



Orange County, New York

# Department of Social Services 2002 Annual Report

Edward A. Diana, County Executive

Margaret Kirchner, Commissioner

## DEPARTMENT MISSION

The Orange County Department of Social Services provides temporary help to eligible individuals and families with social service and financial needs in order to assist them with leading safe, healthy and independent lives.

**The Department employs a staff of approximately 490 to perform activities in five office locations:**

- 11 Quarry Road, **Goshen**  
(845) 291-4000  
Fax: (845) 291-4338
- 23 Hatfield Lane, **Goshen**  
(845) 291-2800  
Fax: (845) 291-2985
- 33 Fulton Plaza, **Middletown**  
(845) 346-1120  
Fax: (845) 346-1246
- 141 Broadway, **Newburgh**  
(845) 568-5100  
Human Services Fax:  
(845) 568-5191  
Economic Independence Fax:  
(845) 568-5127
- 150 Pike Street, **Port Jervis**  
(845) 858-1420  
Fax: (845) 858-1443

## **Office Hours:**

Monday through Friday  
9:00 A.M.— 5:00 P.M.

OCDSS programs and administrative expenses are funded by a combination of county, state and federal monies. In 2002, the Social Service gross budget totaled \$164,486,146., of which \$68,645,894 was from Orange County taxation.

## **OCDSS Serves Orange County Residents**

The Department provides and manages a wide range of social welfare programs. While there is overlap, different program areas serve different populations.

**T**he Human Services Division provides services that enhance the ability of families to live together, enables individuals to remain in their homes, minimizes the risk of abuse or neglect, and provides for specialized care in residential settings when necessary. These services are generally provided without consideration of income, but are based on social need. In 2002....

Reports of child abuse and/or neglect rose 9%, with Child Protective Services completing 3,081 investigations of alleged abuse and/or neglect among children under age 18.

Placement of PINS (Persons in Need of Supervision) and Juvenile Delinquents for 2002 totaled 101 youth, while 88 youth were referred to CRYPS (Court Related Youth Program Services).

The foster care population remained stable at an average of 510 children in care each month. 57 children were discharged from care to their parents and 31 were freed for adoption. 35 children were adopted and 39 others await finalization of adoptive placement.

Preventive Services were provided to approximately 262 families with 1,174 children identified as being at risk of abuse and/or neglect, or out of home placement.

891 referrals were received for Adult Protective Services and Adult Home Care Services, with 1,234 persons receiving home care services through the Medicaid Personal Care or Long Term Home Health Care Programs.

**T**he Economic Independence Division provides various forms of financial assistance to families and individuals. Programs are subject to income and resource eligibility that must be satisfied to

qualify for assistance. Participation in Welfare to Work Programs is also required for employable applicants and recipients.

Families and individuals receiving Temporary Assistance declined in 2002 by 5%, with 2,365 households receiving financial help to maintain a minimal standard of living at year's end.

As of December 31, 2002 Food Stamp benefits were supplementing Temporary Assistance grants or income of 7,446 households (19,131 persons).

The Medicaid program continued to grow throughout the year, with over 35,000 recipients accessing this medical assistance program. The number of families and individuals receiving Medicaid increased by 12%. At the end of 2002, Managed Care provided assistance for 7,133 enrollees and the Family Health Plus program, introduced to extend medical assistance to households with income exceeding Medicaid eligibility, also grew with 1,150 families receiving these health coverage benefits.

Welfare to Work initiatives, coordinated with the O.C. Employment & Training Administration, led to 1,080 entries to employment during the year and an average of 757 families received DSS child care subsidies each month.

**T**he Administrative Division facilitated activities for administrative and fiscal direction for the Department. These activities included collecting Child Support payments exceeding \$29 million for over 19,000 cases; processing over 48,000 requests for medical transportation; conducting 4,462 Special Investigations of reported consumer fraud, with 625 cases found with substantiated fraud and 1,789 applications not authorized for assistance; implementing new software and electronic communications, database programs and PC equipment by Information Technology and; providing 369 in-service training programs for employees by Staff Development.

## HUMAN SERVICES DIVISION - 2002 HIGHLIGHTS

### HUMAN SERVICES UNITS

**Intake** Caseworkers are responsible for assessing the service needs of children and families in non-child protective service situations.

**Court Intake** provides assessment, referral, and placement services for PINS and JD's.

**Child Protective Services** Caseworkers investigate allegations of child abuse and neglect that are made to the New York State Central Register (SCR) and then transmitted to the local DSS.

**Preventive Services** provide supportive and rehabilitative services to intact families where children have been assessed to be at-risk of foster care placement.

**Foster Care** Caseworkers provide casework services to children in family foster care, group and residential programs and to their birth parents and siblings at home.

**Adoption** Caseworkers arrange for permanent homes for foster children who have been freed for adoption, and provide services to those birth parents who want to give up (surrender) their child for adoption.

**Homefinding** staff recruits, trains and certifies families to be foster and adoptive parents.

**Adult Home Care** Services are designed to increase or maintain an adult's level of independence to assure their continuing safety, independence and ability to remain at home.

**Adult Protective Services** Caseworkers provide assistance to mentally or physically impaired adults, 18 or older, who are unable to meet their essential needs of food, clothing, shelter, or medical care, and/or who are unable to protect themselves or their interests from neglect or abuse, and who further, have no one willing and able to help in a responsible manner.

In addition to providing ongoing services for families and individuals during 2002, the Human Services Division continued to meet the challenges of executing new legislation, developing more effective and efficient methods of service delivery and implementing technological expansion of automated services. Some of these activities have been highlighted below.

» Meeting the specialized needs of the newly legislated sixteen to eighteen year old Persons in Need of Supervision (PINS) required coordination of activities to develop effective service responses for this population while introducing methods for maximizing funding and reducing County costs of implementation. A new contract for the "PINS Plus" program was executed in order to offer a variety of services emphasizing education, job training and employment. The Family Resolutions Project was developed as a result of grant funding to provide a family driven service plan. Two additional programs were developed to meet the needs of youth and families in crisis: Multi-systemic Therapy (MST)- a research based model of therapeutic intervention and Family Keys- an immediate, short-term intervention service.

Participation took place in an Interdepartmental collaboration with the Department of Mental Health, Probation Department, and Youth Bureau that included joint involvement in a consultation provided by the VERA Institute for Justice through the Office of Children and Family Services. As a result, a system for processing Persons in Need of Supervision (PINS) complaints, is being revised to include a new "Immediate Intervention Service" and system for handling truancy complaints with the goal of diverting PINS cases from court involvement while providing families with assistance within two to twenty-four hours of initiating a request.

» The Homefinding Unit expanded recruitment efforts in order to increase the availability of foster and adoptive homes. These efforts included discussions with adjacent counties and a marketing agency. Additionally, the curriculum for the Model Approach to Partnership in Parenting (MAPP) was redesigned in order to reduce the number of training sessions and decrease the length of time a foster or adoptive applicant must wait to attend training.

» Construction of a comprehensive in-service training plan by the Adoption Unit emphasized early identification of a permanency plan and resources for foster children that will reduce the length of time a child must stay in foster care and provide greater physical and emotional security.

» A partnership was established for implementation of a Family Treatment Court aimed at providing permanency for children in a safe, drug-free home, and whenever possible to reunite families. Casework and rehabilitation services are coordinated by Family Court, Social Services, and Treatment Alternatives for a Safe Community (TASC).

» Children's Intake, Preventive, and Foster Care Services staff worked collaboratively to establish a protocol for addressing issues of Personal Safety that do not rise to the level of a reportable incident. Child Welfare Staff developed a Personal Safety Checklist for use during initial and ongoing contacts with children and families to ensure thoroughness of assessments of a caregiver's ability to ensure adequate physical health and emotional well being of children in their care. The protocol checklist also helped to establish a set criterion for uniform case recording of assessments and related findings.

» Adult Protective Services staff began serving on a team of local consultants to the State Office of Children and Family Services (OCFS) information and technology staff to assist with development of a statewide automated adult services program called the Adult Services Automation Project (ASAP). This project intends to develop a centralized, computerized intake process for Adult Protective referrals.



## ECONOMIC INDEPENDENCE DIVISION - 2002 HIGHLIGHTS

### **ECONOMIC INDEPENDENCE UNITS**

*Medicaid provides medical assistance for those families and individuals who are uninsured or under-insured. Eligibility criteria includes income and/or resource level limits.*

*Food Stamp benefits supplement low income households in order to reduce hunger and malnutrition.*

*Temporary Assistance provides cash assistance to Orange County residents lacking income and resources to maintain a minimal standard of living. Temporary Assistance is provided through the Family Assistance Program and the Safety Net Assistance Program.*

*(HEAP) Home Energy Assistance Program assists households with meeting the costs of home fuel and heating needs.*

*The Program Integrity Unit administers the Fair Hearing process, a forum for applicants and recipients of Social Service benefit programs to appeal Agency decisions that are based on New York State Codes, Rules and Regulations. Additionally, Administrative Reviews are conducted for cases where clients have disagreed with eligibility decisions.*

*Employment activities for employable recipients are contracted with the O.C. Employment and Training Administration (ETA). ETA provides employment orientations, training, job opportunities and post employment services. Child Care Services, administered by the Human Services Division, are coordinated with Employment activities.*

*(THA) Temporary Housing Assistance for eligible homeless applicants and recipients is provided.*

The Economic Independence Division staff responded to Orange County households seeking financial assistance during 2002, determining eligibility for 7,764 Temporary Assistance applicants, 4,295 Food Stamp applicants and 12,194 Medicaid applicants. Activities responding to financial needs also included implementation and compliance with legislation and procedural modifications for effective responses to applicants, as highlighted below.

- » The inception of Welfare Reform in 1996 resulted in a primary goal for local districts to meet Federal and State work participation rates for employable applicants and recipients of Temporary Assistance. The Department's activities for employable recipients are coordinated with the Orange County Employment and Training Administration. The participation rate was successfully met in 2002, with over 90% of employable recipients of Temporary Assistance through the Safety Net Program participating monthly in approved work activities. Nearly, 1,100 recipients were placed in jobs during the year and 764 households received child care assistance.
- » During 2002 continued focus was given to cases nearing 60-month time limits for federal temporary assistance benefits. Many cases faced significant employment barriers and programs were continued to address these barriers. These programs were funded by both the New York State Department of Labor and the Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance. During the year approximately 3,000 clients were screened for drug/alcohol problems. Over 1,000 were assessed with a problem that required intervention, a 25% increase over 2001 figures. Approximately 250 cases received intensive case management services under a variety of community based programs, including a substance abuse program that works with Family Court for the reunification of families who have substance abuse problems. This program serviced 40 families and was helpful in obtaining 20 job placements. Nearly 400 persons accessed an after-hours hot line that assists persons in need of services in areas such as, childcare, transportation, etc.
- » A federal grant for transportation permitted continued transportation services for over 300 recipients per month to jobs in Orange County. This initiative included driver training and enabled 12 Temporary Assistance recipients to obtain vehicles in 2002. A proposal to the Department of Labor has requested an additional 130 cars, drivers education, and defensive driving classes for 2003.
- » A countywide initiative continued to work with the homeless population. Case Management services for families and individuals temporarily housed at hotels/motels helped to reduce the length of time of homelessness by assisting recipients to find suitable housing. Regularly scheduled meetings of OCSSS staff and participants from community agencies permitted case conferencing that coordinates utilization of all available resources to assist homeless persons and facilitates a comprehensive approach to addressing multiple issues affecting successful transition of homeless persons to self-sufficiency.
- » Recipients of Medicaid continued to rise during 2002, as well as the Family Health Plus (FHP) Program that provides health insurance coverage to adults aged 19 through 64 who do not have health insurance through their employers and have income exceeding Medicaid eligibility. Two additional medical assistance programs became effective during the year, the Family Planning Benefit and the Breast and Cervical Cancer Treatment Program. The Family Planning Benefit allows individuals under 200% of the federal poverty level who are not eligible for Medicaid or Family Health Plus, to receive Family Planning Services only. The Breast and Cervical Cancer Treatment Program provides full Medicaid coverage to individuals with incomes at or below 250% of the federal poverty level if screened by the Healthy Women Partnerships and found to be in need of treatment for breast or cervical cancer or a pre-cancerous condition.



## ADMINISTRATIVE SERVICES DIVISION 2002 HIGHLIGHTS

### ADMINISTRATIVE UNITS

**Administrative Support Services** performs various functions that support the day to day operation of DSS offices, including mail processing, microfiche imaging, duplication services, and physical plant operations.

**Child Support** staff assist citizens of Orange County in the establishment of paternity and child support orders, promoting self sufficiency of families and insuring children's rights to know both parents.

**Managed Care** offers an alternative to Medicaid and is designed to improve access to quality medical services in a more cost effective manner.

**Medical Transportation** receives, evaluates and processes telephone and fax requests for medical transportation to cover medically necessary appointments and services.

The **Special Investigation Unit** investigates suspected cases of fraud and abuse by recipients and vendors for various Department programs.

**Staff Development** is responsible for training and developing programs for all employees to ensure that staff have the knowledge and skills necessary to perform their jobs.

**Information Technology** is responsible for System Solutions Issues, Production, Data Collection/Distribution and Equipment Maintenance. The Division coordinates digital systems between the NYS Office for Technology and County Information Services, Personal computers utilized by the agency and related issues.

The Administrative Division met many objectives during 2002, including administrative and fiscal activities related to meeting day to day operations, training staff, maintaining contractual agreements, responding to human resource needs, providing medical transportation services, investigating consumer fraud allegations, establishing and collecting child support, and administering technological growth of the Department. Achievements included those highlighted below.

- » The Child Support Establishment Unit was recognized in 2002 as ranking fourth in the State for federal performance measure improvement, a very positive reflection of Orange County's activities leading to establishment of child support orders.
- » Information Technology advanced the Department's abilities with electronic communication; efficiency between Personal Computer users; implementation of the Kindertrac system for Child Care case tracking; creation of tracking databases for HEAP and Agency inquiries and; successful introduction of pilot programs for software applications.
- » Staff Development was involved in many activities other than providing training. Tuition reimbursement, participation in the LearnLinc pilot, Family Development Credentialing, Employee Development Plan, MAPP (Model Approach to Partnership in Parenting) classes for foster parents, and more were conducted throughout the year.



## GOALS FOR 2003

All Divisions of the Department participate in developing an annual Management Plan. As the Department looks ahead, goals and objectives are determined and appropriate-projects and monitoring commence. Goals during 2003 include those summarized below.

As one of the State's five pilot counties, the Human Services Network will be implemented. This pilot project provides installation of nearly 240 computers in DSS offices permitting almost all DSS staff to have a Personal Computer on their desk. The new equipment will link staff to State computer systems, provide improved communications and the ability to develop more effective, efficient methods to deliver services.

OCSS will engage in other State pilot programs anticipated to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of service delivery. Adult Protective Services will be involved with a statewide program called the Adult Services Automation Project (ASAP) that will provide a centralized, computerized intake process for Adult Protective referrals. Additionally, the Electronic Eligibility Decision Support Systems (EEDSS) will be implemented to streamline the Medicaid eligibility process.

Provision of non-emergency medical transportation will be competitively bid in 2003 as a result of State and Federal Waivers approved for Orange County DSS. The waiver applications were sought as methods of providing fiscal savings and administrative efficiencies for Orange County's medical transportation services. Annual savings of \$450,000 in Medicaid costs and improvement of coordinated transportation services are anticipated.

OCSS will continue to seek effective methods to address homelessness in the County. Case management roles will remain adaptable in order to provide effectiveness with assisting families and individuals acquire and maintain permanent housing. Active participation with the O.C. Housing Consortium will be maintained in order to further efforts promoting safe and affordable housing opportunities for the County's residents, including housing programs that will meet the needs of the County's living wage earners. Additionally, decentralization of emergency shelter services will continue to be supported in order to adequately provide temporary housing and services for County residents.