

Rockland COUNTY
Department of Social Services
2021 Annual Report



Edwin J. Day
County Executive



Joan M. Silvestri
Commissioner





DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES

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Joan M. Silvestri
Commissioner

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

I am pleased to present the Department of Social Services Annual Report which describes our programs and services and highlights our accomplishments during 2021. DSS's partnership with all sectors of our community remains a priority. We continue to collaborate with not-for-profit, educational, law enforcement, judicial and health and human services agencies throughout Rockland County.

At DSS our greatest resource is our DSS staff, over 300 trained, motivated and professional employees.

Over the course of the year, as the pandemic entered new, ever-changing phases, we continued to modify our operational protocols in order to safely meet the needs of our clients and the community. During these challenging times, our focus remained on enhancing access to services under these new conditions. To that end, and for the safety of both our employees and those we serve, prioritization of compliance with CDC guidelines, policies and procedures remained crucial.

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

Sincerely,

Joan M. Silvestri
Commissioner

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ROCKLAND COUNTY GOVERNMENT

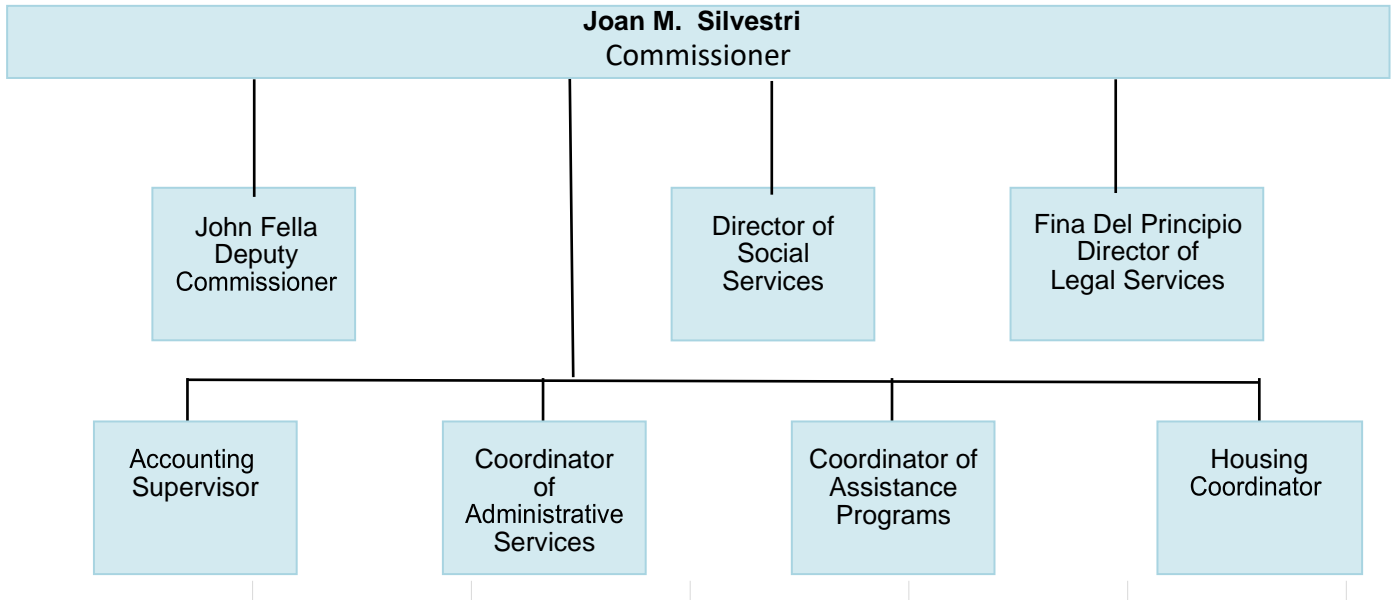
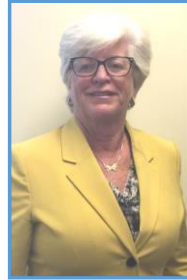
County Executive: Hon. Edwin J. Day

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Rockland County Department of Social Services



Rockland County Department of Social Services

VISION

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

MISSION

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



AT A GLANCE – INDIVIDUAL CASELOAD ACTIVITY & YEARLY AVERAGE COMPARISONS

		2020	2021	% Change
TEMPORARY ASSISTANCE	Active Temporary Assistance Cases			
	Family Assistance	236	240	1.7%
	Safety Net	359	330	-8.8%
	Total Active Cases	595	570	-4.4%
	Temporary Assistance Case Activity			
	Applications Processed	1,703	2,252	24.4%
	Cases Opened	1,041	1,380	24.6%
	Withdrawals	12	39	69.2%
	Denials	650	872	25.5%
	Cases Closed	511	447	-14.3%
Recertifications	635	929	31.6%	
Changes in Active Cases	6,783	6,497	-4.4%	
Total Case Activities	9,632	10,125	4.9%	
Temporary Assistance Recipients				
Family Assistance	507	507	0.0%	
Safety Net	519	478	-8.6%	
Total Recipients Year End	1,026	985	-4.2%	

		2020	2021	% Change
SNAP	Active SNAP Cases			
	Non-Public Assistance	13,730	13,970	1.7%
	Public Assistance	349	328	-6.0%
	Total Active Cases	14,079	14,298	1.6%
	SNAP Case Activity			
	Applications Processed (Non-Public Assistance)	8,384	6,825	18.6%
	Cases Opened	6,211	4,732	-23.8%
	Withdrawals	99	138	39.4%
	Denials	2,173	2,093	-3.7%
	Cases Closed	1,985	3,401	71.3%
Recertifications	10,970	10,812	448.8%	
Changes in Active Cases	14,611	23,269	59.3%	
Total Case Activities	41,029	58,605	42.8%	
SNAP Recipients Year End	41,108	41,500	1.0%	

AT A GLANCE – INDIVIDUAL CASELOAD ACTIVITY & YEARLY AVERAGE COMPARISONS

		2020	2021	% Change
MEDICAID	Medicaid Case Activity			
	Applications Processed	5,801	5,037	-15.2%
	Cases Opened	4,088	3,952	-3.4%
	Withdrawals	30	193	84.5%
	Denials	1,683	1,085	-55.1%
	Cases Closed	1,654	1,346	-22.9%
	Recertifications	771	716	-7.7%
	Changes in Active Cases	18,498	23,159	20.1%
	Total Case Activities	26,724	30,258	11.7%
	Medicaid Recipients Year End – Receiving Coverage through RCDSS	15,987	18,182	12.1%
Medicaid Recipients Year End – Receiving Coverage through New York State of Health (NYSOH)	102,188	117,869	13.3%	
Medicaid Recipients Year End - TOTAL	118,175	136,002	13.1%	

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

EXPENDITURES BY PROGRAM

EXPENDITURES BY PROGRAM

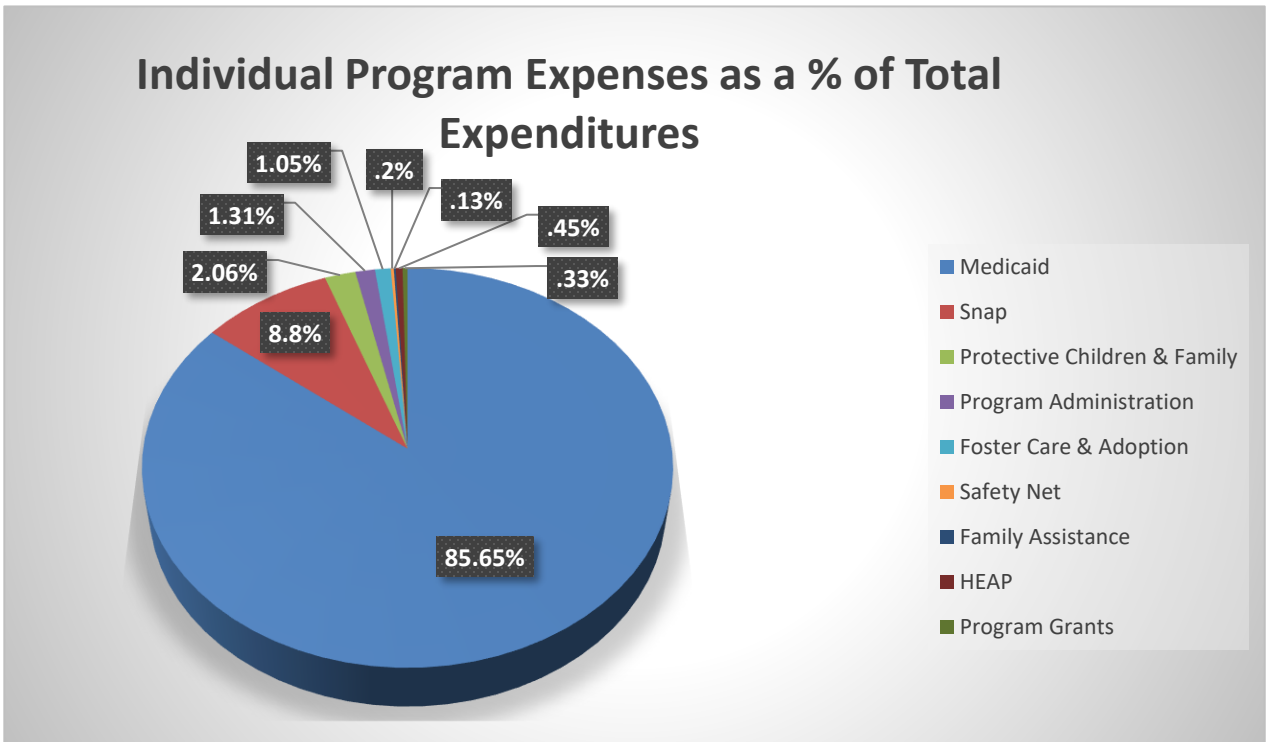
Program	2020	2021	\$ Change	% Change
Medical Assistance (Medicaid)	\$1,017,795,174	\$1,135,157,154	\$117,361,980	11.53%
*SNAP**	88,110,969	116,635,480	28,524,511	32.37%
Family Assistance	2,687,178	1,770,734	(916,444)	-34.10%
Safety Net	3,546,218	2,683,387	(862,831)	-24.33%
*Home Energy Assistance Program (HEAP)	3,985,140	6,007,519	2,022,379	50.75%
Emergency Aid	33,886	21,670	(12,216)	-36.05%
*Protective, Children and Family Services	27,398,365	27,285,734	(112,631)	-0.41%
*Foster Care and Adoption Assistance	14,280,559	13,956,865	(323,694)	-2.27%
Program Grants	2,841,568	4,432,262	1,590,694	55.98%
Program Administration	<u>18,126,605</u>	<u>17,349,133</u>	<u>(777,472)</u>	<u>-4.29%</u>
	\$1,178,805,662	\$1,325,299,938	\$146,494,276	12.43%

*Includes Program Administration

** Includes Pandemic SNAP Enhanced Payments

Note: Medicaid Administration – Total for 2021 \$7,326,507

INDIVIDUAL PROGRAM EXPENSES AS A % OF TOTAL EXPENDITURES



MEDICAID EXPENDITURES BY PROVIDER

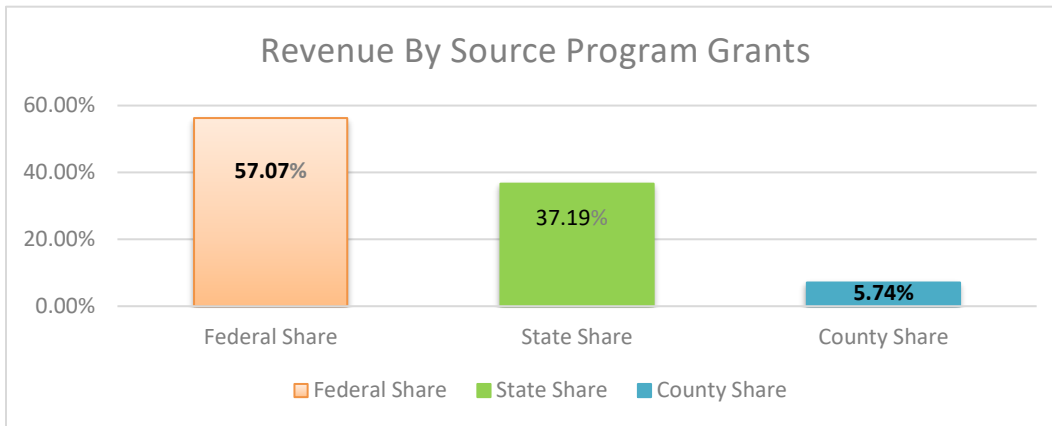
<u>Provider Type</u>	<u>2020</u>	<u>2021</u>	<u>\$ Change</u>	<u>% Change</u>
Hospital Inpatient	\$40,997,583	\$42,159,799	1,162,216	3%
Hospital Outpatient	6,980,331	6,507,280	(473,051)	-7%
Skilled Nursing Facility	61,116,159	70,843,743	9,727,584	16%
Intermediate Care Facility for Developmentally Disabled	7,988,554	8,450,834	462,280	6%
Clinic	34,730,963	51,169,758	16,438,795	47%
Hospice	268,914	611,248	342,334	127%
Physicians	3,165,826	3,335,034	169,208	5%
Dental	187,997	207,903	19,906	11%
Other Practitioners	2,801,330	2,902,252	100,922	4%
Child Care Instl Per Diem	289,113	165,489	(123,624)	-43%
Personal Care	19,395,798	19,198,594	(197,204)	-1%
Home Health Services	263,534	871,755	608,221	231%
Assisted Living Program	8,739,498	8,232,813	(506,685)	-6%
Waived Services	192,644,585	210,272,032	17,627,447	9%
Rehab and Therapy	160,819	231,255	70,436	44%
Rehab Options Services	17,556,323	20,113,768	2,557,445	15%
Drugs and Supplies	8,712,674	9,011,961	299,287	3%
Eye Appliance and Durable Medical Equipment	431,272	491,717	60,445	14%
Prepaid Care	590,035,752	661,942,087	71,906,335	12%
Care Management Plans	14,546,396	11,887,738	(2,658,658)	-18%
Transportation	4,818,304	4,764,043	(54,261)	-1%
Lab and X-ray	739,571	864,409	124,838	17%
Other	<u>1,223,878</u>	<u>921,642</u>	<u>(302,236)</u>	-25%
Total	\$1,017,795,174	\$1,135,157,154	\$117,361,980	12%
Administration	<u>7,115,940</u>	<u>7,326,507</u>	<u>210,567</u>	3%
Medicaid Grand Total	\$1,024,911,114	\$1,142,483,661	\$117,572,547	11%

<u>Source</u>	<u>2020</u>	<u>2021</u>	<u>\$ Change</u>	<u>% Change</u>
Local Share	\$61,843,298	\$55,398,621	(\$6,444,677)	-10%

REVENUE BY SOURCE **PROGRAM GRANTS**

REVENUE BY SOURCE

	2020	2021	% Change
Federal	\$663,359,314	\$756,376,423	12.3%
State	431,991,322	492,902,294	12.4%
County	<u>83,455,026</u>	<u>76,021,221</u>	<u>-9.8%</u>
Totals	\$ 1,178,805,662	\$ 1,325,299,938	11.1%



2021 PROGRAM GRANT REVENUES

CAPTA/CARA	\$81,534
Children's Consolidated Waiver (CCW)	\$62,020
Emergency Rental Assistance Program (ERAP)	\$424,058
Emergency Solutions Grant (ESG-CV1)	\$214,826
Emergency Solutions Grant (ESG-CV2)	\$152,208
Executive Order 151 (Code Blue)	\$508,180
Expansion of Child Care Assist (ECCAP)	\$613,847
Family Day Care Registration (CCR)	\$470,246
Family First Transition Fund	\$10,133
Family First Transition Fund- Aging Out	\$17,707
Low Income Home Energy Program – Cares (LIHEAP Cares)	\$23,265
Low Income Home Energy Program – American Rescue Plan (LIHEAP ARPA)	\$300,039
Safe Harbor	\$25,268
Solutions to End Homeless (STEHP)	\$252,870
Summer Youth Employment Program	\$587,074
Summer Youth Employment Program WIOA	\$95,626
Supervision & Treatment Services for Juveniles Program / Raise The Age- Detention Transportation	\$19,989
Supervision & Treatment Services for Juveniles Program / Raise The Age (STSJP/RTA)	\$12,790
Supervision & Treatment Services for Juveniles Program (STSJP)	\$8,507
Supportive Housing	\$274,703
Supportive Housing Coordinated Entry	\$57,959
Supportive Housing Helping Hands	\$88,876
Supportive Housing – Rapid Rehousing	\$100,537
TOTAL	\$4,432,262

PUBLIC INFORMATION / PUBLIC RELATIONS

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



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

Our efforts to further strengthen relationships with the community continued during the ever-changing phases of the ongoing pandemic. Maintaining effective communication with the community remained a priority during these unprecedented times.

New York Social Services law requires local districts to have a Citizen’s Advisory Council. The Commissioner’s Citizen Advisory Council was fortunate to continue to meet virtually in an effort to keep ourselves and our partners safe.

Prior to COVID-19, meetings were attended by over 40 members representing hospitals, schools, service providers, non-profit agencies, and recipients of services. The purpose of the Council is to advise the Commissioner concerning programs and policies pertaining to public assistance, medical care and services to children, families, and adults. The meeting agendas have consisted of Council members presenting information on topics such as domestic violence, what it means to be trauma informed, and presentations made by the Commissioner on the updates to RCDSS programs. The Council has also been instrumental in identifying service gaps in the community, assisting RCDSS in publicizing available programs, and members continue to educate constituents, service providers and public officials regarding the Department's policies. Through the challenges faced by such a deadly virus, RCDSS has been able to retain strong bonds with the community members as well as the general public.

ADMINISTRATION OF ECONOMIC ASSISTANCE BENEFITS

MISSION STATEMENT

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

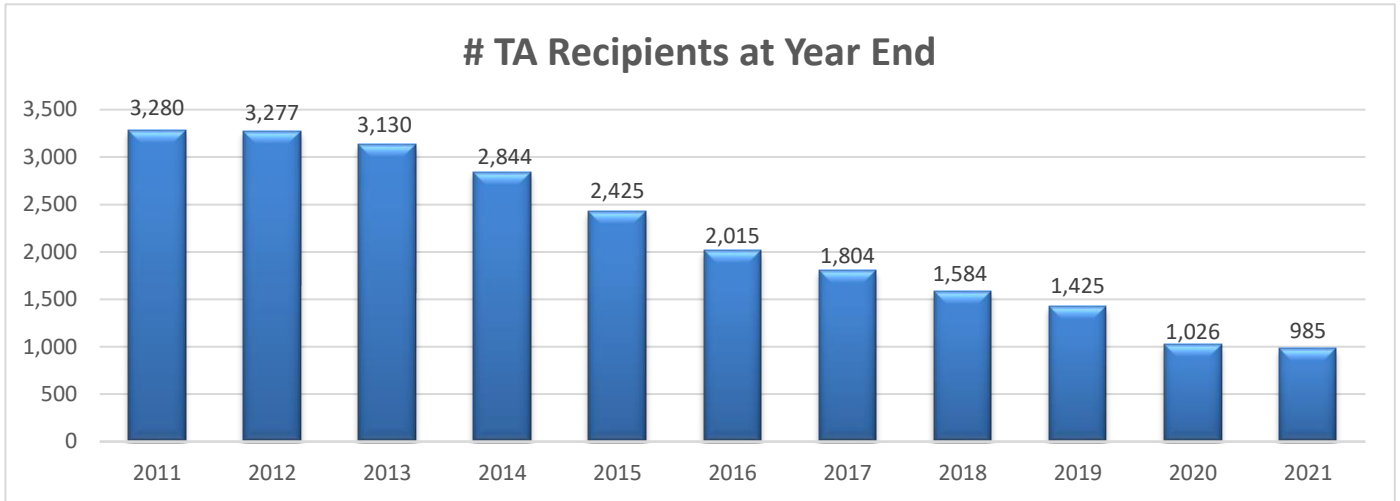
The Rockland County Department of Social Services administers several State and Federal assistance programs that help low-income individuals and families meet their basic needs. These programs include assistance paying rent, utility bills and childcare, as well as monthly benefits that can be used to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

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

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

TEMPORARY ASSISTANCE provides temporary support to assist persons who are unable to work or are working in a job paying less than the poverty level. Depending on individual case circumstances, cash benefits are issued under the Federal Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) or the New York State Safety Net Assistance guidelines. The Temporary Assistance Unit also determines eligibility for SNAP and Medicaid for Temporary Assistance applicants and recipients. At the end of 2021, approximately 985 individuals were receiving Temporary Assistance. Temporary Assistance also provides Emergency Temporary Assistance providing support to families that are victims of fire, natural disasters, rental, and utility arrears and moving assistance.

The department developed an integrated team in 2019 and in 2020 and continued its mission in 2021 on supporting long term recipients of Temporary Assistance and Safety Net assisting individuals and families to achieve self-sufficiency. As a result, the number of families/individuals in need of benefits continued to decline resulting in additional savings in 2021 of over 1 million dollars.

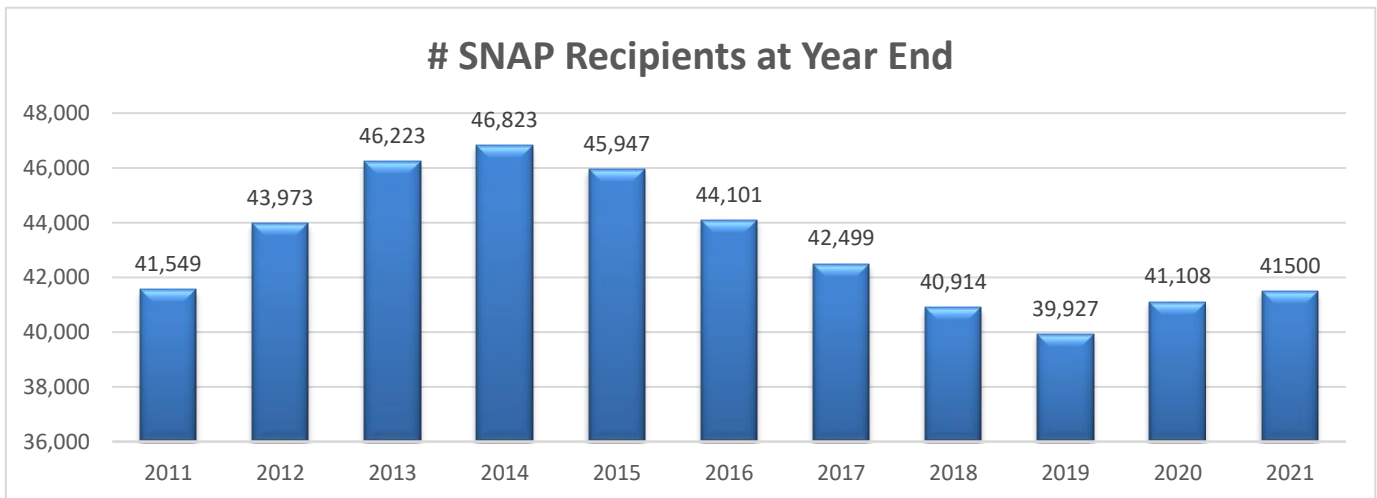


EMERGENCY ASSISTANCE conducts in-depth assessment interviews with all Temporary Assistance applicants. The Unit also handles the cases of applicants who are not receiving Temporary Assistance but have an urgent need or a situation that requires immediate attention. Situations handled by the Emergency Unit include homelessness, pending evictions, domestic violence, lack of food, and utility shut offs.

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

At year end there were 14,298 households (41,500 individuals) in Rockland County receiving SNAP Benefits. Of the total SNAP household population, 2,767 cases (2,906 individuals) received SSI SNAP.

During the months of January 2021 through September 30, 2021, OTDA temporarily increased all SNAP household benefits by 15% in response to ongoing pandemic. All Rockland households were also provided the maximum SNAP benefit allotted for their household size regardless of income supporting and acknowledging added burden to families during the health emergency.



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

<u>INTAKES</u>	
Temporary Assistance	1,417
SNAP (including SSI)	6,060
TOTAL FOR 2021	7,477

<u>RECERTIFICATIONS</u>	
Temporary Assistance	983
SNAP (including SSI)	10,770
TOTAL FOR 2021	11,753

EMPLOYMENT UNIT is responsible for assisting applicants for, and recipients of, Temporary Assistance and SNAP enter the workforce and achieve self-sufficiency. Employment services are a critical step for those in poverty to bring about positive changes in their own lives. The Employment Unit successfully assisted 125 residents find employment. All non-exempt applicants and recipients must participate in work activities assigned by the Employment Unit. These work-related activities are intended to aid individuals and families in poverty and move them toward self-sufficiency. In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, New York State suspended required participation in work activities as of March 2020. During that time, the Employment Unit continued to engage clients in job search, job readiness training and vocational education opportunities. NYS resumed mandatory participation in work activities on August 1, 2021. The Employment Unit assessed clients and assigned them to the appropriate work activity.

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

Currently, Rockland County requires SNAP recipients identified as ABAWDs to participate in work activities. ABAWD stands for “able-bodied adults without dependents.” Federal law requires ABAWDs to meet additional work requirements to receive SNAP benefits for more than three months in a 36-month period. They must participate in qualifying work activities for a least 80 hours a month, be granted an exclusion consistent with their social services district’s ABAWD exclusion policy or reside in an area with a waiver approved by the U.S. Department of Agriculture. In addition, any non ABAWD SNAP recipients who request assistance with employment are directed to the Employment Unit where they are connected to our community partners. In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, New York State suspended ABAWD work requirements until September 30, 2022. The Employment Unit continues to engage clients in job search, job readiness training and vocational education opportunities.

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

The Temporary Assistance and Employment Units continued their work to assist Safety Net individuals and families obtain and maintain self-sufficiency using a holistic approach to assess and address barriers to employment. These efforts have resulted in a savings of more than \$1 Million and decreased the number of clients receiving Temporary Assistance benefits.

The **EMERGENCY RENTAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAM** (ERAP) assists households behind on their rent that have experienced financial hardship due to COVID-19 and are at risk of homelessness or housing instability. In addition, the program can provide 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 are median income for the Federal Program and between 80 percent and 120 percent of 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 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 owes past due rent at their current residence.

Rockland County had received a direct allocation of \$21,266,331.10 of ERAP funds from the U.S. Treasury for the Federal ERAP program and New York State had appropriated \$125 million for the State-funded ERAP program, which started receiving applications on September 15, 2021. Rockland County partnered with the New York State ERAP program where New York State was responsible for making determinations on the applications and issuing payments. The Rockland County Department of Social Services (RCDSS) was responsible for application assistance and program outreach.

Outreach for the program began on March 1, 2021 and RCSS was able to obtain contact information from 768 tenants and 197 landlords prior to the program opening on June 1, 2021 and by December 31, 2021 we were able to obtain contact information for a total of 954 tenants and 219 landlords. These landlords and tenants were able to receive program updates and information via email and text messages. Once the program opened on June 1, 2021 workers from the RCDSS were able to provide application assistance 5 days/week at the RCDSS building at 50 Sanatorium Road Building L, in Pomona and also at various sites throughout Rockland County to provide a more localized outreach effort. These sites included 6 in Spring Valley, 4 in Haverstraw, 2 in Nyack, 2 in Suffern, 1 in Congers and 1 in Nanuet and these sites were staffed by RCDSS employees from June 2021 through November 2021. Landlords were also able to receive assistance from RCDSS in the form of helping them complete their portion of the application and answer any questions as well. RCDSS was able to help 313 households apply for the program from June 1, 2021 to December 31, 2021.

By December 31, 2021 there were 2,099 applications filed by Rockland County households and 833 were processed by New York State for payment. The average application was approved for \$16,102.33 for a total of \$13,493,752.36.

The New York State Landlord Rental Assistance Program (LRAP) provided economic relief to help landlords by providing rental arrears assistance for landlords whose tenants have left their rental property or who are unwilling to apply for the Emergency Rental Assistance Program. Landlords approved for LRAP may 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 had 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 refused to apply for ERAP and the landlord had reached out to their tenant to encourage participation in ERAP at least 3 times, including 2 in writing.
- The landlord had documented rental arrears owed for the tenant at their residence for rent costs accrued on or after March 1, 2020.
- Unit rental amount was at or below 150 percent of the Fair Market Rent (FMR) for their location. These limits are based on county and number of bedrooms of the rental unit. Rockland County's limits are below. If the monthly rental amount exceeds 150 percent of the FMR, the landlord will be ineligible for assistance.

FAIR MARKET RENT (FMR):

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

New York State had appropriated \$125 million for the state program and Rockland County was responsible for application assistance and program outreach. The program had opened and started receiving applications on October 7, 2021 and closed on November 21, 2021 since funding for the program was projected by New York State to be exhausted with the applications already submitted. A total of 454 applications had been filed by landlords on behalf of Rockland County tenants. By December 31, 2021, 53 applications had been processed for payment by New York State for a total of \$1,079,544.10

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

Caseworkers attempt to uncover the underlying reasons for the housing problem. As a result, when emergency housing placement is diverted, these cases are retained until issues such as domestic violence, substance abuse, lack of employment, mental health, and childcare are addressed. Casework counseling and referral to needed services are provided on an on-going basis. Of the 207 families and single adults who were assessed by the Emergency Housing Unit, 105 housing placements were made in 2021.

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 44 individuals approving 24 temporary assistance applications and approving 20 waivers to supporting safety and recovery.

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

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

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

HOME ENERGY ASSISTANCE PROGRAM (HEAP) is a federally funded program that assists eligibility 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 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 & Rockland receives the Regular HEAP payment, they enroll the client in their HEAP Low Income Credit Program. This program consists of HEAP credits being deducted from the utility bill for the next 12 months.

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

The Regular and Emergency HEAP programs are generally open during the heating months from November to April. Both programs were extended until August 31, 2021, due to the devastating economic effects of the Covid 19 pandemic. There were also three Emergency HEAP benefits available. The 2021-2022 HEAP program year opened October 1, 2021, which is 30 days earlier than the previous program year.

An additional HEAP program was available in 2021 called the Regular Arrears Supplement (RAS) benefit. RAS was a onetime benefit funded with the HEAP appropriation received under the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 (Public Law 117-2). This benefit was available in fiscal year 2021 starting September 22, 2021. RAS benefits were a Regular HEAP supplement available to assist HEAP eligible households who had electricity and/or gas account arrears as 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.

\$3,951,628 was provided to assist 15,020 eligible residents with their energy bills through HEAP for the 2021 calendar year.

HEAP 2019-2020: 11/12/2019 – 08/31/2020	
HEAP 2020-2021: 11/02/2020 – 08/31/2021	
HEAP 2021-2022: 10/01/2021 – 12/31/2021	
Fiscal 2020: 01/01/2020 – 08/31/2020 = 167 Days 11/02/2020 – 12/31/2020 = 38 Days Total Days = 205 Days	Fiscal 2021: 01/01/2021 – 08/31/2021 = 167 Days 10/01/2021 – 12/31/2021 = 61 Days Total Days = 228 Days
RAS Program: 9/22/2021 – 12/31/2021 = 68 Days	

\$2,093,271.17 was provided to assist 1,123 eligible residents with their energy bills through RAS Program for the 2021 calendar year.

The **Low Income Household Water Assistance Program** (LIHWAP) can help to pay overdue water and wastewater bills. Applications were submitted online or by mail beginning 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 and could go as high as \$2,500 for each service. This assistance is targeted at low-income households, particularly those who pay a high proportion of their income for drinking water and wastewater services, and income guidelines will mirror that 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 (RCDSS) was able to provide application assistance to those interested in applying for the program. We were able to submit applications electronically along with providing assistance with completing and submitting paper applications. Documentation for electronic applications were uploaded by RCDSS staff or it was sent out in the mail with any paper applications that were filed.

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

Approximately \$8.7 million was received and \$5.2 million distributed to approximately 478 families to provide childcare for an estimated 912 children. Our funds were not fully disbursed due to the effects on our family's ability to fully engage in work during the pandemic.

Effective December 1, 2021, OCFS made changes in regulations to allow for more assistance to families; helping to move them towards self-sufficiency and continuing to help strengthen families within our community.

SUPPORTIVE HOUSING AND SECTION 8

MISSION STATEMENT

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

The **SUPPORTIVE HOUSING UNIT** works collaboratively with Emergency Housing to provide comprehensive case management and rental subsidies to homeless individuals and families. Currently, Supportive Housing Staff manages Permanent Supportive Housing which includes a Permanent Disability Program as well as Rapid Rehousing and the Foster Youth Initiative program. In addition, it manages the Emergency Solutions Grant which is currently set to expire on September 30, 2022 with the potential for an extension as well as the Solution to End Homeless Grant (STEHP).

The Supportive Housing program can provide participants with rental subsidies, security deposits, moving expenses as well as first month's rent to find and obtain permanent housing. Each household is offered a Case Manager who can assist with obtaining mainstream benefits and applying for entitlements. The Housing First model is used, to ensure that all applicants have an equal opportunity for subsidized Supportive Housing. Wrap around services are provided to each household based on identified needs. Some of the services offered include mental health and substance abuse treatment, job readiness programs, educational opportunities, and financial and household budgeting. We have expanded our community outreach through our STEHP and ESG grants. The Department of Social Services has partnered with Helping Hands, Catholic Charities and the Village of Haverstraw, to provide homeless street outreach throughout the County. The Village of Haverstraw and Helping Hands utilized these funds to create a drop- in center which also offers mobile shower units as well as access to laundry services. Case management is an integral component of engaging the homeless to offer service delivery and the Mental Health Association of Rockland (MHA) has partnered with the RCDSS Staff to provide specialized treatment modalities that are trauma informed and person centered. The goal is to provide mobile mental health services to those who previously have refused these types of services. The MHA team consists of a Nurse, Clinician and a Peer Specialist who engage the Client and provide individualized wrap around services.

The **SECTION 8 UNIT** administers the Housing Choice Voucher Program for New York State Housing and Community Renewal. For the first time, HUD required the New York State Housing and Community and Renewal (HCR) to open the bidding process for the new Local Administrators or give current Administrators the opportunity to cover more than one county. The Housing Trust Fund Corporation (HTFC) accepted the Department of Social Services proposal to continue to administer the Section 8 program on their behalf. Our RCDSS Section 8 contract is valid for five years, with the possibility of renewing for an additional five years. The RCDSS Section 8 program currently administers 1,143 total voucher slots with a 99% utilization rate. The Mainstream vouchers are filling up as more applicants start to find housing. This year, the Section 8 Staff collaborated more with our RCDSS Housing Unit and RCDSS Housing Locator to assist our applicants to find housing.

NYS Housing and Community Renewal awarded Rockland Housing Action Coalition with 10 Project Based Vouchers (PBV) for the Youngblood Senior center building, with RCDSS Section 8 administering the vouchers. Rockland Housing Action Coalition volunteered 10 current residents to issue the HCV Project Based Vouchers and our RCDSS Section 8 completed eligibility on all tenants and leased them up in their current units.

RCDSS Section 8 held an online lottery for their Mainstream Voucher program as well as the PBV vouchers for the Youngblood Public Housing Voucher. Each Mainstream Applicant had to be under age 62, disabled and homeless and each Youngblood applicant had to be 62 years or age or older. There were over 600 applicants accepted into the Mainstream lottery and 200 applicants were randomly chosen by an outside vendor to be added to the current HCV waitlist. There were 75 applications completed for Youngblood Complex and 50 applicants were randomly chosen in the lottery process.

Section 8 has a new Family Self Sufficiency Coordinator who has increased the number of program participants to seven. The Family Self Sufficiency Coordinator recently completed the necessary program trainings and is committed to meeting with each program participants on a quarterly basis to assist them with meeting their goals.

The Foster Youth Initiative Program enables individuals who are between the ages of 18-23 years old and who were in the Foster Care System to apply for a HUD voucher for 3 years. This voucher enables the applicant to contribute 30% of their income towards their rent. The program has a case management component with the goal of providing wrap around supports. The Case Managers work with the applicants to encourage them to utilize these services and job training opportunities so that they will be able to afford to pay their full rent when the three years are over. We have also offered the applicants access to training courses on budgeting, financial literacy and refer them to any training opportunities that we think would be beneficial.

Through the pandemic, HUD authorized Housing Quality Standard inspection waivers which will expire on June 30, 2022. Although the final date has continuously been pushed out, Rockland was eager to get all the HQS paperwork up to date. In early June 2021, our staff began conducting inspections of all households that required one, prior to the expiration of the voucher. To date, staff have been able to remain current on all inspections.

Temporary Housing

The Department of Social Services (RCDSS) oversees the Rockland County's Warming Center. The RCDSS contracts with Catholic Charities to run the daily operations and RCDSS is responsible for the oversight of the contract. The Warming Center was established in response to Governor Cuomo's Code Blue Initiative. The Warming Center is open to anyone age eighteen or older who needs a safe place to stay. The Warming Center further provides guests with a warm meal, a hot shower and use of laundry services. There are van pick-ups each night at Spring Valley, Haverstraw and Nyack twice at each location and drop off at all these locations each morning following Breakfast. All guests are assigned a Case Manager at the Warming Center and care management team meetings are held twice monthly throughout the season. The Catholic Charities Staff works directly with the RCDSS Housing Staff to coordinate housing opportunities and placements. The Warming Center remains open beginning November 1st through April 1st each night regardless of the temperature and will open during the day when the temperature (with the wind chill) is below 32 degrees. Beginning April 1, 2021, the Warming Center was only open when it was below 32 degrees with the wind chill. The Warming Center closes for the season on April 30th. During the 2020-2021 season, there was a daily attendance average of 38 guests. Seasonal average temperature was 37 degrees. There were 219 unduplicated guests: 169 males and 50 females. The Center was open every night from November 1, 2020 - April 1, 2021. All COVID protocols from the prior year were followed. All guests wore masks while at the Warming Center and COVID vaccines were offered in house. During the season, 73 guests were placed in housing.

The Department operates an **EMERGENCY FAMILY SHELTER** to provide temporary housing to families who are homeless due to fire, flood, eviction, and other emergencies that require attention. Shelter staff

members, in conjunction with the housing unit, assist families in locating affordable permanent housing. Other services provided at the shelter include case management, childcare, after- school tutorial, recreation programs for the children, and educational workshops for the parents. The Shelter includes a Psychiatric Social Worker to work with individuals and families with mental health issues to obtain housing stability, coordinate and monitor their treatment plans and assist in obtaining other needed services.

In August 2021, the last resident moved out of the shelter into permanent housing for 2021. The Shelter was not closed; however, in the interim, all shelter staff were assigned to other units and remained available to cover their respective shifts as needed. Due to the pandemic and moratorium on evictions, the housing unit did not refer eligible families to the shelter during 2021.

During the COVID pandemic several safety protocols were put into place to protect workers and residents.

Year	New Families Admitted	Adults/Children Residing Throughout Year	
		Adults	Children
2015	29	36	49
2016	28	31	49
2017	31	44	72
2018	22	35	57
2019	21	38	50
2020	13	15	22
2021	1	5	10

Despite the pandemic, 4 families found permanent housing in 2021. The average length of stay for a family that resided in the shelter in 2021 was 95.6 days down from 2020 when the average length of stay was 96.27 days.

MEDICAL ASSISTANCE

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 Rockland County Department of Social Services' Medicaid Unit 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 can assist with the cost 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 the cost of care 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

While there are several programs that assist with providing long term care services to Medicaid recipients, the Consolidated Children's Waiver program is a program which provides services to medically fragile and/or severely emotionally disturbed children under the age of 21. In 2021, New York state added an additional 1,500 slots to the program to make it available to more children. Rockland County saw the number of applicants for the Consolidated Children's Waiver program increase from approximately 200 in 2020 to 1,100 in 2021

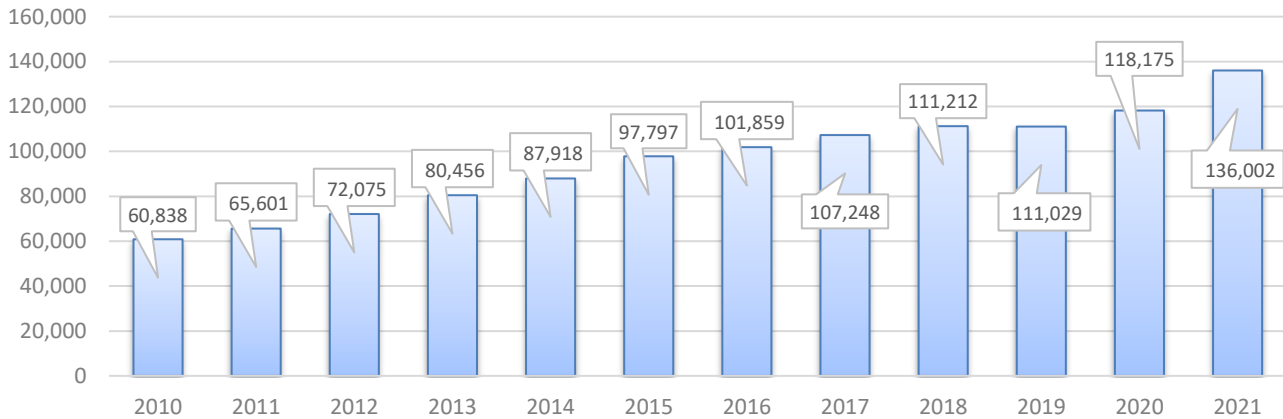
In the beginning of 2021, there were seven Assisted Living facilities that accepted Medicaid in Rockland County. On March 23, 2021, due to a tragic fire, Evergreen Court Assisted Living Facility was destroyed. One resident and one firefighter, Jared Lloyd, lost their lives in this horrifying incident. Due to Jared Lloyd's bravery and dedication, he and his fellow firefighters saved the lives of 112 residents, many of whom were

Rockland County Medicaid recipients. The residents have since been re-homed in other Assisted Living facilities throughout New York state and we will be forever grateful and indebted to Mr. Lloyd for his heroism and dedication to our community.

Throughout 2021 the declared Public Health Emergency due to COVID 19 has remained in effect and therefore the relaxed regulations put into place in March 2020 for applicants and recipients have continued to be implemented by the Medicaid Unit. For those recipients who had Medicaid as of March 18, 2020, medical coverage has remained in place with the exception of those individuals who have moved out of state, passed away or that have requested their case be closed.

Indigent Burial or Cremation Assistance Program pays for the disposition of deceased county residents when neither their legally responsible relatives, nor their estate, can afford to provide for a burial or cremation. Most individuals are buried in the County operated Highview Cemetery. In 2021, the number of approvals for payment of Indigent Burials or Cremations processed by Rockland County decreased from 61 cases to 52 cases.

of Medicaid Recipients in Rockland County at Year End



CHILDREN AND FAMILY SERVICES

MISSION STATEMENT

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

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

Children and Family Services consists of the following: Child Protective Services (Investigative, Family Assessment Response), Children's Services (Foster Care, Direct Custody, Adoption, and Foster Parent Recruitment/Certification/Training/Support), Family Services, Adolescent/PINS Diversion Services and the STEPS (**S**chools, **I**rraining, **E**ligibility, **P**ublic **O**utreach and **S**tatistics) Administrative Unit. Together, they provide various supportive and important services to help maintain the safety and well-being of children in Rockland County. Children & Family Services partners with families and utilizes a trauma-informed treatment framework that involves understanding, recognizing, and responding to the effects of all types of trauma.

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

Child Protective Services is divided into two tracks, the traditional Investigative track and the Family Assessment Response track (FAR). Family Assessment Response is a strength based, family centered approach to responding to concerns of child abuse and neglect. Caseworkers work in partnership with families to address strengths and needs of the family while focusing on child safety. FAR builds on parents' and communities' strengths and resources and connects families with services to meet the unique needs of each family. FAR assess's all safety factors throughout the case.

In 2021, CPS received a total of 1,431 reports from the State Central Register (SCR), a slight increase of approximately 1% from 2020 (1,338). The FAR Units assessed 657 (46%) of the reports while the Investigative Units assessed 774 (54%). These percentages are consistent with 2020. Of the 774 Investigative reports, there were 610 maltreatment investigations, 140 sex abuse investigations (Increase of 42% from 2020) and 24 physical abuse investigations. On average, the Investigative and FAR Units assessed 119 cases each month.

Investigative Caseworkers removed a total of 69 children from the care and custody of their parent/guardian due to abuse and or neglect. This was an increase of 33% from 2020 (52 Children). Forty (40) children were placed in the direct custody of relatives and 29 Children were placed into foster care. Out of the 69 children who were placed, the highest concentration of children (39) were removed from the Spring Valley area. In compliance with the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), 100% of the children who were removed were maintained in their school district of origin.

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

By the end of December 2021, Rockland had 87 children in out of home placement, which is an increase of 28% from 2020 (68). Of the children currently in out of home placements, 56 children are in foster care and 31 children are in the direct custody of relatives. 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, 19 children were able to achieve permanency within a year of entering placement. There was a total of 35 youth who achieved permanency in 2021. For those cases that posed barriers, an administrative review was held to determine if compelling reasons to extend the time in care existed.

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 a successful transition to adulthood. Rockland in Partnership with Office of Children and Family Service's (OCFS) Youth Specialist conducted 3 virtual Independent Living Seminars during 2021. Caseworkers also assisted four eligible youth in utilizing Chafee funds for tutoring, storage costs for belongings, car insurance, as well as items to start up a new apartment.

Rockland is actively working to achieve the goals of the Family First Preventive Service Act. By the end of December, Rockland has exceeded OCFS's target to have 12% or less youth in a congregate care setting by having only 1 youth (1.8%) in this setting. Rockland is striving for the OCFS expectation of increasing Kinship Foster Home placements to at least 50%. The number of kinship homes was increased from 15 to 25 for a rate of 45%.

In November 2021, Rockland launched a new website fosterrockland.com, an online portal which modernizes the foster parent application process. The entire application is mobile-friendly, so applicants and agency staff can navigate the software using a computer, tablet or mobile device. Due to the pandemic, Rockland continued to hold the foster parent informational sessions and training online, which helped them to facilitate 3 sessions in 2021. These efforts resulted in 86 active foster homes at the end of the year which included 9 families willing to take teenagers.

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

Family Time and Transportation Unit provides children in foster care and their families with crucial services including Family Time supervision and support, transportation to Family Time, medical, dental and mental health appointments and drug screening testing. This team played a vital role by continuing the drug screening process throughout the pandemic. This was especially critical because many substance use programs stopped providing drug screenings, at times, during the pandemic. The important feedback provided by drug screenings in relation to parent's progress with their recovery helps caseworkers and the courts to continue making decisions regarding child safety and family reunification.

Additionally, this team 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 on our newly renovated playground. Additional visits are provided in the community by Mental Health Association (MHA) of Rockland. RCDSS and MHA supervision help to maintain and enhance bonding while providing opportunities for parents to practice and strengthen their parenting skills. The team also transitioned to including the option of virtual visits so parents could increase family time and stay connected with their child even at times when it was unsafe to see each other in person. The indoor visitation area was restructured and equipped so that families could continue to visit in person while social distancing from other families.

2021 Summary of Services Family Time and Transportation Unit			
Drug Tests	Family Time	Transports	Bus Tickets
5169	1187	2262	0 - Fares are free

The role of a Family Services worker in the **Family Services Unit** is to provide support and resources to families to prevent placement of their children out of their home. 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, strengthen families, and prevent avoidable disruptions to the family unit. Services are voluntary, except when ordered by Family Court in cases of abuse, neglect, or custody matters.

In 2021, 204 families were serviced by the unit. This was a 17 % increase from 2020 (174). 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, quarterly virtual collaborative meetings with internal units and community resources were held to assist in determining appropriate resources for families. These meetings also provided opportunity to build working relationships and increase knowledge of prevention resources.

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.

Adolescent Services referrals increased by 27% in 2021 to 128 compared to the referrals received in 2020 (97). The large number of the referrals were due to school truancy and the need Mental Health services.

In 2021, the Adolescent Unit held a total of 12 review board meetings with other service providers working with the Rockland County Adolescent population. Participants included staff from Department of Social Services, Mental Health, BOCES, Probation and the Partnership for Safe and Healthy Youth. In 2021, Services expanded to include the 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 youth that are missing and who are believed to be the targets of sex traffickers or gang members. Ten referrals were made to Brosnan Risk Consultants in 2021, which resulted in all 10 youths being located and safely returned to their community.

The Adolescent Unit 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 2021, fifteen youths from the Adolescent Unit participated and graduated from the program. After completion of the program, the youth continue communication (with the program) 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.

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

STEPS staff provides training to school and community organizations to assist with identifying and reporting early signs of potential abuse and neglect of children and at-risk behavior of youth.

RCDSS continues collaboration with the school districts to expedite and support the need for services identified within the schools. In 2021 East Ramapo continued to have the highest number of calls to the State Central Registry (106:285 or 37%) which is a decrease from 54% from last year. An RCDSS Caseworker is assigned to the East Ramapo School District to help identify appropriate referrals for early engagement to reduce potential safety and risk factors. RCDSS also partners with the East Ramapo School District by participating in their monthly student attendance meetings to offer and provide services to those families that have youth with excessive school absences.

RCDSS has a representative stationed at the Partnership for Safe and Healthy Youth to engage families and coordinate comprehensive plans for cross-system services. A total of 75 new referrals were made to the Partnership for Safe and Healthy Youth (PSHY) in 2021. This is a 32% (51:75) increase from 2020.

RCDSS was awarded a grant by the Office for Children and Family Services (OCFS) for its seventh year in providing services to youth identified as confirmed or at risk of human trafficking and/or sexual exploitation. A screening tool is being utilized across systems to identify victims of human trafficking. RCDSS conducted a total of 1,026 rapid indicator tools in 2021 which was a 20% decrease from the 1,278 rapid indicator tools completed in 2020. A “yes” response to the rapid indicator tools prompts the case worker to complete a Comprehensive tool which identifies the youth’s risk level. Seventy-one Comprehensives were completed in 2021 (5 high risk, 16 youth were identified at medium risk, 50 no risk, 0 confirmed). The Safe Harbor MDT meeting takes place monthly to discuss and strategize around engagement and services for youth who are being trafficked or who are at risk of trafficking. Services provided has included educational support, clothing, food, housing, pro-social activities, tutoring, laptops, etc. As a preventive measure, youth are always notified that there is a 24-hour hotline and other services through the Sanctuary, a shelter for runaway and homeless youth.

In addition, 2021 Safe Harbour Funds were used to bring in a guest speaker, Ronald Cook Barrett, gang prevention specialist with the city of Albany, New York since 1999 where he implemented the Capital Region Gang Prevention Program and Gang Prevention Center, which was recognized by the National Crime Research Center in Chicago, Illinois as an exemplary program in 2001. He conducted a presentation that addressed the violent impact gang culture has created and how the increase of violence is a result of the behaviors and presence that gangs have introduced to communities. Education was provided on the culture of youth gangs, including why youth join gangs and the proactive measures that can be taken to engage gang involved youth and assist in preventing involvement.

DSS STEPS has collaborated with Bravehearts MOVE since 2019. The 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 systems 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 an expertise to foster change in their communities and in their own lives.

ADULT AND SPECIAL SERVICES

MISSION STATEMENT

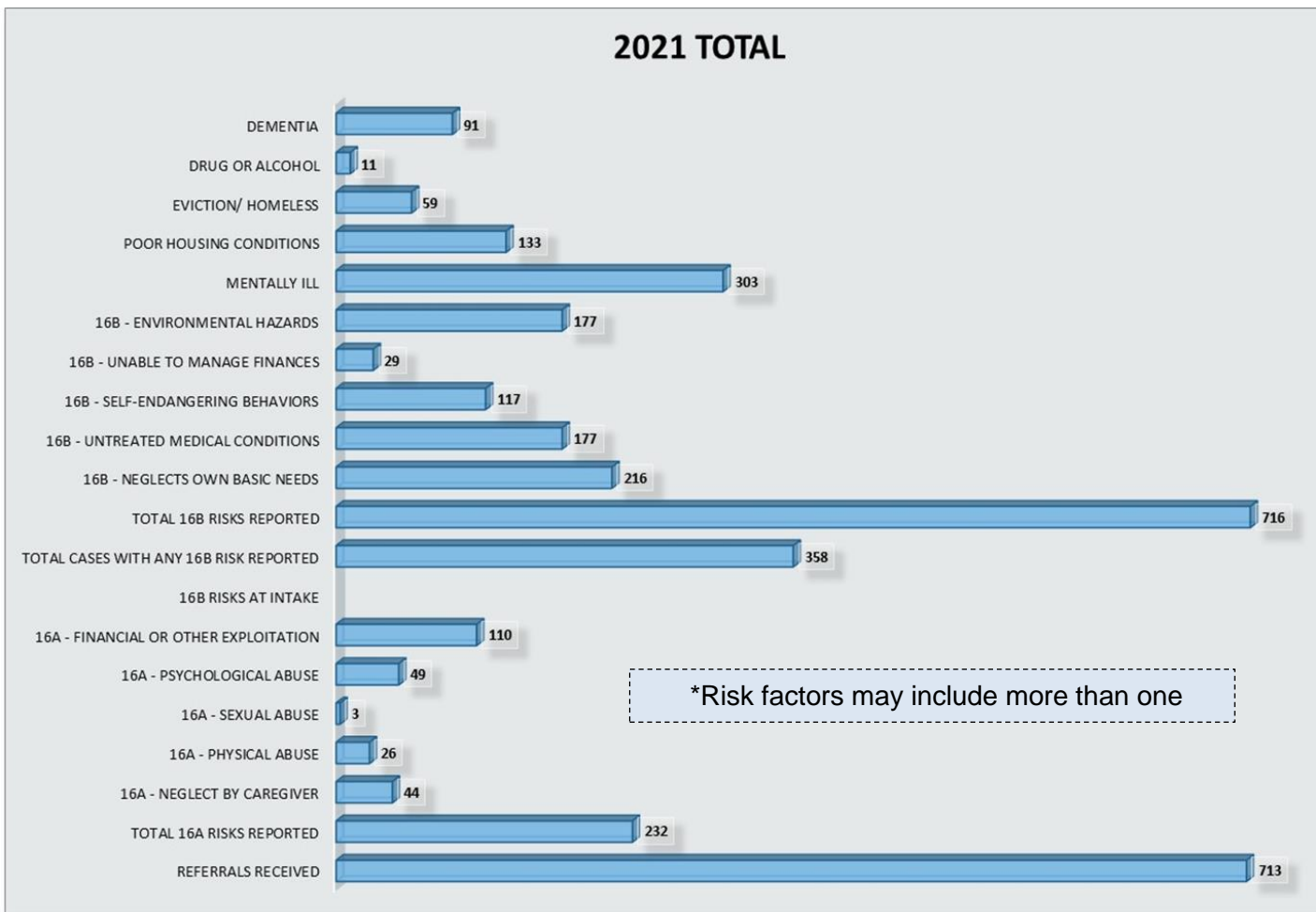
Partnering with Rockland County, Adult Protective Services (APS) and Adult Services (AS) are dedicated to the protection and support of vulnerable adults, through community involvement and collaboration of services to identify, prevent, and address abuse and exploitation of adults as well as enable adults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

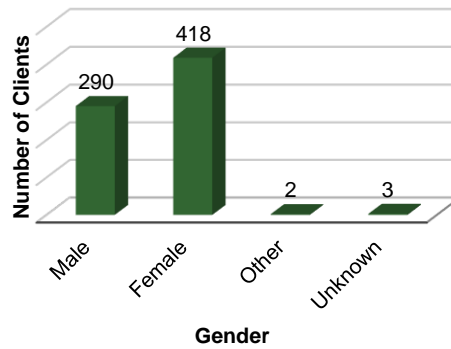
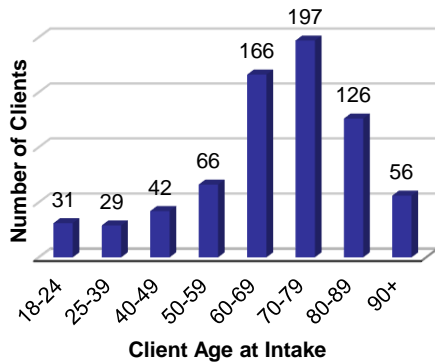
ADULT PROTECTIVE SERVICES (APS) is a program to assist adults, age 18 or over, who because of mental or physical impairment cannot provide for their basic needs or protect themselves from abuse and/or neglect. These services are provided without regard to income and are based on the principle of the individual's right to self-determination and the least restrictive alternatives. In 2021, APS received 713 referrals.

A major role of APS is to identify and address circumstances of Adult Abuse. In 2021, 232 cases involved a component of possible abuse. The COVID-19 pandemic continued to impact service delivery by requiring safety protocols for both clients and worker. Nevertheless, APS workers provided needed services to vulnerable adults.

One significant development in 2021 was the start of an E-MDT (Enhanced multidisciplinary team)- which is collection of professionals from a variety of organizations who meet to discuss complex cases of elder abuse and financial exploitation in an effort to develop interventions.

APS also continues to collaborate with various County departments such as the Department of Health in dealing with health and safety standards for residences and issues of hoarding. In 2021, there were 133 of these types of cases. APS also works with the Department of Finance and the Office for the Aging to assist in protecting and connecting residents with various services. Additionally, APS cooperates with nonprofit and community-based agencies such as Meals on Wheels, food banks and mental health providers. Below is statistical data for the year of 2021:





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

Rockland County **Adult Service Medical Unit** has approximately 546 active long-term care cases. In response to significant regulatory changes, RCDSS implemented major operational changes for securing and procuring Home Care Services.

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

2021 saw the implementation of expanded eligibility and new procedures for environmental and vehicle modifications under the Child Waiver Program, which allows for increased mobility and safety in the home for severely disabled children under the age of 18.

ENFORCEMENT

MISSION STATEMENT

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

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

The Family Law Division continued to successfully and safely navigate the COVID-19 pandemic in 2021. Myriad changes to usual practices and protocols were replaced with technology driven alternatives using various platforms. The ability to pivot and safely accommodate the needs of our clients allowed us to seamlessly facilitate necessary legal interventions, including virtual meetings, court conferences, hearings, and electronic document sharing. The Attorney staff provided additional legal support to other Department employees and partners about ever-changing protocols.

This Unit has a 98% success rate in abuse and neglect proceedings. There are 26 neglect /abuse matters which are still pending before the Family Court as a result of court backlogs due to the impact of the COVID pandemic.

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

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

In 2021, the Department of Social Services participated in the resolution of nearly 200 Fair Hearings, of which 90% resulted in Agency affirmed, applicant rescinded, applicant default, or correct when made.

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

The **Operations, Analysis and Planning (OAP) Unit** develops and processes funding applications, contracts, plans, and grants in accordance with State and Federal regulations and administrative directives. The Unit's processing also incorporates a legal review and analysis. OAP staff develops, drafts, implements, manages, and monitors internal and contracted local programs that provide needed services to families in Rockland communities. The Unit assists contract agencies with contract compliance, performance, and reporting requirements to ensure that the Department's expectations and objectives are properly met. The Unit continues its efforts to assure accountability by service providers, including strict scrutiny, monitoring, site visits, and legal review of contract services. OAP works collaboratively with DSS staff and agencies to identify unmet needs and develop contracted programs that best address what is needed for our clients, families, and the community. OAP oversees agency allocations and expenditures, maximizes resources, and develops Annual Agency Achievements and Strategies for submission to the County Executive as well as various mandated State plans and annual updates required by the State.

In 2021, OAP was responsible for 161 contracts totaling \$5,457,188 and 18 grants totaling \$3,415,384.

The OAP Unit returned somewhat to normalcy in 2021 and were able to conduct in person site visits to our contract vendors.

We are always trying to improve upon the contract process. In 2021, there was integration of two different software programs: OnBase contract approval system and the ION portal. OAP was the pilot department to begin using the OnBase system for our contract approval process. The OnBase system allows for faster processing of the DCEs (internal approval required prior to contract execution) by submitting the contract approval request to all Departments at the same time. We also began using a new contract portal (called ION) that allows vendors to submit all documentation directly to our database and allows for electronic processing of the contract. The ION portal not only helped to expedite contract processes but also creates a transparent environment where the department and the vendor can see all documents and requests related to their particular contract and what the status is for every stage of the contract process (contract signing, vouchers, monitoring, etc). The most beneficial aspect of both OnBase and the ION portal is that they reduce the amount of time it takes to execute a contract from contract approval process through contract execution.

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

Through both Front (FEDS) and back end (Fraud) investigations, the SIU works to ensure program integrity for all public assistance programs administered by 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 2021, the SIU received 161 new FEDS referrals for investigation, all of which were completed resulting in the denial/withdrawal of 62 applications and an estimated \$538,182 in New York State defined cost-avoidance.

The SIU received 377 new fraud (back end) referrals; completing 380 (233 from new 2021 referrals, 147 from previous years’ referrals), resulting in 27 new fraud overpayments totaling \$133,962.28 and on-going recoveries totaling \$155,362.13. Additionally, 116 active assistance cases were closed as the direct result of fraud investigations resulting in an additional \$409,548 in estimated cost-avoidance. Combined FEDS (\$538,182) and Fraud (\$409,548) cost-avoidance totaled an estimated \$947,730.

SIU FEDS/Fraud Investigators regularly conduct field investigations involving referrals they may receive regarding applicants, Child Care Subsidy providers, and relevant and related collateral contacts. These investigations may include unannounced home visits to verify an applicant’s/recipient’s reported household composition and income and unannounced visits to employers to verify Child Care Subsidy applicant’s/recipient’s reported days and hours of employment. When referrals for Child Care Subsidy providers (Day Care providers) are received, staff conducts unannounced attendance verification visits. Information observed by SIU staff during their field investigations may result in referrals to the Office of Children and Family Services (OCFS) regarding issues with licensed Day Care providers; the Rockland County Health

Department/Housing Codes Initiative/various Village and Town Building and Fire Inspectors regarding apparent substandard, illegally converted, and/or overcrowded; and RCDSS Family Services Teams and Child Protective Services regarding possible child neglect.

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

The **RESOURCE RECOVERY UNIT** assures that any non-exempt income and/or assets of a customer are utilized to reduce the need for assistance. Recoupment is made from recipients when assets or resources are later uncovered such as stocks, bonds, bank accounts, real property, lawsuit recoveries, estate or other claims. The Unit also files liens, judgments, assignments, estate claims and mortgages in appropriate cases to preserve the rights of the Department. In 2021, \$609,203.22 was collected by the Resource Recovery Team; approximately 300 new collections cases were established on behalf of TA, SNAP, HEAP, SIU and O&R reconciliation; and 145 judgments were prepared and filed electronically with the Rockland County Clerk on delinquent consumers.

Both SIU and Resource Unit staff members are responsible for coordinating and overseeing all aspects of overpayment and advance payment collections for all programs, including Temporary Assistance, SNAP, Childcare Assistance and Medicaid. These employees serve as a liaison between RCDSS and the consumers who owe the County money. They are responsible for following up on all repayment agreements, establishing contact with non-paying consumers, negotiating a mutually acceptable repayment arrangement, and as a last resort, referring matters for litigation when deemed necessary.

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

In 2021, \$25,116,000 in child support was collected and distributed to 5,173 custodial parents, pursuant to CSEU's efforts to establish, collect and enforce child support orders on behalf of our clients.

ADMINISTRATION

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

WELFARE MANAGEMENT SYSTEMS (WMS)

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

WMS supports over 500 devices connected to the State network and over 200 mobile devices for workers in the field to ensure that staff have 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 2021, WMS resolved 10,814 employee requests for technical support and assistance, 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 all operations for the Central Index System (CI) which assigns case numbers to individuals and or families that are receiving benefits through the Agency's eligibility programs. Central Index closed 6,159 requests in 2021 of which 4,723 were new cases and 1,436 were prior cases which require considerable research and time to assess.

WMS also manages local operations for the Benefits Issuance Control System (BICS), a New York State fiscal accounting system that generates all Foster Care, Vendor and other payments authorized by Agency staff. BICS also provides data to Agency Units via Production Hosting Reports and Enterprise Documents (PHRED).

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

WMS is the editor of the Rocklandgov.com RCDSS web pages for the Agency and has been tasked with keeping the pages current based on the information received from the various Units/Departments. In addition, WMS acts as the administrator for the following applications: CONNECTIONS, ASSETS, eMedNY, Work Number, DOL, SOLQ, HCS, UAS and WMS. The Unit provides different levels of access and support and performs audits to ensure compliance with state mandates. These applications are used by workers in their daily job functions and are an integral part of the workflow.

WMS provides statistical data extracted from various sources within the Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance (OTDA), Office of Children and Family Services (OCFS) and Department of Health (DOH). WMS also provides monthly data to Agency management on Medicaid, TA, SNAP, CSEU, CPS, and Jail matches. This data identifies patterns of use and need, while supporting daily operations and supervisory functions. This data is also used to refine planning and policy formulation for enhancement of services provided to Rockland County residents.

FISCAL OPERATIONS

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

Assistance provided to residents of Rockland County exceeded \$1.3 Billion in 2021, a 12.4% increase as compared to 2020. Medicaid expenses comprise more that 86% of the County's total budget and account for more than \$1 Billion. The majority of the 12.4% increase over 2020 is related to Supplemental Assistance Nutrition Program (Food Stamps/SNAP). SNAP expenses accounted for \$116,635,480, or 9% of the RCDSS Agencies Budget.

Federal support toward overall assistance costs exceeds 57% (\$756,375,423), State aid accounts for approximately 37% (492,902,294), and local share is approximately 6% (\$76,021,221).

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

AUDIT

Throughout 2021, RCDSS continued to prioritize Agency performance in three key areas: Regulatory compliance, client services delivery and increased efficiency between internal units. In pursuit of achieving these goals, the Commissioner's Audit and Administration Policy Team audits current operations, identifies deficiencies, researches legal and regulatory mandates while addressing key operational issues. The Team has a unique process, working collaboratively with all Units to develop guidelines, procedures, processes, and employee trainings, which ensure compliance with Agency expectations.

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

POLICY

Agency investment in internal policy development yields high returns. Clear identification of Agency compliance goals and requirements, in tandem with updating internal procedures and employee training, enables staff to work more efficiently and focus their efforts on delivering services that protect the vulnerable and provide financial assistance for residents in need. Tighter internal controls improve program integrity, helping to uncover and avert welfare waste and fraud, while focusing on the Agency's accountability to Rockland's taxpayers.

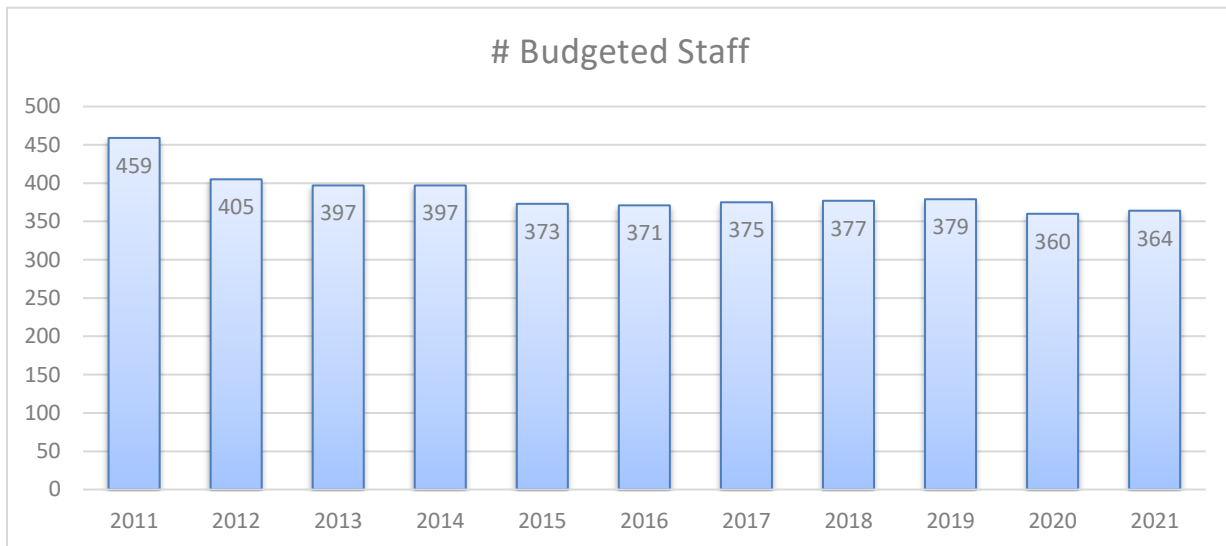
During 2021 significant policies were developed:

- DSS Vehicle Official Business Sign Procedure
- Vehicle Utilization Policy
- Telework Policy and Procedures
- Auditing and Shredding Key Procedure
- Confidentiality of Records and Communications Policy

- Blind Removal Process Policy
- Kin-First Firewall Practice Policy
- Travel Purchase Procedures for Families with Children in Foster Care
- Confidentiality of Records and Communications Policy #02-19.

Personnel is responsible for hiring and retaining a diverse, qualified workforce in accordance with Civil Service Law. Personnel provides human resources direction and assistance, payroll administration, equal employment opportunities and employee relations services. In 2021, Personnel scheduled 183 interviews for 17 different position titles. Thirty-two new hires were processed as well as 46 separations. Other functions include maintenance of employee records, compliance with federal, state, and local laws, regulations, and policies (i.e.: Americans with Disabilities Act, Family and Medical Leave, Workers' Compensation, etc.), health and safety and performance management

In 2021, the number of budgeted positions was 364.



Staff Development continued to work closely with all internal units in the implementation and coordination of trainings associated to new directives and procedures from federal, state, and local administrations. Due to cancellation of most classroom trainings, Staff Development worked closely with the Bureau of Training & Development, OCFS /OTDA in Albany, Administration and Unit Heads to create, provide feedback and execute remote learning trainings & applicable platforms. Staff Development coordinated with the Bureau of Training & Development, SUNY Albany (PDP) and the RCDSS teams as they attended the first in-person (Welfare Fraud Investigator Training Institute) in December 2021.

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

- ❖ Employee Engagement Survey Results delivered to all employees by their supervisors, with a focus on Solution-Focused results, in January & February.

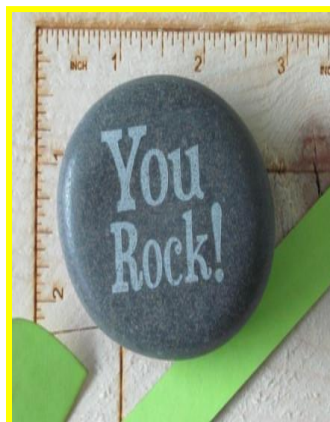
- ❖ Partnered with The Institute on Trauma and Trauma-Informed Care (ITTIC) to deliver additional trauma-informed care sessions in February & March.
 - *ITTIC: Addressing the Impact of the Work ONLINE*
 - 11 sessions total participants 118
 - *ITTIC: Navigating Worry, Stress & Fear ONLINE*
 - 11 sessions total participants 137
- ❖ Created and delivered a 3 Module Leadership Series for Supervisors from May-June.
 - *Absence Management Module I*
 - 3 sessions total participants 18 (in-person)
 - *Feedback: Giving & Receiving Module II*
 - 3 sessions total participants 18 (in-person)
 - *Coaching Employees to Improve Performance & Engagement Module III*
 - 3 sessions 18 in-person
- ❖ Conversations with the Commissioner: Commissioner Silvestri hosted 13 sessions for a total of 83 participants in June.
- ❖ Partnered and Coordinated with NYPWA for their Leadership Series Workshops which were held online in July with 35 RCDSS Leaders in attendance.
- ❖ Collaborated with Rockland County's Intelligence Center to deliver 2 sessions of a Safety/Gang 101 training at the Fire Training Center for 90 participants in October.
 - Followed by a collaboration with The NYS Gang Prevention Organization to deliver Gangs 102: Intervention Works at the Fire Training Center for 74 participants in November.
- ❖ Staff Development facilitated 3,371 sessions, totaling 9,905 hours of staff training in key areas of professional development.

Leadership Series - Giving and Receiving Feedback Session



Pictured from Left and around the table: **Madelin DeLeon** (APS), **Beatrice Prophete** (Children & Family Services), **Sheila Hill** (CSEU), **Simone Parris-McGuane** (Staff Development), **Liz Lewis** (Employment), **Jeannine D'Alisera** (Medicaid)

RCDSS SPOT AWARDS The Department of Social Services believes strongly in recognizing employees for their efforts. During 2021, the Department awarded 54 On-The-Spot Awards, which enable supervisors to award recognition to a staff member/s to recognize their accomplishments and efforts towards achieving the department's goal and mission.



YEARS OF SERVICE

Honorees

5 Years of Service

Monica Leafy-Kastner
James Carlucci
Kendra Remarais
Caitlyn Reilly

10 Years of Service

Ana Duran
Michael Domen
Thomas Ninan
Carly Leal
Patricia Owens
Thais Rodriguez
Thelma Beauchemin
Oswaldo Santana
Christine Bonavito

15 Years of Service

Janet Marasa
Frank Sung
Alfakenia Diaz
Diana Leonardo
Michael Grosso
Arunoday Kumar
Onikka Whitehead
Moses Gross
Lucy Roman
Madelin DeLeon
Mark Navarro
Joan Thomas-Scott
Beatrice Prophete
Mini Krishnakumar
Jolly Bertolino
Maritza Gorritz
Sarah Ramos
Margalie Montinat
Amma Appiah
Frances Rivera

20 Years of Service

Laura-jo Alanis
Holly Cullinane
Vanessa Angelet-Torres
Shari Feldstein
Leonette Racho
Ana Torres
Olga Valentin
Wykesha Walker
Lisette Vazquez
Lourdes Rivero
Karen Besley
Joan Silvestri
Diana Scorese
Debra Rubin
Jocelyn Zucco

25 Years of Service

Teresa King
Gloria Gutierrez
Vera Vursta
Fina Delprincipio
Elizabeth Lewis
Teresa Ferris

30 Years of Service

Steven Phillips
Solomon Gittler
Maura Donoghue
Barbara Gavin-Green
Annette Quiles
Jennifer Seymour
Edward Lussen

35 Years of Service

David Stein
Digna Manan
Scott Purves

Rockland County Department of Social Services - 2021 Annual Report



Pictured from left to right: Ana Duran, Pat Owens, James Carlucci, Michael Domen, Monica Leahy-Kastner, Osvaldo Santana, and Carly Leal



Pictured from left to right: Beatrice Prophete, Mark Navarro, Frank Sung, Mini Krishnakumar, Arunoday Kumar, Joan Thomas-Scott, Jolly Bertolino, Mike Grosso, Alfakenia Diaz, Janet Marasa, Madelin DeLeon.



Pictured from left to right: Amma Appiah, Sarah Ramos, RCDSS Commissioner Joan Silvestri, Maritza Gorretz, Margalie Montinat

Rockland County Department of Social Services - 2021 Annual Report

Pictured left to right: Wykesha Walker, Lissette Vazquez, Olga Valentin, Lourdes Rivero, Shari Feldstein, Vanessa Angelet-Torres, RCDSS Commissioner Joan Silvestri, County Executive Ed J Day, Holly Cullinane, Jocelyn Zucco, Karen Besley



Pictured left to right: Steve Phillips, David Stein, Scott Purves, Solomon Gittler, Maura Donoghue, Thelma Beauchemin, Digna Manan, Barbara Gavin, Fina Delprincipio

Thank you for your years of service.

the joy of
h e l p i n g
giving

Rockland County's Department of Social Services 5th Annual Toy and Clothing Drive was once again a major success. COVID has had an impact on all of us and particularly hard on the families who receive services from RCDSS. This drive has been held every year to ensure that every child in Rockland County has a gift to open for the holidays. This would not be possible without the generous donations from our staff and the community. This event without a doubt, has given each child a holiday to remember.



There have been so many contributions throughout these last few weeks and an outpouring amount of support. Being able to give back and help our families is rewarding. A special thank you to all who have donated to our annual drive because without your help and support it would not have been such a great success. Not only have we been able to provide the gifts to the families in need, but we have also made and will continue to make a lot of children happy!



Pictured Below: We are so fortunate to have the overwhelming support from our community again this year. This holiday season, an organization by the name of JL Blessings donated 112 backpacks, on December 10th. JL Blessings is a non-for-profit organization that aims to share love with the less fortunate. JL Blessings is known for providing support for homeless men, women and children in the New York and New Jersey area. Students throughout Rockland County have been assigned to fill the backpacks. There is a standard list of

suggested items to include, they typically include socks, sweatshirts, hats, gloves, hand sanitizer, toiletries and other necessities. Our RCDSS teams will distribute some to the Warming Center and the Housing team will provide them to our Clients. JL Blessings are always looking for volunteers, if you are interested, please look them up on Facebook. A warm heartfelt thank you to JL Blessings.

