

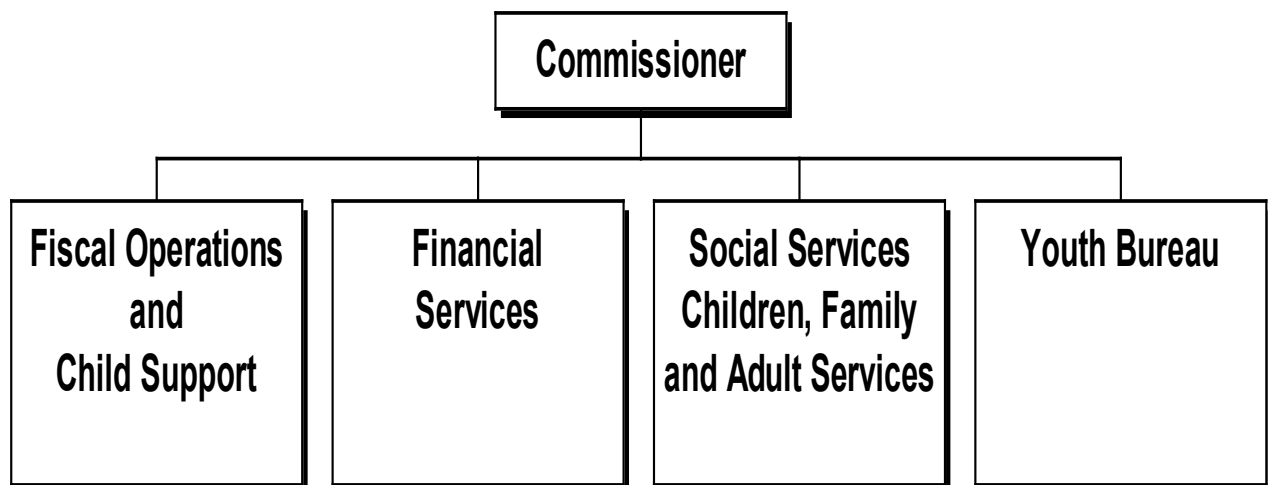
GENESEE COUNTY

DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES



2025 PROGRAM BUDGET

January 2025



DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES

DEPARTMENT DESCRIPTION

The Genesee County Department of Social Services provides a wide range of financial assistance and social service programs to the needy and vulnerable citizens of Genesee County. The department is responsible for a significant part of the "social safety net" which ensures that basic human needs will be met. Federal and state laws and regulations mandate virtually all our programs and services.

STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK

Mission

Our mission is to provide assistance and opportunities for improved quality of life for individuals and families through financial, supportive, preventive and protective services. We strive to maintain an organization which promotes self-sufficiency while respecting human dignity and privacy. Excellence will be pursued through continuous improvement, cooperation, and teamwork.

Purpose

The department's purpose is to help people care adequately for themselves and family members with the lowest level of assistance and government intervention possible.

Values

1. An emphasis on excellence of service and continuous improvement.
2. A workplace environment of mutual respect and trust.
3. Constant development of our skills and capabilities.
4. Putting people doing the job in charge of their work process.
5. Teamwork.

2024 Key Accomplishments

All programs are back to pre-pandemic procedures. We have continued to promote good hygiene, social distancing when sick and taking precautions when out in the community. These measures make sense and are easier to carry out when people were already practicing these habits.

Required training for new employees hired over the past several months is back up and running, but many trainings remain virtual. Due to the ongoing training needs and staff turnover the implementation of Task-Based processing in areas other than our non-public assistance SNAP/MA cases has been slow to move forward. Eligibility decisions and accurate client benefit issuance in the current Task-Based caseload continues to be on track. In-person training for new Caseworkers was briefly returned to in-person and is now being held with hybrid options.

The Employment Services Unit continues to network with temp agencies in the community and the Career Center to regularly obtain work (even if temporary) for the employable public assistance clients. The unit continues to strive towards meeting the fifty percent goal of TANF recipient work participation rate by engaging the clients in work experience training and subsidized employment for all families. The total number of open public assistance cases has remained fairly steady so far this year.

Medicaid cases taken over by the State continue to return to the district for a variety of reasons and many cases remain at the local level. The timeline of the State take-over of the non-MAGI population is currently uncertain, as are any other Medicaid administrative transitions.

The Foster Care unit (FCU) in the Social Services Division have certified eight (8) new foster homes this past year. Of the eight, four (4) of these foster homes are kinship care and four (4) are regular foster care. Unfortunately, we have been unable to locate any new cluster homes. We currently have three (3) Cluster Homes in total. The staff continue their outreach efforts to recruit and retain foster homes. Genesee County has significantly reduced the number of children in foster care. At the beginning of 2024, there were only 26 children in regular foster care. At the time, this was the lowest number of children in foster care in more than 10 years. Due to many adoptions in 2024, that number is even lower now. Currently, there are only 19 children in foster care. The Family First initiative began in October 2021, which has reduced the need for children to be placed in the custody of the department. The Office of Child and Family Services (OCFS) required each LDSS to cut their residential placements to 12% by October 2021. The Family First initiative also required each LDSS to have at least 30% of their total foster care population in a certified Kinship (i.e., relative) foster home. We are happy to report that as of this narrative, there are only three (3) youth in congregate care. Last year at this time, there were eight (8).

As of this report, through calendar year 2024, the FCU finalized the adoptions for twelve (12) children. This will provide much-needed permanency to these children.

Mandated Preventive Services (MPS) and our Cluster Preventive Services staff, through calendar year 2024, worked with a total of 184 children. Of the 184 children, five (5) were placed in foster care in 2024. This is about a 97% success rate. This unit works diligently to reach and stay within the 95% - 99% success rate target.

Child Protection Services (CPS) investigated a total of 842 cases of suspected child abuse and maltreatment in 2024. This is a slight decrease from what we saw in 2023. The CPS unit remains successful in making their determinations within the 60-day NYS mandated timeframe for investigations. NYS mandates that CPS workers maintain a workload with fifteen or less investigations. For most of 2024, with minimal exceptions, workers met this mandate. Other CPS mandates include having a 100% on-time completion of seven-day safety assessments and 60-day closures. It is very important to maintain the proper manning levels in the CPS unit to meet these mandated timelines. Throughout the year these statistical measures are met and allows the CPS unit to remain among the highest percentage districts in NYS for timely completion of the seven-day safety assessments and closing cases in the 60-day timeframe.

Adult Protective Services Unit (APS) received one-hundred eighty (180) investigations in 2024. The unit successfully meets their mandates making the required initial contacts on cases within three business days, or sooner in many instances. Additionally, the workers in the APS unit consistently complete their mandated investigations within 60 days while ensuring individuals over the age of 18 are safe and in suitable environments. The APS workers also assist in the monitoring and handling of eleven (11) guardianship cases.

In August of 2022, the Student Transformation and Empowerment Program (S.T.A.R.) LLC suddenly announced that they were no longer able to maintain operations and were closing their doors. The S.T.A.R. program had been in existence in Genesee County for over 20 years and was vital to providing services to children and families in our community. Genesee County held a contract with the S.T.A.R. program, who worked closely with not only DSS, but with Probation and every school district in the County. This program provided intensive services to children that were struggling in school and in the community with truancy, school suspensions and other challenging behaviors including children who were adjudicated Juvenile Delinquents (JD). The program helped children stay in school and improve their grade point average and get the counseling they need. Additionally, S.T.A.R. kept children out of foster care and the costly residential placements. Due to the need for this program, when S.T.A.R. suddenly closed their doors, DSS created the Student Transformation and Empowerment Program (S.T.E.P.) along with four newly budgeted positions to run the program.

S.T.E.P. employs two Adolescent Behavioral Specialist I positions and one Adolescent Behavioral Specialist II. Those three positions are supervised by the Adolescent Behavioral Coordinator. At the beginning of 2024, the program relocated from the Robert Morris school to St. Anthony's Church. S.T.E.P. is designed to provide services that will work closely with schools and probation to help children stay in school and improve their grade point average and their behavior as well as to help keep children out of foster care and residential placements. S.T.E.P. has tutors on site as well as a licensed mental health counselor. A portion of the cost to run the S.T.E.P. program will be offset by grants through OCFS and repayments from the school districts. The program officially opened on December 1, 2022, and has run successfully throughout all of 2023 and again in 2024. S.T.E.P. has a One-Day Program, a Thirty-Day Program, and a Court Ordered Program. For the 2023-2024 school year, S.T.E.P. worked with approximately 220 students in the One-Day Program and Thirty-day programs. For those children, their average grade point average (G.P.A.) went from 68% to 81%. For those same children, their attendance went from about 10 days absent to 4 days absent from school. This program has had a remarkable impact on keeping children out of foster care and being more successful in

school.

On the personnel side there is still some turnover, however it looks like this continues to subside. The Program and Service unit's teams have needed to step up and perform the extra work until positions can be filled. In 2024 we had three (3) staff retire, thirteen (13) staff resign for other employment and three (3) staff terminated. We continue to project up to two (2) retirements in 2025. In the Services area, 1/3 of our Caseworkers are still relatively new with less than one year on the job. This puts a lot of extra work on the more experienced Caseworkers who are already stretched thin with the ever-increasing mandates put on us by the State.

Technical capabilities at the state level have allowed DSS to continue exploring alternative methods of utilizing the state's network to assist DSS to move our technology forward. The new network system has increased our technology capabilities and allows us to perform activities, we have been unable to perform previously, allowing us to be more effective and efficient. We are now over 3 years into our scanning project to make all Programs files electronic. This project will take years to complete but our methods continue to improve to move things along. We will be able to scan documents and move away from our paper filing system and rid ourselves of an antiquated computer system that has functionality problems. Electronic technology will improve our existing capabilities, access to records, and create a tracking system that is more efficient and will ultimately lead to a reduction in the amount of paper being used.

2025 Essential Goals

We continue to look for ways to renew efforts for the Employment Services Unit to secure additional locations to be utilized for work experience and subsidized employment. With the guidance and procedures from the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) agreement, it is hopeful that partner agencies will assist us to achieve our goal of a work participation rate of at least 50% while continuing to monitor the defined social distancing and masking guidelines. These programs can lead to permanent employment, therefore reducing the current number of open public assistance cases.

By completing thorough and timely investigations, the Social Services Investigators will maintain their goal to increase the level of funds subject to fraud recovery by twenty-five percent over the estimated 2024 total.

The Services unit continues to discuss innovative and alternative strategies to handle any potential increase of the number of all Juvenile Delinquent (JD) placements and an increase in the number of preventive service referrals to prevent out-of-home placement. The Juvenile and Adolescent Services Committee (JASC) continues to be instrumental in planning for all youth to safely remain in the community as much as possible.

For the 2024-2025 school year, we expect S.T.E.P. to continue to be fully engaged with all the school districts in Genesee County. We anticipate having about one hundred and forty (140) youth referred to the One-Day Program and about ninety (90) youth referred to the Thirty-Day Program. The Court Ordered program will see about six (6) youth referred from Family Court. S.T.E.P. also has a program that runs during the summer months when school is closed. The youth in this program complete community service throughout the summer under the close supervision of our Adolescent Behavior Specialists.

The Permanency Planning Unit (PPU) and Cluster Care (CC) will continue their efforts to outreach and recruit twelve (12) new foster homes in 2025 with the hope that at least one or two homes will be identified specifically as a cluster home. Our Foster Care team has been conducting presentations in the community, such as churches and schools, in an effort to recruit foster parents. Also, these teams will continue to focus attention on the youth currently in residential levels of care to expedite earlier step-downs to a lower level of care or discharge to family resources. With the introduction of Family First there was an emphasis placed on the county to maintain our number of congregate care placements at 12% or less. We are three years into the Family First transition and have seen positive results already with newly implemented programs like the Juvenile and Adolescent Services Committee and the Kinship Firewall which adds an extra layer of diligence to finding appropriate kinship resources for children in our community. Beginning in October 2021, going forward, any child that is placed in DSS custody and enters a Qualified Residential Treatment Program (QRTP), must be evaluated by a Qualified Individual (QI), per OCFS Regulation. In 2024 we had four (4) children enter a QRTP.

The MPS team continues to demonstrate success working with families. The MPS unit will work together with CPS to continue to develop a process that allows MPS Caseworkers involvement during the early stages of a CPS case, especially in cases identified as having a high rating on the Risk Assessment Profile (RAP). The goal is to have MPS work with approximately 220 children and prevent out-of-home placement for at least 95% of these children, including families considered at high risk. Kinship Care has been implemented with the intent on outlining a more efficient and speedy process to recruit family resources when it appears that there is a likelihood that a child may need a placement outside of their parents' home.

CPS will maintain the outcomes from 2024 and work to stay below the mandated threshold of each caseworker having no more than fifteen (15) open CPS investigations. Monitored staffing levels will continue to ensure that the Supervisor/Caseworker ratio is appropriate and that the current workforce is able to handle any increased volume of reports to the hotline. There have been prior requests to add another supervisor in CPS, but due to budgetary constraints and current CPS numbers this request remains on hold. The CPS staff are mandated and strive to complete 100% of all seven-day safety assessments and case closing determinations within 60 days.

APS will complete an anticipated two-hundred and ten (210) APS investigations in 2025. Initial contact needs to be made within three business days, per regulation, or sooner if the case facts dictate such information. APS is mandated to complete all investigations within 60 days to ensure individuals over the age of 18 are safe and in suitable environments.

The collection rate on current child support orders is a focal point for our Support Collection Unit. Federal guidelines strive for a minimum collection rate of eighty percent, while the current statewide rate is 66%. Genesee County is currently averaging 79% consistent with the same time last year, with a goal to maintain collections to at least eighty percent. This will be accomplished by developing staff members, as well as, working with Family Court Officials to ensure right-sized orders are being established and appropriate modifications to existing orders are occurring, as applicable.

With the upcoming retirement of the Coordinator of Child Support, the Director and

supervisor of this unit will continue to place an emphasis on enhanced employee development and succession planning. In cooperation with our Staff Development Consultant, more advanced training will be accessed for the new employees who have been hired.

Moving forward with technology and with the new network available, the DSS Information Technology unit will continue moving the Scanning Project forward and transition our antiquated systems-based programs over to the new network system format which will increase and upgrade our technology capabilities and streamline processes. Moving forward the goal remains to improve the technological capabilities of this department to allow for more efficient work processes, data storage and reduce paper consumption. Advancements in these areas are ongoing.

DSS currently has one Deputy Assistant County Attorney and four Assistant County Attorneys, bringing our total to five. The support staff for these five attorneys is two Legal Clerk Typists. Of the five attorneys, four work solely on child welfare and adult protective issues. The other attorney is assigned to assist with Programs area legal issues.

BUDGET SUMMARY

| Appropriation by Object | Adopted 2023 | Actual 2023 | Adopted 2024 | Actual 2024 | Adopted 2025 |
|------------------------------------|-------------------------|------------------------|-------------------------|------------------------|-------------------------|
| Salary/Fringe | \$ 8,228,960 | \$ 7,628,909 | \$ 8,676,666 | \$ 8,519,655 | \$ 9,992,840 |
| Equipment | \$ 4,295 | \$ 2,941 | \$ 7,600 | \$ 5,658 | \$ 6,810 |
| Contractual | \$ 1,447,462 | \$ 1,309,991 | \$ 1,457,361 | \$ 1,222,190 | \$ 1,558,847 |
| Categories | \$ 18,345,013 | \$ 17,693,328 | \$ 21,043,380 | \$ 17,398,743 | \$ 20,990,029 |
| Total | \$ 28,025,730 | \$ 26,635,169 | \$ 31,185,007 | \$ 27,146,246 | \$ 32,548,526 |
| Repayments | \$ 965,141 | \$ 819,231 | \$ 985,474 | \$ 732,278 | \$ 1,003,054 |
| State Aid | \$ 6,133,798 | \$ 4,978,727 | \$ 6,436,530 | \$ 6,734,518 | \$ 7,871,729 |
| Fed Aid | \$ 7,420,511 | \$ 6,341,776 | \$ 8,014,196 | \$ 5,839,802 | \$ 8,572,798 |
| Local Share | \$ 13,506,280 | \$ 14,495,435 | \$ 15,748,807 | \$ 13,839,648 | \$ 15,100,945 |
| Total Benefits | \$ 143,483,988 | \$ 168,277,066 | \$ 175,344,144 | \$ 160,222,587 | \$ 177,295,053 |
| Local Share of total benefits | 9.4% | 8.6% | 9.0% | 8.6% | 8.5% |
| FTE's | 108.25 | 112.25 | 112.25 | 115.25 | 117.25 |

Note: Actual Benefits include Federal and State shares of MMIS & SNAP Benefits, and HMS repayments.

BUDGET HIGHLIGHTS

The 2025 budget is predicated on the existing programming and continued anticipation for federal and state dollars. This will involve technological capabilities related to administration of SNAP cases, Flexible Fund for Family Services (FFFS), Community Optional Preventive Services (COPS), Supervision & Treatment Services for Juvenile Program (STSJP), CAPTA/CARA funding and Safe Harbour funding. Detention Services and Independent Living Allocations continue with level funding to support programming with increases to Foster Care Block Grants. Safety Net cases have seen minimal change while the state share remains twenty-nine percent (29%), leaving seventy-one percent (71%) local share. The existing mandates continue to present large financial responsibilities to the County even though there is little to no discretion regarding eligibility for or quality and quantity of the services provided.

Costs for services in the Medicaid program do not result in any increases in the local share of the program, even though the caseload size and the benefits paid to providers continue to rise. In 2025, the County will be assessed 13 weekly shares of \$181,406 and 39 weeks of \$190,005 with a total estimated liability of \$9,768,473. The Medicaid administrative cap is projected to remain in effect, limiting the allowable local expenditures that the district can utilize for administration of the program.

Caseload sizes have decreased in family foster care, but barely offset rate increases for residential care, dormitory authority payments and the increase in the number of adoption subsidies. It is uncertain if the State is willing to continue to provide the Child Welfare funding mechanism which enables the department to receive State aid for a variety of programs, including STSJP, COPS with their regular allocations and at a reimbursement rate of 62% for most services. These services along with CAPTA/CARA and Safe Harbour are crucial to limiting placements and controlling associated expenditures.

DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES
DIVISION OF FINANCIAL SERVICES

DIVISION DESCRIPTION

The Temporary Assistance Programs provides cash assistance or equivalents to individuals or families. Social Welfare Examiners work to determine benefit eligibility and maintain ongoing case monitoring. The eligibility requirements vary considerably among programs, as does the financial participation of the Federal and State governments. The department makes use of one-time diversion payments to alleviate the need for ongoing cash assistance. Referrals through the Front-End Detection System (FEDS) to the Social Services Investigators assist in identifying possible fraud prior to making applicants into recipients. The implementation of Welfare Reform in 1996 dramatically changed the nature of cash assistance. Family Assistance and Safety Net Assistance recipients are required to engage in work activities to off-set costs and to prepare them for self-sufficiency in the future. As a result of the 2023-2024 New York State Budget, changes were made to the Earned Income Disregard for public assistance recipients effective 12/29/23. Recipients who start a new job will have all their income disregarded from eligibility considerations for a once-in-a-lifetime period of six months, as long as their income is not more than 200% of the Federal Poverty Level. This also includes income earned through a qualified work activity or training program. Fifteen cases have benefited from the Earned Income Disregard since 12/29/23.

The department has the responsibility of paying burial costs for indigent residents of the county. Rates paid for various funeral services are established every three years by Legislative resolution. Any assets left by the deceased are used to offset costs.

While the federal government originally established the Home Energy Assistance Program (HEAP) to supplement low-income households' heating budgets in the cold weather months, the program has expanded to include summer cooling benefits, clean & tune benefits, and replacement and repair benefits, now causing HEAP to run on a year-round basis. There is no local share for the benefits in this program, although administrative functions require a great deal of both in-house and contracted staff time. The energy benefits to clients returned to pre-Covid amounts for the 2023-2024 HEAP season and benefit amounts remain the same for 2024-2025.

The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) is another federally mandated benefit. The line-item budget only reflects the cost of administering the program, and not the actual benefit provided. There is currently a statewide Able-Bodied Adults Without Dependents (ABAWD) waiver in place until February 28, 2026. Upon expiration of this waiver, SNAP recipients will once again have to comply with work requirements as part of the eligibility process.

The department has a vigorous employment program, which enables many applicants/recipients to find employment. Personnel work very closely with a variety of agencies including Job Development, Genesee Community College, UConnectCare (formerly Genesee Orleans Council on Alcoholism and Substance Abuse), and Horizons. The Flexible Fund for Family Services (FFFS) and various other State allocations are the sources of funding in this area. When allocations for Employment programming decrease,

services reduce in a like manner. A strong local economy is the most important element in reducing welfare dependency.

The Medical Assistance programs include a wide array of services. Medicaid is a government (federal/state/local) financed health insurance policy for eligible people. The State continues to support significant growth to the program, as evidenced when Genesee County experienced increased enrollment in Medicaid coincident to the opening of The New York State of Health (health care exchange) in 2014. Other changes that have encouraged the growth of the Medicaid program include the elimination of resource tests for most types of Medicaid, the elimination of Medicaid eligibility face-to-face interviews, and effective January 1, 2023, the income level increased to 138% of the federal poverty level (FPL). The current income levels are \$1,732 for individuals and \$2,351 for a couple. This has placed an additional strain on Social Welfare Examiners that determine eligibility and authorize benefits. For limited programs, such as some homecare, Caseworkers from the Adult Services Unit also provide case management. Chronic care eligibility determinations take the most time and due to the five-year look-back period, the variety of complex issues and the different challenges that arise from case-to-case these cases pose the longest waiting times and delays for eligibility determination. The State has put on hold their plan to institute a 36-month lookback on Medicaid cases that need coverage for homecare as well. The Medical Assistance programs have the largest burden to the County, but for which the County has very little control.

The State continues to struggle in the process to take over Medicaid administration from the counties. Genesee County still has responsibility for a portion of Medicaid administration at the local level, apart from non-emergency medical transportation and some eligibility functions for the MAGI population (cases where eligibility is based primarily on the applicant's modified adjusted gross income, with no consideration of their resources). Since 2012 the department has been successful remaining within the cap that was instituted for Medicaid administrative expenditures. It is of great concern that New York State has determined they will no longer share the eFMAP savings with the local counties.

The State of New York operates a vast computer driven system (MMIS) through which medical providers bill and receive payments. The actual appropriation reflects only the local share of these costs. Historically, this has been about sixteen percent of the total spent in our county on inpatient, outpatient, long-term care, and the other areas of service funded through Medicaid. Managed Care offers an alternative to the traditional fee-for-service Medicaid program. Several Medicaid services continue to be forced into a managed care process, including long term home health care services and nursing home care.

The department continues to provide benefits through the Child Care Assistance Program. The allocations for this program are not known until after the beginning of the SFY, even though they are for the FFY beginning six months prior. With the increase in funding for this program, through the New York State Child Care Block Grant, there is currently no wait list. Effective October 1, 2023, income eligibility increased to 85% of the state median income (SMI). This has resulted in a significant increase in families being eligible for assistance. This program is important in supporting the work of many single and low-income parents.

BUDGET HIGHLIGHTS

The current overall Public Assistance monthly caseload has changed minimally. However, there is a greater percentage of Safety Net cases than Family Assistance cases. Through intensive case management, job placement for many people continues during the application process or in the alternative, make use of targeted supportive payments that address short-term needs and reduce long-term reliance on assistance. The current SNAP caseload has increased 1% over this time last year. As in the past, the economy contributes to the demands in all benefit programs, as well as necessitates the continued supports to assist working individuals and families who struggle to make ends meet despite their employment status.

The Medicaid program remains the single biggest line item in the budget and for the County overall. The 2025 MMIS Medicaid budget projection of \$9,768,473 which will be paid out in a total of fifty-two (52) weekly installments. The total is calculated as monthly payments of 13 weeks at \$181,406 and 39 weeks at \$190,005. It is imperative that the County continues to pursue additional reductions to the local share of this fiscally unsustainable program.

INDICATORS

| Performance Indicators | Actual 2023 | Actual 2024 | Adopted 2025 |
|---|--------------------|--------------------|---------------------|
| Public Assistance (cases) | 190 | 176 | 200 |
| SNAP (cases) | 2680 | 2771 | 2800 |
| MA (locally administered cases) | 3452 | 3336 | 3500 |
| HEAP – Regular Benefits | 3095 | 2964 | 3500 |
| HEAP – Emergency Benefits | 442 | 468 | 600 |
| Burials (approved applications) | 27 | 37 | 50 |
| Fraud Investigations (completed) | 256 | 205 | 230 |
| FA participation rate (all families) | 7% | 7% | 50% |
| Funds Subject to Recovery | \$31,082 | \$19,814 | \$45,000 |
| MA Recovery | \$490,849 | \$286,644 | \$235,000 |
| Public Assistance (FA/EAF, SN & EAA) | \$1,668,944 | \$1,199,046 | \$1,944,427 |
| Day Care Block Grant (program expenses) | \$1,239,378 | \$1,950,820 | \$1,454,630 |
| MMIS Medicaid (gross expenditure) | \$139,043,988 | \$137,291,964 | \$145,000,000 |
| Medicaid Weekly Shares | \$8,597,277 | \$9,677,842 | \$9,768,473 |
| Other Medical Assistance | \$46,909 | \$19,269 | \$32,000 |
| Burials | \$48,300 | \$77,689 | \$137,500 |
| HEAP (locally processed) | \$23,259 | \$1,217 | \$32,000 |
| SNAP Benefits | \$11,047,301 | \$10,234,321 | \$9,500,000 |

DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES
DIVISION OF SERVICES TO CHILDREN, FAMILIES AND ADULT SERVICES

DIVISION DESCRIPTION

The department provides a variety of services, which focus on enhancing individual and family functioning, as well as assisting abused, neglected or delinquent children. The guiding principle is to provide care, assistance, and intervention in the least intrusive and least restrictive manner possible. The services directed toward families and children include child protective, foster care, cluster care, preventive, adoption, certain types of child day care, and various institutional programs. There are also substantial numbers of adults in the community who require specialized care and/or protection. The department provides protective services to adults over the age of eighteen (18) years. Additionally, caseworkers perform case management for Medicaid-supported home care, monitor deinstitutionalized adults, and provide other preventive services including acting as representative payee and guardians for many clients.

BUDGET HIGHLIGHTS

Genesee County received a total of 842 Child Protective Services reports in 2024. Many of the investigations are very complex and labor intensive, with the greatest trend being substance abuse, contributing to the family dysfunction. Additionally, State Central Registry (SCR) Reform has changed the way investigations are conducted. To indicate a report for child abuse or neglect, there needs to be a “preponderance of evidence”. This is a change in the burden of proof which has always been “some credible evidence”. This change began on January 1, 2022, and has added another layer to CPS investigations. In addition to substance abuse, there continues to be a significant increase in the number of reports of Educational Neglect. Efforts persist to reduce the number of petitions filed in Family Court by offering preventive services as a means of resolving family problems. Success with the preventive services caseload is measured by children remaining in their own homes, rather than entering out-of-home placements, or being returned home from placement earlier than expected.

The use of electronic monitoring and close coordination with partner agencies in the juvenile justice system is implemented to minimize detention placement days. Use of the State-required Detention Risk Assessment Instrument (DRAI) tool continues to be helpful as a concrete tool that better informs Court Officials of the need or appropriateness of detention placement, and forces professionals to consider other alternatives.

Foster home placements of children have decreased significantly; however, we anticipate them to be on the rise again soon. While efforts continue to recruit new foster parents, dependency on purchasing such resources from voluntary agencies prevails, again at a very high cost. The significant cost of residential placement leads to continual monitoring of all youth in care. Residential placements are responsive to serving highly dysfunctional and special-needs youth while protecting the safety of the community. As mentioned, new Family First program initiative has required us to have reduced our congregate care placements to 12% by October 2021. In 2024 we had three children placed into OCFS custody and subsequently placed into an OCFS State Training School. Our foster care budget continues to be impacted by Administrative Directive Memorandum (ADM) 22-OCFS-ADM-16. In this ADM, the local department of social services were advised that,

effective July 1, 2023, the districts must provide the Maximum State Aid Rate (MSAR) for foster care programs. In 2025 there will again be the full 12 months of these payments. The increase in these foster care payments will have a large impact on the budget if our foster care placements increase as expected. This payment increase also applies to parents receiving adoption subsidy. Currently Genesee County provides adoption subsidy to adoptive parents of 127 children.

The Adult Services workload maintains upward growth, particularly in the complexity of Protective Services referrals and the need to provide on-going services, including representative payee services, to adults in the community who are at risk.

INDICATORS

| Performance Indicators | Actual 2023 | Actual 2024 | Adopted 2025 |
|---------------------------------------|--------------------|--------------------|---------------------|
| Child Protective Reports | 923 | 842 | 925 |
| Preventive Caseload (children served) | 172 | 184 | 220 |
| S.T.E.P. (children served) | 229 | 220 | 240 |
| Foster Care Days | 10,586 | 7,920 | 9,882 |
| Adoption Subsidy Days | 44,431 | 45,263 | 47,9416 |
| Adoptions Finalized | 9 | 12 | 12 |
| Institutional Days (STS/CSE) | 2,712 | 3,154 | 4,392 |
| Detention Days | 0 | 1 | 45 |
| Personal Care Caseload | 32 | 44 | 50 |
| Adult Protective Investigations | 197 | 180 | 210 |
| Services to Recipients | \$ 432,330 | \$ 372,919 | \$ 526,424 |
| Placement Costs | \$ 4,825,312 | \$ 4,802,058 | \$ 6,769,056 |

DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES

DIVISION OF FISCAL OPERATIONS AND CHILD SUPPORT

DIVISION DESCRIPTION

This division encompasses the departmental areas of Accounting, Child Support Enforcement and Support Collection services and the Informational Technology services.

Accounting administrative support services personnel are responsible for fiscal operations that sustain all areas of the department, such as accounts payable, payroll, accounts receivable, reconciliation of accounts, cash receipts, budgeting and compiling data for State and Federal claims reporting and reimbursements. Personnel in this unit also work closely with staff of all areas to ensure all fiscal obligations and benefits are met, not only accurately but also in a timely fashion.

The Child Support unit has the very important task of ensuring that non-custodial parents contribute to the support of their dependent children. The unit establishes support orders and collects funds, on behalf of children, to offset the costs of public assistance. Support Investigators are responsible for establishing paternity, and orders of support, while monitoring compliance. Child Support Enforcement is one of the main pillars of successful welfare reform. The unit also establishes orders for other "public charges", such as children in foster care and institutional placements. Additionally, the unit recovers funds expended through the Medicaid program, including birth related costs.

The Informational Technology unit, otherwise known as Computer Support, act as the first responders to all hardware, software, and/or computer peripheral related matters at DSS. The unit works with a multitude of oversight agencies, including but not limited to New York State Information Technology Services, Genesee County Information Technology, NYS Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance, NYS Office of Children and Family Services, NYS Department of Health, NYS Department of Labor, NYS Department of Motor Vehicles, Social Security Administration and other outside agencies to ensure all staff have the tools necessary to effectively and efficiently accomplish the department's mission.

BUDGET HIGHLIGHTS

The Director of Fiscal Operations and Child Support in collaboration with County IT will assist the department in modernizing some of our outdated IT systems and to ensure we have sufficient IT support and equipment to carry out our duties.

Technical enhancements and planning remain essential to the future success of the Department of Social Services. Investments in software and hardware are key to moving forward with procedures to increase efficiencies and reduce manual input processes. Evaluation of all organizational processes and personnel must continue, which should include the furthered introduction of new technology and the scheduled and budgeted replacement of archaic or inadequate devices.

The overall total of Child Support collections is projected to increase slightly in 2025 from previous years. Genesee County continues to come close or meet all federal performance standards. It helps to ensure that non-custodial parents provide financial support to

children who would otherwise require public assistance to meet their needs. The Child Support and Enforcement unit remains in compliance with performance standards through enhanced case attention and expanded knowledge of the staff. The unit meets all mandated security requirements imposed by the State and Federal government. The unit is preparing for the retirement of the Child Support Coordinator.

INDICATORS

| Performance Indicators | Actual 2023 | Actual 2024 | Adopted 2025 |
|--|--------------------|--------------------|---------------------|
| Systems | | | |
| State Network Supported Devices | 135 | 154 | 154 |
| County Network Supported Devices | 7 | 13 | 13 |
| Verizon Wireless Devices | 44 | 45 | 43 |
| Office Phones | 136 | 144 | 144 |
| Child Support | | | |
| Active FA (cases) | 125 | 110 | 120 |
| Active Non-FA (cases) | 1110 | 1030 | 1150 |
| AFDC-FC Cases with Arrears Due | 535 | 486 | 475 |
| New Orders Established | 141 | 121 | 130 |
| New Paternities Established | 105 | 150 | 175 |
| Petitions filed, Support | 116 | 139 | 145 |
| Petitions filed, Paternities | 40 | 43 | 50 |
| Petitions filed, Enforcement | 461 | 423 | 450 |
| Collection Rate* | 77% | 79% | 80% |
| SEP (Support Establish Percentage) * | 95% | 95% | 95% |
| PEP (Paternity Established Percentage) * | 98% | 97% | 98% |
| Collections (FA) | \$127,888 | \$100,121 | \$105,000 |
| Collections (Non-FA) | \$5,672,353 | \$5,871,025 | \$5,950,000 |
| Title IV-E and Others | \$60,476 | \$100,796 | \$101,000 |
| Medical Reimbursement | \$55,442 | \$22,277 | \$21,500 |
| Total Child Support Collections | \$5,916,159 | \$6,094,219 | \$6,177,500 |

*Federal Performance Measure

DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES YOUTH BUREAU

DIVISION DESCRIPTION

The Genesee County Youth Bureau was established in 1971 to plan, coordinate, and supplement activities of public, private, and religious agencies devoted to the welfare and protection of youth. The Bureau is responsible to the Chief Executive and funded, in part, by the New York State Office of Children and Family Services (OCFS) and STOP-DWI grant funds.

Youth Bureau programs develop and change over the years, but its foremost purpose remains constant – to assist with the development and funding of programs that encourage positive youth development. Programs are designed to motivate young people, to develop a sense of responsibility and make a positive contribution to their communities.

Youth Bureaus

- Promote positive youth development and youth participation.
- Develop local strategies that meet the needs of young people.
- Help plan and coordinate services for youth.
- Assess youth needs to determine funding priorities.
- Promote partnerships with agencies to provide comprehensive services.
- Provide funding to youth service agencies.
- Monitor and evaluate Youth Bureau funded programs to ensure quality services.
- Advocate for legislation, systems change, & funding to improve/assist the youth services system.

O.C.F.S. FUNDED PROGRAMS

The Youth Bureau administers population-based Youth Development Program (YDP) funding made available to the counties by the NYS Office of Children and Family Services (OCFS). No local match is required to receive Youth Development Program (YDP) funds.

The 2024 funded contract programs included:

1. Genesee Nature Recreation: Connecting Youth with the Outdoors
2. Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA) Volunteer Training Program
3. Genesee Youth Lead
4. Genesee Youth Bureau Outreach
5. United Way Backpack Program

| Prevention/Intervention | 2022 | 2023 | Actual 2024 | Adopted 2025 |
|--------------------------------|-------------|-------------|------------------------|-------------------------|
| Funded Programs | 6 | 7 | 5 | 5 |
| Funding | \$29,750 | \$38,550 | \$28,684 | \$28,634 |
| Youth Served | 1,156 | 1,668 | 1,721 | 1,700 |

Youth recreation programs serve our youth year-round or during the summer months through drop-in programs and structured sports. The 2024 Youth Bureau funded recreation programs included:

6. Alexander Recreation
7. Bergen Recreation
8. Byron Recreation
9. Batavia Recreation & Youth Services
10. Gillam-Grant Recreation and Youth Services Program
11. Oakfield Recreation
12. Stafford Recreation

| Recreation | 2022 | 2023 | Actual 2024 | Adopted 2025 |
|-------------------|-------------|-------------|------------------------|-------------------------|
| Funded Programs | 7 | 7 | 7 | 7 |
| Funding | \$29,908 | \$29,908 | \$33,975 | \$32,697 |
| Youth Served | 1,345 | 1,186 | 1,215 | 1,100 |

Youth Sports Education Funding (YSEF), Youth Sports Education Funding Infrastructure (YSEFI) and Youth Team Sports (YTS) – Funded programs must provide a variety of sports for a broad range of youth in under-resourced communities. OCFS encourages a wide and flexible definition of sports that encompasses any organized activities with movement, including physical fitness activities such as yoga, hiking, dance, and active outdoor pursuits. The 2024 funded programs included:

13. American Youth Soccer Organization; Oakfield Region 1084
14. Batavia Bulldawgs
15. Town of Oakfield
16. YMCA Swimming

| Youth Sports | 2022 | 2023 | Actual 2024 | Adopted 2025 |
|---------------------|-------------|-------------|------------------------|-------------------------|
| Funded Programs | N/A | 3 | 3 | 4 |
| Funding | N/A | \$16,787 | \$57,289 | \$48,838 |
| Youth Served | N/A | 491 | 887 | 400 |

YOUTH BUREAU ADMINISTERED PROGRAMS

The Youth Bureau additionally operates grant-funded initiatives that further youth development and strengthen families and the community. Current initiatives include:

- Youth Court
- Safe Harbour
- STOP-DWI Education and Public Information
- Youth Lead

Youth Court was established in 2008 and funded by state grants through the Genesee County Department of Social Services. Youth Court provides a voluntary alternative for young people facing disciplinary action through school or law enforcement. All Respondents must admit to charges prior to acceptance to Youth Court. Additionally, Youth Court provides students the opportunity to become Youth Court Members and experience the judicial

system first-hand as they fill all the traditional court positions (Judge, prosecution, defense, clerk, bailiff etc.). All proceedings are confidential, with no permanent record of the incident in the youth's file or record. The goal of this program is to improve youth citizenship skills and decrease problematic behaviors through positive peer pressure and early intervention. Youth serving on the court gain knowledge about legal proceedings and develop leadership & problem-solving skills. The Youth Bureau Program Coordinator is the lead staff member for the program.

Safe Harbour: NY (formerly Sexually Exploited Youth SEY) is a program that implements a system-level approach within existing child welfare and allied youth-serving systems, including Runaway-Homeless Youth programs (RHY), Probation, Persons In Need of Supervision (PINS), Youth Bureaus, and other critical partners. This approach leverages existing system strengths to create a more effective and efficient response to youth who have experienced commercial sexual exploitation or trafficking, or who are vulnerable to it.

The goals of this program are to:

- Enhance the capacity of professionals who already serve our youth population.
- Raise awareness of sex and labor trafficking.
- Better identify and provide appropriate services to at-risk, exploited, or trafficked youth.
- Meet the current need of at-risk, exploited, and trafficked youth.
- Support healing and prevent victimization through youth services; and enhance the capacity of local partnerships to support this work.

The Juvenile Justice Planning Committee (JJPC) functions as a task force for SEY/Safe Harbour funding. The Safe Harbour program objectives fit within the JJPC mission and monthly meetings provide a platform for updates and input.

The Youth Bureau Program Coordinator is the lead staff member for the program.

STOP-DWI involvement includes working closely with the County's STOP-DWI Coordinator. The Youth Bureau is the lead agency for Public Information and Education. Components of the public information and education include:

- Portable STOP-DWI display
- Youth education event
- Prom/graduation reminder gifts
- Public (youth & adult) information campaign
- STOP-DWI "Night at the Ballpark"
- Poster contest and luncheon with law enforcement recognition

The Youth Bureau Program Assistant is the lead staff member of the program.

| STOP-DWI | 2022 | 2023 | Actual 2024 | Adopted 2025 |
|-----------------|---------|---------|----------------|-----------------|
| Funding | \$9,700 | \$7,000 | \$7,890 | \$7,600 |

Genesee Youth Lead was developed and implemented in 2013 as a leadership program to replace the former Government Intern Program. It was designed to help students evaluate their strengths, weaknesses, and potential for personal and intellectual growth. Youth Lead provides the opportunity for students to develop leadership skills by being a part of a team,

the community and through applied learning within the county. Presently the program has 102 alumni from every high school in Genesee County. Youth Lead provides leadership development through hands-on experience within and outside the classroom. Topics covered during the eight-month program include:

| | |
|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local government • Criminal justice system • Local business • Health & human services | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Civic responsibilities & community service • Job readiness • Agribusiness • Emergency Management • Arts & Culture |
|--|---|

The Youth Bureau Program Coordinator is the lead staff member for the program.

Ongoing Collaboration continues with the Genesee County Youth Bureau striving to be the conduit for youth services in the county. This occurs through committee memberships, collaborative initiatives, joint functions and a team approach with agencies and programs throughout the county. Including but not limited to:

| | |
|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • UConnectCare (formerly GCASA) • GCC/GVEP/BOCES and School Districts • County Parks and Planning, Genesee 2050 • YMCA | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community Action • Genesee Interagency • Law Enforcement, Probation and Courts • Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA) |
|---|---|

STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK

Mission

Dedicated to developing, implementing, and evaluating a comprehensive countywide system of youth related services.

Key 2024 Accomplishments

- Staff continued ongoing commitment to committees, organizations, and community groups as youth development experts, along with leadership development and team building engagement.
- Reconfigured the Youth Bureau duties to have administrative tasks under already existing DSS units, allowing the Youth Bureau employees to dedicate more time to serving children in our community.
- We had record numbers at the Youth Conference and Safe Summer Carnival.
- Established new community collaborations to create opportunities for youth development.

Youth Court:

- Currently there are 35 members of Youth Court and 2 Advisors.
- New Youth Court members began training in October 2024 with a swearing in ceremony in December 2024.
- 15 Youth Court referrals were received for 2024.
- Youth Court has processed 285 cases since its inception in 2008.
- Youth Court staff and members continue to work closely with the Batavia City PD and GC Sheriff's. Juvenile Officers, GC Probation Department and School Resource

Officers.

- Throughout the year Youth Court members can be counted on to volunteer with a variety of Youth Bureau activities.

STOP-DWI

- Display, public education, prom/graduation activities continued to spread the message.
- The Night at the Ballpark hosted over 1,500 people at a Muckdogs game in July 2024.
- STOP-DWI Poster Contest and Top Cop luncheon was held in November 2024.

Genesee Youth Lead

- The 2023-2024 Program ended in May with the graduation of 12 youth participants.
- The partnership with our local schools is a key component to the success of the YL program.

Safe Harbour

- Continued utilization of media and billboards highlighting the national hotline number.
- Continued education with middle school age youth along with community outreach & education.
- Maintained stock of “Go Bags” containing personal care items for youth in need.
- Juvenile Justice Planning Committee (JJPC) continued as Task Force for program.

Key 2025 Goals

- Lead the Youth Conference Planning Committee for 7 & 8th grade students that will take place in March and serve 350+ youth from both Genesee and Orleans counties.
- Sunrise Breakfast with professional and survivor speaker about human trafficking.
- Sponsor the annual youth recognition awards & banquet, providing recognition to outstanding youth, adult youth workers and adult volunteers across the county.
- Host Family Game Night. We hope to increase engagement across county departments for this valuable community night.
- Compile and analyze a youth service needs assessment. Last done 2017-2018.
- Continue to provide representation and accept leadership roles on community human service boards, committees etc.
- Continue partnerships with youth programs and youth-based initiatives across the region.
- Increase emphasis on activities that promote future employability of youth such as:
 - GLOW Emerging Workforce Committee, GLOW with your Hands
 - BEA career programs and events
- Evaluate current social media use to ensure engagement with desired audience, youth and adult.
- Evaluate creating semiannual newsletter to highlight youth activities.
- Evaluate new or previously operated youth programs for need, viability, funding, and sustainability (example AmeriCorps, Big Buddy/brother/sister etc.).
- Review previously funded YDP programs who have not applied in several years, contact and encourage qualified programs to apply.
- Increase direct services provided by the Youth Bureau and Youth Bureau volunteers to assist with increasing overall engagement with Youth Bureau activities and events.

Safe Harbour

- Continue Safe Harbour programming for Genesee County to:
 - Educate and address youth at risk of being sexually exploited or trafficked.
 - Increase public awareness through outreach events.
 - Sponsor an annual conference for 100 service providers and law enforcement.
 - Report monthly to Juvenile Justice Planning Committee (JJPC).
 - Train new staff at the Youth Bureau to facilitate human trafficking presentations with schools, law enforcement and other community partners.

Youth Court:

- Train a class of new members for 2025-26.
- Increase communication with SRO's and Assistant Principals.
 - Promote YC membership as an educational opportunity.
 - Promote YC as meaningful disciplinary option.
- Evaluate capacity to hear a greater number of cases.
- Evaluate current community service locations add/subtract as needed.
- Provide monthly programs/trainings/case reviews in lieu of active cases.
- Provide members with additional training opportunities through regional and state associations.
- Encourage Association of NYS Youth Courts scholarship opportunities.

STOP-DWI:

- Promote Adult Campaign during the holiday season with local businesses.
- Promote good decision making through Prom/Graduation season.
- Plan "Night at the Ballpark" with Dwyer Stadium and the Batavia Muckdogs. Address enhancements identified in post-game meeting. Look at other opportunities for partnerships with the Muckdogs.
- Promote participation in the Annual STOP-DWI Poster Contest to all schools.
- Recognize contest winners and Law Enforcement at Luncheon.

Genesee Youth Lead:

- Establish a minimum goal of two students per High School for the 25-26 program year which begins in October.
- Cultivate and maintain relationships with area schools and their student body to ensure participation in years to come with an emphasis on schools with lower participation with YB programs.
- Expand partnerships with human service, government, civic, and business groups within the community to provide a comprehensive countywide youth program.
- Evaluate each session to ensure quality programming for future years, adjust where needed.

Facility and Staffing:

The Youth Bureau is currently housed at the Department of Social Services. Current Youth Bureau staffing is two full time employees, one other than full time employee. These positions are comprised of a Youth Program Coordinator (37.5 Hours), Youth Program Assistant (37.5 Hours) and Youth Program Assistant/Child Care Worker Hybrid (19.5 Hours each) and are included with other DSS personnel costs.

Current staff is very flexible and willing to adjust schedules to accommodate evening and weekend obligations. As this program budget demonstrates the Youth Bureau is a very dynamic and multi-faceted department. Programs and events take hours of behind the scenes work before and after, often requiring coordination with multiple agencies. Likewise, grant obligations require additional due diligence. Current staffing can manage all the nuances one would expect from an active youth-oriented approach.

BUDGET SUMMARY

| Appropriation | Actual 2022 | Actual 2023 | Actual 2024 | Adopted 2025 |
|------------------------|------------------------|------------------------|------------------------|-------------------------|
| Salary/Fringe | 160,184 | 159,405 | N/A | N/A |
| Equipment | 0 | 964 | N/A | N/A |
| Total Appropriation | 250,949 | 271,341 | 123,802 | 127,519 |
| Revenue | 196,055 | 110,780 | 139,269 | 136,749 |

BUDGET HIGHLIGHTS

Funding sources continue through NYS Office of Child and Family Service (OCFS), shared services funding allocated to DSS, and STOP-DWI funds to impact over twenty (20) programs and events in the county. Youth Bureau staff are invested in a multitude of committees, workgroups, agencies/organizations, and events across the county to ensure Genesee County youth needs are being represented.