

2022

Annual Report



2022 Commissioner's Advisory Council

Maureen Abbott,
Executive Director
Tioga Opportunities, Inc.

Caitlin Mizerak,
Community Nutrition Educator
Cornell Cooperative Extension

Patrick Aquilio,
Tioga Outreach Director
Catholic Charities of Tompkins/Tioga

Lori Morgan,
Community Services Director
Tioga County Mental Hygiene

Jill Bennedum, Executive
Director of Special Education
Owego-Apalachin Central Schools

Sister Mary O'Brien
Executive Director
Tioga County Rural Ministry

Fran Bialy, Executive Director
A New Hope Center

Josh Roe, Superintendent
Tioga Central Schools

Barbara Case, Superintendent
Spencer VanEtten Schools

Susan Ruff, Advocacy Director
Southern Tier Independence Center

T Hanson, Executive Director
Cornell Cooperative Extension

Todd Schaffer,
Interim Superintendent
Newark Valley Schools

Eric Kimble, Program Manager
Glove House

Renee Spear, Executive Director
Catholic Charities of Tompkins/Tioga

Dr. Eric Knolles, Superintendent
Waverly Central Schools

Heather Vrooman
Director
Tioga County Public Health

Ashley Manning,
Program Director
Glove House

...from the Commissioner...

This has been a year of transitions. A transition out of the pandemic. A transition for employees who have moved on to other adventures, rather it be retirement or new opportunities. A transition to being surrounded by many new co-workers, eager to start or continue their careers and help move us forward. A transition into a remote work policy as we prepare for the workplace of both today and the future.



Behind all these transitions is a real story about the struggles we have faced together with an incredibly high vacancy factor that has pushed everyone to do more with less resources. To all our employees who have chosen to stay the course, thank you for your perseverance. Your dedication to the people we serve and to our mission and values is appreciated beyond any words I can write here. There always is a light at the end of the tunnel and that light gets a little brighter every day. I am a firm believer that better days always lie ahead, and it is due to what I see you all doing day in and day out that gives me that belief. Thank you, thank you, thank you.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Shawn L. Yetter". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first letters of the first and last names being capitalized and prominent.

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

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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, Lisa Williams

ADMINISTRATIVE SERVICES DIVISION

Mickelle Andrews, Accounting Supervisor
Andrea Rossi, 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

Sarah Moore, Grade A Supervisor
Donna Corbin, Foster Care/Adoption/Home Finding /Preventive Supervisor
Sarah Tiffany, Foster Care/Adoption/Preventive/Raise the Lower Age/PINS Diversion
Supervisor
Jennifer Green, Training Supervisor
Joylynn MacNaughton, Adult Services Supervisor
Amanda Miller, Child Protective Services Supervisor
Cassandra Moore, Child Protective Services Supervisor
Tyna Eldred, Child Advocacy Center/Safe Harbour Coordinator

TIOGA EMPLOYMENT CENTER

Jackie Burdick, Manager

2022 Tioga County Legislature

Martha C. Sauerbrey, Legislative Chair

William Standinger—*Chair, Health & Human Services Committee*

*Jake Brown

Ron Ciotoli

Keith Flesher

*Tracy Monell

*Dennis M. Mullen

Barbara Roberts

Dale N. Weston

*Health & Human Services Committee

Accounting/Systems Activities for 2022

The Accounting Department is responsible for:

- Monitoring and processing all cash receipts and disbursements of the department.
- Accurate recording and reporting of all agency expenditures and revenues to the County Treasurer's Office. This includes all program and administrative expenditures.
- Preparing and submitting 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, audits, and maintaining the agencies Rep-payee accounts
- Issuing temporary benefit cards

The Systems Department is responsible for:

- Maintaining and providing user support for both hardware and software
- Managing a variety of hardware from Apple iPad devices to computers
- Maintaining security access to a variety of state-owned software such as the Welfare Management System, I/EDR (Imaging and Enterprise Document Repository), MyWorkspace, Connections and other applications
- Providing agency-wide services such as data entry, processing state reports – both electronic and printed, and creating custom databases for departments across the agency
- Providing staff with remote access as needed

Successes:

- The Accounting Department participated in the Annual State Single Audit. The programs tested were HEAP (40 records) and SNAP. They also audited 40 administrative disbursements. There were no significant findings.
- Accounting and Systems continue to integrate work functions to support to each other's units. Accounting has assumed daily BICS processing
- Accounting processed 644 EBT cards for expedited benefits and replacements.
- Accounting has overcome many challenges this year including turnover, limited staffing, and hiring and training new staff.
- Accounting worked with Adult Protective Services 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 \$570,290 on their behalf. Accounting has also provided APS with monthly ledgers, and other needed reports.
- Accounting submitted claims for approximately \$11,850,000 in state and Federal reimbursements.
- In 2022, we continued the transition employee's desktop computers from the New York State Network to the County Network. We plan to have all employees on the County Network by the end of 2023.
- 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 115,000 pieces of mail in 2022
- Local revenues and recoveries totaled \$946,224 in 2022. 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

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.

In 2022, our Fraud Unit was instrumental in the arrest and prosecution of one of the largest fraud cases in New York State. The diligent efforts of our Fraud Investigator uncovered fraud due to identity theft that spanned many years across multiple states and counties. The case included \$249,811 in Supplemental Security Income benefits and \$588,645 in state benefits. The case was investigated by The Social Security Administration Office of the Inspector General, the Tioga County Sheriff's Office, and the New York State Police, with assistance provided by the U.S. Marshalls Service. The case was prosecuted by the U.S. Attorney's Office, Northern District of New York.

Fraud Referrals:

152 Received (In agency 56, Electronic 78, Support Collection 7, Public 11)

124 Unfounded

1 Arrest

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

\$ 5,267.04 in Public Assistance monies

\$ 51,028.80 in SNAP monies

\$ 558,880.52 in Medicaid monies

\$ 3,676.15 in HEAP monies

\$ 618,852.51 Total monies referred for collections

Overpayment Referrals:

52 Received

01 Pending

43 No overpayments

08 Agency errors (MA \$426.67, SNAP \$13505.00)

\$13,931.67 Total of monies referred for collections

Front End Detection (FEDS):

149 Received

45 Unfounded

104 Founded

\$ 37,951.00 Total Monthly Local Share Savings

\$ 103,154.00 Total Monthly Savings

\$ 227,707.00 6 Month Projected Local Share Savings

\$618,924.00 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

Employment and Transitional Supports

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 2021-2022 HEAP Season ran from October 1, 2021, through September 30, 2022. The HEAP Unit processed 6869 benefits resulting in allocations of \$4,849,799 or an average of \$706 per benefit. This includes a one-time Regular Arrears Supplement that many households received.
- HEAP also assisted 97 homeowners with the repair or replacement of their primary heating equipment, for a total of \$129,001.30.

Temporary Assistance and Intake/Employment Unit:

- DSS started as a Voluntary Income Tax Assistance (VITA) site in 2004. Assistance is provided to working individuals to have their tax returns e-filed at no cost. In 2022, for tax year 2021, 225 returns were processed resulting in Federal refunds of \$375,812.00 and State refunds of \$68,876.00 totaling \$444,688.00, of which \$101,964.00 was EITC monies, all returning to, and being reinvested in, the local economy. Since 2006, we have completed 2,269 returns with a combined total in tax refunds of \$5,053,912.00.
- Employment Specialists closely monitored 11 employable work experience participants who completed work projects for 4 different not-for-profit agencies throughout the community; 1 had a positive job placement, 5 were closed/denied for non-compliance with work experience, 2 are now on medical and 3 are currently in compliance and working their mandated work experience.
- In 2022, the Tioga Career Center's reception signed in 4,101 walk-in customers. This number is up from 2021 when 3,036 walk-in customers were signed in.
- In 2022, the Tioga Career Center's reception answered and assisted 9,029 incoming phone calls. This number is up from 2021 when 7,838 incoming phone calls were reported.
- Staff meets weekly with employable persons applying for and/or in receipt of Safety Net and TANF, reviews their job search logs. 313 duplicated Temporary Assistance Customers were assigned to JOBS; of those 313, 33 unduplicated had actual job placements.
- The total number of averaged Cash Assistance cases decreased from 245 in 2021 to 210 in 2022.
- The number of families in the Family Assistance (TANF) caseload average decreased from 152 in 2021 to 132 in 2022.
- The Safety Net caseload (single individuals and couples as well as families that have reached the 60-month time limit) average was 78 in 2022, an increase from 59 in 2021.
- The Daycare unit is co-located in the Career Center. In 2022, the Daycare caseload was comprised of an average of 119 cases serving an average of 208 children and 151 adults. In 2021, the Daycare caseload was comprised of an average of 98 cases serving an average of 167 children and 125 adults.
- The Social Security Disability Case Manager received 12 new SN referrals and 7 new TANF referrals. Due to the receipt of SSI 1 TANF case closed, 1 TANF case 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 16,596 completed tasks in 2022.
- The average monthly number of individuals receiving SNAP (Food Stamps) benefits in 2022 was 5,051 (approximately 1,698 of these were children).
- The monthly average of the total number of Tioga County individuals on Medicaid in 2022 was 12,851. 3,136 of these cases continued to be managed by FSMA staff, the remainder are on the State Exchange. Average number of SSI individuals was 1,057 (184 were children). The average number of Chronic Care (nursing home, assisted living and waiver programs) Medicaid cases was 230 per month for 2022.

Successes:

Maintained a high level of customer service despite staffing challenges, meaning citizens of Tioga County were provided with housing, food, health insurance, and heat

Child Support Enforcement Unit (CSEU)

The Child Support Enforcement Unit collected \$5,226,583 in 2022.

Average monthly caseload 1,965.

Reimbursements to DSS in 2022 totaled \$493,878 compared to \$530,725 in 2021.

The Child Support Enforcement Unit filed a total of 673 petitions in 2022, up 20% from 557 in 2021.

Youth Bureau

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

Newly established Youth Sports & Education Opportunity funds of \$6,653 distributed to one organization

Tioga Career Center

Provides a variety of seamless customer-driven employment services to both businesses and individual job seekers in the greater Tioga County area.

One-stop for many employment-related services:

- Unemployment Assistance and mandated appointments

- BOCES GED class

- Resumes, job search assistance, on-line application

- Computer skills, tutoring

- Funding opportunities for classroom and on-the-job- training opportunities

- Provided Job Placement assistance for 672 customers in 2022

Services for the community provided by Workforce staff, Literacy Volunteers, GST BOCES, WIOA Youth Program – Cornell Cooperative Extension Tioga, Access-VR, and other Tioga County agencies.

Collaborating with Tioga County School Districts with transitional and supportive services for students

Services for employers:

- Job postings, hiring events, on-the-job training opportunities

- Job Fairs with free advertising on radio, newspaper, and social media

Unemployment Services

- ID.Me identity verification

- Developed Department of Labor Unemployment contacts to more readily resolve issues

- Assisted and resolved many customers with unemployment benefit barriers

- Provided UIB assistance to 729 customers in 2022



Children and Adult Services

Staff Development

- 695 participants attended 181 state-sponsored virtual trainings, totaling 2,773 hours
- 727 participants attended 71 local-sponsored trainings, totaling 1068 hours
- 21 new hires completed New Employee Orientation totaling 60.5 hours of training
- 9 new Caseworkers received 1150 hours of training through modeling and hands-on practical experience

Child Protective/Preventive Services

- 1168 hotline reports received: 793 investigative, 375 Family Assessment Response (FAR)
- 201 alleging drug use
- 160 alleging domestic violence
- 441 investigations determined: 123 indicated and closed, 21 indicated and opened for preventive services
- 45 families served, involving 116 children
- 19 families discharged from Preventive Services
- 15 Neglect petitions filed on behalf of 21 children
- 2 Abuse petitions filed on behalf of 5 children

Foster Care/Adoption/Home Finding

- 17 Foster Care Admissions: 12 abuse/neglect, 5 Juvenile Delinquents
- 24 Foster Care Discharges: 13 reunited with parent, 4 “aged out,” 1 was placed in OCFS custody and 6 children were adopted
- 6 Tioga County youth were in detention for a total of 151 days
- 4 children freed for adoption
- 2 children placed in a pre-adoptive home with an early 2022 adoption planned
- Kinship Foster Home Care placements were at 31.6% of all placements at the end of 2022. This is a 5% increase since 2021.

Adult Protective Services

Received 422 Adult Services referrals
Received 195 Adult Protective referrals
Conducted 103 Adult Protective investigations
3 active Guardianship cases
Representative Payee for 50 individuals

PINS Diversion

110 Referrals resulting in 13 cases being opened for DSS Diversion Services. The remaining cases were informational or referred out for community-based services.

Successes:

6 Adoption finalizations
The average length of time spent in foster care for the children discharged in 2022 was 1 year and 7 months.



CAC and Safe Harbor

The CAC serviced 115 children and their families. This is an increase from the 92 children served in 2021, an increase of 20%.

The Tioga CAC applied for and was awarded a grant totaling over \$300,000 for a period of three years; the grant allowed for the acquisition of a second full-time advocate, the purchase of a portable interviewing system and future purchase of medical equipment for sexual assault exams to occur on site.

44 youth served by the Safe Harbor program

January is recognized as Human Trafficking Awareness Month, per legislative proclamation.

Over 300 "Shed Light on Human Trafficking" bags were distributed throughout the County to raise awareness.

