner, is the Treasurer for the New York Public Welfare Association (NYPWA) Board. Karen Hillis, Staff Development Coordinator, is the Treasurer for the Staff Development Association of New York State. Through this increased level of involvement, Washington County is well represented among the rest of the state. Most of the various Board meetings are held in conjunction with regular meetings, thus limiting the added burden this responsibility places on us.

In addition to representation on the various associations that represent the interests of our Departments, there is a wide array of local boards and special purpose groups at which we are represented. Examples of this include the Economic Opportunity Council Board and Community Services Board, both of which Tammy DeLorme is a member, and the Long Term Care Council and the RSVP Advisory Council, where Gina Cantanucci-Mitchell dedicates time to serve the aged and disabled population. Many more councils, coalitions and workgroups exist with representatives from across our programs and employees within all levels of the organization.

Over the course of 2015 we wished a “happy retirement” to the Director of Assistance Programs, Hollie Rapp, and other long term employees that also achieved that goal. Additionally, we saw an uptick in the job market result in the openings of several internal positions. In total, there were **24** new hires in DSS during 2015. For a staff of **131** that is an 18% turnover. Related to this transition, **12** employees received promotions within their line of programming and another **7** moved to higher graded positions (outside of their original programming area) within the Department.



Accounting

With a 6 member team, the Accounting Unit upholds the fiscal integrity for all DSS and OFA accounting operations ensuring precise reporting and that the county share of the budget is kept to a minimum. The team continuously reconciles each account with the County Treasurer's Office and the work is subject to an annual audit by an independent accounting firm as well as from any of the State agencies from which we receive funding.

The total DSS/OFA budget is over \$28,000,000., almost \$11,000,000 of that is a county cost directed to the state to support Medicaid. The remaining \$17,000,000 is spent to provide all of the services you can read about within this report. The efforts to accurately claim and maintain our accounts resulted in over \$14,000,000 in Federal and State revenue. Quite significantly, this means that the County cost of providing all of the DSS/OFA programs in 2015 was \$3,374,083. Realizing an 80.86% reimbursement rate across all programs.

2015 DSS/OFA Budget at a Glance

DSS Salaries	\$ 5,071,707
OFA Salaries	\$ 297,557
Equipment	\$ 20,980
Administration Expenses	\$ 1,396,162
Program Expenses	\$ 8,259,588
Fringe Benefits	<u>\$ 2,606,479</u>
Total Cost of DSS/OFA programs	\$17,652,473
Total Revenues	<u>\$14,186,661</u>
Net Cost of DSS/OFA programs	\$ 3,465,812
% Program Revenue Realized	80.86%
County Medicaid Cost	\$10,852,104

Additionally, the fiscal team works closely with other program areas within the two Departments and provides many other supportive functions:

- 25 T-53 (Rep Payee) Accounts were maintained for the Adult Services and Children's Services Units.
 - ◊ \$224,957 in payments were made on behalf of the individuals who receive social security and other income but are unable to be entirely self-sufficient.
- The team sorts all of the County Complex's incoming and outgoing mail. 1950 vouchers were processed and remitted for the Assistance Programs Division.
 - ◊ This includes payments of direct and indirect Temporary Assistance and one time help such as back rent or utility bills.
- 28 sessions were collaboratively held in conjunction with the Staff Development Coordinator to process forms and provide an overview of the Agency to new employees.
- 2190 vouchers were processed and remitted for the Children's Services and ADRC Divisions.
 - ◊ This includes payments for foster care and regular costs associated with cases such as supportive services that are not paid for through health insurance; and infrequent costs various educational supports, such as tutoring, or recreational equipment for children in need.

Children and Family Services



Karen Baker
Director of Services
746-2434

- Child Protective Services
- Preventive Services
- Placement Services
- Child Support Enforcement

The mission of the Children and Family Services Division is to serve families, children and adults; to strengthen families and keep children safe; to achieve permanency and stability; to improve their quality of life; to promote positive outcomes; and to protect those who are vulnerable.

Child Protective Services

When reports of suspected child abuse/maltreatment are called in and accepted by the New York State Central Registry (SCR), those reports are then transmitted to Child Protective Services within the county where the abuse/maltreatment was alleged to occur. Child Protective Services staff are available to accept these reports 24 hours a day.

In **2015**, Washington County Child Protective Services received **1504** reports from the SCR. Of these, **824** cases were managed through the traditional Investigations response while **290** were managed through Family Assessment Response (FAR).

To Report a Suspected Case of Child Abuse 24 hours a day, call:

Non-Mandated (Public) Reporters

1-800-342-3720

Mandated Reporters

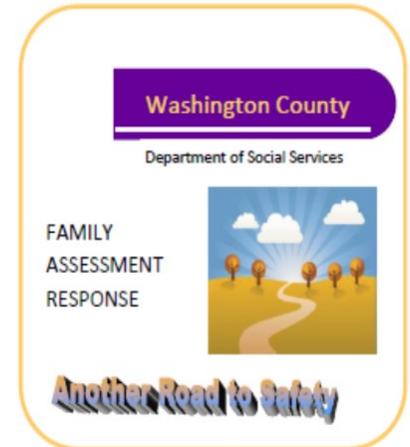
1-800-635-1522

Out of State

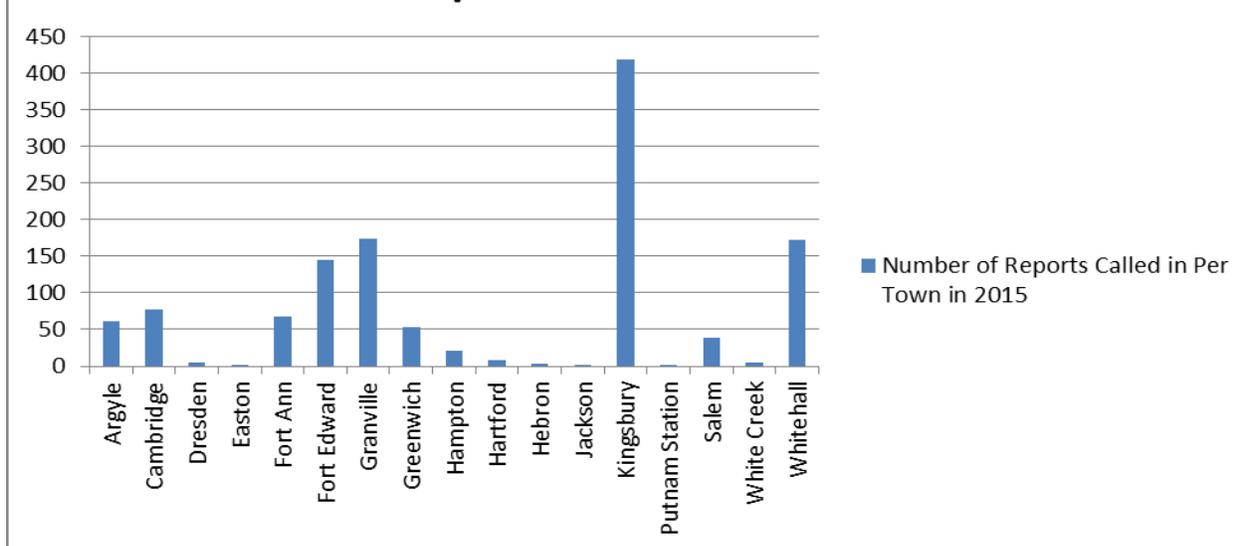
1-518-474-8740

The focus of FAR is on assessing and addressing a family's needs by identifying their own strengths with less emphasis on traditional investigative fact finding. The FAR process seeks safety through family engagement and collaborative partnerships. This response allows and encourages agencies to provide services without a formal determination of abuse or neglect.

FAR has proven to be a positive approach for the families we work with. Families feel less threatened by CPS/Agency intervention and are more willing to accept support. Since the beginning of FAR in Washington County in 2010, approximately 30% of cases received yearly were referred to the Family Assessment Response track.



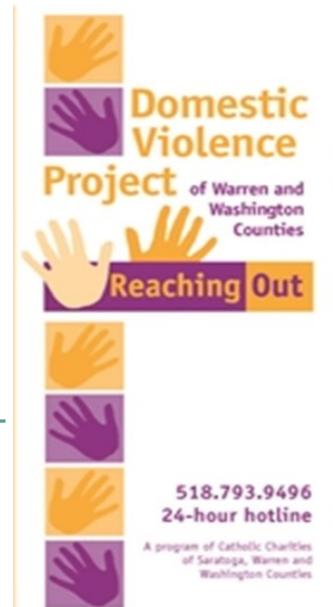
Number of Reports Called in Per Town in 2015



Child Protective Services

In April of 2015, we were able to increase the services provided in domestic violence cases through a collaboration with the Domestic Violence Project of Warren and Washington Counties. This collaboration was made possible through funding provided by OCFS.

Through this work, CPS staff is able to make referrals to an on-site Domestic Violence Advocate who is then able to make joint home visits with casework staff.



In an effort to keep the community and outside agencies informed, the agency continues to provide outreach in order to educate local school districts and other community agencies about FAR and Investigation Responses in Child Protective Services.

Working together to prevent child abuse.



The purpose of the Warren Washington CARE Center is to reduce the trauma to child victims of physical and sexual abuse and their non-offending family members by working with a multidisciplinary team of experts, who specialize in child abuse, from Warren & Washington Counties.

All professionals are trained in conducting forensic, child-friendly interviews through the New York State Forensic Interviewing Best Practices. All forensic interviews are coordinated with the Multidisciplinary Investigative Team.

In **2015** Washington County Child Protective Services staff conducted **97** interviews at the CARE Center. Of those, **13** cases involved the need for medical examination to be conducted at the CARE Center.

Preventive Services

Washington County Preventive Services is an essential program that can work in conjunction with Child Protective Services to help avoid foster care placement. Caseworkers in this Unit are assigned to work with families who are unable or unwilling to provide the proper guidance, housing, or care for their children.

The overall goal of Preventive Services is to avoid the out of home placement of a child whenever possible. In **2015**, the Unit received **155** referrals to provide Preventive Services. Out of those 155, **6** resulted in families having children placed into Foster Care—that is a **96%** success rate of avoiding out of home placement!

Preventive Services also focuses on the needs of youth who have been referred to the PINS (Person In Need of Supervision), JD (Juvenile Delinquent), and the J-Fire (Juvenile Fire Setter) programs.

In **2015**, the Unit provided services to **118** youths who were referred to the PINS program, alone. Out of those **118**, **3** were placed into care outside of their homes due to issues of neglect.

Washington County Juvenile Fire Intervention Response & Education Program

J-FIRE



FOR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION OR TO MAKE A REFERRAL
CALL
518-746-2142

Washington County Department of Social Services

Person In Need of Supervision (PINS Diversion Program)
Building B of Municipal Center
383 Broadway
Fort Edward, NY 12828



The Preventive Unit works in close collaboration with the Assistance Programs Division in order to provide services for families who have presented to our agency as homeless.

In **2015**, assistance and support to **75** homeless families was provided by this team. The collaboration and services provided are intended to help families find and relocate into permanent housing. In doing so, Preventive staff can assist clients with contacting landlords, visiting available housing, linking families to necessary services, and helping them to understand and navigate through other agency requirements, to name only a few.

2015 Homeless Stats		
# of Families Served	# Children Served	Ages of Children Served
75	133	Under 1–17

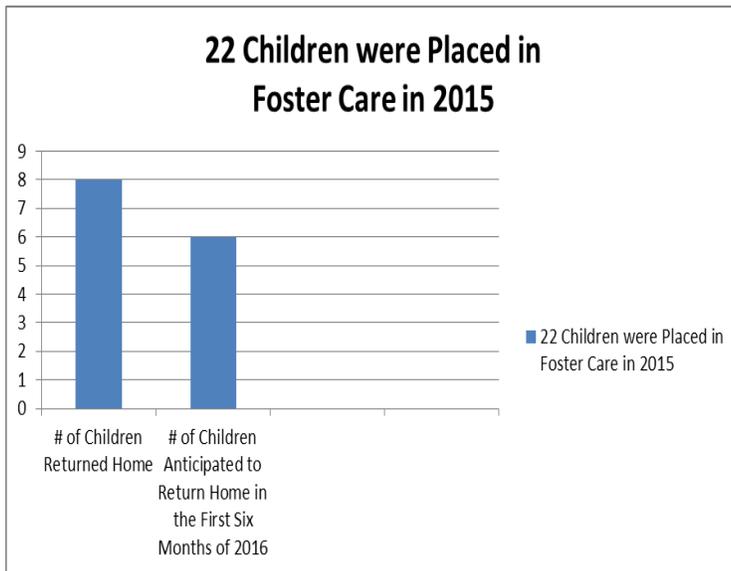
Placement Services

The Placement Services Program is intended to be a short-term option to provide care and safety for children in need. The ultimate goal for children in Foster Care is to be reunited with their parents.

The agency works in close partnership with Berkshire Farm Center & Services for Youth when children must be placed in Foster Care. Through that partnership, the agency has access to a wide array of foster home settings and supportive services for the children and families we are working with.

During a child's time in care, Placement Services works diligently to provide the support and assistance

necessary in order for the family to remedy the issues that led to the child being placed. One issue in particular that has resulted in the placement of a number of children in recent years is parental drug abuse. Seven (7) of the **22** children placed in care in **2015** were placed as a result of their parent's drug and/or alcohol abuse. Substance abuse and addiction can be a difficult obstacle to overcome for both the family, and Placement Services. During situations such as this, if a family's dynamic is not improving, other permanency options can be explored.



The Washington County Placement Services team does not work alone to achieve permanency for the youth in our care. The unit collaborates with several different departments and agencies to provide the best service possible for families we are assisting. This can include, but is not limited to, Family Court, Berkshire Farm, Northeast Parent & Child Society, The WAIT House, Captain's Youth Shelter, Parsons Child & Family Center.



Placement Services

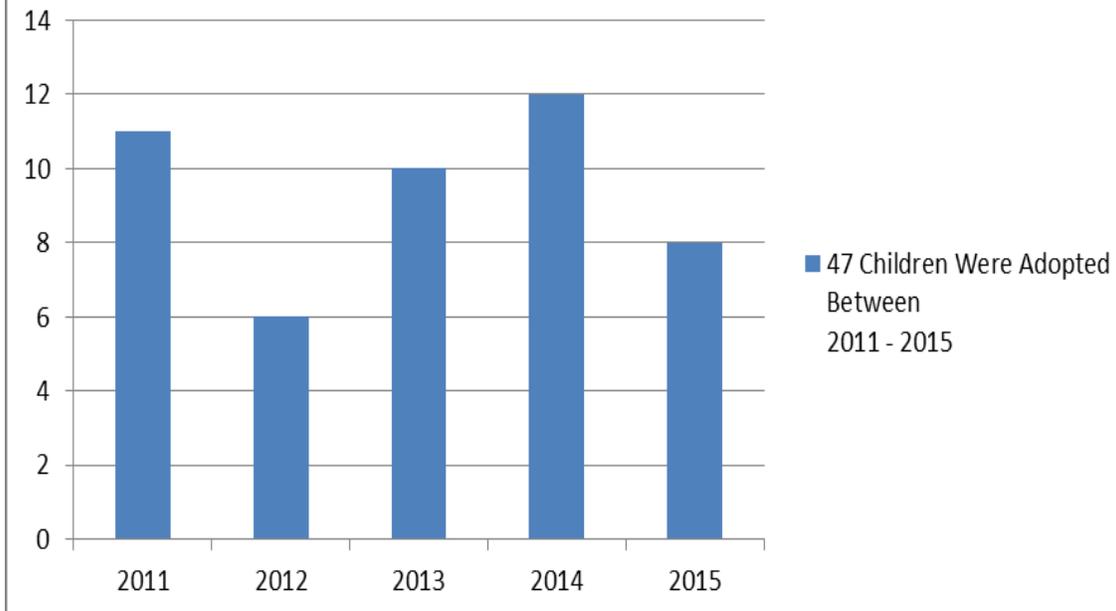
When a return to the parent is not feasible, Placement Services will pursue alternate options for the child. For example, relative placements offer a safe haven for the child/children, while keeping them within their family realm.

In the instance that the child/children are unable to be returned to their parents or previous guardians, and no other options exist, adoption is utilized as the final permanency step. Children who are freed are then able to be adopted. Placement Services takes great care to find loving and nurturing forever homes for any child who is freed for adoption. In most cases, a freed child is adopted by the foster parents with whom they lived with while in care.

If you are interested in becoming a certified foster parent please contact:

Tracy Hudson, Placement/Preventive Supervisor for
Washington County Department of Social Services @ (518) 746-2341
or
Berkshire Farm Center and Services for Youth @ (518) 390-0878

47 Children Were Adopted Between 2011 - 2015



Child Support Enforcement Services

The Child Support Unit provides custodial parents with assistance in obtaining financial support and medical insurance coverage for their children by locating absent parents, establishing paternity and establishing/enforcing support orders.

	2014	2015
Child Support cases at year end	4165	4426
Children in open support cases at year end	4690	4688
Petitions filed	941	1104

The Child Support Customer Service Helpline is a service agency where clients call for all questions concerning child support. When necessary, the Helpline will provide an electronic referral to the local district requesting additional information be provided to the client in need.

NYS Child Support
Helpline 1-888-208-4485

**Total Collections
for 2015
\$7,891,820**

DNA/Paternity Tests Scheduled in 2015 at DSS

Number of Mom's - 40
Number of Children - 47
Putative Father's - 41

A "Putative Father" is identified as someone who may be the child's father

Visit www.childsupport.ny.gov/dcse/home

For an overview of the NYS Child Support Enforcement program or to see frequently asked questions by Custodial Parents (CP) and Non-Custodial Parents (NCP)



During the course of 2015, the Unit saw an increase in referrals from the Temporary Assistance Unit for Non Parental Caregivers (NPC) cases which include relatives/caretakers who are receiving Temporary Assistance to care for someone else's children.

While these individuals are not in receipt of TA for themselves, they are in fact required to comply with CSEU. This includes providing any information necessary to assist the Unit in pursuing a support order against both absent parents which then helps to offset the cost of TA.

If these OTG individuals fail to comply, they can see a 25% reduction in the amount of TA they are receiving on behalf of these children.

The Unit also pursues absent parents for support orders to offset the cost that the County incurs when their children are placed in Foster Care.

Child Support Enforcement Services

In 2015 the Child Support Unit along with its child welfare counterparts, put a greater emphasis on engagement, and the approach the workers take with their customers. By taking the time to listen and ask the right questions, the result is better case management and customer service for both parties. The Unit's goal is to focus on the entire case and the family itself rather than just the non-custodial parent as has historically been the case.



Customer Service

In keeping with the theme of better customer service, the Unit spent time revising many of the documents that are provided to customers, to include General Information sheets for both non-custodial (NCP) and custodial parents (CP). This ensures the CP's could have a better understanding of what services are available to them while providing the NCP's the necessary information to make timely payments.

The Unit works to monitor and engage NCP's when it is appropriate to file modifications based on any change in their circumstances to establish a guideline support order, by filing direct with the court or by applying for child support services for assistance. In addition, the Unit encourages unemployed NCP's to attend the Agency sponsored Employment Program called CHOICES which provides them with assistance with employability skills.

In 2015, the Child Support Unit began participation in an Arrears Pilot Initiative Program with NYS Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance to improve support payment compliance. The focus of the pilot is on accounts on which permanently-assigned arrears exist.

All participating NCPs will receive a review of their orders in light of their current financial situation and, as appropriate, will receive assistance pursuing a "right-sized" order that more accurately reflects the NCP's ability to pay through existing modification procedures. Washington County had the highest participation rate of the Capitol Region Counties in the Arrears Pilot Initiative and was 3rd overall of participating counties.

In 2015, \$542,600.09 was collected from child support payments as reimbursement to offset benefits provided to families for Foster Care, Temporary Assistance and Medical Support.



Total Dollars Collected as arrears from Income Tax Refunds and Lottery Winnings for failure to pay child support	
Federal Refunds	<u>\$274,101.97</u>
State Refunds	<u>\$89,206.75</u>
Lottery Winnings	<u>\$ 4,674.65</u>

Assistance Programs



Eileen Irwin
Director of
Assistance Programs
746-2424

- Day Care/Reception
- Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)
- Temporary Assistance
- Home Energy Assistance Program (HEAP)
- Homeless/Computer Operations
- Employment Services
- Investigations/Fraud
- Medicaid

The focus for employees in this division is to provide assistance and services that ensure the health, welfare, and safety while transitioning from dependence to their highest attainable level of self-sufficiency to eligible persons

Day Care Services

The Daycare program offers financial assistance to households with children under the age of 13. This is an income based program that is able to assist people while they are working, attending vocational training, or attending a substance abuse treatment program. Assistance is also available to parent/caretakers who are deemed physically or mentally incapacitated. It is important to note that funding is limited and that assistance is contingent upon the funds being available at the time the application is complete and ready for determination.

In 2015 93 cases, with a total of 278 children were assisted with Daycare funds in Washington County.

Reception

In 2015

12,730 people
dropped off documentation at the front window
11,374 people
formally checked in at reception
10,440 people
presented without an appointment
& wanted to speak to a worker

Reception is responsible for directing the daily walk in traffic at the Department of Social Services in Washington County while performing several other duties that help maintain efficiency in serving our clients and providing good customer service. The members of this team rotate duties on a weekly basis. They are responsible for coverage on the main window for check-in, the switchboard, vault card assignment, as well as for taking photographs for client benefit cards. Additionally, reception staff puts together food pantry requests, copies and receipts documents for our customers and work to electronically scan all documentation for DSS benefit programs.

Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program

SNAP, formerly known as the Food Stamp Program, is a federally funded program designed to help low income households purchase food needed for good nutrition and good health. Every SNAP application submitted for eligibility determination must be screened for expedited processing. If it is determined that an immediate/emergency need exists, the processing of the application is “expedited” and SNAP benefits must be issued within five days of the application. SNAP applications can be submitted for processing online at www.mybenefits.ny.gov or via paper application at our office

In 2015

The monthly average was for
4052 open SNAP cases
(7708 individuals)

SNAP Benefits* totaled \$11,201,547.

*This number is not reflected in the DSS Annual Budget. It is 100% Federal Funds & goes directly to the user.

SNAP benefits help working people, seniors, the disabled and others with limited incomes to feed their families. Funding for local SNAP programs is now regionally administered through the Eat Smart New York Program.

Eat Smart New York (ESNY) Nutrition Education is FREE to all individuals who qualify for and/or receive benefits through the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP). ESNY provides nutrition education materials and sponsors education events and classes in local communities on a variety of nutrition topics like: healthy eating on a budget, smart shopping for vegetables and fruit, healthy meal planning, basic cooking and food safety skills, weight control and physical activity.

The goals of the Eat Smart New York program are to:

- Eat more fruits and vegetables
- Drink less sugar-sweetened beverages
- Exercise more and balance calories eaten as part of a healthy lifestyle.

More information about the Eat Smart New York Program can be found at <http://albany.cce.cornell.edu/eat-smart-new-york>.



Temporary Assistance

2015

Public Assistance Grants based on Household size and circumstance

# in Household	Basic Allowance	Electricity supplement	If Heat is Included in rent. w/o children - w/children Total Grant Amount including Shelter	If the heat source is separate the amount varies based on choice of Oil, Propane, Kerosene, Natural Gas, Wood, or Electric w/o - w/children Total Grant Amount including Shelter
1	\$158	\$25.10	\$382 - \$388	\$454 - \$510
2	\$252	\$39.50	\$522	\$594 - \$644
3	\$336	\$53.00	\$726 - \$756	\$726 - \$806
4	\$433	\$68.70	\$790 - \$833	\$865 - \$960

Challenge the beliefs of “free money”:

The Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996 (PRWORA), provides the funding “Temporary Assistance to Needy Families” (TANF). This federal law requires states to operate a temporary assistance program to “provide assistance to needy families so that children may be cared for in their own homes or in the homes of relatives...” **Family Assistance** is reimbursed to the County with 100% federal funds. The program provides assistance to needy families with children under the age 18 (or under 19 & regularly attending a secondary school or the equivalent level of vocational or technical training) who meet the following criteria:

1. The child is living with caretaker relatives.
 - a. The child could be living with a grandparent and is eligible as a “non-parental caregiver”.
2. The family meets the categorical eligibility requirements.
 - a. They are limited to a lifetime total of 60 months of benefits.
 - b. The adult caregivers are required to seek employment or be involved in job seeking/readiness activities. Certain medical conditions will exempt employment requirements.
 - c. If it is determined to be needed, the adult caregiver must be in receipt of drug/alcohol treatment and compliant with recommendations.
3. The family meets the financial eligibility requirements.
 - a. They must report all income and remain below the “Statewide Standard of Need”, which is based on the Federal Poverty Level.

Temporary Assistance

Temporary Assistance, also referred to as Public Assistance, is the program that determines eligibility for (cash) benefits. Temporary Assistance can include one-time emergency payments for things such as rental and utility arrears, fuel assistance and furnace repair/replacement (when HEAP funds are not available) as well as home repairs when health and safety of the household is at stake. Temporary Assistance can also be issued as an on-going grant. As termed, the benefits are meant to be “temporary” in duration and are to be utilized to cover shelter expenses and the personal needs of a household due to the loss of a job, or health issues which prevent a household adult from working.

What about people who are collecting benefits for longer than 5 years?

Under the New York State Constitution, the state is required to provide assistance to those individuals who are unable to provide for themselves and are ineligible for federal programs. Generally speaking, that includes single adults, childless couples, children living apart from an adult relative, persons with drug or alcohol addictions, and those who have reached the 60-month limit for federal assistance. **Safety Net Assistance** is the New York State category of temporary assistance provided to needy individuals who are not eligible for Family Assistance (FA). Safety Net Assistance is funded with 29% state funds and 71% local funds. Safety Net recipients are also eligible for SNAP benefits and Medicaid.

Many people believe that people on Public Assistance “have it made”, that they are collecting “free money” and that they are living better than their neighbors without having to work. Very few of the people who apply for Temporary Assistance in Washington County are actually eligible for ongoing assistance and those who do qualify (are at the Federal Poverty Rate) receive a basic grant that, for one person, is \$158 per month.

Temporary Assistance Benefits 2015	
Total Expenditures \$2,688,840	
Cases 347	Recipients 588
Children 369	Adults 219
TANF Cases 193	Safety Net Cases 154

Home Energy Assistance Program (HEAP)

HEAP the Home Energy Assistance Program, for the majority of the work, is a seasonal program. The HEAP program assists eligible households in meeting the costs of home energy. Program components include: regular and emergency HEAP grants, and the lesser known, Heating Equipment Repair/Replacement and Cooling. Grants are based on income eligibility, fuel type, and the presence of a vulnerable individual in the household. Vulnerability is defined as a person under 6, over 60, or having a disability, as determined by the Social Security Administration. Program dates are determined at the state level and vary from year to year.

2015 HEAP Federal Fiscal Year 10/1/14-9/30/15		
Number of Benefits/Grants Authorized	Total Federal Dollar Amount paid out through program to Washington County Residents	Administrative Allocation provided to DSS to operate the program during the HEAP Season
6,343	\$2,974,599.	\$192,369



For many years Washington County HEAP has partnered with Washington County EOC to provide a heating repair and replacement program to homeowners. The Heating Equipment Repair/Replacement (HERR) component is an income based grant for those who own their own home. Depending on eligibility, this program is limited to assisting a household once every ten years.

The Cooling Assistance component is available in the summer months to offer cooling assistance for those documented as having a medical condition that is exacerbated by heat.

The first week of the **2015** HERR (Heating Equipment Repair and Replacement) component was the busiest week, with **9** applications for replacement of a furnace and **2** applications for repair with second week of the program leveling out at **2** replacement applications and **1** for repair.

15 households applied for and were approved for replacements totaling **\$47,319.58**, while **4** households were approved for repairs resulting in **\$1,163.20**.

The HERR program provided **19** households with repairs and replacements totaling **\$48,482.78**.

Homeless

The goal of Temporary Assistance is to assist individuals and families in attaining self-sufficiency. Placement in a motel or shelter is never intended to be permanent housing, but once placed, the homeless have a difficult time obtaining and maintaining safe, stable and permanent housing. There is a shortage of affordable housing available in our area. Many who are placed are unable to maintain steady employment or manage their finances. Some have serious mental health and/or substance abuse issues. Most have problems that are not unique but are complicated by the situation they find themselves in and exacerbated by the requirements that they must meet to maintain their temporary housing.

In order to receive ongoing Temporary Assistance, all adults must comply with employment requirements and/or substance abuse screenings and cooperate with treatment as recommended. The vast majority of the “homeless” people who receive assistance from Washington County DSS are sent to motels, the majority of which are in neighboring counties. Many think of a stay at a motel as being a vacation. Being homeless is not a vacation. Often, the stays are longer than anyone would want to be in a motel and require a family to do basic chores such as prepare meals or a child doing homework in very meager conditions. School aged children are transported daily through arrangements made by the school district and DSS. This, often, results in a child being one a bus for lengthy rides and may disrupt the school schedule as well.

In 2015

96 Families (304 total family members) and 275 individuals combined to equal 579 Washington County Residents who were housed through Washington County DSS for at least one night.

The total number of nights that temporary housing was provided for these 579 people was **9,743**.

Computer Operations

The programs within our agency are from a multitude of state agencies such as Office of Children and Family Services (OCFS), Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance (OTDA), Department of Health (DOH), and a variety of other agencies. Many of those agencies have designed software specifically for an individual program area, such as myWorkspace which is used to manage TA, SNAP and HEAP applications, or Connections which is utilized by our Child Welfare staff, or eMedNY utilized by our Medicaid staff. One of the daily challenges for the Computer Operations Coordinator is to troubleshoot issues within these software programs. This ranges from printing issues, to compatibility issues with other programs, to complete outages. This requires a working knowledge of every software program used within the agency and the ability to learn and remember all of the “known issues” and find solutions, as well as troubleshoot and research new issues in order to resolve them.

For trouble calls that are unable to be resolved locally, there is a state help desk that routes tickets to the appropriate agencies and programs. The help desk is serving every county in New York, state agencies, voluntary agencies as well as public customers, so the sheer volume of their calls means a much slower turnaround time. It is necessary to use this as a last resort, but most advantageous to have our own in-house computer ops specialist.

Employment Services

All adult Temporary Assistance Benefits applicants and recipients, under the age of 60, are required to comply with employment requirements in order to receive, or continue to receive benefits. Applicant employment requirements include an employment assessment interview, a 30 hour per week job search assignment and regularly scheduled appointments to meet with NYS Jobs staff for employment leads. If the applicant is claiming a medical condition, the applicant would be required to submit medical documentation from a medical professional to verify disability and may still be assigned up to 30 hours per week of medically appropriate employment activities.

Job Retention: Supportive services such as gas cards or monthly bus passes/tokens, which help defray the cost of transportation associated with employment are available for Temporary Assistance recipients and for families whose income falls at or below the 200% poverty level. Gift cards/vouchers are also available to purchase items required by an employer to start a new job.

In 2015

Washington County
Welfare Employment Representatives completed

921

Employment Assessments

421-Family Assistance; 500- Safety Net

646 of the 921 individuals claimed medical issues prevented them from working

430 of the 921 individuals sought employment through their own direction and withdrew their TA application

Not to exceed 40 hours per week, a Recipient's "employment activities" could include any combination of the following:

- work experience program
- drug/alcohol counseling
- mental health counseling
- physical therapy
- vocational education
- secondary education
- high school equivalency program
- community service
- job search
- job readiness training
- attend appointments w/ NYS Jobs Staff for job leads

Assignments are monitored by Welfare Employment Representatives to ensure compliance.

Investigations/Fraud

During the process of applying for benefits and being found eligible, the Investigations unit is sometimes called upon to conduct home and office visits to verify the applying household's circumstances. When something seems out of line on an application or during an interview, the Investigations unit will be notified. There are two in-house methods used in forwarding the information provided by the applicant for follow up: the Front End Detection Program (FED) and the Eligibility Verification Referral (EVR).

During the initial phase of an investigation, a face to face interview is conducted and a statement is taken to ensure that all information is correctly understood. The investigation process becomes more involved if a case is opened and there is an allegation of possible fraud. Referrals are also received by the Investigations Unit from the Fraud Tip Line, as well as from other individuals to include social welfare examiners and caseworkers. If it is found that the information received may affect eligibility in the case, the investigation continues. This process involves interviewing the recipient and any appropriate collateral contacts, reviewing case records and documentation provided, and making a decision in regard to the outcome of the investigation, if the case has been overpaid.

Sometimes, recoupment of the overpayment is the result. At other times, in collaboration with the Washington County Sheriff's Office, criminal prosecution is sought. The case is reviewed by the Sheriff's Investigator and forwarded to the Washington County District Attorney's office for charges to be pressed.

The Investigations unit also works with the Temporary Assistance staff that handles the homeless population. They meet with the recipients of temporary housing biweekly, do visits to the motels, and generally look to maintain the integrity of the program.

In 2015

\$964,650 Front End Detection System (FEDS)
\$388,248 Eligibility Verification Report (EVR)

15 Cases leading to arrests or pending arrests totaling \$61,066.

\$20,375 collected in cases continuing to pay on money owed to the Agency due to arrests and signed Confessions of Judgment.

23 Intentional Program Violations signed
resulting in a **\$41,682** cost savings.

Medicaid



Medicaid is a publicly funded health insurance program that covers the cost of medical care services and supplies. Federal statute mandates certain services must be provided to all Medicaid recipients. Medicaid in NYS has been broken down into several components to serve the different needs of the residents of NYS. As Washington County is a mandatory Managed Care County, most individuals in receipt of Medicaid will be enrolled in either Fidelis or CDPHP health care programs.



Some of the other programs provided through the Medicaid program are Pre-Natal Care Program, The Medicare Savings Program, The Family Planning Benefit Program, the Medicaid Buy In for Working People with Disabilities and Chronic Care Program. The **Pre- Natal Care Program** is a presumptive eligibility program offered to pregnant women. The **Medicare Savings Program** offers subsidy for the Medicare premium for eligible elderly and disabled clients. The **Family Planning Benefit Program** provides coverage for family planning and reproductive health. The **Medicaid Buy In Program** offers working people with disabilities the opportunity to retain Medicaid coverage despite their increased earnings. The **Chronic Care Program** provides coverage for the nursing home population. Federal guidelines require the local district to verify all assets for sixty months prior to the date of coverage, often times resulting in a lengthy processing time while families gather the required documentation.



As a result of the Affordable Care Act, New York State has set up a marketplace to assist individuals with obtaining health insurance coverage including New York State Medicaid. This marketplace was established in 2013 under the name NY State of Health; previously known as the New York State Health Benefit Exchange. Individuals who establish coverage through NY State of Health maintain their coverage through New York State. Most individuals from birth to age 65, who are not covered by an employer for health insurance, will access their health benefits through the marketplace and have no need to interact with our office.

Because NY State of Health includes the Medicaid program as a health care option for those eligible, individuals are often confused as to who to contact for questions about their coverage. Many times, people think that the first point of contact is the Washington County Department of Social Services since the local Social Services has historically been the only agency that provides Medicaid coverage. Washington County Medicaid staff field many contacts from recipients of Medicaid provided through the Exchange. In most cases, Washington County staff is unable to provide any assistance; questions must be directed to NY State of Health at 1-855-355-5777 or www.nystateofhealth.ny.gov

In 2015
Medicaid Cost Washington County
\$10,852,104.

This amount is representative of the amounts paid out as billed for services rendered such as physical therapy, institutional care, prescriptions, hospitalizations, labs and x-rays, hospice, etc This amount is located within the DSS budget but only tangentially related to the work that is done at DSS.



Gina Cantanucci-Mitchell

**Director of Washington County Office for the Aging
Director of ADRC, a collaborative effort of
Washington County DSS and OFA**

- OFA Outreach
- OFA Public Hearing
- OFA Four Year Needs Assessment
- OFA HIICAP
- NY Connects
- OFA Legal Services
- OFA Transportation
- OFA Services for the Blind & Visually Impaired
- OFA Special Needs Registry
- Home & Community Based Services
- Adult Protective Services
- OFA Caregiver Services
- OFA Nutrition Services
- Advisory Council's
- OFA 2015 Events

The mission of Washington County Office for Aging and Disabilities Resource Center is the provision of unbiased education, information, referral and service to residents in need of emergency or long term home and community based supports. We meet identified needs in the most appropriate way, respecting individuals right to choose without regard to income.

Washington County Office for Aging and Disabilities Resource Center

Greetings,

Through the partnership between Washington County Office for Aging and the Department of Social Services, it is with pleasure that I present to you the Washington County Office for Aging and Disabilities Resource Center's 2015 Annual Report. Included in this year's report is supporting data for 2015 programs that include both OFA and DSS.

To start with, I would like to share with you some facts about our Aging population. In 2015, 20 percent (3.7 million) of New York State residents are 60 years of age or older for the first time in history, and due to longer life and the aging of the baby boom generation, the "age wave" will accelerate during the next three decades. With more people living longer than ever before, the State faces both a challenge and an opportunity. By 2025, 51 counties will have 25% or more of their population over the age of 60. According to the United States Census Bureau of Quickfacts, in 2013 Washington County's population was 63,093 and approximately 10,726 of those individuals were 65 and older. That represented 17.1% of the county. These statistics emphasize the importance of the programs and services Office for Aging offers.

To prepare for the increase of the Aging population, OFA completed a 4-Year Needs Assessment and also a Public Hearing. The goals of both of these events was to assess OFA's programs and services and see if there were any gaps in services that needed to be addressed. Within this report you will have the opportunity to read about the Needs Assessment and the Public Hearing.

Our NY Connects program serves as one of the integral components of New York State's efforts to rebalance the long term services and supports system through its emphasis on community based services and supports and person centered approach. NY Connects is a locally based "No Wrong Door" system that provides one stop access to free, objective, comprehensive information and assistance for people of all ages needing long term services and supports. In 2015, the expansion and enhancement of NY Connects was initiated. We have started building formal relationships and contracts with the Office of Persons with Developmental Disabilities (OPWDD), Office of Mental Health (OMH), Independent Living Centers (ILCs), and other community-based organizations who assist individuals with disabilities.

In 2015, we made it our goal to inform and educate the community about our services. Through a partnership with the Board of Elections, we have access to a data base of Washington County Residents age 60 and older. On an almost daily basis, we make introductory telephone calls to these individuals and speak about the services we offer. In addition, on a monthly basis we also send out approximately 323 informational packets to various organizations, clubs, agencies, religious centers, and businesses. These information packets include pieces of information that touch on different topics and events.

Shared with you today are some of the many accomplishments achieved in 2015 to address the rise in our aging population. If you would like to learn more about our programs and/or achievements, or would like to discuss the information provided in this report, please feel free to contact me. I would like to thank the Board of Supervisors for all of their support and the Office for Aging and Disabilities Resource Center employees for their commitment and dedication to serving individuals in Washington County.

Sincerely,

Gina Cantanucci-Mitchell

Executive Director

Washington County

Office for Aging and Disabilities Resource Center

Washington County Office for Aging and Disabilities (ADRC) is a collaborative effort between the Department of Social Services and the Office for the Aging, providing unbiased information and access to home and community based services for aging and disabled populations under the NYConnects Program.



ADRC is the designated Area Agency on Aging, operating all state and federally funded programs under the Older American Act.

Outreach

We have made outreach to the community a high priority. Although we have expanded and enhanced our services over the years, we continue to struggle with the community's perception of what services the Office for the Aging provides. Many are not aware that we now maintain the Aging & Disability Resource Center.

We are always looking for opportunities to reach all demographics. Over the past year we have made outreach phone calls to over 1,972 individuals over the age of 60 in our county. The Senior Times quarterly newspaper reaches approximately 2,400 homes. We send out a monthly mass mailing to over 325 business, clubs, agencies, medical providers, churches, etc. The mass mailing is different every month and includes several pages of information and flyers that we feel seniors, families, and the community at large would find beneficial. By networking with many different agencies we are able to share information with more people in a more targeted way. We will continue our efforts to get the word out.

SENIOR TIMES



The Senior Times is our quarterly newspaper with over 2,400 subscribers. The newspaper keeps Washington County senior citizens up to date on the latest information including program updates, upcoming events and individual Senior Citizen Club news.

Public Hearing

In October 2015, a Public Hearing was facilitated to obtain feedback from the community on the programs and services offered by Office for Aging. There were approximately 170 individuals present at the Public Hearing. Participants in the hearing were given the opportunity to provide feedback in their preferred method of communication. There were open discussions throughout the hearing and individuals were also provided with tools to provide written feedback as well. A Summary of Testimonials is as follows:

Communication between OFA and DSS is wonderful
When calling OFA – do not always get a quick response
Completely satisfied with services – would not change anything
Friendly OFA staff
Thankful for services
More transportation services are needed
Thankful for in-home visits
Great job on Senior Times Newspaper
Invaluable services
Appreciate how OFA events bring individuals in from all over the county
Programs are always excellent
Nutrition program has delicious food

Need more handicap parking
Transportation is needed for those who are wheelchair bound
Donation for OFA services is fair
Shopping services are needed for those who cannot leave their home
PowerPoint was easily readable
Have something in transportation service vehicle to identify what organization they are from

The feedback from the Public Hearing was used in the development of the Four Year Annual Implementation Plan.



Four Year Needs Assessment

Conducting a Needs Assessment is a crucial element in fulfilling the overall planning responsibility of the Office for Aging. In 2015, information was gathered in several ways to ensure that all demographics were reached. One of the several ways we conducted the Needs Assessment in Washington County was through the use of a Survey tool. The survey was used to gather and analyze information about: (A) the needs and concerns of older people, and their caregivers, (B) barriers which may prevent older adults and their caregivers from accessing available services, and (C) inadequate services or gaps in services. Surveys were given to 2,558 individuals over the age of 60 within Washington County. The method of identifying the proper demographic for this survey included: a random selection of 20% of each town from the Board of Elections Listing of those aged 60 and older, 100% of

“other ethnicity” from the Harmony database of clients, and 10% of each town who are enrolled in the Medicare Savings Program. The main components of the survey were broken down into 4 sections:

The number of surveys returned to our office was 665. This results in a return rate of 26%. The outcome of the survey showed that priorities for our older population lie in the following areas: Information and Assistance, Transportation, Health Insurance Counseling, and Caregiver Services. This information was used in the development of our Four Year Annual Implementation Plan.

Section I includes housing, transportation, nutrition, insurance/health and services and support. These questions are geared to all individuals regardless of their caregiver status.

Section II includes needs of caregivers and those they care for.

Section III includes information about individuals who were hospitalized and their discharge plans.

Section IV identifies the community’s knowledge of NY Connects.

Health Insurance Information, Counseling and Assistance

Do you have questions about Medicare or your health insurance?

HIICAP provides free, accurate and objective information, counseling, assistance and advocacy on Medicare, private health insurance, and related health coverage plans. HIICAP helps people with Medicare, their representatives, or persons soon to be eligible for Medicare. The answers to your questions are just a free phone call away.



Our certified Medicare Counselors take their time with each person to educate them about their options as well as screen them for the Medicare Savings Program, Low Income Subsidy and EPIC. These programs provide great discounts toward their prescription needs.



Health Insurance Expo

This past year we held our annual Health Insurance/Wellness Expo at the Kingsbury Firehouse. We had 61 seniors attend the event. The Medicare Open Enrollment brings lots of questions for existing and new recipients of Medicare. We had many health insurance representatives there to answer questions about their plans for 2016. The Sheriff Department, Veterans Service Agency, Southern Adirondack Independent Living Center and local pharmacies provided information about their services as well. Rite Aid was able to provide flu shots for the event!

NY CONNECTS

We are the designated NY Connects agency in Washington County to provide information and referrals to individuals of all ages. NY Connects is a statewide, locally based point of entry system that provides one stop access to free, objective and comprehensive Information and Assistance on long term services and supports.

We make every effort to let the community know about our services, however last summer we conducted a survey and found that many of our senior citizens needed services but did not know where to find the information. Some of the needs that participants identified were in regards to health insurance information, support services for the aging, disabled and their caregivers. Many people owned their own homes but were finding it difficult to pay taxes, maintain their home, and afford groceries and medical care. We are happy to say that

WE CAN HELP!

Trained Information and Assistance Specialists provide individualized information and assistance and links individuals of all ages needing long term services and supports, as well as their caregivers, to the services and supports they need to maintain independence to the extent possible, regardless of payment source.



NY Connects
Your Link to Long Term
Services and Supports

Office for Aging Services

Legal Services

Washington County Office for Aging partners with the Legal Aid Society of Northeastern New York for the provision of legal services for older adults. Services are provided by a licensed Attorney and include, but are not limited to, development of a Wills and Trusts, Power of Attorney, Health Care Proxy's, Financial



Exploitation, Public Benefits, Housing Issues, and Bankruptcy.

**Unduplicated Count of
Individuals Served:**
4/1/2014 - 3/31/2015: 39
4/1/2015 - 12/31/2015: 25



Transportation

Transportation is a critical component in the array of services provided by Washington County's Office for Aging. Many older adults utilize the transportation services offered by the aging network to enable them to gain access to needed services and maintain their dignity, independence, and connection to their communities.

Transportation services, provided through a partnership with the Economic Opportunity Council

(EOC), allow older adults to participate in programs, get to medical appointments, go grocery shopping, pick up prescriptions and reach other vital destinations while remaining independent in their own homes.

**Unduplicated Count of
Individuals Served:**
3/1/2013 - 3/31/2014: 95
4/1/2014 - 3/31/2015: 120
4/1/2015 - 12/31/2015: 117

Services for the Blind and Visually Impaired

Washington County Office for Aging contracts with the Glens Falls Association for the Blind and Visually Impaired, Inc. to provide services to blind or visually impaired individuals for the promotion of independent living in the community. Services include, but are not limited

**Unduplicated Count of
Individuals Served:**
4/1/2013 - 3/31/2014: 67
4/1/2014 - 3/31/2015: 58
4/1/2015 - 12/31/2015: 55

to, transportation, adaptive living equipment and instruction, social activity, vision screenings, and information/assistance/referral services.

Special Needs Registry

Individuals residing in Washington County who feel as though they are in need of special assistance in the event of severe weather, prolonged power outage, flooding, or evacuation can be placed on a special needs registry. This Registry is maintained and accessed by Office for Aging staff. Services are coordinated with Public Safety and other emergency management services. At this time, there are 53 Washington County residents on the Special Needs Registry.

Adult Services

Home and Community Based Services

Washington County ADRC coordinates a full range of public and private home and community based services.

Those services include:

- ◆ **Medicaid Personal Care Services Program**
- ◆ **EISEP/CSE Personal Care Services (Non-Medicaid)**
- ◆ **Social Adult Day Care**
- ◆ **Consumer Directed Services**
- ◆ **Respite**
- ◆ **Personal Emergency Response System (PERS)**
- ◆ **Caregiver Support Services**



Medicaid Personal Care Service: This is a program available through Medicaid, private payment, and some health insurers. For Medicaid eligible persons, the ADRC contracts with home-care agencies that employ aides to provide Medicaid funded personal care services, and New York State oversees the local districts administration of the program. For a person to receive services his or her doctor must send a completed Physician's Order to the local district, which then arranges a social and nursing assessment of the individual. A nurse assessor uses the results of the assessment, together with the physician's order, to recommend an appropriate amount, frequency and duration of services. The local district notifies the individual of the services that will be provided. The need for services is reassessed every six months.

***Medicaid Personal Care services transitioned to Managed Long Term Care Companies. Currently the ADRC are only working with people on Medicaid Waiver Programs or only in need of level 1 services. It is hard to provide an accurate number of people served in 2015 due to the transition process. At the end of December 2015 there were 75 Medicaid Personal Care Cases.**

Adult Services

Office for Aging In Home Services and Supports

These OFA programs are non-medical community-based long term care services that help non-Medicaid persons 60 and older with diminished functioning capacity, and/or their caregivers. These programs include **Expanded In Home Services for the Elderly (EISEP), Community Services for the Elderly (CSE), Social Adult Day Care, Caregiver Support Services, Respite, and Personal Response Services (PERS)**. A comprehensive assessment is completed on each referral to determine the need and what type of service would be

most beneficial to the individual and/or their caregiver. **EISEP, CSE, and Respite** offer in home services and supports through aid services. In home service consist of personal care level I and personal care level II. Personal care level I provides assistance with instrumental activities of daily living (IADLS); housecleaning, cooking, shopping. Personal care level II provides assistance with both IADLS and ADLS; dressing, bathing, transferring in/out of bed/chair. These services are contracted by aid agencies.



Expanded In Home Services for the Elderly

Program: EISEP is a case managed program that enables many frail older adults to remain in their home. The goal is to improve access to cost effective, non-medical in-home services and supports for non-Medicaid older adults who have functional impairments in the area of their activities of daily living. The program also enhances the ability of family members or other informal caregivers to care for an older person in a home environment and can provide non-institutional respite supports.

Community Services for the Elderly: CSE provides community-based, supportive services to frail, low income elderly who need assistance to maintain independence at home. CSE is a state block grant that allows local OFA's to determine what unmet needs older people have and allowing them to be flexible in developing a wide range of services to include transportation and outreach, case management, in-home services, home delivered meals, adult day care, respite, housing programs, personal emergency systems (PERS), and health promotion services.

Social Adult Day: A structured comprehensive program which provides functionally impaired individuals with socialization, supervision and monitoring, personal care and nutrition in a protective setting during any part of the day, but for less than 24 hour period. Additional services may include and are not limited to maintenance and enhancement of daily living skills, transportation, caregiver assistance and case coordination and assistance. OFA contracts with Fort Hudson and Holbrook's for several Adult Day services.

Program	Unduplicated People Served
EISEP	70
Level I Personal Care	40
Level II Personal Care	30
Community Services (CSE)	7
Consumer Directed	19
Personal Emergency Response System (PERS)	28
Social Adult Day	13

Consumer Directed Services: This is in addition to the traditional EISEP eligibility criteria. Consumer Directed empowers the care recipient to select, train, and manage their own care providers instead of the state doing that on their behalf. Participants are able to hire other family members and pay them for their caregiving services. The ADRC contracts with Community, Work, and Independence, Inc. (CWI) as the fiscal intermediary. The fiscal intermediary is responsible to assist the consumer in the carrying out of authorized services including acting as the "employee of record" for the purposes of maintaining appropriate controls and employment practices on behalf of the consumer.

Personal Emergency Response System: A service which utilizes an electronic device to alert appropriate people of the need for immediate assistance in the event of an emergency situation in an older person's home.

Adult Services

Adult Protective Services: Adult Protective Services (APS) is provided through the ADRC, has a legal responsibility to investigate alleged abuse, neglect, or financial exploitation of impaired adults, age 18 and over, who live in the community. Those who may need protective services may have a physical or mental impairment; can no longer protect themselves from neglect, abuse, or hazardous situation; cannot provide for their most basic needs for food, clothing, and shelter; have no one willing or able to help responsibly.

Programs available through APS include counseling for the adult and family, arranging for medical and mental health assessments, applying for benefits, coordination with law enforcement and other agencies, finding alternative living arrangements, financial management services (representative payee), crisis intervention, and long term legal interventions.

<u>Adult Protective Service Stats</u>		
	2014	2015
Referrals	172	156
Investigations	139	150
Representative Payee Cases	17	20
Guardianships	8	9

Competent adults have the right to exercise free choice in deciding whether to accept services. If an adult appears to be capable of understanding the risks and chooses to stay in an abusive or neglectful situation this can be a difficult decision for others to understand. APS will build a relationship by working in partnership with the individual in hopes that they accept the appropriate services to keep them safely in their home.

To Report Suspected Abuse, Neglect and Financial Exploitation for Adults 18 years and older call: 1-800-848-3303.

In August 2015 Adult Protective Service (APS) received a referral from case management at Glens Falls Hospital to assist a twenty-two year old chronically ill homeless man who was hospitalized due to a urinary tract infection.

This young man is a paraplegic as a result of a horrific accident during childhood. This young man has chronic medical conditions that require him to perform many self-care procedures. This young man has not had a permanent residence for over three years. He was frequently in the hospital due to his chronic health problems. When this young man was not in the hospital, he stayed with different friends, stayed in motels and sometimes lived on the streets. He suffered frostbite one winter as he was living on the streets of Glens Falls. He would go to Burger King at night to get warm.

This young man has very limited family support that can assist him with his needs. He has not always been accepting of family supports or assistance. His Father died when he was a young teenager. An uncle, who he was very close to and was residing with, died in July of 2015. This is why a call was made to Washington County APS as this was his last permanent address.



APS made many visits to the hospital in an attempt to get the young man to accept services that would assist him with stabilizing his life. After several months he agreed to accept assistance from APS. APS assisted this young man in securing a hand-capped accessible apartment in a local government subsidized apartment complex. APS also worked with family supports to assist with getting the permanent housing for this young man and planning for him to continue to have the opportunity to maintain this stable housing.

This gentleman is now living in his apartment. APS assisted him in applying for SNAP (food stamps) and HEAP benefits that he is eligible for. He is also receiving nursing services at home to address his medical needs.

Caregiver Support



Caregiving is the hardest job anyone can have. Watching your loved one decline and struggle day to day is not only difficult to watch but it also attacks the emotional, spiritual, physical and social aspects of the caregiver.

Mrs. Smith arrived to our Caregiver Circle to find answers to some of the questions she had. She said she did not know exactly what she was looking for but thought that since this was sponsored by the Aging Office, it was a good place to start.

Mrs. Smith was taking care of her father who was quite elderly, but still had all his mental capacity. She was struggling with finding care for him as he needed assistance with personal care. He did not walk well so she felt that she could not leave him for very long. Her story was told and as she was telling it, she began to tear. Ms. Paul handed her a tissue and Ms. Tyler gently took her hand. Both people had been dealing with very similar issues. They told her that they were glad she came. When Ms. Tyler said something about her being stressed, Ms. Smith denied it. She said she just wanted answers. Ms. Paul smiled and patted her other hand.

"Ms. Smith, you are stressed, emotionally and physically." When Ms. Smith asked why she thought that, Ms. Paul replied, "Because you are here."

She asked Ms. Smith who was sitting with her father. Ms. Smith said she had to wait for the neighbor to come home and ask him to come over so she could come to the meeting.

Ms. Paul asked her if she felt anxious or worried that she left her husband with the neighbor. Ms. Smith had replied, "not anxious but guilty," is what she felt. Ms. Tyler said that it was normal and that as a group they would help her.

They shared their stories, and although each one was a little different, they all had said that they shared the same issues. Who could assist them, can they get help so that they are not "trapped" in the home and where do they turn if they need more help in the future.

As a facilitator, knowing the structural needs like, respite services, NHTD and other programs to assist folks in their home is just a small part of the caregiver process. Watching the group help her know that she was not alone and that she could contact anyone of them to lend a shoulder was the biggest and most powerful aspect of the Caregiver Circle.

As the group helped clean up the cookie crumbs and empty coffee pots, Ms. Smith smiled as she clutched pamphlets of contact agencies. She hugged Ms. Tyler and Ms. Paul and said she was happy she came and she is looking forward to seeing them next month.

Caregiver Support Services: Services designed to support informal caregivers such as family, friends, and neighbors as they carry out caregiving responsibilities. Through this program, the ADRC provides:

Information – Information refers to group service activities designed to inform caregivers of available resources.

Assistance – Assistance refers to a service that assists caregivers in obtaining access to the services and resources available within their community.

Individual Counseling, Support groups,

Caregiver training – Counseling, support groups and training refer to a range of individual and/or group services that are intended to assist caregivers in gaining knowledge and/or skills related to their caregiver role. Counseling can take place on an individual basis or in a group setting for caregivers who are involved with the same care receiver.

Respite – A service provided to give caregivers a break and temporarily relieve them from their caregiving responsibilities. It can take the form of in home respite (e.g., personal care level I or level II, home health aide for supervision or companion), adult day services, or overnight respite in a nursing home, adult home, or assisted living facility.

Supplemental Services – Flexible enhancements to caregiver support programs. Examples include PERS, assistive technology, home modifications, disposable supplies, nutrition services, and transportation.

The ADRC provides a Caregiver Support Group called the Caregiver Circle at the Hudson Falls/Fort Edward Senior Center on the third Thursday of the month from 6pm – 8pm. It is open to anyone who would like to come for some support from other caregivers. Jean Marie Lundgren is the Caregiver Circle facilitator.

She always provides a topic of discussion but it is open for all input. This is a meeting for caregivers and the needs that they are faced with on a daily basis.



Nutrition Services

HOME DELIVERED MEALS

“Meals on Wheels”

Washington County Office for the Aging manages the Nutrition Programs, commissioned under the Older American Act, passed by Congress in 1965, for lack of services for older adults.

“Very tasty and nutritious meals!”

Home delivered meals, also recognized as “Meals on Wheels”, provides a hot meal 5 days a week to individuals 60 years of age or older, and to a caregiver who is caring for that senior. Nutritionally balanced

meals are delivered to these seniors that are homebound and unable to prepare their own meals. All meals are approved by a Registered Dietician (low salt-no added sugar).

The Nutrition Program is funded by participants’ contributions, as well as, the Washington County Board of Supervisors through the Federal Older American Act and State Funds through NYS Office for the Aging. At Washington County, we are proud to say that our meal cost is one of the lowest in New York State.

Currently, we have 15 meal route delivery people. Some of these routes are delivered by Community Work and Independence (CWI). (CWI is a local group that offers innovative supports and services, empowering people with differing abilities and needs.) Approximately, 385 meals are delivered on a

	<u>2014</u>	<u>2015</u>	<u>Difference</u>
# of Meals	64,620	68,295	+ 3,675
Unduplicated Count of People Served	490	526	+ 36

daily basis. We anticipate this to increase as “baby boomers” become a part of the aging population.

Along with a monthly menu and nutritious meal, our recipients receive so much more. Our friendly and courteous drivers report any safety concerns, deliver the meals at approximately the same time each day and provide recipients with a brighter day, letting them know that someone will be stopping in to



check on them.

All meal recipients will be visited by a Case Manager from ADRC to evaluate their need for additional services.



Twice a year we send out survey’s asking the recipients how they are enjoying the meal and if we can do anything to improve our service. Returned surveys have been very positive and some of the comments have been:

“Wonderful service!”, *“Very tasty and nutritious meals!”*, *“Living alone as I do, I would never prepare the variety of food you supply”*, *“The people who deliver are very friendly and helpful!”*, *“I am very grateful for the meals, it would be very difficult for me without it.”* and a family member reports *“It has been a tremendous help for her caregivers and herself. What a wonderful program!”*

Nutrition Services

Senior Dining Sites

Cambridge Senior Center

Manager: Cathie Brownell
5 Park Place, Cambridge
(518) 677-8592

The Senior Center of the Kingsbury & Fort Edward Area

Manager: John "Max" McDonnell
(518) 747-9352
78 Oak St., Hudson Falls

Salem Senior Site

Manager: Beth Cope
St. Paul's Rectory
(518) 854-7294
32 East Broadway, Salem

Whitehall Senior Site

Manager: Hellin LeClaire
American Legion
(518) 499-2482
148 Main St., Whitehall

Washington County has four Senior Dining Sites where seniors can meet for socialization, information and creative entertainment as well as obtaining a nutritionally balanced, dietician approved, delicious meal. The sites offer a variety of activities and fun programs daily. We invite an array of speakers on a regular basis to present programs that educate and promote healthy lifestyles for seniors. Our Site Managers are a link between the seniors in our county and available services through the Office for the Aging. As one person put it "I find it comforting to be out with other people, sharing a meal and chit-chat". We served 150 people with a total of 12,275 meals at the senior dining sites in 2015.



Senior Center Recreation and Education

Senior sites throughout Washington County are a bustle of activity. On any given day, you can participate in a gentle exercise program like Tia Chi or Osteobusters, or join a challenging game of cards or domino's. There are craft making groups, book clubs, and Wii bowling,

"I enjoy coming with our exercise class and enjoying the other people's company in relaxing and having a fun time together"

just to name a few of the activities. Many educational programs and speakers are offered on a continuous basis as well. There is certainly something for everyone, including defensive driving courses, tax help, health

insurance information, The Association for the Blind, Coffee with a Cop, the list goes on. Just ask the 185 participants how much they enjoy the events offered at the senior sites.

Nutrition Education

A very important aspect of the nutrition program is Nutrition Education. Nutritionally relevant material is sent to the home delivered meal recipients monthly. It is also included in the mailings throughout the month. Such topics as Heart Health, Diabetes, Fall Prevention, Smart Snacking, Staying Hydrated and Eating Right as You Get Older are an example of the subjects covered. In addition, presentations and demonstrations are given at the senior dining programs monthly. Just for fun we've made soup for *winter nutrition tips*, eaten popcorn as a *whole grain* and tried 8 different varieties of *apples* in the fall. In 2015, 869 people benefited from the nutrition education provided.

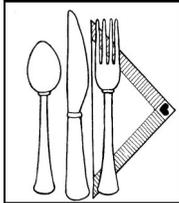


Nutrition Services

Restaurant Dining

The Restaurant Dining Program is a partnership between the Washington County Office for the Aging and nine local restaurants. The program has been a huge success due to the generous and compassionate attitude of the owners and staff of these restaurants. Each participating restaurant offers a unique Senior Dining Menu, which provides a variety of delicious and nutritious food. You must be 60+ and live in Washington County to register in the program. Tickets are available for a \$4.00 suggested donation and can be obtained at Washington County OFA or by mail.

“Good quality food from friendly wait staff”



In 2015
193 participants of the
Restaurant Dining Program
were served 3,910 meals

Participating Restaurants

- Lathams Diner**
Hudson Falls
- Sally's Hen House**
Hudson Falls
- Cabin Café**
Argyle
- Christ the King Spiritual Ctr.**
Greenwich
- China Wok Restaurant**
Whitehall
- AJ'S Restaurant**
Granville
- Seeley's**
Fort Edward
- Country Diner**
Fort Edward
- What's Cookin**
Hartford

Nutrition Counseling

A Registered Dietician (RD) is on staff and available to Washington County individuals over the age of 60. The RD directly provides personalized nutrition information and recommendations based on the individuals' dietary needs.



Kristin Stewart

“The dietician was extremely pleasant, knowledgeable, and willing to help in any way she could” is just one report from the 178 individuals who benefited from the service in 2015.

Farmers Market



The New York State Farmers Market Nutrition Program provides coupons for income eligible seniors, age 60 and over. From July 1 to September 30th Farmers Market Coupon Booklets are available through the Washington County Office for the Aging. The coupons are used to purchase locally grown veggies and fruits from local farmers at Farmers Markets throughout the county. In 2015, 423 coupon booklets were distributed

Nutrition Services

Genesis of a Meal

Following referrals from doctors, family, friends and self, case managers will meet with perspective individuals 60 and older and their caregiver, if one is designated. Case managers assess their need for home delivered meals and other services.

Any good meal starts with a menu: The Food Service Director, Craig, has created four different six week cycle menus that are rotated throughout the year, winter spring, summer, and fall. The menu will include a variety of dishes. In the summer cycle we incorporate a few more salads and cold plates which individuals really enjoy. Each month the Food Service Director, Craig, e-mails the menu to the Registered Dietician, Kristin, and the Aging Services Assistant, Vanessa. Kristin will make sure that each day the individuals are getting enough of their daily requirements as put forth by the state. This would include low salt, low carbohydrate, adequate proteins and vitamins. In addition, nutritional educational information, that has been approved by the Dietician, is on the back.

At this point we have the finished copy of the menu. Vanessa then sends the menu to the various towns' newspapers, websites, and radio stations via e-mail's and fax. It is also included in our office mailings each month.

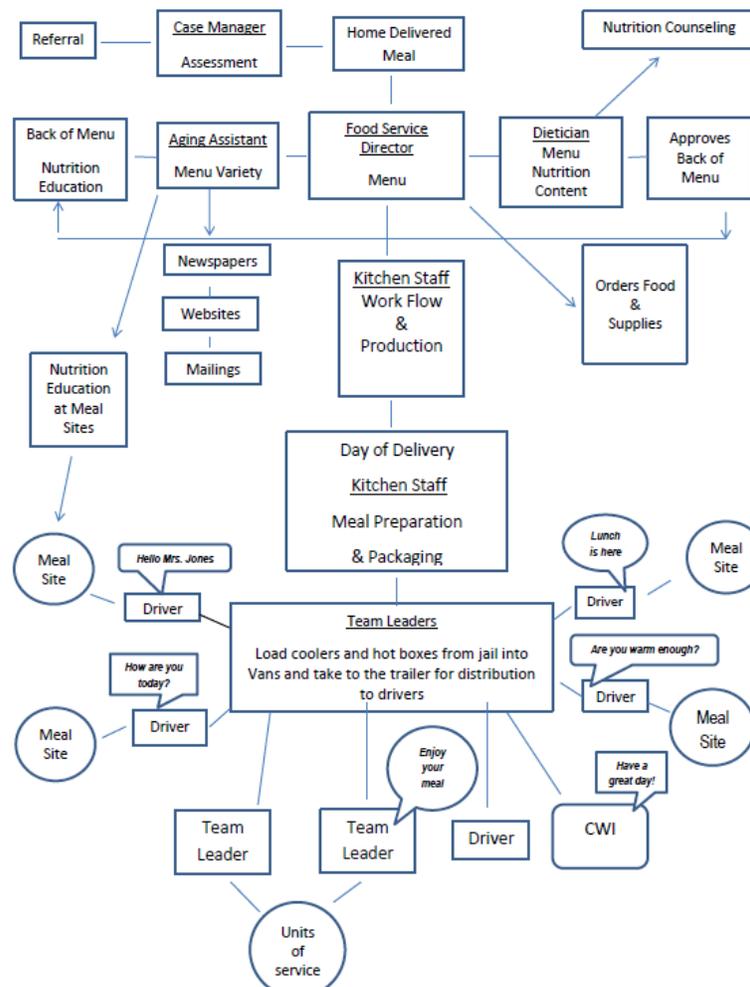
Let the production begin: Using the menu as a guide, the Food Service Director, Craig, orders the appropriate supplies needed for the meal creation, resulting in daily deliveries. Depending on the complexity of a particular meal, prep work may be done days in advance by the kitchen staff. On the day of service starting at 6:30am, the kitchen will begin by printing out the Daily Meal Count Work Sheet which tells them exactly how many meals they are to prepare that

morning. At 9am, kitchen staff begins the process of packaging approximately 350 individual hot meals in takeout trays. These hot meals are then counted out and the appropriate numbers of meals are placed in hot boxes which are labeled with the proper route name. Every effort is made to insure that the food is delivered at the correct temperature, the coolers have ice packs, and the hot trays are put in hot boxes which plug into the car. All of these hot boxes and coolers are then placed in the jail's sally port, and the kitchen door is closed.

Meals on Wheels: The overhead door to the sally port opens and the team leaders load the two vans with all of the hotboxes and coolers. They then leave the secure area of the jail and go to the trailer where the hotboxes and coolers are given to the route drivers for delivery. They are also given the route sheet for the day, which shows where clients will be receiving meals and which ones are canceled for that day. This sheet is updated daily by the drivers and team leaders. The drivers then

deliver the meals as well as performing a wellness check on the clients receiving the meal.

When the drivers complete their route they tally up there counts for the next day and return all of their equipment to the trailer, where they are loaded and brought back into the secure area of the jail and sally port. After they unload their vans, the team leaders come back to the office, count donations that are collected that day, and complete the Daily Meal Count Work Sheet for the next day. The Team leaders will also record all meals delivered that day as units of service for our state quarterly reports.



Advisory Councils

The development and implementation of services within the Aging and Disability Resource Center is based on local needs and available resources. To ensure local input Washington County Office for Aging has two Advisory Councils.

Advisory Councils provide valuable insight into service needs through actively encouraging professionals and citizens to understand and comment on local program operations and resources.

Office for the Aging Advisory Council

The OFA Advisory Council is required under the Older American Act. The Advisory Council is composed of senior citizens, appointed by Supervisors from each town in Washington County, representatives from senior groups and providers. The Advisory Council reviews current aging programs and services and makes recommendations for additional programming to meet local needs.

Advisory Council Representatives

- * Argyle—Carol Kuhr
- * Cambridge—Mary Bodnar/Carol Hamilton
- * Dresden— Open
- * Easton—Florence Perry/Judith Stevens
- * Fort Ann—Gretchen Stark
- * Fort Edward—Marcia Sullivan
- * Granville—Carol McGivern
- * Greenwich—Gerald Foelsch
- * Hampton—William Lawrence
- * Hartford—Lettie Hayes
- * Hebron—Alice Coldwell

- * Jackson—Fran Voerman/Sharon Dunn
- * Kingsbury—Sandy Wheeler
- * Putnam—Open
- * Salem—Dave McNitt
- * White Creek—Helen Decker/Carol Hamilton
- * At Large Members—Mary Ann Nichols—President
Pat Cantanucci
Antonia Estrada
- * Kingsbury/FE Sr. Center—Max McDonnell
Vice President
- * Public Health—Patty Hunt
- * Dept. of Social Services -
Tammy DeLorme/Jodie Smith



Long Term Care Council

It is required that each NY Connects agency maintain a Long Term Care Council. It is the mission of the Long Term Care Council to objectively consider and evaluate the needs of county residents who are seeking long term care and assistance. The Council identifies gaps in the current service delivery system and makes recommendations to the NY Connects agency related to program development and service implementation.

NY Connects of Washington County has joined forces with NY Connects of Warren & Hamilton Counties to form a joint Long Term Care Council. As we share many of the same providers it makes sense to do this. Members of the Long Term Care Advisory Council include 160 professionals and individuals representing a wide array of agencies and programs that serve the aging and disabled populations of Washington, Warren & Hamilton Counties.



This past year we have also joined forces with the Adirondack Interagency Council whose members also include many providers in our area who were not already in our council. Together we are better able to reach other demographics and pockets of people who may previously have eluded us.

The exciting part of our council is that we do more than talk! We identify gaps in services and supports and we then address them. In the past, NY Connects Washington, Warren and Hamilton Counties LTCC formed a transportation work group. Result? Increased accessible transportation through The Conkling Center for persons age 55 and older who have a disability. We also formed a

workforce work group. Result? We organized training at no charge to our local home care workers in collaboration with High Peaks Hospice, Employee Assistance Program and others.

2015 Events

State Senior of the Year Recognition



In May, our office, as well as the New York State Office for the Aging, recognized Marty Butterfield and Ruby Komarony both from Argyle as Washington County Seniors of the Year given their dedication and commitment to volunteerism and civic engagement.

County Senior of the Year Recognition

On May 14, 2015 each club recognized a senior citizen from their area for Senior of the Year. A celebration luncheon was held at the Greenwich Elks Club.

- Queen Ann Seniors—Carolyn Ouderkirk
- Argyle Senior Citizens—Sibyl Ketcham
- Cambridge Senior Citizens—Dolores Mullen
- Granville Senior Citizens—Kathy Morse
- Greenwich Senior Citizens—Diane Snyder
- Hartford Senior Citizens—Chuck Harrington
- Hudson Falls/Fort Edward Area Senior Citizens
Mike and Maryellen Bourdeau
- Salem Senior's—Pat Perkins
- Whitehall Senior Citizens—William Lawrence



Washington County Senior Citizen Clubs and Club Presidents

- Argyle Senior Citizens Club
Mary Ann Ovitt
- Cambridge Valley Seniors Club
Laurie Speanburg
- Fort Ann Queen Anne Seniors
Sally Walker
- Granville Mettowee Valley
Lois Warner
- Greenwich Senior Citizens
Larry Wilbur
- Hartford Fifty Plus Sr. Citizens Club
Karen Harrington
- Kingsbury/Ft. Edward Seniors
Max McDonnell
- Putnam Senior Outreach Committee
Joan Rock

Council of Seniors

In partnership with the Washington County Council of Seniors, OFA/ADRC supported two Council of Seniors luncheons located in Hartford.

April Luncheon— 91 attended

October Luncheon - 180 attended

- Salem Area Senior Citizens
Beverly Hay
- Whitehall Senior Citizens Club
Pat Provost/Mary Simonson

2015 Events

Annual Senior Citizen Picnic

On Friday, July 10, 2015 our annual picnic was held at the Washington County Fairgrounds. This year 300 people were in attendance. Some of the seniors formed teams to compete against each other in various games. In addition to the games, we had entertainment provided by Ginny Allen's line dancing group and the Moreau Fun Band. Some of the seniors dressed up in accordance to our "Picnic Theme".



Our food service prepared hamburgers with toppings, macaroni salad, baked beans and strawberry shortcake for lunch.

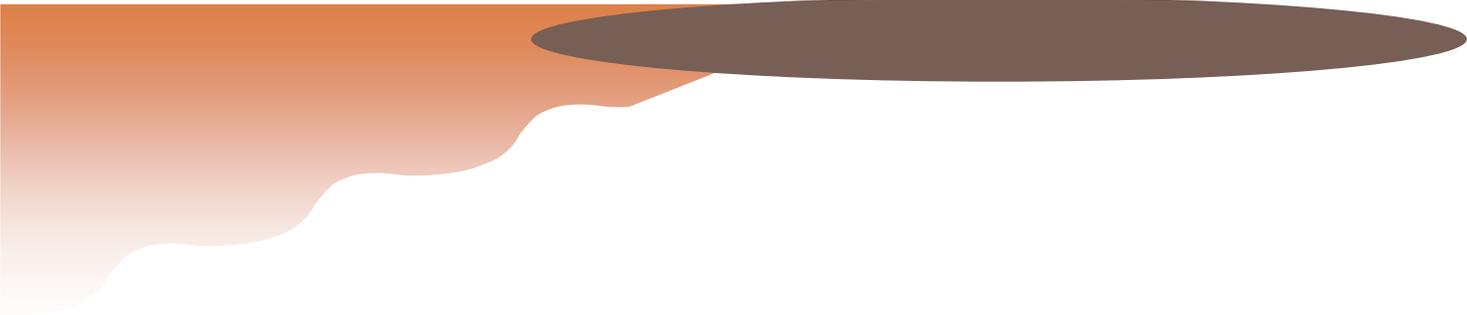


Dinner Theatre



In partnership with the Argyle School Drama Club and the Student Council, we facilitated an intergenerational dinner theater event on April 23rd at the Argyle School. We had 130 individuals enjoying an evening that included a roast beef, mashed potatoes, Brussel sprouts and cherry cheesecake dinner and a viewing of the play "Little Shop of Horrors".





2015



***Highlights
Of the
Year***

Employee Generosity

In 2015, Washington County Department of Social Services employees continued their support and generosity raising over **\$3,116.00** to donate to various organizations on the local, state and national level.

Jeans Day

Every Friday of each month has been designated as “Jeans Day”. A donation of \$5.00 per month affords employees the ability to wear jeans each Friday. The collected monthly proceeds are then donated to various charities which have been chosen by the employees at the beginning of each year. Employees enjoy wearing their favorite jeans, all while giving back to their community at the same time.

DSS Employee Food Pantry

The Washington County D.S.S Food Pantry was started by a group of employees in 1989 and continues to serve Washington County residents. The Food Pantry is currently operated with funds received through the Regional Food Bank of Northeastern New York, as well as through employee and local church donations.



Toy Drive

In December, employees held an in-house toy drive collecting numerous toys that were, in turn, distributed to families in need that were not already part of an adopt a family program.

Photo Clip Awards

Any agency employee can nominate a coworker to receive a photo clip award in recognition of a job well done. The recognition is shared in an all agency email on alternating weeks coinciding with payday!

During the course of 2015, 47 nominations were made by employees wishing to recognize their colleagues. Of those 47 nominations, 10 were then selected to receive additional special recognition at the all agency quarterly business meetings.

The money to purchase these awards is obtained through the fund raising donations of our own staff members. This monetary show of support proves our agency staff value themselves and the work of others and that they see the importance in showing appreciation for those achievements!

Continuing Development

Early in 2015, casework supervisors, seniors and front line staff from the Children’s Services and the ADRC Division, joined together to take a look at the existing structure of supervision that takes place on a weekly basis and to see where improvements could be made. The work was sponsored by the Office of Children and Family Services (OCFS), through the Center for the Development of Human Services (CDHS) who provided assistance in determining areas of strength and need. The group (s) were able to determine what areas of focus were most relevant. This interactive discussion continued throughout the year, involving countless hours on conference calls and in meetings with staff to include coaching sessions for casework supervisors and seniors. While the work with CDHS has officially concluded, the lessons learned will serve as the foundation for the continued improvement of the work that takes place at all levels.

Let's keep this moving

Concerning Trends

The focus of these next few pages is to share specific topics that we would like to increase the awareness of our community members about.

The Heroin Epidemic

The HEROIN Epidemic:

Much has been said about the recent explosion of opiate and heroin abuse. Washington County DSS has joined with other county departments, community agencies, and concerned citizens across Washington and Warren Counties to examine the problem and explore opportunities to challenge the trend. This group is called the Hometown vs. Heroin Taskforce and has been successful in expanding awareness about the problem and helping to form solutions.

Opioids have been used throughout history to dull the pain of the injured and ill and to develop tolerance to pain. The first epidemic actually grew from the treatment of illness and pain for soldiers in the late 1800's and early 1900's. Better trained practitioners helped reduce the overuse from that era until the late 1980's-early 1990's when the movement to aggressively identify and treat pain was supported by the medical community. This movement is what gave rise to the current reality. The use and abuse of pain medications leading to the abuse heroin and addiction treatments (such as suboxone) is so widespread that it has reached endemic proportions.

In Washington County we are keenly aware of the problem and working closely with our colleagues across all disciplines to plan for safer outcomes. In 2015 leaders from DSS, Youth Bureau/Alternative Sentencing, the Sheriff's Office, Public Health, Probation and the District Attorney jointly attended a "Convening" hosted by Casey Family Programs in Burlington, VT that united similar entities from the counties on both sides of the NY/VT border. At that two day meeting much was learned by the sharing and inspiration offered by the progress of other regions. Our local team has continued to meet since and is working toward more progressive solutions to help respond to the current crisis and prevent continued decline.

It is important that all communities actively join in the dialogue about this problem, that has historically been shielded from the public eye. Opiate and Heroin abuse is impacting every facet of our environment. It is in the workplace and touches our home life. It has been correlated to an increase in death of young adults, increase in drug related arrests and incarceration, and an increase in foster care placements. If you have not detected an impact in your own household, you are among the few and the lucky.

Don't wait for it to strike before becoming involved.

Is Homelessness a Problem in Washington County?

Have you ever seen a vagrant pushing a shopping cart filled with personal possession on a street in Washington County? That image is more in keeping with an urban street where we know that homelessness is an issue. Most people do not realize how BIG an issue it is within Washington County.

When most people think of the homeless, our minds go to the unkempt man or woman on the streets of a big city, sleeping on the sidewalk under a cardboard box at night and pushing a shopping cart containing all they own during the daylight hours. There are a very large number of homeless people in Washington County but, as a group, they are almost invisible to the vast majority of the population.

Many homeless people will “couch surf” for weeks on end. They may out stay a welcome at the home of one family member or friend and then move on to another, until they run out of options and appear at DSS. Families who are no longer able to maintain an apartment or a home are often evicted with nowhere to go. When they present at Social Services and say they have nowhere to stay, Temporary Assistance can provide (temporary) emergency housing assistance for individuals and families by placing them in a motel or shelter.

The availability of alternate housing with a friend or family member is always explored prior to the actual placement, but most have already exhausted those resources. Washington County has few motels and no shelters. Washington County homeless are therefore placed in motels in neighboring counties; out of sight, out of mind.

In 2015

\$582,348 was spent on placement in motels/shelter. Is that a “problem”?

Of that amount, only **\$48,092** was spent in Washington County. While **\$170,541** was spent in Saratoga County and **\$363,714** was spent in Warren County. Is that a “problem”?

(more data on this population can be found on page 23)

Mia's Story



Mia's story is one of perseverance, understanding, and hope—it all fueled her to grow up to be the ambitious seventeen-year-old who dreams of becoming a case worker and forensic scientist.

Placed in foster care at nine years old, Mia spent years with different foster families. On top of moving from home to home, bullying at school made things even harder.

“Everyone used to pick on me for not living with my mom,” said Mia. She stayed resilient when peers treated her badly, and knew that she wanted to treat people better than that.

One moment caused Mia to realize that she wanted to devote herself to lifting up children in foster care. “I saw this baby who couldn't crawl and walk correctly because no one had taught him how,” said Mia. “Seeing that broke my heart. I realized that I need to do something to help kids who are in my situation.”

Mentee to mentor

Social work isn't the only the career path Mia plans to pursue when she graduates from high school. Her passion for forensics sparked during a mentor-mentee program she was a part of in fifth grade. “[During the project,] we had to figure out who committed a crime, and I fell in love with it. I love the DNA factor, how little fibers of anything can be traced to any person, testing DNA by lifting fingerprints—I loved it.”

Mia is now a senior in high school and works to empower others as a cheerleading coach. Four years of cheerleading have helped her build the skills to excel in the sport while also growing into a team leader and peer mentor. Even in the off-season when she's not coaching, her younger teammates look up to Mia and seek her advice and guidance.

“Even when football season is over, they still ask me for help,” said Mia. “It's great that they look up to me. They'll ask me about school, and we talk in our group chat on Facebook.”

Mia's mentorship on and off season is important to her teammates' success both in cheerleading and in navigating the landscape that is high school. She has fully embraced her place as a positive role model and admits that being a great role model to those around her is always on her “to do” list.

“Blood doesn't matter.”

As she nears the end of high school, the image of becoming a caring resource for children in foster care becomes clearer. “I want to change a lot of things about my county and improve them, so that children don't feel unwanted,” said Mia. “When I had my permission slips signed by the commissioner, I felt like a case number. I want to change that.”

According to Mia, spending years in foster care makes her better equipped to understand the anxieties, fears, and frustrations of other children in foster care. Adopted in 2014 by Cindy and Jeff Wheeler, who also grew up in foster care, Mia has her own loving support system. Sharing the perspective of living in several foster homes during their childhoods, Mia and her parents deeply understand each other and have a strong family bond. Mia watched her adoption happen and knows how much her parents wanted her to be part of their family.

“They fought for me to stay here, and that's what really opened up my eyes,” said Mia. “That really showed that they are my family, no matter which way you look at it, blood or not.”

For now, Mia has some advice for children entering foster care: “It's amazing knowing that an entire family that isn't blood related can love you just as much or even more than your blood family. Blood doesn't matter. If an entire family wants you to be their child, take it and run with it. Be happy and be the best person you can be.”

♦ **Foster Homes Are Needed to Provide Stable and Caring Homes for Children of All Ages** ♦
-You or someone you know can make a huge difference in the life of a child, share this information-
If you are interested in becoming a certified foster parent or interested in adoption please contact:

Tracy Hudson, Placement/Preventive Supervisor for Washington County Department of Social Services @ (518) 746-2341
or
Berkshire Farm Center and Services for Youth @ (518) 390-0878

Who is Responsible for This?

As an agency, the Department of Social Services is seen as the agency responsible for the protection of the vulnerable. While the mere name of “Child Protective Services” would support that belief about children, it is impractical in today’s society to imagine that one public entity could solely manage such a feat. Accepting that stance, the agency works to collaborate with the Washington County community at large (and all providers) to encourage all citizens to work together to ensure the safety of children.

Through stories reported by word of mouth, through the press, and through social media, there is often a public outcry for public agencies such as ours to do more on behalf of children. When a tragedy involving a child takes place, fingers are often first pointed at this agency. It should not be forgotten that the caregiver who allowed or inflicted the harm to the child is the most blameworthy. However, in such an instance there is often more than enough culpability to share. The neighbor that overhears something and gets a prickle of unease; the cafeteria worker that detects something that is “off” with a child; or the cashier at the local convenience market that senses a true disdain from a caregiver toward a child these people can all make a difference.

Worried that it is not your business? There is a wide variance between looking away from something that is “just not right” and being a “busybody”. It is imperative for the wellbeing of our community for us to look out for one another. This includes the kid whose uncle you went to school with as well as the kids in the family that is “new” or from “out of town”. More often than not, what you have seen might be an anomaly but if you have expressed concern the worst that can happen is to have someone know that you are a caring human being.

It is important for anyone reading this annual report to know that our agency is involved in a small fraction of a child or family’s life. While contact happens with children and families, even with the most conspicuous allegations our contact is quite limited. Knowing that, we implore you as citizens of Washington County to work together, and with us, to ensure that our children are safe and have an attentive environment to grow up in.

While this has been directed at child safety, it is worth noting that it can all be equally attributed to the welfare of our frail and disabled citizens and integrity of our benefits programs.

CPS

Fraud

ADRC

Hotline

1(800)342-3720

Tipline

1(866)843-8759

Helpline

(518)746-2420