

Rockland County Department of Social Services

Strengthening Families & Communities



2015 Annual Report

Ed Day
County Executive



Susan Sherwood
Commissioner



DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES

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Susan Sherwood
Commissioner

To: County Executive Ed Day
Members of the Rockland County Legislature

It is with pleasure that I submit the 2015 Annual Report for the Rockland County Department of Social Services.

Whether it's the extra food we put on our families' tables, the health insurance we provide to keep our elderly neighbors safe in their homes, the assistance we provide to keep our families intact, by the nature of the work we do, we help to strengthen our families and communities every day. This year, many of our units have taken additional steps to strengthen the family unit and our community. We have highlighted these services throughout this report.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank you for your assistance. Without your support, we would be unable to help the growing number of residents who come to us in need.

I know that we can count on your support in future years to accomplish our goal of helping our neighbors.

Sincerely,


Susan Sherwood
Commissioner

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ROCKLAND COUNTY GOVERNMENT

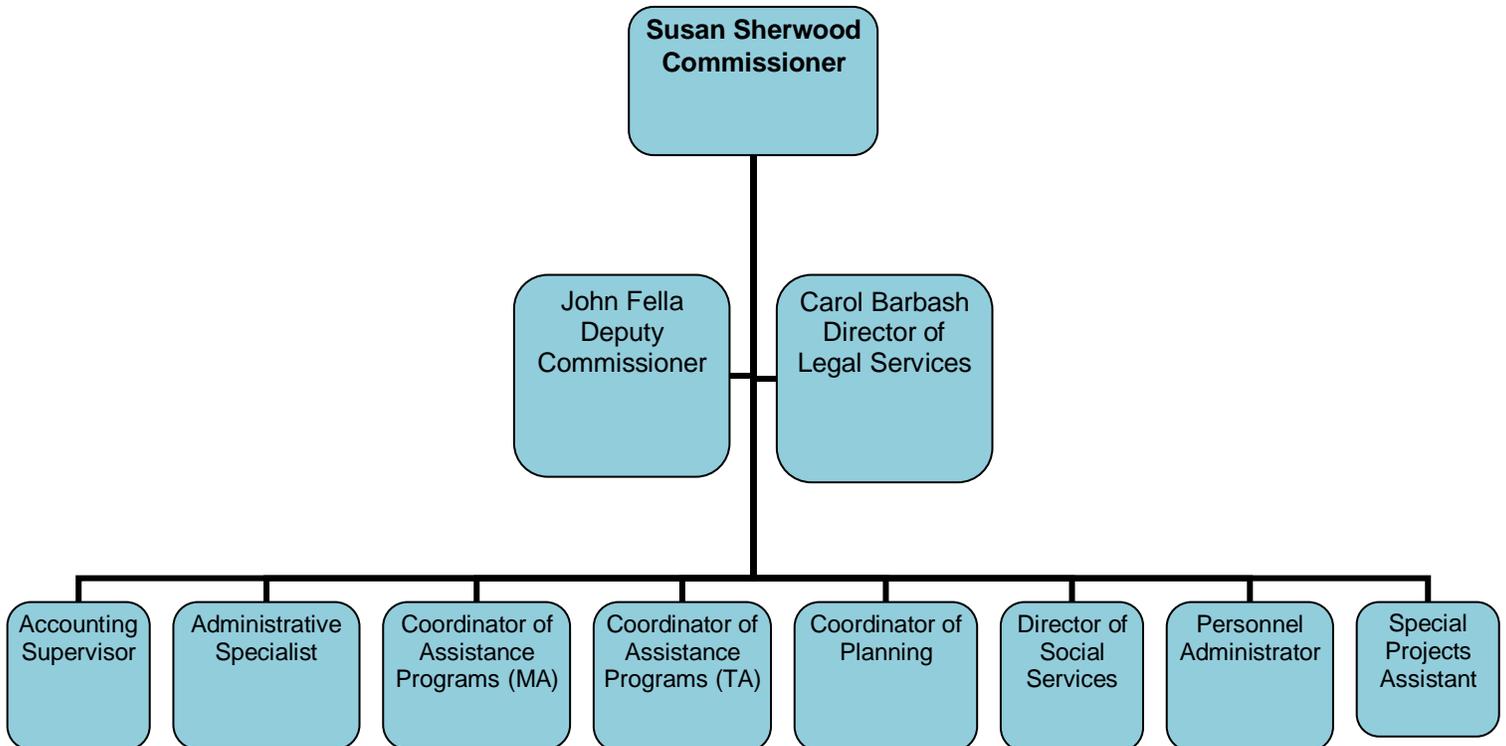
County Executive: Hon. Ed Day

County Legislature: Hon. Alden H. Wolfe, Chairman

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Rockland County Department of Social Services



AT A GLANCE – INDIVIDUAL, CASELOAD ACTIVITY & MONTHLY AVERAGE COMPARISONS

TEMPORARY ASSISTANCE

		2014	2015	% Change
Active Temporary Assistance Cases				
	Family Assistance	663	559	-15.7%
	Safety Net	787	646	-17.9%
	Total Active Cases	1,450	1,205	-16.9%
Temporary Assistance Case Activity				
	Applications Processed	4,011	3,353	-16.4%
	Cases Opened	2,592	2,028	-21.8%
	Withdrawals	112	103	-8.0%
	Denials	1,307	1,222	-6.5%
	Cases Closed	2,029	1,627	-19.8%
	Recertifications	2,435	2,061	-15.4%
	Changes in Active Cases	10,730	8,927	-16.8%
	Total Case Activities	19,205	15,968	-16.9%
Temporary Assistance Recipients				
	Family Assistance	1,613	1,319	-18.2%
	Safety Net	1,231	1,106	-10.2%
	Total Recipients Year End	2,844	2,425	-14.7%

SNAP

		2014	2015	% Change
Active SNAP Cases				
	Non-Public Assistance	15,944	15,542	-2.5%
	Public Assistance	1,035	814	-21.4%
	Total Active Cases	16,979	16,356	-3.7%
SNAP Case Activity				
	Applications Processed (Non-Public Assistance)	10,136	9,656	-4.7%
	Cases Opened	7,529	7,019	-6.8%
	Withdrawals	450	409	-9.1%
	Denials	2,157	2,228	3.3%
	Cases Closed	7,322	7,420	1.3%
	Recertifications	9,649	9,759	1.1%
	Changes in Active Cases	53,631	45,036	-16.0%
	Total Case Activities	80,738	71,871	-11.0%
SNAP Recipients Year End		46,823	45,947	-1.9%

A decrease in Temporary Assistance and SNAP recipients is due to our successful efforts in assisting clients obtain employment. Rockland County's Unemployment Rate at year-end was 3.9%*.

*New York State Department of Labor.

AT A GLANCE – INDIVIDUAL, CASELOAD ACTIVITY & MONTHLY AVERAGE COMPARISONS

		2014	2015	% Change
MEDICAID	Active Medicaid Cases			
	Medicaid	24,124	21,240	-12.0%
	Medicaid Presumptive Eligibility	56	133	138.0%
	Medicaid/SSI	5,502	5,671	3.1%
	Total Active Cases	29,682	27,044	-8.9%
	Medicaid Case Activity			
	Applications Processed	9,081	7,099	-21.8%
	Cases Opened	6,296	5,096	-19.1%
	Withdrawals	392	250	-36.2%
	Denials	2,393	1,753	-26.7%
Cases Closed	9,051	7,730	-14.6%	
Recertifications	22,986	19,948	-13.2%	
Changes in Active Cases	115,673	74,803	-35.3%	
Total Case Activities	156,791	109,580	-30.1%	
Medicaid Recipients Year End - Applied through DSS				
	70,097	67,027	-4.4%	
Medicaid Recipients Year End - Applied through NYSDOH				
	17,821	30,770	72.7%	
Medicaid Recipients Year End - TOTAL				
	87,918	97,797	11.2%	

*With the opening of the New York State of Health (NYSOH) on January 1, 2014, all new Medicaid applications for persons who: are younger than 65 years old, do not have Medicare, are not placed permanently in a Nursing Care Facility and are not applying for a specialized Medicaid Waiver Program were processed through the Health Benefit Exchange. All other populations applied through DSS.

EXPENDITURES BY PROGRAM EXPENDITURES BY % OF BUDGET

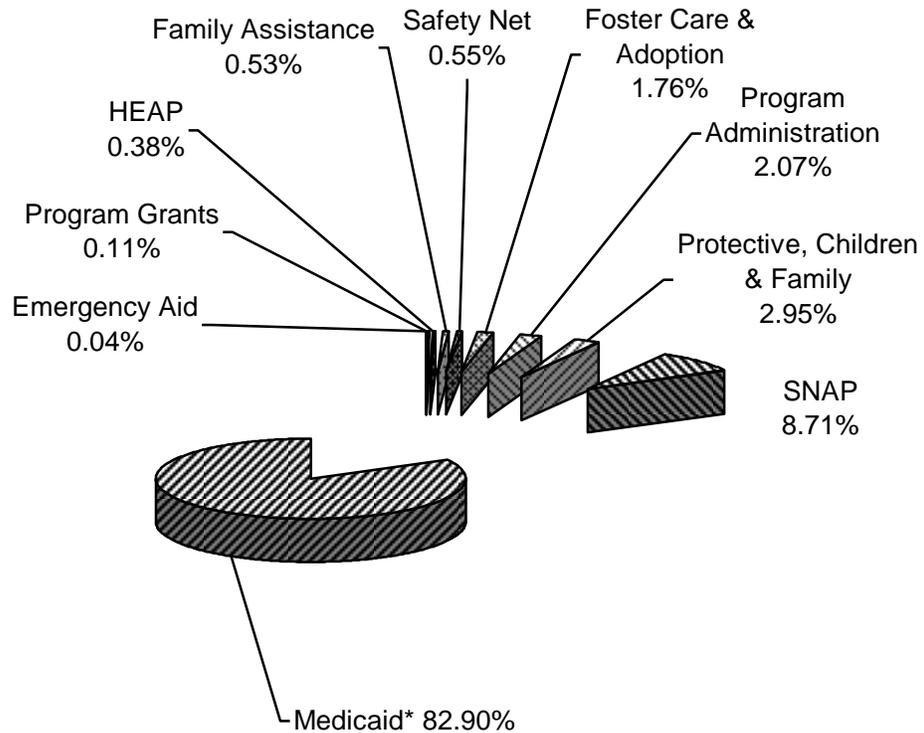
EXPENDITURES BY PROGRAM

<u>Program</u>	<u>2014</u>	<u>2015</u>	<u>\$</u> <u>Change</u>	<u>%</u> <u>Change</u>
Medical Assistance (Medicaid)*	\$706,567,387	\$769,279,122	\$62,711,735	8.9%
SNAP**	80,396,668	80,884,852	488,184	0.6%
Family Assistance	5,608,706	4,884,770	(723,936)	-12.9%
Safety Net	5,423,622	5,074,166	(349,456)	-6.4%
Home Energy Assistance Program (HEAP)**	3,620,521	3,523,309	(97,212)	-2.7%
Emergency Aid	464,644	331,752	(132,892)	-28.6%
Protective, Children and Family**	26,121,149	27,402,552	1,281,403	4.9%
Foster Care and Adoption Assistance**	14,959,829	16,339,607	1,379,778	9.2%
Program Grants	860,462	1,043,097	182,635	21.2%
Program Administration	20,853,861	19,203,390	(1,650,471)	-7.9%
Totals	\$864,876,849	\$927,966,617	\$63,089,768	7.3%

*2014 and 2015 expenditures include expenses for individuals who applied through NYSOH and DSS.

**Includes Program Administration

EXPENDITURES BY % OF BUDGET



*2015 Medicaid expenditures include expenses for individuals who applied through NYSOH and DSS.

MEDICAID EXPENDITURES* BY PROVIDER

<u>Provider Type</u>	<u>2014</u>	<u>2015</u>	<u>\$ Change</u>	<u>% Change</u>
Hospital Inpatient	\$36,658,515	\$41,329,018	\$4,670,504	12.7%
Hospital Outpatient	11,023,630	11,284,598	260,968	2.4%
Skilled Nursing Facility	81,578,357	81,571,936	(6,421)	N/A
Intermediate Care Facility for Developmentally Disabled	27,261,423	16,660,336	(10,601,087)	-38.9%
Clinic	28,968,954	31,113,212	2,144,258	7.4%
Hospice	852,304	848,889	(3,415)	-0.4%
Physicians	4,262,077	3,874,932	(387,145)	-9.1%
Dental	823,549	571,894	(251,655)	-30.6%
Other Practitioners	5,837,444	5,623,166	(214,278)	-3.7%
Child Care Medical Institutional (Per Diem)	383,243	316,409	(66,834)	-17.4%
Personal Care	16,686,093	12,550,470	(4,135,623)	-24.8%
Home Health Services	1,083,199	667,048	(416,151)	-38.4%
Assisted Living Program	4,099,626	4,641,837	542,211	13.2%
Waived Services	112,466,959	124,071,596	11,604,637	10.3%
Rehab and Therapy	94,037	151,004	56,967	60.6%
Rehab Options Services	23,407,607	21,861,300	(1,546,307)	-6.6%
Drugs and Supplies	8,074,224	9,645,301	1,571,077	19.5%
Eye Appliance and Durable Medical Equipment	546,892	671,029	124,137	22.7%
Prepaid Care	330,501,612	387,065,333	56,563,721	17.1%
Care Management Plans	6,307,931	7,699,292	1,391,361	22.1%
Transportation	5,192,107	6,208,049	1,015,942	19.6%
Lab and X-ray	730,992	757,359	26,367	3.6%
Other	<u>349,244</u>	<u>95,115</u>	<u>(254,129)</u>	-72.8%
MMIS subtotal	\$707,190,018	\$769,279,122	\$62,089,105	8.8%
Non-MMIS payments local share	<u>(622,631)</u>		<u>622,631</u>	-
Total	\$706,567,387	\$769,279,122	\$62,711,736	8.8%
Administration	<u>9,498,304</u>	<u>9,289,131</u>	<u>(209,173)</u>	<u>-2.2%</u>
Medicaid Grand Total	\$716,065,691	\$778,568,253	\$62,502,563	8.7%

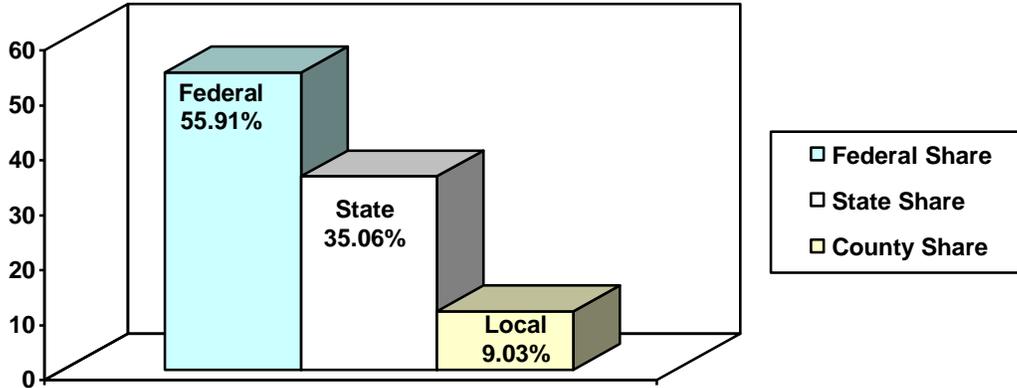
2014 and 2015 expenditures include expenses for individuals who applied through NYSOH and DSS.

<u>Source</u>	<u>2014</u>	<u>2015</u>	<u>\$ Change</u>	<u>% Change</u>
Local Share	\$67,226,676	\$64,795,982	(\$2,430,694)	-3.6%

REVENUE BY SOURCE PROGRAM GRANTS

REVENUE BY SOURCE

	<u>2014</u>	<u>2015</u>	<u>% Change</u>
Federal	\$477,778,514	\$518,826,084	8.6%
State	301,909,944	325,339,920	7.8%
County	85,188,391	83,800,613	-1.6%
Totals	\$864,876,849	\$927,966,617	7.3%



**PROGRAM GRANTS –
EXPENDED IN 2015**

Behavioral Health	\$36,423
Detention Prevention (Flexible Fund for Family Services)	35,000
Family Day Care Registration (CCR)	470,244
Flexible Fund for Family Services	73,275
Non-Residential Domestic Violence	24,999
Safe Harbor	70,086
Summer Youth Employment Program	303,070
Teen Dating Violence	<u>30,000</u>
Total	\$1,043,097

PUBLIC INFORMATION / INFORMATION ROCKLAND

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



INFORMATION ROCKLAND (INFOROCK) *strengthens our families and community by providing easy access to health and human services to residents and professionals.*



While many individuals prefer to speak personally to a call specialist, a growing number of residents choose to find information on their own and used Information Rockland's on-line database. Information Rockland's Call Center answered more than 9,000 calls, referring callers to local agencies that could provide needed services. More than 4,000 unique individuals searched Information Rockland's on-line database per month.

Information Rockland maintains an on-going personal relationship with local service providers, enabling staff to provide residents - either callers or online searchers - with up-to-date information. Staff met with approximately 30 local agencies and attended more than 26 meetings/events to remind residents and professionals about Information Rockland and to ensure that the information they provide about local resources is up to date.

InfoRock also continues to perform the State-mandated service of assessment and intake for residents and professionals seeking to make Adult Protective and Family Services referrals. Callers requesting a referral for services will speak to a Caseworker who assesses whether the circumstances meet the eligibility criteria. If a referral is deemed appropriate, the information is referred to DSS's Protective Services for Adults or Family Services. If not, other community resources are provided.

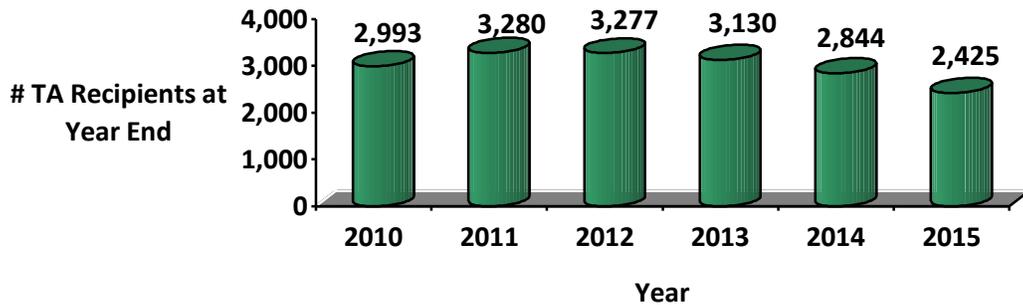
Staff assessed more than 525 adults and 222 families, making 205 referrals to Adult Protective Services and 155 referrals to Family Services in 2015.

ECONOMIC ASSISTANCE

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.

In an ongoing effort to streamline processes and delivery of program benefits, the Department of Economic Assistance has combined forces with previous “stand alone” units. Economic Assistance is now comprised of Public Assistance, Emergency Assistance, SNAP, HEAP, Childcare Subsidy Unit, Housing Unit and the Employment Unit.

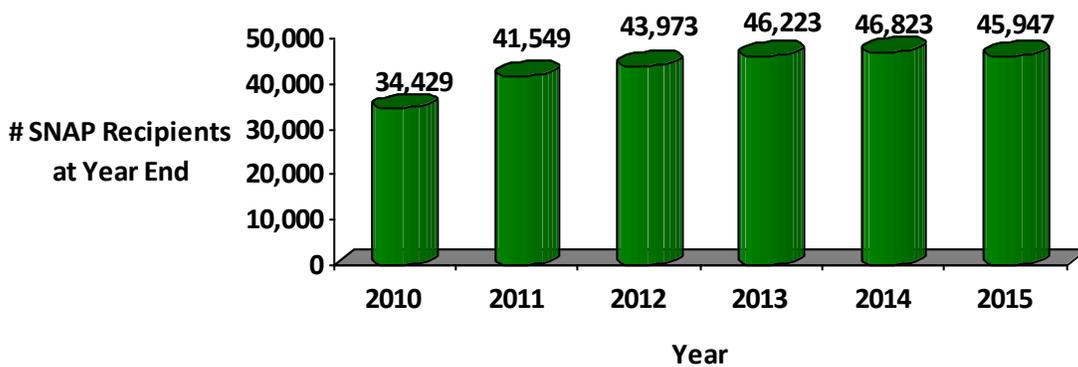
TEMPORARY ASSISTANCE provides temporary help to needy men, women and children who are unable to work or are working in a job that pays less than the poverty level. Depending on individual case circumstances, cash benefits are issued under the Federal Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) or the New York State Safety Net Assistance guidelines. The Temporary Assistance Unit also determines eligibility for Medicaid and SNAP for Temporary Assistance applicants and recipients. At the end of 2015, more than 2,400 residents were receiving Temporary Assistance.



The **SUPPLEMENTAL NUTRITION ASSISTANCE PROGRAM (SNAP)** (Formerly Food Stamps) serves as the first line of defense against hunger and enables families to supplement their food budget by putting additional food on their table.

SSI / SNAP UNIT serves single individuals and childless couples that are receiving Supplemental Security Income benefits from the Social Security Administration.

More than 16,000 households (45,947 individuals) were receiving SNAP at year end.



Comprised of support staff fully versed in eligibility programs and processes, the **SNAP/TA CALL CENTER** was established in 2015 to streamline communications between SNAP and TA applicants/recipients and DSS staff.

SNAP is one of the most effective programs to keep families out of poverty. By creating a Call Center where applicants and recipients can access information quicker and eligibility staff can process cases faster, families throughout Rockland are becoming stronger and more independent.

FRONT DESK RECEPTION AND SCREENING serves as the receptionist for all applicants and recipients, as well as most visitors, to Building L. Front Desk staff direct the “traffic” for the entire agency and are well versed in agency operations, as they must determine where best to direct each inquiry. The Front Desk also takes basic information from all applicants for the Screening and Emergency Assistance Unit.

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

The 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. 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.

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 under TANF a certain percentage of adults must be either working or in countable work preparation activities in order for the State to qualify for full TANF funding. Failure by the State to meet these participation rates has serious monetary consequences to the State and local districts. New York State also mandates similar participation rates in the Safety Net Assistance Program.

In order for these work activities to be considered countable towards the participation rate, the participant must be engaged in the activity for a minimum hourly requirement per week (may be up to 40 hours) averaged monthly, depending on the case type.

A partial list of work activities includes, but is not limited to: employment – subsidized and unsubsidized; job search and job readiness training; work experience; on-the-job training; community service and vocational education.

An applicant or recipient may qualify for an exemption from work requirements due to a verifiable physical or mental impairment. Exemptions are based on State and Federal laws. Even with an exemption, applicants or recipients must follow a treatment program that will restore them to employable status.

The Employment Unit is now in partnership with the new one-stop location called Rockland County Career Center (RCCC) and their community partners. 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 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 child care are addressed. Casework counseling and referral to

needed services are provided on an on-going basis. Of the 544 families and single adults who were assessed by the Housing Unit, 451 were diverted from homelessness.

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 Unit includes a Psychiatric Social Worker to work with individuals and families with mental health issues to maintain their housing stability, coordinate and monitor their treatment plans and assist in obtaining other needed services.

The 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, elderly and minor children. Emphasis is placed on maintaining family stability and in protecting the health and safety of all individuals at risk.

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.

Despite many obstacles to meeting the needs of the homeless, Rockland's emergency housing expenditures are low in comparison to other counties. This is due to successful communication and coordination among various partners, including the Office for Community Development, Legal Aid Society of Rockland County, Mental Health Association, Center for Safety and Change, and other government and non-profit agencies in Rockland County.

The Department operates an Emergency Family Shelter to provide temporary housing to families who are homeless due to fire, flood, eviction, and other emergencies that require immediate attention. Shelter staff members assist families in locating affordable permanent housing. Other services include case management, childcare, and after-school tutorial and recreation programs for the children and educational workshops for the parents.

HOME ENERGY ASSISTANCE PROGRAM (HEAP) is a Federally-funded energy program that assists low-income individuals and families with the cost of heating their homes. The program also helps eligible low-income homeowners repair or replace primary heating equipment.

Approximately \$6.5 million was provided to eligible individuals, families, elderly and/or disabled residents to assist with their energy bills for the 2015 calendar year.

Keeping in line with finding the most cost effective and productive ways to serve our clients, in November of 2015 we partnered with the largest water company in Rockland, SUEZ, to streamline the process for individuals and families to receive assistance to prevent termination of services. We look for alternative revenues...such as utilizing the SUEZ Foundation or working out payment agreements prior to DSS financial involvement. SUEZ has also agreed to accept the lesser of a four-month actual usage payment or the total amount due from DSS to prevent or restore services for eligible individuals and families.

In 2015 the HEAP Unit also took on the additional role of processing applications for Emergency Utility Assistance year-round. In the past, HEAP staff processed applications from approximately the first week of May until the first week of September. Keeping the application process with HEAP staff has made it easier for applicants who are not eligible for HEAP to apply for Emergency Utility Assistance.

The **CHILDCARE SUBSIDY UNIT** is responsible for the administration of Rockland's Childcare Subsidy Program funded by the New York State Childcare Block Grant. Childcare subsidies are provided to: Temporary Assistance families so they can participate in employment and employment activities, working parents who have succeeded in leaving welfare, working families with incomes below 200% of the Federal Poverty Level, teenage parents in order to finish high school, and families who need help to prevent a child's out-of-home placement.

1,217 children from 602 families received Childcare Subsidies, enabling their parents/caregivers to go to work or complete school.

Since there is no longer a waiting list for families to apply for this benefit, funds are available when the family needs child care, rather than when funds become available. A family no longer has to juggle child care in order to go to work to support their family if they are eligible for subsidy benefits. The program will continue to assist the family move towards self-sufficiency, which has helped to strengthen families within our community.

MEDICAL ASSISTANCE

Medicaid provides health care coverage to income eligible individuals. The program is administered by individual States according to Federal requirements.

The Affordable Care Act streamlined the enrollment process through which individuals can gain access to affordable insurance coverage by establishing a Health Benefit Exchange. In October 2013, New York State opened the New York State of Health (NYSOH) which enrolls eligible persons into Medicaid, Child Health Plus and Advanced Premium Tax Credit Health Plans with coverage effective January 1, 2014. With the establishment of NYSOH, the Health Benefit Exchange took over all new Medicaid application processing for persons who: are younger than 65 years old, do not have Medicare, are not placed permanently in a Nursing Care Facility and are not applying for any of the specialized Medicaid Waiver Programs available to qualified disabled children and adults.

In addition to the change in application site for many individuals, the eventual takeover of the Medicaid Program by New York State has impacted other areas in the Medicaid Unit:

- Enrollment of Medicaid recipients into a Managed Care Plan is now the primary responsibility of New York Medicaid Choice/Maximus, New York's Managed Care Enrollment Broker. This resulted in the closure of the Managed Care Unit.
- The Medicaid Unit has one Examiner that now handles other Managed Care business outside of the scope of Maximus and has taken over all Foster Care and mandated Medicaid cases for children under the authority of the Commissioner
- The Medicaid Unit also has one Examiner who handles all Third Party Health Insurance maintenance in eMedNY and all cost effective determinations and decisions for any recipient requesting premium payments be paid by Medicaid.

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

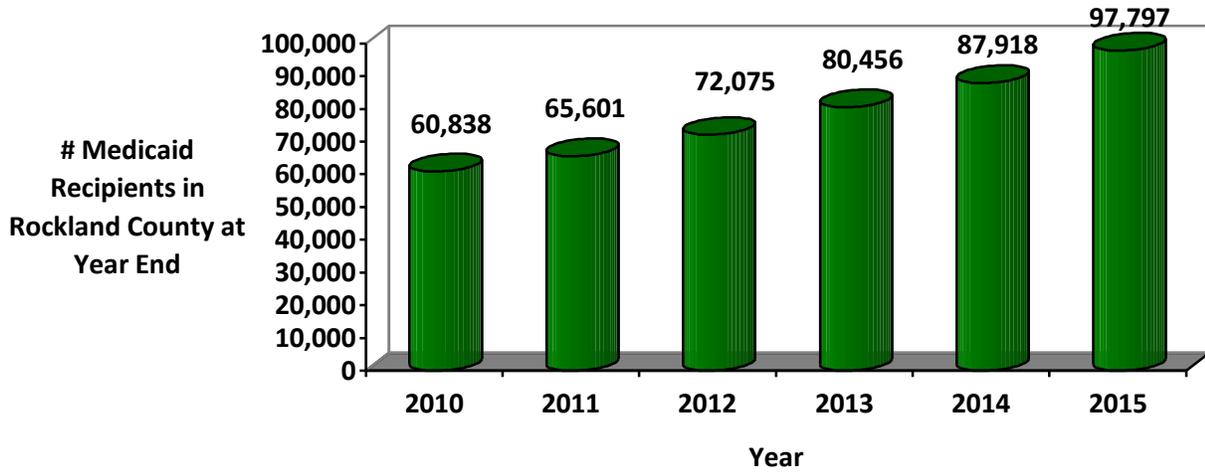
- Medicare recipients
- 65 years old or older who are not caretakers for children under 21 years of age
- looking for assistance with the cost of Home Care, Assisted Living Facility or Nursing Home Care
- disabled adults and children applying for specialized waiver programs
- disabled adults and children eligible for the Excess Income Program
- eligible for help paying for Medicare premiums and/or copays through the Medicare Savings Program

All other persons looking for medical insurance must apply for health insurance (including public health insurance programs like Medicaid and Child Health Plus) through the New York State of Health.

In 2015, Chronic Care staff members were merged into the Medicaid Unit with the Community Medicaid staff. All Examiner staff were cross trained in the program area in which they were unfamiliar. Traditionally, Chronic Care staff assisted only individuals who were looking for nursing home placement or had other long-term care needs.

The new and improved cross trained staff have transitioned into one Medicaid Unit and have combined support and supervisory staff. The result is a leaner, unduplicated and more efficient operation serving all Medicaid recipients within our areas of responsibility and strengthening our service to Rockland's families and communities.

In 2015, approximately 98,000 residents were receiving Medicaid in Rockland County: 67,027 through DSS and approximately 30,770 through the New York State of Health.



SOCIAL SERVICES

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; family planning services; 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

Previously known as Preventive Services, the Unit was renamed in 2013 to **FAMILY SERVICES** due to feedback from Rockland's community. This input identified families who were reluctant to accept services due to the historical connection between CPS and Preventive Services. Family Services staff provides in-home assessment, casework counseling and case management services to Rockland County children and their families without regard to income.

The goal of Family Services is to implement a partnership-based practice in their service delivery. Partnerships with families promote: participation, cooperation and collaboration between worker and family. *During 2015, Family Services' Caseworkers continued the shift to services by utilizing a Family Led Assessment Guide to identify family strengths, needs and community resources available to families. Partnerships lead to more positive outcomes and strengthened families.*

In addition to assessing 337 new families (Family Services, PINS, Teen Parenting) in 2015, staff monitored 1,804 cases.

Children and Family Services was awarded a grant by Office for Children and Family Services (OCFS) in 2015 to increase awareness of human trafficking and the sexual exploitation of minors in Rockland County. DSS partnered with Center for Safety and Change and launched the Safe Harbour Initiative Campaign. OCFS allocated additional funding to continue the Safe Harbour Initiative in 2016.

ADOLESCENT SERVICES encompass Persons in Need of Supervision (PINS) and Juvenile Delinquency (JD) services as well as the Teen Parenting Unit. The goals of these school-based intervention programs are to prevent foster care and enable adolescents to complete their education and become self-sufficient adults.

Persons In Need of Supervision (PINS) and Juvenile Delinquency (JD) services are a partnership with the Rockland County Probation Department, the Mental Health Association, Rockland County Youth Bureau, BOCES, and the Rockland County Departments of Social Services and Mental Health.

The Adolescent Unit has shifted its focus from working mainly with at-risk youth and parents to working with the entire family. Utilizing a Family Systems Approach has broadened the scope of the intervention to include overall family functioning and familial relationships while working to stabilize the at-risk youth's behavior.

Probation and Information Rockland are the intake points for Pre-PINS diversion services. The PINS Preventive Unit assists youth who are truant; acting out in the home, school or community; and who may be involved with drugs or alcohol. PINS Preventive Caseworkers assess the family's service needs and, together with the family, develop a mutually agreed upon plan to prevent out-of-home placement. Services are voluntary, except when ordered by Family Court.

Sixty-five parents whose children were truant, acting out in school or may have been involved in illicit drugs or alcohol attended pre-PINS orientation meetings. Out of the thirty-seven who accepted preventive services, thirty-six (or 97%) were successfully diverted from the juvenile justice system.

Teen Parenting staff provides case management services to adolescents in high school up to the age of 21 who are pregnant, parenting and/or at risk for pregnancy.

The Adolescent Services' Unit received 167 referrals, of which 33 were pregnant/teen parents; 679 on-going cases were monitored throughout the year.

The **FOSTER CARE UNIT** is responsible for providing safe and loving homes for children who are temporarily removed from their birth families. Foster Care Caseworkers partner with: the children, birth parents, foster parents, direct custodians, school staff, service providers, group homes and residential treatment centers with the goal of family reunification. Services range from placement in a temporary home within the child's community to a facility which provides a higher level of care, including exploring if children are involved in sex trafficking and then referring them to the necessary agencies. Additional services such as obtaining credit reports in their names and independent living skills are provided for youth starting at age 14. Starting from ages 16 to 20, emphasis is placed on reconnecting or connecting youth with adult resources including preparation and building skills for independent living. Youth with an APPLA goal (an option only when other options have been ruled out in which the Rockland County Department of Social Services maintains care and custody and arranges a living situation in which the youth is expected to remain until adulthood) receive a stipend if they meet criteria and are encouraged to further their education and/or vocational interest

The Therapeutic Team was formed in 2015 to work in conjunction with the Foster Care and Home Finding Units to prevent multiple placements of children. Foster families are trained to provide therapeutic services to children with a higher level of need so they can remain within the community in a family setting. In addition to providing additional supports to families, Caseworkers on the Therapeutic Team are also trained to work with children in facilities and/or hospitals and assist them in stepping down to a less restrictive placement, such as therapeutic foster homes and/or foster homes.

Of the 67 children removed from their families, 43 were placed in foster care.

The Foster Care Unit concentrated on recruiting foster homes for teenagers in 2015, with ads running in the Rockland Journal News.

The **ADOPTION UNIT** is dedicated to obtaining permanency for those children who could not be reunited with their birth families. Children are adopted by family members and/or foster parents. Adoptions are finalized through Family Court.

In 2015, six children were freed for adoption, and eleven children had adoptions finalized.

THE VISITATION AND TRANSPORTATION UNIT'S role in reunification is to provide transportation and assist with the visitation process between children and their biological family. Visits are provided in a safe and comfortable environment at the Department of Social Services. Partnered with the Mental Health Association's Visitation Program, staff assists families involved in Family Treatment Court by monitoring visits in the community and/or the family's homes. Visits are supervised and/or coached. Both types of visits help to maintain and develop bonding while practicing parenting skills.

Implemented in 2015, Coaching Visitation identifies the parent as the expert of their child and helps parents to develop a partnership with the coach to be better able and prepared to meet their child's needs. Families are assessed for coaching and all types of skills are addressed from diapering and feeding, to behaviors and joint parenting. In 2015 three families were being coached.

In 2015, The Parent Center for Visitation/Transportation Unit supervised 1,177 visits, provided 4,677 bus tickets to clients, supervised 4,102 drug tests and provided 2,151 transports.

"STEPS." (**S**chools, **T**raining, **E**ligibility, **P**ublic Outreach and **S**tatistics) solidifies DSS's commitment to the safety of children and youth by pulling together these groups and services to help keep children and youth in Rockland safe.

STEPS staff provide training to school and community organizations so they can identify and report early signs of potential abuse and neglect of children and at-risk behavior of youth. Staff also analyze and interpret data and identify trends in child welfare, sharing this information with the community to streamline and improve the delivery of services. School referrals to Family Services accounted for 25% (39) of the 155 Family Services' referrals taken by Information Rockland.

The STEPS Unit played a vital part in building and strengthening partnerships with local schools, community organizations and the Partnership for Safe Youth Program, an initiative created by the Rockland County District Attorney's Office designed to enhance the effectiveness and productivity of services for teens and their families living in Rockland County. *Through collaboration with members, DSS was responsible for referring nine youth to the Partnership for Safe Youth Program. Referrals from DSS comprised approximately 13% of all referrals to the Program.*

STEPS staff participated in 34 community-based collaborative meetings, completed 30 outreach activities and added two more school partners to its outreach endeavor. It provided Mandated Reporter Training to various community organizations, including the Rockland County Police Academy.

In an effort to address the disproportional placement of African American children in the child welfare system, the STEPS Unit played an important role in the creation of the Racial Equity Cultural Competence Committee (RECC) and the Removal and Child Permanency Review Board. *RECC was responsible for bringing Tim Wise, a prominent anti-racist writer and educator, to Rockland County to educate and train DSS staff, community organizations and schools on the aforementioned issue. Out-of-home placement of African American children was reduced by approximately 17% in 2015.*

The STEPS unit is also responsible for determining eligibility of children in care for various federal, state and local programs.

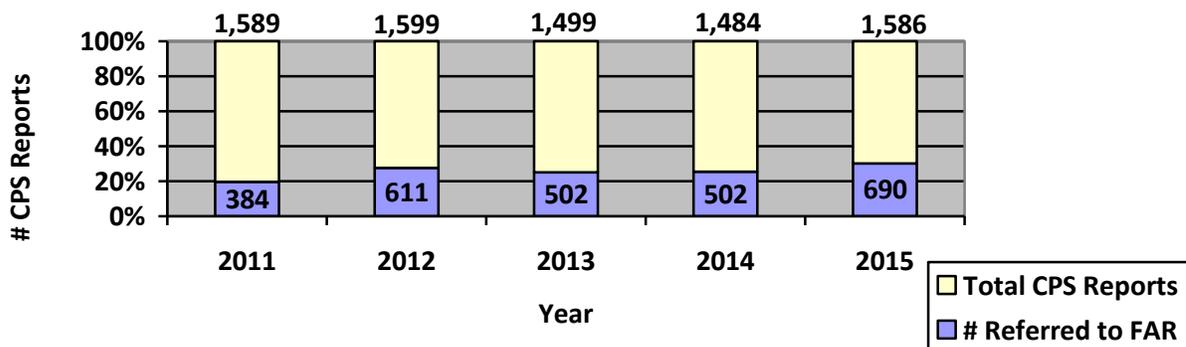
CHILD PROTECTIVE SERVICES (CPS): INVESTIGATIVE AND FAMILY ASSESSMENT RESPONSE (FAR)

CPS is responsible for investigating and/or assessing safety on all reports of suspected child abuse and/or maltreatment of children under the age of 18. Reports of child abuse or neglect are made by calling the New York State Central Registry (SCR) at 1-800-342-3720; these confidential calls may be made anonymously. CPS responds to new reports seven days a week, 24 hours a day.

New York State allows Rockland County to respond to reports to the New York State Central Register of Child Abuse and Maltreatment (SCR) in one of two ways: a traditional Child Protective Service (CPS) Investigation, or, for certain reports, with a Family Assessment Response (FAR). CPS supervisors are responsible for determining if reports require an investigation or Family Assessment Response. Decisions are based on State law along with consideration of past history of reports and the level of cooperation from families.

FAR Caseworkers assess for child safety without having to prove or disprove the allegations. Workers engage families to identify their needs and provide supports, services and resources to meet each family's unique circumstances. This partnership connects families to resources within their community or works to strengthen their informal support systems, while reducing risk to the child.

When a child's safety cannot be assessed or a FAR track is deemed not appropriate, a CPS investigation of the allegations is conducted. A CPS Investigative Caseworker may seek the intervention of the Family Court for Orders of Protection, court-ordered services for families and/or authorization to place a child in foster care. Criminal action can be concurrent in cases of abuse.



Reports to the State Central Registry increased approximately 7% (from 1,484 in 2014 to 1,586 in 2015). Out of the 1,586 SCR reports, 44%, or 690 were tracked by FAR.

A Psychiatric Social Worker was co-located within CPS to assist the Investigative and FAR Units effectively coordinate adults and children between the Behavioral Health and Child Welfare systems. Twenty-nine adults and 29 youth were assessed since May 2015.

Adult & Special Services

PROTECTIVE SERVICES FOR ADULTS (PSA) is a program to assist adults, age 18 or over, who because of mental or physical impairments cannot provide for their basic need for food, clothing, shelter, or medical care, nor can they protect themselves from neglect, abuse, or hazardous conditions in a reasonable manner. Services are provided without regard to income and are based on the guiding principles of the individual's rights to self-determination and the least restrictive alternatives.

PSA workers continue to prioritize the assistance given to consumers and work to empower them whenever possible so they become self-sufficient. When continued assistance is needed, workers collaborate with other agencies. This continues to be an efficient and successful way to insure that our consumer's needs are being met. Three hundred and thirty-seven new PSA referrals were received in 2015.

PSA and the Health Department continue to work closely. Bi-monthly meetings coordinate services and encourage clients to accept services to allow them to remain in their homes.

PSA continues its outreach to locate Family-Type Home providers, especially those who may be able to assist a younger population with needs. Joint meetings with the Rockland County Departments of Health and Mental Health have been conducted to provide training and to offer support to the Family-Type Home providers in this area.

Family-Type Homes provide a much needed housing option to the community by offering care for individuals who do not require medical or skilled nursing services, but are unable to cope with everyday routines. It is, in essence, a foster care program for adults, offering unique housing for those who do not fit comfortably in other housing options.

PSA, Rockland County Department of Health and law enforcement staff members now participate in a new workgroup developed to monitor and address housing violations that places individuals and families at risk. Twenty-four cases were handled by the Workgroup in 2015.

In compliance with Governor Cuomo's Executive Order 151 to address homeless individuals in freezing temperatures, PSA staff conducted outreach to identify and assist homeless individuals. This effort will continue into 2016.

ADULT SERVICES/LONG-TERM CARE UNIT continues to transition Medicaid recipients into Managed Care companies for their long-term care needs. Under the Managed Care Program, clients are to receive all their home care needs by the Managed Care Plan they have chosen or have been assigned. During this transition, Adult Services continues to act as a resource by providing information on where to call to resolve problems and where recipients can get information on various Managed Care Plans. This transition will continue into 2016, however, at a slower rate than anticipated.

Staff continues to coordinate home care services for individuals under the age of 21 who are in need of long-term care. The Department contracts with home health care agencies to provide home care services and incidental household tasks. Adult Services' Caseworkers work with the consumer and their family to assist them in obtaining services necessary for consumers to remain safely in their home. Such help includes, but is not limited to: obtaining and maintaining entitlements, i.e. Medicaid and SNAP; procuring needed prescriptions and medical equipment; advocating for housing or other legal issues; arranging for emergency food as well as other personal necessity items. Agencies under contract are audited periodically to ensure that employees meet approved standards and are in compliance with training specifications.

Consumer Directed Personal Assistant Program (CDPAP) is a program that contracts with nine provider agencies to allow consumers to hire their own Personal Care Aides. The services can be combined with any medically necessary service such as physical therapy, long-term care, etc.

Personal Care Assistance Program (PCA) is a program that contracts with 14 agencies to assist medically needy patients with their personal hygiene, dressing, feeding and nutritional and environmental support functions enabling them to live safely in their homes.

LIFELINE, a personal emergency response system, assures safety to frail and elderly patients, permitting a significant reduction in the number of hours of personal care that need to be provided.

The Unit Supervisor and Director of the Medical Unit also coordinate the Care At Home Medicaid Waiver Program, a program that provides medical assistance to families with children living at home who have severe disabilities or medical conditions. There are currently 38 Care at Home cases, an increase of 20 cases during the past year. This increase is due to the fact that individuals in this program do not need to be in Managed Care and receive enhanced services.

ENFORCEMENT

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

THE FAMILY LAW DIVISION, consisting of seven Attorneys, one Paralegal, and a Community Services Worker, is responsible for representing the Department in Family Court on matters of paternity, support, child abuse and neglect, foster care, severance of parental rights, persons in need of supervision (PINS) and juvenile delinquency (JD) cases.

This Unit has a 90% success rate in abuse and neglect proceedings.

The **LEGAL DEPARTMENT**, consisting of three Attorneys, two Paralegals and one Litigation Assistant, is responsible for any and all litigation by or against the Department, Article 78 Proceedings, Article 81 Proceedings, and administrative hearings. The Department provides general legal advice to all other units, and prepares and processes contracts with agencies.

A subdivision of the Legal Department is the Fair Hearings Unit that 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 reduce administrative costs, and providing better and improved service to the Department's customers.

This Unit has continually ranked high in the number of cases it wins.

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 enforcement units under the direction of this office are Special Investigations and Resource Recovery, including the Cash Management System.

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

The Fraud Section investigates complaints regarding possible fraud and abuse within all assistance programs – Temporary Assistance, SNAP, Medicaid, and Child Care Subsidies. Cases in which fraud have been clearly established are referred to the District Attorney's Office for possible criminal prosecution. This may involve criminal charges of Welfare Fraud, Grand Larceny, and Filing False Instruments and usually results in, at a minimum, recoupment of assistance incorrectly paid. In other cases, the Fraud Unit attempts to recover all overpayments of assistance made to customers.

Recovery may be made by reducing Temporary Assistance grants or by individual agreement to repay the agency directly.

The FEDS Section detects possible fraud or ineligibility at the application stage to prevent the initial payment of improper benefits by the Agency.

Overpayment dollars identified and recovered by SIU increased by 43% (\$812,957: \$1,160,942) and 21% (\$304,153:\$367,947), respectively, over 2014.

SIU continued to collaborate with DA's Office for prosecutions; and their additional "eyes and ears" during field investigations resulted in over one dozen total ancillary referrals to Child Protective Services (for apparent child neglect), Information Rockland (for apparent need of services), and the Housing Codes Initiative (for apparent substandard or illegal housing).

The **RESOURCE RECOVERY UNIT** assures that any non-exempt income or assets of a customer are utilized to reduce the need for assistance. Recoupment is made from recipients when assets or resources are later

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uncovered, i.e. stocks, bonds, bank accounts, real property, lawsuits and estates 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 addition to the above duties, the Resource Recovery Unit is also responsible for arranging and paying for the burials of indigent individuals. Many of these unfortunate individuals received Medicaid and other related forms of public assistance in the latter stages of their lifetimes. In 2015, 97 burial arrangements were coordinated with local funeral homes and cemeteries.

The Cash Management Systems (CAMS) 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. CAMS staff serve as a liaison between Rockland County Department of Social Services and the consumers who owe Rockland County money. They are responsible for following up on all repayment agreements, establishing contact with non-paying consumers, coming to a mutually acceptable repayment arrangement, and as a last resort, referring matters for civil litigation when deemed necessary.

In 2015, approximately \$307,000 was collected by the Resource Unit. In addition, the Director of Compliance and Resource Recovery negotiated Medicaid settlements on five (5) large personal injury and/or estate cases which resulted in \$967,927 being paid to the New York State Department of Health.

The Director of Compliance and Resource Recovery, who also serves as an Assistant County Attorney in the DSS Legal Department, is also responsible for reviewing and responding to general referrals from the Medicaid Unit related to Community Medicaid and Chronic Care/Nursing Home Medicaid applications. In 2015, 46 written legal opinions made in response to the referrals were rendered determining the sufficiency and ramification of Medicaid Qualifying Trusts, such as Irrevocable Trusts, Supplemental Needs Trusts and Special Needs Trusts.

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.

\$29 million in child support was collected and distributed to custodial parents on behalf of 7,333 children.

WELFARE MANAGEMENT SYSTEMS (WMS)

Welfare Management Systems (WMS) supports Health and Human Services (HHS) programs which sustain our families and communities. These Systems provide support by administering cash and medical assistance, SNAP (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program) benefits, emergency and temporary assistance, child support; and critical services for adults, children and families.

WMS supports the delivery of benefits at the local level which helps strengthen and stabilize Rockland's low income communities.

- Provides statistical data reports extracted from various sources within OTDA, OCFS and DOH. These statistics identify patterns of use and need, while supporting daily operations and supervisory functions. This data is used to refine planning and policy formulation which enhances the services provided to County residents.
- Automating electronic forms to facilitate on-line data entry.
- Implementing technical and user support in compliance with State initiatives.
- In 2015, 3,601 calls were logged and successfully resolved by an internal IT Help Desk.
- Coordinates with the State's Information Technology Services (ITS) to resolve issues and support the local network infrastructure.
- Forecasts future technology needs by depicting caseload trends and worker productivity.

BICS (Benefit Issuance and Control System - generates DSS payments based on WMS authorization records) in conjunction with Accounting and County MIS, modernized and streamlined the check printing process. The new procedure will reduce DSS check processing by 1 full day, providing faster payments to strengthen and stabilize client families and vendors. This process is expected to be rolled out second quarter 2016.

CI/Records Retention sustains the process for supporting families by assigning WMS case numbers to the workers. 4,003 new case numbers were assigned for application registrants including individuals and families seeking monetary supports from DSS.

Application Processing was enhanced by training sessions on the "MyBenefits" application to several nonprofit agencies, which support Rockland families. This application allows pre-screening for client benefits and provides online submission of applications. This facilitates the application process and allows parents to stay with their children at home by preventing unnecessary multiple trips to DSS. WMS supports Health and Human Services (HHS) programs within DSS which sustain families and their communities. This System provides support by administering cash and medical assistance, SNAP (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program) benefits, emergency and temporary assistance, child support; and critical services for adults, children and families.

FISCAL OPERATIONS

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

PUBLIC ASSISTANCE ACCOUNTING staff is responsible for processing all benefit payments made to or for recipients of assistance, which includes Temporary Assistance for Needy Families, Safety Net, Emergency Assistance for Adults, and Emergency Assistance for Families as well as SNAP and HEAP.

The primary function of the **SERVICES ACCOUNTING** staff includes the processing of payments for the following: Childcare, Foster Care, Children's Services, and Protective Services for Adults.

The **AUDIT** staff performs reviews of childcare providers' billing records as well as various applications for medical and public assistance.

The **ADMINISTRATIVE ACCOUNTING** staff is responsible for the preparation of the department budget, as well as monitoring expenditures and ensuring proper reimbursement from Federal and State sources. Other responsibilities include auditing and paying administrative vouchers, accounts payable, cash receipts, trust accounts, bank deposits and bank reconciliations. This Unit also receives and disburses income for individuals for whom DSS is the representative payee or guardian.

ADMINISTRATION

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

In addition to its overall functions, Administration was responsible for several initiatives in 2015 that fell outside of the functions of the administrative units listed below, including the following:

- DSS and the Rockland County's Sheriff Office continued joint efforts to produce accurate and timely reports which accelerated identifying inmates on assistance, thereby enabling earlier termination of benefits. Recoverable and avoided payments totaled \$259,365.
- A new joint DSS and Sheriff Office program reducing local share costs was created and implemented. County Jail inmates were enrolled into Medicaid to save money on hospital and out-of-jail medical costs. Approximately \$15,000 in costs was diverted from local share expense in 2015.
- Created more defined reporting processes to track Medicaid statistics as administration of the Medicaid Program transfers to State control. This year, special focus was placed on monitoring the caseloads and working on reconciling differences found between Rockland County WMS Medicaid statistics and those provided by NYS DOH. In addition, an efficient process was created that consolidated the Medicaid and Chronic Care recertification databases into one mirroring the integration of the units and shortening the recertification process.
- Developed a Rockland County DSS SOLQ (State On-Line Query) Quality Assurance Plan which brought us into compliance with the security rules required to safeguard confidentiality and proper use of data provided by the Social Security Administration. The focal point was to increase program integrity with rigorous controls and access restrictions to promote adherence to all security requirements. User entitlements will be strictly monitored with real time updates from Personnel on staff movements.
- Created an Exit Interview Process which led to positive changes in DSS policies and practices.
- Responsible for successfully launching the County Executive's *Rockland County Employee Appreciation and Recognition Program* which strives to highlight County employees who foster improved quality of service or advance the core values and mission of County Government. DSS formally recognized and celebrated 15 Spot Awardees and 64 Departmental Extra Effort Awardees.

The **STAFF DEVELOPMENT UNIT** coordinated a wide scope of training experiences and managed the related logistics for DSS staff. The team continued to work closely with internal units to implement a range of needed professional development opportunities, providing support for increasing mandates from the State. Staff Development was instrumental in the implementation of updated refresher training on the EEO Policy for employees. The team also saw the expanded use of distance learning among staff, which brings computer-based training on site to workers at their respective stations and significantly reduces travel and time away from the workplace. This serves to continually enhance staff members' knowledge and skills in an efficient and cost effective manner.

Staff Development facilitated 526 workshops, seminars and conferences, totaling 3,077 hours of staff training in key areas of professional development.

OPERATIONS, ANALYSIS AND PLANNING (PLANNING). The Planning Unit develops funding applications, plans for administering agency programs, and prepares local policies and procedures to implement State and Federal regulations and administrative directives. Staff develops, implements, manages, and monitors internal and contracted local programs which provide needed services to families in Rockland communities, and assists contract agencies to comply with requirements for reporting including Performance Target Outcomes. Continuing efforts to assure accountability by service providers include increasing the number of site visits to contract agencies, working 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. Planning oversees agency allocations and expenditures, maximizes resources, and develops Annual Agency Achievements and Strategies for submission to the County Executive as well as the County's Child and Family Services Plan and annual updates required by the State.

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In 2015, the Planning Unit assumed responsibility for processing 27 additional contracts representing 25 non-for-profit agencies previously handled by the County's Finance Department, resulting in anticipated savings to the County of over \$900,000.

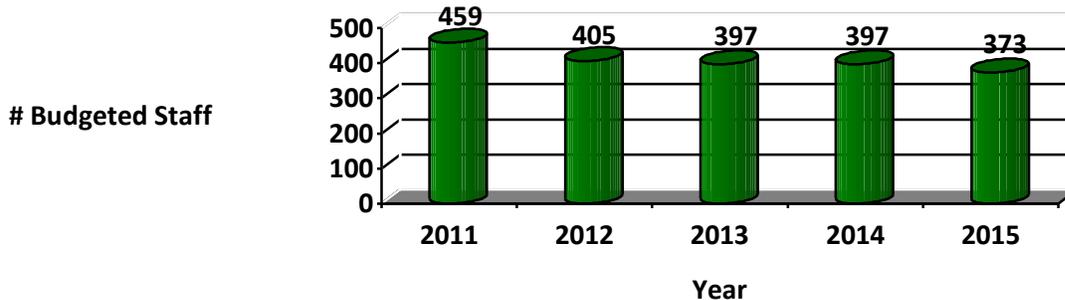
The **PERSONNEL OFFICE** is responsible for processing all personnel and payroll transactions for the Department. The Office coordinates and maintains personnel records of the current salary, title, and status of each employee.

Personnel Office staff also advises employees on a variety of matters including contract interpretation and benefits and disseminates information on health insurance, retirement, workers' compensation, civil service examinations and promotions. Personnel Office staff analyzes and reviews existing job descriptions, personnel policies and procedures and makes appropriate recommendations for revision.

Personnel Office staff assisted in transitioning four psychiatric social workers into the department to assist clients with mental health issues.

Staff continues to implement the online attendance program in the agency. Approximately 50% of agency staff now enter their attendance online.

In 2015 the department head count was 357, an 18.7% decrease from 2011.



ADMINISTRATIVE/OFFICE SERVICES is responsible for maintaining support services for staff located in four different locations. This continues to include forecasting and requisitioning supplies, processing receipts of outside deliveries and operating a secure stockroom. Over the last few years, focus was placed on creating an efficient and reliable system to distribute office supplies through interoffice mail. This replaced workers' loss of valuable work time tracking down office supplies when needed. Staff also monitors vehicle mileage and allocates vehicles for staff to perform official duties. An important new effort was the implementation of monitoring the DSS postal account in monthly coordination with MIS. Fund balance limits were created making replenishing more automatic.