

# Rockland County Department of Social Services 2022 Annual Report



Edwin J. Day  
County Executive



Joan M. Silvestri  
Commissioner



**DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES**

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**Joan M. Silvestri**  
*Commissioner*

September 6, 2023

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

The Rockland County Department of Social Services' Annual Report provides you with an overview of the many services, programs, events, and accomplishments, delivered to Rockland County residents and community during 2022.

I am delighted and it gives me great pleasure to showcase the work performed by our devoted, well-trained, and professional staff, our greatest resource with dedication unmatched.

We are building on our past accomplishments with hopes and an eye toward continuous improvement for a better post-pandemic Agency. Our focus remains on offering best-practice services to meet the needs of all Rockland County residents. For the safety of our workforce and those we serve, compliance with CDC and RC Health Officials' guidelines, policies, and procedures continue to be focused on and prioritized. Safety remains crucial.

Thank you for your continuous support. I greatly appreciate the time and assistance you have given in support of our programs and in making Rockland County a great place to live.

We are confident that under your leadership we are building a better Rockland.

Sincerely,



Joan M. Silvestri  
Commissioner

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## Rockland County Government

**County Executive:**

Hon. Edwin J. Day

**County Legislature:**

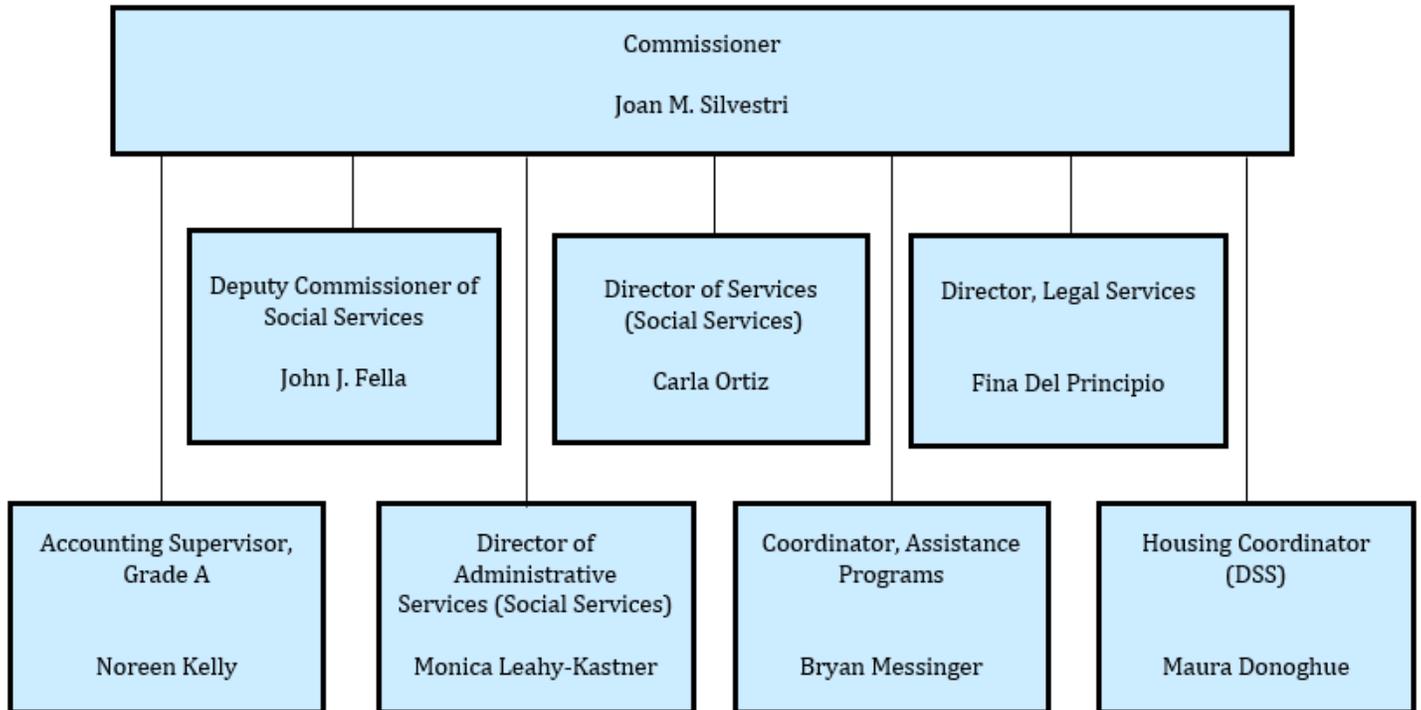
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## Rockland County Department of Social Services (RCDSS)



**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 and provide financial assistance, safety, and support; with compassion, respect, and dignity.**

## INDIVIDUAL CASELOAD ACTIVITY and YEARLY AVERAGE COMPARISONS

### TEMPORARY ASSISTANCE

		2021	2022	% Change
Active Temporary Assistance Cases				
	Family Assistance	240	247	2.9%
	Safety Net	330	344	4.2%
	<b>Total Active Cases</b>	<b>570</b>	<b>591</b>	<b>3.7%</b>
Temporary Assistance Case Activity				
	Applications Processed	2,252	2,781	23.9%
	Cases Opened	1,380	1,604	16.2%
	Withdrawals	39	113	189.7%
	Denials	872	1,064	22.0%
	Cases Closed	447	576	28.9%
	Recertifications	929	922	(0.8%)
	Changes in Active Cases	6,497	7,715	18.7%
	<b>Total Case Activities</b>	<b>10,125</b>	<b>12,916</b>	<b>27.5%</b>
Temporary Assistance Recipients				
	Family Assistance	507	561	10.7%
	Safety Net	478	456	(4.6%)
<b>Total TA Recipients Year-End</b>		<b>985</b>	<b>1,017</b>	<b>3.2%</b>

### SUPPLEMENTAL NUTRITION ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

		2021	2022	% Change
Active SNAP Cases				
	Non-Public Assistance	13,970	14,370	2.9%
	Public Assistance	328	363	10.7%
	<b>Total Active Cases</b>	<b>14,298</b>	<b>14,733</b>	<b>3.0%</b>
SNAP Case Activity*				
	Applications Processed (Non-Public Assistance)	6,825	16,072	135.5%
	Cases Opened	4,732	13,332	181.7%
	Withdrawals	138	1,011	632.6%
	Denials	2,093	2,740	30.9%
	Cases Closed	3,401	3,386	(0.4%)
	Recertifications	10,812	11,146	3.1%
	Changes in Active Cases	23,269	31,615	35.9%
	<b>Total Case Activities</b>	<b>58,605</b>	<b>76,952</b>	<b>31.3%</b>
<b>Total SNAP Recipients Year-End</b>		<b>41,500</b>	<b>43,151</b>	<b>4.0%</b>

\*Statistics were obtained from the Monthly Transactions Process - WST003 Report. Data Source: WRTS Reporting.

## INDIVIDUAL CASELOAD ACTIVITY and YEARLY AVERAGE COMPARISONS

### MEDICAID

	2021	2022	% Change
Medicaid Case Activity*			
Applications Processed	5,037	5,957	(18.3%)
Cases Opened	3,952	4,469	13.1%
Withdrawals	193	257	33.2%
Denials	1,085	1,231	13.5%
Cases Closed	1,346	1,550	15.2%
Recertifications	716	754	5.3%
Changes in Active Cases	23,159	28,408	22.7%
Total Case Activities	30,258	36,669	21.2%
Medicaid Recipients Year End – Receiving Coverage through RCDSS	18,182	21,248	16.9%
Medicaid Recipients Year End – Receiving Coverage through New York State of Health (NYSOH)	117,869	124,179	13.3%
<b>Total Medicaid Recipients Year-End</b>	<b>136,002</b>	<b>145,427</b>	<b>13.1%</b>

\*Statistics were obtained from the Monthly Transactions Process - WST003 Report. Data Source: WRTS Reporting.

Temporary provisions were put in place due to the declared Public Health Emergency related to COVID-19, which were intended to assist those in need of healthcare coverage to apply for Medicaid; and to prevent consumers already receiving 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 Departments of Social Services.

## EXPENDITURES BY PROGRAM

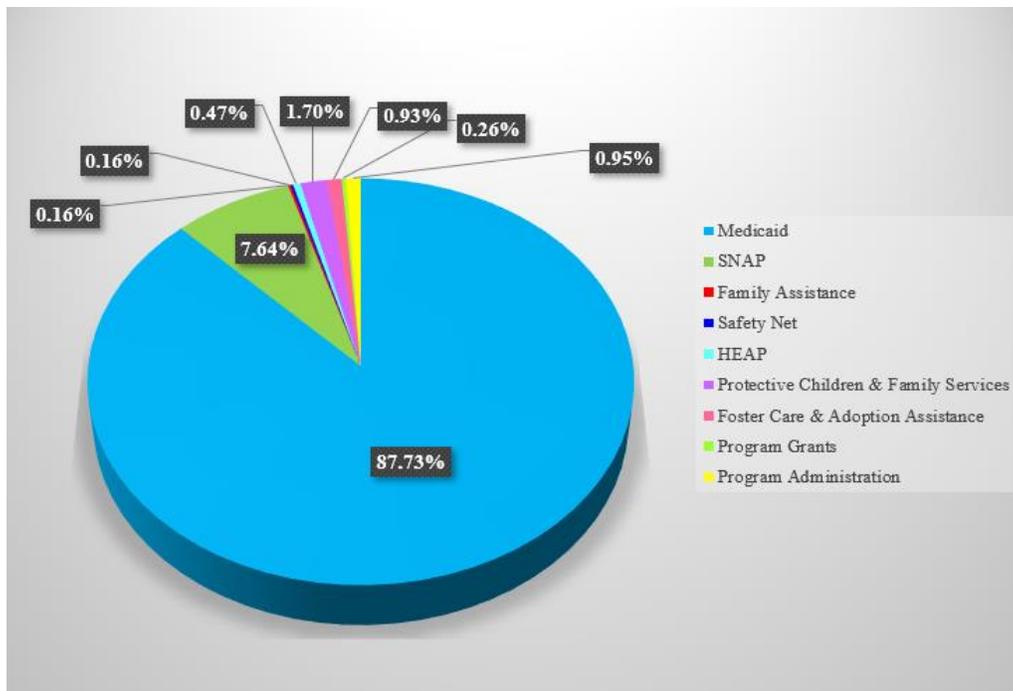
Program	2021	2022	\$ Change	%Change
Medical Assistance (Medicaid)	\$1,135,157,154	\$1,520,110,780	\$384,953,626	33.91%
*SNAP**	116,635,480	132,448,156	15,812,676	13.56%
Family Assistance	1,770,734	2,840,136	1,069,402	60.39%
Safety Net	2,683,387	2,711,327	27,940	1.04%
*Home Energy Assistance Program (HEAP)	6,007,519	8,118,711	2,111,192	35.14%
Emergency Aid	21,670	17,311	(4,359)	(20.12%)
*Protective, Children and Family Services	27,285,734	29,465,527	2,179,793	7.99%
*Foster Care and Adoption Assistance	13,956,865	16,032,608	2,075,743	14.87%
Program Grants	4,432,262	4,520,340	88,077	1.99%
Program Administration	<u>17,349,133</u>	<u>16,468,038</u>	<u>(881,095)</u>	<u>(5.08%)</u>
	<b>\$1,325,299,938</b>	<b>\$1,732,732,934</b>	<b>\$407,432,995</b>	<b>30.74%</b>

\*Includes Program Administration

\*\* Includes Pandemic SNAP Enhanced Payments

Note: Medicaid Administration Total for 2022 was \$6,984,450

## INDIVIDUAL PROGRAM COSTS AS A % OF TOTAL EXPENSES

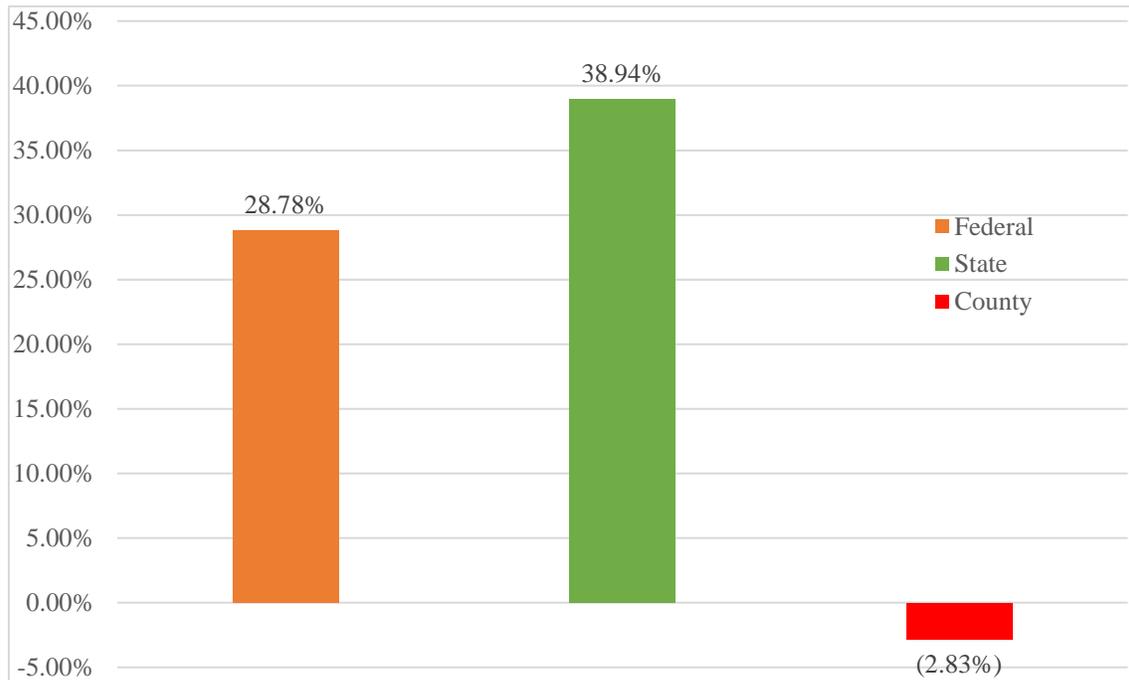


## MEDICAID EXPENDITURES BY PROVIDER TYPE

Provider Type	2021	2022	\$ Change	% Change
Hospital Inpatient	\$42,159,799	\$42,714,503	554,704	1%
Hospital Outpatient	6,507,280	6,430,365	(76,915)	(1%)
Skilled Nursing Facility	70,843,743	74,259,957	3,416,214	5%
Intermediate Care Facility for Developmentally Disabled	8,450,834	8,335,949	(114,885)	(1%)
Clinic	51,169,758	48,065,699	(3,104,059)	(6%)
Hospice	611,248	522,117	(89,131)	(15%)
Physicians	3,335,034	3,458,737	123,703	4%
Dental	207,903	164,467	(43,435)	(21%)
Other Practitioners	2,902,252	3,726,141	623,889	28%
Child Care Instl Per Diem	165,489	93,404	(72,085)	(44%)
Personal Care	19,198,594	23,569,735	4,371,141	23%
Home Health Services	871,755	923,448	51,693	6%
Assisted Living Program	8,232,813	8,734,621	501,808	6%
Waived Services	210,272,032	261,541,577	51,269,545	24%
Rehab and Therapy	231,255	299,092	67,837	29%
Rehab Options Services	20,113,768	26,861,998	6,748,230	34%
Drugs and Supplies	9,011,961	9,031,777	19,816	0%
Medical Appliances and Durable Medical Equipment	491,717	413,841	(77,876)	(16%)
Prepaid Care	661,942,087	975,978,434	314,036,347	47%
Care Management Plans	11,887,738	15,927,734	4,039,996	34%
Transportation	4,764,043	6,586,042	1,821,999	38%
Lab and X-ray	864,409	836,917	(27,492)	(3%)
Other	<u>921,642</u>	<u>1,634,224</u>	<u>712,582</u>	77%
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$1,135,157,154</b>	<b>\$1,520,110,780</b>	<b>\$384,953,626</b>	<b>34%</b>
Administration	<u>7,326,507</u>	<u>6,984,450</u>	<u>(342,057)</u>	(5%)
<b>Medicaid Expenditures Total</b>	<b>\$1,142,483,661</b>	<b>\$1,527,095,230</b>	<b>\$384,611,569</b>	<b>34%</b>

Source	2021	2022	\$ Change	% Change
Local Share	\$55,398,621	\$53,912,343	(\$1,486,278)	(3%)

### Percent Change in Revenue by Source Program Grants



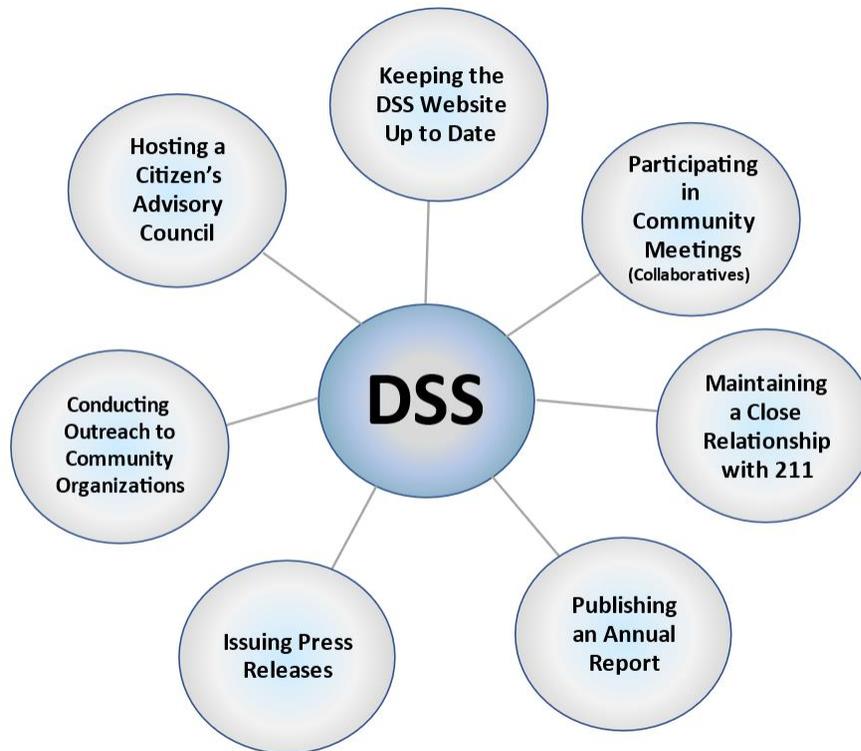
Source	2021	2022	% Change
<b>Federal</b>	\$756,376,423	\$974,028,203	28.78%
<b>State</b>	492,902,294	684,832,212	38.94%
<b>County</b>	<u>76,021,221</u>	<u>73,872,519</u>	<u>(2.83%)</u>
<b>Totals</b>	<b>\$ 1,325,299,938</b>	<b>\$1,732,732,934</b>	<b>30.74.%</b>

## 2022 PROGRAM GRANT REVENUES

CAPTA/CARA	\$68,717
Children’s Consolidated Waiver (CCW)	176,782
Emergency Rental Assistance Program (ERAP)	236,486
Emergency Housing Voucher Program (EHV)	72,061
Emergency Solutions Grant (ESG-CV1)	585,942
Emergency Solutions Grant (ESG-CV2)	446,815
Executive Order 151 (Code Blue)	374,050
Family Day Care Registration (Child Care Resources)	470,244
Low-Income Home Energy Program -American Rescue Plan (LIHEAP ARPA)	159,317
Rental Supplement Program (RSP)	1,264
Safe Harbor	37,912
Solutions To End Homelessness Program (STEHP)	196,562
Summer Youth Employment Program (SYEP)	598,974
Summer Youth Employment Program WIOA	153,701
Supervision and Treatment Services for Juveniles Program / Raise The Age- Detention Transportation	44,993
Supervision and Treatment Services for Juveniles Program / Raise The Age (STSJP/RTA)	24,592
Supervision and Treatment Services for Juveniles Program (STSJP)	26,786
Supportive Housing	497,663
Supportive Housing Coordinated Entry	107,925
Supportive Housing Helping Hands	37,717
Supportive Housing – Rapid Rehousing	<u>201,836</u>
<b>Total Grant Revenues</b>	<b>\$4,520,340</b>

## PUBLIC INFORMATION/PUBLIC RELATIONS

RCDSS strives to collaborate with Rockland’s residents, recipients, and providers, to ensure they are informed of its programs, eligibility requirements, and overall changes within the Department. RCDSS also works diligently to solicit feedback from community members regarding the overall operation of the Department and its programs. This flow of information is maintained by:



The Vision is sustained by the work performed by RCDSS workers on a daily basis. Through continued teamwork, the Agency makes a difference in the lives of the people living in Rockland County. In addition, public relations outreach strengthens our relationships with the Rockland County non-profit community and the public, which facilitates our efforts to meet challenges faced by our residents.

Our efforts to maintain strong relationships with Rockland County’s residents during continuously changing times are reflected in our actions to achieve effective communication and transparency with our various communities.

A Citizen’s Advisory Committee (CAC) is mandated by Article 3; Title 7; §78 of the New York Social Services Law which requires local social services districts to establish a citizen-member committee willing to serve in an advisory capacity with the purpose of providing guidance on matters impacting the people living in Rockland County. This committee is comprised of key stakeholder groups that speak for the residents we serve. They identify recommendations to promote collaboration and education and act as a link between the residents, service providers/businesses, non-profits, and the public.

## Rockland County Department of Social Services Annual Report 2022

CAC meetings were attended by members representing service providers, non-profit agencies, hospitals, schools, and recipients of services. Employees also attend to provide real-time answers to community members' questions or issues and provide current information on programs, as do the not-for-profit agencies. The meetings consisted of committee members presenting information on topics such as the changes made to the Child Care Assistance Program; Catholic Charities Community Services of Rockland's key services; the Emergency Rental Arrears Program; Emergency Housing Vouchers; and presentations on new developments in other community programs.

The Committee plays an important role in identifying service gaps in the community, assisting RCDSS in promoting available programs, and educating constituents, service providers, and public officials regarding the Department's policies. RCDSS has retained strong bonds with the community members and the public and is assisting Committee members in spreading the word about the availability of benefits and encouraging families to reach out for further information.

RCDSS is happy to raise awareness and meet with any service provider's personnel at their events to help enhance awareness about its programs.

## 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 to enable people 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 reasonable and comprehensive health insurance to address individual medical needs and create healthier outcomes.

#### The Front Desk and Call Center

The Front Desk and Call Center are the Agency's "Front Line" triaging all walk-in clients seeking assistance, including individuals and families facing housing insecurity and homelessness, long-term income loss, and/or food insecurity.

The staff works with many other Agency Teams, but most closely with the Temporary Assistance, SNAP, and Housing Teams. In cold-weather months, staff receive and direct clients staying at the Agency's overnight warming center, to other Teams who can provide the services needed.

Trained in trauma-informed care, diversity, inclusion, and implicit bias, the staff assisting the County's neediest cases are sensitive to the emotional stress and hardship that often accompanies clients walking into the Agency lobby.

Staff are continuously educated in evolving Agency operations and protocols to accurately direct and expedite client inquiries and documents to other departments.

The Team performs daily functions that directly service clients and/or feed upstream processes to other Agency Teams. Highlights of these functions and their associated volume for the year are described below:

- Answered approximately 150-175 phone calls daily.
- Answered or directed nearly 7,000 emails annually.
- Pre-processed 11,536 SNAP case recertifications.
- Logged and delivered 3,874 faxes.
- Issued 3,135 temporary Electronic Benefit Cards (EBT) cards to walk-in clients.
- Indexed approximately 1,000 pages clients uploaded with NYS Doc Submit application.
- Opened, date-stamped, and delivered all SNAP and TA documents dropped off by clients or delivered by the US Postal Service.
- Opened, date-stamped, and processed all undeliverable US Postal Mail, taking requisite actions to ensure benefits are redirected and/or terminated as needed.
- Updated electronic e-Boards in the Agency lobby to stream current program information to clients.
- Implemented process improvements and cost-saving initiatives including, collaboration with the Agency's WMS Team, to streamline and automate multiple internal processes, eliminating hundreds of man-hours each month and cutting in half, the Agency's payment to a 3<sup>rd</sup> party vendor.
- In collaboration with the Administrative Office Services Team, the Agency installed an exterior document drop-box to facilitate secure client document drop-off at any time.

**Temporary Assistance**

Temporary Assistance provides temporary support to assist persons unable to work or who are working in a job paying under 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 Team also determines eligibility for SNAP and Medicaid for Temporary Assistance applicants and recipients. At the end of 2022, approximately 1,017 Rockland County residents were receiving Temporary Assistance. Temporary Assistance also provides Emergency Temporary Assistance which supports families that are victims of fire, or natural disasters, and are experiencing a need with rental or utility arrears or moving assistance.

In order to serve long-term recipients of temporary assistance and Safety Net while aiding individuals and families to attain self-sufficiency, the Department established an Integrated Services Team in 2019 and will continue this objective in 2022.

Pandemic Emergency Assistance Funds (PEAF) were awarded to New York State Counties to help ease financial burdens on Rockland families. (Temporary Assistance and SNAP) was authorized over \$1 million in PEAF payments as follows:

Multigenerational Payment	\$330,480
PEAF Diaper Fund	553,280
PEAF Family	66,250
Nutrition Assistance	9,600
Back to School	104,004
<b>Total PEAF Assistance to Rockland County</b>	<b>\$1,063,614</b>

**Emergency Assistance**

Emergency Assistance conducts in-depth assessment interviews with all Temporary Assistance applicants. The Team handles cases of applicants who are not receiving Temporary Assistance yet have urgent needs or a situation that calls for immediate attention. Situations handled by the Emergency Team include homelessness, impending evictions, domestic violence, a shortage of food, and utility shut offs.

**Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program**

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. Several factors may impact a household’s eligibility for SNAP benefits, including the level of income, type of income (earned or unearned), household size, age, receipt of disability benefits, shelter, and utility expenses, medical expenses for certain household members, and other factors.

At year-end, there were 14,733 (43,151 individuals) households in Rockland County receiving SNAP Benefits. Of the total SNAP household population, 2,699 individuals received SSI SNAP. All Rockland households were also provided an additional Emergency Assistance (EA) SNAP benefit up to the maximum SNAP benefit allotted for their household size. The EA SNAP supplement provided a total of \$34,712,147 to Rockland SNAP households in 2022. The monthly average supplement was \$2,892,678 and the average supplement to each family was \$190.

### **Supplemental Security Income SNAP**

Supplemental Security Income (SSI) SNAP Team assists single individuals and childless couples that are receiving SSI benefits from the Social Security Administration with the purchase of healthy food which is especially challenging for individuals with significantly limited income.

### **Employment**

The Employment Team is responsible for assisting recipients and applicants 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 Team successfully assisted 149 residents with finding employment. All non-exempt applicants and recipients must participate in work activities assigned by the Employment Team. These work-related activities are intended to aid individuals and families in poverty and move them toward self-sufficiency.

The Employment Team conducts a full Employment assessment to identify if an individual has any barriers to participation in work activities and to determine the appropriate work activity assignment for the individual. Common barriers to participation in a work activity are lack of transportation, lack of access to affordable childcare, lack of education, and a physical or psychological illness or injury including substance abuse. The Employment Team works with the client to develop an Employment Plan to address any identified barriers and establish goals for participation in work activities.

Applicants and recipients of Temporary Assistance are screened for substance abuse and monitored for compliance with treatment recommendations as a condition of eligibility. Applicants and recipients identified as possibly having a substance abuse issue or with a history of substance abuse will be referred for further evaluation. Individuals will be assessed by a Certified Alcoholism and Substance Abuse Counselor who determines if treatment is needed, the level of care required, and monitors that their attendance is compliant with treatment recommendations. In 2022 the Substance Abuse Treatment and Compliance Team maintained a monthly caseload of 137 people on average and conducted 287 intake assessments.

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 at 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 Team where they are connected to our community partners. In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, New York State suspended ABAWD work requirements until February 29, 2024. The Employment Team continues to engage clients in job search, job readiness training, and vocational education opportunities.

The Employment Team works closely with Rockland Works and our Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) partners to provide clients with a wide range of support services aimed at increasing an individual’s employability. Working together allows SNAP and Temporary Assistance applicants and recipients to have easier access to programs and training that will support individuals and their families as they try to overcome employment hurdles and move closer to self-sufficiency. The Temporary Assistance and Employment Teams also continued their work assisting Safety Net individuals and families to obtain and maintain self-sufficiency using a holistic approach to assess and address barriers to employment.

## **Medicaid**

Medicaid is a government program financed by federal, state, and local funds to provide medical insurance for persons who fall into specific income and resource limits. The majority of Medicaid cases are currently overseen by the New York State of Health, Health Benefit Exchange.

- The cases that continue to be maintained by the RCDSS' Medicaid Team are for individuals who are:
- Medicare recipients.
- 65 years old or older who are not caretakers for children under 18 years of age, or students aged 18 through 19.
- Looking to participate in programs that assist with the costs of long-term care services in the community, such as:
  - Adult Day Care
  - Home Care
  - Personal Care
  - Private Duty Nursing
  - Social and Environmental Support
  - Home-Delivered Meals
- Looking for assistance with care costs in 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 Traumatic Brain Injury 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, deductibles, and/or copays through the Medicare Savings Program.

Under the *Families First Coronavirus Response Act*, states have been able to claim a temporary 6.2 percentage point increase in the Federal Medical Assistance Percentage (FMAP). As a condition of receiving this temporary FMAP increase states have been unable to terminate enrollment for most individuals enrolled in Medicaid as of March 18, 2020. Throughout 2022 those conditions remained in place. However, the continuous enrollment condition for individuals enrolled in Medicaid is no longer linked to the end of the Public Health Emergency.

As part of the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2023, the continuous enrollment condition will end on March 31, 2023. The temporary FMAP increase will be gradually reduced and phased down beginning April 1, 2023 (and will end on December 31, 2023). Effective April 2023 yearly recertification will once again be sent to Medicaid recipients to determine ongoing eligibility. As of July 1, 2023, all new applications will be processed following the rules and regulations that were in place prior to the creation of the Families First Coronavirus Response Act.

## **Indigent Burial or Cremation Assistance**

The Indigent Burial or Cremation Assistance Program pays for the disposition of bodies of deceased county residents for whom neither their legally responsible relatives may not wish to provide, or their estate cannot afford to provide for burial or cremation. In 2022 the number of approvals for payment of Indigent Burials or Cremations processed by Rockland County increased to 52 cases, as compared to 47 cases in 2021.

**Emergency Rental Assistance Program**

The Emergency Rental Assistance Program (ERAP) assisted households behind on their rent who were experiencing financial hardship due to COVID-19 and were at risk of homelessness or housing instability. In addition, the program provided temporary rental assistance and assistance with unpaid utility bills. This assistance can pay up to 12 months of past due rent and for some households, pay up to 3 months for future rent. The program can also pay for up to 12 months of overdue electric or gas bills. Eligible households would need to meet the following eligibility criteria:

- Household gross income up to 80 percent is the median income for the federal program and between 80 percent and 120 percent of the area median income for the state program, which varies by county and household size. Rockland County’s income limit is below:

Area Median Income	1 person	2 people	3 people	4 people	5 people	6 people	7 people	8 people
80% AMI	\$66,850	\$76,400	\$85,950	\$95,450	\$103,100	\$110,750	\$118,400	\$126,000
120% AMI	\$100,320	\$114,600	\$128,800	\$143,160	\$154,680	\$166,080	\$177,600	\$189,000

- A member of the household who received unemployment benefits or experienced a reduction in income, incurred significant costs, or experienced financial hardship, directly or indirectly, due to the COVID-19 pandemic.
- The applicant owed past due rent at their current residence.

New York State appropriated \$125 million for the State-funded ERAP program and partnered with Rockland County. New York State was responsible for making application determinations and issuing payments. RCDSS was responsible for program outreach and application assistance. RCDSS also received an allocation of \$21,266,331 of ERAP funds from the U.S. Treasury for the Federal ERAP program. RCDSS’ program outreach campaign began on March 1, 2021; by December 31, 2022, RCDSS had developed a contact list of 1,076 renters and 236 landlords. Updates and information about the initiative were sent to the tenants and landlords via email and text messaging. Five days a week RCDSS staff provided tenants and landlords with application assistance. RCDSS helped 570 households apply for the program from initiation of application acceptance on June 1, 2021, through December 31, 2022.

**Landlord Rental Assistance Program**

The New York State Landlord Rental Assistance Program (LRAP) provided rental arrears assistance for economic relief to landlords whose tenants left their rental property, or who were unwilling to apply for the Emergency Rental Assistance Program. Landlords approved for LRAP could receive up to 12 months of rental arrears payments for rents accrued on or after March 1, 2020. Landlords needed to meet the following eligibility requirements:

- The landlord had a tenant who left an apartment in New York State with unpaid rental arrears, or the landlord had a tenant with rental arrears who was residing in an apartment in New York State who refuses to apply for ERAP; and the landlord has reached out to the tenant to encourage participation in ERAP at least 3 times, including 2 in writing
- The landlord documented rental arrears owed by the tenant for rent costs accrued on or after March 1, 2020.
- Unit rental amount is at or below 150 percent of the Fair Market Rent (FMR) for their location. These limits are based on Rockland County and number of bedrooms in the rental unit. Rockland County’s limits are below. If the monthly rental amount exceeded 150 percent of FMR the landlord was ineligible for assistance.

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Fair Market Rent (FMR)	0 Bedroom	1 Bedroom	2 Bedrooms	3 Bedrooms	4 Bedrooms	5 Bedrooms	6 Bedrooms	7 Bedrooms	8 Bedrooms
150% FMR	\$2,640	\$2,702	\$3,080	\$3,897	\$4,176	\$4,802	\$5,429	\$6,055	\$6,682

New York State appropriated \$125 million for the State program. Rockland County was responsible for application assistance and program outreach. The program opened and started receiving applications on October 7, 2021, and closed on November 21, 2021, because funding for the program was projected to be exhausted with the applications already submitted. Applications filed in 2021 continued to be processed and approved throughout 2022.

**Low-Income Household Water Assistance Program**

The Low-Income Household Water Assistance Program (LIHWAP) can help pay overdue water and wastewater bills. The program started to receive applications on December 1, 2021. LIHWAP is a drinking water and wastewater emergency assistance program funded with \$69.8 million through the Federal Consolidated Appropriations Act 2021, and the American Rescue Plan of 2021. Benefits are based on the amount of unpaid water and wastewater bills owed by applicants with a ceiling of \$2,500 for each service. This assistance is targeted at low-income households, particularly those who use a high portion of their income for drinking water and wastewater services. Income guidelines will mirror those of the Home Energy Assistance Program.

The 2021 – 2022 LIHWAP Monthly Income Limits are:

Household Size	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	Each Additional
Maximum Gross Monthly Income	\$2,729	\$3,569	\$4,409	\$5,529	\$6,088	\$6,928	\$7,086	\$7,243	\$7,401	\$7,558	\$7,715	\$7,873	\$8,420	Add \$568

LIHWAP benefits are based on the actual amount of drinking water and/or wastewater arrears, up to a maximum of \$2,500 per drinking water or wastewater provider, or \$5,000 if drinking water and wastewater services are combined, per household. Benefits are paid directly to the household’s drinking water and/or wastewater vendor(s).

Eligibility and benefits are based on:

- Income
- Household size
- Household includes a U.S. citizen, U.S. national, or qualified alien; and
- Amount owed to drinking water and/or wastewater provider(s)

The Rockland County Department of Social Services provided application assistance to those interested in applying for the program. RCDSS electronically submitted applications and helped with completing and submitting paper applications. Documentation for electronic applications was uploaded by RCDSS staff or mailed with paper applications that were filed.

OTDA receives the applications, determines eligibility, and makes payments on approved applications. Payments began being sent out in early 2022; and by December 31, 2022, 1,831 applications had been approved for a total of \$2,324,622. There were 2,237 total applications received by December 31, 2022.

### **Emergency Housing**

The Emergency Housing Team provides comprehensive services to families and individuals facing potential homelessness. Working as a Team, experienced caseworkers, support staff, and professionals from other agencies, address crisis circumstances surrounding the individual or family.

Caseworkers investigate the underlying causes of the housing crisis. 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 referrals to needed services are provided on an ongoing basis. There were 161 housing placements made for 331 families and single adults assessed by the Emergency Housing Team,

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 Domestic Violence Liaison met with 30 individuals approving 15 temporary assistance applications and approving 14 waivers to support safety and recovery.

The Team is alerted of all Rockland County Sheriff Office's 72-hour eviction notices, utility disconnections, and residential Health Department violations throughout the entire county. Staff meets with individuals and family members to help them retain safe and affordable housing. In many instances, home visits are conducted to ensure the health and safety of frail and elderly adults and minor children.

The Team is also notified by the American Red Cross when there is a fire, flood, or natural disaster and individuals are displaced and need Temporary Housing. Emphasis is placed on maintaining family stability and protecting the health and safety of all individuals at risk.

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

### **Emergency Housing Voucher Program**

The Emergency Housing Voucher (EHV) program went into effect on August 16<sup>th</sup>, 2021, and the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) granted 527 vouchers to the downstate area. The EHV program is available to some of our most vulnerable populations; the homeless or those at risk of homelessness. A voucher is approved by HUD and is viable for up to 10 years if funding remains available. The Emergency and Supportive Housing Teams are working hard to refer our clients to this program. HUD is also offering multiple incentives to the landlords who accept the vouchers, as well as moving assistance to the client. RCDSS provides monthly case management to these households ensuring their ability to maintain their housing.

Through the EHV Program, landlords willing to accept these vouchers are offered the following incentives:

- **Pre-Inspections:** Will provide inspectors to perform pre-inspections of housing units to ensure they qualify for the program in advance of the voucher issuance, (if the unit is vacant and staff are available).
- **Higher Payment Standard:** Homes and Community Renewal (HCR) may establish a payment standard for each EHV Unit size that is higher than its current Housing Choice Voucher (HCV) standard for that county; this payment standard may be adjusted at Homes and Community Renewals (HCR's) discretion depending on actual and projected Housing Assistance Payment (HAP) spending; and rent must still be determined reasonable.

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- **Incentive Payment to Landlord:** HCR will pay the landlord a bonus of one month's rent at the time of lease signing.
- **Repair Fund:** Homes and Community Renewal (HCR) will provide a maximum of \$1,000 to reimburse the landlord for repairs necessary to ensure the health and safety of the tenant; expenses will be approved by the inspector for HCR or its designated agent.
- **Security Deposit:** HCR will provide the security deposit for the household.
- **Landlord Guarantee:** If a landlord is forced to evict the tenant for non-payment of the tenant's share of the rent, HCR will reimburse the landlord for losses accrued prior to the date of eviction within the first 12 months.

RCDSS has streamlined a process to ensure that our most vulnerable population is referred to the EHV program. Referrals are made to the EHV website designated by HUD at which point HUD reviews the preliminary information and determines if the individual will move forward in the program's lottery drawing. If an application is sent to the client, the caseworker ensures the application is completed and all required documentation is collected. The application and documents are then uploaded into the portal assigned by HUD where their case managers review everything. HUD will then determine if a voucher will be issued. Once the voucher is received the client can begin looking for safe and affordable permanent housing.

Vouchers were authorized for Rockland County and as of December 31, 2022, 114 rentals were located for 63 families.

### **Home Energy Assistance Program**

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 be low on heating fuel to receive a Regular HEAP benefit. When Orange and Rockland receive 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 a quarter tank or less of heating fuel. In order to qualify to be eligible for Emergency HEAP the client must also pass a resource test.

The Regular and Emergency HEAP programs are open during the heating months generally from November to April. This year the Regular HEAP program opened November 1, 2022 and closed on April 29, 2022. The Emergency HEAP program opened January 3, 2022 and was extended until July 20, 2022. There were also three Emergency HEAP benefits available to those who qualified, and \$4,381,615 was provided to assist 14,408 eligible residents with their energy bills through the Regular and Emergency HEAP programs.

An additional HEAP program was available in 2022 named the Regular Arrears Supplement (RAS) benefit. RAS was a one-time benefit funded by the HEAP appropriation received under the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 (Public Law 117-2). This benefit was available in fiscal year 2022, it began January 1, 2022, and closed March 15, 2022. RAS benefits were a Regular HEAP supplement available to assist HEAP-eligible households who had electricity and/or gas account arrears documented by their utility vendor. Only one RAS benefit per current electricity and/or gas account was permitted, and total RAS benefits could not exceed \$10,000 per applicant household. The RAS Program provided \$2,552,622 to assist 1,165 eligible residents with their energy bills in the 2022 calendar year.

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HEAP also has a Cooling Assistance Benefit Program. Eligible clients may receive one cooling assistance benefit every 5 years for the purchase and installation of air-conditioning units in one room of their home. This benefit was created to protect any client with a medical condition worsened by extreme heat. The 2021 HEAP Cooling program ran from May 3, 2021, to August 31, 2021, and provided \$23,100 to assist 29 eligible residents.

In comparison the 2022 HEAP Cooling program ran from May 2, 2022, to July 8, 2022, closing after 46 days because funding was exhausted. The program provided \$326,580 to 409 eligible residents with an installed air-conditioning unit. The 2022 program eliminated the requirement of a doctor’s note to support a medical condition. We appreciate the assistance of our outreach partners who helped our clients complete the application process. Their help was invaluable and made it possible for us to reach many eligible households prior to the program closing.

HEAP 2021-2022	01/03/2022 – 07/20/2022	
HEAP 2022-2023	11/01/2022 – 12/31/2022	
Fiscal 2022		
Regular HEAP Program 2021 – 2022	01/03/2022 – 04/29/2022	82 Days
Regular HEAP Program 2022 – 2023	11/01/2022 – 12/31/2022	60 Days
Emergency HEAP Program 2022	01/03/2022 – 07/20/2022	137 Days
HEAP Cooling Program 2021	05/03/2021 – 08/31/2021	83 Days
HEAP Cooling Program 2022	05/02/2022 – 07/08/2022	46 Days
RAS Program for fiscal 2022	01/03/2022 – 03/15/2022	72 Days

**Child Care Assistance Program**

The Child Care Assistance Program formerly known as the Child Care Subsidy Program, is funded by the New York State Child Care Block Grant. Childcare assistance is provided to Temporary Assistance recipients and other families whose income falls below 300% of the Federal Poverty Level and does not exceed 85% of the State Median Income for New York during their one-year guarantee period.

This assistance enables families to participate in:

- Employment
- Employment activities
- Support teenage parents trying to finish high school
- Support families who need assistance to prevent a child’s out-of-home placement
- Attend approved substance treatment programs
- Attend programs for remedial education, Test Assessing Secondary Completion (TASC), and English as a second language (ESL) and;
- Attend college to increase earning capacity

Approximately \$8.7 million in funding was received, and \$7.48 million was distributed to 591 families to provide childcare for 1,093 children. We processed 491 new applications, which is a 97% increase from the 249 new applications processed in 2021. The expansion of the program’s income eligibility criteria by New York State and the increased number of qualifying activities by RCDSS in 2022 account for the sharp rise in applications.

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In our continuing efforts to increase accessibility to childcare assistance for our residents, we developed an improved outreach program including updating the RCDSS website to include eligibility levels, the application process, an application, and all the forms necessary to apply for assistance. Also, a link was provided to the Office of Children and Family Services (OCFS) to assist families in finding a provider. RCDSS now accepts all applications and documents in person, through the mail, by fax, and by email. OCFS is continuing to enact changes to increase aid to families, enabling them to move towards self-sufficiency.

## HOUSING SUPPORTS

### 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.

### Supportive Housing

The Supportive Housing Team works collaboratively with the Emergency Housing Team to assist homeless individuals and families. This Team provides wrap-around services to clients with a focus on overcoming the obstacles that caused their homelessness. The staff works to ensure that the services provided do not cause additional trauma to individuals. In addition, this Team administers the Solutions To End Homelessness Program (STEHP) and the Emergency Solutions Grant (ESG) which follows the housing first model and is responsible for the management of the Rapid Rehousing (RRH) and Permanent Supportive Housing (PSH). Intensive case management is provided for the individuals in each program to assist them in working towards achieving stable housing.

Services that can be provided to clients include rental subsidies, security deposits, and/or moving expenses with the goal of achieving and maintaining permanent affordable housing. Clients are also able to receive mental health and substance abuse services if needed. Services that promote educational opportunities, household budgeting, and job readiness are also available. The goal is to optimize self-sufficiency among individuals and families.

The ESG will be ending on September 30, 2023. This very useful funding increased community collaboration and provided necessary support that filled service gaps in Rockland County. RCDSS partnered with Helping Hands to expand outreach and their breakfast program. In addition, this funding enabled Helping Hands to bring mobile showers to Spring Valley and Nyack. The Haverstraw Center used its funding to create Project Embrace, which consists of street outreach and a drop-in center with shower and laundry facilities on site. Catholic Charities expanded its outreach and provided prevention funds to undocumented residents who were impacted by COVID-19. They also paid for motel stays when individuals and families needing to isolate had contracted COVID-19 and met the financial criteria for the Emergency Solutions Grant – COVID-19 Virus (ESG-CV). Catholic Charities and RCDSS were able to provide individuals and families (who were COVID-19-positive and financially eligible) with a motel room if they needed a place to isolate. Funding was also utilized to pay rental arrears to avoid eviction and prevent homelessness.

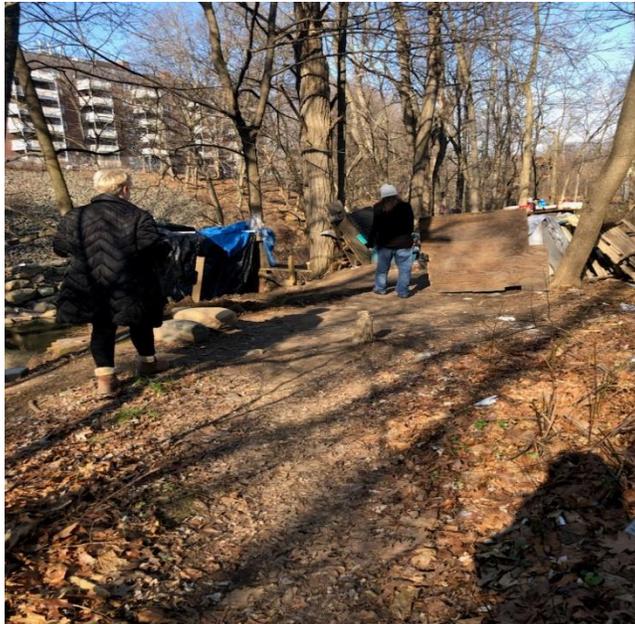
The Legal Aid Society assisted Supportive Housing clients impacted by the pandemic, with eviction proceedings, tenant/landlord mediation, and legal advice. The Mental Health Association (MHA) used its funding to establish a mobile mental health team that consisted of a clinician, a peer (previously homeless), and a nurse who provided support in the field to homeless individuals. MHA accompanied the street outreach workers to encampments, the warming center, and appointments as needed. Case management is an integral component of engaging the homeless to offer service delivery. Towards that end, the Mental Health Association (MHA) of Rockland has partnered with RCDSS staff to provide specialized treatment modalities that are trauma-informed and person-

centered. The goal is to encourage treatment for substance and mental health issues for those who don't utilize traditional service delivery options.

**Point-In-Time Study**

The Supportive Housing Team and RCDSS staff played a vital role in the County's Point-In-Time (PIT) study. The PIT is required yearly by the Office of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) to count both sheltered and unsheltered homeless. This count takes place during the last ten days in January over a 24-hour period where sheltered and unsheltered individuals and families (in the EFS) are counted. Commissioner Silvestri recognized the need for an updated tool to monitor and track encampment locations. Supportive Housing partnered with the County's Transportation Department to develop a software application. This application is utilized throughout the year to map encampments and places where the homeless are found. Funded agencies and the Clarkstown Police, regularly use this application to document homeless locations and encampments. This data enables us to provide services to the most vulnerable and those who are traditionally difficult to locate. Using this application also allowed us to create walking lists for each of the areas throughout the County, where homeless have been found. This technology significantly improved our Point in Time data collection and enabled service providers to follow up throughout the year.

In 2022, there were 40 unsheltered and 91 sheltered individuals/families identified in the count. This data is submitted to Congress and impacts local, federal, and state funding.



Point-In-Time Picture

**Warming Center**

RCDSS is responsible for the oversight and management of Rockland County's Warming Center. The Warming Center was established in response to the Governor's Code Blue initiative. RCDSS contracted with Catholic Charities to run the daily functions of the Warming Center, which is operational from November through April each evening, and on days when the weather with the wind chill falls below 32 degrees. The Center is available for anyone age eighteen or older who needs a safe place to stay and has pick-up and drop-off locations at the RCDSS office in Pomona, Spring Valley, Haverstraw, and Nyack. The Warming Center is located near the County bus routes and bus tickets are free within Rockland. The Warming Center provides warm meals, hot showers, and the opportunity to have laundry done. The center holds a total of 75 guests per night and each guest is assigned a case manager who provides ongoing care coordination during their stay.

The Warming Center is located on the same campus as RCDSS, allowing guests to seamlessly access services. This season, the warming center was used by 170 unduplicated people in total: 126 men and 44 women.

**Section 8**

The Section 8 Team administers the Housing Choice Voucher Program for New York State Housing and Community Renewal. The Team currently has a total of 1,284 vouchers, general allocation, and specialized vouchers. Voucher types include Mainstream, Foster Youth Initiative, and Public-Based. In 2022, Section 8 was issued an additional 98 Public-Based vouchers for seniors and families. The voucher utilization rate exceeded 98% compared to the collective Public Housing Authority (PHA) rate of 88%. Section 8 previously had one field inspector, however, in 2022 each Community Builder became certified, and field trained as the Team was reorganized. The RCDSS Community Builders are now responsible for performing inspections and eligibility assessments. The COVID-19 Housing Quality Standard waiver ended on June 30, 2022, and the staff was able to conduct over 300 inspections prior to the termination of the waiver.

**Emergency Family Shelter**

RCDSS operates an Emergency Family Shelter (EFS) which provides temporary housing to families who are homeless due to fire, flood, eviction, and other emergencies. Shelter staff members, in conjunction with the Emergency Housing Team, assist families in locating affordable permanent housing. Other services provided at the shelter include case management, childcare, after-school tutorials, recreation programs for the children, and educational workshops for the parents. A Psychiatric Social Worker is on staff to assist individual residents struggling with mental health concerns to find stable housing, organize, and oversee their treatment programs, and obtain the other resources they require.

Year	New Families Admitted	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
2021 (COVID)	1	5	10
2022	14	15	30

- The average length of stay for a family that resided in the shelter in 2022 was 141.5 days.
- In comparison with 2021 the average length of stay for a family residing in the shelter was 95.6 days.
- The number of families placed in permanent housing in 2022 was 4, which was comprised of 5 adults and 10 children

Three families revisited the EFS in 2022 for the following reasons:

- The family’s TA closed due to a failure to recertify and had a disagreement with their landlord.
- The apartment the resident was living in became unavailable.
- The resident was denied a Section 8 voucher due to program infractions.

## CHILDREN AND FAMILY SERVICES

### MISSION STATEMENT

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

Children and Family Services consists of 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/Persons in Need of Supervision Diversion Services, and the Schools, Training, Eligibility, Public Outreach, and Statistics Administrative Team. Together, they offer a variety of crucial programs that support keeping kids safe and well in Rockland County. Children and 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 traumas.

### Child Protective Services

Child Protective Services (CPS) is divided into two tracks, the traditional Investigative track, and the Family Assessment Response track (FAR). While both the Investigative track and the Family Assessment Response track are strength-based, the FAR track is a family-centered approach to responding to concerns of child abuse and neglect. Caseworkers work in partnership with families to address the strengths and needs of each family while focusing on child safety. FAR builds on the parents' and the community's strengths and resources while connecting families with services to meet each family's unique needs. FAR assesses all safety factors in the case. A determination of the allegations is not required in order to close the case.

In 2022, CPS received 1,642 reports from the State Central Register (SCR), an increase of approximately 14% from 2021 (1,431). The FAR Teams assessed 737 (45%) of the reports while the Investigative Teams assessed 905 (55%). These percentages are consistent with 2021. The 905 Investigative reports included 668 maltreatment investigations, 131 sex abuse investigations, and 24 physical abuse investigations. On average, the Investigative and FAR Teams assessed approximately 136 cases per month.

Investigative caseworkers removed a total of 36 children from the care and custody of their parent/guardian due to abuse and/or neglect. This was a decrease of 52% from 2021 (69 children). There were 24 children placed in the direct custody of relatives and 12 children were placed into foster care. The majority (17) of the 36 placed children were removed from the Spring Valley area. In compliance with *Every Student Succeeds Act* (ESSA), 100% of the children who were removed were maintained in their school district of origin.

### Children's Services

The Children's Services Team is responsible for placing and supervising children and youth in temporary trauma-informed homes that meet their needs for safety and well-being. Foster care caseworkers work with community resources, birth parents, children, foster parents, and direct custodians to reduce and/or eliminate safety and risk factors. The primary goal is reunification of the family with alternative permanency plans for the children as needed. When a higher level of structure is necessary, caseworkers work with group homes and residential

treatment centers. In 2022, Rockland had 75 children placed outside their homes, which is a decrease of 14% from 2021 (87). RCDSS utilizes monthly Permanency Review Board Meetings to achieve permanency for youth and families according to the Adoption and Safe Families Act (ASFA) guidelines. As a result, permanency was achieved for 54 children in 2022.

Foster families receive special attention from RCDSS, which designs activities that encourage spending quality time together in a setting marked by staff members who are compassionate and empathic. As an illustration, the annual barbecue for foster parents and adoptive families this year was a huge success in uniting the staff, foster parents (both present and prospective), and adoptive families. In June 2022, Rockland had 4 foster care children successfully graduate from high school and they were recognized at the barbecue. A large extra thank you goes out to staff who cooked, delivered food, set up, cleaned up, and cheered for the graduates.

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 successful transition to adulthood. The RCDSS Children's Services Team conducted 2 in-person Independent Living Seminars in 2022 in which caseworkers assisted 17 eligible youth in utilizing Chafee funds for tutoring, car purchase, security deposit, and first-month rent; transportation, purchase of business attire, summer camp, and driving lessons. RCDSS partnered with Hearts to Homes, a non-profit organization based in Westchester that assists newly independent young adults who just aged out of foster care by providing the essentials to furnish a new home/apartment. This year 2 youths that had newly aged out of foster care received a total of 160 items.

*Celebrating Families*, a 16-week substance misuse education course with mandated attendance for Family Treatment Court participants is provided by RCDSS under a contract with The Village of Haverstraw Center. The program's premise is that addiction affects every member of the family. The groups are broken down into parents, caretakers, and children. Sessions consist of a 30-minute family meal and a 90-minute session on the week's topic, followed by a structured activity for the entire family.

In 2022, RCDSS continued to hold virtual monthly foster parent informational sessions, Foster/Adoptive Support group meetings, and foster parent training. The home finders facilitated 2 foster parenting training sessions, with an emphasis on finding homes for teenagers. At the end of 2022, there were 93 active foster family homes; 22 of which have either fostered teenagers or agreed to provide a safe and loving family home for a teenager.

RCDSS continues to partner with Wendy's to celebrate our foster and adoptive families. Wendy's restaurants, located in both Nanuet and West Haverstraw, provided free meals to our foster and adoptive families. The Wendy's in Nanuet provided 100 meals to 19 families, while the West Haverstraw location provided 70 meals to 16 families.

The annual Foster Parent Appreciation Holiday Party was back and in person at the Knights of Columbus, in Haverstraw, NY. There were 161 people in attendance at the holiday party; families and children were greeted by Mr. and Mrs. Claus. A specially selected and wrapped gift donated by the Cosgrove Foundation and affiliates was given to each child.

### **Family Time and Transportation**

The Family Time and Transportation Team provides children in foster care and their families with crucial services including supervision, support, and transportation. In addition to transporting children, the Team provides important feedback to caseworkers pertaining to parent/child observations, as well as administering drug testing, and providing the results to caseworkers. This information plays a vital role in relation to parents' recovery progress and helps caseworkers and courts to continue making sound decisions regarding child safety and family

reunification. In 2022, the Visitation Team provided supervised family time for 72 families and conducted 6,289 drug screenings which consisted of 2,052 urine collections and 4,237 oral swabs. Transportation services were provided for visitation, school runs, and client appointments as needed, which included approximately 3,504 transports by the Team. The Team oversees the fleet management of nine vehicles for operational use by the Child Welfare staff. This oversight includes car maintenance and EZ pass access for trips out of Rockland County.

Additionally, this Team has provided court-ordered supervised visits for parents with children in placement due to neglect or abuse. Family time is provided in a safe and comfortable environment, both indoors and outdoors in the RCDSS playground located outside of Building C. Additional visits are provided in the community by the Mental Health Association (MHA) of Rockland. The supervision by RCDSS and MHA helps maintain and enhance bonding while providing opportunities for parents to practice and strengthen their parenting skills.

### **Schools, Training, Eligibility, Public Outreach, and Statistics**

The Schools, Training, Eligibility, Public Outreach, and Statistics (STEPS) Team solidifies RCDSS' commitment to ensuring the safety of children and youth by giving Children and Family Services Teams' real-time data to enable proper planning and efficient programming. The School Liaison Coordinator and STEPS staff provide training to schools and community organizations to assist with identifying and reporting early signs of potential abuse and neglect of children and at-risk behavior of youth.

The School Liaison Coordinator is certified to provide Seminar in Field Instruction (SIFI) and taught graduate students with one-on-one instruction. In 2022, field instruction was provided to 5 graduate students from various colleges and universities.

RCDSS continues collaboration with the school districts to expedite and support the need for services identified within the schools. In 2022 out of 1,642 calls to the State Central Registry, 409 were calls made by school personnel. Allegations of educational neglect comprised 113 of the 409 (27%) calls. The East Ramapo School District continued to have the highest number of calls to the State Central Registry (159:409 or 37%) which is an increase of 32% from 2021. An RCDSS senior caseworker is assigned to the East Ramapo School District to help identify appropriate referrals for early engagement to reduce potential safety and risk factors. The senior caseworker attends meetings with school personnel, students, and families to offer and provide services to families that have youth with excessive school absences. Referrals are made to connect the family and youth with appropriate services in the community or within the Agency. The senior caseworker serves as the RCDSS representative stationed at the Partnership for Safe and Healthy Youth to engage families and coordinate comprehensive plans for cross-system services.

### **Family Services**

The Family Services Team's role is to provide support and resources to families to prevent the placement of their children out of their homes. They promote safety, permanency, and well-being for children and their families in their home environment. Caseworkers provide in-home assessments, casework counseling, and assistance with connecting to other community resources. Other services provided are transportation to appointments, assistance with educational needs, and providing daily necessities when needed.

The goal is to empower families to achieve and maintain self-sufficiency and prevent avoidable disruptions. Services are voluntary, except when ordered by the Family Court in cases of abuse, neglect, or custody matters.

In 2022, Family Services received 329 referrals. The Family Services Team provided services to 286 of those families. This was a 40% increase from 2021 (204). Family Services facilitated monthly review boards with participants from all areas of Children and Family Services to discuss and formulate ideas to prevent the

placement of children into foster care. In addition, collaborative meetings with internal teams and community resources were held to assist in determining appropriate resources for families. These meetings also provided the opportunity to build working relationships and increase knowledge of prevention resources.

### **Adolescent Services**

Adolescent Services provides diversion services and support 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.

In 2022, 134 families received services from the Adolescent Team. There was a slight increase from 2021, which reflected a total of 128 families being served. The Adolescent Team assisted the Family Services Team with cases due to a large number of referrals pertaining to school truancy and the need for Mental Health Services.

In 2022, the Adolescent Team held a total of 12 review board meetings with other service providers working with the Rockland County adolescent population. Participants included staff from RCDSS, the Department of Mental Health, BOCES, the Probation Department, and the Partnership for Safe and Healthy Youth. The Adolescent Team continues to work with Brosnan Risk Consultants, an agency that helps to provide research analysts and licensed private investigation services under their “Save a Child” (SAC) program. Through these services and collaboration with the local law enforcement departments, RCDSS filled an important need to locate missing youth, believed to be the targets of sex traffickers or gang members. All youths referred to Brosnan Risk Consultants were located and safely returned to their community.

The Adolescent Team partnered with BOCES to bring the Youth Police Initiative (YPI) to teens in our community. YPI enables youths to collaborate with our local police departments and community organizations to build trust and bring about positive changes together. In 2022, 17 youths participated and graduated from the program. After completion of the program, the youth continue communication via group chats along with other positive proactive programs, trips, and activities. These interactions help youth to remain bonded, engaged, and build long-term positive relationships while learning skills that will help them through their lifelong journey.

The Adolescent Team has collaborated with Bravehearts MOVE since 2019. Bravehearts’ meetings take place weekly at the Louis Kurtz Center located in the East Ramapo section of Rockland County. Bravehearts are living the mantra “nothing about us, without us.” Bravehearts envisions systems in which every child, youth, and young adult entering a youth-serving system is being appropriately prepared for life through genuine opportunities and authentic youth involvement throughout all system levels. They help guide the strengthening of the systems so that no youth falls through the cracks, and advocate for youth to utilize their lived experience as expertise to foster change in their communities and in their own lives.

### **Parent and Adolescent Response Team**

In recent years, Adolescent Services expanded to include the Parent and Adolescent Response Team (PART). This addition was able to fill an immediate gap in mental health and substance abuse services. It allowed Behavioral Health workers to partner with caseworkers and bring mental health and substance abuse services into the home. In 2021, the PART Team started implementing an evidence-based model called Multi-Systemic Therapy (MST). To date, this model has shown significant promise in changing the trajectory of young people.

## Rockland County Department of Social Services Annual Report 2022

### MST Highlights:

- 100% of youth completed treatment (97 youth)
- 90% of the youth remained at home and in the community (87 youth)
- 90% of youth were in school or working at the end of treatment (87 youth)

### Other Adolescent Services Highlights:

- 100% of youth with PINS behaviors were diverted from placement (97 youth).
- 98% of all youth serviced were diverted from placement (95 youth).
- 0 youths placed because of criminal charges.

RCDSS was awarded a grant by the Office for Children and Family Services (OCFS) for the eighth consecutive year of providing services to youth identified as confirmed or at risk of human trafficking and/or sexual exploitation. A screening tool was utilized across systems to identify victims of human trafficking. RCDSS conducted a total of 1,885 rapid indicator tools in 2022 which was a 46% increase from the 1,026 rapid indicator tools completed in 2021. A “yes” response to the rapid indicator tool prompts the caseworker to complete a comprehensive tool that identifies the youth’s risk level. There were 86 comprehensive assessments completed in 2022 (9 high-risk, 10 medium-risk, 67 no-risk, and 0 confirmed). The Safe Harbor Multi-Disciplinary Team monthly meeting discusses and strategizes engagement and services for youth being trafficked or at risk of trafficking. In 2022, RCDSS serviced 30 youths identified as at risk for trafficking. Services provided have included educational support, clothing, food, housing needs, pro-social activities, tutoring, laptops, etc. As a preventive measure, youth are always notified of a 24-hour hotline and other services through the Sanctuary, a shelter for runaway and homeless youth.

## ADULT 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 enabling adults to remain in the least restrictive environment.

### Adult Protective Services

Adult Protective Services (APS) is a program to assist adults, aged 18 and over, who due to 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 in the least restrictive alternatives.

In 2022, APS received 651 referrals, a decrease of 9% from 2021. APS continues to work tirelessly on confronting Adult Abuse for the elderly population of Rockland County. In October, members of the Adult Services staff attended the Adult Abuse Training Institute held in Albany. This training provided advanced workshops in identifying, treating, and preventing adult abuse. There were several key issues identified and discussed. Workers agreed on the considerable impact that COVID-19 had on services to vulnerable adults. Age-related social isolation and abuse risk increased for older persons as a result of COVID. The Workshop also addressed financial exploitation as the most common form of abuse as well as physical, emotional, and sexual abuse. Participants learned about new programs that support caregivers and provide in-home problem-solving designed to reduce abuse. Attendees had the opportunity to exchange information and share ideas with one another to work toward the common goal of reducing Adult Abuse within the communities we service.

In 2021, an E-MDT (Enhanced Multidisciplinary Team) was formed to examine complex cases of elder abuse and financial exploitation. The E-MDT provided at no cost to the county a Forensic Accountant trained to review financial records and identify evidence of crimes or misappropriation of client funds. In 2022, APS identified 2 cases of financial abuse. E-MDT and legal counsel followed up to safeguard clients' standing with regard to assets and security.

In 2022, APS had 436 Home Care Cases. On December 1, 2022, new regulation changes were made to the process for adults 18 and over who are seeking personal care services and/or consumer-directed personal assistance services. Adults seeking these services based on immediate need will now have the option of providing as part of their request a *Practitioner Statement of Need* form in lieu of a Physician's Order form. The *Practitioner Statement of Need* requires less documentation on the part of the practitioner and can be completed by an MD, DO, NP, or PA. Once the individual provides a completed *Immediate Needs Packet*, the RCDSS must follow the process to refer adult individuals to NYIA immediately and without delay to schedule a community health assessment and clinical appointment, all in an expedited timeframe. This new regulation helps to mitigate extensive paperwork and delay time for assessments.

In November of 2022, APS assisted a 91-year-old American citizen returning from Cyprus to New York under federal law, Section 1113 of the Social Security Act. APS developed a service plan that included greeting the

Rockland County Department of Social Services Annual Report 2022

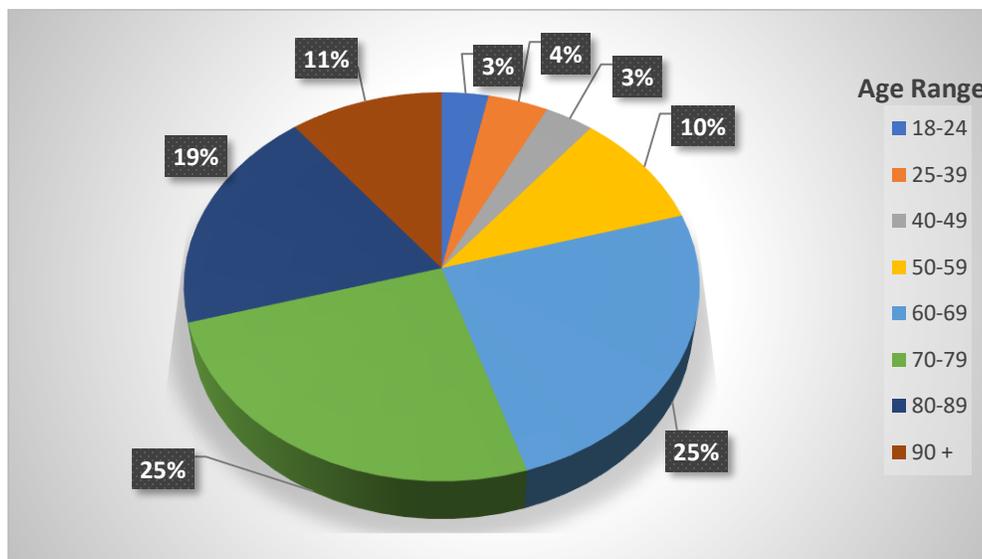
client at JFK International Airport, securing transport to Rockland County, arranging for housing, scheduling a nurse assessment, and gathering the individuals’ personal items. APS continued to support this client over the course of the following weeks to ensure all needs were met before his caregiver returned to Cyprus in early December.

In 2022, APS serviced 625 clients with multiple issues or risk factors. The chart below provides the total number of each type of risk factor treated in 2022 by APS.

Referrals Received	Total
16A - Neglect by caregiver	39
16A - Physical abuse	28
16A - Sexual abuse	2
16A - Psychological abuse	39
16A - Financial or other exploitation	98
16B - Neglects own basic needs	176
16B - Untreated medical conditions	147
16B - Self-endangering behaviors	105
16B - Unable to manage finances	31
16B - Environmental hazards	162
Mentally Ill	206
Poor Housing Conditions	134
Eviction/ Homeless	80
Drug or Alcohol	20
Dementia	72

The pie chart below demonstrates percentages of the 625 RCDSS APS clients serviced in 2022 broken down by age. All of these clients were serviced for one or more of the risk factors in the listing above.

**% OF APS CLIENTS SERVICED BY AGE RANGE**



## 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.

#### **Family Law and Legal Division**

The Family Law Division is responsible for representing RCDSS in Family Court on matters of paternity, child support, child abuse and neglect, foster care, and juvenile delinquency cases. The Team has a 98.5% success rate in abuse and neglect proceedings. There are 13 neglect/abuse matters still pending before Family Court. Additionally, two appeals were defended, and the appellate division upheld the decision of the trial court and continued the neglect adjudications against the parents in both cases. The Legal Team is responsible for all litigation by or against RCDSS, Article 81 Proceedings, and administrative hearings. The Team also provides legal advice to other internal Teams.

#### **Fair Hearings**

The Fair Hearings Team represents RCDSS in administrative reviews requested by applicants or recipients of assistance not satisfied with the Agency's actions. This Team tries to resolve disagreements and avoid a hearing, helping to reduce administrative costs and provide improved service to RCDS clients. In 2022, RCDSS participated in the resolution of 213 Fair Hearings, of which 98% resulted in Agency Affirmed, Applicant Rescinded, Applicant Default, or Correct When Made. The Legal Division also oversees proper enforcement of the operations of Teams that enforce federal, state, and local laws, rules and regulations, and procedures regarding assistance payments made through the Agency, excluding child support.

#### **Child Support Enforcement**

The Rockland County Child Support Enforcement Team (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 2022, \$23.5 million in child support was collected and distributed to 4,923 custodial parents, pursuant to CSEU's efforts to establish, collect, and enforce child support orders on behalf of our clients.

#### **Operations, Analysis, and Planning**

The Operations, Analysis, and Planning (OAP) Team develops and processes funding applications, contracts, plans, and grants in accordance with state and federal regulations, and administrative directives. The Team's processing also incorporates a legal review and analysis. OAP staff develops, drafts, implements, and monitors internal and contracted local programs that provide needed services in Rockland communities. The Team assists contract agencies with contract compliance, performance, and reporting requirements to ensure that RCDSS' expectations and objectives are properly met. The Team continues its efforts to assure accountability by service providers, including strict scrutiny, monitoring, site visits, and legal review of contract services. OAP works collaboratively with RCDSS staff and agencies to identify unmet needs and develop contracted programs that

best address what is needed for clients, families, and the community. OAP oversees agency allocations and expenditures, maximizes resources, and helps to develop various mandated State plans and annual updates required by the State for submission to the County Executive. In 2022, OAP was responsible for 147 contracts totaling a minimum of \$5,769,243, as well as 20 grants/plans totaling \$4,520,340.

### **Special Investigations**

The Special Investigations Team 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 RCDSS. 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 2022, the SIU Team received 209 new FEDS referrals for investigation, all of which were completed resulting in the denial/withdrawal/correction of 103 applications and an estimated \$1,016,226 in New York State-defined cost-avoidance. The SIU Team received 465 new fraud (back end) referrals; completing 424 (252 from new 2022 referrals, 172 from previous years’ referrals), resulting in 28 new fraud overpayments totaling \$110,411.72 and an additional \$183,399.21 identified in Medicaid overpayments. Ongoing recoveries totaled \$135,818.65. Additionally, 85 active assistance cases were closed as the direct result of fraud investigations resulting in an additional \$428,664 in estimated cost-avoidance. Combined FEDS (\$1,016,226) and Fraud (\$428,664) cost-avoidance totaled an estimated \$1,444,890. The SIU administered 12 Intentional Program Violations (IPVs) resulting in 12 administrative disqualifications.

### **Resource Recovery/Collections**

The Resource Recovery/Collections Team 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. In 2022, \$585,432.63 was collected by the Resource Recovery Team; approximately 182 new collection cases were established on behalf of TA, SNAP, HEAP, SIU, and O&R reconciliations.

The Team prepared 111 judgments against unpaid customers and electronically submitted them to the Rockland County Clerk. All overpayment and advance payment collections for all programs, including Temporary Assistance, SNAP, Childcare Assistance, and Medicaid, are coordinated, and overseen by SIU and Resource Team staff members. These employees serve as a liaison between RCDSS and the consumer debtors who owe money to the County. 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.

## ADMINISTRATION

The Department of Social Services has several Teams working on providing critical administrative and support services to the Agency.

### **Welfare Management Systems**

Welfare Management Systems (WMS) is the IT Team for the Department. The Team provides technical knowledge and information to improve business processes through technology and best practices. The Team serves as the technical administrators to maintain various systems while maintaining and updating hardware, software, and network infrastructure. WMS provides incident management services, and information from both the Central Index System (CI), and the Benefit Issuance Control System (BICS).

WMS supports over 500 devices connected to the State network and over 200 mobile devices for workers in the field to ensure that staff has reliable and consistent access to the New York State applications that administer the local Social Services programs. These applications directly impact Rockland County's citizenry and enable RCDSS employees to strengthen communities by providing prompt customer service to Rockland's individuals and families.

In 2022, WMS resolved 12,901 employee requests for technical support (4,566) and CI assistance (8,335), as reported by the RCDSS Technical Support System. WMS personally attends to each request to resolve the incident in addition to fulfilling State, County, and Agency requests for information. WMS oversees operations for the Central Index System (CI) which assigns case numbers to individuals and/ or families that receive benefits through the Agency's eligibility programs. Central Index closed 8,335 requests in 2022 of which 7,787 were new case requests and 548 were inquiries that involved prior cases and required considerable research 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. BICS also provides data to Agency Teams via Production Hosting Reports and Enterprise Documents (PHRED).

WMS works in conjunction with both state and county IT entities to deploy new technology, educate staff on usage, and provide telework and/or office support. In 2022, WMS distributed video conferencing headsets, took over Verizon wireless management of over 240 lines, upgraded all network switches, implemented an Automated Call Distribution System, and started developing an intra-agency SharePoint site.

WMS is the editor of the Rocklandgov.com RCDSS web pages for the Agency and was tasked with keeping the pages current based on information received from the various internal Teams. In addition, WMS acts as the administrator for the following applications: CONNECTIONS, ASSETS, eMedNY, Work Number, DOL, SOLQ, HCS, UAS, and WMS. The Team provides different levels of access and support and performs audits ensuring compliance with state mandates. These applications are used by workers in their daily job functions and are an integral part of the workflow. WMS also processes Medicaid (MA) enrollment reports from the Sheriff's Department and forwards information to MA and SNAP.

### **Accounting**

Accounting is responsible for all of the fiscal operations of the Agency. The Accounting Team prepares and files the pertinent reports and claims for reimbursement as required by the state and federal government. The Accounting Team consists of 3 subdivisions: Public Assistance Accounting, Services Accounting, and Administrative Accounting.

## Rockland County Department of Social Services Annual Report 2022

Assistance provided to residents of Rockland County exceeded \$1.7 billion in 2022, a 30.74% increase as compared to 2021. Medicaid expenses comprise more than 87% of the County's total budget and account for more than one billion dollars. The majority of the 30.74% increase over 2021 is related to the Supplemental Assistance Nutrition Program (Food Stamps/SNAP). SNAP expenses accounted for \$132,448,156 or 7.64% of the RCDSS Agency's budget.

Federal support toward overall assistance costs exceeds 56% (\$974,028,203), State aid accounts for approximately 40% (\$684,832,212), and the local share is approximately 4% (\$73,872,519). Revenue sources include grant awards totaling \$4,520,340.

### **Administrative Services**

The Administrative Services Team provides writing and accountability support to the Agency. Throughout 2022 RCDSS continued to oversee and emphasize Agency performance in three critical areas: Regulatory compliance, client (fellow employees) service delivery, and enhanced efficiency across internal RCDSS teams. The Team examined operational challenges, identifying weaknesses/shortcomings, and analyzing legal and regulatory requirements while addressing significant operational concerns in order to accomplish these goals. The team has a distinct methodology for developing guidelines, procedures, processes, and employee training that assure compliance with State and Agency requirements.

The Team's efforts assure accountability throughout the Agency while also ensuring the 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, guidelines, and laws. The process includes legal analysis and compliance review.

Agency investment in internal policy development yields high returns. The Policy Team develops, writes, reviews, and edits written processes and procedures in accordance with state and federal regulations and administrative directives. 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 efforts on delivering services that protect the vulnerable and provide financial assistance for residents in need. Tighter internal controls improve program integrity, by detecting and preventing welfare waste and fraud while focusing on the Agency's duty to Rockland taxpayers.

In 2022, the Administrative Services Team developed or updated these significant Policies and Processes.

- Emergency Housing Voucher Procedure Policy
- Records Retention and Disposition Policy
- RCDSS Emergency Shelter Policy
- Emergency Utility Loans Policy
- Confidentiality of Records and Communications Policy
- Uber Services Policy
- Records Retention Policy
- Fleet Management Review and Processes
- Use and Management of Mobile Device Policy
- HEAP Cold Season Policy
- Child Care Assistance Repayment Policy
- Safety Net Process
- Temporary Assistance Non-Emergency Program Overpayments Policy
- Compliance with Section 5.1.1 of IRC 6103(p)(4)(C) Mandatory Background Investigation Minimum Requirement for Prospective Staff with Access to Federal Tax Information (FTI)

In 2022, the Team oversaw and developed the content for the internal RCDSS SharePoint site (additional content will be released in 2023) by collaborating with each Team to deliver the most current information and contacts for every Team. Tasked with being the content source and editor, the focus was on developing an easily accessible site that would be a useful one-stop shop. The Team communicated to RCDSS staff the importance of using the site for "self-help" to prevent work interruptions to other Teams during the working day. SharePoint will be transformed into a fully functional resource hub, complete with a newsroom, team-specific pages, frequently used forms, and often searched-for links. The Team will continue to develop the site as information is received from around the Agency.

The Team also writes and edits concise summaries of guidance directives received from the Offices of Temporary and Disability Assistance and Children and Family Services. In 2022, over 100 summaries were written and posted for Agency use. The synopses are distributed to the managers to align the Agency's actions with the State's policies, regulations, and modifications. The data is used to develop and update Agency processes in compliance with State regulations.

The Team compiles monthly statistical data from the Commissioner's Dashboard, the Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance, Assets, the Office of Children and Family Services, and the New York State Department of Health. The data is formulated into custom-designed local reports that identify and track current outcomes and trends in Medicaid, Temporary Assistance, the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, the Child Support Enforcement Team, and Child Protective Services. The information is used to anticipate workforce needs, pinpoint problem areas, and ensure adherence to time-related laws and other regulations.

A prominent policy this year was the *Policy for the Issuance, Use, and Management of Mobile Devices*, which was developed to oversee and guide caseworkers' use of cell phones in the field. Caseworkers were given the equipment to assist with their work in the field. The procedural guidelines for the policy were developed because clients and children are increasingly relying on smartphones and texting services. The same instant mobile interaction and communication applications the clients and children use are the most effective way to communicate with them.

The Administrative Services Team began working with the RCDSS fleet at the end of 2022 to ensure all cars were E-Z Pass registered. The Team began developing a system and enacting updates with specific information as vehicles enter or leave the fleet, and records and manages any changes. The coordination between RCDSS and the County Fleet Manager clarified the process and prompted these developments of new changes and processes.

### **Administrative Office Services**

The Agency's personnel are served by Administrative Office Services (AOS) in four different sites with a variety of services. This support includes setting up blanket purchase orders for supplies and services, forecasting and routinely requisitioning supplies ranging from pens to vehicles, processing receipts of outside deliveries, personally inspecting items and comparing them to purchase orders, making sure all items are accounted for, and managing a secure stockroom. Emphasis is placed on having an effective and dependable approach for distributing office supplies by hand delivery. Additionally, AOS manages a van for general usage and arranges for van borrowing as well as for outside donations to be collected.

AOS is responsible for entering repair requests for campus facility issues relating to Building L and is the backup ticket submitter for Buildings C and K.

The Team is in charge of the annual ordering and delivery of numerous cots, clothing, hygienic, and toiletry items to ensure the smooth operation of the Warming Center.

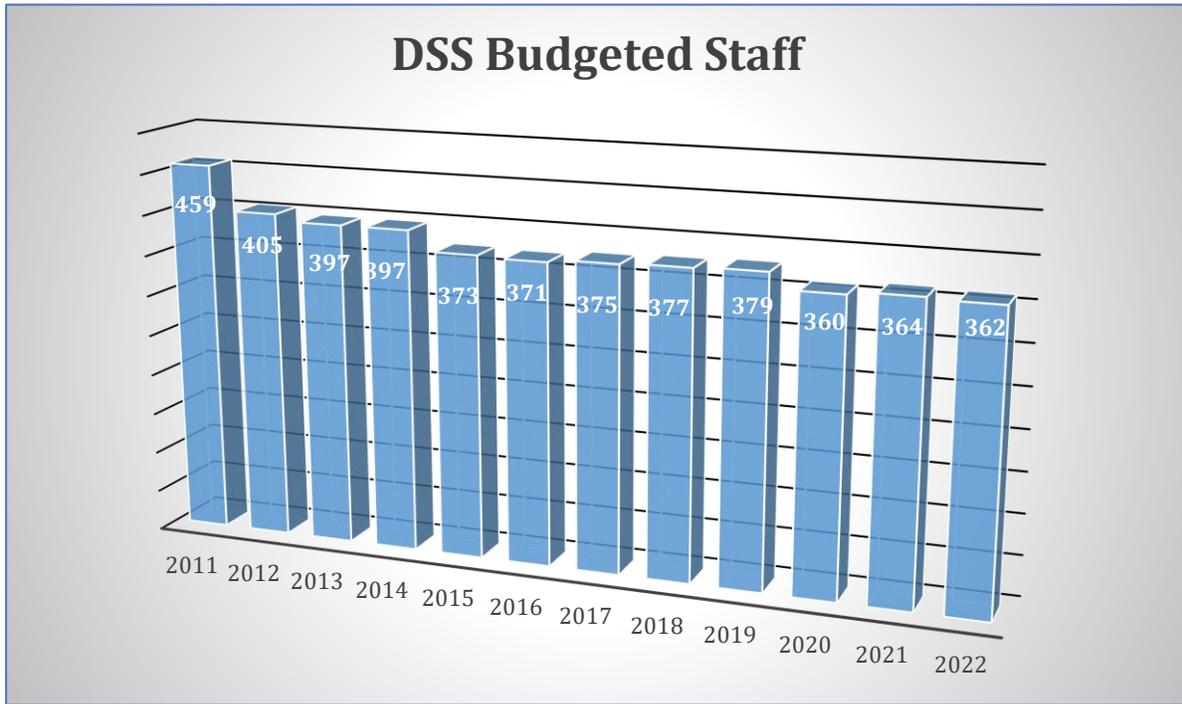
In 2022, the following transactions were made:

- Maintenance tickets submitted: 146
- PeopleSoft requisitions submitted for items and services: 175
- Procurement Card purchases made: 133
- RCDSS staff supply requisitions filled: 373

**Personnel Team**

The Personnel Team 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 2022, Personnel scheduled 127 interviews for 19 different position titles. In 2022, 46 new hires and 52 separations were processed. 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, safety, and performance management.

In 2022, there were 362 budgeted positions.



**Staff Development**

In unison with the rest of New York State, RCDSS Staff Development began 2022 with in-person training and virtual training. Virtual training, with the tools and skills acquired during the past two years, continues to be part of training delivery. There are great benefits connected to virtual attendance, among them, the absence of travel time, and the reduction of incurred expenses. However, it was realized that human connection and direct interactions with trainers and colleagues are beneficial as they produce a positive ripple effect in attendees and even the trainers, who can finetune their deliveries, by observing the classroom dynamics. In March 2022, staff resumed some in-person training in Albany.

A record number of supervisors and managers attended the New York Public Welfare Association (NYPWA) Winter session, thanks to its virtual delivery. More than 40 participants attended the conference and engaged

with other NYS members. RCDSS had a successful in-service training in March, titled “*Contribution, Collaboration and Recognition*”, which 90% of staff attended. Guest speaker John Richardson-Lauve from Child Savers focused on the topic of reward and recognition. The presentation was delivered with a mix of lectures, audience participation, digital live polling, and small group work. Themes included self-care, the brain science of reward, celebration of the work and each other, workplace languages of appreciation, and workplace resiliency.

In October, RCDSS had a second in-service, which focused on “*Empowerment Through Collaboration.*” It was the first ever produced and delivered exclusively by staff. The Education Committee developed and delivered a great presentation. This interactive experience was based on the various services and benefits available at RCDSS; as well as the multiple Teams/staff that collaborated to make this happen. Participation reached above 94% and the satisfaction level was at its highest!

There were 18 senior caseworkers and supervisors who attended the *Kempe International Virtual Conference, “A Call to Action to Change Child Welfare.”* This three-day conference in October is part of a growing global movement to bring radical and lasting change to the workings of the child welfare systems. It brought together practitioners, policy and lawmakers, academics, children and young people, families, and communities with an agenda for real change.

Twice a year Staff Development invites all new staff to an in-person RCDSS Orientation. There were 17 participants in 2022. All caseworkers received cell phones and participated in two related trainings; *Cellphone Deployment Training*, a guided tour of the phones’ capabilities, delivered by WMS; and a training on the application “*Alert Media a Hands-free Distress Signal Solution, Safety Monitoring, and Action Plans*” delivered by the vendor to aid caseworkers when in distress and in need of assistance. Over 70 staff took both trainings.

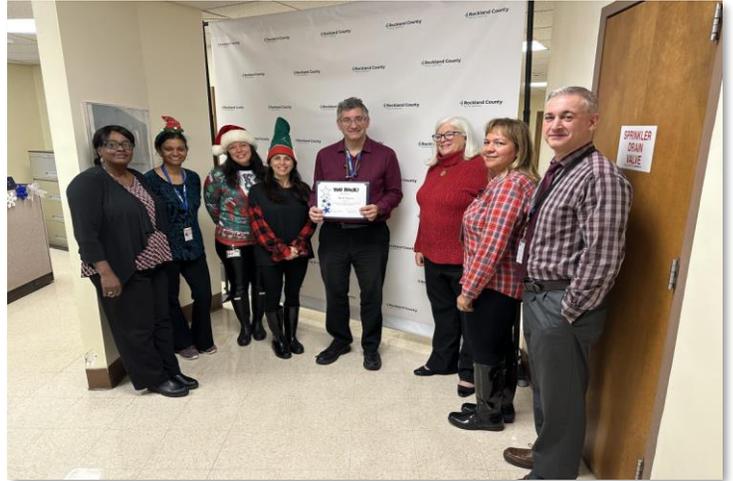
Finally, we closed the year with 60 participants in the sixth *Poverty Simulation Experience*. The training was opened to all of our staff that had not previously attended and invitations were extended to other county employees and other counties within New York State as well. We delivered this experience with only staff, composed of over 20 agency volunteers, in addition to facilitators and registration staff.

Staff Development facilitated over 3,000 sessions, totaling 8,450 hours of staff training in key areas of professional development. All Teams participated in an average of 11 training hours related to the tools and skills needed to perform their responsibilities or to further develop their professional foundation.

## EMPLOYEE RECOGNITION AND RCDSS HAPPENINGS

### RCDSS SPOT AWARDS, YOU ROCK AWARDS, ABOVE and BEYOND AWARDS

RCDSS recognizes employees for outstanding, dedicated efforts, toward achieving and continuously supporting the Department's goals and mission. Supervisors and peers award staff members in acknowledgment of their accomplishments and efforts. In 2022, the Department awarded 100 *On-The-Spot Awards*.



**RCDSS SPOT AWARDS, YOU ROCK AWARDS, ABOVE and BEYOND AWARDS**



**RCDSS SPOT AWARDS, YOU ROCK AWARDS, ABOVE and BEYOND AWARDS**



# YEARS OF SERVICE

## 5 Years of Service

Allison Aiello  
Rasa Aurelien  
Sandra Coluccini  
William Gavin  
Camillia McRae  
Iona Smith-Northern  
Hector Real  
Helen Yerger

## 10 Years of Service

Joseph Brennan  
Sheylah DeLeon-Aguko

## 15 Years of Service

Ana Arenas  
Kimberly Bacon  
Charlene Gulino  
Donna Hansen  
Cherian Kurian  
Ana Laboriel  
Neil Mednick  
Denise Urena  
Chana Weitz  
Dorothy Williams  
Ronald Wilson

## 20 Years of Service

Anastasia Armstrong  
Jacqueline Banker  
Joanne Clouden  
Patricia Collins  
Gricin Cumbo  
Kathleen Kavanagh  
Michelle Lakes  
Lourdes Quezada  
Vita Streva  
Elizabeth Zaragoza

## 25 Years of Service

Kevin Brown  
Datrice Armstrong  
Thomas Dimick  
Jeannine D'Alisera  
Elsa Gonzalez  
Jennifer Heller  
Marjorie Metellus  
Sylvia Nieves  
Lisa Olivo  
Linda Ortiz  
Gerald Parker

## 30 Years of Service

Jennifer Covati  
Nancy Murphy  
Barbara Palmentiero

## 35 Years of Service

Roland Hill



Thank you for your Service.

## RCDSS HAPPENINGS

The Wellness Committee is off to a great start! Many employees have expressed interest in the Committee since its introduction in April 2022. The Wellness Committee hosted a "Walk for Wellness" event at both Building C and Building L on June 21, the first day of summer. Participants reported feeling enthused and motivated. Many people are eagerly awaiting the upcoming programming.

### RCDSS Walking for Wellness



### RCDSS Evening of Zumba



## Juneteenth 2022

Juneteenth was commemorated at RCDSS with a Proclamation by the Honorable Legislator Toney L. Earl, a commemorative walk, and special readings by RCDSS staff. Commissioner Silvestri explained that the colors associated with Juneteenth hold significant meaning in African American history. The red symbolizes the bloodshed of those who fought for freedom, black represents the enslaved people, and green provides hope for a better future.



## In-Service Training

We had an opportunity to come together from March 9th to March 11th to acknowledge “Contribution, Collaboration, and Recognition.” As we move forward, our success will be enhanced by our individual and collective efforts to commitment, accountability, and empowerment.

From September 20th to September 22nd, RCDSS held another In-Service Training with the theme of Empowerment and Collaboration. Through teamwork, we help clients access the services they need until they can reach self-sufficiency. To achieve this goal, we collaborate with other Teams and come together.



## Breast Cancer Awareness Month



This year, on October 28th, RCDSS wore pink to honor those who have or had breast cancer. Georgia Gentile generously made pink ribbons for all of RCDSS to wear! Commissioner Silvestri arranged an outdoor gathering and spoke about the reasoning behind this month. She handed out roses to employees who have, had, or know a friend/family member who was diagnosed. It was beautiful to honor their strength and courage.





### Annual Adoption Celebration

November is National Adoption Month. For the eleventh year in a row, RCDSS and Wendy's partnered to celebrate the Foster and Adoptive Families of Rockland County.

This event occurred on November 16th, from 4:00 pm to 7:00 pm. The Wendy's restaurants in Nanuet and West Haverstraw provided free meals to foster and adoptive families of Rockland County in honor of Dave Thomas.

The event was a success! Wendy's reported they served 100 meals to 19 families in Nanuet and 70 meals to 16 families in West Haverstraw.



## Toy and Clothing Drive

Our 6th Annual Toy and Clothing Drive was held from November 25th to December 20th. RCDSS set up 4 drop-off locations for donations to make it easier to give. The Toy and Clothing Drive was a huge success, and we thank everyone who donated. The new toys and clothing were distributed to families in need throughout Rockland. These presents make the holidays extra special for the children and their families. We had very generous donors this year, making this Toy Drive a huge success. In addition, JL Blessings generously donated 125 backpacks filled with food. The backpacks were distributed to the warming center, the homeless, and people in need. This time of year can be challenging for children in foster care and these donations of new toys and clothing can make a large difference and improve their lives during the season.





World Elder Abuse Awareness Day was on June 15, 2022. This day aims to provide an opportunity for communities around the world to promote a better understanding of the abuse and neglect of older persons by raising awareness of the cultural, social, economic, and demographic circumstances affecting elder abuse and neglect.



## Foster Parent and Adoptive Families Annual BBQ

Once again, the Foster Parent and Adoptive Families Annual BBQ was a huge success because of your dedication, generous support, and most of all the presence of caring staff. A special THANK YOU to those who cooked, donated part of their day to deliver food, assisted in setting and cleaning up, cheered our graduates, and conveyed their sentiments of gratitude to Rockland foster families. The Home Finding Team holds these special events as part of their efforts to retain and recruit foster parents for wonderful children.



## **Foster Families Spring Egg Hunt April 2022**

As a result of a unique idea from caseworker Aida DeLeon, the Home Finding Team held its 1st Annual Spring Egg Hunt on Saturday, April 9th, on the grounds behind Bldg. L. The event was well attended by about 15 foster families and their children. Commissioner Silvestri along with child welfare staff assisted a group of enthusiastic children in this fun activity while their foster parents looked on. Thanks to the Parent Aid Fund, we were able to serve pizza and drinks to the participants. A very warm thank you to everyone who supported and participated to make this event successful. We look forward to it becoming an annual event.





April is Child Abuse Prevention Month. The Children and Family Services Teams were busy planning a series of events to raise awareness of Child Abuse and Prevention to recognize efforts of RCDSS staff who work with our children and families every day to prevent and investigate child abuse and neglect. Each day members of our team work to protect Rockland’s Children. There are certain symbols used throughout the month to raise awareness, including wearing blue and planting Pinwheels. We had an opportunity to tie dye t-shirts, and all wore our blue shirts on Wear Blue Day in New York, on April 12th. This event was inclusive of all RCDSS staff in all locations. We were joined by County Executive Ed Day and District Attorney Tom Walsh and recognized RCDSS employees for the work they do in strengthening families and preventing child abuse and neglect. A special thanks to all who volunteered their efforts to coordinate all the events. It was much appreciated by all.



## Back to School Drive

A Back-to-School Drive is held annually. Supplies are collected from July to September with drop-off bins in Buildings C and L at the Robert Yeager Health Complex. The items donated include plastic pocket folders, book bags for all grade levels, composition notebooks, flexible 1–2-inch binders, dividers, glue sticks, colored pencils, markers, lined index cards, wide rule paper, highlighters, pens, crayons, gallon/quart Ziploc bags, disinfectant wipes, hand sanitizer and more! The school supplies were donated to children in the emergency family shelter and caseworkers gave them to their clients.



## Donations from the “Coupon Queen”

Anna DeSousa, a Valley Cottage resident donated over 1,000 toiletry items and food for residents in need. Rockland County Chief of Staff John Lyon, RCDSS Commissioner Joan Silvestri, and Jeff Gillies from the Town of Clarkstown made a visit to the home of Anna DeSousa known in her community as the “*Coupon Queen*” to collect items including toothpaste, soap, shampoo, sanitizer, razors, pens, water bottles, turkeys, and hams that were distributed to the County’s warming center and to Rockland individuals and families in need. We are grateful for these generous donations that helped Rockland residents.



## Foster Care and Adoption Holiday Party

On December 14th, caseworkers from the Children’s Services Foster Care Team arranged the annual Foster Parent Appreciation Holiday Party evening to celebrate the holidays with all the foster and adoptive families in Rockland. The annual event was back and in person at the Knights of Columbus, in Haverstraw, NY. There were 161 celebrants who attended the holiday party; families and children were greeted by Mr. and Mrs. Santa Claus. A specially selected wrapped gift donated by the Cosgrove Foundation and affiliates was given to each child. The evening was a resounding success, and each child had a huge smile on their face the entire night.



**Thank you to RCDSS staff for a productive and rewarding 2022**