

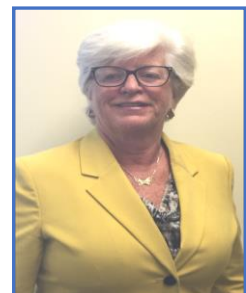
Rockland County Department of Social Services 2020 Annual Report



Edwin J. Day
County Executive



Joan M. Silvestri
Commissioner





DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES

12345 Dr. Robert L. Yeager Health Center
50 Sanatorium Rd, Building L
Pomona, New York 10970
Phone: (845) 364-3300

Joan M. Silvestri
Commissioner

To: County Executive Edwin J. Day
Members of the Rockland County Legislature

I am pleased to present the Department of Social Services (DSS) Annual Report which describes our programs, services, and highlights our accomplishments of 2020 during the unprecedented times this nation has faced. The effects of the COVID-19 pandemic have been very stressful and traumatic to individuals of our community.

On March 18, 2020, DSS was forced to change its normal operational protocols. DSS was well prepared and equipped to efficiently and effectively transition 90% of staff immediately to remote work. In the early stages of the pandemic, when the infection rate was at its highest, for health and safety purposes, the Emergency Family Shelter and the Warming Center were forced to close for a period of time. Fortunately, through the hard work and efforts of our Emergency Housing staff, Rockland individuals requiring COVID-19 quarantining or isolation were safely relocated to open air access hotels sourced and certified by our department. Through these challenging times, the Family Shelter and Warming Center were eventually reopened in compliance with CDC guidelines, protocols, and procedures.

DSS also assisted the Department of Health by having 90 staff volunteers trained as certified contract tracers within 36 hours, to meet the metric required to open Rockland County for Phase I. In addition, almost all of our employees volunteered to help at the weekly vaccine PODS, as the Department of Health rolled out and distributed vaccines to the Rockland County community.

At DSS, our greatest resource is our staff, nearly 400 trained, motivated, and professional employees. DSS was both "boots on the ground", working onsite daily, handling an exponentially increased volume of inquiries while working under constantly changing rules, conditions, restrictions, and operations. As well as, adapting to new technology and supporting the majority of our staff to effectively and efficiently work remotely during the Pandemic, by deploying laptops and webcams enabling consistent communication through virtual meetings. WMS set-up 130 tablets in three days, rolled out Microsoft Teams to staff, arranged for trainings, deployed nearly 200 cameras, while maintaining real time website postings of all updates and changes relevant to the public.

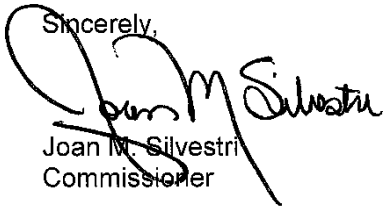
DSS casework staff quickly adapted to working in PPE to deliver meals, arrange emergency medical care and provide life supporting services to vulnerable COVID infected clients. Throughout the year, DSS staff never stopped conducting assessments, investigating instances of neglect or abuse of children and adults, and providing services to ongoing cases. Temporary Assistance and the Employment Unit continued their work with the Safety Net population, resulting in a local share savings of \$700,000 and decreasing the number of clients receiving Temporary Assistance.

DSS clerical staff did a phenomenal job holding the line for the Agency in the face of global health concerns and uncertainty. Staff managed some very tragic situations with families impacted by COVID-19. Many workers went above and beyond to make sure children were safe, including providing access to court when guardianship was needed, as well as alleviating concerns pertaining to food, clothing, and housing.

Throughout 2020, DSS staff in all program areas received many compliments for their dedication and service to our neighbors in Rockland County. We have shared some of these kind compliments throughout this report. I think you will agree that Rockland's entire DSS staff is second to none when it comes to customer service in our community.

I would like to thank you for your support this year. Together, with your continued support we will accomplish our goals and vision of a Rockland County, in which communities enjoy an environment in which individuals and families thrive, are safe and have financial security.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Joan M. Silvestri". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "J" and "S".

Joan M. Silvestri
Commissioner

TABLE OF CONTENTS

		<u>Page</u>
Rockland County Government		<u>5</u>
Vision and Mission Statements		<u>6</u>
Statistics		
Program Caseloads & Recipients		7-8
Expenditures by Program		9
Medicaid Expenditures by Provider		10
Revenues and Grants		11
<hr/>		
	<u>Page</u>	<u>Page</u>
Public Information/Public Relations	<u>12-13</u>	Enforcement <u>31-33</u>
Administration of Economic Assistance		Family Law Division <u>31</u>
Benefits <u>14-18</u>		Legal Department <u>31</u>
Call Center and Front Desk <u>14</u>		Special Investigations <u>31-32</u>
Temporary Assistance <u>14-15</u>		Resource Recovery <u>32-33</u>
SNAP <u>15</u>		Child Support Enforcement <u>33</u>
Employment <u>16</u>		Administration <u>34-38</u>
Emergency Housing <u>16-17</u>		Welfare Management Systems/BICS/CI <u>34-35</u>
Home Energy Assistance Program (HEAP) <u>17-18</u>		Fiscal Operations <u>35</u>
Child Care Subsidy <u>18</u>		Audit/Administrative Policy Team <u>36</u>
Supportive Housing and Section 8 <u>19-20</u>		Administration <u>36</u>
Temporary Housing <u>20-21</u>		Operations, Analysis & Planning <u>36-37</u>
Medical Assistance <u>22-23</u>		Personnel <u>37</u>
Social Services <u>24-30</u>		Staff Development <u>38</u>
Child Protective Services (CPS)/Investigative & Family Assessment Response (FAR) <u>24</u>		Employee Recognition <u>39-45</u>
Children's Services <u>25</u>		
Family Time & Transportation Unit <u>26</u>		
Family Services <u>26-27</u>		
Adolescent Services <u>27</u>		
Schools, Training, Eligibility, Public Outreach and Statistics (STEPS) <u>27-28</u>		
Adult and Special Services <u>28-30</u>		

ROCKLAND COUNTY GOVERNMENT

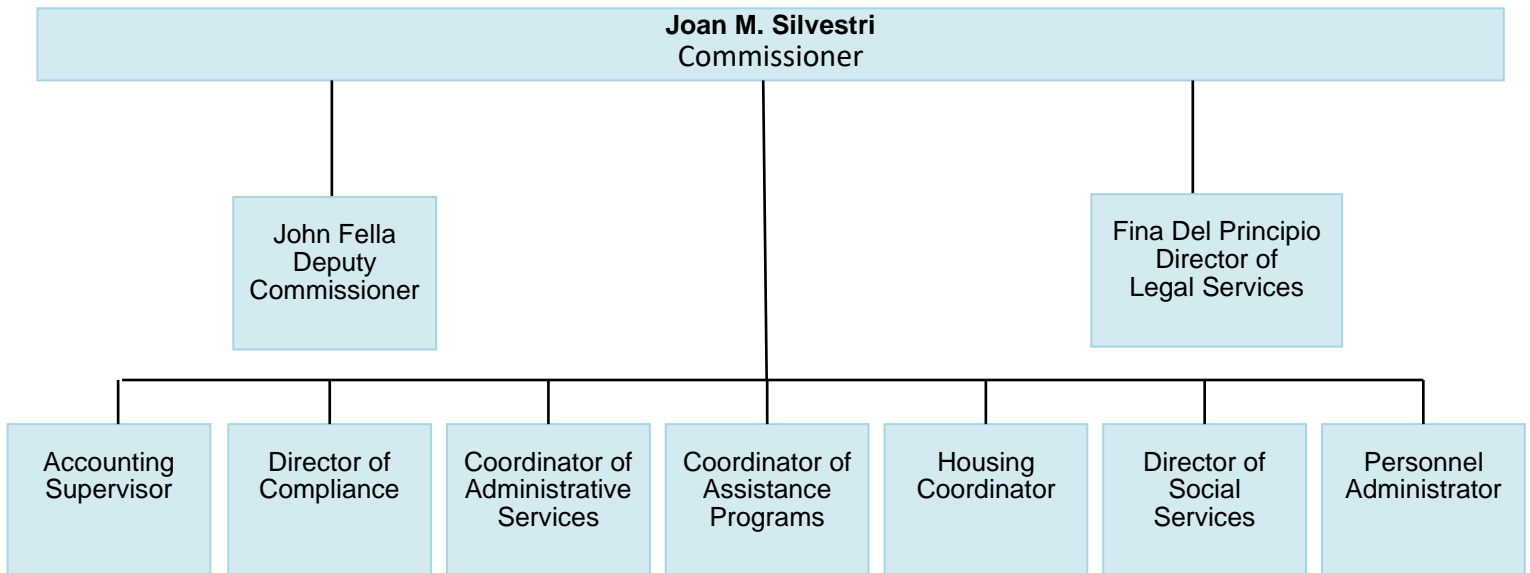
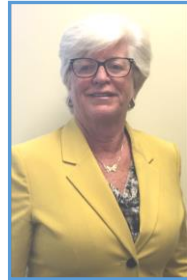
County Executive: Hon. Edwin J. Day

County Legislature: Hon. Alden H. Wolfe, Chairman

Hon. Christopher J. Carey
Hon. Harriet D. Cornell
Hon. Charles J. Falciglia
Hon. Michael M. Grant
Hon. Lon M. Hofstein
Hon. Jay Hood, Jr.
Hon. Douglas J. Jobson
Hon. John McGowan

Hon. James J. Foley
Hon. Aney Paul
Hon. Laurie Santulli
Hon. Philip Soskin
Hon. Vincent D. Tyer
Hon. Aron B. Wieder
Hon. Toney L. Earl
Hon. Itamar Yeger

Rockland County Department of Social Services



Rockland County Department of Social Services

VISION

Rockland County communities will enjoy an environment where individuals and families thrive, are safe, and have financial security.

MISSION

Our mission is to partner and engage with individuals, families, and communities in Rockland County by providing services to protect the vulnerable, empower them to achieve and maintain self-sufficiency, provide financial assistance, safety and support; with compassion, respect, and dignity.



AT A GLANCE – INDIVIDUAL CASELOAD ACTIVITY & YEARLY AVERAGE COMPARISONS

		2019	2020	% Change	
TEMPORARY ASSISTANCE	Active Temporary Assistance Cases				
		Family Assistance	304	236	-22.4%
		Safety Net	482	359	-25.5%
		Total Active Cases	786	595	-24.3%
	Temporary Assistance Case Activity				
		Applications Processed	2,018	1,703	-15.6%
		Cases Opened	1,347	1,041	-22.7%
		Withdrawals	102	12	-88.2%
		Denials	569	650	14.2.%
		Cases Closed	1,156	511	-55.8%
	Recertifications	1,239	635	-48.7%	
	Changes in Active Cases	5,251	6,783	29.2%	
	Total Case Activities	9,664	9,632	-0.3%	
Temporary Assistance Recipients					
	Family Assistance	678	507	-25.2%	
	Safety Net	747	519	-30.5%	
	Total Recipients Year End	1,425	1,026	-28.0%	

		2019	2020	% Change	
SNAP	Active SNAP Cases				
		Non-Public Assistance	13,364	13,730	2.7%
		Public Assistance	472	349	-26.1%
		Total Active Cases	13,836	14,079	1.8%
	SNAP Case Activity				
		Applications Processed (Non-Public Assistance)	6,598	8,483	28.6%
		Cases Opened	5,094	6,211	21.9%
		Withdrawals	301	99	-67.1%
		Denials	1,203	2,173	80.6%
		Cases Closed	6,005	1,985	-66.9%
	Recertifications	8,702	1,970	-77.4%	
	Changes in Active Cases	19,586	14,710	-24.9%	
	Total Case Activities	40,891	41,128	-0.6%	
SNAP Recipients Year End		39,927	41,108	3.0%	

The continued decrease in Temporary Assistance and SNAP recipients is due to our successful efforts in actively engaging 445 individuals and families to achieve and maintain self-sufficiency and continuing the implementation of the SNAP program affecting abled-bodied adults without dependents (ABAWD).

AT A GLANCE – INDIVIDUAL CASELOAD ACTIVITY & YEARLY AVERAGE COMPARISONS

		2019	2020	% Change
MEDICAID	Medicaid Case Activity			
	Applications Processed	6,098	5,801	-4.9%
	Cases Opened	4,118	4,088	-0.7%
	Withdrawals	275	30	-89.1%
	Denials	1,705	1,683	-1.3%
	Cases Closed	4,150	1,654	-60.1%
	Recertifications	6,061	771	-87.3%
	Changes in Active Cases	25,377	18,498	-27.1%
	Total Case Activities	41,686	26,724	-35.9%
	Medicaid Recipients Year End – Receiving Coverage through DSS	14,911	15,987	7.2%
Medicaid Recipients Year End – Receiving Coverage through New York State of Health (NYSOH)	96, 118	102,188	6.3%	
Medicaid Recipients Year End - TOTAL	111,029	118,175	6.4%	

Because of the declared Public Health Emergency due to COVID-19, temporary provisions were put into place to help those in need of health care coverage apply for Medicaid and to stop consumers already in receipt of Medicaid from losing their coverage. Medicaid cases were not closed unless a consumer passed away, moved out of state, or requested to have their case closed. These changes contributed to the increase in the number of open and running cases with the Local Department of Social Services.

EXPENDITURES BY PROGRAM

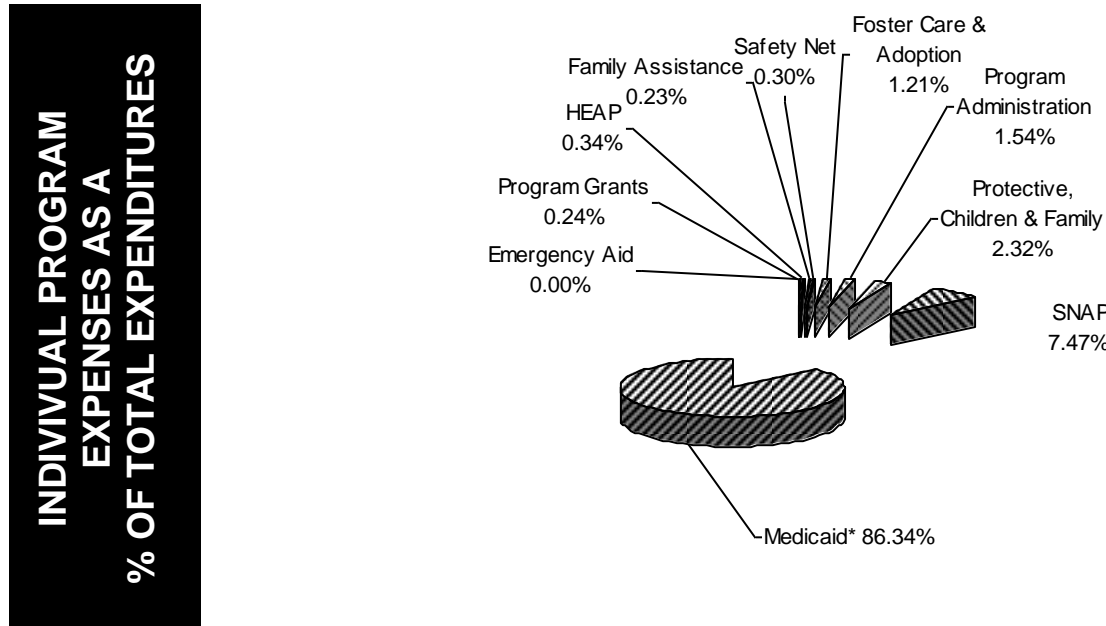
EXPENDITURES BY PROGRAM	<u>Program</u>	<u>2019</u>	<u>2020</u>	<u>\$</u> <u>Change</u>	<u>%</u> <u>Change</u>
	Medical Assistance (Medicaid)*	\$977,621,576	\$1,017,795,174	\$40,173,598	4.11%
SNAP***	69,071,145	88,110,969	19,039,824	27.57%	
Family Assistance	3,522,101	2,687,178	(834,923)	-23.71%	
Safety Net	4,259,022	3,546,218	(712,804)	-16.74%	
Home Energy Assistance Program (HEAP)**	3,764,262	3,985,140	220,878	5.87%	
Emergency Aid	149,029	33,886	(115,143)	-77.26%	
Protective, Children and Family Services**	31,387,236	27,398,365	(3,98,871)	-12.71%	
Foster Care and Adoption Assistance**	14,516,267	14,280,559	(235,708)	-1.62%	
Program Grants	2,450,249	2,841,568	391,319	15.97%	
Program Administration	<u>21,192,924</u>	<u>18,126,605</u>	<u>(3,066,319)</u>	<u>-14.47%</u>	
	\$1,127,933,811	\$1,178,805,662	\$50,871,851	4.51%	

*2019 and 2020 expenditures include expenses for individuals who applied through DSS and NYSOH.

**Includes Program Administration

***Predominance in increase in expenditures is directly attributable to the supplemental pandemic benefits paid.

Note: Medicaid Administration – Total for 2020 \$7,115,940.00



*2020 Medicaid expenditures include expenses for individuals who applied through DSS and NYSOH.

MEDICAID EXPENDITURES* BY PROVIDER

<u>Provider Type</u>	<u>2019</u>	<u>2020</u>	<u>\$ Change</u>	<u>% Change</u>
Hospital Inpatient	\$37,099,379	\$40,997,583	3,898,205	11%
Hospital Outpatient	6,837,410	6,980,331	142,921	2%
Skilled Nursing Facility	60,523,300	61,116,159	592,859	1%
Intermediate Care Facility for Developmentally Disabled	8,705,306	7,988,554	(716,752)	-8%
Clinic	40,747,374	34,730,963	(6,016,411)	-15%
Hospice	414,568	268,914	(145,654)	-35%
Physicians	3,315,495	3,165,826	(149,669)	-5%
Dental	311,764	187,997	(123,767)	-40%
Other Practitioners	3,425,403	2,801,330	(624,073)	-18%
Child Care Instl Per Diem	166,628	289,113	122,485	74%
Personal Care	17,176,851	19,395,798	2,218,947	13%
Home Health Services	366,263	263,534	(102,729)	-28%
Assisted Living Program	9,190,851	8,739,498	(451,353)	-5%
Waived Services	182,290,834	192,644,585	10,353,751	6%
Rehab and Therapy	248,211	160,819	(87,392)	-35%
Rehab Options Services	24,512,774	17,556,323	(6,956,451)	-28%
Drugs and Supplies	8,319,184	8,712,674	393,490	5%
Eye Appliance and Durable Medical Equipment	545,324	431,272	(114,052)	-21%
Prepaid Care	545,971,205	590,035,752	44,064,547	8%
Care Management Plans	11,924,061	14,546,396	2,622,335	22%
Transportation	7,318,356	4,818,304	(2,500,052)	-34%
Lab and X-ray	769,732	739,571	(30,161)	-4%
Other**	<u>7,441,304</u>	<u>1,223,878</u>	<u>(6,217,426)</u>	<u>-84%</u>
Total	\$977,621,576	\$1,017,795,174	\$40,173,598	4%
Administration	<u>6,830,802</u>	<u>7,115,940</u>	<u>285,138.00</u>	<u>4%</u>
Medicaid Grand Total	\$984,452,378	\$1,024,911,114	\$40,458,736	4%

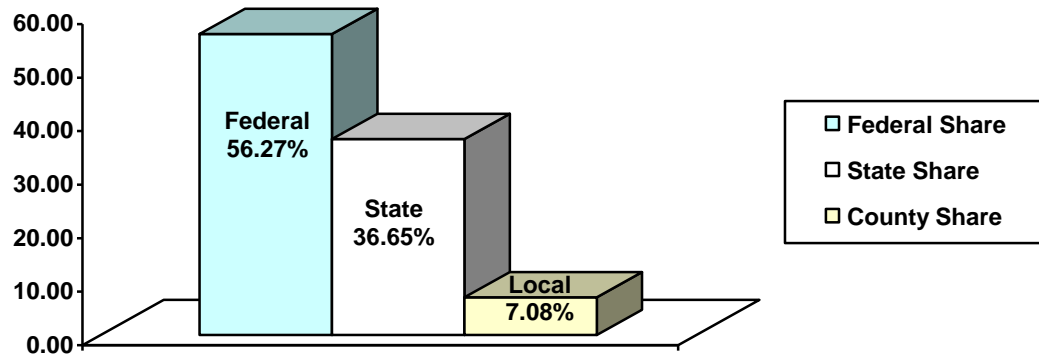
*2019 and 2020 expenditures include expenses for individuals who applied through DSS and NYSOH.

<u>Source</u>	<u>2019</u>	<u>2020</u>	<u>\$ Change</u>	<u>% Change</u>
Local Share	\$65,426,036	\$61,843,298	(\$3,582,738)	-5%

REVENUE BY SOURCE **PROGRAM GRANTS**

REVENUE BY SOURCE

	<u>2019</u>	<u>2020</u>	<u>% Change</u>
Federal	\$632,182,065	\$663,359,314	4.9%
State	408,979,586	431,991,322	5.6%
County	86,772,160	83,455,026	-3.8%
Totals	\$1,127,933,811	1,178,805,62	3.4%



2020 PROGRAM GRANT REVENUES

Supervision & Treatment Services for Juveniles Program	\$36,808
Supportive Housing Helping Hands	\$32,306
Summer Youth Employment Program	\$467,845
Supervision & Treatment Services for Juveniles Program- Raise The Age- Detention Transportation	\$18,043
Supportive Housing Coordinated Entry	\$60,000
Supervision & Treatment Services for Juveniles Program- Raise The Age	\$23,752
Safe Harbor	\$41,783
Executive Order 151 (Code Blue)	\$532,025
Family Day Care Registration (CCR)	\$470,244
Family First Transition Fund	\$19,868
Family First Transition Fund- Aging Out	\$11,910
Solutions to End Homeless (STEHP)	\$216,480
CAPTA/CARA	\$66,505
Emergency Solutions Grant (ESG-CV)	\$19,912
Expansion of Child Care Assist (ECCAP)	\$361,716
SNAP Bonus	\$112,910
Supportive Housing – Rapid Rehousing	\$78,493
Family Assessment Response (FAR)	\$4,382
Supportive Housing	\$266,586
Total	\$2,841,568

PUBLIC INFORMATION / PUBLIC RELATIONS

The Department of Social Services (DSS) strives to keep Rockland's residents, as well as its recipients and providers, informed of its programs, eligibility requirements and overall changes within the Department. DSS also works diligently to solicit feedback from community members about the overall operation of the Department and its programs. This flow of information is kept current by:



Public Relations: *Strengthens our relationships with community members as well as the general public.*

During the outbreak of the pandemic, DSS like many other organizations and businesses, had to begin to think outside the box to ensure that the needs of clients were still being met. Maintaining effective communication to the community had become a priority during unprecedented times. As the year progressed, DSS adjusted and continued to strengthen relationships with the community. New York Social Services law requires local districts to have a Citizen's Advisory Council. The Commissioner's Citizen Advisory Council was fortunate to meet virtually as the nation made efforts to transition to normalcy in the safest way possible. Prior to COVID-19,

meetings were attended by over 40 members representing hospitals, schools, service providers, non-profit agencies, and recipients of services. The purpose of the Council is to advise the Commissioner concerning programs and policies pertaining to public assistance, medical care and services to children, families, and adults. The meeting agendas have consisted of Council members presenting information on topics such as domestic violence, what it means to be trauma informed, and presentations made by the Commissioner on the updates to DSS programs. The Council has also been instrumental in identifying service gaps in the community, assisting DSS in publicizing available programs, and members continue to educate constituents, service providers and public officials regarding the Department's policies. Through the challenges faced by such a deadly virus, DSS has been able to retain strong bonds with the community members as well as the general public.

ADMINISTRATION OF ECONOMIC ASSISTANCE BENEFITS

MISSION STATEMENT

Partnering with Rockland County by providing and supporting families and individuals with temporary cash assistance; paying for food; heating assistance; childcare subsidies so people can go to work; employment services to overcome barriers by supporting education, job preparation, substance abuse treatment; assisting homeless families and individuals in finding affordable, permanent housing; providing affordable, comprehensive health insurance to meet individual medical needs and healthier outcomes

The Rockland County Department of Social Services administers several State and Federal assistance programs that help low-income individuals and families meet their basic needs. These programs include assistance paying rent, utility bills and childcare, as well as monthly benefits that can be used to purchase food at retail food stores.

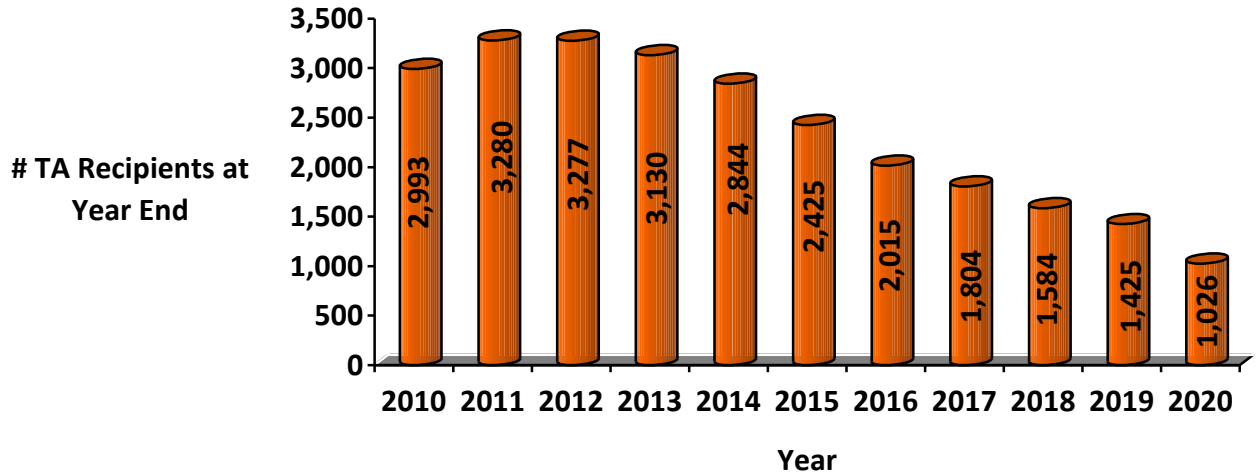
CALL CENTER AND FRONT DESK is the Agency's "Front Line", handling all walk-in clients seeking assistance. Staff work closely with the TA, SNAP and Housing Units, and in cold-weather months, with the Agency's overnight Warming Center, to assist the County's neediest cases – which include individuals & families facing homelessness, prolonged income loss and food insecurity. Trained in trauma-informed care, staff are sensitive to the emotional stress and hardship that often accompany clients walking into the Agency lobby. Staff are also well-versed in basic Agency operations in order to accurately direct and expedite client inquiries to other departments. The Unit performs the following essential functions daily:

- Handles all inbound SNAP/TA inquiries – phone calls, emails, faxes, US Postal mail and in-person document drop-offs.
- Registers all new SNAP/TA applications and pre-process all associated case recertifications. Processes undeliverable US Postal Mail, taking requisite actions to ensure benefits are redirected and/or terminated as needed.
- Delivers all documents to Eligibility staff.
- Issues Electronic Benefit Cards to clients.

From the sudden onset of COVID in March 2020, this team has been "Boots on the Ground," working on-site daily handling an unprecedented volume of questions and inquiries, all while working under newly designed and ever-evolving Agency operations and external restrictions. Efficiency in this unit's performance enabled the Agency to meet regulatory obligations with SNAP/TA operations.

TEMPORARY ASSISTANCE provides temporary support to assist persons who are unable to work or are working in a job paying less than the poverty level. Depending on individual case circumstances, cash benefits are issued under the Federal Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) or the New York State Safety Net Assistance guidelines. The Temporary Assistance Unit also determines eligibility for SNAP for Temporary Assistance applicants and recipients. At the end of 2020, approximately 1,026 individuals were receiving Temporary Assistance.

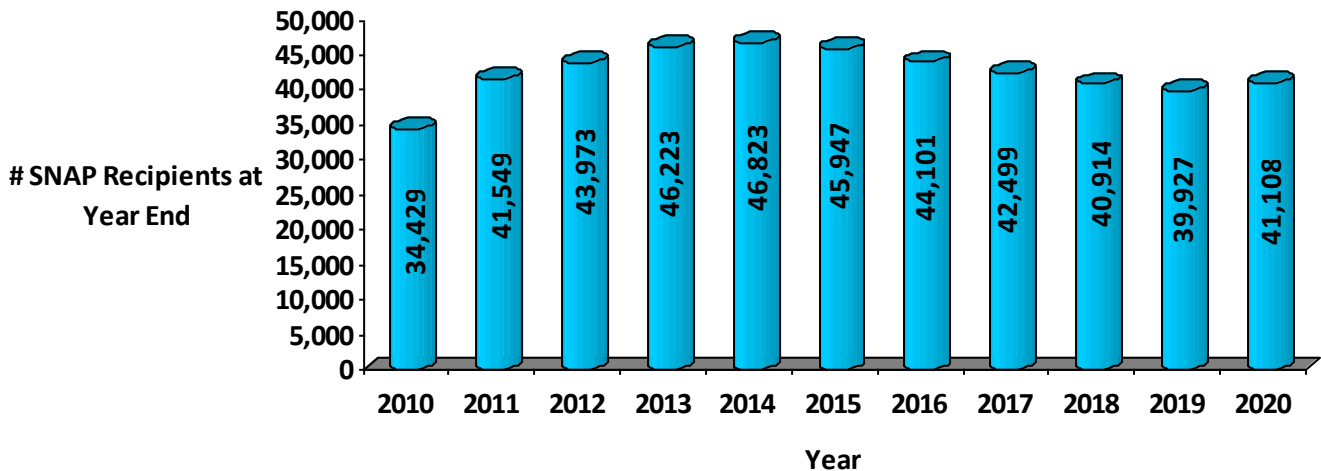
The department developed an integrated team in 2019 to focus on long term recipients of Temporary Assistance and Safety Net clients which focused resources to assist individuals and families to achieve self sufficiency. As a result, the number of families/individuals in need of benefits continued to decline.



The **SUPPLEMENTAL NUTRITION ASSISTANCE PROGRAM (SNAP)** helps eligible limited income families and individuals purchase the food they need for good health. For many families, SNAP serves as the first line of defense against hunger. Benefits are redeemed at participating retailers by using an electronic benefit card (EBT), which is similar to a debit card. Eligibility factors and benefit levels are based on federal law and regulations. A number of factors may impact a household's eligibility for SNAP benefits, including level of income, type of income (earned or unearned), household size, age, receipt or disability benefits, shelter and utility expenses, medical expenses for certain household members and other factors.

At year end there were 13,730 (41,128 individuals) households in Rockland County receiving SNAP benefits. Of the total SNAP household population, 3,901 cases (4,052 individuals) received SSI SNAP.

During 2020 in the months of April to June the number of applications and persons receiving SNAP benefits dramatically increased. Supplemental pandemic benefits were also distributed to families effected by COVID. These amounts and numbers of cases has returned to nearly the same as pre-pandemic levels.



EMPLOYMENT UNIT is responsible for assisting applicants for, and recipients of, Temporary Assistance and SNAP enter the workforce and achieve self-sufficiency. Employment services are a critical step for those in poverty to bring about positive changes in their own lives. The Employment Unit successfully assisted 126 residents find employment. All non-exempt applicants and recipients must participate in work activities assigned by the Employment Unit. These work-related activities are intended to aid individuals and families in poverty and move them toward self-sufficiency. In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, New York State suspended required participation in work activities as of March 2020. The Employment Unit continues to engage clients in job search, job readiness training and vocational education opportunities.

For Temporary Assistance clients, these activities also count towards the Federal and State “participation rates.” The Federal government has set employment participation rates for all states. These rates mandate that TANF non-exempt adults must be either working or in countable work preparation activities in order for the State to qualify for full TANF funding. Failure by the State to meet these participation rates has serious monetary consequences to the State and local districts. New York State also mandates similar participation rates in the Safety Net Assistance Program.

Currently, Rockland County requires SNAP recipients identified as ABAWDs to participate in work activities. ABAWD stands for “able-bodied adults without dependents.” Federal law requires ABAWDs to meet additional work requirements to receive SNAP benefits for more than three months in a 36-month period. They must participate in qualifying work activities for a least 80 hours a month, be granted an exclusion consistent with their social services district’s ABAWD exclusion policy or reside in an area with a waiver approved by the U.S. Department of Agriculture. In addition, any non ABAWD SNAP recipients who request assistance with employment are directed to the Employment Unit where they are connected to our community partners. In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, New York State suspended ABAWD work requirements until October 2021. The Employment Unit continues to engage clients in job search, job readiness training and vocational education opportunities.

The Employment Unit is in partnership with Rockland Works (formerly the Rockland County Career Center) and our Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA). With this collaboration, applicants for/recipients of Temporary Assistance and SNAP will have greater access to programs and training that will help individuals and their families work towards overcoming barriers to employment and help them advance toward self-sufficiency.

The Temporary Assistance and Employment Units continued their work to assist Safety Net individuals and families obtain and maintain self-sufficiency using a holistic approach to assess and address barriers to employment. These efforts have resulted in a savings of \$700,000.00 and decreased the number of clients receiving Temporary Assistance benefits.

The **EMERGENCY HOUSING UNIT** provides comprehensive services to families and individuals facing potential homelessness. Experienced caseworkers in the Unit, as well as support staff and professionals from other agencies, work as a team to address and ultimately eliminate the crisis or urgent circumstances surrounding the individual or family.

Caseworkers attempt to uncover the underlying reasons for the housing problem. As a result, when emergency housing placement is diverted, these cases are retained until issues such as domestic violence, substance abuse, lack of employment, mental health, and childcare are addressed. Casework counseling and referral to needed services are provided on an on-going basis. Of the 508 families and single adults who were assessed by the Emergency Housing Unit, 110 housing placements were made in 2020.

A Domestic Violence Liaison is on staff to meet with and assist individuals, families, and victims with waivers and to help plan and ensure their safety.

The Emergency Housing Unit is notified of all Rockland County Sheriff Office's 72-hour eviction notices, utility disconnects and residential Health Department violations for the entire County. Staff meets with individuals and family members in an attempt to help them retain safe and affordable housing. In many instances, home visits are conducted to insure the health and safety of frail and elderly adults and minor children. Emphasis is placed on maintaining family stability and in protecting the health and safety of all individuals at risk.

Emergency Housing Unit staff communicates with attorneys, landlords and other nonprofit agencies to help prevent impending evictions. Staff helps negotiate payments of rental arrears, security agreements, rent subsidies, temporary housing alternatives and secures permanent housing for the homeless.

During the Pandemic, the Emergency Housing Unit Staff, following strict CDC guidelines, continued to assess singles and families face to face, and made appropriate Emergency Housing Placements as necessary.

The Emergency Housing Unit Staff were instrumental in having five hotel owner/operators become Emergency Housing Vendors for the County. Two of those hotels have open air access to safely place individuals and families that require COVID-19 quarantining or isolation.

HOME ENERGY ASSISTANCE PROGRAM (HEAP) is a Federally-funded program that assists eligible households in meeting their home energy needs. This includes financial assistance with paying utility and oil bills for each heating season.

The Regular Heap program requires a client to be directly responsible for their heating expense. Income eligibility is based on the number of people living in a household and the gross income received by all household members in the previous 30 days. The household does not have to be facing utility termination or below on heating fuel to receive a Regular HEAP benefit. When Orange & Rockland receives the Regular HEAP payment, they enroll the client in their HEAP Low Income Credit Program. This program consists of HEAP credits being deducted from the utility bill for the next 12 months.

A client may qualify for additional help through the Emergency HEAP program. Emergency HEAP requires a pending notice of utility termination or ¼ tank or less of heating fuel. To qualify for Emergency HEAP the client must also pass a resource test.

The Regular and Emergency HEAP programs are generally open during the heating months from November to April. Both programs were extended until August 31, 2020 due to the devastating economic effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. There was also an unprecedented third Emergency HEAP benefit added for the 2019-2020 HEAP program year to further help people pay down their utility bills. The 2020-2021 program year opened November 2, 2020 which is 10 days earlier than the previous program year.

\$6,679,886 was provided to assist 9,805 eligible residents with their energy bills through HEAP for the 2020 calendar year.

Note that the number of households and total dollars are significantly higher than the previous fiscal year. This is because the HEAP program was open a total of 205 days in 2020 versus 112 days in 2019.

HEAP 2018-2019: 11/13/2018 - 04/26/2019

HEAP 2019-2020: 11/12/2019 - 08/31/2020

HEAP 2020-2021: 11/02/2020 – 08/31/2021

Fiscal 2019: 01/01/2019 – 04/26/2019 = 80 Days

11/12/2019 – 12/31/2019 = 32 Days

Total Days = 112

Fiscal 2020: 01/01/2020 – 08/31/2020 = 167 Days

11/02/2020 – 12/31/2020 = 38 Days

Total Days = 205 Days

The total number of households and total dollars spent was calculated based on data received from WMS. The data they provided included 4,707 \$35.00 SNAP payments that were incorrectly issued by OTDA on September 20, 2020. OTDA identified their error and reissued the same 4,707 payments in the corrected amount of \$45.00 on September 30, 2020.

If qualified, HEAP may be able to help if a household's source of heat is: natural gas, propane, oil, electricity, wood/wood pellets, kerosene, coal, or corn.

The **CHILD CARE SUBSIDY PROGRAM** is funded by the New York State Child Care Block Grant. Child care subsidies are provided to Temporary Assistance and other families whose income falls below 200% of the Federal Poverty Level to enable them to participate in employment and employment activities, as well as to move working parents toward self-sufficiency, support teenage parents trying to finish high school, and support families who need assistance to prevent a child's out-of-home placement.

Approximately \$8.7 million was distributed to approximately 586 families to provide child care for an estimated 1,073 children; including 6 families and 9 children who received care as a result of a waiver that allowed families with up to 85% of the State Median Income to be eligible effective 12/1/2020, giving their parents/caregivers the ability to work and earn income or attend school to obtain a High School Diploma.

Rockland County received \$1,000,000 for the Expansion of the Child Care Assistance Program for services provided during the period October 1, 2019 through September 30, 2021. The Purpose of the Expansion of the Child Care Assistance Program is to allow the county to reduce or eliminate the waiting list. These additional funds have allowed us to serve an additional 52 families providing care for 92 children, eliminating our wait list.

The program continues to assist families moving towards self-sufficiency, which has helped to strengthen families within our community.

SUPPORTIVE HOUSING AND SECTION 8

MISSION STATEMENT

Mission Statement: Partnering with our internal and external partners to provide temporary emergency shelter for individuals and families with the goal of transitioning into permanent, safe affordable housing.

The **Supportive Housing Unit** works collaboratively with Emergency Housing to provide comprehensive case management and rental subsidies to homeless individuals and families. Currently, Supportive Housing manages the rapid rehousing grants which consist of Permanent Supportive Housing, Coordinated Entry, Solutions to End Homelessness Project (STEHP), Emergency Solutions Grant-Corona Virus (EG-CV) and Foster Youth Initiative program (FYI).

Coordinated entry is the process by which our homeless are placed into Supportive Housing Programs. The Permanent Supportive Housing program is permanent housing in which the head of household is disabled or was either homeless or at risk of homelessness and is low income. The Rapid Rehousing program connects individuals or families to speed up the process of moving them from homelessness to housing for a period of up to 24 months.

DSS provides a rental subsidy and case management services, to provide education and guidance with a focus on taking the necessary steps to obtain permanent housing and financial stability. Case Managers focus on the individual barriers to housing and look for ways to assist to increase their household income; obtaining mainstream benefits and assistance with applying for entitlements. The goal is obtaining service delivery for anyone who may need mental health services or substance abuse treatment and may require assistance accessing these services. The grant also provides access to job training and employment readiness while always utilizing a Housing First model.

DSS also took over managing the Helping Hands rapid rehousing grant for \$108,000.00 this year. The STEHP grant is for \$1.5 million dollars and provides \$300,000.00 of funding per year for five years. The STEHP grant provides for rapid re-rehousing, outreach, and referral. In 2020, DSS was able to move two Families who had been homeless into permanent housing, and with outreach and support, they continue to remain housed.

The ESG-CV grant was established following the COVID-19 pandemic to enable communities to assist the homeless or those at risk of homelessness with obtaining resources and outreach, and referral services. The ESG-CV grant is a \$1.327 million dollar grant, that will be utilized to assist those who have been negatively impacted by COVID-19. This grant will provide funding for rental arrears for up to six months of payment to prevent homelessness. Citizenship is not a requirement for rental arrears. This grant will enable us to utilize community providers who will be providing trauma informed services in the community. These funds will also be utilized to expand street outreach. There will also be mobile medical crisis services for medical, mental health and substance services, for our Clients that are reluctant to use traditional service delivery. This grant will be funding drop-in centers that will be in the areas that have been identified as most in need. These drop-in

centers will be equipped with portable shower facilities, laundry services and case management, to engage people where they are. The Supportive Housing Staff were able to continue their work in the office throughout the pandemic. The Staff followed COVID protocols and were able to see Clients as needed.

The **Section 8 Unit** administers the Housing Choice Voucher Program which is a federally funded rental assistance program for qualified tenants. The Section 8 program currently has 1,074 regular vouchers and was given an additional 30 vouchers in 2020 by the Division of Housing and Community Renewal (DHCR). The Staff held a Section 8 lottery in 2018 and there were 1000 applications selected for the wait list. The Staff is currently working through this wait list and there are 580 applicants remaining on this current wait list.

In addition, there are a total of 46 mainstream vouchers. Mainstream vouchers are for non-elderly, disabled and homeless individuals, or those at risk of homelessness. The Section 8 staff anticipates that in 2021, they will run a mainstream lottery. The Section 8 staff is responsible for the recertification and inspections for each of the Section 8 units annually. The Section 8 Staff also runs the Family Self Sufficiency Program, Homeownership and Portability programs. The Section 8 Unit in Rockland was the first County in the State to be awarded Foster- youth Initiative vouchers. These vouchers are a collaborative project that involves the Supportive Housing, Section 8 LA, and Child Welfare Staff.

The Foster Youth Initiative enables individuals who are between the ages of 18-23 years old who were in Foster Care, to apply for a HUD voucher for 3 years. This voucher enables the applicant to contribute 30% of their income towards their rent. The program has a case management component with the goal of providing wrap around supports that will afford the applicant educational opportunities as well as job training, with the goal of being able to afford the rent when the three years are over. We have also offered the applicants access to training courses on budgeting, financial literacy and refer them to any training opportunities that we think would be beneficial. Rockland has been the only County to date that has utilized these vouchers and currently have 3 youth on the program. The Section 8 Staff continued to work throughout the pandemic. Staff was able to cover operations with no disruption in services. The Staff worked with their Clients to ensure that anyone needing additional assistance received it. Staff was able to get all recertification packets out on time and they were available to any Clients who were impacted by the COVID pandemic.

TEMPORARY HOUSING

The Department of Social Services opened their Warming Center again for the season on November 1, 2019. Social Services is responsible for the over-sight and contracts with Catholic Charities for the operation of Rockland County's Warming Center. The Warming Center was established in response to Governor Cuomo's Code Blue Initiative. The Warming Center is open to anyone age eighteen or older who needs a safe place to stay. Catholic Charities runs the daily operations for the Warming Center. During the season, we had 142 unduplicated guests at the Warming Center, 35 were female and 107 were male. 97 of the nights were at or below 32 degrees and we were open for 44 days. We were open for a total of 144 nights but, when COVID began we knew we had to make alternative arrangements. By mid-March 2020, there was concern about the increased risk of housing individuals in a congregate care setting and the potential for exposure or an outbreak. We contracted local hotel/motel providers and we moved our Warming Center Guests out the morning of March

23, 2020. We maintained our Guests in the hotels until we were able to transition each guest into a safe housing option. The warming center re-opened on November 1, 2020 and operated using the CDC guidelines for safety. The warming center remained open and had no health related issues through the season.

The Department operates an **Emergency Family Shelter** to provide temporary housing to families who are homeless due to fire, flood, eviction, and other emergencies that require immediate attention. Shelter staff members assist families in locating affordable permanent housing. In 2020, the average stay in the Shelter was 96.27 days, a decrease from 2019, where the average length of stay was 104.25 days. Other services provided at the shelter include case management, childcare, and after-school tutorial and recreation programs for the children and educational workshops for the parents. The Shelter includes a Psychiatric Social Worker to work with individuals and families with mental health issues to obtain housing stability, coordinate and monitor their treatment plans and assist in obtaining other needed services.

With the onset of the pandemic, for the health and safety of our clients, DSS temporarily closed the shelter and placed all residents in hotels. From March to July DSS staff visited families in hotels to provide meals and other support to assist them during the pandemic.

During the COVID pandemic several safety protocols were put into place to protect workers and residents. These included limiting occupancy rate for shelter and sanitizing of rooms. Despite the pandemic, 12 families found permanent housing.

Thirteen new families were admitted to the Shelter in 2020. A total of 27 families resided in the Shelter throughout the year.

Year	New Families Admitted	Adults/Children Residing Throughout Year	
		Adults	Children
2015	29	36	49
2016	28	31	49
2017	31	44	72
2018	22	35	57
2019	21	38	50
2020	13	15	22

MEDICAL ASSISTANCE

Medicaid provides health care coverage to income-eligible individuals. The program is a government program, financed by federal, state, and local funds, for medical insurance for persons of all ages within certain income limits. The majority of Medicaid cases are currently handled by the New York State of Health, Health Benefit Exchange.

The Rockland County Department of Social Services' Medicaid Unit processes Medicaid applications for residents who are:

- Medicare recipients
- 65 years old or older who are not caretakers for children under 18 years of age or between the ages of 18 and 19 and still in school
- looking to participate in programs that can assist with the cost of long-term care services' such as:
 - Adult Day Care
 - Home Care
 - Personal Care
 - Private Duty Nursing
 - Social and Environmental Support
 - Home Delivered Meals

for assistance with the cost of Home Care, Assisted Living Facility or Nursing Home Care:

- Looking for assistance with the cost of residential facilities such as Assisted Living Facilities, Intermediate Care Facilities or Nursing Home Facilities
- Eligible for the Medicaid Buy in for Working People with Disabilities Program
- Disabled adults and children applying for specialized waiver programs such as:
 - The Nursing Home Transition Diversion Waiver Program
 - The Home and Community Based Waiver Program
 - The Children's Consolidated Waiver Program
- disabled adults and children eligible for the Excess Income Program
- eligible for help paying for Medicare premiums and/or copays through the Medicare Savings Program

All other persons looking for medical insurance through the Medicaid program must apply through the New York State of Health (NYSOH).

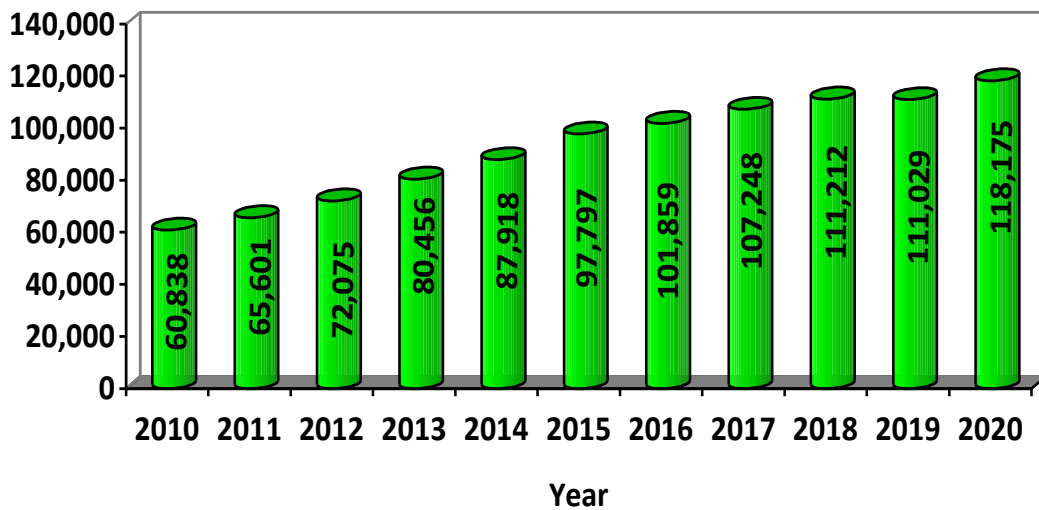
During the COVID-19 pandemic the Medicaid Unit has worked closely with multiple non-for-profit agencies, client representatives and consumers themselves to approve Medicaid coverage as quickly as possible for the elderly and disabled. By providing services not covered by Medicare or other third-party health insurances, the Medicaid program has been able to assist individuals in obtaining services such as in-home health aides and personal care assistants. These services have allowed our Medicaid recipient to remain living safely in the comfort of their own home for as long as possible. Without these vital services some individuals would have no other option than to enter a nursing home facility in order to receive the care they need.

MEDICAID APPLICATIONS – For all applications, requests for an increase in coverage and redeterminations; clients can self-attest to all eligibility criteria, including the 5 year look back on resources. The only exception is applicants must provide verification of immigration/identity status and trusts. Additionally, individuals are not required to pursue other benefits that may be available to them i.e., Social Security, Medicaid, Unemployment Insurance Benefits etc.

RECERTIFICATIONS- New York State DOH has been extending Medicaid cases automatically and have not required recipients of Medicaid to renew their benefits during the federal COVID emergency period. All active Medicaid cases are being systemically extended for 12 months starting in March 2020. Cases are being recertified on a month-by-month basis for example: cases that are running out June 30, 2021 will be automatically extended for a 12-month period until June 30, 2022 systematically.

To ensure that anyone in receipt of Medicaid coverage on or after March 18, 2020 does not lose or have a reduction in their Medicaid coverage during this public health emergency no negative actions are to be taken.

of Medicaid Recipients in Rockland County at Year End



SOCIAL SERVICES

MISSION STATEMENT

Partnering with Rockland County families, in a respectful and culturally competent manner, to reach the common goal of a secure and safe environment where all individuals and families thrive.

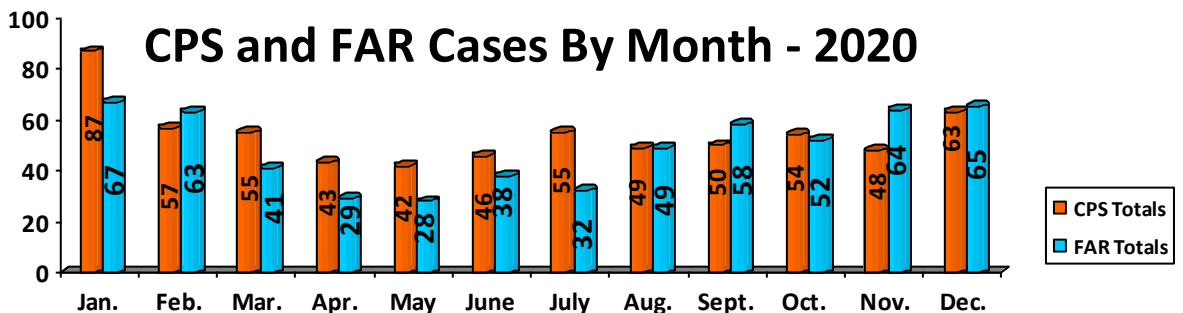
The Department of Social Services provides a wide range of supportive programs, including services to strengthen family life, prevent family disruption, promote individual functioning, and keep families together; temporary placement in family foster homes, group homes or residential facilities; adoption; services to help the elderly or disabled remain in their own home; services to unmarried parents; protective services; and services toward self-support.

Children and Family Services consists of the following: Child Protective Services (Investigative, Family Assessment Response), Children’s Services (Foster Care, Direct Custody, Adoption, and Foster Parent Recruitment/Certification/Training/Support), Family Services, Adolescent/PINS Diversion Services and the STEPS (**S**chools, **T**raining, **E**ligibility, **P**ublic **O**utreach and **S**tatistics) Administrative Unit. Together, they provide various supportive and important services to help maintain the safety and well-being of children in Rockland County. Children & Family Services partners with families and utilizes a trauma-informed treatment framework that involves understanding, recognizing, and responding to the effects of all types of trauma.

CHILD PROTECTIVE SERVICES (CPS): INVESTIGATIVE AND FAMILY ASSESSMENT RESPONSE (FAR)

In 2020, CPS received a total of 1338 reports from the State Central Register (SCR). This was a 16% decrease in reports from 2019 (1589) The FAR Units assessed 621 (46%) of the reports, while the Investigative Units received 717 (54%) reports. Of the 717 investigative reports, there were 649 new investigations completed. These cases included 528 maltreatment investigations, 98 sex abuse investigations, and 23 physical abuse investigations. On average the Investigative and FAR Units assessed 111 cases each month.

Investigative Caseworkers removed a total of 52 children for neglect and/or abuse. This remains consistent with the removals made in 2019. Thirty-two (62%) of these children were placed in the direct custody of relatives and twenty (38%) of these children were placed in non-relative foster care. This was a slight increase of 2% more children being placed with relatives from 2019. It also surpassed the Office of Children and Families Services (OCFS) target to place a minimum of 30% of children with relatives. The highest concentrations of children who were removed lived in the following towns: Spring Valley (38%), Haverstraw (12%), Nanuet (12%) and Pearl River (8%). In compliance with Every Student Succeeds act (ESSA), 100% of the children who were removed for neglect or abuse were maintained in their school district of origin.



Children's Services Unit is responsible for providing trauma-informed, safe, and loving homes for children and teens who are temporarily removed from their birth families. Foster care caseworkers work with birth parents, children, foster parents, and direct custodians to reduce and/or eliminate safety and risk factors. The primary goals are reunification of the family and safe permanency plans for the children. Caseworkers also work with group homes and residential treatment centers that provide services for children and teens who need a higher level of structure.

By the end of December 2020, Rockland had 68 children in placement, including 40 children in foster care and 28 children in the direct custody of relatives. Despite the restrictions from the pandemic, Rockland DSS worked diligently with the purpose to achieve permanency for the children in placements. Fifty-one children were discharged in 2020 to the following resources: Returned to their parents (30), Discharged to a relative (9), Adoption (3), Kinship Guardianship, Independent Living (4) and OCFS custody (1).

Specialized Services are provided for youth between the ages of 14 and 21 to connect them with a significant adult resource and prepare them for adulthood independence. Rockland in Partnership with Office of Children and Family Service's (OCFS) Youth Specialist conducted 3 virtual Independent Living Seminars. Two youth in foster care received a COVID-related grant from Family First Transitional Act Aging-Out Fund. Caseworkers diligently assisted these youth in strategically using these funds towards their transition into independence. One young person received a three-year housing voucher from the Foster Youth to Independence Initiative (FYI) program. This was the first voucher of its kind that was given out in NYS.

Rockland is actively working to achieve the goals of the Family First Preventive Service Act. By the end of December, Rockland has exceeded OCFS's target to have 12% or less youth in a congregate care setting by having only 2 young people (5%) in a congregate care setting. Rockland also surpassed the OCFS expectation of increasing Kinship Foster Home placements to at least 30%. The number of kinship homes was increased from 9 to 15 for a rate of 37.5%

A Redlich Horwitz Foundation grant helped Rockland hold its first symposium for the purpose of recruiting foster parents in March 2020. The event was followed by monthly virtual informational sessions to continue our recruitment efforts. Rockland became one of the first counties in NYS to transition our foster parent training to a virtual setting. This allowed staff to safely provide 2 trainings in 2020. All of these efforts resulted in 77 active foster homes at the end of the year.

DSS partnered with Wendy's to celebrate our foster care families. Wendy's restaurants, located in both Nanuet and Haverstraw, transitioned their annual in-person event to a drive through event and provided free meals to our foster and adoptive families. Similarly, the annual in person holiday party in December was transitioned to a drive-by Holiday Party in the Social Service's parking lot. Families and children were greeted by Mr. and Mrs. Santa Claus and showered with donated gifts from the public.



Family Time and Transportation Unit provides children in foster care and their families with vital services including transportation and drug screening tests. This team played a vital role by continuing the drug screening process throughout the pandemic. This was especially critical because many substance abuse programs stopped providing drug screening during the pandemic. This important feedback on the parent’s progress with their recovery helps caseworkers and the courts to continue making safe decisions and avoid delays with reunifying families and protecting children.

Additionally, this team provided court ordered supervised visits for parents with children in placement due to neglect or abuse. Visits are provided in a safe and comfortable environment, both indoors and outdoors and on our newly renovated playground. Additional visits are provided in the community and family home by Mental Health Association (MHA) of Rockland. Another Redlich Horwitz Foundation grant helped to fund a lending library of 14 laptops for parents to borrow if they didn’t have access to technology for virtual Family Time. DSS and MA supervision help to maintain and enhance bonding while providing opportunities for parents to practice and strengthen their parenting skills. The team also transitioned to including the option of virtual visits so parents could increase family time and stay connected with their child even at times when it was unsafe to see each other in person. The indoor visitation area was restructured and equipped so that families could continue to visit in person while social distancing from other families.

The chart below is a summary of services provide by the Family Time and Transportation Unit during 2020.

2020	Drug Tests	Swab Tests	Urine Tests	Family Time	Transports	Visitors	Bus Tickets	Coached Visits
Total	4272	3387	885	807	1127	3599	720	1

A partnership with Mental Health Association (MHA) of Rockland enhances DSS’s capacity for visitation by providing additional occasions for visitation in the community and/or the family’s home. DSS and MHA supervised visits help to maintain and develop bonding while providing opportunities for parents to practice and strengthen their parenting skills.

In addition, the Parent Center for Visitation provides foster care children and their families with vital and important services including transportation and drug screening tests. The chart below is a summary of services provided during 2020.

2020	Car Usage	Drug Tests	Swabs	Urines	Visits	Transports	Visitors	Bus Tickets	Coached Visits
Total	5204	4272	3387	885	1440	1127	3599	720	1 Families

Family Services staff provide in-home assessments, casework counseling and assistance with connecting to other services. The goal is to empower families to achieve and maintain self-sufficiency, strengthen families, and prevent avoidable disruptions to the family unit. Services are voluntary except when ordered by Family Court in cases of abuse, neglect, or custody matters.

In 2020, 174 families were served, which is about the same number of families served in 2019 (176). Family Services holds monthly review board meetings with participants from all areas of Children and Family Services to discuss and formulate ideas to prevent the placement of children into the Foster Care system. All workers in Family Services were trained in locating absent parents in 2020. This training taught workers how to improve their casework by further strengthening the parent-child bond, including both parents in the case planning to strengthen the family.

Family Services staff quickly transitioned into using mobile technology during the Covid pandemic to access and monitor for safety and risk while continuing to meet child welfare mandates. In many cases staff contacted families weekly to provide additional support regarding concerns related to the pandemic including medical, food shortages, housing issues etc. In person visits occurred throughout the pandemic when safety and risk could not be assessed virtually.

DSS remains a key stakeholder in Rockland's Family Treatment Court (FTC) Improvement Project.

Adolescent Services provide diversion services and supports to families with teenagers exhibiting behaviors such as truancy, substance use, parent-child conflict, gang involvement, criminal activity and/or violence. Caseworkers partner with families to increase the likelihood of a young person transitioning into pro-social independence and adulthood. Research shows that the long-term outcomes for young people are best served in the community, so this is the goal of Adolescent Services. As a result of the Covid-Pandemic, Adolescent Services referrals dropped 10% in 2020 to 97 compared to the referrals received in 2019 (108).

In 2019, Adolescent Services expanded to include the **Parent & Adolescent Response Team (PART)**. This addition filled an immediate gap in mental health services. It allowed Behavioral Health workers to partner with Caseworkers and bring mental health and substance abuse services into the home. In 2020, the PART Team started implementing an evidenced-based model called Multi-Systemic Therapy (MST). To date this model has shown significant promise in changing the trajectory for young people.

MST Highlights:

- 84% (16:19) of youth completed treatment
- 94% of the youth remained at home and in the community
- 81% of youth were in school or working at the end of treatment

Other Adolescent Services Highlights:

- 100% of youth with PINS behaviors were diverted from placement.
- 98% of all youth services were diverted from placement (2:97)
- 2 youths placed because of criminal charges

Additionally, several prosocial supports were provided for youth and their families including Career and Education Workshops, tutoring, prosocial activities, Braveheart's youth leadership development and incentives. DSS also continues to collaborate with the District Attorney's Office, Probation, Mental Health, and Rockland BOCES to provide diversion services at the Partnership for Safe and Healthy Youth. The Partnership seeks to locate children and youth that are being serviced by multiple systems to provide a streamlined intervention that helps children and youth progress in school and remain healthy and safe in the community.

“STEPS” (**S**chools, **T**raining, **E**ligibility, **P**ublic Outreach and **S**tatistics) solidifies DSS's commitment to the safety of children and youth by providing real-time data to Children and Family Services' units so adequate planning and effective programming can be provided.

STEPS staff provides training to school and community organizations to assist with identifying and reporting early signs of potential abuse and neglect of children and at-risk behavior of youth. In 2020 the pandemic brought about a rise in school absenteeism. As a result, the STEPS unit assisted school districts throughout Rockland County with safety checks to assess the situation, determine what needs had to be met, and to provide resources, and/or assistance.

DSS continues collaboration with the school districts to expedite and support the need for services identified within the schools. East Ramapo continues to have the highest number of calls (5:99 or 54%) to the State Central Registry. However, this is a 67% (54:164) decrease in the number of calls

made by East Ramapo School District in 2019. A DSS Caseworker is assigned to the East Ramapo School District to help identify appropriate referrals for early engagement to reduce potential safety and risk factors. DSS also partners with the East Ramapo School District by participating in their monthly student attendance meetings to offer and provide services to those families that have youth with excessive school absences.

DSS has a representative stationed at the Partnership for Safe and Healthy Youth to engage families and coordinate comprehensive plans for cross-system services. A total of 51 new referrals were made to the Partnership for Safe and Healthy Youth conducted virtual meetings to continue to serve both current and new families.

Rockland County DSS was awarded a grant by the Office for Children and Family Services (OCFS) for its sixth year in providing services to youth identified to be at confirmed or at risk of human trafficking and/or sexual exploitation. A screening tool is being utilized across systems to identify victims of human trafficking. DSS conducted 1, 278 rapid indicator tools in 2020. A yes response to the rapid indicator tools prompts the case worker to complete a Comprehensive tool which identifies the youth's risk level. Thirty Comprehensives were completed in 2020 (2 high risk, 7 youth were identified at medium risk, 21 no risk, 0 confirmed). The Safe Harbor MDT meeting takes place monthly to discuss and strategize around engagement and services for youth who are being trafficked or who are at risk of trafficking. Outreach is conducted through advertising, distribution of awareness material, and education and trainings in hospitals, school districts, hotels, libraries, colleges, community agencies, and religious organizations.

ADULT AND SPECIAL SERVICES

MISSION STATEMENT

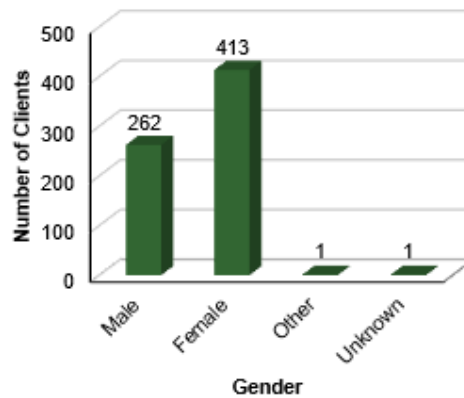
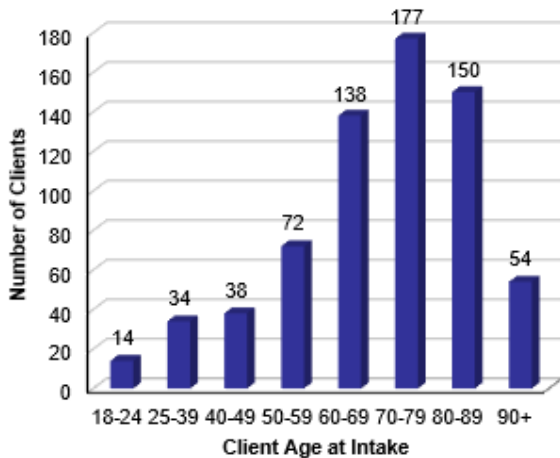
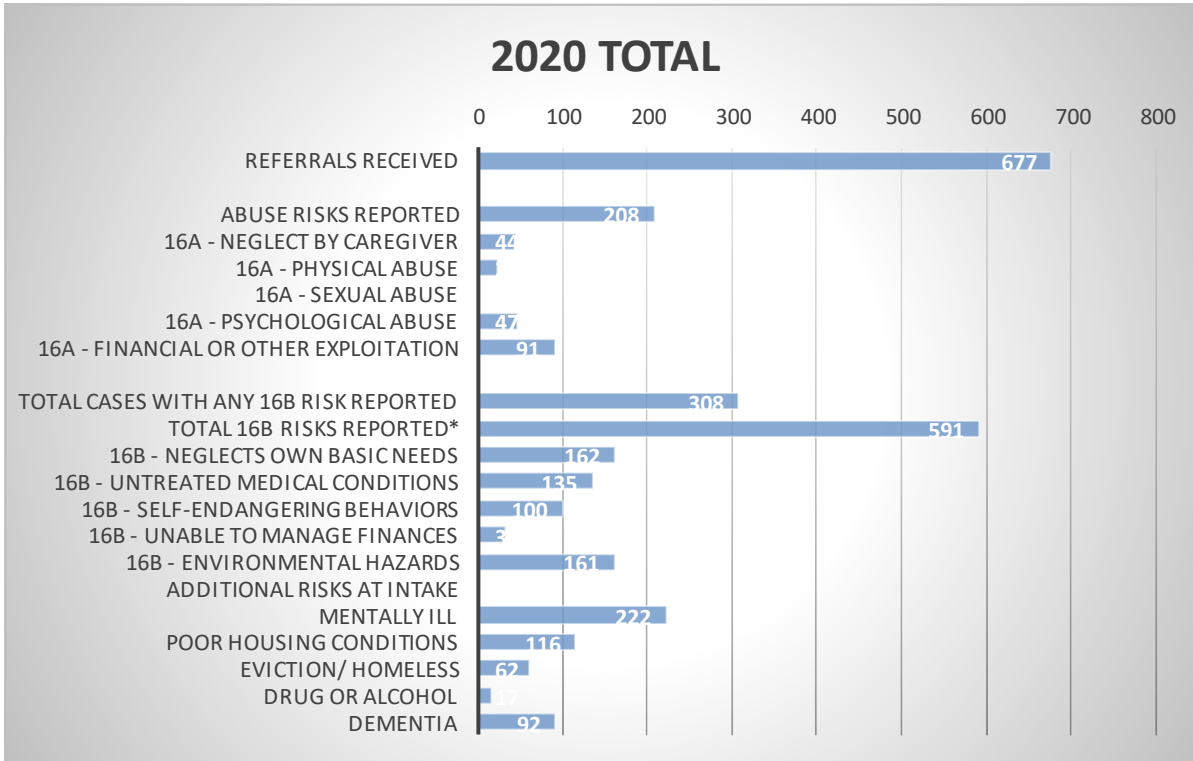
Partnering with Rockland County, Adult Protective Services (APS) and Adult Services (AS) are dedicated to the protection and support of vulnerable adults, through community involvement and collaboration of services to identify, prevent, and address abuse and exploitation of adults as well as enable adults to remain in the least restrictive environment.

ADULT PROTECTIVE SERVICES (APS) is a program to assist adults, age 18 or over, who because of mental or physical impairment cannot provide for their basic needs or protect themselves from abuse and/or neglect. These services are provided without regard to income and are based on the principle of the individual's right to self-determination and the least restrictive alternatives. In 2020, APS received 677 referrals.

A major role of APS is to identify and address circumstances of Adult Abuse. In 2020, 208 cases involved a component of possible abuse. Staff worked closely with law enforcement and the legal system in this area to protect vulnerable adults as adult abuse is considered a hidden problem.

APS collaborates with various County departments such as the Department of Health in dealing with health and safety standards for residences and issues of hoarding. In 2020, there were 116 of these types of cases. APS also works with the Department of Finance and the Office for the Aging to assist in protecting and connecting residents with various services. Additionally, APS cooperates with nonprofit and community-based agencies such as Meals on Wheels, food banks and mental health providers. Below is statistical data for the year of 2020:

Workers continually conduct outreach efforts to service providers, banking institutions and the public to better inform them as to where and how to report potential abuse.



Rockland County Adult Service Medical Unit has approximately 400 active long-term care cases. These cases are still transitioning to Managed Care Companies.

Adult Services staff serve as a resource to applicants and recipients of Personal Care Services to resolve problems and issues of care. The overall purpose is to enable people to remain in their homes and in the least restrictive environment.

2020 saw the implementation of new procedures for environmental and vehicle modifications under the Child Waiver Program, which allows for increased mobility and safety in the home.

Involvement with Family Homes, that provide supportive housing to impaired adults continued.

The Effects of COVID-19

Watching the ball drop at midnight on 12/31/2019, no one could have guessed that a new reality was about to drop as well. By the middle of January, we began to hear talk of a novel coronavirus coming

out of China. Fear began to mount both locally and nationwide and by March 24th our county was in lock down and staff were all working from their homes.

The staff of APS and AS are highly trained and skilled to address unsafe and serious situations. This pandemic, however, was not only a new unknown, but it was also deadly. APS/AS staff had to quickly learn how to safely use Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) and source hand sanitizers and antibacterial wipes. As each new hurdle was encountered, the team leapt. Strategies were developed to deal with Covid infected clients and potentially infected clients as well as those clients in fear on being infected or worse, infecting loved ones. APS/AS workers had to suppress their own fears and anxiety regarding COVID to serve vulnerable Adults in our community. Following state and CDC guidelines, visits to client homes continued. Food was delivered to those in quarantine, emergency medical care was arranged, clients were contacted, and support continued. This was vital, as many health and human services had limited or no operations.

Meeting challenges while in the field was only half the battle. Rockland County APS/AS workers triumphed, keeping up with caseloads, providing needed services and meeting and exceeding deadlines. Staff learned how to “tele-commute” and working remotely necessitated the need for new technology. Tablets once used only to enhance services now became essential. Units communicated with one another via ZOOM, TEAMS, sometimes even used text just to stay in touch. A feeling of camaraderie, community, and mutual support cemented.

APS staff did not miss a beat and continued to service our clients. Cases barely diminished during the time as illustrated by the chart below.

Statistical Comparison
ASAP Referrals 2019 V 2020 (COVID Year)

	January	Feb	March	April	May	June	July	Aug.	Sept.	Oct.	Nov.	Dec.	Total
2019	48	54	58	59	65	57	73	68	41	86	52	64	725
2020	75	40	46	48	51	65	57	58	55	61	60	61	677
Change	+27	-14	-12	-11	-14	+8	-16	-10	+14	-25	+8	-3	-48

Due to COVID there were no Tax Referrals to APS in 2020

As we begin the process of emerging from this pandemic, we can look back over the past year with pride. No client was left behind. Many of the protocols developed are still in use and despite the trials that we faced and continue to face, service to our clients remains consistent and dependable.

ENFORCEMENT

MISSION STATEMENT

Partnering with Rockland County to be the finest provider of legal services on behalf of the Department of Social Services so that the Department and the vulnerable population we serve are afforded their legal rights, with the highest degree of professionalism and integrity.

The Enforcement Unit represents the Department in Family Court; advises the Commissioner and staff on legal matters, procedures and issues and is responsible for program integrity and child support enforcement.

THE FAMILY LAW DIVISION is responsible for representing the Department in Family Court on matters of paternity, child support, child abuse and neglect, foster care, and juvenile delinquency (JD) cases.

The Family Law Division successfully and safely navigated the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020. Myriad changes to usual practices and protocols were replaced with technology driven alternatives using various platforms. The ability to pivot and safely accommodate the needs of our clients allowed us to seamlessly facilitate necessary legal interventions, including virtual meetings, court conferences, hearings, and electronic document sharing. The Attorney staff provided additional legal support to other Department employees and partners during that time to guide them on the limitations on what type of cases could be heard by the court and to assist in formulating plans for those cases that did not meet the criteria for filing.

This Unit has a 95% success rate in abuse and neglect proceedings. There are 13 neglect matters which are still pending before the Family Court.

LEGAL DEPARTMENT is responsible for any and all litigation by or against the Department, Article 81 Proceedings, and administrative hearings. The Department also provides legal advice to other units.

A subdivision of the Legal Department is the **Fair Hearings Unit** which represents the Department in administrative reviews requested by applicants or recipients of assistance who are not satisfied with the agency's actions. This Unit tries to resolve disagreements to avoid a hearing, helping to reduce administrative costs and provide improved service to the Department's customers.

In 2020, the Department of Social Services participated in the resolution of nearly 400 Fair Hearings, of which 89% resulted in Agency affirmed, applicant rescinded, applicant default, or correct when made.

The Legal Department also oversees the operations and functions of units that enforce federal, state, and local laws, rules and regulations and procedures regarding assistance payments made through the Department, with the exception of Child Support. The enforcements units under the direction of this office are Special Investigations and Resource Recovery, including the Cash Management System.

SPECIAL INVESTIGATIONS UNIT (SIU) is comprised of the Fraud and Front-End Detection System (FEDS) Sections.

Through both Front (FEDS) and back end (Fraud) investigations, the SIU works to ensure program integrity for all public assistance programs administered by DSS. These programs include Temporary

Cash Assistance (commonly known as “welfare”), Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) Benefits (formerly known as “Food Stamps”), Child Care Subsidy (Day Care) Assistance, Medicaid Assistance, Home Energy Assistance (HEAP) and Emergency Temporary Assistance.

The goal of the FEDS program is to identify at application, before any assistance benefits have been expended, unresolved discrepancies which may be indicative of false information. These discrepancies are New York State approved indicators or “red flags” (examples: paid expenses exceed reported income without reasonable explanation; working off the books either presently or previously; self-employed but without adequate business records to substantiate reported information). The FEDS program is a simple and cost-effective way to identify and avoid expending benefits on behalf of ineligible applicants at intake and is preferable to costly and time/labor-intensive back end Fraud eligibility investigations.

In 2020, the SIU received 101 new FEDS referrals for investigation, all of which were completed resulting in the denial/withdrawal of 34 applications and an estimated \$264,366 in New York State defined cost-avoidance.

The SIU received 351 new fraud (back end) referrals; completing 357 (276 from new 2020 referrals, 81 from previous years’ referrals), resulting in 37 new fraud overpayments totaling \$152,865 and on-going recoveries totaling \$156,811. Additionally, 98 active assistance cases were closed as the direct result of fraud investigations resulting in an additional \$396,288 in estimated cost-avoidance. Combined FEDS (\$264,366) and Fraud (\$396,288) cost-avoidance totaled an estimated \$660,654.

SIU FEDS/Fraud Investigators regularly conduct field investigations involving any referrals they may receive regarding applicants, Child Care Subsidy providers, and relevant and related collateral contacts. These investigations may include unannounced home visits to verify an applicant’s/recipient’s reported household composition and income and unannounced visits to employers to verify Child Care Subsidy applicant’s/recipient’s reported days and hours of employment. When referrals for Child Care Subsidy providers (Day Care providers) are received, staff conducts unannounced attendance verification visits. Information observed by SIU staff during their field investigations may result in referrals to the Office of Children and Family Services (OCFS) regarding issues with licensed Day Care providers; the Rockland County Health Department/Housing Codes Initiative/various Village and Town Building and Fire Inspectors regarding apparent substandard, illegally converted, and/or overcrowding; and DSS Family Services Teams and Child Protective Services regarding possible child neglect.

The SIU refers cases of suspected fraud to the Rockland County District Attorney’s Office, and allegations of fraud involving Rockland County Medicaid Exchange clients have been referred directly to the Office of the Medicaid Inspector General (OMIG) for appropriate action.

RESOURCE RECOVERY UNIT assures that any non-exempt income and/or assets of a customer are utilized to reduce the need for assistance. Recoupment is made from recipients when assets or resources are later uncovered such as stocks, bonds, bank accounts, real property, lawsuit recoveries, estate, or other claims. The Unit also files liens, judgments, assignments, estate claims and mortgages in appropriate cases to preserve the rights of the Department. In 2020, \$544,332 was collected by the Resource Recovery Team; over 525 new collections cases were established on behalf of TA, SNAP, HEAP, SIU and O&R reconciliation; and 184 judgments were prepared and filed electronically with the Rockland County Clerk on delinquent consumers.

Both SIU and Resource Unit staff members are responsible for coordinating and overseeing all aspects of overpayment and advance payment collections for all programs, including Temporary Assistance, SNAP, Childcare Assistance and Medicaid. These employees serve as a liaison between Rockland County DSS and the consumers who owe the County money. They are responsible for following up on all repayment agreements, establishing contact with non-paying consumers,

negotiating a mutually acceptable repayment arrangement, and as a last resort, referring matters for litigation when deemed necessary.

Due to the pandemic of 2020, the Special Investigations Unit, Resource Recovery and Compliance Units shifted their operations to both telephonic and virtual outreach to meet the needs of both clients/applicants and the Agency.

Special Investigations

The Special Investigations Unit adjusted its focus during the pandemic. The Unit was unable to perform home visits and instead performed field observations and made contact with clients telephonically. Although the referral process slowed due to the automatic recertification and lack of in-person interviews, the Unit continued to investigate fraud allegations, pursue overpayments and work with the Eligibility Unit to gather accurate and up to date information on clients/applicants.

Resource Recovery/Collections

The Resource Recovery/Collections Unit stopped billing clients during the months of April, May, and June 2020. Billing resumed on a smaller scale beginning in July of 2020 and in November moved to a full cycle with approximately 2,000 bills being mailed. We continued to receive and post payments throughout the pandemic. The focus of the Unit was to determine the validity of 'old' debt currently reflected in the Cash Management System.

Compliance

The in-person reviews of the Child Care Subsidy Providers moved to virtual and the process was adjusted. Documents were submitted via email and staff interviews were conducted telephonically. Some Agency scheduled reviews were postponed and instead the focus of the Unit shifted to corrective action plans and follow-up on previously reviewed areas to determine that process improvements were in place. The Unit also focused on the staff telecommuting process to ensure that telework agreements, requests, logs, tokens, and schedules were in place. In addition, reviews were conducted using the token report.

The Rockland County **CHILD SUPPORT ENFORCEMENT UNIT (CSEU)** continues to work with Temporary Assistance consumers, Medicaid recipients and private clients to assist them in the establishment of paternity and enforcement of child support orders.

In 2020, \$26,316,000 in child support was collected and distributed to 5,497 custodial parents, pursuant to CSEU's efforts to establish, collect and enforce child support orders on behalf of our clients.

ADMINISTRATION

The Department of Social Services has several units that provide administrative and support services to the Agency.

WELFARE MANAGEMENT SYSTEMS (WMS)

The Welfare Management Systems (WMS) Unit is the IT Unit for the Department. They support two networks (mobile devices for workers in the field and desktop computers in the office) to ensure DSS employees have reliable and consistent access to New York State applications that administer the local Social Services programs. These applications directly impact Rockland County's citizenry and enable DSS employees to strengthen communities by providing prompt customer service to Rockland's individuals and families.

WMS manages hardware of nearly 400 desktop computers, almost 200 mobile devices and approximately 300 cameras. WMS unit was instrumental in providing the technology and support which allowed for over 90% of the DSS staff to work effectively and efficiently during the pandemic by deploying laptops and cameras.

In 2020, WMS resolved 9,188 requests for employee technical support assistance, as reported by the DSS Technical Support System. WMS personally attends to each request and handles technical needs derived from all the equipment they maintain, monitor, and manage.

WMS oversees all operations for the Central Index System (CI) which closed 5,263 cases in 2020 of which 3,476 were new cases and 1,787 were prior cases which require considerable research and time to assess.

WMS also manages local operations for the Benefits Issuance Control System (BICS), a New York State fiscal accounting system that generates all Foster Care, Vendor and other payments authorized by Agency staff.

WMS implements statewide technology modernization efforts designed to reduce agency costs and improve worker productivity. WMS works hard to deploy all manner of new technology, educate staff on its use, and provide support whether they are teleworking or in the office.

WMS implements all computer and telephone relocations within the Agency and completed relocations of 32 computers and 50 telephones to accommodate COVID social distancing requirements as staff returned to the office safely.

WMS is the curator for all DSS websites and have been tasked with keeping the information current.

WMS provides statistical data extracted from various sources within the Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance (OTDA), Office of Children and Family Services (OCFS) and Department of Health (DOH). WMS also provides monthly data on Medicaid, TA, SNAP, CSEU and CPS and Jail matches. This data identifies patterns of use and need, while supporting daily operations and supervisory functions.

The data is used to refine planning and policy formulation for enhancement of services provided to Rockland County residents.

WMS expanded the monthly stats report to include WMS Monthly Stats, Temporary Assistance and Medicaid Individuals by Zip Code; Child Support Services DCE-157; Commissioner's Corner – Unduplicated Individuals Report; and Child Welfare Services Report.

COVID-19 Pandemic

During the height of the COVID-19 Pandemic, many projects were urgently accelerated to accommodate demand and provide support for teleworking employees. WMS was called upon to deploy and support large amounts of technology. This included obtaining additional RSA tokens for staff, deploying 40 additional tablets, setting up 130 tablets with SSLVPN connection within 3 days, rolling out Microsoft Teams to staff and arranging for trainings, deploying cameras to be used by staff for virtual meetings, and moving 32 computers to promote social distancing. These efforts enabled DSS to work remotely without a break in providing services to the public. These challenges were particularly difficult as the need for mobile and remote technology explosively expanded while a portion of the workforce remained in the office site and required support as well.

Administration also coordinated the Need Assessment Response for each Unit in the Department to facilitate the Rockland Forward Initiative. This was particularly challenging due to an extremely short time frame.

Also, during the pandemic, to maintain communication with Staff, we quickly got up to speed using Microsoft Teams and created a handout, for users to acclimate faster. IT support increased due to necessity and the demand was met.

The WMS LAN Admins provided tech support when NYDOC Submit was launched on an accelerated platform from 12 months to 4 weeks, enabling clients to virtually submit their applications.

In addition, it is very important to note that during the COVID19 pandemic, WMS posted all changes relevant to the public, including updates on changes with SNAP recertifications and all relevant timetables.

WMS was tasked with organizing the effort to get 89 DSS workers certified as Contact Tracers during the COVID-19 pandemic within 36 hours to enable Rockland County to meet the Contact Tracer metric to open Rockland County for Phase I.

FISCAL OPERATIONS

Accounting is responsible for the fiscal operations of the agency and preparing and filing all pertinent reports and claims for reimbursement as requires by the State and Federal government. The Accounting Department consists of four units: Public Assistance Accounting, Services Accounting, Audit and Administrative Accounting.

Assistance provided to residents of Rockland County exceeded \$1.1 Billion in 2020, a 4.5% increase as compared to 2019. Medicaid expenses comprise more that 86% of the County's total budget and account for more than \$1 Billion. The majority of the 4.5% increase over 2019 is related to Supplemental Assistance Nutrition Program (Food Stamps/SNAP). SNAP expenses accounted for \$88,110,969, or 7.4% of the DSS Agencies Budget.

Federal support toward overall assistance costs exceeds 56% (\$663,359,314), State aid accounts for approximately 37% (431,991,322), and local share is 7% (\$83,455,026). Revenue sources include grant awards (\$2,841,565) and repayment of assistance from clients (\$678,600).

Detailed information regarding program expenditures and revenues can be found on pages 8-10.

AUDIT / ADMINISTRATION POLICY TEAM

Throughout 2020, DSS continued to prioritize Agency performance in three key areas: Regulatory compliance, client services delivery and increased efficiency between internal units.

In pursuit of achieving these goals, the Commissioner's Audit and Administration Policy Team audits current operations, identifies deficiencies, researches legal and regulatory mandates while addressing key operational issues. The Team has a unique process, working collaboratively with all Units to develop guidelines, procedures, processes, and employee trainings, which ensure compliance with Agency expectations.

The Team's efforts assure accountability throughout the Agency, while ensuring consistent provision of accurate levels of benefits and services to Rockland's residents. The Team develops and implements policies in accordance with State and Federal regulations, as well as, State administrative directives. The process includes legal review and analysis from Administration, as well as, an audit review from the Auditing Unit.

ADMINISTRATION

Agency investment in internal policy development yields high returns. Clear identification of Agency compliance goals and requirements, in tandem with updating internal procedures and employee training enables staff to work more efficiently and focus their efforts on delivering services that protect the vulnerable and provide financial assistance for residents in need.

Tighter internal controls improve program integrity, helping to uncover and avert welfare waste and fraud, while focusing on the Agency's accountability to Rockland's taxpayers.

During 2020 significant policies were developed:

- Child Care Subsidy Benefit Overpayment Policy
- Medicaid Benefit Overpayment Policy
- Temporary Assistance Program Overpayment Policy
- Records Retention Policy
- Telework Policy and Procedures
- Auditing and Shredding Key Procedure
- Confidentiality of Records and Communications Policy
- Blind Removal Process Policy
- Kin-First Firewall Practice Policy

Administration successfully negotiated with the State for permission to use secure State cable lines for the County's new VOIP project, saving huge expense for the County as well as hours of County work power.

OPERATIONS, ANALYSIS AND PLANNING (OAP)

OAP develops and processes funding applications, contracts, plans, and grants in accordance with State and Federal regulations and administrative directives. The Unit's processing also incorporates a legal review and analysis. OAP staff develops, drafts, implements, manages, and monitors internal and contracted local programs that provide needed services to families in Rockland communities. The Planning Unit assists contract agencies with contract compliance, performance, and reporting requirements to ensure that the Department's expectations and objectives are properly met. The Unit continues its efforts to assure accountability by service providers, including strict scrutiny, monitoring,

site visits at least twice per year, and legal review of contract services. OAP works collaboratively with DSS staff and agencies to identify unmet needs and develop contracted programs that best address what is needed for our clients, families, and the community. OAP oversees agency allocations and expenditures, maximizes resources, and develops Annual Agency Achievements and Strategies for submission to the County Executive as well as various mandated State plans and annual updates required by the State.

In 2020, OAP was responsible for 155 contracts totaling \$4,968,972 and 13 grants totaling \$2,841,586.

2020 was extremely challenging for all, including our contracted vendors. OAP was able to seamlessly continue monitoring the contracts and adapt to the changing protocols implemented to keep the services going. OAP was able to process contracts electronically. We worked closely with our vendors to ensure the services were being provided and working with them as they had to change the way in which services were delivered.

COVID-19 pandemic led to new legislation/guidelines related to homelessness prevention which resulted in an increase in the amount of grants, plans and contracts OAP processed and monitored.

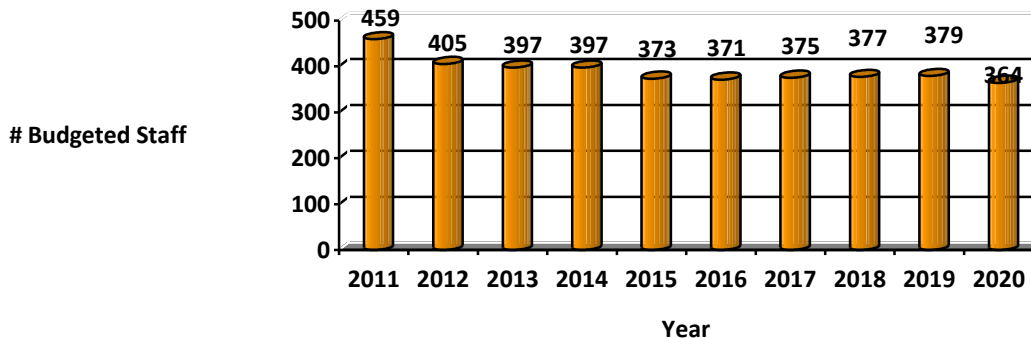
PERSONNEL and **STAFF DEVELOPMENT** serve the Department of Social Services by focusing efforts on its staff.

MISSION STATEMENT

PERSONNEL- Partnering with Rockland County DSS employees, Personnel provides comprehensive human resources information and services to affect an engaged and efficient workforce.

Personnel is responsible for hiring and retaining a diverse, qualified workforce in accordance with Civil Service Law. **Personnel** provides human resources direction and assistance, payroll administration, equal employment opportunities and employee relations services. In 2020, Personnel scheduled 102 interviews for 19 different position titles. Twenty-one new hires were processed as well as 45 separations. Other functions include maintenance of employee records, compliance with federal, state, and local laws, regulations, and policies (i.e.: Americans with Disabilities Act, Family and Medical Leave, Workers' Compensation, etc.), health and safety and performance management.

In 2020, the number of budgeted positions was 364.



During the COVID-19 pandemic Personnel also managed the following:

- Distributed COVID-19 guidance, regulations and safety information to all employees;
- Applied COVID leave as appropriate;

- Administered emergency paid sick leave and emergency FMLA under the Families First Coronavirus Response Act (FFCRA);
- Maintained telework agreements for those working remotely.

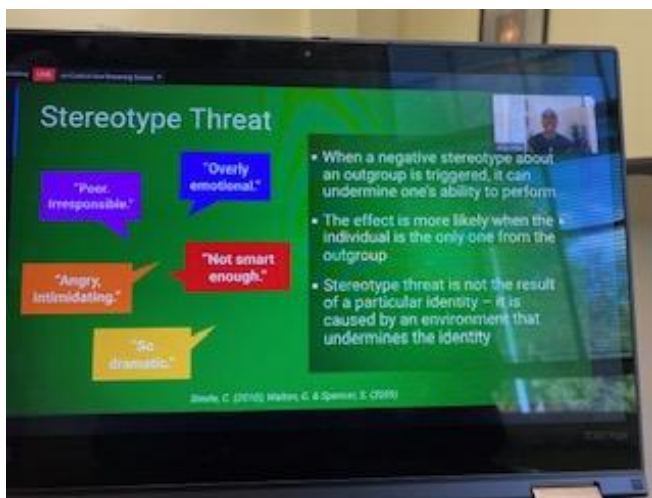
MISSION STATEMENT

STAFF DEVELOPMENT- Partnering with Rockland County DSS employees, Staff Development is recognized as the center of excellence for empowering professional/self-development opportunities and resources that meet the evolving needs of all employees

The **STAFF DEVELOPMENT UNIT** worked closely with all internal units in the implementation and coordination of trainings associated to new directives and procedures from federal, state, and local administrations. Due to cancellation of ALL classroom trainings, Staff Development worked closely with the Bureau of Training & Development, OCFS /OTDA in Albany, Administration and Unit Heads to create, provide feedback and execute remote learning trainings & platforms in response to the COVID-19 global pandemic.

Staff Development also managed all logistics of a wide range of professional development opportunities for DSS staff, which included the following:

- ❖ Employee Engagement Survey Results delivered to 157 employees during 7 sessions in January and February
- ❖ Partnered with The Rockland County Pride Center to deliver additional sessions to 129 employees in February and June
- ❖ COVID-19 Contact Tracing Course Training taken by 91 DSS employees in May, this training was provided by Johns Hopkins University
- ❖ Partnered with The Perception Institute to deliver Implicit Bias-Mind Science workshop to 275 employees in September
- ❖ Collaborating to Build Equitable Workplace Cultures delivered to 283 employees during 18 sessions in September
- ❖ Staff Development facilitated 1,541 sessions, totaling 18,930 hours (62 percent more hours than 2019) of staff training in key areas of professional development.

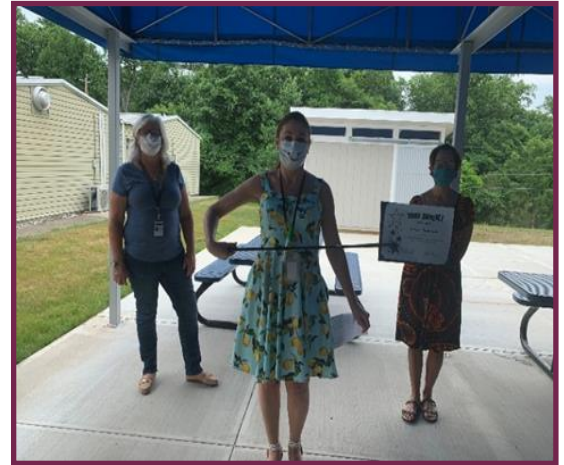


Due to the global pandemic all trainings were virtual, these pictures show screen shots from the Implicit Bias training all DSS staff attended in 2020.

DSS SPOT AWARDS The Department of Social Services believes strongly in recognizing employees for their efforts. During 2020, the Department awarded 123 On-The-Spot Awards, which enable supervisors to award recognition to a staff member/s to recognize their accomplishments and efforts towards achieving the department's goal and mission.

Commissioner Silvestri was reminded daily that we had many employees who went above and beyond to work on behalf of many of the residents of Rockland County. While we were all living through this very tough time, with COVID-19, the employees you will learn about are just some of the employees who during this very difficult time did whatever it took to assist the people of Rockland County who needed our services the most. Below are just a few examples of our own heroes here at the Department of Social Services.

Throughout the pandemic **Jennifer Zinderman** went to several food banks to procure food for many of the families she serves who she knew did not have transportation to pick up food on their own. Jennifer made sure the families received food and any of the services they were eligible for. Jennifer was instrumental in converting the Kinship Foster Care and Direct Custody document into Spanish. During this time Jennifer was assigned a case where a mother had given birth to a pre-mature baby via a c-section due to the mother having Covid-19. After the baby's birth the mother tragically passed away. The mother had other children who Jennifer provided support to by again going to food banks and delivering food to the family. Jennifer also assisted a maternal uncle in applying for guardianship of the newborn and two other children who were minors. Jen set the family up with an organization to ensure all items needed for the newborn were received. Jennifer continues to do what she has to do to ensure this family has what they need.



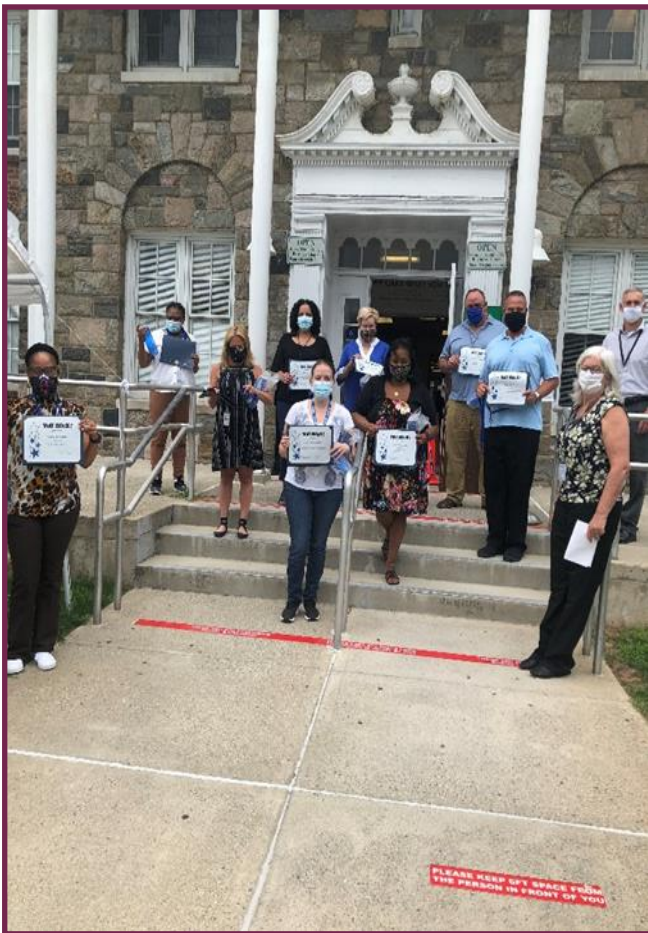
Pictured from left to right – Commissioner Silvestri, Jennifer Zinderman and Maureen Scanlan-Keywork

It is always a difficult time when making “end of life” decisions for family members however, it is most difficult when you need to make them for someone you are representing through the Guardianship of the person. **Theresa O'Rourke** received a case for an individual for whom the Commissioner was granted guardianship for the person since he was not capable of making decisions relating to his health or wellbeing. Theresa visited the client at his place of residence to insure he was receiving proper care. The client contracted COVID 19 and required hospitalization. While he was hospitalized it was discovered there was no documentation as to what should be done if his condition worsened. Fortunately, the client made a recovery and was discharged to a skilled nursing facility. This incident precipitated the need for Theresa to discuss with the client's relatives what they believed his wishes were and to formalize the necessary documentation. In addition, Theresa spoke to the physician regarding the client's overall medical condition to find out what the best course of action should be. Through Theresa's diligence and hard work, she was able to obtain the necessary documentation which stated agreed upon “end of life” protocols for the client. Unfortunately, the client experienced a relapse from COVID 19 and passed away. As a result of Theresa's perseverance, the client's passing occurred in a manner that preserved his dignity and respected his “end of life” wishes.



Pictured Above—Theresa O'Rourke Adult Services Specialist

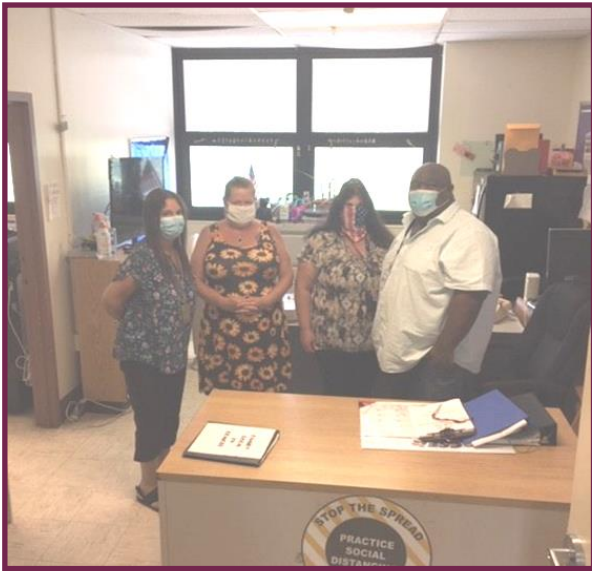
During the height of the pandemic our **Housing Unit** was extremely busy. This team worked tirelessly to place individuals who during the COVID-19 pandemic found themselves homeless. **Maura Donoghue, Tony Petriccione, Ana Laboriel, Valerie Taylor, Maria Pastorelli, Matthew Mulrooney, Wykesha Walker, Deena Roedema, Melanie Gascot-Diaz, and Ann Marie Mathew** worked together daily, in the office to place individuals. Every day they seemed to be faced with new issues and together they had to come up with innovative ways to tackle the ultimate issue of individuals who found themselves homeless. During this time the Housing Unit Staff quickly screened and assessed forty homeless singles and they were able to get housing in hotels throughout the rest of the pandemic and to date, all but two of the 40 clients have found permanent housing. The Staff worked diligently to obtain hotel agreements to ensure our clients would have housing until a more stable housing opportunity could be worked out. Virtually overnight, the Housing Staff assumed many roles in addition to their regular jobs - they found themselves providing security, driving clients to important appointments and scheduling for COVID testing. Throughout the pandemic, the Staff delivered meals to the hotels to minimize the need for our clients to leave. Staff also collected and delivered toiletries to the guests and found games and activities for the children. The Housing Staff remained in constant contact with the supportive housing clients and began implementing face time visits as needed to ensure continuity of care. Services and referrals were made for Mental Health issues, Substance Abuse and Domestic Violence. Several clients began utilizing telehealth visits for the very first time. The Housing Staff filled out applications for the Spring Valley Section 8 lottery while working up at the Warming Center. During the pandemic, the Staff were advised that six chronically homeless individuals had been picked and again, with the assistance of the Housing Staff all six individuals have now been moved into their own apartments. The fact that the clients now had permanent housing did not mean the Housing Staff's responsibilities ended, they continue to go see the client's to ensure that they have all necessary supplies and to work with each of them to make sure their bills are paid. The Housing Staff were heroes to the clients they served during this very unstable time.



Pictured from left to right: Wykesha Walker, Ana Laboriel, Deena Roedema, Melanie Gascot-Diaz, AnnMarie Mathew, Maura Donoghue, Maria Pastorelli, Matt Mulrooney, Tony Petriccione, Commissioner Silvestri, Bryan Messinger – missing from the picture Valerie Taylor



Jennifer Heller and the Emergency Family Shelter Staff, Holly Shiffman, Rosemarie Ramirez, Donna Hansen, Maureen Heegan, Linette Sanders, Marcus King and Jamel Wright dealt with several challenging situations during the COVID-19 pandemic. One of the biggest challenges occurred when the families that were being housed in the EFS had to be relocated to motels/hotels due to concerns with individuals who had tested positive for COVID. The EFS Staff located the motels/hotels, assisted families with their belongings, transported the families to their new locations (there were several), arranged for Meals on Wheels deliveries and continued to check in with the families to make sure they had everything they needed. Once the families were all moved to their new locations the real work began. The EFS team worked with several departments to ensure all mandates and new requirements were being followed and adhered to. Gradually, the families were able to move back to the EFS in a safe and comfortable way so that all families felt comfortable. The good news is while ensuring the EFS was safe to return to members of the EFS Staff worked alongside the members of the Housing Unit and several of the families were placed in permanent housing. The entire Emergency Family Shelter Team were our heroes by doing everything they could to make this unpredictable time a safe one for the families who resided at the EFS.



Left Picture-Pictured left to right: Jennifer Heller, Donna Hansen, Rosemarie Ramirez, and Jamel Wright
Missing from picture: Maureen Heegan, Marcus King, Linnette Sanders and Holly Shiffman



Above Picture-Pictured from left to right: Commissioner Silvestri, Chevon Dos Reis, Sandra Charles, Erin Smith, and Bryan Messinger

During the pandemic, many residents of Rockland County lost their fight against COVID 19 and in many cases, it was so sudden that some families did not know where to turn to for assistance with burying their loved ones. **Chevon Dos Reis** handled the situation in Rockland County with professionalism and sympathy. She assisted families by finding funeral homes, processing paperwork, and coordinating efforts with burial/cremation schedules. Chevon facilitated over 60 screenings during the month of April, Chevon was able to do this as a result of her excellent communication skills and commitment to her job and the families she was assisting. Chevon had her work phone forwarded to her cell phone so that she would not miss a call. Chevon understood the family's situation and was able to counsel them and provide them the direction and information they needed. Chevon received a card from a family who had lost their father. They wrote in the card "Thank you for all that you have done for our family in these terrible moments. You have done so much to ease our pain." Fortunately, the number of deaths due to COVID 19 have decreased in Rockland County but for the families who are still in need of our services Chevon continues to give each family the attention and assistance they need.

OUTSTANDING ACCOUNTING TEAM

Steve Grogan, Deputy Budget Director in the County's Finance Department nominated the entire RCDSS Accounting team, here is what he had to say:

"I wanted to personally thank your Accounting unit for all the cooperation and dedication during this health crisis in working with my department to meet all of the necessary regulatory deadlines. DSS Accounting continued working throughout the pandemic so that we all could continue paying vendor, employees and recording 2019 and 2020 data. This was critical for my office so that we could meet the Office of the State Comptroller's due date and the 2019 County audit deadline. Thank you again to all for the professional dedication".



Commissioner Silvestri presented several years of service awards for employees who have been with the agency for 30, 35, 40 and 45 years. Although the pandemic forced us to cancel our Annual Employee Appreciation BBQ, Commissioner Silvestri felt very strongly that employee milestone service anniversaries should be celebrated particularly now. Commissioner Silvestri commented “Over that last 4 months employees of the Department of Social Services continued to work, providing support and services to those in need. This need was very much expanded during the pandemic and the employees of this department worked through many challenges to service our clients. Their many years of service should be recognized and celebrated”. John Fella who received his 45 years of service pin commented “Forty-five years is a long time however, a time well spent helping those in need and working with caring workers.”

Throughout the week of July 13th, all employees who reached a milestone year beginning with 5 years received their pins during several different presentations. The ceremony was held outside where social distancing and non-contact was feasible. Please see a list of the honorees below, we were able to capture some pictures that can be seen on the following page.

Thank you for your years of service



Pictured Above—Georgia Gentile, Debbie Ohana, Noreen Kelly, Mary Berman, Joe Filippone, Steve Phillips, Trish Rodriguez, John Fella, Brian Silver, Commissioner Joan Silvestri, John Sullivan, Maria Garrido and June Gray



Pictured Above—Theresa Gizzi, Ray Murphy, Laura-Jo Alanis, Regina Lamb, Yves Innocent-Cherubin, Michelle Rosenberg, Barbara Wilmer, Holly Shiffman, Sandy Pierre, Commissioner Joan Silvestri and Bryan Messinger



Pictured Above—Patty Reich, Jennifer Wisner, Patti Mancuso, Lisette Reyes, Chevon Dos Reis, Sharnette Smart, Barbara Gillick, Vanessa Caren, Eliot Zinko, Commissioner Joan Silvestri and Eunice McLean



Pictured Above—Ramona Jaime, Tony Petriccione, Nadia Hau, Adrienne Kalinowski, Commissioner Joan Silvestri, Matt Mulroney, Cheryl Oti, Teresa King, Theresa O'Rourke, Mikki Daniel, Melissa Chappell



Pictured Above—Mathew Paul, Joanne Price, Janet Marsalisi, Mary Campbell, Alyce Ingram, Phyneschea Shackelford, Rachel Collins, Rebecca Scott, Commissioner Joan Silvestri

Rockland County's Department of Social Services 4th Annual Toy and Clothing Drive once again was a major success. COVID has had an impact on all of us and particularly hard on the families who receive services from DSS. This drive has been held every year to ensure that every child in Rockland County has a gift to open for the holidays. This would not be possible without the generous donations from our staff and the community. This event without a doubt, has given each child a holiday to remember. There have been so many contributions throughout these last few weeks and an outpouring amount of support. Being able to give back and help our families is rewarding. A special thank you to all who have donated to our annual drive because without your help and support it would not have been such a great success. Not only have we been able to provide the gifts to the families in need, but we have also made and will continue to make a lot of children happy!



Pictured Below: We are so fortunate to have the overwhelming support from our community during the holidays. During the holiday season, an organization by the name of **JL Blessings** donated 125 backpacks. JL Blessings is a non-for-profit organization that aims to share love with the less fortunate. **JL Blessings** is known for providing support for homeless men, women and children in the New York and New Jersey area. Each backpack is filled with essential items ranging from snacks to hygiene products. In each backpack there is a letter of encouragement along with a list of free resources that supports change and sustainability. These backpacks were distributed to the Warming Center, Catholic Charities for outreach, our Housing team will be handing them out to the Homeless. Helping Hands and the Haverstraw Center also received backpacks. A warm heartfelt thank you to **JL Blessings**

