

Tioga County Department of Social Services

2020 Annual Report

Children and Adult Services

Successes:

- Creation of a training unit to handle the increased number of new staff.
- The use of our mobile technology allowed us the ability to go remote/work from home on a moment's notice.
- Our staff pivoted to the changing requirements of the COVID-19 pandemic in a seamless manner.
- The Local Implementation Team is continuing to work on ensuring we continue to make this a better place to work.
- The supervisory team is stepping up and taking on full caseloads while at the same time mentoring new staff.

Challenges:

- Staff Turnover – there was a loss of 8 staff members due to both retirements and resignations
- The COVID-19 Pandemic and the new methodologies needed to keep staff safe and ensuring families were safe.
- The COVID-19 Pandemic and the impact on how we were able to provide services to ensure children's safety and continue having children visit with their parent when in out of home placement.
- A continued number of serious cases requiring court intervention and/or on-going preventive services.

Accounting/Systems/Fraud Activities

- The Accounting Department participated in the Annual State Single Audit. The programs tested were TANF (40 records), FC IVE (7 records). They also audited 40 administrative disbursements. There were no significant findings.
- Accounting and Systems continue to successfully integrate the BICS and data entry functions. This was done as a cost savings measure and to provide cross training proficiencies.
- Accounting maintained many services throughout the COVID pandemic, such as continuing to provide departments with needed reporting, processing timely payments with little to no loss of efficiency and back-up to Systems. This is due to the dedication of the accounting staff using and creating improved processes.
- All the accounting staff are continuing to be cross trained to learn new accounting functions due to need, to increase efficiency, and succession planning.

- Accounting worked with APS and maintained a total of 50+ rep payee accounts. Accounting did an estimated 6,000 transactions including taking in their incomes and processing payments totaling \$532,186.64 on their behalf
- Systems is responsible for metering mail for almost all county departments including offices at the HHS Complex, Sheriff's Office, Treasurer's Office, DMV, and other departments. The mail department metered over 84,000 pieces of mail in 2020
- Systems department provided staff with access to VDI (Virtual Desktop Infrastructure) so staff could work remotely during the pandemic.
- Computers that were purchased at the end of 2019 were received in 2020 and 19 of those computers were redistributed to staff with a computer over 9 years old.
- 4 Surface Pros were purchased and are being utilize by the Supervisors in the Employment and Transitional support for remote access to their state devices.
- Social Services had our annual review conducted by state staff for the application usage of Connections, overseen by OCFS – Office of Children and Family Services. The Connections review focused on user security controls, verified that users only received permissions needed for their job scope, and that staff position changes and removal were completed in a timely manner. The review team found that Tioga County continues to be consistent with state requirements and is prompt in keeping user profiles current and only granting access to what is needed.
- Local revenues and recoveries totaled \$1,018,742 in 2020

Employment and Transitional Supports

HEAP

- The Home Energy Assistance Program (HEAP) is a vital program that helps low-income people pay the cost of heating and heating/cooling repair costs in their homes. The 2019-2020 HEAP Season ran from October 1, 2019 through September 30, 2020. The HEAP Unit processed 6,046 benefits (an increase of 2% over the previous season) resulting in allocations of \$3,002,578 or an average of \$496 per benefit.

Temporary Assistance and Employment

- DSS started as a VITA site in 2004. Assistance is provided to working individuals to have their tax returns e-filed at no cost. In 2020, for tax year 2019, 150 returns were processed resulting in Federal refunds of \$281,036.00 and State refunds of \$45,148.00 totaling \$326,184.00, of which \$79,521.00 were EITC monies, all returning to, and being reinvested in, the local economy. Since 2006, 1,790 returns have been completed with a combined total in tax refunds of \$4,113,981.00.
- Due to the COVID-19 pandemic many normal standard operating procedures have been suspended. Examples of this include: telephone interview waivers; waiving of employment requirements that require in-person contact; delay of mandatory work assignments; mass

change to case extensions; flexibility in verifying job loss; and, extended eligibility periods for day care recipients.

- In 2020, the Tioga Career Center's staff assisted 3,044 walk-in customers, down 61% from 2019*, and fielded 8,708 phone calls.
- The average number of Cash Assistance cases decreased in 2020 from 313 in 2019 to 296*.
- The average number of families in the Family Assistance (TANF) caseload average decreased from 186 in 2019 to 176 in 2020*.
- The Safety Net caseload (single individuals and couples as well as families that have reached the 60-month time limit) average was 119 in 2020 compared to 128 in both 2019 and 2018*.
- In 2020 the Daycare Caseload was comprised of an average of 108 cases, a 20% decrease from 2019*.

* Significant drops began in the Spring months due to impacts from COVID on the needs of individuals and families and facility access.

SNAP/Medicaid Unit

- Using the "Task-Based" Process Management Model, this Unit processed applications, re-certifications and under-care maintenance for a total of 18,323 completed tasks in 2020.
- The average monthly number of individuals receiving SNAP (Food Stamps) benefits in 2020 was 4,604 (approximately 1,540 of these were children).
- The monthly average of the total number of Tioga County individuals on Medicaid in 2020 was 10,562. 3,684 of these cases continued to be managed by FSMA staff, the remainder are on the State Exchange. Average number of SSI individuals was 1,198 (197 were children).
- The average number of Chronic Care (nursing home, assisted living and waiver programs) Medicaid cases was 229 per month for 2020.

Child Support Enforcement Unit (CSEU)

- The Child Support Enforcement Unit collected \$5,829,983 in 2020.
- Average monthly caseload 2,223.
- Reimbursements to DSS in 2020 totaled \$660,799 compared to \$461,917 in 2019. This 46% increase can, in part, be attributed to intercept of the Pandemic Unemployment Assistance (PUA) and stimulus income.
- The Child Support Enforcement Unit filed a total of 538 petitions in 2020, down 28% from 2019.

Youth Bureau

- Total allocations of \$46,600 were distributed to eleven Community Organizations and Municipal Recreational Programs.