TABLE OF CONTENTS

TABLE OF CONTENTS .......................................................................................................................... 2
INTRODUCTION ................................................................................................................................. 3
Director’s Message ............................................................................................................................... 3
Advisory Board of Agency .................................................................................................................. 4
CHILD, FAMILY & ADULT SERVICES .............................................................................................. 5
Child Protective Services .................................................................................................................... 5
In-Home Services ............................................................................................................................ 6
Out-of-Home Placement ................................................................................................................... 7
Adult Services .................................................................................................................................. 8
FAMILY INVESTMENT ADMINISTRATION .................................................................................... 9
Financial Assistance .......................................................................................................................... 9
Medical & Health Services ............................................................................................................... 11
Child Care Programs ........................................................................................................................ 12
Housing .......................................................................................................................................... 12
CHILD SUPPORT ENFORCEMENT ADMINISTRATION ............................................................... 13
Child Support Collections ............................................................................................................... 13
ADMINISTRATION AND FINANCE ............................................................................................. 13

Vision

WE ENVISION WORCESTER COUNTY AS A SAFE COMMUNITY, FREE OF EXPLOITATION, NEGLECT, AND ABUSE, WHERE INDIVIDUALS TAKE RESPONSIBILITY FOR THEMSELVES AND THEIR FAMILIES BY STRIVING FOR INDEPENDENCE AND ACHIEVING SELF-SUFFICIENCY.

Mission

WORCESTER COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES IMPROVES THE QUALITY OF LIFE FOR CITIZENS OF WORCESTER COUNTY BY EMPOWERING INDIVIDUALS TO BECOME SELF-SUFFICIENT AND PRODUCTIVE, ASSURING THAT PREVENTION EFFORTS PROTECT THE VULNERABLE, POOLING RESOURCES AND MAXIMIZING PARTNERSHIPS WHILE RESPECTING THE DIVERSE CULTURAL VALUES WITHIN THE COMMUNITY AND OUR AGENCY.
INTRODUCTION

Director’s Message

With the state election results last year, our Department experienced numerous changes in state and local leadership. Governor-elect Larry Hogan appointed a new Secretary of Human Resources, Sam Malhotra. On the local level, five of the seven County Commissioners were newly elected. With this change in leadership, our department and local agency has had to take a fresh and new look at our policies, practices and priorities. To this end, Secretary Malhotra has been in the process of developing a new Strategic Plan that will transform the Department into reaching new heights of effectiveness and efficiency. We at the local level are excited to participate in the process as it moves forward.

Our Family Investment unit stayed busy this year juggling a high demand for SNAP benefits and supporting the development of the State’s Maryland Health Connection System. Locally we not only assisted in enrolling members of our community into MHC, but also aiding those in the system to maintain their eligibility. With the national economy in recovery, our jurisdiction saw a slight decrease in SNAP applications over the first six months of the fiscal year, but caseloads remain high.

Our Services unit was successful this year meeting most of the State designated outcome measures. We did experience, unlike most of the state, a rise in Foster Care entries. A thorough review of our child placements demonstrates theses entries were all necessary for protecting those children. We will continue to try to look strategically at this area and see what we can do in order to optimize our ability to keep children safe in their homes.

I am proud to say that for a second consecutive year our Child Support Collections have increased over the previous year. Although we have experimented with different strategies in dealing with our non-custodial parents, we attribute the increase primarily to the continued dedication and hard work of our staff in Child Support.

With an increasingly senior workforce our Administrative unit put together a Leadership Development Program to build our capacity to fill vacancies in our Leadership team over the next 3-5 years. We also implemented DHR’s Work Day automated personnel system. This system standardizes our personnel systems for all state agencies and performs many functions that use to require manual labor.

We as an agency would like to thank our new Secretary, Sam Malhotra, and our local commissioners for their ongoing support of our mission. We also recognize the critical role our community partners play in assisting us to protect the vulnerable and provide economic opportunity to the poor.
Advisory Board of Agency

Members of the Worcester County Department of Social Services Advisory Board are volunteers appointed by the Worcester County Board of County Commissioners to serve a term of three years. Their many duties include reviewing the Department’s programs, assessing the need for new programs and additional resources, advocating for resources from local and state government and promoting awareness of services provided by the Department.

**FY2015-FY2016 Board members:**

Nancy Howard, Chair

Commissioner Diana Purnell, Ex-Officio

Arlette Bright

Cathy Gallagher

Faith Coleman

Harry Hammond

Tracey Cottman

Wes McCabe

Judy Stinebiser
Child Protective Services

Maryland law mandates local Departments of Social Services to respond to all reports of suspected child abuse and/or neglect. Child Protective Services workers are responsible for assessing and taking steps to ensure the safety of children.

Accepted investigations FY15

- 20 Physical Abuse
- 32 Sexual Abuse
- 28 Neglect
- 2 Mental Injury
- 58 Referrals from other Agencies (ROA’s)
- 115 Alternative Response (AR)
- 46 Non-CPS (512/domestic violence)

~ During the course of the year, two staff supervisors received their certificate from the University of Maryland, School of Social Work trauma intervention Certificate Program. As clinical social work supervisors, these supervisors will transfer their learning experience through clinical consultation with line staff. By learning about the impact of trauma on the brain and how brain development is stunted when a child experiences trauma, staff will be better educated in developing intervention strategies that are effective to build positive parenting, trauma-focused treatments, and enhanced approaches to foster care that address child exposure to maltreatment. This approach is an extension to the Department’s Family Centered Practice.
In-Home Services

In–Home Family Services is a time-limited service designed to develop positive, nurturing parent-child relationships to families whose children are at risk of out-of-home placements. The main purpose is to promote the safety and well-being of children and their families. In-Home Family Services provides direct services as well as referring families to community resources to enhance the overall health of the family. In FY15, In-Home Services were provided as follows:

- 9 families with 22 children received Services to Families with Children
- 38 families with 88 children received Family Preservation Services
- 93 families with 184 children received Consolidated Services

Only 6 children who received the above services for FY15 entered foster care

~ When the In-Home Services Supervisor began managing the unit in January 2014, the workers were struggling with getting information into MD CHESSIE. The cases were not up to date as contact notes were not being entered timely and case reconsiderations were not completed according to the program policy. Because of the intensity of the work that is being done with the families and the time spent out in the field, it is difficult for some workers to manage their time to ensure that the documentation is completed in a timely manner. The caseworkers have worked very hard at getting their cases up to date. As of 7/1/2014, 90% of the workers have all of their cases up to date. This is certainly a major accomplishment for the unit and I applaud all of their efforts.
Out-of-Home Placement Services provides services to children who have been removed from their homes due to abuse or neglect. The main purpose is to provide a safe and stable environment for the child. This can be established through foster care or adoption, placement with relatives or reunification of children with their parents once they can provide a healthy home environment.

### Out-of-Home Placement Services for FY15
- 33 Out of Home services for children needing protection
- 7 Reunifications
- 3 Finalized Adoption

~ A client who has a long history of substance abuse entered our FAST Program, Families Achieving Sobriety Together, and received services from the team, which includes a Social Worker, Peer Support Worker and an Addiction counselor. This client had struggled for many years, losing custody of four children and having a previous child placed for adoption. When her children went to live with a relative, she entered treatment. With the support of her team, this client has achieved over 8 months of sobriety and is re-engaged with her children. Her goal is to have the custody of her children returned to her and be able to provide a stable, nurturing home for them.~
## Adult Services

- **Adult Protective Services**
  APS investigated and/or provided continuing services to reduce the risk of abuse, neglect, self-neglect or the exploitation of 68 vulnerable adults in FY15.

- The Adult Public Guardianship Program served 6 clients as of June 30, 2015. This program protects the person and interests of a vulnerable adult at risk by the court appointment of guardianship to Worcester County DSS as a last resort to enable them to make critical life decisions on the client’s behalf. A service plan is sanctioned by the court; then both they and DSS implement and monitor the case for the effectiveness and continued need of guardianship.

- The Project Home Program assisted 1 adult with disabilities or mental illness by placing them in supervised housing where they receive room, board, personal care, and assistance with other daily activities.

- Respite Care Services were provided for 13 families. These services are for the adult caretaker of disabled clients.

- Social Services to Adults (SSTA) case management services were provided to 52 disabled and elderly adults as of June 30, 2015. Staff provided counseling, advocacy, case management, and referral services to assist adult customers function independently in the community.

- In-Home Aide Services were provided to 28 individuals. These services provide personal care, household and therapeutic services to elderly or disabled customers in their homes, enabling these clients to remain living at home rather than being institutionalized. As of June 30, 2015 there were 24 clients on a waiting list for these services.

![Adult Protective Services Investigation Referrals](image)
Each Family Investment program has different technical and financial eligibility/guidelines that must be met before a customer can be eligible to receive benefits under these programs. Some of these programs are federally funded only, others are state and federally funded, and one is fully state funded. The criteria varies greatly in terms of what the income and resource limits are, what income must be counted, what income may be disregarded, and what deductions, if any, may be applied. The next several pages list the Family Investment programs offered at our Department.

**Financial Assistance**

The Family Investment Division administers a number of financial assistance programs that support low-income families and individuals. The programs provide a safety net for vulnerable Worcester County citizens who do not have other sources of income. These programs include:

- **Temporary Cash Assistance (TCA)**
  
  This program offers time limited financial assistance for families with children. Requirements may include cooperation with Child Support Enforcement and Employment Services. Sixty-four TCA recipients have been placed in jobs with an average wage of $11.18 per hour, which exceeds our FY2015 job Placement Goal by 3 placements.

- **Welfare Avoidance Grants (WAGs)**
  
  This program provides a one-time authorization of funds to alleviate a crisis which might result in a family becoming dependent on TCA. In FY15, WAGs totaling $72,327 were issued to assist 35 families.

- **Emergency Assistance for Families with Children (EAFC)**
  
  This program helps families with dependent children resolve crisis situations such as evictions and utility cut-offs. Burial assistance provides limited assistance for eligible individuals. EAFC grants of $8,033.00 were issued to 24 families facing such issues.
Financial Assistance (continued)

- **Temporary Disability Assistance Program (TDAP)**
  This program provides financial assistance to low-income adults with disabilities who meet certain medical qualifications. Benefits were issued to an average of 118 cases per month in FY15.

- **Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)**
  This program provides benefits enabling households to supplement their food budgets. An average of 3,7654 cases was worked each month by this program during FY15. These benefits averaged $810,200 per month for a total of $9,722,400 annually into the local economy.

~ A 49 year old male Temporary Cash Assistance (TCA) customer raising his five (5) year old daughter was long term disabled. After this condition cleared up, this customer was able to return to work. With the help of the TCA team, this customer began subsidized employment with the Harrison Group in Ocean City, MD in April 2015. The TCA / Work Opportunities team provided transportation and Child Care Services for him. His three month employment follow up went very well and he is happy with his position and the Harrison Group is pleased with his work.
Medical Assistance programs are administered by the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (DHMH). Worcester County Department of Social Services establishes eligibility for these programs but does not disperse the funds to pay for services.

- **Medical Assistance SSI Program**
  This program provides Medical Assistance coverage to customers who receive Supplemental Security Income (SSI) benefits from the Social Security Administration. There were 762 active cases at the end of FY15.

- **Medical Assistance – Long Term Care Program**
  This program assists individuals residing in long-term care facilities with medical expenses and other cost of care. There were 175 active cases at the end of FY15.

- **Medical Assistance – Community Program**
  This program serves low-income families and individuals who are aged, blind, or disabled. Services were provided to an average of 3,221 adults and children monthly. This caseload figure will increasingly drop as cases transition to Maryland Health Connection.

- **Maryland Children’s Health Program (MCHiP)**
  This program provides Medical Assistance coverage to children and pregnant women who meet financial eligibility requirements. There was a monthly average of 524 cases in FY15.

- **Public Assistance to Adults (PAA)**
  This program provided cash assistance for a monthly average of 7 adults who are physically and/or mentally disabled residing in supported living arrangements.
Child Care Programs

- **Purchase of Care (POC)**

  This program assisted an average of 95 families monthly with the cost of childcare during FY15. There are no families presently on the waiting list at the end of FY15. This program transitioned to Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) and the Xerox Corporation in July 2015.

Housing

The Worcester County Department of Social Services Housing staff work to stabilize housing and prevent homelessness for the low-income and most vulnerable Worcester County residents. The case managers assist these residents facing a housing crisis with financial aid and other resources. The array of services include: eviction prevention, foreclosure prevention, help with security deposit or first month's rent, emergency motel placement, case management and budgeting.

~ The Worcester County Family Investment Administration has been proactive in assisting our Medicaid customers transition from the current Medicaid system to the Maryland Health Connection (MHC). We have reached out to customers by calling every customer identified as having a pending Medicaid case closure on the current system to advise them and provide assistance to them in enrolling on MHC prior to losing coverage. In addition, specialized staff has been assigned to assist those who have already lost coverage in enrolling on MHC.

~ Worcester County Family Investment Administration has worked hand in hand with the Lower Shore health Insurance Assistance Program (LSHIAP), the Connector Entity for the lower Shore and has housed a Navigator on our site. In addition, we have housed three (3) Department of Human Resources (DHR) Verification Case Managers at our site. We are participating in an outreach program with LSHIAP across the region enrolling customers offsite in order to increase enrollment for those with transportation issues.
Child Support Collections

Six (6) agents managed 1,647 cases in fiscal year 2015, of which 1,415 have orders (85.91%)
Amount disbursed — $3,268,454 (July 1, 2014 through June 30, 2015)
Children with paternity established — 1,236 (102.74%)

The Worcester County Child Support Office works hard to enforce court ordered child support payments. Four enforcement workers handle approximately 400 cases each. Collecting support in Worcester County has some barriers that are based on the demographics of this area. Many non-custodial parents work seasonally in Ocean City and then are unemployed during the winter months. Also, Worcester County continues to have the highest unemployment rate in the state. For June 2015, the state average unemployment rate was 5.2% with Worcester County having a rate of 11.3%. Even with these obstacles, Worcester County improved collections by almost 3% from June of 2014. Overall collections for the federal Fiscal Year were increased by $64,431.

The Worcester County Child Support Office has implemented a new program under the guidance of Pete Buesgens, the agency Director. This program entitled M.O.R.E. (Men Obtaining Regular Employment), is aimed to increase and sustain child support payments from unemployed and underemployed male non-custodial parents. The majority of these customers has difficulty paying their child support and has somewhat different dynamics and obstacles. These individuals can be referred for direct services such as counseling, transportation and financial support to help them obtain and sustain employment. The first non-custodial parents have been selected and referred to the M.O.R.E. program and have begun receiving the necessary services to assist them in their child support cases. Both non-custodial parents achieved full time employment within six weeks of initiating services.
ADMINISTRATION AND FINANCE

The Local General Administration (LGA) unit provides support to the operations of the agency through Finance, Human Resources, Fleet, Facility, Procurement, and Information Technology. The finance unit submitted the SFY 2016 Operation Budget to the Department of Human Resources (DHR) Budget and Finance. The Finance unit also maintained 100% compliance in expenditure reporting and Minority Business Enterprise reporting. The Human Resources unit acquired a new Fiscal Technician for the Finance unit. Performance Evaluation Program cycles were reported at 100% compliance. The 2015 Health Benefits Enrollment process was successfully completed. The Human Resources unit hired six new employees, reclassified seven staff, and nine exits for various reasons. The Information Technology (IT) unit responded to and resolved over 300 user work orders. Facility unit has improved customer services through rerouting front desk operations to make dropping off information more convenient for the customer.

FY 2015 Program Funds
$15,823,470.00