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# Worcester County Department of Social Services Annual Report July 2015 - June 2016

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Worcester County Department of Social  
Services  
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**State of Maryland**  
Larry Hogan, *Governor*  
Boyd K. Rutherford, *Lt. Governor*  
**Maryland Department of Human Resources**  
Sam Malhotra, *Secretary*  
Peter J. Buesgens, *Director*



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## **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

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## Director's Message

I am pleased to provide the Worcester County 2016 Annual Report. It has been a year of change and innovation at the Department of Human Resources. Our Secretary has set a goal of modernizing our current technology capabilities. His vision is to create an IT system that is web based, easily updated and shared not only within all DHR programs, but also with major state partners. Emphasis is also being placed on improved customer service, preparing foster youth for economic self sufficiency, leadership development and providing entrepreneurial opportunities for those who are economically disadvantaged.



Locally we continued to prioritize In-Home Services to prevent abuse and violence in the family home. One hundred and thirteen families that included two hundred and thirty one children received in-home services from our Department. Of these 231 children addressed to be at risk of maltreatment, only seven required foster care placement. This year, as in many past years, our Department utilizes family services at a rate equal to many medium sized jurisdictions. I am confident this statistic results from our Services Unit's desire to help and assist families.

Our Foster Care Unit saw a slight increase in the number of children in our care. We started the year with 35 children and ended with 41. We have seen an increase in Foster Care for a third consecutive year. This statistic reflects Worcester's emphasis on safety first for the families we are servicing. We hope in future years we can reverse this caseload trend without compromising safety.

As in past years, our Family Investment Unit has had to be nimble to meet the multiple and ever changing demands of providing a safety net to our community. For a good part of the year our staff continued assisting residents in enrolling into and sustaining their Maryland Health Connection medical coverage. We also took on the challenge of shortening time to process Long Term Care Medical Assistance applications, and thus maintaining a good working relationship with our local Long Term Care vendors. Currently Worcester, Somerset and Wicomico counties are also piloting the Secretary's Welfare to New Entrepreneurship initiative. We are confident this program will assist our clients in developing a more secure economic future for themselves and their families.

Finally, for a third straight year, our Child Support Unit increased collections by over \$80,000.00 from the previous year. This accomplishment is especially impressive in that the unit was without one of its five agents for most of the year.

As most of you are aware, this will be my last annual report as the Director in that I will be retiring December 1, 2016. I would like to thank this community for the support I have received in my ten year tenure as Director and I wish you all the best in keeping Worcester the exceptional jurisdiction it is. Thank you so much for allowing me to lead this worthy mission.

## 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, FAMILY & ADULT SERVICES

## Child Protective Services

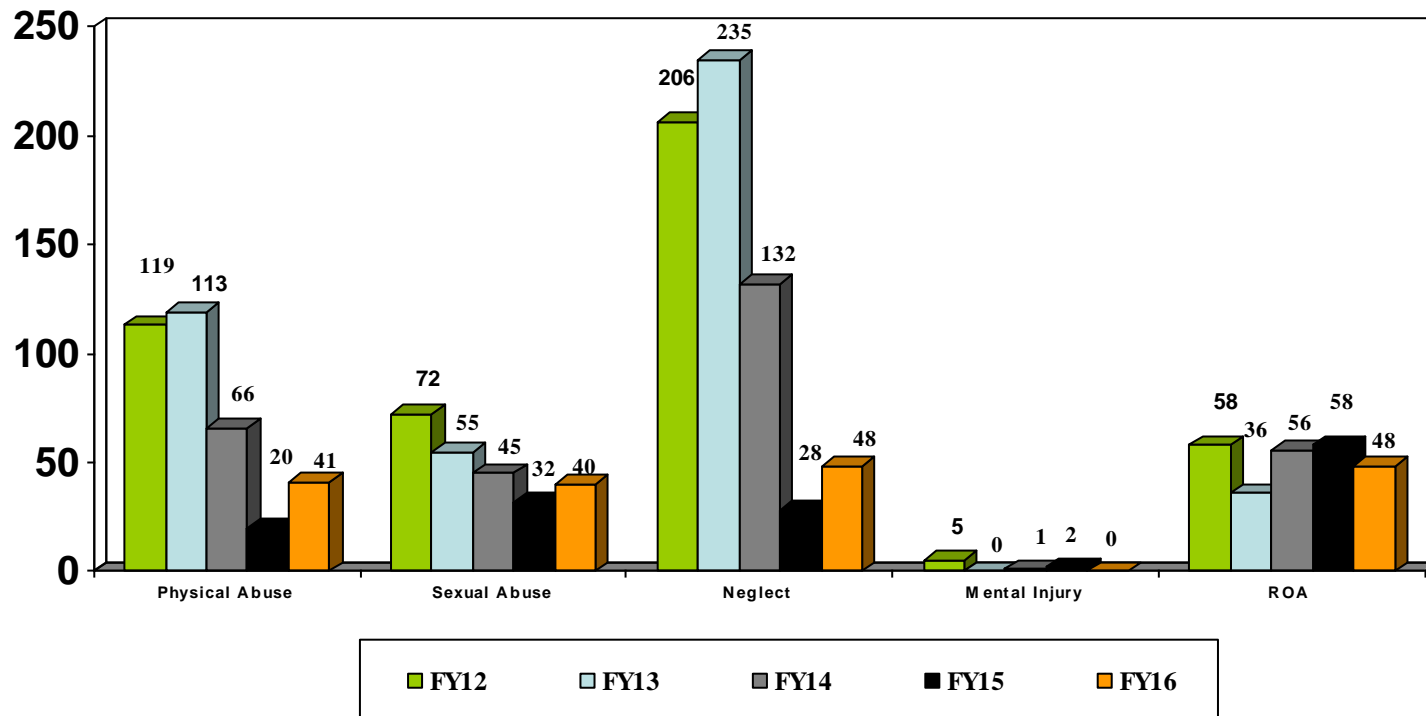
Maryland law mandates local Departments of Social Services to respond to all reports of suspected child abuse and/or neglect. Child Protective Services workers are responsible for assessing and taking steps to ensure the safety of children.

### Accepted Investigations FY16

- 41 Physical Abuse
- 40 Sexual Abuse
- 48 Neglect
- 0 Mental Injury
- 48 Referrals from other Agencies (ROA's)

### Accepted Alternative Response Investigations FY16

- 29 Physical Abuse Alternative Response
- 74 Neglect Alternative Response
- 59 Non-CPS (512/domestic violence)



## In-Home Services

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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 FY16, In-Home Services were provided as follows:

- 21 families with 56 children received Services to Families with Children
- 25 families with 52 children received Family Preservation Services
- 113 families with 231 children received Consolidated Services



Only 7 children who received the above services for FY16 entered foster care.

A total of 1,786 calls were received in Intake for Emergency Services.

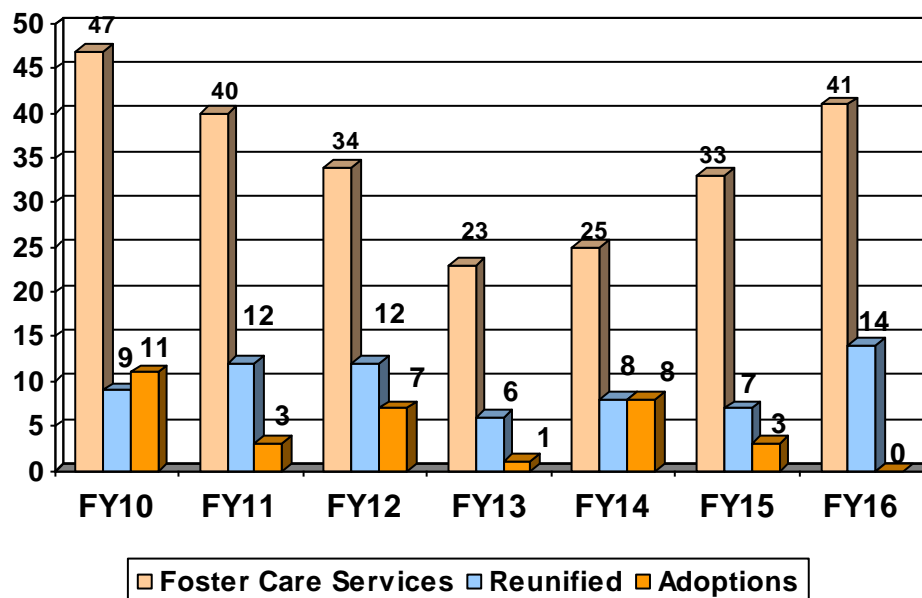
*~ The Service Unit enhanced services to parents through a Parent Support Program in which three family support workers provided intensive parent education training. Parents were offered one-on-one teaching and counseling. Parents built stronger bonds with their children, gained a better understanding of child development and developed positive discipline techniques through redirection and modeling of skills. Children were quickly reunified with their parent and a reduction of further maltreatment was evident.*

## Out- of-Home Placement

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 FY16

- 41 Out of Home services for children needing protection
- 14 Reunifications
- 0 Finalized Adoptions



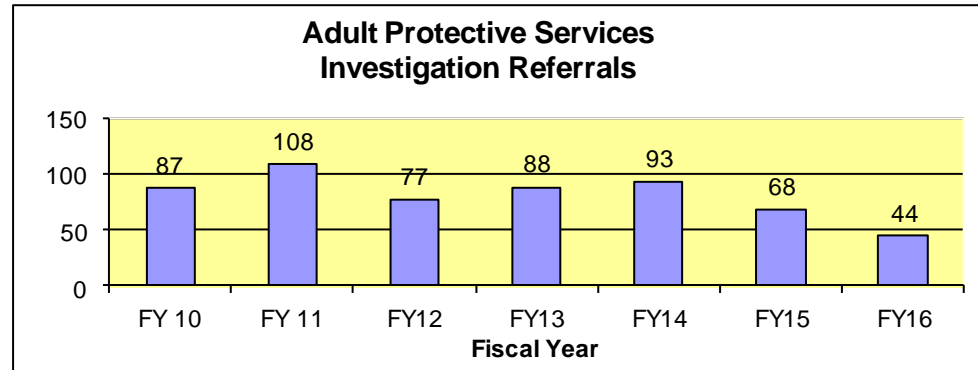
*~ A client who has a long history of substance abuse entered our FAST Program, Families Achieving Sobriety Together, and received services from the team, which includes a Social Worker, Peer Support Worker and an Addiction counselor. This client had struggled for many years, losing custody of four children 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

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- Adult Protective Services

APS investigated and/or provided continuing services to reduce the risk of abuse, neglect, self-neglect or the exploitation of 44 vulnerable adults in FY16.



- The Adult Public Guardianship Program served 5 clients as of June 30, 2016. 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 19 families. These services are for the adult caretaker of disabled clients.
- Social Services to Adults (SSTA) case management services were provided to 3 disabled and elderly adults as of June 30, 2016. 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 35 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, 2016 there were 19 clients on a waiting list for these services.
- Our Adult Services Unit provided 45 adults with Information and Referral Services or Environmental Crisis assistance.



# *FAMILY INVESTMENT ADMINISTRATION*

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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**

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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-three TCA recipients have been placed in jobs with an average wage of \$10.47 per hour.

- *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 FY16, WAGs totaling \$50,135.00 were issued to assist 29 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 \$6,426.00 were issued to 19 families facing such issues.

## Financial Assistance (continued)

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- *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 107 cases per month in FY16.

- *Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)*

This program provides benefits enabling households to supplement their food budgets. An average of 3,566 cases were worked each month by this program during FY16. These benefits averaged \$568,000 per month for a total of \$6,816,000 annually.



*~ Ms. Z applied for Temporary Cash Assistance (TCA) upon being released from Jessup Correctional Facility after recovering from a drug addiction prior to her incarceration. She was released from prison only to find out that her children were being abused by their father's girlfriend. Ms. Z regained custody of her children. She has made contact to obtain a pardon to assist her in finding employment. She has a pleasant and positive attitude toward the Work Program and maintaining her hours of work requirements. Ms. Z has had several interviews and is hoping to be hired in the near future.*

## Medical & Health Services

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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 793 active cases at the end of FY16.

- *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 196 active cases at the end of FY16.

- *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 1,067 adults monthly. This caseload figure has decreased as cases have transitioned to Maryland Health Connection.

- *Public Assistance to Adults (PAA)*

This program provided cash assistance for a monthly average of 11 adults who are physically and/or mentally disabled residing in supported living arrangements.

## Housing

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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.*



# CHILD SUPPORT ENFORCEMENT ADMINISTRATION

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## Child Support Collections

Five (5) agents managed 1,613 cases in fiscal year 2016, of which 1,434 have orders (88.90%)  
Amount disbursed — \$3,360,119 (July 1, 2015 through June 30, 2016)  
Children with paternity established — 1,209 (101.85%)



*~ In October 2015, a child support specialist left work for medical leave. This worker subsequently retired in February 2016. This put additional work on the remaining 5 child support specialists. Despite this vacancy, the Worcester County Bureau of Support Enforcement collected an additional \$91,665 over the previous year. As a matter of fact, March 2016 proved to be the best month in child support collections in ten years. This was a result of the teamwork displayed by the Child Support Unit to pitch in and take on extra duties to benefit the children of Worcester County.*

*~Worcester County had a non-custodial parent who had two cases. During a period spanning over 20 years, the non-custodial parent never made consistent monthly payments. In May 2014, the non-custodial parent signed up for the Payment Incentive Program. This program encourages obligors to make consistent payments by reducing a portion of the arrears due to the State of Maryland. During the next 24 months, the non-custodial parent paid his child support according to the terms of his Payment Incentive Agreement each and every month. Both cases were closed successfully in June 2016.*

# ADMINISTRATION AND FINANCE

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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. Performance Evaluation Program cycles were reported at 100% compliance. The 2016 Health Benefits Enrollment process was successfully completed. The Human Resources unit hired eight new employees, reclassified five staff, and four exits for various reasons. The Information Technology (IT) unit responded to and resolved over 383 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 2016 Program Funds  
\$17,846,018.00**

