

2021 Annual Report



Tioga County Department of
Social Services
Your Potential. Our Support.

2021
Commissioner's Advisory Council

Maureen Abbott

Executive Director

Tioga Opportunities, Inc.

Fran Bialy, Executive Director

A New Hope Center

Donna Corbin, Director

Glove House, Inc.

Ryan Dougherty, Superintendent

Newark Valley Central Schools

Cory Green, Superintendent

Owego Apalachin Central Schools

Diahann Hesler, Superintendent

Spencer-VanEtten Schools

Tara Henyon

Associate Director of Programs

*Cornell Cooperative Extension—
Broome*

Eric Knolles, Superintendent

Waverly Central Schools

Lori Morgan

Community Services Director

Tioga County Mental Hygiene

Sister Mary O'Brien

Executive Director

Tioga County Rural Ministry

Josh Roe, Superintendent

Tioga Central Schools

Susan Ruff, Advocacy Director

*Southern Tier
Independence Center*

Renee Spear, Executive Director

*Catholic Charities of
Tompkins/Tioga*

Jackie Spencer

Association Community Educator

Cornell Cooperative Extension

Heather Vrooman

Deputy Director

Tioga County Public Health

from the Commissioner...



On behalf of myself and the Administrative Team at the Tioga County Department of Social Services, I simply want to use this space this year to express sincere gratitude and appreciation to our staff for making our mission achievable during the COVID Pandemic. While maintaining a frontline and field presence

throughout the past two years, staff continued to meet the challenges of assisting those we serve to stay safe, while keeping themselves safe, and never wavering from our core mission of delivering services in an ***“empathetic, timely and customer focused manner”***. To all of you, no matter where you are in your careers right now, beginning, middle or end, you will and should look back on these two past years as the years where you made some of the most important contributions to the residents we are charged with serving. You have my utmost respect.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Shawn L. Yetter". The signature is fluid and cursive, written on a white background.

Shawn L. Yetter,
Commissioner

Tioga County Department of Social Services

Mission

The Social Services department works to promote self-sufficiency and protect citizens by providing financial and social services to eligible Tioga County residents through program development, application of the law and encouragement of responsibility in an empathetic, timely and customer focused manner.

Values

Responsibility

Accepting personal and professional accountability for the delivery of dependable, reliable services.

Integrity & Ethics

Ensuring optimal standards of service with honesty, trust and dedication.

Equality

Promoting fairness and impartiality among all.

Respect & Compassion

Expressing consideration and empathy toward others.

Excellence

Vision

To be the most respected Department of Social Services, having a culture which values responsibility, efficiency, teamwork, compassion, excellence and universal respect.

Tioga County Department of Social Services

P.O. Box 240

1062 NY Route 38

Owego, New York 13827

607.687.8300

www.tiogacountyny.com/departments/social-services/

ADMINISTRATIVE AND SUPERVISORY STAFF

ADMINISTRATION

Shawn L. Yetter, Commissioner
Gary Grant, Deputy Commissioner
Elizabeth Myers, Director of Services
Julie Whipple, Director of Employment & Transitional Supports
Administrative Secretaries: Brenda Holt, Gail Perdue, Penny Ward

ADMINISTRATIVE SERVICES DIVISION

Mickelle Andrews, Accounting Supervisor
Amy Canzler, Welfare Management Systems Coordinator

EMPLOYMENT & TRANSITIONAL SUPPORTS DIVISION

Rebecca Fetherbay, Principal Social Welfare Examiner
Katherine Garrison, Principal Social Welfare Examiner
Tara Hauptfleisch, Principal Social Welfare Examiner
Anita Teed, Child Support Enforcement Coordinator

LEGAL DEPARTMENT

Mari Townsend, Second Assistant County Attorney
John Van Wert, First Assistant County Attorney

SERVICES DIVISION

Jennifer Green, Child Advocacy Center Director/Safe Harbour Coordinator
Joylynn MacNaughton, Foster Care/Adoption/Home Finding Supervisor
Sarah Moore, Training Supervisor
Eric Silvanic, Adolescent/Adult Services Supervisor
Tricia Soper, CPS/Preventive Services Supervisor
Sarah Tiffany, CPS/Preventive Services Supervisor
Christopher Titus, CPS/Preventive Services Supervisor

TIOGA EMPLOYMENT CENTER

Sheri McCall, Manager

2021 Tioga County Legislature

Martha C. Sauerbrey, Legislative Chair, District 2

Cliff Balliet

District 1

Ed Hollenbeck, Deputy Chair

District 7

Tracy Monell

District 4

Health and Human Services Committee

Dennis Mullen

District 5

Health and Human Services Committee

Michael Roberts

District 3

William Standinger

District 7

Chair, Health and Human Services Committee

Loretta Sullivan

District 4

Health and Human Services Committee

Dale Weston, Deputy Chair

District 6

Administrative Services

Gary Grant, Deputy Commissioner

The **Accounting Department** is responsible for monitoring and processing all Agency cash receipts and disbursements of the Agency and for the accurate recording and reporting of all DSS expenditures and revenues to the County Treasurer's Office. This includes all program and administrative expenditures. The Accounting Department prepares and submits monthly and quarterly claims in a timely manner to State agencies to receive maximum reimbursements of Federal and State aid. Other functions include bank reconciliations, financial management case reconciliations, budget preparations, maintaining the Agency's Representative-Payee accounts, and issuing temporary benefit cards.

The **Systems Department** is responsible for maintaining and providing user support for both hardware and software. The unit manages a variety of hardware from Apple iPad devices to computers. Security access is maintained to a variety of State-owned software such as the *Welfare Management System (WMS)*, *Imaging and Enterprise Document Repository (I/EDR)*, *MyWorkspace*, *Connections* and other applications. Systems also provides agency-wide services such as data entry, processing State reports, (electronic and printed) and creating custom databases for departments across the Agency.

2021 Highlights:

- Participated in the Annual State Single Audit. The programs tested were HEAP (40 records) and SCU. They also audited 39 administrative disbursements. There were no significant findings.
- Accounting and Systems continue to integrate work functions to support to each other's units.
- Continued to maintain many services throughout the ongoing COVID pandemic, such as continuing to provide departments with needed reporting, processing timely payments with little to no loss of efficiency and back-up to Systems. This is due to the dedication of the accounting staff using and creating improved processes.
- Overcame many challenges this year including turnover, limited staffing, and hiring and training new staff.
- Worked with APS and maintained a total of 50+ rep payee accounts. Accounting did an estimated 6,000 transactions including taking in their incomes and processing payments totaling \$548,636 on their behalf. Accounting has also provided APS with monthly ledgers, and other needed reports.
- Replaced the Northwoods Compass Pilot software program used by Caseworkers for field work. The new program, Traverse, is cloud based with many enhanced features.
- All Services Caseworkers cell phones were replaced with iPhone SE models to take advantage of the Traverse casework software used by staff while in the field
- We received additional HEAP administrative funding that allowed us to purchase 25 new Kodak S2070 desktop scanners to replace 12-year-old scanners. The new scanners were distributed to the following units: FSMA, HEAP, Employment Center, Accounting, Fraud, Systems and Services.
- A Kodak S3060 scanner was also purchased with HEAP funds to replace the old scanner that handles the large authorization documents.

- Initiated the process to transition employee's desktop computers from the New York State Network to the County Network. The project started with testers in the Services and Systems Unit and we have 7 staff members that have been working on the County Network. We plan to have all employees on the County Network by the end of 2022.
- Systems is responsible for metering mail for almost all county departments including offices at the HHS Complex, Sheriff's Office, Treasurer's Office, DMV, and other departments. The mail department metered over 128,000 pieces of mail in 2021
- Local revenues and recoveries totaled \$906,589 in 2021. Local recoveries are collections from or on behalf of a client or his estate effected by any legal processes authorized by the Social Services Law

The Fraud and Front-End Detection Systems (FEDS) Unit's primary function is to ensure that the expenditure of public funds is only for those who are legally entitled to receive these benefits. Through a variety of mandated programs and local initiatives, DSS investigators save taxpayer dollars by uncovering fraud of unreported assets, income, household composition, dual assistance, fraudulent vendor billing, misuse of funds, and the filing of false applications. Referrals to the fraud unit can be generated from within the agency or from external sources.

Fraud Referrals:

142 Received (In agency 48, Electronic 86, Support Collection 3, Public 5)

130 Unfounded

0 Arrest

12 Agency Repayments (Fraud referral and Overpayment referrals that had fraud involvement)

\$ 1,513.80 in Public Assistance monies

\$ 12,063.00 in SNAP monies

\$ 13,576.80 Total monies referred for collections

Overpayment Referrals:

32 Received

05 Pending

25 No overpayments

02 Agency errors (MA \$1,331.10, SNAP \$612.00)

\$1,943.10 Total of monies referred for collections

Front End Detection (FEDS):

55 Received

20 Unfounded

35 Founded

\$ 5,204.00 Total Monthly Local Share Savings

\$ 39,049.00 Total Monthly Savings

\$ 31,224.00 6 Month Projected Local Share Savings

\$234,294.00 6 Month Projected Savings

Eligibility Verification Review (EVR):

1 Received

0 Unfounded

1 Founded

\$ 266.00 Monthly Savings

\$ 1,596.00 6 Month Projected Savings

Children & Adult Services:

Liz Myers, Director

Staff Development:

The Covid-19 Pandemic continued into 2021 causing training to be offered virtually. The convenience and reduced cost due to the virtual platform contributed to an increase in staff attending trainings.

The Caseworker Foundations and Response Trainings that are mandated for new CPS caseworkers continued to be offered virtually. Two CPS caseworkers virtually attended Child Welfare Foundations and Response training. A total of 803 participants attended a total of 453 state-sponsored trainings equaling 3,119 hours. All trainings were in a web-based setting. In addition to the State-Sponsored trainings, 688 participants attended a total of 198 local-sponsored trainings equaling 1,847.75 training hours. These trainings were offered in-house and virtually. Driver Safety Training was attended by 17 staff in the virtual platform.

All new hires to Tioga County DSS must complete New Employee Orientation. This Orientation gives new employees an overview of the departments and reviews pertinent policies and procedures. This Orientation lasts between 2-10 hours depending on the new employee's job. In 2021, the SDC conducted New Employee Orientation for 15 new hires equaling 40.5 hours of training. The SDC then coordinated and monitored the completion of all additional mandatory and requested trainings for each new hire.

The SDC is also responsible for the in-house training and mentoring of all new Caseworkers within the Services Division. In 2021 there were 4 new Caseworkers hired and trained. The training unit continues to allow new caseworkers, the SDC, and supervisor to more easily collaborate and offer cohesive training. The SDC delivered over 100 hours of training through modeling and hands on practical experience in 2021.

Child Protective/Preventive Services (2021):

In 2021, Child Protective Services received 1208 reports, 860 of which were tracked to investigative workers and 348 of which were tracked to the Family Assessment Response (FAR) workers.

Of the 1208 reports received, there were 95 consolidated subsequent FAR reports and 246 consolidated subsequent investigative reports. There was a total of 187 secondary reports, 170 of which were screened to the investigative track and 17 to the FAR track. Of the 87 "add info" or duplicate reports, 72 were screened to the investigative track and 15 to the FAR track.

Of the 860 cases screened to the investigative track, less secondaries, add info and consolidated reports, Tioga County was responsible for determining 372 reports in 2021.

Of the 498 investigations determined in 2021 (as there was carry over from 2020), 307 were unfounded and 191 were indicated. Of the 191 indicated, 156 were indicated and closed and 35 were indicated and opened for ongoing preventive services.

Of the total 1208 reports received, 207 contained allegations involving drug use, a slight decrease from 2020, when 213 reports received contained an allegation of drug use.

CPS/Preventive Services served a total 49 families in 2021 involving 128 children. Seventeen (17) families were discharged from Preventive Services in 2021.

CPS/Preventive Services filed 22 Neglect petitions on behalf of 47 children and filed 2 abuse petitions on behalf of 5 children.

Foster Care/Adoption/Homefinding – 2021

There were 21 admissions to Foster Care and 11 discharges. Of the 21 admissions, 17 were placed due to abuse/neglect and the remaining 4 were Juvenile Delinquents. Of the 11 children who were discharged for the calendar year 2021, four were reunited with a parent, four were discharged to a relative and three were discharged to themselves as they aged out of foster care. The average length of time spent in care for these children was 2 years and 2 months. Of these 11 children discharged from foster care, 4 (36.6%) of them were discharged within 1 year of their placement date. Of special note, a sibling set who spent more than 4 years in foster care found permanency through Kinship Guardianship when discharged to a grandparent in summer of 2021. Additionally, no children re-entered foster care in 2021.

Foster/Adoptive Homes: Seven foster homes were opened in 2021. Five of the homes were emergency approved relative homes. These homes are located in Newark Valley School District (2), Owego-Apalachin School District (2), Tioga Center School District, Spencer Van-Etten School District and the Horseheads School District. 2021 saw six (6) foster homes close. All but 1 of the homes closed voluntarily.

Of the 21 admissions to Foster Care, 7 (33.3%) children were placed directly with approved relative foster parents at their time of removal. Kinship Foster Home placements were 26.6% of all placements at the end of 2021.

Five Tioga County youth were in detention during 2021 for a total of 144 days.

Adoptions: There were no adoptions finalized in 2021. At the end of 2021 there were 4 children completely freed for adoption and one placed in a pre-adoptive home with adoption planned for early 2022.

The Glove House Group Home serviced 1 youth during 2021. Glove House Therapeutic Foster Boarding Homes served 2 children. Berkshire Farms had 1 child serviced by their Therapeutic Foster Boarding Homes.

Throughout 2021, DSS Staff (Administration, Foster Care, Systems and Accounting) along with the Legal Department/County Attorney, Family Court Staff and Probation, planned for the implementation of the Family First Prevention Services Act. While there are multiple components of this Federal Act, the initial requirement changed the requirements for children placed into Congregate Care (now called Qualified Residential Treatment Placements or QRTPs). In September of 2021, these new rules became effective which require additional assessments along with Court oversight and approval. All stakeholders were involved in developing local procedures to ensure the rules and requirements will be met. If any one of the required components are not met, there are fiscal sanctions (no reimbursement) from the State of New York to the Local District in certain categories of eligibility.

CAC and Safe Harbour 2021

The Child Advocacy Center (CAC) was fully opened in 2021 to serve as a place for children and youth to be interviewed about alleged child sexual or physical abuse in a safe, child friendly, non-institutional setting. Our partners in the New York State Police, Owego Police Department and Tioga County Sheriff's Department, along with child protective staff used the location to interview 92 children throughout the year.

Families were seen in a timely manner, at their convenience, in some instances, late into the night.

All families seen at the CAC were provided with advocacy services, furnished through an agreement with A New Hope Center. Advocates provide support, information and referrals to families at some of the most difficult times. Caregivers were provided with brochures, assistance in accessing services and with finding transportation, obtaining orders of protection and with Christmas presents.

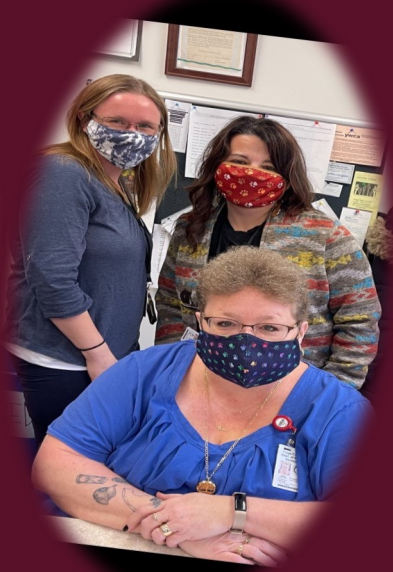
Children were provided with a goody bag of activities, a snack and a comfortable place to talk about what happened to them.

Our Multi-Disciplinary Team (MDT) partners in law enforcement, advocacy, prosecution, mental health and specialized treatment shared their wealth of knowledge and experience, as well as constructive feedback so that families and children were provided with the best experience and resources moving forward.

The Safe Harbour program continued to grow and thrive in 2021. Since 2019, when 9 youth were served, the program served 15 youth in 2020 and 30 youth in 2021. In 2021, the Safe Harbour Coordinator completed certification in the One Circle Foundation to facilitate the Boys' Council and Girls' Circle programs, a strengths based approach for youth's safe and healthy development.

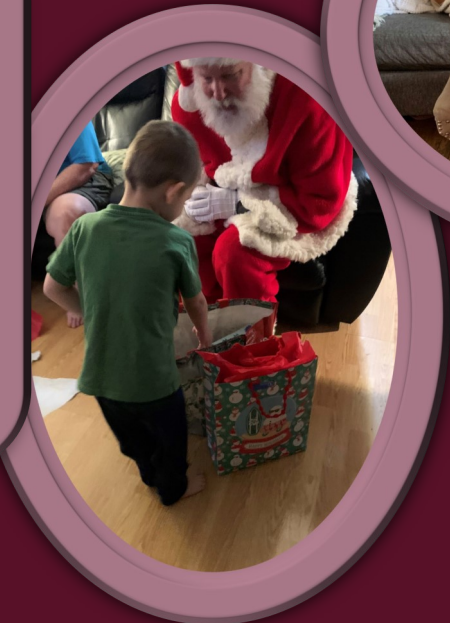
The Safe Harbour Coordinator, along with contracted partners A New Hope Center conducted several trainings and informational sessions to community agencies such as Tioga County Probation, the Tioga County Sheriff's Department, Tioga Opportunities Family Planning, Owego Rotary Club and the Spencer Van-Etten School District, among others. Safe Harbour was also present at several tabling events: the Candor Farmer's Market, Blueberries and Books, Trunk or Treat and Lights on the River.

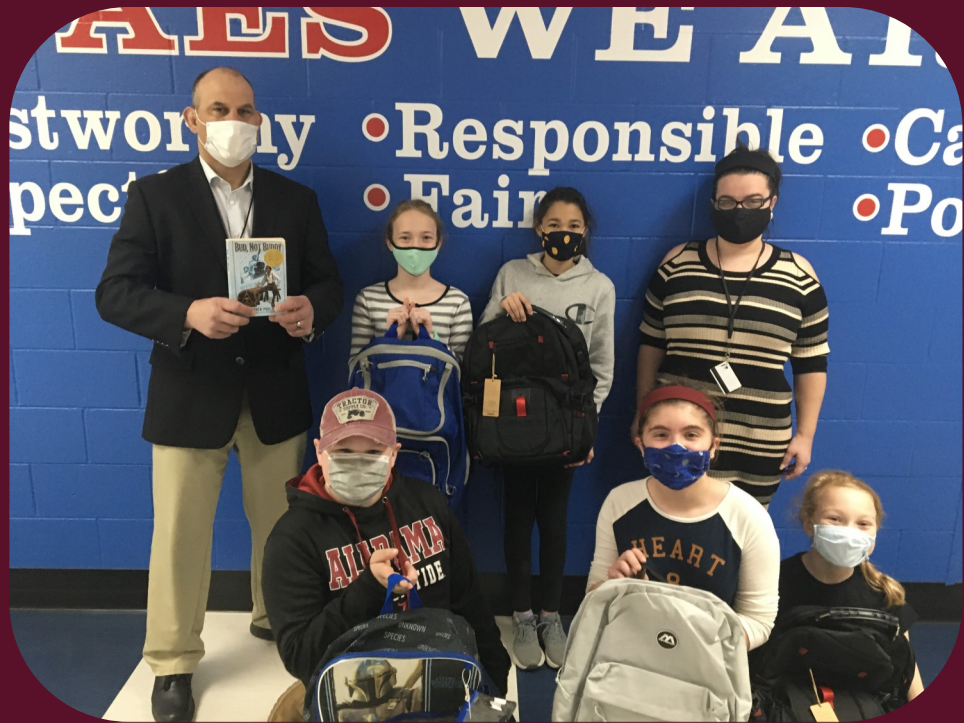
In January, we participated in "Look Beneath the Surface," a professional speakers' series on the topic of human trafficking. We raised awareness through press releases in the Pennysaver and published pictures our partners Wearing Blue on January 11. We began work on our 2022 awareness campaign in December by drafting a proclamation to the Tioga County Legislature asking that January be recognized as Human Trafficking Awareness Month and by assembling bags with promotional materials to hand out in January for our Shed Light on Human Trafficking Initiative.



Staff support the "Wear Blue" for the Human Trafficking Awareness campaign; Interview rooms at the Child Advocacy Center;

Santa delivers donated gifts to Foster Children





Owego-Apalachin Schools donate backpacks for Foster Children



Tioga Career Center

Sheri McCall, Supervisor

In 2021, The Tioga Career Center remained one of the few Centers in NYS that was open to the public. Many are still closed to the public as of 2022. We continue to serve all customers with walk-in and scheduled appointments for Unemployment Assistance, Unemployment mandated appointments, GST BOCES GED class, resumes, job search assistance, computer skills, tutoring, on line applications, Classroom and On the Job training funded opportunities, and referrals to other partner agencies and community resources. Services are provided by Workforce staff, Literacy Volunteers T.A.L.L and T.E.L., GST BOCES, WIOA Youth Program- Cornell Cooperative Extension Tioga, and ACCES-VR. Tioga Career Center was able to assist customers from the surrounding counties who did not have open Centers in their counties.

We continue to provide services to employers, with job postings, hiring events, On the Job training opportunities, and assist with hiring and Unemployment issues. We held 2 job fairs in 2021- March was a virtual event with approximately 135 job seekers, and an in person event in August, held just before the federal benefits cutoff of Sept 5th. Only 88 job seekers attended that event, when we had over 1500 UI claims set to expire.

Unemployment services remain a major portion of services provided due to the new mandates in filing for unemployment; namely the IDme identity verification component necessary to complete prior to being able to file a claim. The IDme process is an arduous process that can take hours and sometimes days to complete with an individual. The Tioga Career Center has developed unemployment contacts to more readily resolve the UI issues faced by customers.



Employment & Transitional Supports

Julie Whipple, Director

HEAP

- The Home Energy Assistance Program (HEAP) is a vital program that helps low-income people pay the cost of heating and heating/cooling repair costs in their homes. The 2020-2021 HEAP Season ran from November 2, 2020, through September 30, 2021. The HEAP Unit processed 5850 benefits resulting in allocations of \$2,711,303 or an average of \$463 per benefit.

HEAP also assisted 79 homeowners with the repair or replacement of their primary heating equipment, for a total of \$50,902.

Temporary Assistance and Intake/Employment Unit:

- DSS started as a VITA site in 2004. Assistance is provided to working individuals to have their tax returns e-filed at no cost. In 2021, for tax year 2020, 254 returns were processed resulting in Federal refunds of \$433,659.00 and State refunds of \$62,097.00 totaling \$495,756.00, of which \$105,122.00 was EITC monies, all returning to, and being reinvested in, the local economy. Since 2006, we have completed 2,044 returns with a combined total in tax refunds of \$4,609,224.00.

- Work experience programs didn't begin again due to COVID waivers until 10/1/21. From 10/1/21-12/31/21 Employment Specialists closely monitored 7 employable work experience participants who completed work projects for 4 different not-for-profit agencies throughout the community; one had a positive job placement, three were closed/denied for non-compliance with work experience and three are now on medical. We had 5 employables assigned to work experience for the period of 01/02/20 – 02/07/20 when due to COVID, work experience was waived. The waiver continued through 09/30/21.

- In 2021, the Tioga Career Center's reception signed in 3,036 walk-in customers. This number is down slightly from 2020 when 3,044 walk-in customers were signed in.

- In 2021, the Tioga Career Center's reception answered and assisted 7838 incoming phone calls.

- Staff meets weekly with employable persons applying for and/or in receipt of Safety Net and TANF, reviews their job search logs. 139 duplicated Temporary Assistance Customers were assigned to JOBS; of those 139, 40 unduplicated had actual job placements. This number is up compared to 96 duplicated being assigned to JOBS in 2020 but 56 unduplicated had actual job placements.

- The total number of averaged Cash Assistance cases decreased from 295 in 2020 to 245 in 2021.

- The number of families in the Family Assistance (TANF) caseload average decreased from 176 in 2020 to 152 in 2021.

- The Safety Net caseload (single individuals and couples as well as families that have reached the 60-month time limit) average was 59 in 2021, down from 73 average in 2020.

- NYS Emergency Rental Assistance Program – 280 Tioga County tenants applied. Although administered by the State, local staff did outreach and provided direct assistance to 179 tenants and 44 landlords. Three laptop computers and scanners were provided to community organizations to help facilitate the process for tenants who otherwise would not have program access.

- The Daycare unit is co-located in the Career Center. In 2021, the Daycare caseload was comprised of an average 98 cases serving an average of 167 children and 125 adults. These

numbers are down from 2020 when the caseload was comprised of an average of 108 cases serving an average of 193 children and 138 adults.

- The Social Security Disability Case Manager received 21 new SN referrals and 12 new TANF referrals. Due to the receipt of SSI 2 TANF cases closed, 2 TANF cases reduced, and 11 SN cases closed.

SNAP/Medicaid Unit

- Using the “Task-Based” Process Management Model, this Unit processed applications, recertifications and undercare maintenance for a total of 17,380 completed tasks in 2021.
- The average monthly number of individuals receiving SNAP (Food Stamps) benefits in 2021 was 4,750 (approximately 1,619 of these were children).
- The monthly average of the total number of Tioga County individuals on Medicaid in 2021 was 13,184. 3,686 of these cases continued to be managed by FSMA staff, the remainder are on the State Exchange. The average number of SSI individuals was 1,173 (187 were children).
- The average number of Chronic Care (nursing home, assisted living and waiver programs) Medicaid cases was 223 per month for 2021.

Child Support Enforcement Unit (CSEU)

- The Child Support Enforcement Unit collected \$5,437,937 in 2021.
- Average monthly caseload 2,063.
- Reimbursements to DSS in 2021 totaled \$530,725 compared to \$660,799 in 2020.
- The Child Support Enforcement Unit filed a total of 557 petitions in 2021, up 4% from 538 in 2020.

Youth Bureau

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



Pictured: Laptops & Scanners provided to community organizations to assist with ERAP; E&TS staff on the road to promote our programs and assist our community.

Employee Recognitions

Employee of the first quarter, 2021: Christine Gloss

Christine began her career with Tioga County DSS on November 12, 2019 when she was hired as a caseworker in the Children's Services Unit. In her role as a Preventive worker she is responsible for assisting families in navigating voluntary services or their court ordered stipulations. Christine has been able to develop relationships with challenging clients which allows them to fulfill their obligations and find success. Families who other caseworkers have found to be resistant to Department intervention have said that they would like to keep their Preventive case open with Christine longer as they have found her to be so helpful. She engages with families in an empathetic way but also holds them accountable for their actions. This was most notable during a difficult removal in which Christine trusted her gut to make an unannounced home visit to see if a family was abiding by the order of protection that was in place. While most removals are difficult, the unique circumstances with this one left Christine alone with the family for over an hour while they hurled insults and personal attacks at her as she awaited another staff member to bring removal paperwork. Despite the difficulty of that day, Christine has continued to work in partnership with that family.

Christine is flexible and motivated, often having a plan of how she will keep on top of her work and looking for ways to meet workload demands when cases increase. Christine is willing to step out of her comfort zone and assist others with establishing safeties on new investigations. Christine was recently promoted to a Senior Caseworker and will again be stepping out of her comfort zone as she takes on a role of a CPS Investigator. She is always looking to learn more about aspects of her job so that she can be the best that she can be.

Christine has been a valuable member of the training unit, taking new caseworkers out into the field on home visits and showing them tips and techniques she uses to keep up to date with progress notes or scheduling visits. New caseworkers have expressed that they appreciate Christine's feedback when they assist her with progress notes.

Employee of the second quarter, 2021: Joe Breitwieser

Joe began his career with Tioga County DSS in 2018 as a Community Services Worker. Joe was promoted to a Social Welfare Examiner in the Temporary Assistance Intake/Employment Unit on October 28, 2019.

Joe is motivated, flexible, timely, dependable, and efficient. Joe is often the first one willing to change his schedule to best fit the needs of the department. He routinely takes on new projects without complaint and learns them quickly. Joe's positive outlook and friendliness are evident throughout his daily activities with the Division and his high level of professionalism is astounding.

Employee of the third quarter 2021, Doreen Holbrook

Doreen is very knowledgeable of the child support program and knows all aspects of the accounting. She is responsible for interpreting court orders, setting up accounts, and adjusting accounts based upon those orders. She daily reviews disbursements and transactions on reports to check to make sure money was applied accurately. Doreen does the monthly bank reconciliations and wire transfers. Doreen is responsible for personal service paperwork, tax interceptions, refunds, closed files, DSS pass-through exceptions, undisbursed collections, and many other tasks. Doreen is very attentive to detail, and priorities well, and is very accurate and efficient in her work. Doreen is also responsible to train and audit the work of another Accounting Associate.

Doreen is very welcoming when a visitor comes to the Child Support office. She is very professional and courteous to the customers, and able to remain calm in stressful situations. She is also helpful to other units when they request child support information.

Doreen is a “jack of all trades” and takes the initiative to complete tasks as she sees they need completing. She has a tremendous work ethic and is willing to do whatever it takes to get the job done. Doreen is very caring, conscientious, knowledgeable, and dependable.

Employee of the fourth quarter 2021, Brandi Wilson

Brandi's main responsibility as the Community Services Worker in the Foster Care Unit is supervising visits between parents and their children. One does not realize the amount of work it takes to coordinate these visits until they are forced to arrange them. In the last quarter, the unit has been down a Community Services Worker, leaving the majority of these visits on Brandi to arrange and supervise. Brandi has handled the increase in work seamlessly and without complaint. Brandi is on the go from the minute she gets to the office, traveling hundreds of miles each week, lugging car seats around, observing interactions between parents and their children, intervening and coaching parents through issues and lending an ear when others need to vent. Brandi is often the middleman between parents, foster parents and caseworkers. She is excellent at communicating issues as they arise in order to address concerns immediately.

When the rare occasion arises, that Brandi has free time in the office, she is always willing to take on other jobs. For example, she assisted in cleaning out and reorganizing the mess of a closet in Services and took several trips to the Open-Door Mission to donate items. She ensures that our visitation room has safe, age-appropriate toys and remains clean. She ensures car seats are in good working order and not expired. She's taken on extra transports of clients, assisted families with paperwork, dropped off items to those in need, and does all of this with a smile and positive attitude.

Brandi has been the rock in the evolving Foster Care Unit. She is reliable, helpful, and thoughtful. Her paperwork is timely and thorough. Her dedication and commitment to the children in foster care and their families is obvious in the work that she does and is so very appreciated.

Everyday Brandi juggles her job, family and going back to school. Brandi should be proud of what she does and confident that she is making a positive impact in the lives of those she is involved with.

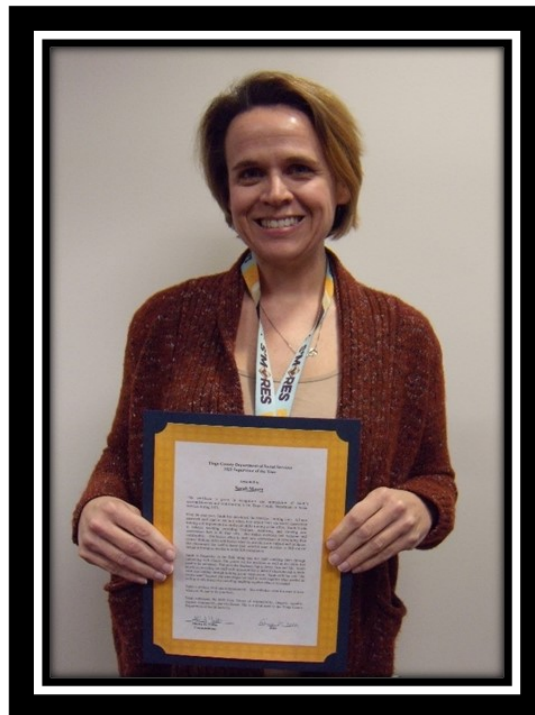
Supervisor of the Year, 2021—Sarah Moore

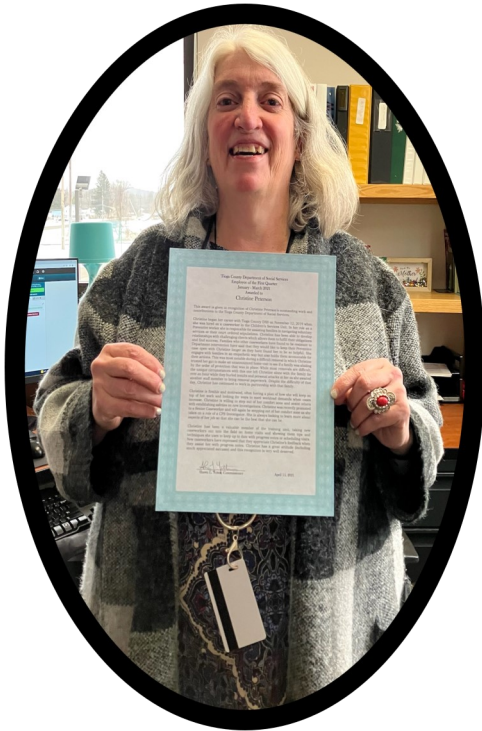
Over the past year, Sarah has developed the Services Training Unit. All new casework staff start in her unit where they attend State sponsored caseworker training and implement the on-the-job skills training at the office. Sarah is able to balance teaching, providing feedback, mentoring, and showing new caseworkers how to do their jobs. She makes everyone feel welcome and comfortable. She knows when to push new caseworkers in developing their critical thinking skills and knows when to provide more support and guidance. She encourages her staff to leave their comfort zone in order to find out the factual information needed to make full assessments.

Sarah is frequently in the field alongside her staff coaching them through interacting with clients. She points out the positives as well as the skills that need to be enhanced. She provides feedback that is direct, firm and fair. Sarah excels at providing her staff with opportunities to debrief situations and to learn from one another through holding group supervision. Sarah calls her unit “the dream team” because she encourages her staff to work together when needed as well as to talk things out including laughing together when it is needed.

Sarah is patient, kind and compassionate. She embodies what it means to love what you do and to try your best.

Sarah represents the DSS Core Values of responsibility, integrity, equality, respect, compassion, and excellence. She is a great asset to the Tioga County Department of Social Services.





Pictured, clockwise from top left: Christine Gloss, Joseph Breitwieser,
Doreen Holbrook, Brandi Wilson