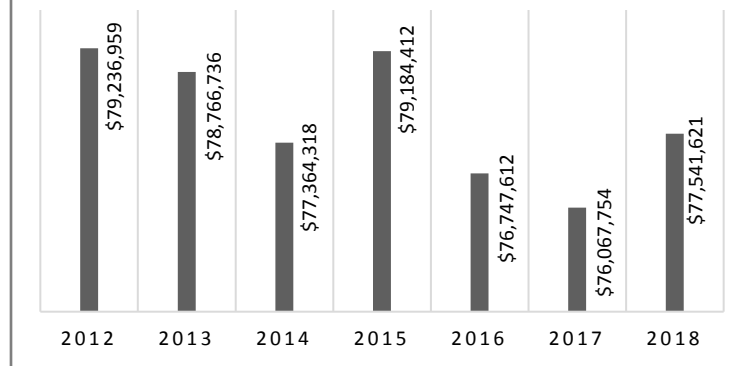


SOCIAL SERVICES

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DSS- COUNTY SHARE



MISSION STATEMENT

The Department of Social Services (DSS) delivers services that support and protect families and individuals while encouraging self-sufficiency and personal responsibility. DSS administers public assistance programs; serving as a safety net for the poor, the near poor, and vulnerable adults who are unable to care for and protect themselves.

WHO WE SERVE

The table below outlines the number of cases ACDSS has handled over the course of the last several years. While this table summarizes the number of cases in broad categories of service, it should be noted that some of the cases receiving "entitlement" services are also receiving other services offered by the Department, such as child care, employment, HEAP and home care. Currently DSS serves more than 52,000 unduplicated individuals within our programs, which is roughly 17% of the total population in the county.

	January-2011	January-2013	January-2015	January-2017	% change 1/11 to 1/17
CASELOADS					
Temporary Assistance	2,837	2,735	2,580	2,567	-10%
Medicaid	26,343	29,406	26,722	20,747	-21%
SNAP (Food Stamps)	14,797	17,534	17,844	16,874	14%
Sub-total "entitlements"	43,977	49,675	47,146	44,294	-9%
Services/non-entitlements					
Child Support	17,211	18,163	18,590	18,601	9%
Adult Protective Long-Term Cases	251	246	263	290	16%
Child Care (children served)	1,709	1,640	1,461	1,525	-11%
sub-total "non-entitlement"	20,494	21,098	21,356	20,416	
TOTAL CASELOAD	64,471	70,773	68,502	64,710	
Unduplicated individuals served	56,865	61,064	59,123	52,452	-8%

ABOUT OUR DEPARTMENT

[DSS delivers services that support and protect families and individuals while encouraging self-sufficiency and personal responsibility.] DSS is responsible for addressing the social service needs of the poor and working poor, as well as adults who are unable to care, for and/or protect themselves. The Department offers citizens cash assistance, food buying assistance, temporary housing, employment preparation and training services, day care and case management to support the transition to more stable, productive lives. DSS also serves the aged and disabled through access to Medicaid benefits as well as assessment and linkage to long-term services and supports. In partnership with the community, DSS is committed to providing excellent service with compassion and respect through the efficient use of resources in a fair, confidential, and dignified manner.

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The agency provides mandated services to clients within the following areas:

- The **Temporary Assistance Division** is designed to meet the essential financial needs of eligible individuals and families and foster their ability to achieve economic self-sufficiency. The division also contracts with homeless shelters and acts as the conduit to provide homeless placement in the county, homeless diversion services enable people to obtain more permanent housing.
- The **Health Insurance Division** provides access to Medicaid, primarily for individuals who are aged and/or disabled and who meet income guidelines; and for those in receipt of Medicare and who are income eligible and would otherwise be unable to afford health insurance. Many recipients are required to enroll in a Medicaid Managed Care plan.
- The **Nutrition and Energy Division** operates the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP, formerly known as Food Stamps) which is designed to assist low income individuals and families meet their nutritional needs. It also administers the Home Energy Assistance Program (HEAP) which offers financial assistance to offset residential heating fuel and utility costs.
- The **Adult Services Division** assists elderly and disabled individuals through a No Wrong Door/Single Entry Point system called NY Connects. NY Connects provides information, assistance, and options counseling for long term services and supports. The Division assesses eligibility and need for a variety of homecare programs (including EISEP) and includes providing ongoing case management for these homecare programs; and assesses eligibility for Department for Aging funded Home Delivered Meals and Social Adult Day Care (SADS) programs. The Division also provides Adult Protective Services for potentially abused and neglected adults and acts as Representative Payee for those who have challenges handling their money.
- The **Child Support Enforcement Division** provides services to identify and locate financially responsible non-custodial parents to establish and enforce child support orders. For some clients this helps reduce dependence on public assistance.
- The **Employment and Child Care Subsidy Division** provides job readiness training and assistance with child care costs to help individuals prepare for, secure and retain employment. Child Care Subsidy benefits are also provided to low income families to help with the cost of child care so that adult household member(s) can maintain employment or participate in other job readiness activities.
- The **Fair Hearings** unit provides an opportunity for an applicant/recipient to appear before an impartial State appointed Administrative Law Judge (ALJ) and explain why they disagree with an action taken by ACDSS. Supporting documents and witness testimony by both applicant/recipient and the Fair Hearing Unit staff is presented. The ALJ will issue a written decision based on testimony, law and procedure regarding the Agency's determination of social services programs.
- The **DSS Reception** area is located on the first floor of the DSS offices and functions as the "welcome center" for DSS. All individuals (clients, providers, guests) coming to DSS sign-in through the Reception area. Clients/potential clients are all seen in Reception or escorted to the basement training or interview rooms. Clients can pick up applications, drop off completed applications and required documentation, obtain a new/replacement Benefit Card, meet with appropriate staff member or find out what programs and benefits may be available to meet their needs. Clients also come into DSS offices for scheduled appointments.

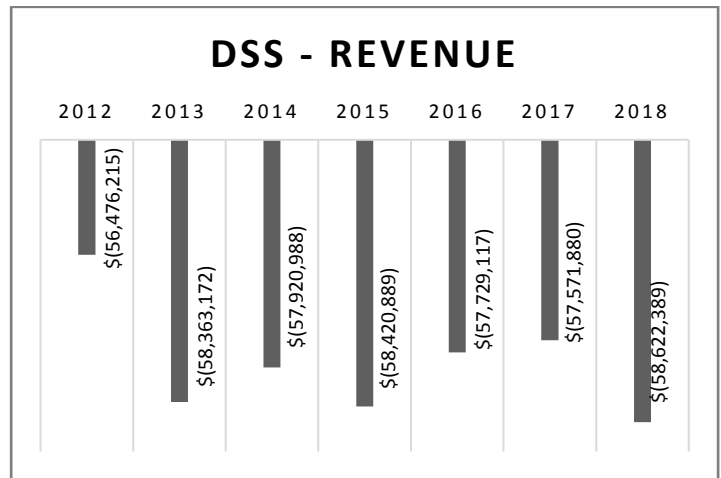
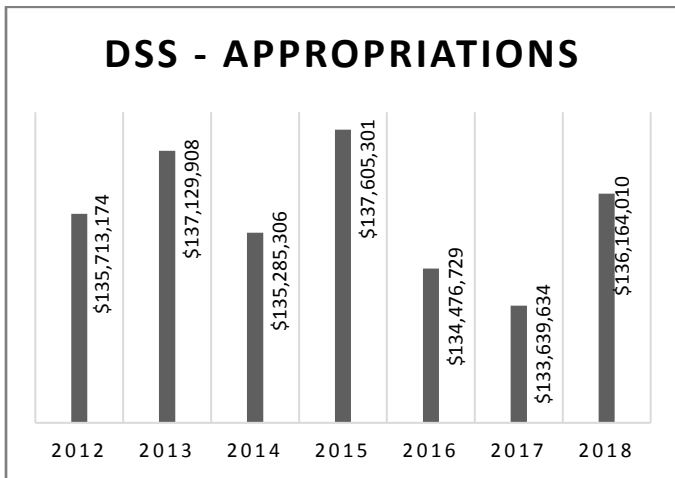
2017 ACCOMPLISHMENTS AND CHALLENGES

- The DSS Child Support Enforcement Unit collected and distributed \$28,484,121 for both TANF and NONTANF cases and established 872 Paternity Orders.
- When an applicant/recipient does not agree with the determination that the Agency has made, they have a right to request a Fair Hearing before an Administrative Law Judge. Our agency's determinations have been upheld (considered correct) in 86% of cases presented.
- Albany County has been able to maintain our eligibility level for low income child care subsidy at 125% of the Federal Poverty Level through comprehensive monitoring of the Child Care Block Grant (CCBG) funding and expenditures.

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- NY Connects and Home Care staff will enrich their understanding of the major mental health conditions and substance use concerns facing the clients we serve so we better promote mental wellness and resilience by completing the CADER Behavioral Health Certification Program by Oct. 2017. This is an online certificate program developed by Boston University School of Social Work and will take approximately 20 hours for each caseworker to complete. The program consists of 5 courses: Alzheimer’s disease and other Dementias of Aging, Mental Health and Aging Issues, Mental Wellness and Resilience about Older Immigrants and Refugees, substance use among Older Adults and Suicide Prevention.
- As part of the homeless prevention services ACDSS paid out \$259,118 in eviction prevention payments to 330 households in calendar year 2016. During the same period, 568 households received \$402,427 in security deposits and ACDSS issued \$22,163 in bus vouchers to transport clients to another county/state.
- During the 2016/2017 HEAP season, the Clean and Tune Program was reinstated. The Agency successfully processed 92 applications, which helped to lower the number of more costly Home Energy Repair and Replacement (HERR) applications.



2018 GOALS AND PERFORMANCE TARGETS

- The Employment Unit will continue the initiative begun in 2016, to develop community satellite sites at which mandated Employment Orientation, Assessment, and engagement in employment activities can occur. Conducting these meetings in the community, rather than at DSS offices, has been a successful undertaking; creating a more constructive link between the consumer and available resources.
- In 2018, Community First Choice Options (CFCO) will be a new program available for Medicaid clients. CFCO is focused on person-centered consumer direct services that help the consumer maximize their independence and participation in the community. CFCO will offer the consumer an array of services that are currently being offered to Medicaid clients enrolled in various waiver programs. Contracts will be developed and signed with entities able to provide services such as assistive technology, community habilitation, durable goods, environmental, and vehicle modification and transportation (both social and medical), etc. Staff will be trained on the program including how to assess and authorize the various services offered under CFCO.
- Adult Protective will collaborate with the Albany County Legal Division and the NYS Office for People with Developmental Disabilities (OPWDD) to explore the possibility of modifying the current guardianship cases in which the individual resides in an OPWDD residential setting. Differences in philosophy and mandates of each of the responsible entities has led us to determine changes in the guardianship orders need to be made so both entities can better serve these clients.
- The Agency’s homeless team will continue to work intensively with the homeless population in Albany County to reduce the number of individuals and families placed in emergency shelters and motels. We will collaborate with landlords and community providers to prevent evictions, and help clients secure and maintain permanent housing. When an individual and/or family is placed in emergency shelter/motel, we will have our Client Support Specialist and Caseworkers work closely with the individual/family to assist with removing the obstacles that have led to the individual/family being homeless.

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- In conjunction with Temporary Assistance and SNAP Divisions, the Fraud Unit intends to work closely to improve the volume of FEDS (Front End Detection System) referrals generated. This is an instrumental component of preventing fraud and keeping integrity in the programs at application stage.

SUMMARY OF BUDGET CHANGES

- Medicaid increases by \$1.5M or 2.5% from \$64.9M to \$66.4M.
- [Personnel services increases by \$469k or 3% driven by collective bargaining agreement + step increases to Union positions.]
- Safety net increases by \$107k or 1.3% driven by increasing caseloads.

The following paragraph comes from Federal (USDA) Auditor, Chris Anna Nisbet, who led a first of its kind on-site audit of our Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP/Food Stamps) staff and program delivery.

“The most noteworthy observation that FNS had last week was that the office allows clients who are present for a reason other than applying for SNAP, to drop off documents pertaining to their SNAP case without an appointment. The Albany staff show a true compassion for helping their clients and take the time out of their busy days to service their clientele to the best of their ability. During the staff interviews, it was very clear that case workers take the time to establish relationships with their clients, which in turn allows for better communication between the clients and the Albany staff. Clients also mentioned during their interviews with FNS staff that they experience shorter wait times at the Albany District Office in comparison to other locations. Most clients said they wait for under an hour to be seen by a case worker. Additionally, when clients were asked to rate their overall experience at the Albany Office on a scale of 1-5 with 5 being excellent and 1 being poor, the average rating from all 5 clients was a 5. This shows FNS that clients are treated well here and the staff truly cares about the population they serve.”