



# ANNUAL REPORT 2021

Chenango County Department of Social Services

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## *A Message from the Commissioner*

Greetings,

It is my privilege to present to you our 2021 *Annual Report* and a summary of the programs our department provides to the residents of Chenango County. While this document is in no way an exhaustive review of the services, outputs, and undertakings of the previous year, I hope that it provides you with some sense of the broad range of supports that we make available to our county's families.

2021 brought with it a continuance of the many trials the COVID-19 pandemic presented us with in 2020, which we all undoubtedly wished was not going to be the case when we kicked the year off. Nevertheless, the staff met those challenges with the same commitment and resolve they showed at the onset of the crisis. The need for social supports, emergency interventions, and protective responses for our communities continued to be amplified by the strains of the pandemic, and it would be dismissive to say that they didn't take their toll on our staff as well. Throughout another long year in a masked, distanced, and dubious world filled with troubling events on so many levels, the staff endeavored to bring services to the public despite very trying circumstances. In addition to their own work, several of our staff also assisted the Public Health Department with vaccine clinics and related tasks to support them during this very difficult time. I am extremely proud of the unity and strength the staff exhibited for both the clients and for each other throughout the year. Additionally, we had 23 new employees come onboard since the 2020 report and are extremely happy to have such a variety of experience and talents joining our ranks; you can read about these folks in the "New Faces" section further on in these pages.

2021 was also a year of vision and revision. Programs like the NYS Emergency Rental Assistance program and *Fostering Futures* project took shape, the Safe Harbor anti-trafficking project advanced under the Department's oversight, and many supportive programs saw their capacity expanded. Planning meetings for a collaborative Leadership Project through SUNY Morrisville were initiated with the goal of a pilot program in 2022, and several key positions were created or reinstated to enhance supervisor-to-staff ratios for our workforce.

Technology was a focus in 2021 as well; new software programs and mobile equipment continue to be integrated into our services division to enhance our ability to bring comprehensive supports to a complicated world. We continue to shape our programs and our teams to meet the needs of the community and to find new approaches to address complex social issues.

The challenges we have faced as a county, a country, and a society these past two years show that actions, not rhetoric or catchphrases, are what best define us. Thich Nhat Hanh, the celebrated Buddhist activist who passed away in January after a life devoted to peace and mindfulness, observed "*My actions are my only true belongings.*" The guiding principle of our services is the belief that transformative change should, and can, occur at every level of society towards peace and understanding for all. That's why our staff chooses this work. Our actions, through service, speak to our beliefs and we strive to demonstrate them through the many programs detailed in the following pages.

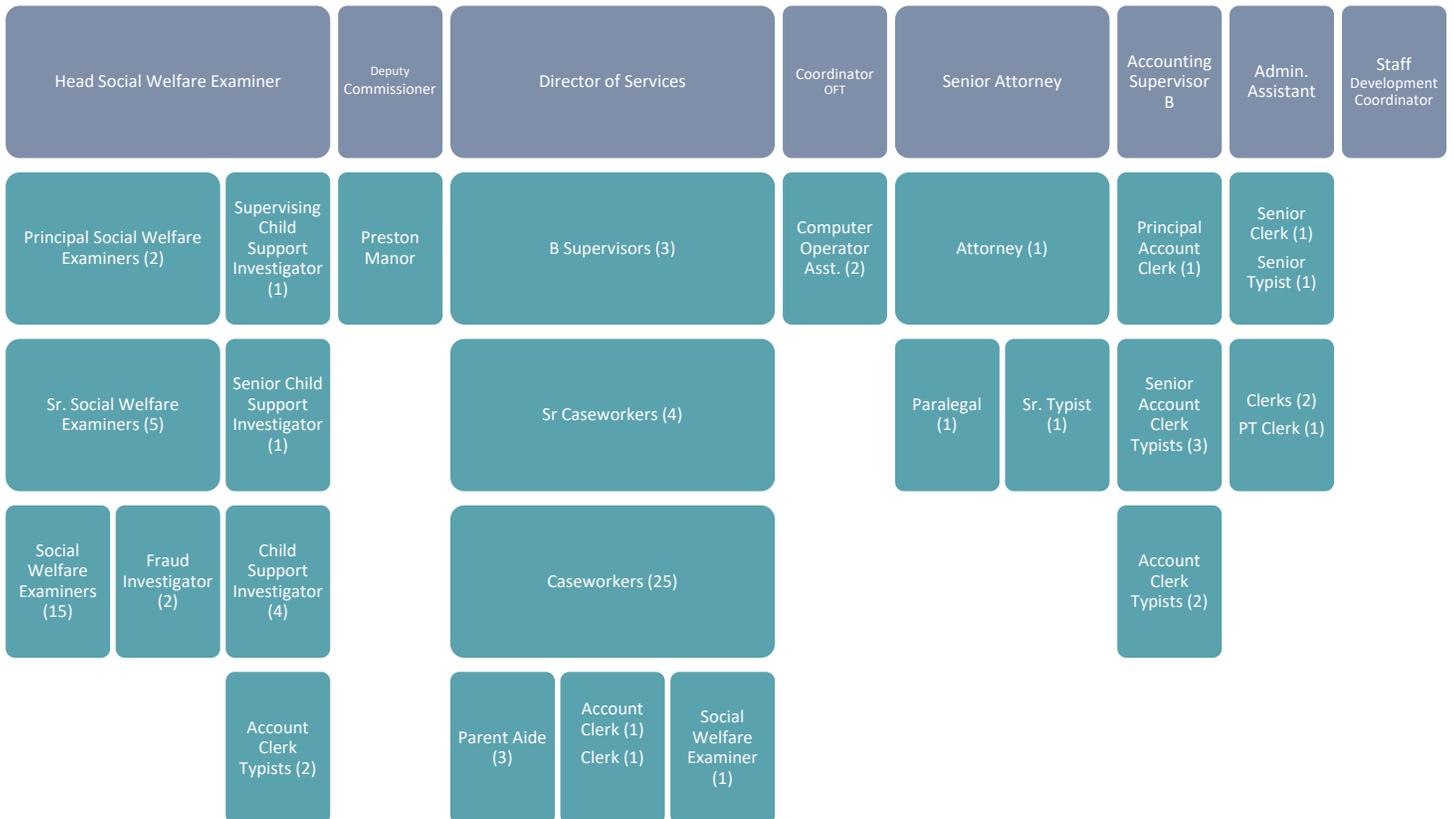
I hope you find this report informative and welcome any questions you may have about our organization.

*-Daniel Auwarter, Commissioner*

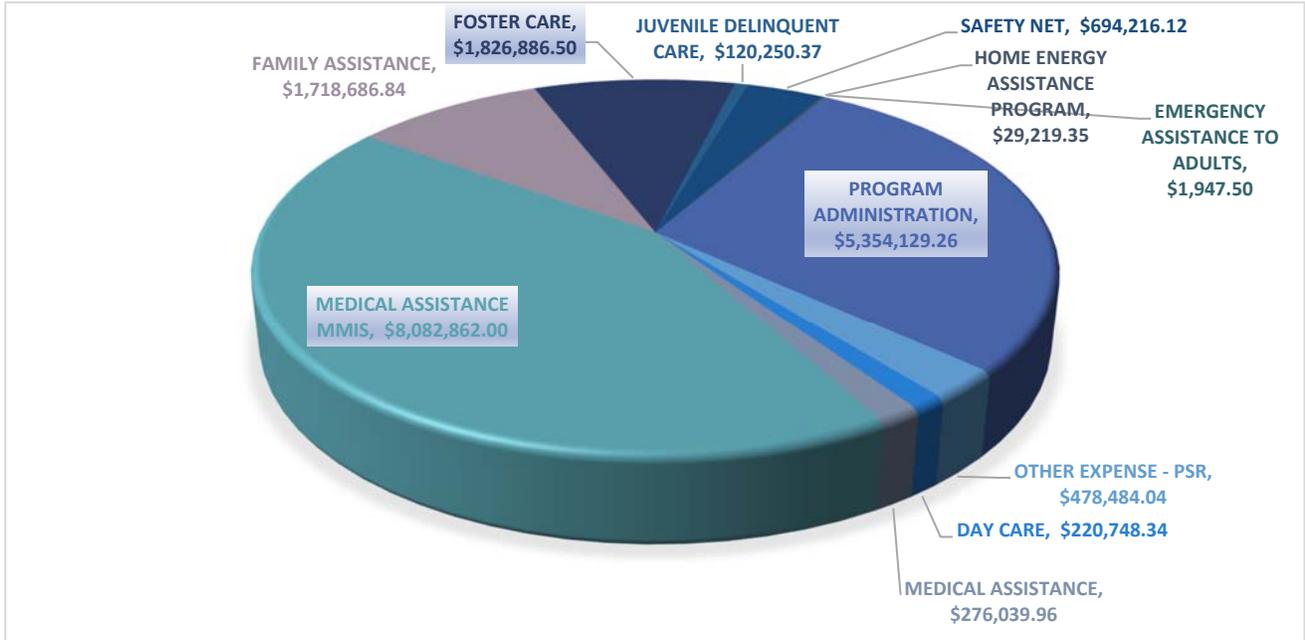
# Social Services Organizational Chart

Board of Supervisors

Commissioner of Social Services



## 2021 Expenditures by Program Summary



## Administrative Team

The Department of Social Services Administrative team is comprised of key staff that oversees each functional area of the agency as well as convenes to provide oversight and direction for the department’s daily operations.

New York State has one of the largest public welfare systems in the nation, which is divided into 58 local social services districts, the five boroughs of NYC which are served by one Human Resource Administration, and the St. Regis Mohawk Tribe<sup>1</sup>. In total there are 62 local social service commissioners (Albany, Onondaga, and NYC have two commissioners each). The duties of the Commissioner are detailed in SSL § 65 which states there “*shall be a county commissioner of public welfare in each county public welfare district...[who] shall be responsible for the administration of all the assistance and care for which the county is responsible*”<sup>2</sup>.



<sup>1</sup> NYPWA Commissioners’ Reference Guide Dec. 2017 p.2

<sup>2</sup> McKinney’s Consolidated Laws of New York, 2003

## Department Staff by Unit

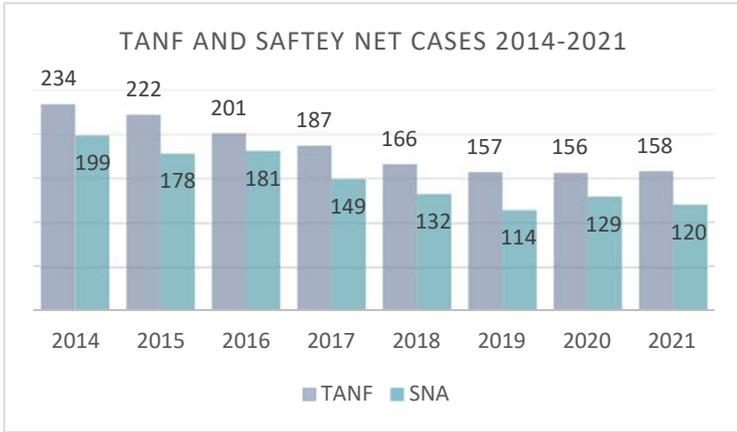
<p><b><u>ADMINISTRATION</u></b></p> <p>Daniel Auwarter Janice Burt-Ashton Elizabeth Beers Patty Hodge Gregory Peirez Pam Stein Evelyn Kirkland Lois LoPresti John Kolb</p>	<p><b><u>ACCOUNTING</u></b></p> <p>Evelyn Kirkland Penni Mills Wendy Petry-Jones Kayla Simpson-Linger</p>	<p><b><u>ADULT SERVICES/LTC</u></b></p> <p>Misty Davis Deb Munyan Bill Moakler Martina Davis</p>
<p><b><u>CHILD PROTECTIVE</u></b></p> <p>Teresa Foster-Jones Diane Beckwith Brandi Guinn Jessica Grow Zina Corey Aaron Weeks Donita Ireland Anne Mayher Laurent Paul Karen Mack Aimee Carman Alex Madden Jeanine Joe Katelyn Pierson Emily Straight Alicia Kuhn Ronald Martorelli Russell Carr Diane Dulina Nicole Johnson</p>	<p><b><u>CHILD SUPPORT</u></b></p> <p>Natasha Selan Jeff Cox Lynne Angle Kori Thornton Debra Fuller-Shimer Lacey Hathaway Robin Farley Jean Wolfe</p>	<p><b><u>FOSTER CARE</u></b></p> <p>Susanne Bloes Brandie Hazzard Katarzyna Ozimek Christi Fregans Lace-Ann Porter Maranda Owens Brian O'Connell Laurie Hennessey Alexa Bates</p>
<p><b><u>FRONT DESK/CLERICAL</u></b></p> <p>Jacqueline Ryan Jennifer Randall Claudia Schulze Jessica Matthews Susan Mirabito</p>	<p><b><u>LEGAL</u></b></p> <p>Gregory Peirez Jennifer Mason Jody Eckert Janice Smith</p>	<p><b><u>MA/HEAP/FRAUD</u></b></p> <p>Lynn Kline Trisha Berg Brandi Armstrong Nicole Watts Lisa Wilchynski Derik Williams Fran Loiselle</p>
<p><b><u>OFT</u></b></p> <p>John Kolb Arden Hamstra Ranjit Singh</p>	<p><b><u>TA/SNAP/EMPLOYMENT/DAYCARE/EMERGENCY SERVICES</u></b></p> <p>Susan Seneck, Stacey Coraci, Joanne Evans, Michelle Graczyk, LeVon Garofalo, Olivia Doyle, Renee Collins, Amalia Miller, Diane O'Donnell Joanne Woodard, Holly Finch, Keegan Winans</p>	

# Income Maintenance Programs

## Overview of Income Maintenance

The *Income Maintenance Division* operates several economic support programs for immediate financial needs, while also assisting clients in gaining economic self-sufficiency to reduce ongoing reliance on public assistance funding.

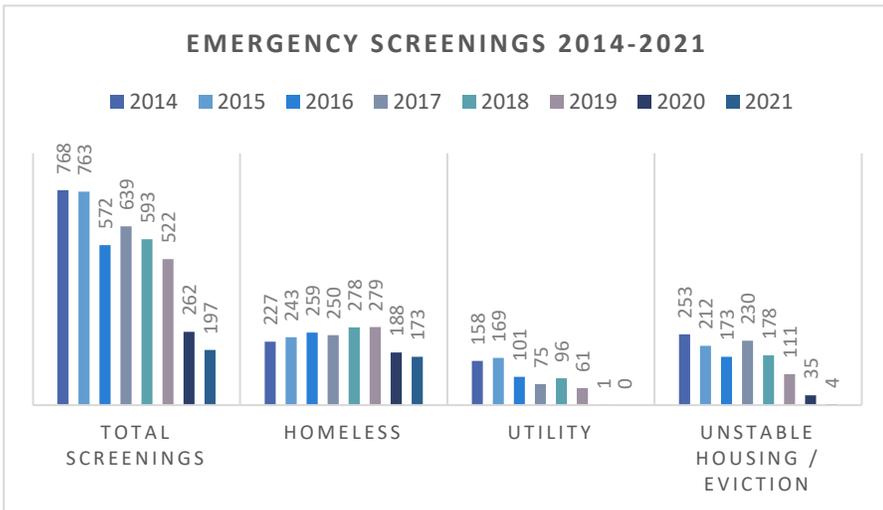
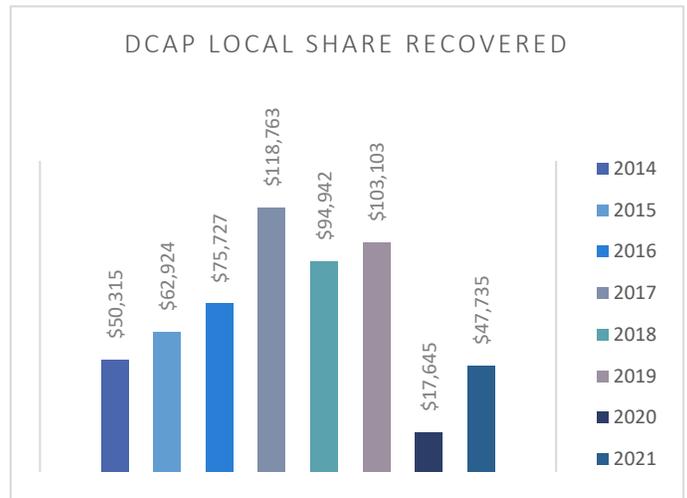
- **Temporary Assistance**, consisting of federal Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), and state / locally funded Safety Net (SN) assistance for single adults or childless couples.
- **Employment Services** meet federal and state mandates to help recipients find pathways to self-sufficiency through performing employment assessments, assigning and referring recipients to work activities, monitoring compliance and participation, and imposing sanctions for non-compliance.
- **DCAP**, the Disabled Client Assistance Program which helps both TANF and Safety Net applicants/recipients apply for Supplemental Security Income (SSI) or Social Security Disability (SSD).
- **Emergency Services**, non-recurring forms of assistance and crisis prevention / intervention to address homelessness, housing services, fuel or utility shutoffs, and other emergency needs.
- **SNAP**, the federally funded Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, which provides monthly benefits used for approved food purchases.
- **HEAP**, or Home Energy Assistance Program, a federally funded benefit that assists low-income New Yorkers with the cost of heating and cooling their homes.
- **Daycare Assistance**, federal funding which helps income eligible parents remain employed or seek employment.
- **Medicaid**, a health insurance program for income-eligible New Yorkers which is funded by a mix of federal, state, and local dollars.
- **Indigent Burials** for deceased individuals who leave insufficient funds for interment or cremation and have no legally responsible person who has sufficient funds to pay.
- **Child Support Services**, which assists individuals with establishment, enforcement, and collection of child support payments, determining the location of non-custodial parents, and paternity testing.
- **Fraud Prevention / Investigation** to prevent ineligible applicants from receiving program benefits and investigate allegations of fraud for active assistance cases.



### Temporary Assistance, Employment, DCAP, & Emergency Services:

TANF cases, which are federally funded, have dropped over 33% overall since 2014 and Safety Net cases have decreased 40%<sup>3</sup>. At the end of 2021, 413 individuals in Chenango were actively receiving one of these forms of temporary assistance.

Employment staff are responsible for coordinating work activities with recipients and developing individualized goal plans. Recipients may face multiple barriers to success, such as unfinished education, medical issues, child-care needs, and housing. Employment workers help find ways to address these barriers to move the client toward self-sufficiency. Non-exempt clients are responsible for certain requirements to maintain eligibility. Some clients are referred to our Disabled Client Assistance Program, a collaboration with Legal Aid Society of Mid-New York. Since 2000, 624 Individuals have been awarded SSI/SSD benefits with support from DCAP, and almost \$2 million in Safety Net costs have been repaid to the county<sup>4</sup>. The benefits of this program are two-fold; reducing local taxpayer costs for public assistance programs while helping eligible clients obtain ongoing financial security through the US Social Security Administration.



Blue regulations passed in 2016 expanded homeless services during cold weather months. In 2021, additional program funding was distributed to Chenango County homes through PEBT Benefits to school aged children (\$912,856) and RAS Utility Arrears paid out (\$547,561).

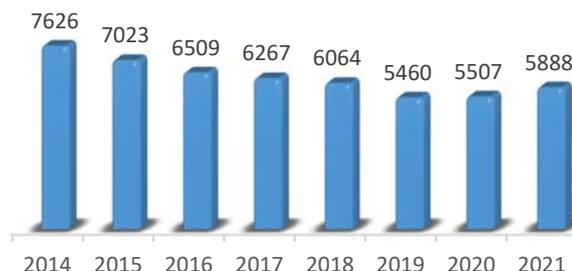
<sup>3</sup> NYS Welfare Management System Reports 2014-2021 (as of Dec. 31 Case Count)

<sup>4</sup> SSA Government to Government Services Online

## SNAP & HEAP:

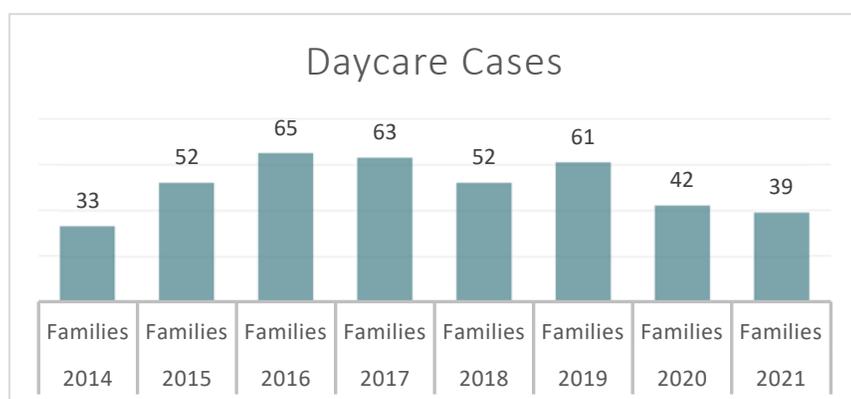
In 2021, total SNAP recipients at year's end increased 7% from the previous year<sup>5</sup>. As with other programs, eligibility and certification periods were repeatedly extended due to the pandemic. While the SNAP benefits themselves are 100% federal dollars, the local administrative costs of the program are reimbursed at 50%.

SNAP Individual Recipients



Each fall the HEAP program opens statewide. In Chenango, \$2.7 million in HEAP benefits were distributed to eligible households. The Area Agency on Aging helps process regular HEAP benefits for applicants over 60 who are not receiving temporary assistance and/or SNAP benefits.

Daycare Cases



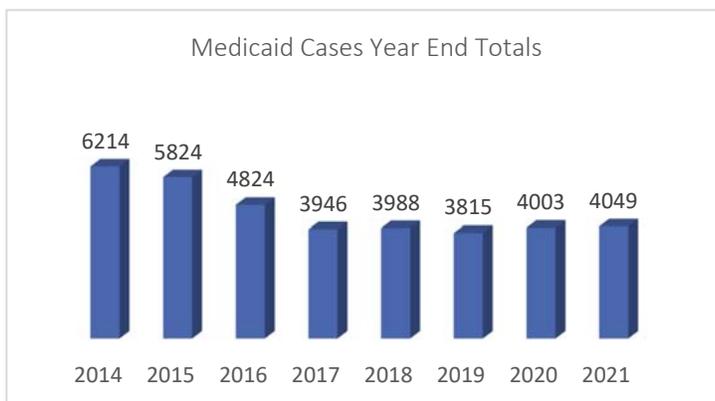
## Daycare Assistance:

Childcare funds assist low- and moderate-income families with the cost of childcare. Family Enrichment Network supports Chenango as our Child Care Resource and Referral Agency (CCRR)<sup>6</sup> and collaborates with our department on childcare strategies and provider certification.

## Medicaid:

Medicaid eligible services are broken down into federal, state, and local shares. County costs are capped annually, and costs exceeding that ceiling are state expenses. Local Medicaid cases have declined<sup>7</sup> as the State assumes responsibility for new and recertifying ones. Only certain types of cases continue to be the responsibility for local DSS offices to manage.

Medicaid Cases Year End Totals

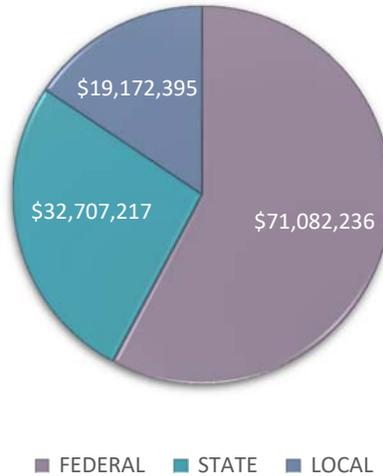


<sup>5</sup> NYS Welfare Management System Reports 2014-2021 (Active Dec. Case Count)

<sup>6</sup> <https://ocfs.ny.gov/programs/childcare/referral-agencies.php>

<sup>7</sup> NYS Welfare Management System Reports 2014-2021 (Active Dec. Case Count)

2021 Chenango Medicaid Costs Breakdown\*

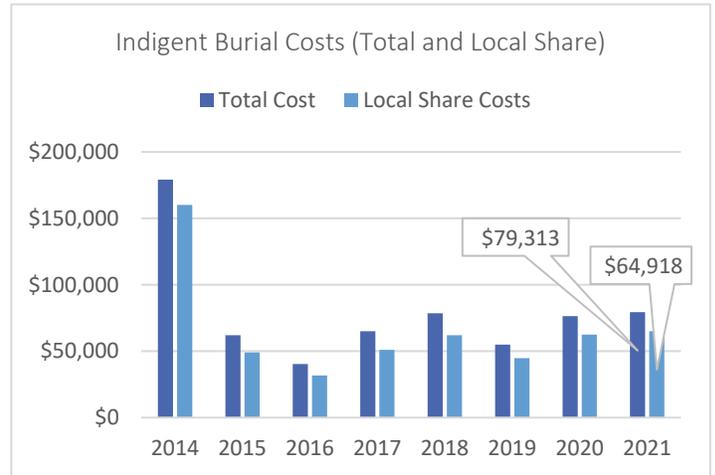
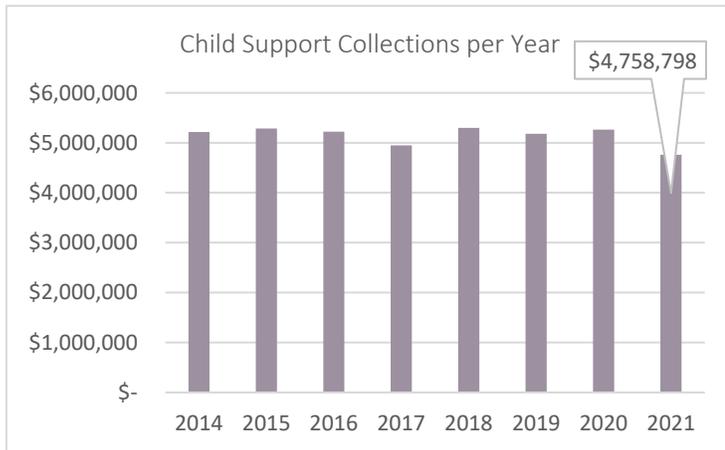


CATEGORY	2021	FEDERAL	STATE	LOCAL	2020 LOCAL	% Change
	TOTAL MA \$	LOCAL				
HOSPITAL INPATIENT	\$ 3,814,423	\$ 2,226,987	\$ 1,076,769	\$ 510,667	\$ 596,204	14%
HOSPITAL OUTPATIENT	\$ 1,774,031	\$ 989,502	\$ 415,055	\$ 369,473	\$ 372,063	1%
SNF	\$ 15,869,078	\$ 7,997,933	\$ 6,876,180	\$ 994,965	\$ 638,234	-56%
ICF-DD	\$ 192,547	\$ 96,274	\$ 48,136	\$ 48,136	\$ 42,266	-14%
CLINIC-FREE STANDING	\$ 684,360	\$ 372,646	\$ 167,434	\$ 144,282	\$ 108,272	-33%
HOSPICE	\$ 1,895	\$ 948	\$ 513	\$ 434	\$ -	0
PHYSICIANS	\$ 411,223	\$ 229,319	\$ 96,001	\$ 85,903	\$ 81,099	-6%
DENTAL	\$ 73,983	\$ 39,210	\$ 18,321	\$ 16,452	\$ 22,059	25%
OTHER PRACTITIONERS	\$ 407,610	\$ 206,853	\$ 101,104	\$ 99,653	\$ 81,530	-22%
CHILD CARE MEDICAL INSTITUTION PER DIEM	\$ 215,056	\$ 107,528	\$ 53,764	\$ 53,764	\$ 61,916	13%
PERSONAL CARE-TOTAL	\$ 1,582,547	\$ 792,217	\$ 642,064	\$ 148,266	\$ 180,123	18%
HOME HEALTH SERVICES-GRAND TOTAL	\$ 95,995	\$ 50,055	\$ 38,867	\$ 7,074	\$ 4,347	-63%
ASSISTED LIVING PROGRAM	\$ 181,016	\$ 90,509	\$ 73,529	\$ 16,979	\$ 10,690	-59%
WAIVED SERVICES-TOTAL	\$ 15,956,858	\$ 8,004,825	\$ 5,287,609	\$ 2,664,423	\$ 2,582,832	-3%
REHAB AND THERAPY	\$ 5,919	\$ 3,086	\$ 1,448	\$ 1,385	\$ 1,890	27%
REHAB OPTIONS SRVCS TOTAL	\$ 2,023,778	\$ 1,052,131	\$ 770,959	\$ 200,688	\$ 163,635	-23%
DRUGS AND SUPPLIES	\$ 1,752,352	\$ 920,292	\$ 430,178	\$ 401,882	\$ 400,738	0%
EYE APPLIANCES AND DME	\$ 128,765	\$ 64,971	\$ 32,649	\$ 31,146	\$ 29,311	-6%
PREPAID CARE	\$ 73,349,304	\$ 45,321,419	\$ 15,554,872	\$ 12,473,011	\$ 12,185,170	-2%
CASE MANAGEMENT PLANS	\$ 1,962,057	\$ 1,001,561	\$ 501,770	\$ 458,726	\$ 391,864	-17%
TRANSPORTATION	\$ 2,197,637	\$ 1,364,483	\$ 429,298	\$ 403,857	\$ 296,609	-36%
LAB AND X-RAY	\$ 133,305	\$ 75,279	\$ 30,805	\$ 27,220	\$ 20,822	-31%
OTHER - TOTAL	\$ 148,108	\$ 74,208	\$ 59,892	\$ 14,009	\$ 428	-3173%

\*Total Local Share Cost reflected No Local Share Cap - Source: NYS DOH MARS reports 2021

## Indigent Burials:

NYS SSL § 141 details circumstances when the expense of a burial shall be a charge on a public welfare district, known as an “indigent burial”. In 2021, a total of 57 services were paid through county funds, the cost being 82% local share (\$64,918).



## Child Support Services:

The CSU assists with establishing support cases and processing of child support payments annually. In 2021 a total of \$4,758,798<sup>8</sup> in support payments were processed, slightly down from the previous year.

## Fraud Investigations:

The processes known as FEDS (Front End Detection System) and EVR (Eligibility Verification Review) are audits based on specific indicators. Denied or closed cases are used to estimate local savings, termed “cost avoidance”. Some applications may contain errors or omissions that are not intentional attempts to obtain benefits inappropriately. Some applications, however, contain intentional omissions or inaccuracies which are flagged for inspection. Fraud investigations are undertaken when intentional abuse is suspected; some cases are criminally prosecuted while others are disqualified from future assistance eligibility. The total cost avoidance for 2021 was \$694,476<sup>9</sup> through the following methods:

Method	Description	2021 Total Cost Avoidance (all categories)
<b>Front End Detection System (FEDS)</b>	Detecting fraud/ineligibility at application	\$597,816
<b>Eligibility Verification Review (EVR)</b>	Detecting fraud/ineligibility at recertification	\$96,660

<sup>8</sup> ASSETTS reporting system monthly statistics 2014-2021

<sup>9</sup> OTDA Cost Avoidance for Program Integrity Initiatives report 2021

# Services Programs

## Overview of Services Programs

The *Services Division* is comprised of several programs addressing safety and well-being for children and adults. These programs, largely carried out by caseworkers and support staff, aim to ensure that vulnerable individuals are protected. A variety of supports comprise the work carried out by the services programs, including preventive measures and legal interventions when necessary. Many of these programs have histories in New York reaching back to the late 1800's<sup>10</sup>. Social service agencies were largely created to provide for the care of children, with roots going back as far as the founding of America itself<sup>11</sup>. Many important state and federal legislative acts have broadened the scope of services units, making modern day programs complex and demanding.

Our services unit is comprised of:

- **Child Protective Services:** involving the investigation of reports alleging abuse or maltreatment of a child under the age of 18; when the acts of maltreatment or abuse are committed by a Person Legally Responsible for the care of the child(ren)
- **Foster Care/ Adoptions:** arranging for and supervising the out of home placement of children due to a voluntary surrender of care by a parent, or because of a child protective case. Placements can be temporary while safety concerns are addressed or can result in the adoption of a child.
- **Adult/Long Term Care Services:** services for individuals 18 and older who are unable to protect their own interests and may face harm through action or inaction of another person, their own actions, or incapacity to provide for basic needs and security.
- **PINS Services:** "Person In Need of Supervision" is a family court adjudication regarding a youth under the age of 18 who does not attend school, or behaves in a way that is dangerous or out of control, or often disobeys his or her parents, guardians or other authorities. A PINS petition may be filed in Family Court by a parent or other person legally responsible for the care of the child, by a peace officer or police officer, by a person who has been injured by a child, or by a school or other authorized agency. The PINS petition contains a description of the child's behavior and asks the court to find that the child needs supervision.<sup>12</sup>

## Child Protective Unit (CPS)

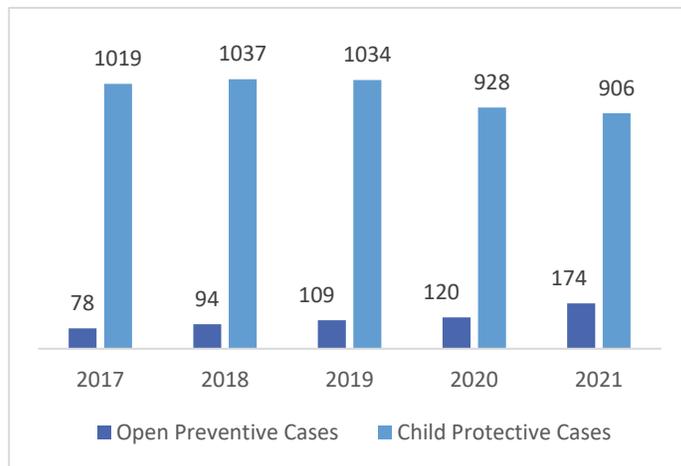
The overarching goal of CPS, outlined in Social Service Law and further directed in state regulations, is to investigate reports of child abuse and maltreatment, and to provide a range of services to address family issues and prevent further instances. These can lead to a variety of interventions ranging from preventive case management to foster care placement, and even criminal prosecution. CPS workers investigate child

<sup>10</sup> NYPWA Commissioner's Reference Guide Dec. 2017 p.36

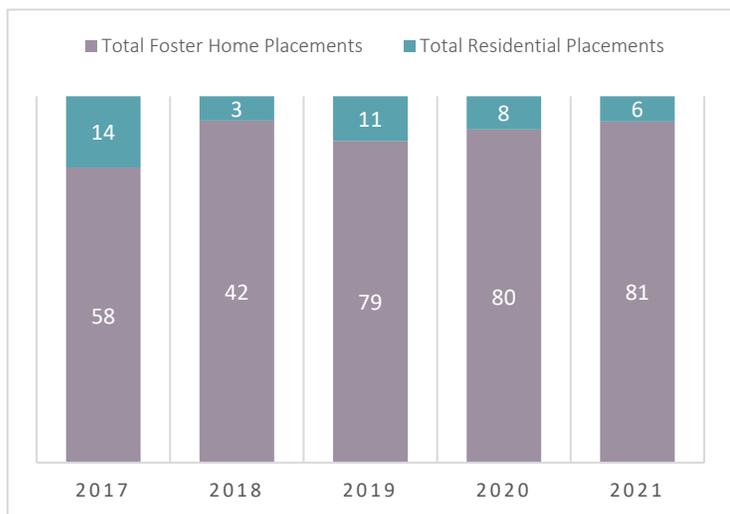
<sup>11</sup> ibid

<sup>12</sup> [http://ww2.nycourts.gov/COURTS/nyc/family/faqs\\_pins.shtml](http://ww2.nycourts.gov/COURTS/nyc/family/faqs_pins.shtml)

protective reports received by the State Central Child Abuse and Maltreatment Registry. The investigation includes interviewing the source of the allegation, collateral contacts, and all children and adults listed on the report. Home visits are conducted throughout the investigation. Police agencies are also involved in the process if the allegation includes suspected criminal conduct. Cases involving sexual or physical abuse are investigated through a Multi-Disciplinary Team and those interviews often take place at the local Child Advocacy Center.



CPS Caseworkers have specific time frames when a report is received to determine if the case should be *indicated*, meaning sufficient evidence exists to substantiate the concerns in the report. In addition, indicated reports opened for other county DSS agencies must be monitored by the Child Protective Unit to periodically assess the safety of the children.



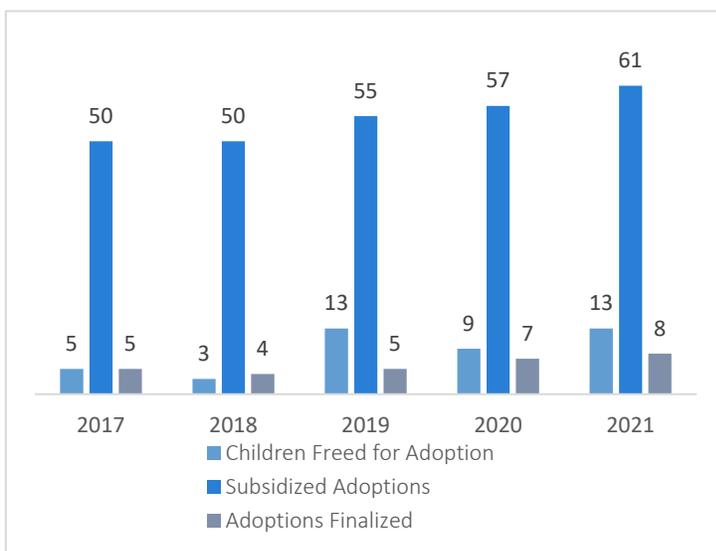
All possible efforts are made to keep children safely in their own homes through both voluntary and court ordered Preventive Services. When this is not possible, it may be necessary to file a petition in Family Court and place the child in protective custody.

On average, our CPS unit receives over 1000 child abuse/neglect reports annually. Total reports for 2021 were lower, a trend that has continued for the past four years. When removing a child is unavoidable, kinship placements are a priority, as established through Family First legislation<sup>13</sup> now

fully enacted in New York State. Residential placements have been reduced, however foster care totals remain significantly high and are a focus of several collaborative projects to increase successful returns to home for removed children.

### Foster Care/Adoption:

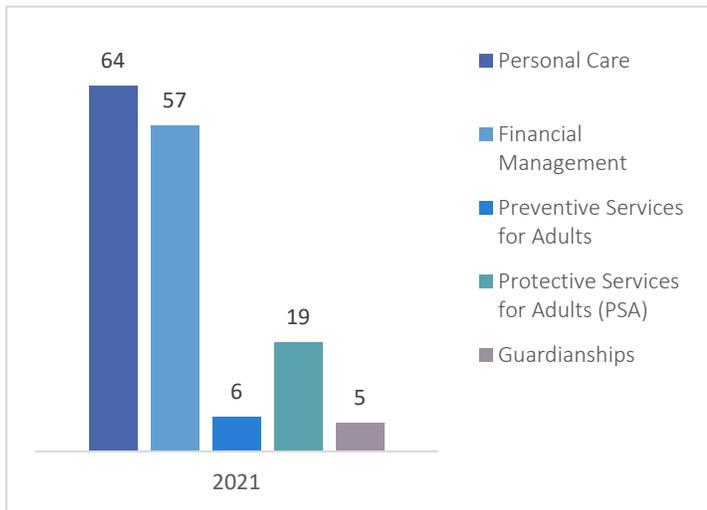
The goal of foster care is to reunite a child with his or her family whenever possible. In situations where this cannot be pursued for the health and safety of the child, the goal is permanency with an adoptive family or a kinship placement.



<sup>13</sup> <https://www.childwelfare.gov/topics/systemwide/laws-policies/federal/family-first/>

Caseworkers meet with the foster child, biological parents, foster parents, school staff and other agencies to develop a permanency plan for the child. The Foster Care unit arranges for all placements of children, whether they are being placed in foster homes, residential placements, Office of Children and Family Services programs, or detention.

Social Services provides adoption services in accordance with NYS regulations. This division recruits adoptive and foster care families, and adoptive/foster care classes are held twice per year. The foster care homes in the district are recertified annually and all foster families are required to attend training yearly.



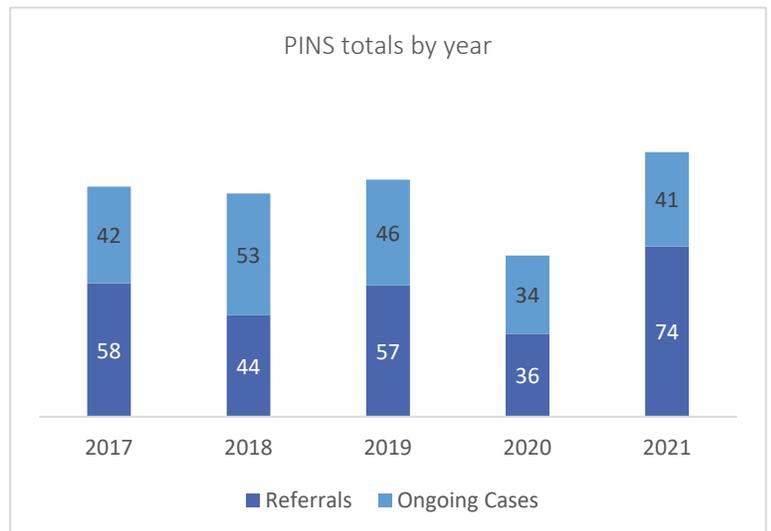
### Adult/Long Term Care

Protective Services for Adults are legally mandated and require investigation into allegations of abuse, neglect, or exploitation of adults. The Department of Social Services is also responsible for adult guardianships. The Commissioner is appointed guardian by the courts and the Adult Services Unit coordinates assistance for these adults, which include financial, medical, and personal needs. From November through April utility companies are mandated to refer customers who may be elderly, frail or dependent on medical equipment to

the Protective Services unit for investigation prior to a utility shut off. The Chenango County Area Agency on Aging, the Chenango County Department of Social Services, and Chenango County Public Health Nursing collaborate on homecare options available to Chenango County residents through the NY Connects program. Adult Services staff are responsible for certifying and re-certifying Family Type Homes for Adults within the county, ensuring that these facilities adhere to all NYS regulations. The Adult and Long-Term Care Unit also oversees the Care at Home waiver program, assessment, and case management of persons in need of social admission and for homeless persons when necessary.

### PINS:

PINS (Person in Need of Supervision) referrals are made by schools, community members, and parents due to unruly youth behavior and/or issues of truancy. DSS is the lead agency for PINS Diversion. PINS planning meetings occur on a regular basis consisting of staff from various service providers, Probation department staff, and Social Services. Diversion services are an attempt to ameliorate issues and prevent Family Court involvement and adjudication or out-of-home placements. Diversion can involve counseling, caseworker monitoring, school interventions, and mental health services.

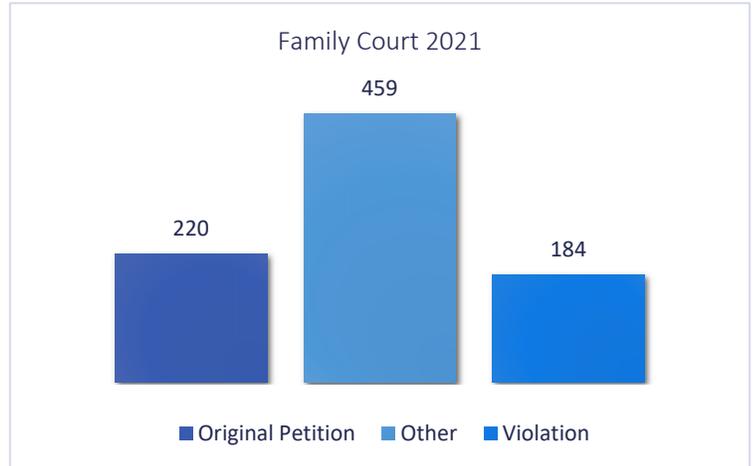


## Legal Unit

### Overview of Legal Unit

The Legal Unit is comprised of a Senior Attorney, an Attorney, a Senior Typist and a Paralegal. Together they handle the numerous petitions, hearings, and other court related matters the department is involved in. DSS attorneys represent the department in legal proceedings, which primarily include the following:

- Child Support/ Paternity proceedings, Mental Hygiene Law Art 81 Guardianship proceedings
- Fair Hearings involving persons with indicated CPS reports that seek to amend the report to unfounded.
- PINS/JD proceedings, Art 10 Child Abuse/Neglect proceedings
- Permanency Hearings, Termination of Parental Rights proceedings, and Appeals



## Office for Technology

The OFT office worked through several changes to our IT systems this year. The digital document management system we use was rebuilt, our Connections system was upgraded to a newer interface using Virtual Desktop Infrastructure and the Onenet connection used to interface with NYS was upgraded to 100 Mbps which significantly improved our productivity. DSS increased its security with the use of 14-character passwords due to new state rules, and we coordinated with Buildings and Grounds to enable secure universal door access to the County Office Building. As many staff were working from home during the pandemic, OFT assisted Behavioral Health and County IT in setting up Microsoft Surface tablets for use by their staff.

## County Home for Adults

Homes for adults<sup>14</sup> in NY are operated for the purpose of providing long-term residential care, room, board, housekeeping, personal care, and supervision to five or more adults as described in 18 NYCRR 487<sup>15</sup>. Chenango currently operates a county home, named Preston Manor, which is a separate program with its own staff and budget. However, the Department of Social Services assists with oversight, financial management and accounting. There are 48 beds at the residence. Due to its status as a public institution, residents at Preston Manor are not eligible to receive Supplemental Security Income (SSI) benefits. While there are at times a few private-pay residents in the program, most adults living at the program are public charges. Currently there are 24 residents in the program (50% occupancy).

<sup>14</sup> <https://profiles.health.ny.gov/acf/view/1254859>

<sup>15</sup>

[https://govt.westlaw.com/nycrr/Document/I50d04056cd1711dda432a117e6e0f345?viewType=FullText&originationContext=documenttoc&transitionType=CategoryPageItem&contextData=\(sc.Default\)&bhcp=1](https://govt.westlaw.com/nycrr/Document/I50d04056cd1711dda432a117e6e0f345?viewType=FullText&originationContext=documenttoc&transitionType=CategoryPageItem&contextData=(sc.Default)&bhcp=1)

## Reflections from 2021

### New Faces - *By Pamela Stein*

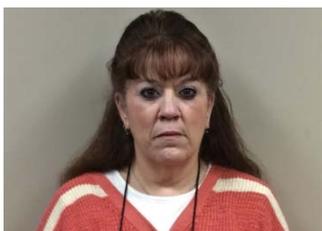
*In this segment called New Faces, we introduce and welcome the newest members of our team and they share a little about themselves. In 2021 and early 2022 we were pleased to have the following people join our agency:*

My name is **Aimee Carman**. I was hired at Social Services on 4/12/2021 as a CPS Caseworker. I was born in Oneonta, NY and grew up in Mt. Vision. I lived in Edmeston to complete school and moved to Norwich in 2010. I attended Laurens Central School from Kindergarten through eleventh grade. I graduated from Edmeston in 2008. I attended University of Phoenix and received my Associates, Bachelors, and master's degree in the Science of Psychology. I am engaged and have two beautiful daughters. We have a bearded dragon named Dash (but I call him Gecko, ha ha). I love spending time with my girls. I enjoy crocheting, diamond art painting and baking. I do enjoy thrift store shopping with my family and having new adventures. I love to organize and keep things neat. I love Disney and love the fact that my family loves it too! I collect Disney DVD's. My favorite animal is elephants.



My name is **Holly Finch**. On 12/6/2021 I was hired as a Social Welfare Examiner in the SNAP Unit. I reside in Oxford, NY and attended SUNY Oneonta and graduated with a bachelor's degree in English. My husband, Jason and I have two daughters, Jillian and Jocelyn, along with two dogs. I enjoy golfing, playing pickleball, gardening, and frequenting garage sales.

My name is **Kori Thornton**. I started at DSS on 1/10/2022 in the Child Support Unit as a Support Investigator. I was born and raised in Bainbridge, New York, where I also graduated from Bainbridge-Guildford Central School in 2019. I attended SUNY Broome and graduated in the Spring of 2021 with a degree in Criminal Justice. I love playing basketball and softball. I enjoy hunting, fishing and being outdoors.



My name is **Jean Wolfe**. I was hired on 12/13/2021 as an Account Clerk in the Child Support Unit. I was born and raised in Elmira, New York and attended Elmira Free Academy. I now reside in Georgetown, NY with my significant other, Scott, three dogs and one cat. I have a son and a daughter who are both married. I also have four grandsons and one granddaughter. I am very family orientated and love spending time with them. I enjoy watching my son and grandkids do Demolition Derbies and taking trips down south.

My name is **Aaron Weeks**. I was hired as a Caseworker in the CPS Unit on 12/13/2021. I was born and raised in Norwich, NY, just returned after living out west since 1995. I attended and graduated from the Norwich High School and attended SUNY Fredonia, graduating with a BA in Theatre. My wife, Rebecca and I have five grown children and a fifth grader at Perry Browne. I like cooking and sports.



My name is **Keegan Winans**. I started at DSS on 1/11/2022 as a Social Welfare Examiner in the SNAP Unit. I live in Afton, New York. I received my bachelor's degree in psychology at Cazenovia College. I have three siblings and enjoy being outside and spending time with my family.

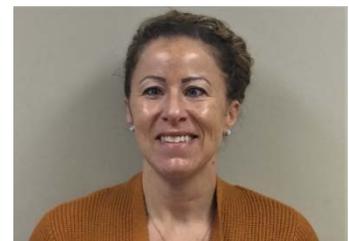
My name is **Russell Carr**. On 1/3/2022 I was hired as a CPS Caseworker. I was born in Hamilton, New York and now live in Smyrna, New York. I graduated from Sherburne-Earlville Central School District and SUNY Morrisville (Associates) and then Syracuse University (Bachelors). I have two grown daughters and two granddaughters, with a third on the way. I enjoy my family, beef farm, hunting, fishing, camping and just about anything outdoors.



My name is **Jeanine Joe**. I was hired as a CPS Caseworker on 1/14/2022. I was born in Apple Valley, CA, raised in Tempe, AZ, and now reside in Norwich, NY. I attended high school at Marcos De Niza in Tempe, AZ. I then went on to Oregon Institute of Technology in Klamath Falls, OR where I received my BS in Psychology with Minors in Human Services and Child Development. I have a husband, Shawn, four children, Skylar, Eugene, Kylie, and Trevor. I also have a stepdaughter Karissa, and 3 grandchildren, Peyton,

Preston and Paisley. I enjoy playing games, doing puzzles, spending time with my family, watching Forensics/True Crime shows. I am also passionate about helping others and learning about different cultures.

My name is **Christi Fregans**. I started as a Caseworker in the CPS Unit on 11/1/2021 and moved to the Foster Care Unit on 2/7/2022. I was born and raised in Norwich, New York. I attended and graduated from Norwich High School, SUNY Cobleskill with an AA Degree, and SUNY Cortland with a BA Degree. My husband, Chris and I have three daughters: Anna Fregans, age 13; Ella Fregans, age 10; and Mariah Joslin, age 7. We have two dogs: Romeo, who is a 3-year-old Chocolate Lab and Apollo, who is a 2-year-old Yellow Lab. I enjoy working out, dancing for fun, spending time with my family and of course shopping! 😊. I also enjoy challenges and helping others in any way that I am capable.





My name is **Katie Pierson**. I was hired on 3/15/2021 as a CPS Caseworker. I was born and raised in Oxford, NY. I attended and graduated from Oxford High School and then went on to Broome Community College and Empire State, receiving my BA in Human Services and Criminal Justice. I have three children: Sylvester, Dexter, and Amara; two dogs: Jack and Finn. I love spending time with my kids, reading and sports.

My name is **Jessica Matthews**. I was hired as a Clerk at the Front Desk on 9/13/2021. I was born and raised in Broad Channel/Rockaway – a little 1-mile-long island town in the middle of Jamaica Bay in Queens, NY. About 1 hour subway ride from Manhattan. Our backyard looked out over Jamaica Bay where my favorite view was the sun setting behind the Manhattan skyline. I enjoyed swimming, boating, and hunting all sorts of crabs. I don't miss the traffic. My family moved to Norwich about 17 years ago to try and get my stepfather better mental health care, a fresh start, and for a better high school to keep my younger brother out of trouble. I attended Beach Channel High School in Rockaway. BCHS was the only school in the city with a Crew Team (Rowing) and we would travel all over NY to compete with other high schools. I live with my husband, Eric, who is a biology teacher in Norwich HS and 5-year-old son Gideon, who is in Pre-K. My mother and grandmother also live with us. We have 3 cats – Zoe, the yowler; Bella, the lurker; Bruce, the cuddle bug; and 1 soft fluffy black and white Q-tip dog – Alice. I would love to travel and have more adventures, but realistically I enjoy watching travel shows, playing video games, and reading. Occasionally, I like to drag my family on a slow hike for letterboxing or enjoying the view somewhere, if mosquitos, ticks, and mud can be avoided.



My name is **Robin Farley**. I started working at DSS on 2/1/2021 as an Account Clerk in the Child Support Unit. I was born in New Jersey, lived in Colonia, Woodbridge Township until 2019 and moving to Plymouth Reservoir. I graduated from Colonia High School, Middlesex College and Kean University – Accounting. I live with my husband, daughter, and a dog. I love to travel, fishing, and kayaking with our dog.

My name is **Jennifer Mason**. I was hired as an Attorney on 8/30/2021. I was born and raised in Gilbertsville, NY. I bounced around the east coast a little through college and law school and now I reside in Bainbridge, NY. I attended Gilbertsville-Mt. Upton High School; Binghamton University for my bachelor's in business administration; Boston College for Law School. I am married to my high school sweetheart, and we have two dogs. I enjoy hiking, golfing, and spending time with my dogs.





My name is **Claudia Schulze**. I am a Clerk at the Front Desk with a hire date of 1/3/2022. I was born and raised in Richmond, Virginia. I have lived in Masonville, NY, and now reside in Bainbridge, NY. I attended Monacan High School in North Chesterfield (Bainbridge-Guildford for middle school), VA. I received my Bachelor's in Biology from Virginia Commonwealth University in Richmond, VA. I live at home with my parents, Connie and Ralf. We have 4 cats (Dewey, Joseph, Ansey, and Abby), and a leopard gecko (Casey). I enjoy

nature, insects, origami, comics, and video games. If you find a cool bug, show me. Weird or gross bugs are okay too.

My name is **Renee Collins**. I was hired on 1/3/2022 as a Social Welfare Examiner in the Temporary Assistance Unit. I was born in Hudson, NY. I was raised in Poughkeepsie, NY and moved to New Paltz, NY in 1987-1988. I moved to this area in 2007. I attended high school in New Paltz. I am now going for a degree from Grand Canyon University in Social Work. I am in my 2<sup>nd</sup> year. I have been married for 7 years. I have two sons – Stephen, Jr., who is 13 years old and Isaiah, who is 4 years old. I don't really have any hobbies, as I am with my family all the time and school takes a lot of my time.

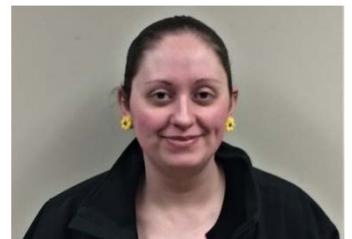


My name is **Nicole Johnson**. I am a Caseworker in the CPS Unit, being hired on 2/22/2022. I was born in Boston, Massachusetts, raised in North Easton, Massachusetts, and currently reside in Sherburne, New York. I attended high school at Holderness Prep School in Plymouth, New Hampshire (it was a boarding school). I attended college at Utica College (now known as Utica University) and have a bachelor's degree in Cyber Security with a concentration in Cybercrime and Fraud and minors in Fraud and Financial Crime and Criminal Justice. I grew up with my mom, dad and three older brothers. Currently I have two dogs (male German Shepard/Border Collie mix and a female Purebred German Shepard), one cat, and a few chickens and ducks. I enjoy getting outside on my free time and going on walks, hunting, and fishing. I also enjoy working out and boxing. On weekends, I usually go out with my



boyfriend and our friends and enjoy trying new things. Sundays are spent as my relaxing day to hang out at home with my boyfriend, our animals, and watch movies. I am currently serving in the Army Reserves as a Transportation Management Coordinator. I played college field hockey for a short time at Salve Regina University in Newport Rhode Island and then I played college ice hockey for Utica College.

My name is **Emily Straight**. I was hired as a CPS Caseworker on 2/14/2022. I was born and raised in DeRuyter, NY and now live in Georgetown, NY. I attended DeRuyter Central School then went to SUNY Geneseo for a year and then transferred to LeMoyne College where I received a B.S. in Psychology with a concentration on Childhood Education. I have been married for a year and a half to my husband, Todd. We have one child together. I have a daughter from a previous marriage and three stepchildren. We have no pets at this time. In my spare time I like to spend time with friends and family. I love listening to music and I also play on an adult volleyball league.





My name is **Greg Peirez**. I was hired on 8/16/2021 as the Senior Attorney. I was born in Brooklyn, raised on Long Island, and currently live in Franklin, NY hoping to move to Norwich shortly. I attended Hobart College, Geneva, NY (BA in English); Hofstra University School of Law (JD). I am single and have had dogs and cats, etc. over the years. Currently I have a 19 year plus old cat. I enjoy music (60's/70's rock in particular), old movies, current news events, reading various sports, politics/religion, etc.

My name is **Nicole Watts**. I work in the Medicaid Unit as a Social Welfare Examiner and started on 5/10/2021. I was born and raised in Norwich and have recently moved back when I started working for the County. I attended high school at Unadilla Valley Central School. I started with my associates through Mohawk Valley Community College and finishing bachelor's through University of Phoenix. I have two sons: Tommy, who is 4, and Lincoln, who just turned 3. I have my 10-month-old puppy named Apollo, and a kitten named Roscoe. Typically, I spend my free time that I do have reading, cooking and baking. During the summer, I enjoy finding new trails to hike, sitting on a beach with my boys or hanging out at the dog park with Apollo.



My name is **Diane Dulina**. I was hired on September 27, 2021, as a Caseworker in the CPS Unit. I was born in Passaic, NJ, raised in Otego, NY and reside in Sherburne. I attended the Unatego High School and graduated from the University of Albany with a BA in Psychology. I have 7 daughters and 1 dog. I love doing crafts and recently got a *Cricut* machine, so I have been making a lot of shirts and home décor. If you need anything made, let me know 😊.

My name is **Anne Mayher**. I started with DSS on January 3, 2022, as a Caseworker in the CPS Unit. I grew up in Hawaii, Louisiana, California – but Dad and other family are from Chenango, and I've spent a lot of summers and other time here. I now reside in Greene. 😊 I attended Bolton High School (Alexandria, Louisiana); Loyola University (New Orleans) Bachelor of Arts in English; SIT Graduate Institute (Vermont) Master's in International and Intercultural Management. I am married to my husband Zolani Tyalimpi (aka "Shaps", which is short for his middle name, Shapiro) – he's South African. We have a funny German shepherd dog who is being taken care of for us in South Africa. I enjoy jogging, hiking, learning new things, travel, spending time with family/friends, and reading.



My name is **Laurent Paul**. I was hired on February 14, 2022, as a Caseworker in the CPS Unit. I was born in Haiti, raised in Long Island and now reside in Sidney, NY. I attended Holy Trinity Diocesan, SUNY Oneonta for Psychology. I live with my girlfriend and 7-month-old baby girl. We have no pets. I enjoy basketball, travel, and video games.

2021 DSS Staff Picnic- held at Rogers Environmental Center, Sherburne NY <https://friendsofrogers.org/> on August 6<sup>th</sup>.



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## ***Our Mission:***

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*The mission of the Chenango County Department of Social Services (DSS) is to ensure the provision of financial, medical, and Family and Children's Services necessary to assist eligible residents of Chenango County towards enhancing family functioning and to reduce or eliminate dependency.*