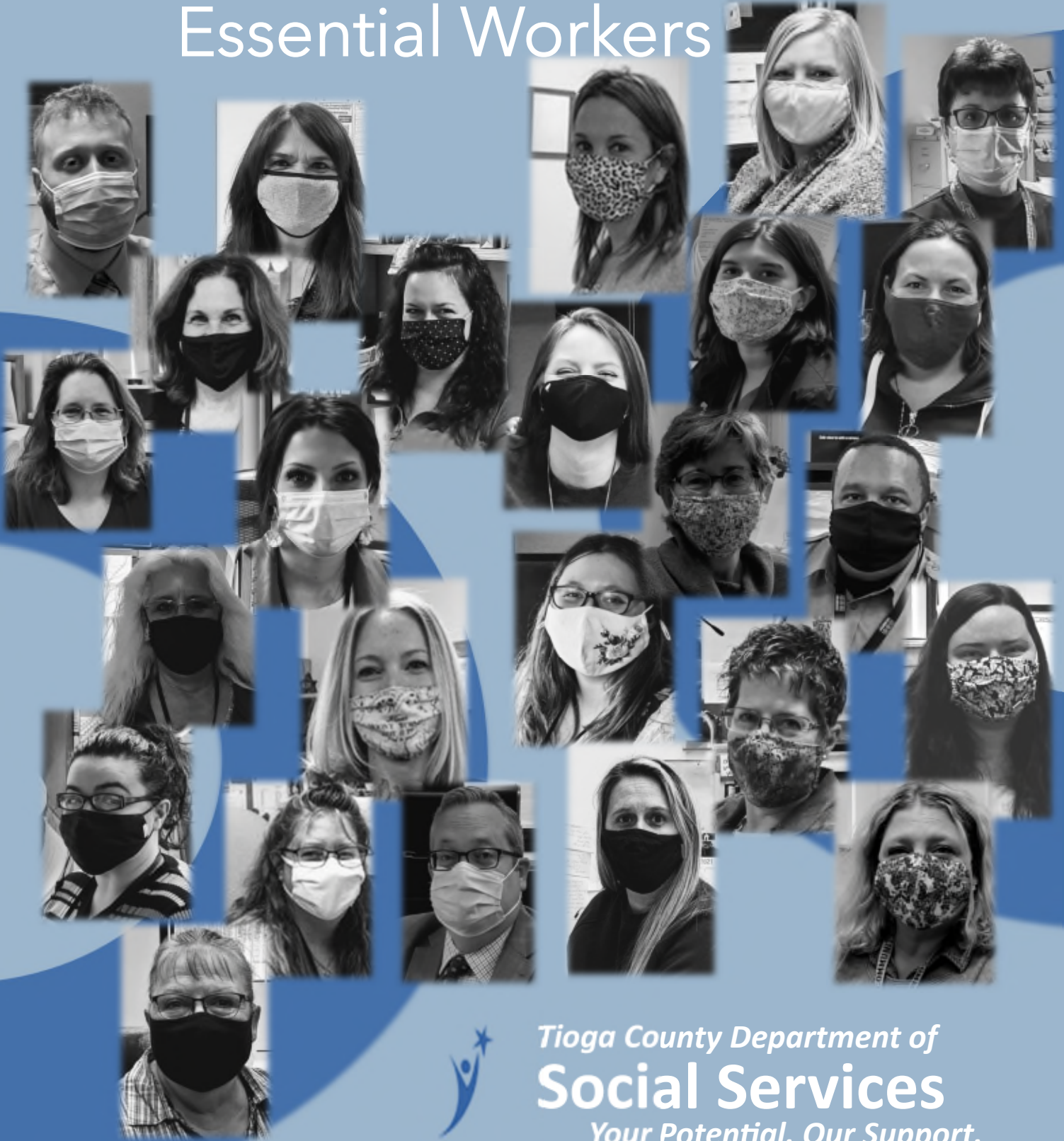


# 2020 Annual Report

## Essential Work

## Essential Workers



*Tioga County Department of*  
**Social Services**

*Your Potential. Our Support.*

2020

## Commissioner's Advisory Council

**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*

**Kathleen Keene, Principal**

*Tioga Central Schools*

**Eric Knolles, Superintendent**

*Waverly Central Schools*

**Lisa McCafferty, Director**

*Tioga County Public Health*

**Lori Morgan**

**Community Services Director**

*Tioga County Mental Hygiene*

**Dr. Joseph Morgan, Superintendent**

*Spencer-Van Etten Central Schools*

**Sister Mary O'Brien**

**Executive Director**

*Tioga County Rural Ministry*

**Marilyn Ochs**

*ACT and Owego Citizen*

**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*

**Elizabeth Stieglitz**

*Berkshire Citizen*

**Kelly White**

**Nutrition Program Manager**

*Cornell Cooperative Extension*

On the cover: Just a few of the many faces of DSS staff who continued to work throughout the pandemic.

## A Message from the Commissioner



Just when you think you could not be prouder of the accomplishments that you see from the team you have around you, something like 2020 rears its head and you realize, you can indeed be prouder!

As an entity that had to continue to function without pause during the COVID-19 pandemic, I witnessed our staff provide services to our vulnerable populations in the County without hesitation and with the same level, if not more, of compassion and care that they always show.

The staff that had to continue to be in the field never once complained. The staff that continued to see people in the agency never once complained. While the rules seemed to change every day (sometimes every hour) the Administrative Team and supervisors worked diligently to make sure our staff, and the people we were serving, were safe and had all the tools they needed to remain safe. We are all going to look back on 2020 with a different lens, depending on how we were professionally and personally impacted as individuals and as a collective. I will look back with pride, admiration and gratitude for what every employee of this department did to make sure we all found our way to the other side of this historic pandemic.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Shawn L. Yetter".

**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

*Encouraging and motivating the best in others and ourselves.*

## 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/](http://www.tiogacountyny.com/departments/social-services/)**

# ADMINISTRATIVE AND SUPERVISORY STAFF

## ADMINISTRATION

Shawn L. Yetter, Commissioner  
Gary Grant, Deputy Commissioner  
Elizabeth Myers, Director of Services  
Natalie Thompson, Director of Employment & Transitional Supports  
Administrative Secretaries: Heather Anderson, 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  
Julie Whipple, Principal Social Welfare Examiner

## LEGAL DEPARTMENT

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

## SERVICES DIVISION

Jennifer Green, Child Advocacy Center Supervisor/Safe Harbour Coordinator  
Joy MacNaughton, Foster Care/Adoption/Home Finding Supervisor  
Sarah Moore, CPS/Preventive Services Supervisor  
Michele Resue, Adolescent/Adult Services Supervisor  
Tricia Soper, CPS/FAR Supervisor  
Sarah Tiffany, CPS/Preventive Services Supervisor

## TIOGA EMPLOYMENT CENTER

Sheri McCall, Manager

## YOUTH BUREAU

Natalie Thompson, Director

## 2020 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

## 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.

- ◆ The **Accounting Department** participated in the Annual State Single Audit. The programs tested were TANF (40 records), Foster Care IVE (7 records). They also audited 40 administrative disbursements. There were no significant findings.
- ◆ Accounting and Systems continue to successfully integrate the BICS and data entry functions. This was done as a cost savings measure and to provide cross training proficiencies.
- ◆ Accounting maintained many services throughout the COVID pandemic, such as continuing to provide departments with needed reporting, processing timely payments with little to no loss of efficiency and back-up to Systems. This is due to the dedication of the Accounting staff using and creating improved processes.
- ◆ All the Accounting staff continue to be cross trained to learn new accounting functions due to need, to increase efficiency, and succession planning.
- ◆ Accounting worked with APS and maintained a total of 50+ rep payee accounts. An estimated 6,000 transactions were completed, including taking in their incomes and processing payments totaling \$532,186.64 on their behalf.
- ◆ **Systems** is responsible for metering mail for almost all County departments including offices at the HHS Complex, Sheriff's Office, Treasurer's Office, DMV, and other departments. The mail department metered over 84,000 pieces of mail in 2020.
- ◆ Systems provided staff with access to VDI (Virtual Desktop Infrastructure) so staff could work remotely during the pandemic.
- ◆ Computers that were purchased at the end of 2019 were received in 2020 and 19 of those computers were redistributed to staff using a computer more than nine years old.
- ◆ Four Surface Pros™ were purchased and are being utilize by the supervisors in Employment and Transitional Supports for remote access to their State devices.

New York State staff conducted the Agency's Annual Review for the application usage of Connections, overseen by the Office of Children and Family Services (OCFS).

The Connections review focused on user security controls, verified that users only received permissions needed for their job scope, and that staff position changes and removal were completed in a timely manner. The review team found that Tioga County continues to be consistent with state requirements and is prompt in keeping user profiles current and only granting access to what is needed.



Local revenues and recoveries (collections from or on behalf of a client or their estate affected by any legal processes authorized by Social Services Law) totaled \$1,018,742 in 2020.

## 2020 Budget

The Department of Social Services ended 2020 with a budget return of \$696,160.

In August of 2020, an additional \$91,405 was removed from our budget to offset County-wide losses of revenue due to COVID-19.

### Administrative Budget Highlights: (-\$99,356) under budget

Full-Time Payroll	(-\$98,552)
Part-Time Payroll	(-\$28,696)
Overtime Payroll	(-19,565)
Contractual Lines	(-\$559,813)
Administrative Revenues	(-\$608,878)

### Program Budget Highlights: (-596,275) under budget

Medicaid local share (-\$512,689) *weekly share reduction*

Foster Care/Adoption Local Share +\$30,082

JD/Pins and Detention Local Share (-171,542) *no secure detention chargebacks*

OCFS Local Share Chargeback +\$36,097

Safety Net Local Share +\$10,879



On the **Capital Budget** line,  
4 new cars were  
purchased in 2020.

The **Employment Budget**  
outcome was \$8,116 over as  
the result of the reduction in  
Federal allocation.

**Youth Bureau Budget**  
was \$500 under in 2020.

# Children and Adult Services

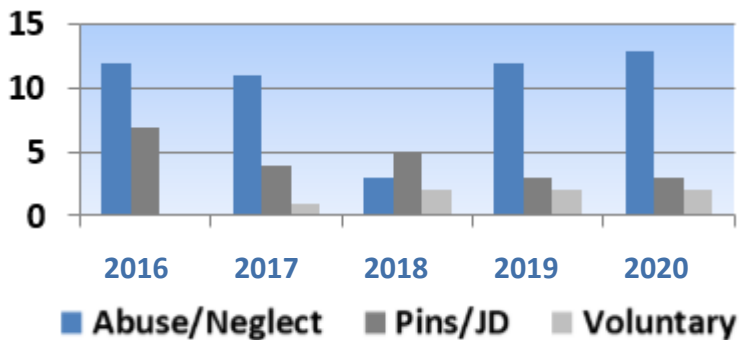
## Children and Adult Services

Liz Myers, Director

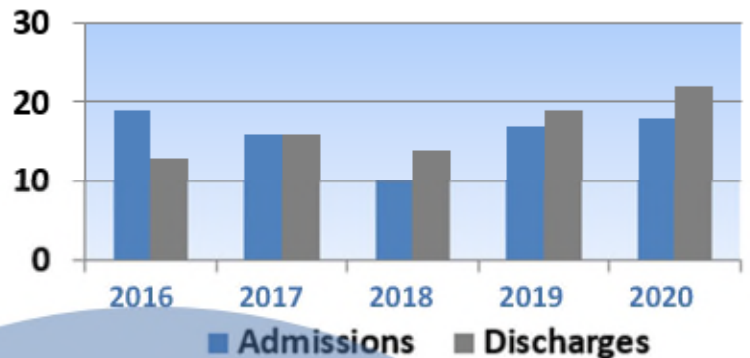
### Foster Care/Adoption Unit

There were 22 admissions to Foster Care and 15 discharges. Of the 22 admissions, 19 were placed due to abuse/neglect, the remaining three were Juvenile Delinquents. Of the 15 children that were discharged for the calendar year 2020, 12 were placed due to abuse/neglect, 1 was placed as Juvenile Delinquent, and 2 were placed as PINS (Persons In Need of Supervision) children. Of the 15 discharges, 7 were reunited with a parent, 4 were discharged to a relative, 4 were discharged to themselves. Of the 15 discharges, the average length of stay was 1 year 4 ½ months in care. Ten children were discharged within one year of their placement date.

Admissions to Foster Care by Category



Foster Care Admissions and Discharges



## Foster Care/Adoption Unit, cont'd

**Out-of-County Placements:** The total number of children placed out of the County throughout 2020 was 19. Of those 19 children, 8 children had been in residential placements, six were in group home placements, two were in a therapeutic foster home, two were in regular foster homes, three of the homes were an approved relative home, and one child was in a psychiatric respite setting. As of December 31, 2020, there were 11 children placed out of Tioga County. Title I Regulations changed (Best Interest Determinations) to allow children placed in care to remain in their home school districts and directing the school district to provide transportation, within a reasonable distance, if placed outside of the home school district. This has allowed foster children to maintain their school connections and academic achievements despite the location of their foster care placement.

**Independent Living Program:** There were a total of 18 children that received independent living skills in 2020. Four of the children received these skills through Cornell Cooperative Extension in Tioga County. The delivery of the program included individual classes once a month and group sessions in July and August for a maximum of six children any given month. However, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, group sessions were not able to occur in 2020. Fourteen of the children received these skills through the congregate care agencies in which they were placed. Of the 18 children that received these services, four were discharged from care to independent living.

**Foster/Adoptive Homes:** Six foster homes were opened in 2020. Four of the homes were emergency certified relative homes and one became a certified relative home through the Interstate Compact for Placement of Children. Such placements eliminate the need for children to be placed with strangers and continue stability through their family connections. The foster homes are located in the Candor School District (2), the Newark Valley School District (2) the Owego Apalachin School District (1) and the Waverly School District (1). Five foster homes were closed in 2020, all closing voluntarily.

**Adoptions:** There were no adoptions finalized in 2020. As of December 31, 2020, there were no children completely freed for adoption and placed with a pre-adoptive family. There are three children completely freed for adoption that have not been placed in a pre-adoptive home; all are placed in residential treatment centers and have very high needs of care and supervision, which are barriers for a pre-adoptive resource. The unit is awaiting three more children to be freed for adoption in 2021 as termination of parental rights (TPR) petitions have been filed in 2020.

**Detention:** Eight Tioga County youth were in detention, for a total of 162 detention bed days.

**Glove House Group Home and Therapeutic Foster Boarding Homes:** The Glove House Transitional Independent Living Program (TILP) served zero youth in 2020. There were four children serviced by the Glove House Group Home. The Glove House Therapeutic Foster Boarding Home program served seven children.

**Child and Family Service Review Federal Performance Indicators:** The Foster Care Unit performed well on federal child welfare indicators during the 2020 calendar year. Regarding stability of placement of children in care, the federal guidelines define stability as having two or fewer placements for children that have been in foster care less than one year. For the 2020 calendar year, there were zero children that moved from placements more than two times within their first year of placement.

Federal guidelines for the rate of re-entry is less than 8.6%. For the 2020 calendar year, one child re-entered foster care within a year of their discharge.

The federal standard for discharges within one year of placement is 40.5%. There were 15 children that were discharged for the calendar year 2020, seven were reunited with a parent, four were discharged to a relative, and four were discharged to themselves. Of the 15 discharges, 10 children were discharged within one year of their placement date. The average length of stay in care was 1 year 4 ½ months.



The Foster Care Unit also continued to work diligently to reduce the number of congregate care placements from the federal standard of 23% (as of 12/31/2018) to 17% by 9/30/21. Nine children were discharged from a congregate care setting in 2020 with the average placements for the year being 25%. At 2020 year end the rate was 20%.

The Foster Care Unit also continued working on the federal standard of increasing Kinship Foster Care placements from 20% (as of 12/31/2018) to 27% by 9/30/21. Throughout 2020 the rate of Kinship Foster Care placement was 25%. At 2020 year end the rate was 31%.



## Adult Protective/Adolescent Unit

Adult Services	
Adult Services Referrals	263
Adult Protective Referrals	161
Adult Protective Investigations	58

PINS Diversion	
Cases opened	29
Opened to MST	17
Opened to Berkshire Farms	5
Opened to PINS Preventive	7



## Child Protective/Preventive Services

In 2020, **Child Protective Services** received 1050 reports, 800 of which were assigned to the investigative workers and 245 of which were traced to the Family Assessment Response (FAR) workers.

Of the 1050 reports received, there were 18 consolidated subsequent FAR reports and 130 consolidated subsequent investigative reports. There was a total of 147 secondary reports, 132 of which were screened to the investigative track and 15 to the FAR track. Of the 83 “add information” or duplicate reports, 70 were screened to the investigative track and 13 to the FAR track.

800 cases (less secondaries, add infos and consolidated reports) were screened to the investigative track. Tioga County was responsible for determining 440 reports received in 2020.

Of the 451 investigations determined in 2020 (as there was carry over from 2019), 301 were unfounded and 150 were indicated. Of the 150 indicated, 123 were indicated and closed and 27 were indicated and opened for ongoing preventive services.

Of the total 1050 reports received, 213 (20%) contained allegations involving drug use, an increase from 2019, when 15% of the reports received contained an allegation of drug use.

DSS In House Preventive services were provided to 58 families with 153 children. 11 families were discharged from preventive services.

In 2020, 22 neglect petitions were filed on behalf of 26 children. Two abuse petitions were filed on behalf of 2 children.



## Child Advocacy Center

In 2020, Tioga County DSS opened **Tioga County's Child Advocacy Center (CAC)**. CACs are State-wide child-focused facilities that help abused children heal by coordinating the investigation and treatment of child sexual abuse and providing children and families access to long-term advocacy and healthcare. The primary goal of CACs is to ensure that children disclosing abuse are not further victimized by the intervention systems designed to protect them. Together, they work with law enforcement, prosecutors, social services, advocates, medical and mental health professionals and others to provide high-quality, specialized services for abused children and their families. Services are provided in the comfort and convenience of a child-friendly location and all services are free.

The **Tioga County Child Advocacy Center (CAC)** worked through the challenges of program development and was ultimately able to open its doors and start serving families at the end of 2020. Aside from the obvious impediment of COVID, the CAC needed a director and a home. A supervisor was appointed in the spring, and a new site was located in July and secured in August.

Since August, the CAC Supervisor has begun meeting with County stakeholders to begin to develop policies, procedures and prepare to review cases that are served at the CAC.

In the coming year, the CAC anticipates meeting, if not surpassing its benchmark of 80% of eligible cases having interviews conducted at the CAC.



Tioga County **Safe Harbour** program began to grow in 2020 and serve an increased population of youth at risk of Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children (CSEC). The Safe Harbour program provided information, services and support to 12 youth in 2020. With an expanding team of community members and agencies joining the Safe Harbour committee, it is our hope to increase awareness and provide education and support to an even greater population in 2021.

## Fraud and FEDS

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:

259 Received (In-agency 109, Electronic 129, Support Collection 9, Public Assistance 12)  
228 Unfounded  
1 Arrest  
\$2690.00 in SNAP monies  
30 Agency Repayments (Fraud referral and Overpayment referrals that had fraud involvement)  
\$2,743.00 in Public Assistance monies  
\$23,607.00 in SNAP monies  
**\$29,040.00 Total monies referred for collections**

### Overpayment Referrals:

81 Received  
06 Pending  
46 No overpayments  
12 Agency errors (PA \$8,825.40, SNAP \$6,265.00)  
**\$15,090.40 Total of monies referred for collections**

### Eligibility Verification Review (EVR):

3 Received  
3 Unfounded  
0 Founded

### Front End Detection (FEDS):

66 Received  
28 Unfounded  
38 Founded  
\$7,802.00 Total Monthly Local Share Savings  
\$34,820.00 Total Monthly Savings  
\$46,811.52 6 Month Projected Local Share Savings  
**\$208,920.00 6 Month Projected Savings**



## Tioga Career Center (TCC) - Sheri McCall, Manager



In 2020, the **Tioga Career Center** was the only Center in NYS that did not shut down due to COVID. Partner agency DSS, maintained office staff to provide services, while Workforce Staff worked from home for 8 weeks. While working from home, Workforce staff assisted over 1500 customers in filing, opening, and resolving issues with unemployment claims. Workforce continued to assist businesses with services- job postings, COVID regulations, and unemployment

issues. Returning to the office on May 18, 2020, the Center was fully open, providing both walk-in and appointment services. Currently, Tioga Career Center is the only Center in this area (and for most of NYS) that is fully open for services.

Many partner agencies continued to work remotely through 2020, but GED classes were being offered in-person by the end of the year. Literacy Volunteers T.A.L.L. was in person and remote for computer skills, resumes, on line applications and other services. WIOA Youth program continued to provide services and enroll youth remotely and then in person by end of 2020. Workforce staff continued to provide individual and business services both in person and remotely.

In the Fall of 2020, unemployment fraud became a major issue. False claims and identity theft have been rampant with several businesses/agencies in Tioga County being targeted by scammers. TCC Workforce staff continue to identify and report false claims and assist individual and businesses in reporting fraud and taking steps to protect their data.

March 11, 2020 was the 6<sup>th</sup> annual **Tioga Co Job Fair**. Squeezing in just before the COVID-19 pandemic forced a shutdown of public gatherings, 88 employers participated and 356 job seekers attended.

# Employment and Transitional Supports

## Employment and Transitional Supports Natalie Thompson, Director



### Temporary Assistance and Employment

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, many normal standard operating procedures for Temporary Assistance were suspended in 2020. Examples of this include: telephone interview waivers; waiving of employment requirements that require in-person contact; delay of mandatory work assignments; mass change to case extensions; flexibility in verifying job loss; and, extended eligibility periods for day care recipients.

The average number of Cash Assistance cases decreased in 2020 from 313 in 2019 to 296\* in 2020.

The average number of families in the Family Assistance (TANF) caseload average decreased from 186 in 2019 to 176 in 2020\*.

The Safety Net caseload (single individuals and couples as well as families that have reached the 60-month time limit) average was 119 in 2020 compared to 128 in both 2019 and 2018\*.

In 2020 the Daycare Caseload was comprised of an average of 108 cases, a 20% decrease from 2019\*.



### VITA (Volunteer Income Tax Assistance)

The VITA program is provided to working individuals to have their tax returns e-filed at no cost. In 2020, for tax year 2019, 150 returns were processed resulting in Federal refunds of \$281,036.00 and State refunds of \$45,148.00; totaling \$326,184.00, of which \$79,521.00 were EITC monies, all returning to, and being reinvested in, the local economy.

Since 2006, 1,790 returns have been completed with a combined total in tax refunds of



In 2020, the Tioga Career Center's staff assisted 3,044 walk-in customers, down 61% from 2019\*, and fielded 8,708 phone calls.



\* Significant drops began in the spring months due to impacts from COVID-19 on the needs of individuals and families and the availability of facility access.

## Employment and Transitional Supports, cont'd

### The Home Energy Assistance Program (HEAP)

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



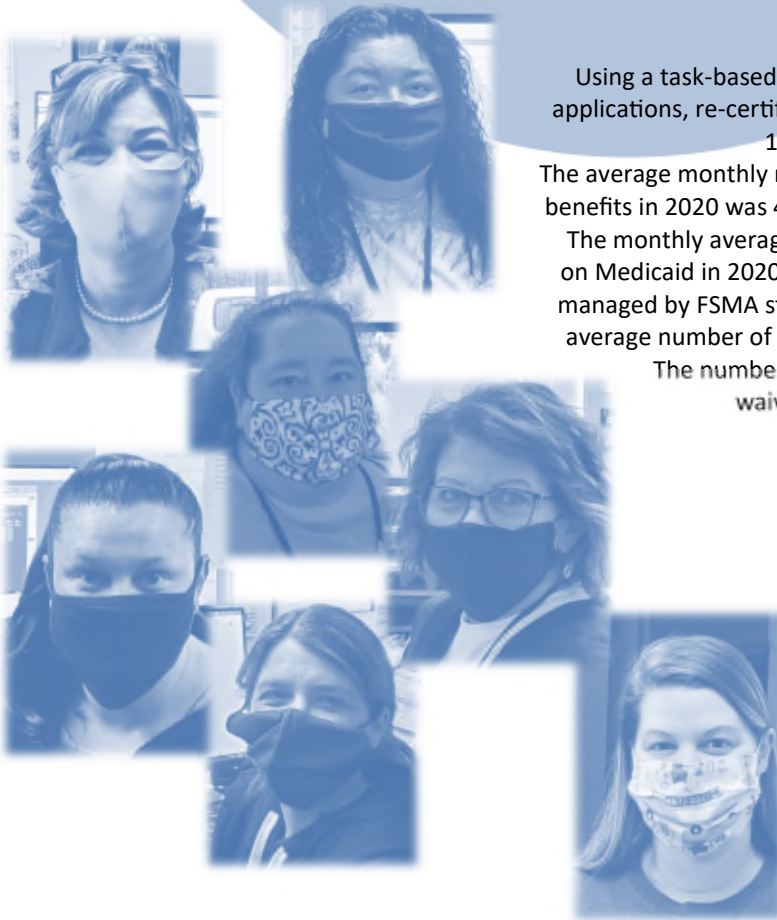
### SNAP/Medicaid Unit

Using a task-based process management model, the unit processed applications, re-certifications and under-care maintenance for a total of 18,323 completed tasks in 2020.

The average monthly number of individuals receiving SNAP (Food Stamps) benefits in 2020 was 4,604 (approximately 1,540 of these were children).

The monthly average of the total number of Tioga County individuals on Medicaid in 2020 was 10,562. 3,684 of these cases continued to be managed by FSMA staff, the remainder are on the State Exchange. The average number of SSI individuals was 1,198 (including 197 children).

The number of Chronic Care (nursing home, assisted living and waiver programs) Medicaid cases averaged 229 per month for 2020.



### Child Support Enforcement Unit (CSEU)

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

## Summer Youth Employment Program

2020 was an unusual and challenging year for SYEP. Because of the uncertainty of COVID-19, counties found out very late in the game whether this year's program would be a go.

Tioga County and BOCES staff had proceeded with the usual planning, so Tioga County was ready to implement the program when the State gave the go-ahead.

SYEP was shortened to 4 weeks in 2020, but an option was added for youth to work 5 days per week rather than the usual four in order to maximize their earnings. Unlike previous years, there were no in-person educational sessions, field trips, nor was the final graduation celebration held.

There were 34 participants this year, down from 55 in 2019. Youth were paid the current NYS minimum wage of \$11.80/hour.

There were 18 boys and 16 girls with the average age being 15.

10 worksites – Tioga County Boys & Girls Club, Catholic Charities, DSS, Greenwood Park, Spencer Highway Department, Stray Haven, Tioga Learning Center, Tioga Opportunities, Waterman Conservation Center and Waverly High School.



## Tioga County Youth Bureau

The Tioga County Youth Bureau serves the County by addressing the priorities of preventing child abuse and neglect and providing programs for youth during non-school hours.

In 2020, the Tioga County Youth Bureau funded eleven programs that served over 1000 youth. 100% of \$46,600 allocated to the programs was reimbursed to the County by the State Office of Children and Family Services.

### 2020 Youth Bureau Funded Agencies

- Big Brother Big Sisters of the Twin Tiers
- Casa-Trinity Global Leadership Now
- Cornell Cooperative Extension 4-H Summer Youth Enrichment
- Cornell Cooperative Extension Family Resource Center
- Empire State Special Needs Experience Camp Badger
- Kali's Klub House & Keys to Success
- Northern Tioga Joint Summer Recreation
- Spencer Van-Etten Schools PAVE
- Tioga Central Schools Summer Rec
- Town of Owego waterman Camp
- Village of Waverly Summer Recreation

## Staff Development and Training

The logistics for **Training and Staff Development** changed drastically in 2020 due to the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, as travel to the Human Services Training Center was suspended as well as all other in-person trainings. There was a massive undertaking by the Office of Children and Family Services (OCFS), the Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance (OTDA), the Bureau of Training and Development (BTD), and their training partners to convert trainings to a virtual platform. As the year progressed and the pandemic did not slow, more trainings were converted to ensure new and existing staff could be fully trained safely without appearing in a face-to-face classroom setting. The convenience and reduced cost due to the virtual platform contributed to an increase in staff attending trainings.

The special circumstances of 2020 led to the conversion to a virtual platform of all the Caseworker Foundations and Response Trainings that are mandated for new CPS caseworkers. The SDC worked with the Director of Services and Supervisor to update the new caseworker training plans to align with the layout of the virtual training platform. Twelve CPS caseworkers virtually attended part or all of their Child Welfare Foundations and Response trainings. Retirements and promotions within the Department of Social Services led to a training need in several departments, as staff were promoted to fill vacant positions. Over the course of the year, most trainings were converted to the virtual platform or not offered. A total of 79 staff attended 2,980.6 hours of state-sponsored trainings. Most of these trainings were in a web-based setting. In addition to the State-Sponsored trainings, staff attended a total of 140 local-sponsored trainings equaling 1032 training hours. These trainings were offered in-house and virtually. Driver Safety Training was attended by 45 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 1-2 days depending on the new employee's job. In 2020, the SDC conducted New Employee Orientation for 18 new hires equaling 92 hours of training. The SDC then coordinated and monitored the completion of all additional mandatory and requested trainings required of each new hire dependent upon their unit.

The SDC is also responsible for the in-house training and mentoring of all new Caseworkers within the Services Division. In 2020 there were 10 new Caseworkers and 1 Community Services Worker hired and trained. The training was completed through modeling and hands on practical experience for a period of 6-9 months. The Caseworkers followed a training plan to ensure all necessary training was completed. In 2020, a training unit was created to allow trainees an opportunity to practice casework skills and learn the daily functions of casework practice prior to moving to their assigned unit and obtaining their own caseload.

This was an unprecedented year in the world of training and development, but with the collaboration of all the training partners and some innovation, training mandates were fully met.

The 2020 year of training is sure to change the reality of training in the future.

The **2020 Strategic Training Plan** was developed by the Staff Development Coordinator (SDC) with input from Administrators, Supervisors and staff and gave details of the specific training needs for each unit at DSS. The 2020 Strategic Training Plan included 8 requested trainings. The SDC worked in collaborative partnerships with the New York State Bureau of Training through the Office of Children and Family Services (OCFS), the Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance (OTDA), the Social Work Education Consortium (SWEC), the Social Services Workforce Development and others. Of the eight requested trainings, one was successfully scheduled and attended by staff. The remaining requests were not available or not accomplished due the pandemic. Some of these requests will be carried over to 2021.

# Staff Highlights

## 2020 Employees of the Quarter

### Eric Silvanic

Eric began his career with Tioga County DSS in September 2018 when he was hired as a Caseworker in the CPS/Preventive Unit. Eric began with a combined caseload of both preventive cases and investigations, one of the most challenging caseloads to juggle. He has since transitioned to being exclusively a CPS investigator but has continued to have between one and four preventive cases at any time, due to his willingness to help during staffing challenges.

While at DSS, he has never shied away from new and difficult situations. Within his first year as a caseworker, due to serious child welfare concerns, Eric had to perform removals of children from two families. He did so efficiently and without complaint. More recently, Eric was called upon to conduct sex abuse investigations. He has stepped up to the plate to conduct that work.

Eric is motivated and flexible; he has worked late, stayed outside the hours of his flex schedule and taken additional on call shifts. Eric routinely signs up for trainings that will expand his knowledge beyond the CPS requirements.

He has a great rapport with families, especially children, finding out their interests in order to put them at ease. Eric always has the safety of children at the forefront of his practice; he readily recognizes situations that call for immediate action and takes steps to intervene.



### Angela Figgs

Angela began her career with Tioga County DSS in October 2015 when she was hired as a Seasonal Social Welfare Examiner in the HEAP Unit. And, subsequently as full-time SWE in the FSMA Unit in January of 2016.

She was hired as a caseworker in the CPS unit in February of 2017 and was promoted to a Senior Caseworker in December of 2018 in the foster care/adoption unit. At the time of the award, Angela was Homefinder for the Foster Care Unit and also began taking on a “mixed” caseload of both foster care and foster home certifications/recertifications. This is one of the most challenging caseloads to juggle due to having to work with both the foster parents and the parents in different capacities. Angela has taken on some foster care cases due to her willingness to help during staffing challenges.

Angela facilitates trainings for prospective foster parents; hosts trainings and support groups for already certified foster parents; and attends to the foster parents needs when overwhelmed. Angela has hard conversations with families and doesn't hesitate to do so when needed. Angela always has the safety of children at the forefront of her practice; she readily recognizes situations that call for immediate action and intervenes when necessary.





## 2020 Employees of the Quarter, cont'd

### Heather Horton

Heather began her career with Tioga County DSS on July 1, 2002 when she was hired as a Social Welfare Examiner in the Income Maintenance Unit. In November 2008 she then became an Employment Specialist in the Temporary Assistance Intake/Employment Unit.

Heather is motivated, flexible, timely, dependable and efficient. Heather comes to work ready to take on whatever the day has in store for her; her daily “go-with-the-flow” attitude is very much appreciated. She routinely offers to assist in job duties that were not initially assigned to her tasks, and does this without complaints or hesitation. Heather is always willing to stay late when the need arises. She also never hesitates to volunteer for her co-workers when there are unit coverage issues.

Heather’s work is important to her and it shows. The skills Heather has developed through her years as an Employment Specialist have proven very useful in assisting clients with breaking through their barriers and obtaining employment. Heather’s “fair but firm” approach exemplifies our goals of accountability and self-sufficiency for our clients.

### Karen Signs

Karen began her career with Tioga County DSS in March 2015 when she was hired as a Senior Account Clerk Typist in the Accounting Unit. She was then promoted to a Principal Account Clerk, now known as an Accounting Associate III, in January 2017. In this role Karen fulfills a variety of responsibilities and tasks; from coordinating daily floor operations, training staff, supervising, claiming and providing back-up to not only other accounting staff, but to her supervisor and the Systems Unit as well.

Karen’s work ethic is outstanding. She takes her responsibilities seriously and expects the same from those around her. Her hard work and dedication are an example to everyone on our team. In addition to her daily tasks such as processing payments, preparing documents to ensure accurate claiming, processing claims, and maintaining financial records, she also oversees daily floor operations, anticipates deadlines, is involved in performance reviews, assists any staff with their needs and she trains all new employees or new job functions.

Highly motivated and flexible, she is often the first one willing to change her schedule to best fit the needs of the department. She is reliable and when Karen makes a commitment, she honors it.

In her role as a trainer, Karen is well versed in all areas of the Accounting unit and is a key factor in keeping operations running smoothly. Additionally, Karen became back-up for administrative roles in Systems and BICS operations in which she now trains new employees.

# 2020 Supervisors of the Year

## Joy MacNaughton

As a supervisor in a Child Protective Unit, Joy is responsible to ensure children’s safety, permanency and well-being.

Joy’s leadership ensures children are safe and staff are supported. Over the past year, two CPS Investigators have been added to Joy’s team creating a mixed team of FAR and INV Caseworkers. She is able to pivot between each approach and found where the FAR Principles were applicable to investigations and utilized those skills with her INV Caseworkers to enhance their skills and knowledge.

Joy has been described as a “caseworker’s supervisor.” She is mindful of the job and its overwhelming and, at times, underappreciated aspects. Joy is supportive of her staff and strives to bring out the best in them by setting high expectations and motivating them to do their best. Joy excels at identifying areas of growth for her team members and then supports and mentors them through that development process. Joy has an excellent work ethic, is a great example for her staff, supports and fosters teamwork, and always tries to make the job better for her team and the Department.

## Amy Canzler

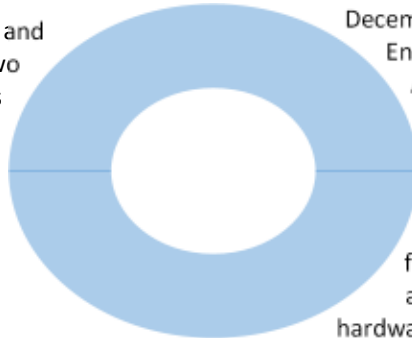
Amy began her career with the Tioga County Department of Social Services in February of 2008 when she was hired as a Records Clerk in HEAP. In December of 2012 she was promoted to Sr Data Entry Operator in Systems. In March of 2016 Amy was promoted to WMS Assistant and in July of 2019 she was promoted to her current position as WMS Coordinator.

Amy is responsible for troubleshooting and/or training on WMS and BICS functions. She is the liaison with both State and County IT for network, software and hardware issues. Amy sets up new users, deploys new computers, fixes copiers and keeps workers connected to the programs they need daily. She also supervises the courier and mail clerks.

2020 was a year where staff became more reliant on things such as remote access and Zoom.

Amy has done an outstanding job making sure all staff have all the resources available to get the job done, both in house and remotely.

Amy provides excellent customer service to all employees, even on short-notice, and does so with her characteristic smile on her face.



## 2020 Employee Milestones

### 20 Years

Sonja Harris  
Anne Davis  
Kelly Kelley  
Denise Haskins  
John Norris

### 15 Years

Gary Grant  
Michele Resue

### 5 Years

Karen Signs  
Natalie Thompson  
Amber Phillips

### Retirements

Charise Campbell  
Suzy Conmy  
Chris Kallin  
Linda Myers  
Bernadette Poppert  
Kandi Saxton

### New Hires

Kimberly Poreda Bailey Caseworker  
William Cornell PT CSW  
Maggie Dunsford Caseworker  
Katherine Howard Caseworker  
Tina Korsak Caseworker  
Cassie Moore Caseworker  
Erin Riddle Caseworker  
Candis Seeley Caseworker  
Katherine Stevens Office Specialist I  
Briana Ward Caseworker  
Katerina Willmot Social Welfare Examiner  
Casey Yelverton Caseworker