

# Annual Report 2022

Chenango County Department of Social Services

## ***Our Mission:***

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*The mission of the Chenango County Department of Social Services 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.*

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## *A Message from the Commissioner*

Greetings,

It is my privilege to present to you our 2022 Annual Report and summary of the programs our department provides to the residents of Chenango County. While this document is in no way an all-inclusive record of the services and accomplishments of the previous year, I hope that it helps convey a sense of the vast amount of work our employees undertake in service to our county and its communities.

2022 saw us continuing to “rise from the bunkers” and the lingering struggles of the COVID-19 pandemic, and while it still affects our communities, our families and our friends, life certainly (and thankfully) has more of a semblance of the connectedness it had before the onset of the crisis. However, many of the emergency financial supports, extensions, and interventions put in place during the pandemic are now coming to an end. The national emergency declaration expires in May of this year, and our focus has now shifted to enhancing ways we can best support the county and, at the same time, prepare for the increased work needed as we move families towards other programs and services while the emergency ones conclude.

Our department continues to evolve as the needs of the community and the nation does. The challenges that affect families throughout the state are not carbon copies of the ones from decades past, and therefore our strategies cannot remain the same. The pandemic certainly revealed and exacerbated many of the issues our state and nation faces, there is no doubt about that. However, many of these challenges have been decades in the making and it takes the endurance, commitment, and resolve of dedicated people to address them. I’m very proud to say I work with such people every day in our various programs and know

first-hand the amount of support and service they give to our county.

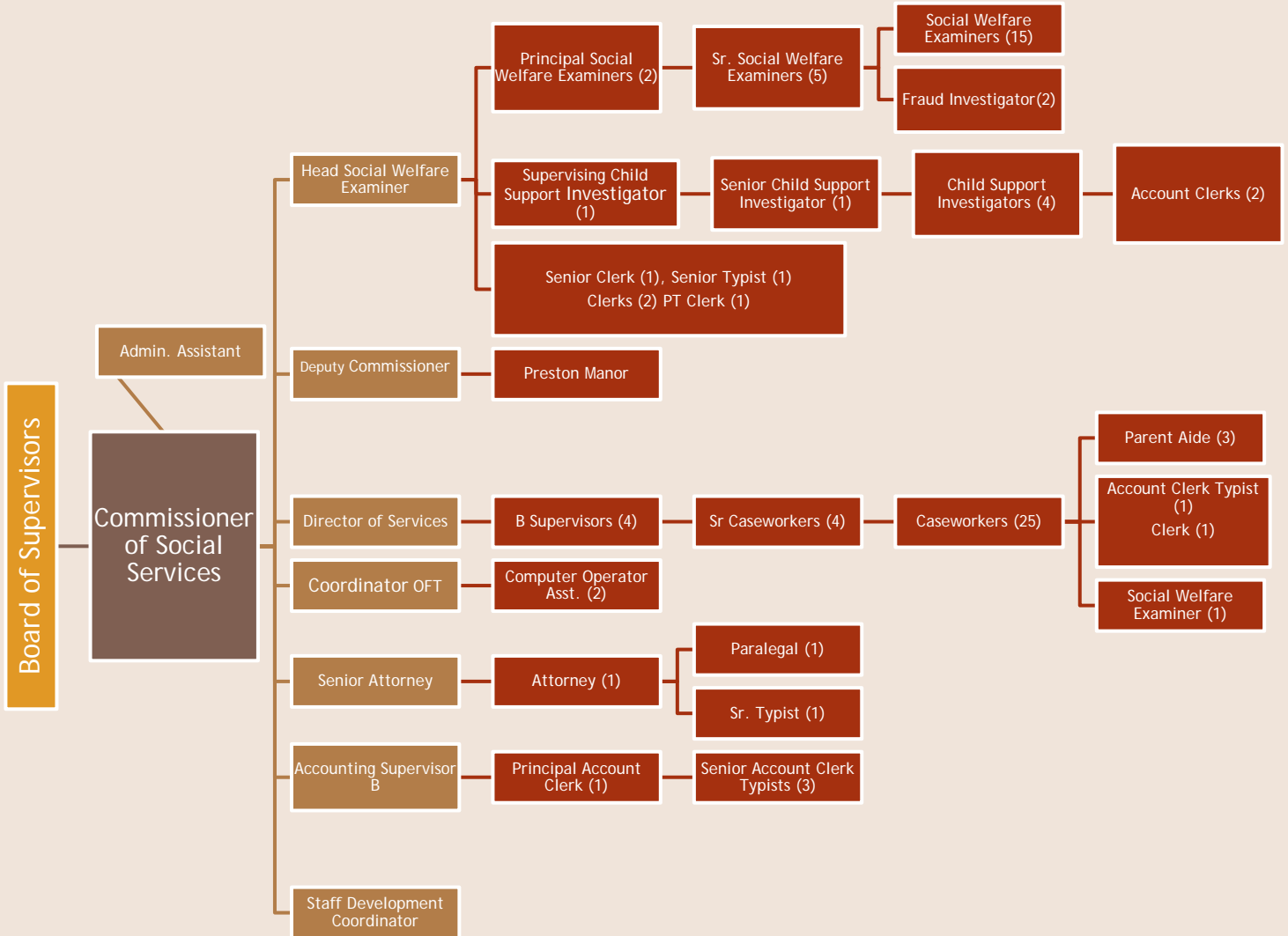
Like the changes happening in our communities, our workforce is changing too, and with new faces come new ideas, philosophies, and approaches that we are excited to incorporate into our strategies. The most important goal of our department is assuring its perpetuity through stewardship so it can continue its mission in the future. We believe a core principle to achieve that goal must be assuring our staff align with our beliefs, are protected in their work, have the leadership they need, and above all are shown the support and value they deserve as a member of our team. In doing so, we protect the legacy of Social Services and assure we stand ready in the future, whatever the needs of the community may be.

One of the core tenets of an effective organization is supporting leadership and growth in everyone, which in turn creates the highest likelihood that all its members will succeed as a team. Paul Petzold, legendary mountaineer and founder of the National Outdoor Leadership School I was fortunate enough to attend, said he had three rules for leadership- you have to know where the people you’re leading are coming from, you have to know what you want to do with them, and you have to truly care about them. Paul passed away in 1999 at the age of 91, but his words continue to resonate with many of us who find themselves leading others in their chosen profession. I consider it a privilege and honor to lead our agency as Commissioner, and hope to stay true to Paul’s philosophy as I do so.

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

*-Daniel Auwarter, Commissioner*

# Social Services Organizational Chart



## 2022 Appropriations by Program Summary

ACCOUNT TITLE	APPROPRIATION
PROGRAM ADMINISTRATION	\$ 6,734,756
OTHER EXPENSE	\$ 500,000
SAFE HARBOR PRGORAM	\$ 43,500
RENTAL SUPPLEMENT PROGRAM	\$ 139,789
DAY CARE	\$ 485,000
MEDICAL ASSISTANCE ADMINISTRATION	\$ 300,000
MEDICAL ASSISTANCE MMIS	\$ 8,277,934
FAMILY ASSISTANCE	\$ 2,025,000
FOSTER CARE	\$ 2,350,000
JUVENILE DELINQUENT CARE	\$ 304,453
RAISE THE AGE	\$ 300,000
PAYMENT TO STATE SCHOOLS	\$ 100,000
SAFETY NET	\$ 1,045,000
HOME ENERGY ASSISTANCE PROGRAM	\$ 20,000
EMERGENCY ASSISTANCE TO ADULTS	\$ 15,000

## Administration

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>COMMISSIONER'S OFFICE</u></b></p> <p>Daniel Auwarter Pam Stein</p>	<p><b><u>ACCOUNTING</u></b></p> <p>Evelyn Kirkland Penni Mills Robin Farley Kayla Simpson-Linger</p>	<p><b><u>ADULT SERVICES/LTC</u></b></p> <p>Deb Munyan Bill Moakler Martina Davis</p>
<p><b><u>DIRECTOR OF SERVICES</u></b></p> <p>Elizabeth Beers</p>	<p><b><u>HEAD SOCIAL WELFARE EXAMINER</u></b></p> <p>Patricia Hodge</p>	<p><b><u>STAFF DEVELOPMENT COORDINATOR</u></b></p> <p>Lois LoPresti</p>
<p><b><u>CHILD PROTECTIVE</u></b></p> <p>Teresa Foster- Jones Diane Beckwith Jessica Grow Ronald Martorelli Aaron Weeks Anne Mayher Aimee Carman Katelyn Pierson</p> <p>Emily Straight Diane Dulina Nicole Johnson Nicholas Antonacci Destiny Foster Erica Jones Jennacee Lagacey Courtney Martini Logan Nuzzolese</p>	<p><b><u>CHILD SUPPORT</u></b></p> <p>Natasha Selan Jeff Cox Kori Thornton Debra Fuller-Shimer Jennifer Lovelace Dorinda Cummings Christina Poplaski Jean Wolfe</p>	<p><b><u>FOSTER CARE</u></b></p> <p>Brandi Guinn Zina Corey Brandie Hazzard Christi Fregans Jeanine Joe Karen Mack Maranda Owens Brian O'Connell Laurie Hennessey Alisha Mullins</p>
<p><b><u>FRONT DESK/CLERICAL</u></b></p> <p>Jacqueline Ryan Claudia Schulze Susan Mirabito Monica Cole</p>	<p><b><u>LEGAL</u></b></p> <p>Gregory Peirez, Esq. Jennifer Mason, Esq. Jody Eckert Janice Smith</p>	<p><b><u>MA/HEAP/FRAUD</u></b></p> <p>Lynn Kline Trisha Berg Lynne Angle Jennifer Randall Nicole Watts</p> <p>Lisa Wilchynski Derik Williams Fran Loiselle</p>
<p><b><u>OFFICE For TECHNOLOGY</u></b></p> <p>John Kolb Arden Hamstra Ranjit Singh</p>	<p><b><u>TA/SNAP/EMPLOYMENT/CHILD CARE/EMERGENCY SERVICES</u></b></p> <p>Susan Seneck Joanne Evans Michelle Graczyk LeVon Garofalo Olivia Doyle Renee Collins</p> <p>Amalia Miller Debra Slattery Joanne Woodard Holly Finch Sabrina Smith JennieLou Gumaer Donita Ireland Brandi Armstrong</p>	

# Income Maintenance Programs

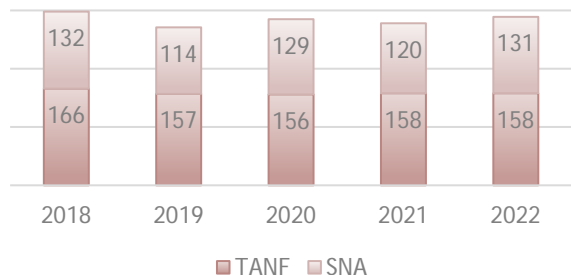
## Overview of Income Maintenance

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.
- **Childcare 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.



TANF and SNA cases (End of Year Totals)

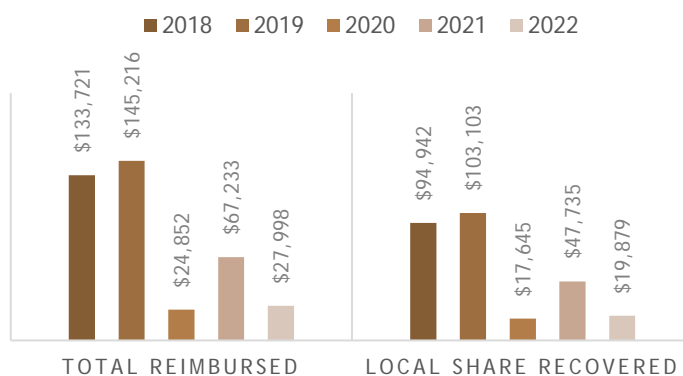


## Temporary Assistance, Employment, DCAP, & Emergency Services:

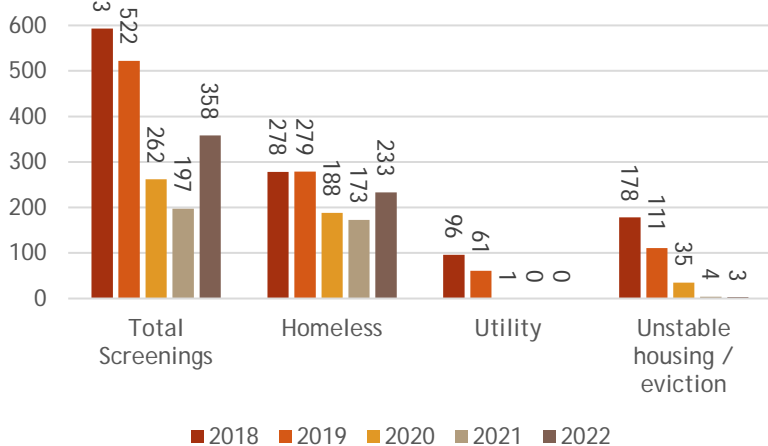
TANF cases, which are federally funded, have dropped almost 5% overall since 2018, while Safety Net cases have oscillated<sup>3</sup>. At the end of 2022, 458 individuals in Chenango were actively receiving one of these forms of temporary assistance.

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, 650 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.

DCAP SUMMARY OF COSTS/REIMBURSEMENT



Emergency Screenings



Since 2000, 650 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.

In July 2022 the Rental Supplement Program was initiated in Chenango to assist individuals earning 50% or less of the Area Median Income (AMI) with rent costs. By the end of December, 21 households had been approved for assistance.

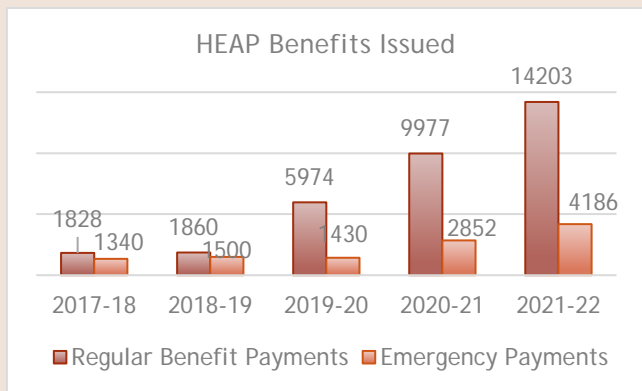
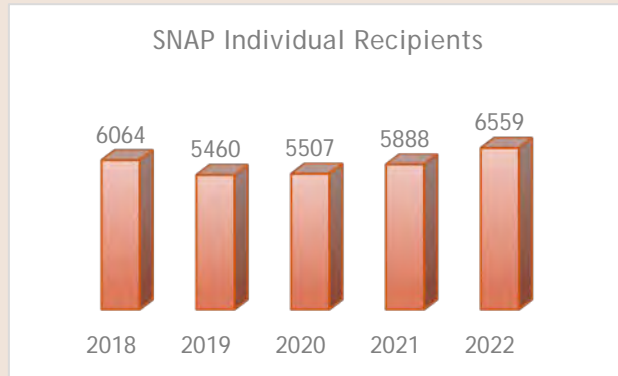
<sup>3</sup> NYS Welfare Management System Reports 2018-2022 (as of Dec. 31 Case Count)

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

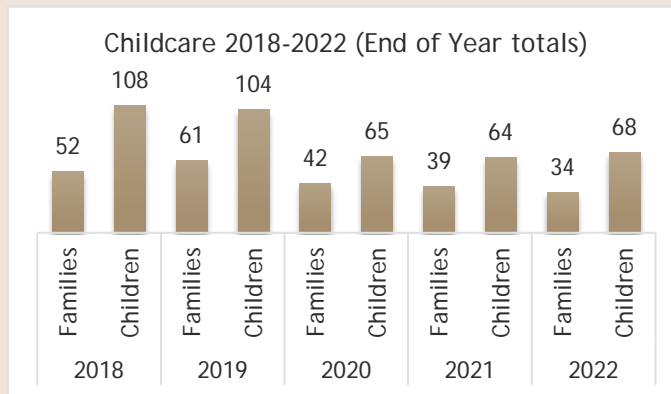
## SNAP & HEAP:

Due to public health emergency, beginning in March of 2020 Congress temporarily increased monthly SNAP benefit amounts beyond typical eligibility amounts. These increased payments ended with the February 2023 issuance and benefits have returned to normal amounts.<sup>5</sup>

In 2022, total SNAP recipients at year's end were 11.4% higher than the previous year<sup>6</sup>. While the SNAP benefits themselves are 100% federal dollars, the local administrative costs of the program are reimbursed at 50%.



Each fall the HEAP program opens statewide. The last three years have seen a dramatic increase in the benefits issued in our county with a 664% increase over 2018-19<sup>7</sup>.



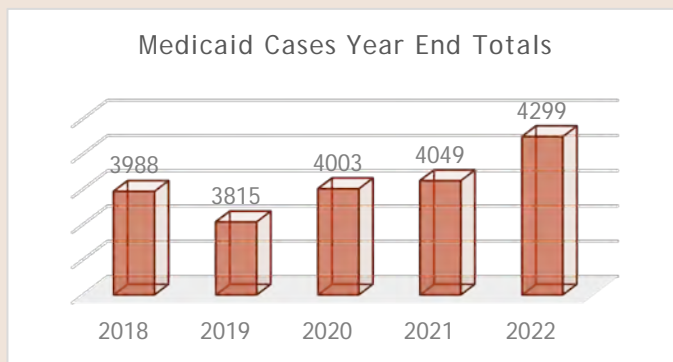
## Childcare Assistance:

Increases in income eligibility for childcare assistance were made in July and August of 2022, increasing to 200% and then 300% State Income Standard, respectively<sup>8</sup>.

Family Enrichment Network supports Chenango as our Child Care Resource and Referral Agency<sup>9</sup>.

## 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>10</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.



<sup>5</sup> <https://www.fns.usda.gov/snap/changes-2023-benefit-amounts>

<sup>6</sup> NYS Welfare Management System Reports 2018-2022 (Active SNAP Dec. Case Count)

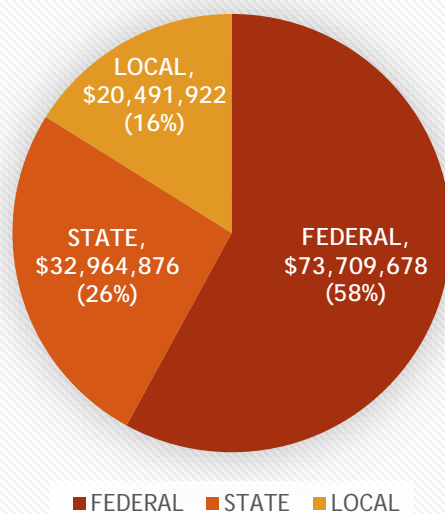
<sup>7</sup> NYS OTDA Global Reporting, HEAP payments 2021-22

<sup>8</sup> <https://ocfs.ny.gov/programs/childcare/ccap/>

<sup>9</sup> <https://ocfs.ny.gov/programs/childcare/referral-agencies.php>

<sup>10</sup> NYS Welfare Management System Reports 2018-2022 (Active Dec. Case Count)

Medicaid Costs 2022 by % share



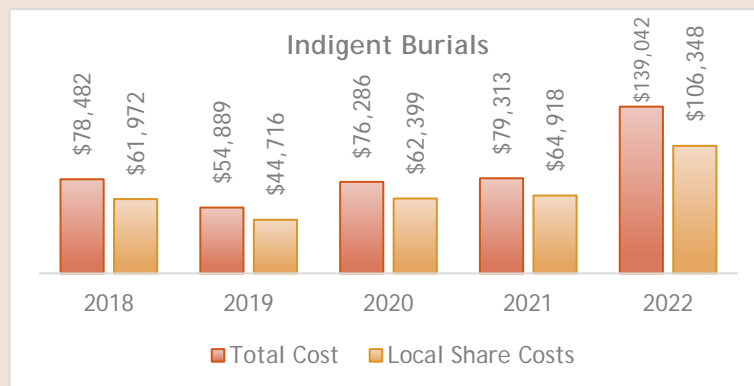
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	TOTAL	FEDERAL	STATE	LOCAL	% inc/dec from previous Local
HOSPITAL INPATIENT	\$ 3,927,574	\$ 2,181,824	\$ 1,073,474	\$ 672,276	31.80
HOSPITAL OUTPATIENT	\$ 1,844,313	\$ 1,016,471	\$ 443,408	\$ 384,433	4.80
SNF	\$ 13,838,060	\$ 6,957,700	\$ 5,802,191	\$ 1,078,169	9.50
ICF-DD	\$ 111,220	\$ 55,610	\$ 35,153	\$ 20,457	-57.50
CLINIC-FREE STANDING	\$ 469,225	\$ 236,144	\$ 127,764	\$ 105,317	-15.00
HOSPICE	\$ 2,790	\$ 1,395	\$ 730	\$ 665	52.40
PHYSICIANS	\$ 407,673	\$ 221,297	\$ 103,094	\$ 83,282	-3.10
DENTAL	\$ 79,124	\$ 41,197	\$ 19,415	\$ 18,512	12.50
OTHER PRACTITIONERS	\$ 516,704	\$ 261,832	\$ 128,163	\$ 126,710	27.20
CHILD CARE MEDICAL INSTITUTIONAL PER DIEM	\$ 53,852	\$ 26,926	\$ 13,463	\$ 13,463	-74.10
PERSONAL CARE-TOTAL	\$ 1,510,728	\$ 769,308	\$ 602,557	\$ 138,862	-5.70
HOME HEALTH SERVICES-GRAND TOTAL	\$ 72,727	\$ 36,363	\$ 31,557	\$ 4,806	-32.00
ASSISTED LIVING PROGRAM	\$ 229,740	\$ 114,870	\$ 93,320	\$ 21,550	23.30
WAIVED SERVICES-TOTAL	\$ 17,165,398	\$ 8,617,041	\$ 5,678,869	\$ 2,869,487	9.00
REHAB AND THERAPY	\$ 10,236	\$ 5,388	\$ 2,426	\$ 2,422	74.90
REHAB OPTIONS SRVCS TOTAL	\$ 1,920,013	\$ 1,011,651	\$ 673,199	\$ 235,163	34.90
DRUGS AND SUPPLIES	\$ 1,706,365	\$ 893,799	\$ 421,837	\$ 390,729	2.80
EYE APPLIANCES AND DME	\$ 87,871	\$ 46,870	\$ 20,790	\$ 20,211	-35.10
PREPAID CARE	\$ 77,931,870	\$ 48,107,105	\$ 16,542,329	\$ 13,282,437	4.30
CASE MANAGEMENT PLANS	\$ 2,096,862	\$ 1,072,135	\$ 535,944	\$ 488,783	-10.70
TRANSPORTATION	\$ 2,882,517	\$ 1,875,628	\$ 512,935	\$ 493,954	33.00
LAB AND X-RAY	\$ 108,302	\$ 60,616	\$ 25,348	\$ 22,338	-17.90
OTHER - TOTAL	\$ 193,314	\$ 98,508	\$ 76,910	\$ 17,896	27.70

<sup>11</sup> Total Local Share Cost reflected No Local Share Cap - Source: NYS DOH MARS reports 2022

## 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 2022, a total of 69 services were paid through county funds, a 64% increase over previous year with the cost being 76% local share (\$106,348).



## Child Support Services:

The CSU assists with establishing support cases and processing of child support payments annually. In 2022 a total of \$4,507,007<sup>12</sup> was processed for support, which is a 5.3% decrease over previous year’s totals. Changes in individual cases affect collection amounts annually.

## 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 state and 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 2022<sup>13</sup> was \$1,265,634 through the following methods:

Initiative	Description	Number of Application Denials, Case Closings, or Grant Reductions	Estimated Cost Avoidance
Front End Detection System (FEDS)	Detecting fraud at application	138	\$1,236,600
Verified Employment Data (VED) Computer Match	Detecting unreported income on TANF adult cases	4	\$13,122
Public Assistance Reporting Information System (PARIS) Computer Match	Detecting out of state residency and duplicate benefits	4	\$6,288
Prison Computer Match	Detecting incarcerated individuals	2	\$3,144
Intentional Program Violations (IPV)	Disqualification Sanctions for those Found Guilty	4	\$6,480

<sup>12</sup> ASSETTS reporting system monthly statistics 2018-2022

<sup>13</sup> OTDA Cost Avoidance for Program Integrity Initiatives report 2022

## 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>14</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>15</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>16</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 protective reports received by the State Central Child Abuse and Maltreatment Registry. The investigation

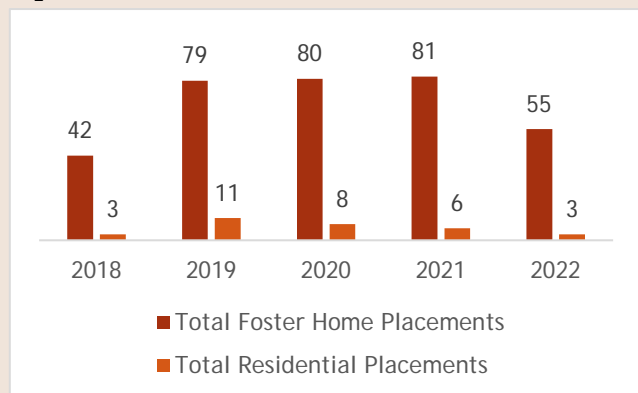
<sup>14</sup> NYPWA Commissioner's Reference Guide Dec. 2017 p.36

<sup>15</sup> *ibid*

<sup>16</sup> [http://ww2.nycourts.gov/COURTS/nyc/family/faqs\\_pins.shtml](http://ww2.nycourts.gov/COURTS/nyc/family/faqs_pins.shtml)

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

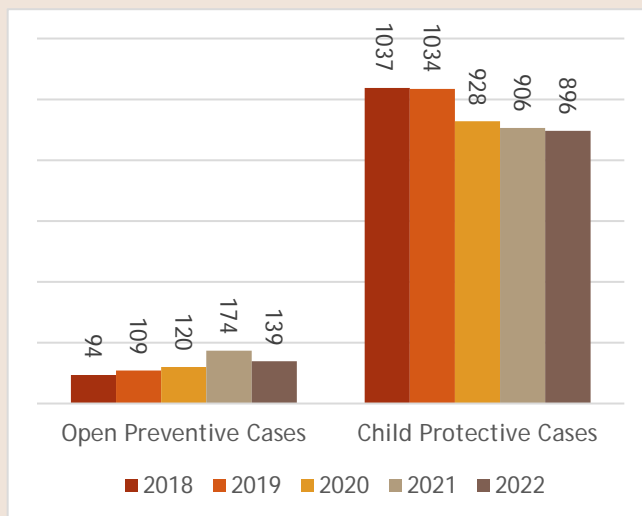


children safely in their own homes through both voluntary and court ordered Preventive Services. When this is not possible, it may be necessary to file a petition in Family Court and place the child in protective custody.

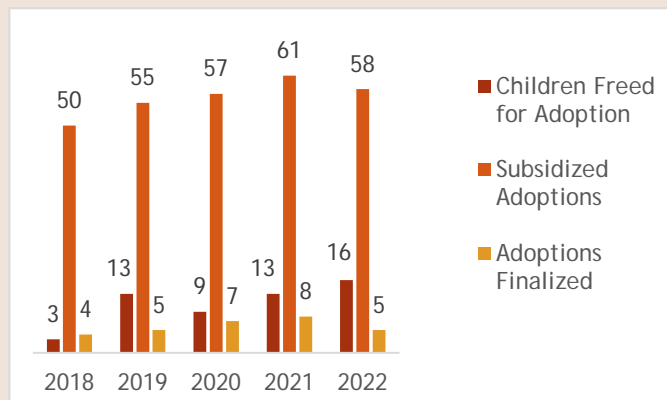
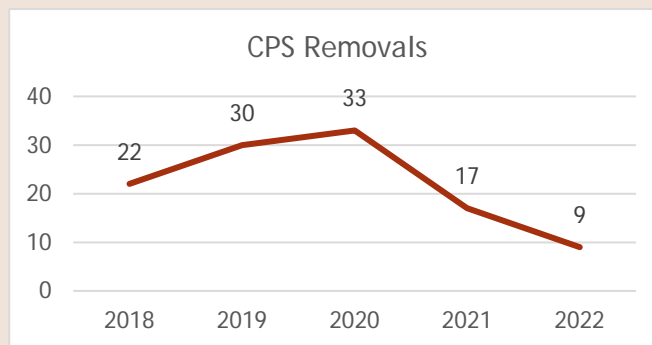
On average, our CPS unit receives 1000+ child abuse/neglect reports annually from the State Central Registry; total reports for 2022 were 907. When removing a child is unavoidable, kinship placements are a priority, as mandated under Family First legislation<sup>17</sup> now fully enacted in New York 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



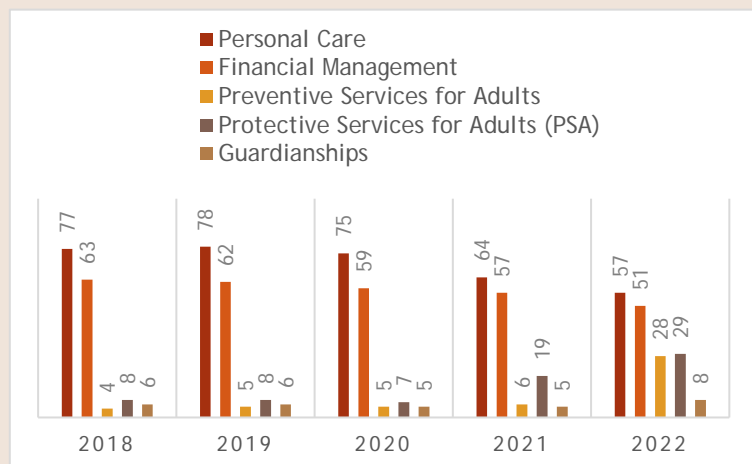
*indicated*, meaning sufficient evidence exists to substantiate the concerns in the report. In addition, indicated reports opened for other county DSS agencies must be monitored by the Child Protective Unit to periodically assess the safety of the children. All possible efforts are made to keep



<sup>17</sup> <https://www.childwelfare.gov/topics/systemwide/laws-policies/federal/family-first/>

family or a kinship placement. 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.



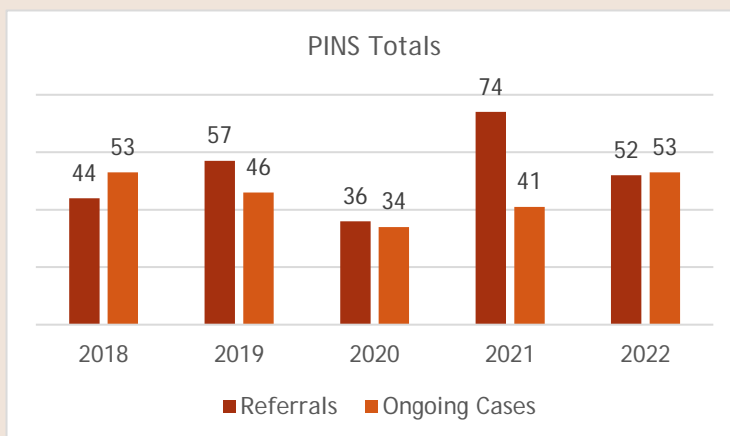
## Adult/Long Term Care

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:

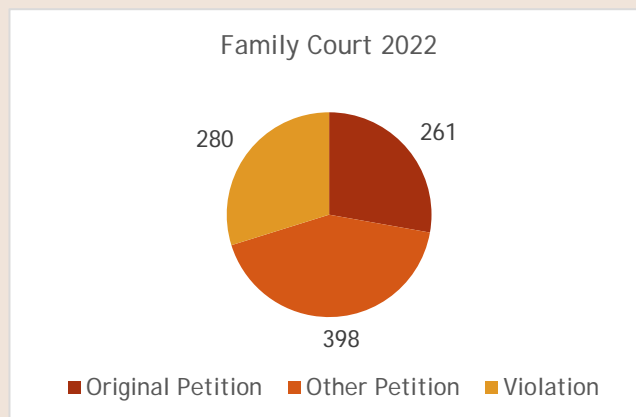
PINS (Person in Need of Supervision) referrals are made by schools, community members, and parents due to unruly youth behavior and/or issues of truancy. DSS is the lead agency for PINS Diversion. PINS planning meetings occur on a regular basis consisting of staff from various service providers, Probation 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

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 had an exciting year, with some big changes to our services software and workflows. OFT worked with the CPS, Foster Care and Adult Services units to make a big step toward going completely paperless. This was done by upgrading to a new case management system called Traverse which allows use of tablets and scanners to greatly reduce paperwork and improve productivity for these units. All caseworkers were provided with iPads as part of this effort, and two scanners were installed for use with the new system. Since much of the paperwork for services units was reduced, this also cut down on how much scanning of paper documents was necessary. The Surface tablets project in collaboration with County IT was also completed in 2022, and our NYS laptops were updated to use a new VPN software called Cisco AnyConnect, which improved security as well as usability.

## County Home for Adults

Homes for adults<sup>18</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>19</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 21 residents in the program (44% occupancy).

<sup>18</sup> <https://profiles.health.ny.gov/acf/view/1254859>

<sup>19</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 2022

### New Faces - *By Pamela Stein*

My name is **JennieLou Gumaer**. I am a Social Welfare Examiner in the SNAP Unit. I was born in Norwich and raised in McDonough where I still reside. I attended the Norwich City Schools. I have 3 boys (ages 16, 12 and 6), a dog named Fern and a cat named Kali. I enjoy reading and travel, along with camp with my boys. I love my job and the people I work with and for!



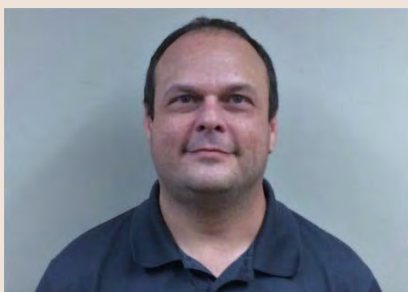
My name is **Logan Nuzzolese**. I was hired as a Caseworker in the CPS Unit. I was born in Norwich and raised in Oxford where I currently reside. I attended high school at Oxford Academy and furthered my education at SUNY Cortland where I earned a TC3-AS in Early Childhood Education and a BA in Sociology. I have a new puppy (6 months old) named Beau. In my spare time, I like hiking, photography, being in nature, and spending time with my dog

My name is **Alisha Mullins**. I am Parent Aide in the Foster Care Unit. I was born and raised in Norwich, and currently reside in Preston. I am married with 3 children, 2 grandchildren, and 1 dog. My family owns an actual monster truck (like the Monster Jam trucks) and an old military Humvee! We spend our weekends in the summer going to mud bogs across New York. We are proud members of the New York Run for The Fallen. Every June we run 200+ miles from Fort Drum to Saratoga National Cemetery over 4 days honoring and remembering the Fallen Military Heroes.



My name is **Courtney Martini**. I was hired as a Caseworker in CPS. I was born and raised in Unadilla and now reside in Bainbridge. I attended Unatego High School. I then attended SUNY Oneonta where I received a bachelor's degree in Criminal Justice. I have six siblings and three dogs. I enjoy spending time with my dogs.

My name is **Christina Poplaski**. I work in the Child Support Unit as an Account Clerk. I was born in Deerfield, NY and recently moved to the Norwich area. I attended Poland Central School and Herkimer County Community College. I enjoy being outside in the fresh air. Some of my favorite hobbies include reading, knitting and cross stitch.



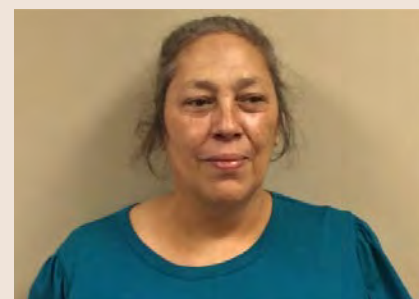
My name is **Nicholas Antonacci**, and I was hired as a Caseworker in the CPS Unit. I was born in Staten Island and attended school at New Drop High School. I received my BA at Five Town College, majoring in Music. I now reside in Masonville and in my spare time I am a Coach for EvolveGT.

My name is **Rindy Cummings**. I began working at Chenango County DSS as a Support Investigator on June 13, 2022. I've lived in Chenango County for my entire life. I attended elementary and middle school at Greene Central and high school at Sherburne-Earlville. I studied Early Childhood Education and Human Services at SUNY Morrisville and Empire State College. My most treasured moments are spent with family. I also enjoy volunteering in the community, watching the Voice, working in my vegetable garden, and a spontaneous road trip now and then!



My name is **Destiny Foster**. I am a Caseworker in the CPS Unit. I attended school at Fonda-Fultonville High School and furthered my education at Hartwick College with a BS in Sociology, minoring in social work. I am now working to get my master's in social work to become a licensed clinical social worker. I now live in Bainbridge with my other half, Collin, and we have a pet gecko named Hopper and a cat named Aggy. I enjoy painting, hiking, camping, and being on the water.

My name is **Debra Slattery**. I am a Social Welfare Examiner in the SNAP Unit. I was born and raised in Orange County, NY and now reside in the Village of Sidney. I attended Minisink High School, Orange County Community College and graduated from Marist College, Poughkeepsie, NY. I have a wonderful husband, two beautiful sons, two fantastic grandchildren, two sweet cats and one smart dog. In my spare time I like to scrapbook and sew. I also love to garden.





My name is **Jennifer Lovelace**. I was hired as a Social Welfare Examiner in April 2022 and transferred to the Child Support Unit as a Child Support Investigator in December. I was born in Port Jervis, NY and have mostly lived in the Norwich area since 1987. I graduated from Norwich High School in 2000, attended Morrisville Norwich Campus as well as Cayuga Community College in Auburn, NY, majoring in Criminal Justice. I enjoy spending time with family, doing crafty type things (i.e., drawing, painting), reading, anything outdoors and/or water related in the summer months.

My name is **Sabrina Smith**. I work in the SNAP Unit as a Social Welfare Examiner. I was born and raised in Yuma, Arizona, lived in Florida, North Carolina and South Carolina. I am now living in Norwich. I attended Yuma Union High School in Yuma, Arizona and furthered my education at Barry University Miami, Florida where I received a B.S. in Finance/Economics. I am married to Robert Smith who is a native to Norwich, and have three children, Edan (20); Ronan (19) and Marcus (11). I enjoy cooking, reading and home DYI projects.

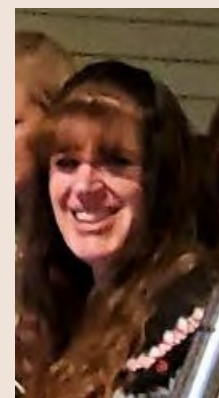
## Retirements:

**Janice Burt-Ashton** retired in 2022 after 34 years of service to the Department. In 1988, Janice joined the county workforce as a Caseworker, and progressed up to the position of Deputy Commissioner where she served until her retirement. As Deputy, Janice provided administrative support to both the Services as well as Income Maintenance programs, as well as the county home for adults.



Also in 2022, **Susanne Bloes** retired from service after serving over 21 years. Susanne joined the Department in 2001 as a Caseworker and was promoted to Senior Caseworker in 2008. Susanne became a B-Supervisor in 2012. In 2019 Susanne was honored with a Certificate of Recognition for Excellence in Providing Adult Services, awarded by the NYS OCFS Bureau of Adult Services.

**Stacey Coraci** retired in February of 2023 after 30 years of service. Stacy started work in 1993 as a Clerk, then became a Social Welfare Examiner in 1995. She was promoted to Senior Social Welfare Examiner in 2018. Stacey worked in virtually all the Income Maintenance programs over the course of her career with the Department.



*Scenes from 2022*



**“WHEREVER THERE IS A HUMAN IN NEED, THERE IS AN OPPORTUNITY FOR KINDNESS AND TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE.”**

**—KEVIN HEATH**