

OTSEGO COUNTY

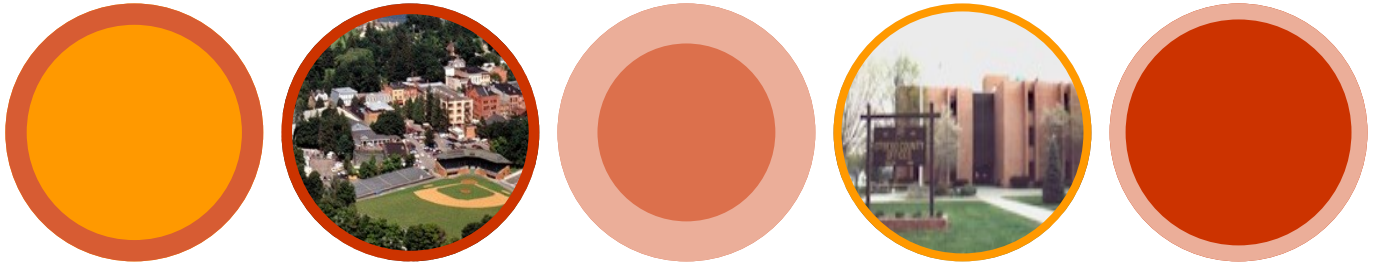
DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES

JOYCE L. BOYD, COMMISSIONER



EVE BOUBOULIS, DEPUTY COMMISSIONER

2009 ANNUAL REPORT



MISSION STATEMENT

“ The mission of Otsego County Department of Social Services is to assist and protect vulnerable individuals in our community by promoting safety, healthy families and enhanced economic stability. We provide services with compassion, respect, integrity, and positive attitudes while encouraging personal responsibility and individual choice. We work collaboratively with community partners to achieve the goals of lifelong safety and self-sufficiency for County residents.”

COMMISSIONER’S MESSAGE

In 2009 the department continued to provide a multitude of services to residents of the community while working diligently to reduce costs department wide. The last page of this report highlights some of the cost saving initiatives that were taken as well as who was our first FISH award recipient. FISH stands for FRESH IDEAS START HERE and is being awarded to any employee whose makes a suggestion that when implemented results in savings that can be documented.

Staff continued to use a vehicle sign out procedure that was put into practice in the prior year. Utilization of the vehicle fleet is now much more consistent than in the past and personal mileage has decreased.

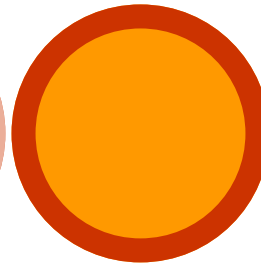
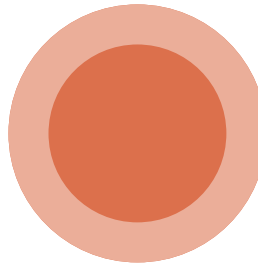
The Child Welfare units wrote a Performance Improvement Plan (PIP) that was required of each district in New York State as a result of the State failing a federal audit. The plan identifies areas the department will focus on for improvement with benchmarks and outcomes identified. The department appreciates the collaboration of community partners in the county that have participated in our process planning and goal identification. The process of plan implementation continues in 2010. All staff received refresher confidentiality training in 2009 and many staff received cross training for tasks of their coworkers so that there is adequate back up coverage at all times.

I am proud to oversee a staff of caring and responsible individuals. Even though caseloads continue to grow and funding continues to tighten the staff of the Department of Social Services works tirelessly to support families and individuals in need.

*Joyce L. Boyd
Commissioner of Social Services*

CHILD PROTECTIVE SERVICES

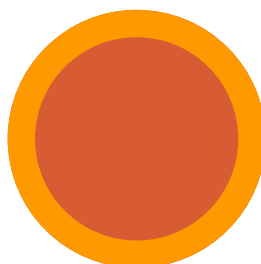
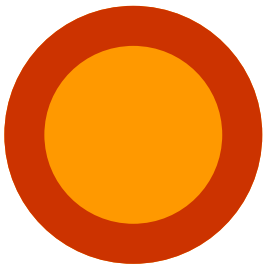
24 Hour Hotline: 1-800-342-3720



Child Protective Services (CPS) is a program mandated by New York State and provided by local County Department of Social Service agencies. CPS staff are responsible for the investigation of all reports that are received from the New York State Central Register of Child Abuse and Maltreatment (SCR). In 2009 there were 988 reports assigned by the SCR to the Otsego County CPS unit; a 14% increase over 2008.

The CPS unit also serves as a member of the Otsego County Multidisciplinary Team. New York State mandates that certain types of investigations be handled using the Multidisciplinary approach. To assist with these investigations the Otsego County Child Advocacy Center (CAC) is used as a child friendly environment to conduct interviews for such investigations. In 2009 CPS assisted in 7 additional law enforcement referrals for investigations at the CAC.

Our CPS Supervisor and Deputy Commissioner participated in conference calls to gather information regarding a new initiative that New York State is piloting in several counties called Family Assessment Response (FAR). FAR is an alternative approach to providing protection to children by focusing on engaging families in informal and formal support services that meet their needs and increases their ability to care for their children.



FOSTER CARE

**To become a foster parent call:
(607) 547-4355**

The foster care unit works with families and their children who are placed in foster care due to abuse and/or neglect or children under the supervision of Probation due to PINS (Person in Need of Supervision) or JD (Juvenile Delinquent) adjudications.

The main goals of the unit are:

- Safely reunite children with their families.
- Assist youth to achieve independent living skills or alternative planned living arrangements.
- Achieve finalized adoptions.

In 2009 four children achieved permanency through adoption; a 25% increase from 2008. Three of those four children were of a sibling group and adopted together into one home.

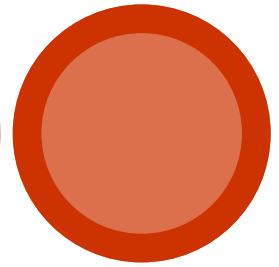
There was an average of 55.5 children in foster care with a range of 50-61 throughout 2009; a 2% increase from 2008. Thirty-two children were admitted into the foster care system. Twenty-seven children were discharged.

In 2009, twenty-one foster/adoptive parents had their homes recertified with the agency and two new foster/adoptive parents became active with the agency.

PREVENTIVE SERVICES

(607) 547-4355

These units provide Caseworker counseling and coordination of outside services for children and families with a goal of keeping children from out-of-home placement.



FAMILY TREATMENT & DRUG/SUBSTANCE ABUSE COURTS

These caseworkers work with families with children whose abuse/neglect is due to the parent(s) alcohol/substance abuse. The graduation rate of Treatment Court participants continued to remain constant due to the dedicated caseworker participation in 2009.

JUVENILE JUSTICE

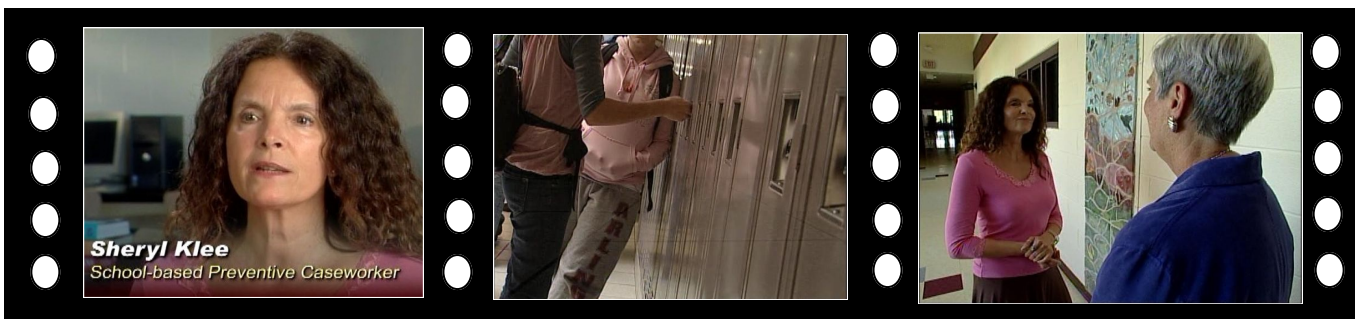
These caseworkers work with Probation and potential and/or adjudicated JD/PINS children. In 2009 there was a 10% increase in PINS intakes. However, the amount of time JD/PINS youth spent in non-secure detention facilities was reduced by approximately 32%.

COUNTYWIDE PREVENTIVE

These caseworkers work with families throughout the county by providing intervention services to prevent foster care placement.

SCHOOL-BASED PREVENTIVE

These caseworkers are directly involved with area school districts and have offices located in the schools. Their work begins with referrals from the schools and then evolves into intervention services to prevent abuse/maltreatment, JD/PINS behaviors and foster care placement. The school-based caseworker attends school meetings and participates on school committees to collaborate in meeting special needs of families. Six area school districts participated in the program in 2009.



Sheryl Klee
School-based Preventive Caseworker

In 2009 Sheryl Klee, School-Based Preventive Caseworker, was the focus of the State's Office of Children and Family Services video to promote the Year of the Child Welfare Caseworker. This video was made to assist in caseworker recruitment and public awareness of child welfare programs.

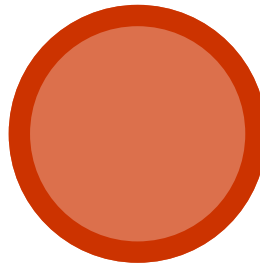
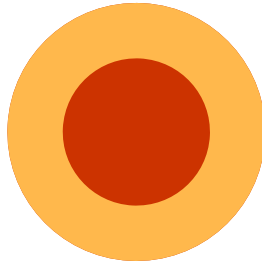
PROTECTIVE SERVICES for ADULTS (607) 547-1700



Protective Services for Adults (PSA) are available without regard to income, to adults age 18 years of age or older who:

- Have physical or mental impairment
- Are in need of protection from actual or threatened harm due to an inability to meet their essential needs for food, shelter, clothing or medical care; secure entitlements due them; or protect themselves from physical, sexual, or emotional abuse; active, passive, or self-neglect; or financial exploitation, AND
- Have no one available who is willing and able to assist them responsibly

This unit investigates both emergency and non-emergency referrals. 141 referrals were received involving 167 individuals in 2009; a 7 % decrease from 2008. An additional 40 utility shut-off referrals were also received. These investigations are in addition to an ongoing caseload of guardianships,



TRANSPORTATION

This unit provides transportation to and from visitations, counseling, and other necessary appointments for people receiving services. The vehicle fleet is also utilized by staff for field use.

On average 16 vehicles are available for use. Two additional vehicles are assigned full time to the District Attorney Fraud Investigators.

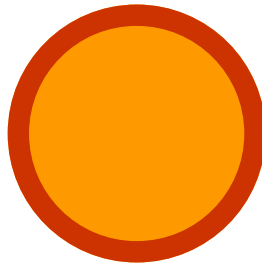
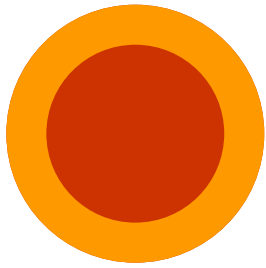
In 2009 the department continued utilizing a new method that had been started in 2008 of signing out vehicles within the Services Unit for caseworkers and homemakers. As a result, county vehicles are being managed and utilized in a very efficient and cost effective manner. The amount of personal mileage has been reduced.

Total mileage use in 2009 was 397,678 for the 16 general use vehicles. This is an increase in total miles of 45,727 miles. Overall, the breakdown of usage remained unchanged from 2008.

- 2% Administration
- 60% Staff use
- 38% Driver use transportation

Driver transports, for the 16 vehicles, can be broken down as follows:

- 1% Child Protective Services
- 39% Preventive Services
- 60% Foster Care Services



CHILD SUPPORT ENFORCEMENT STATE HELPLINE 1-888-208-4485

The Child Support Collection unit is responsible for maintaining and collecting support for all cash assistance, foster care and non-cash assistance cases that apply for support services in Otsego County. Child Support Enforcement Services are provided through both court and administrative processes. The support unit also files petitions to establish paternity for children born out-of-wedlock.

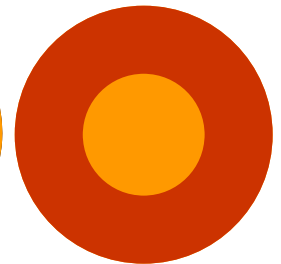
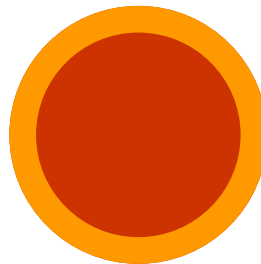
PERFORMANCE MEASURES

The Child Support Performance and Incentive Act of 1998 mandates that the federal government set standards, referred to as performance measures, for measuring the success of the work accomplished through the child support program. States are evaluated for Federal incentive funds based on five performance measures. A local district's performance is based on these five different performance measures. Otsego County's 2009 performance measures are described below:

1. Paternity Establishment Percentage (PEP): Standard 80% **Otsego County 97.31%**
2. Support Establishment Percentage (SEP): Standard 80% **Otsego County 94.02%**
3. Collections on Current Support: Standard 80% **Otsego County 87.03%**
4. Collections on Arrears: Standard 80% **Otsego County 81.06%**
5. Cost Effectiveness: Otsego County total dollars collected **\$5,332,404**
Otsego County total dollars expended \$ **380,488**

TEMPORARY ASSISTANCE

**(607) 547-1700 or
1-800-422-2512**



This unit handles determinations for Temporary Assistance (TA) and Food Stamps (FS). The unit is also responsible for maintaining the combined Medicaid/Food Stamps caseload and processing all HEAP applications.

To research benefit eligibility visit www.mybenefits.ny.gov/selfservice

This unit processed 2833 applications for Temporary Assistance, Food Stamps and Medicaid/Food Stamps in 2009. This was a 21% increase from 2008.

Basic grant allowances were increased 10% effective July 1, 2009. This change increased not only the amount of assistance paid to an eligible household but also increased the standard of need, potentially making more households eligible for assistance.



HEAP

For information call
 (607) 547-1700 or
 1-800-422-2512

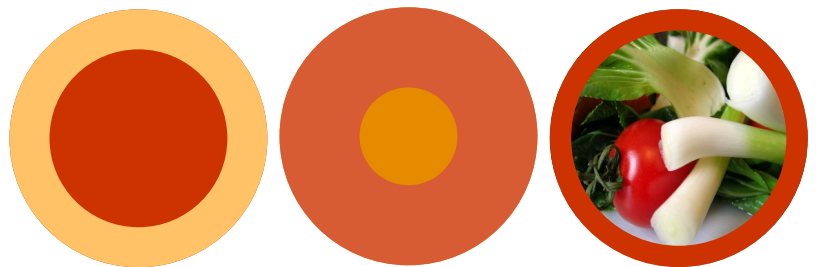
The State continued to pay HEAP vendors directly in 2008-09 season. Opportunities for Otsego and Otsego County Office for the Aging continued to serve as outside certifiers for the program. Early outreach mailing were required to all HEAP households from the previous season.

At program start up on 11/3/2008 HEAP benefits available included 1 regular benefit, 1 emergency benefit, and 1 emergency heat related utility benefit. Effective 1/1/2009 a second emergency benefit was made available and a regular benefit supplement of \$100 was authorized to heating households. Other emergency benefits included propane hook up, relocation or temporary housing, and repair to heating equipment. HEAP authorized 25 furnace replacements during the 2008-09 season.

Additional funding was provided to the Weatherization program operated by Opportunities for Otsego. HEAP staff referred clients for weatherization services. The department also participated in distribution of free weatherization kits provided by the New York State Power Authority. The Clean and Tune component began in July 2009 providing eligible households with furnace cleaning, chimney cleaning, installation of programmable thermostats and minor repairs to the primary heating system.

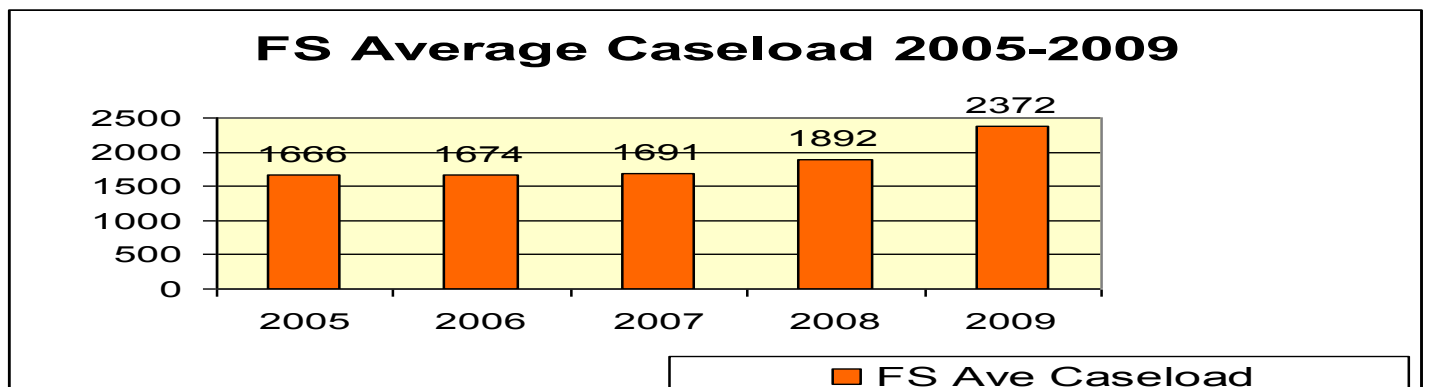
FOOD STAMPS

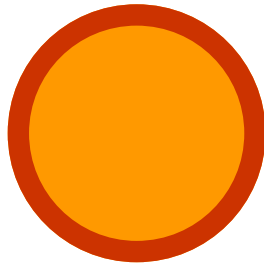
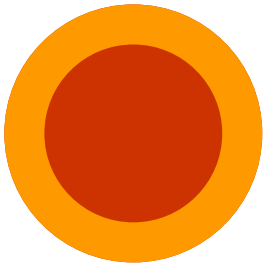
To be mailed an application call
 607-547-1700 or
 1-800-422-2512



The Food Stamp caseload continues to show an increase due to changes in Federal regulations which are attempting to make program access more available. 1/1/2009 the Food Stamp caseload was 2058 cases. By years end the caseload was 2534 cases; a 23% increase.

Food Stamp benefits were increased by 13.6% per household as a result of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act.





HOMELESS

607-547-1700 or
1-800-422-2512

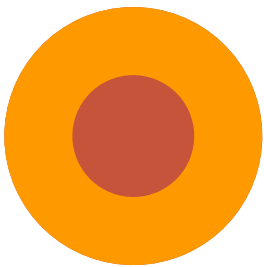
Housing continued to be an important issue in 2009 as referrals increased 7% from 2008. Housing processed 503 referrals for pending evictions (245) and homelessness (258).

The Housing Caseworker assisted the homeless population with:

- Developing an Independent Living Plan
- Furniture Assessments
- Pre-move & post-move inspections for security deposits
- Moving expenses
- Acting as liaison for landlords, clients, and other services workers
- Collaboratively working with multiple agencies to assist with temporary and permanent housing.

The Housing Caseworker also served as the Department of Social Services Domestic Violence Liaison and acting member on the Otsego County FEMA Board, the Housing Advisory Committee, the Affordable Housing Committee, and the Coalition for Housing Solutions in Otsego and Chenango Counties.

Due to lack of affordable housing within the County, Otsego County Department of Social Services sought State approval to implement a local plan to supplement shelter allowances for certain Safety Net recipients in an effort to assist clients in obtaining permanent housing instead of providing more costly temporary shelter. Upon approval the Plan was implemented in November of 2009.



MEDICAID

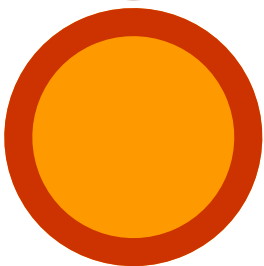
For application information call (607) 547-1700 or 1-800-422-2512

The Medicaid unit includes Medicaid, Family Health Plus, PCAP and SSI Medicaid services. 2766 applications were processed in 2009 showing an increase of 31% over 2008. The total caseload by 2009 year's end was 5853; a 10% increase over 2008. The unit continued to assist clients in outreach offices located at Bassett Medical Center in Cooperstown, A.O. Fox Memorial Hospital in Oneonta, and Otsego Manor Skilled Nursing Facility in Cooperstown.

75% of Managed Care Medicaid eligible recipients were enrolled in one of three Managed Care Plans by December 31, 2009. Facilitated enrollers continued to assist applicants with Family Health Plus, Medicaid, and Child Health Plus in community based settings and at the Meadows Office Complex.

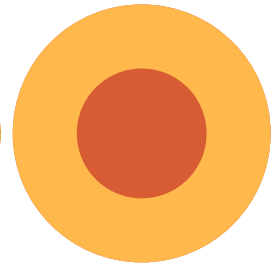
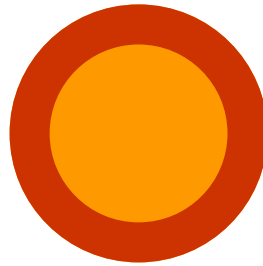
2009 Medicaid Changes

- Effective January 1, 2009, providing Medicaid coverage to children under age 21 who were in foster care on or after their 18th birthday without an income or resource test was implemented.
- In 2009 finger imaging was eliminated as a requirement for Medicaid eligibility.
- COBRA premiums are now approvable to eligible clients through the Family Health Plus Premium Assistance Program.



EMPLOYMENT

(607) 547-1700 or
1-800-422-2512



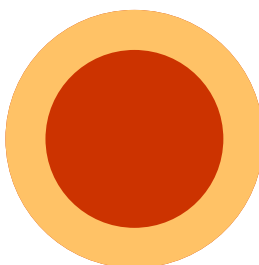
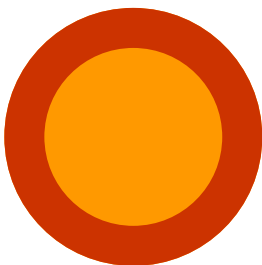
Employment provides services and referrals needed to assist and enable individuals in removing barriers to employment and to ultimately reengage them in the work force. Child care subsidy (day care) continues to be an important part of helping our clients remain employed and self sufficient.

The employment unit prescreened 333 applicants prior to an eligibility interview for Temporary Assistance. By doing this 83% of these applications were denied or withdrawn by the applicant. The unit continues to maximize the use of community resources and work activities to remove the need for cash assistance or to limit the need for cash benefits to short-term only. In 2009 an Intensive Case Management Services program was implemented. Three cases received concentrated employment services in the home. 18 referrals were made to the Temporary Employment Program operated by Opportunities for Otsego. 3 recipients attended certified nursing classes at ONC BOCES and each obtained a Certified Nursing Assistant license and employment.

A NYS Jobs Program Specialist on-site provides job readiness training classes for applicants and recipients to assist in job preparation, resumé writing, and interviewing skills.

A large portion of the caseload consists of clients requiring drug and alcohol, medical, and/or psychological treatment. Regular monitoring of treatment compliance is required.

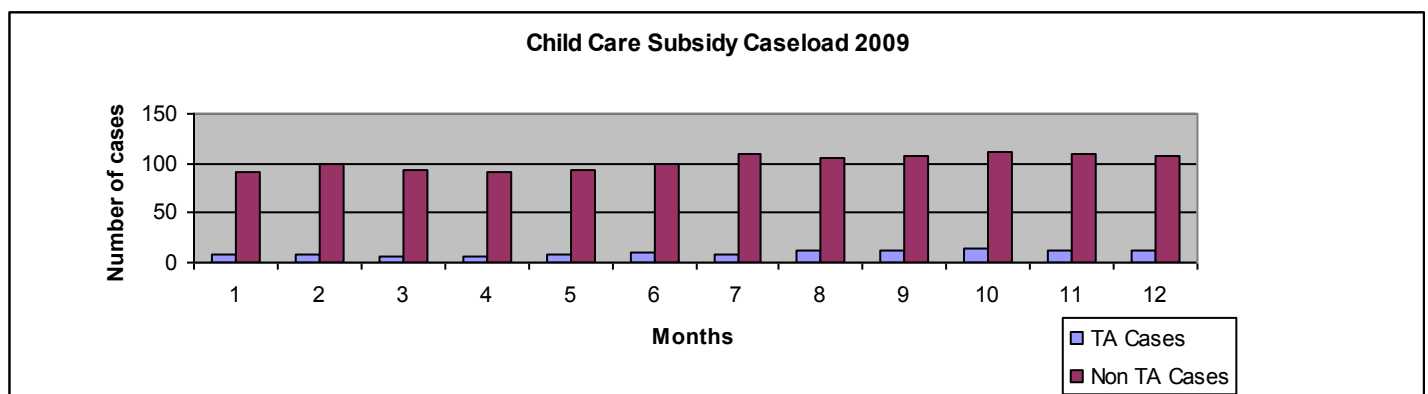
In 2009 the employment participation rate averaged 36.9% for the All Families category and 16.2% for the Safety Net category. The mandated Federal/State participation rate is 50% for each category. The higher caseloads and hard to serve populations make meeting the mandated rate a continuing challenge.

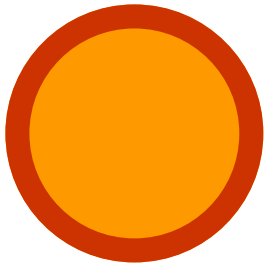
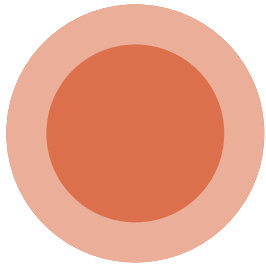


DAY CARE SUBSIDY

(607) 547-1700 or 1-800-422-2512

Day care costs continue to be a substantial expense for many families. The funding provided through the Child Care Block Grant remains an essential part of enabling adults to remain employed, moving adults to employment or providing care to allow the parent caretaker to increase his or her skills and abilities to become more competitive in the work force.





CLERICAL

The clerical staff provide critical support services to eligibility staff, services units and the public. Phone reception duties continue to be the most time consuming of the clerical responsibilities. At the Meadows Office Complex 2 Clerks answer 8 incoming lines in our Call Center. 1 Clerk processes all incoming mail for the department while maintaining the front receptionist desk at the County Office Building. All support staff need to be familiar with the entire array of programs available to insure the client is directed correctly and efficiently.

Our document imaging system continues to give all required staff accessibility to client information and shared comment sheets. In 2009 694,458 pages of documentation were scanned into the system. The clerical staff continue to have a one day turnaround time on the scanning of paperwork that is sent to imaging by the Examiner or Caseworker.

Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) is a free basic tax preparation service provided voluntarily by 2 department staff. The program is geared toward low-income, elderly, disabled and limited English speaking individuals. Volunteers were trained by the IRS and provided this service mid January to mid April at the Meadows Office Complex. 61 returns were processed totaling \$155,706 of combined refunds and Earned Income Tax Credits.

In 2009 clerical staff began to be cross-trained at 197 Main Street to provide ample coverage for the Services unit and the DSS Attorney's Office needs.

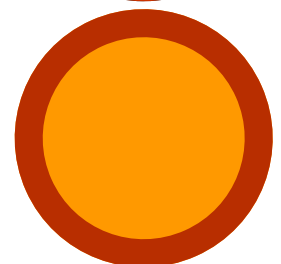
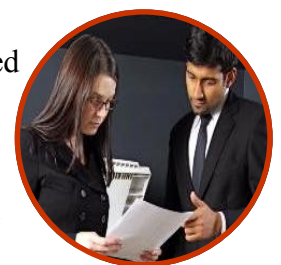
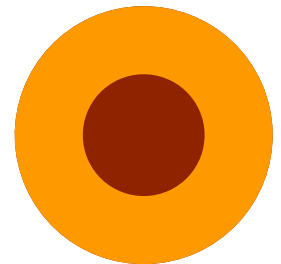
SPECIAL INVESTIGATIONS UNIT

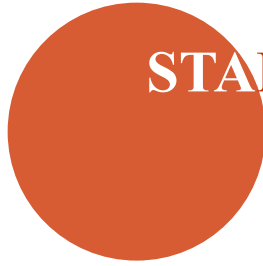
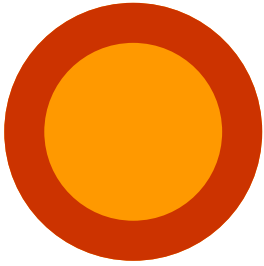
To report suspected welfare fraud call (607) 547-4337

Referrals made to the Investigation unit include mandated Front End Detection cases (FEDS) and reports of suspected fraud and abuse of benefits. During 2009 the unit received 440 referrals.

There were 13 arrests made in 2009. 4 Disqualification Consent Agreements were also signed and 5 sanctions imposed totaling 54 months of ineligibility for assistance. Based on the State formula of cost avoidance for Front End Detection and Eligibility Verification Reviews, projected total saving for 2009 was \$223,176.

Unit investigators also provide service of papers for the Department of Social Services. In 2009 the unit served 160 court papers for Family Court appearances.



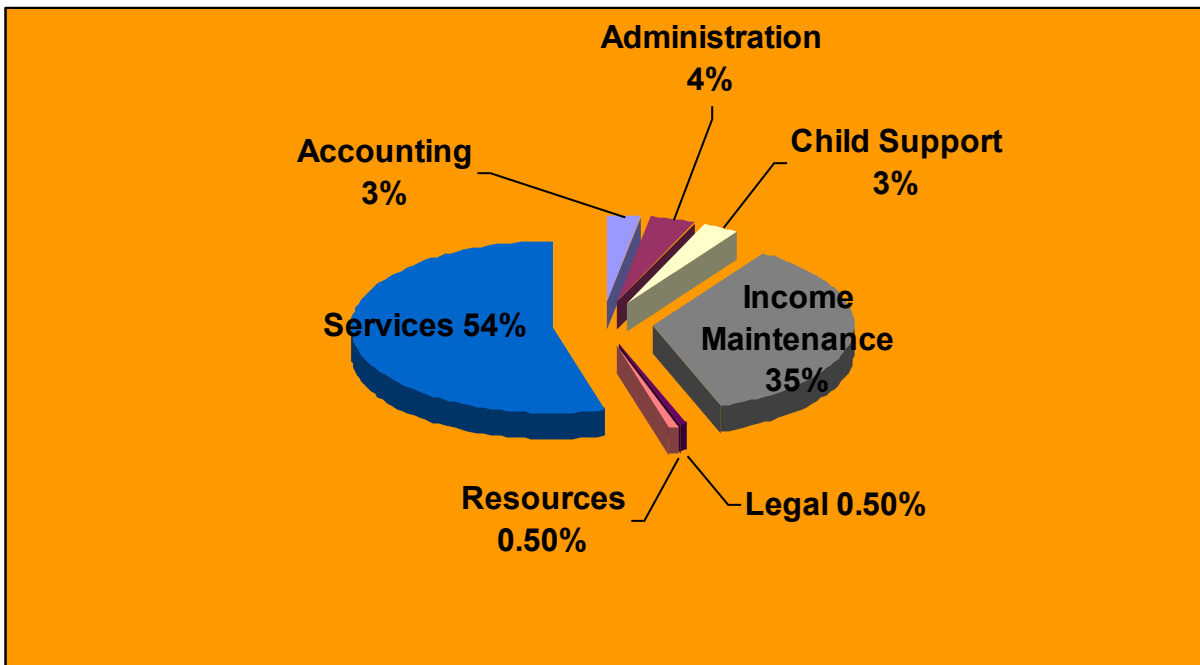


STAFF DEVELOPMENT

(607) 547-6431

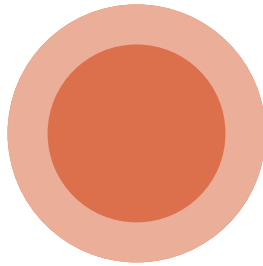
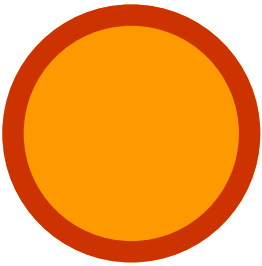
The purpose of the Staff Development Office is to support the Department's goal of ensuring service excellence by providing employees with the tools to develop the skill and knowledge needed to perform their duties. The Staff Development Coordinator is responsible for arranging for all staff members to attend trainings, as well as being responsible to bring in outside trainers to hold trainings in-house to ensure staff attend all required trainings for their job title and have the most up-to-date information to complete their job duties.

The Department continues to look for the most cost effective means to train staff which includes teleconferences, webinars, and computer based trainings such as LearnLinc and TrainingSpace.



Staff Development Coordinator also provides standardized new worker orientation; assists with employee interviews and hiring; and is responsible to see that employee evaluations are conducted as required. As a member of the Management Team the Coordinator assists with policy development and acts as an Agency Liaison in the community.



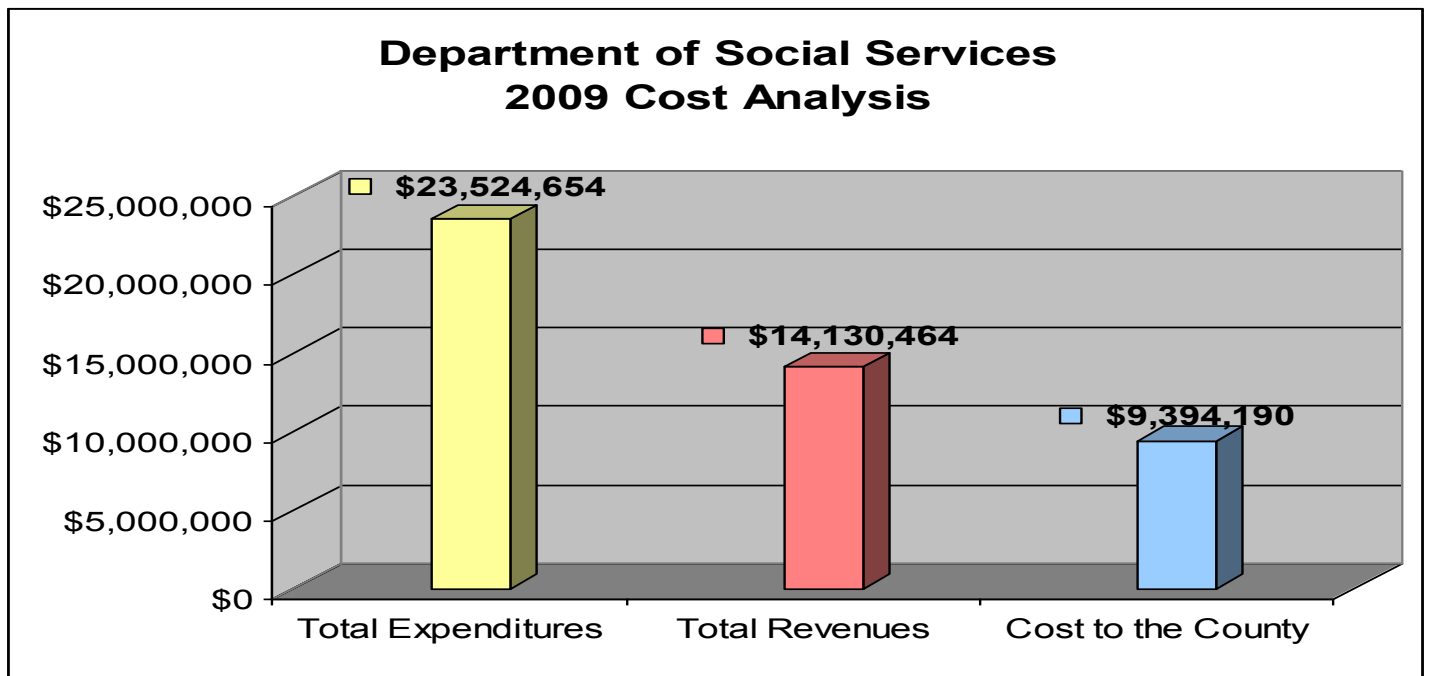


ACCOUNTING

For questions regarding billing and payments (607) 547-4355

This unit is responsible for all fiscal transactions made by the department as well as budget preparation and oversight, filing claims for Federal and State reimbursements, payments to contractors and payroll.

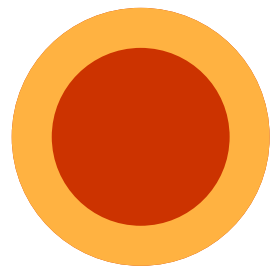
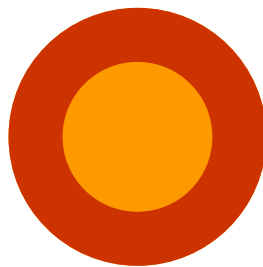
In 2009 expenditures were \$23,524,654. Total revenues, State and Federal reimbursements and repays, were \$14,130,464. This left \$9,394,190 in local costs for 2009. Medicaid costs totaled \$85,000,000 for Otsego County. The local costs was capped at \$8,954,217 mandated Medicaid payments (MMIS). Less than 2% of the overall department's budget was local cost after MMIS.



Income Maintenance FAIR HEARINGS

To request a non-HEAP related fair hearing call 1-518-473-6735

HEAP related fair hearings call:
1-800-342-3334

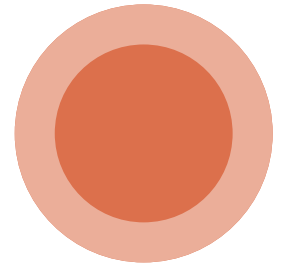
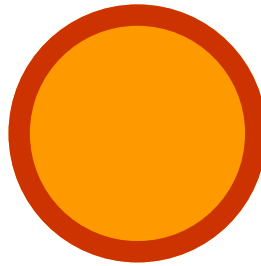


Applicants and recipients of assistance, such as Medicaid, food stamps, public assistance, HEAP and day care subsidy, have the right to have actions taken by the department on their case reviewed by a State appointed Administrative Law Judge. In 2009 the department continued to have an excellent record of resolving client concerns and supporting issues brought to Fair Hearing.

60 requests were received for Fair Hearing in 2009. 36 of these requests were withdrawn by the client. 15 requests defaulted due to no-show by the client. Fair Hearings were held for the remaining 9 requests and the department was upheld in all of those cases.

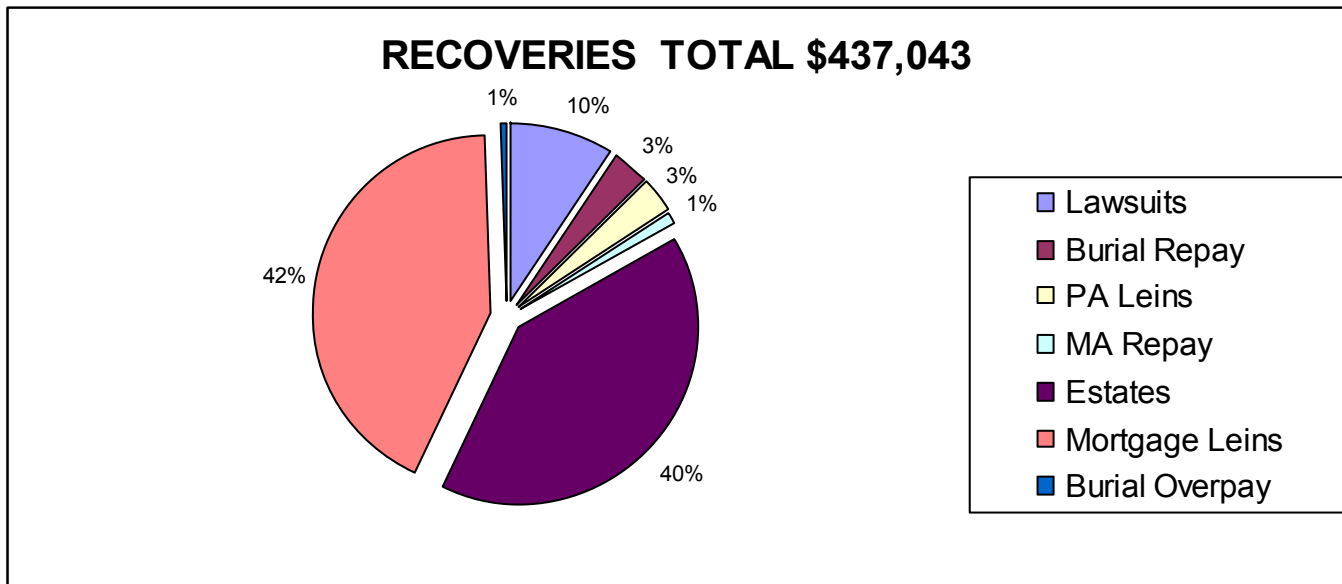
RESOURCE & RECOVERY

(607) 547-6409

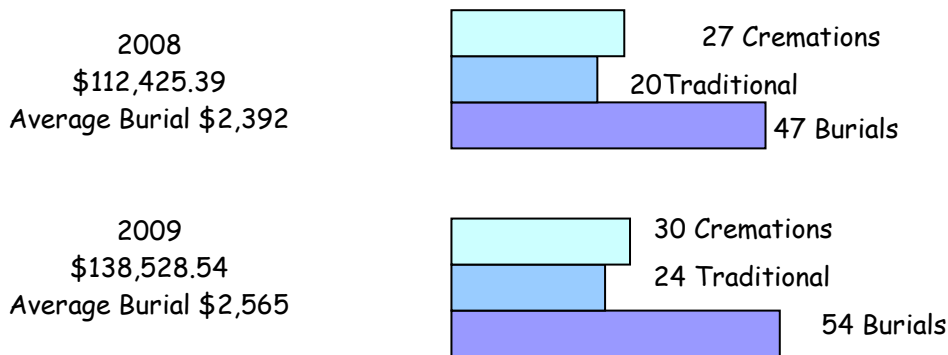


Recoveries are pursued to reduce the overall cost to the tax-payers for payments made under the Temporary Assistance and Medicaid (MA) programs.

Recoveries for 2009 totaled \$437,043, an increase of 52% over 2008 recoveries.



The Resource Unit processes indigent burial applications. In 2009 there were 54 burials, a 15% increase from 2008. Total cost of burials in 2009 was \$138,529, a 23% increase over 2008.



Third party health insurance is also verified by the Resource Unit. Providers bill the third party health insurance prior to billing Medicaid. The NYS Dept. of Health reports that Otsego County realized a total savings, not paid by Medicaid in 2009, of \$1,149,745, an increase of 33% from 2008.

The Resource Unit works closely with the Medicaid staff to determine cost effectiveness of health insurance premiums. In 2009, the unit assumed responsibility of the Medicaid Buy-In transactions.

COST REDUCING EFFORTS OF 2009



2 GPS navigation systems were purchased for staff to use in the field in an effort to use the most accurate route to reduce travel time and mileage costs.

System generated reports began being viewed online versus printing large quantities thereby reducing staff time involved with printing and sorting reports for distribution, paper and filing.

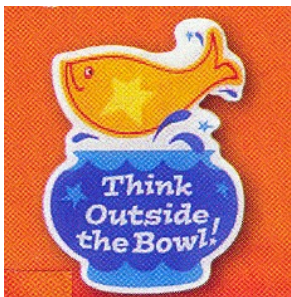
Two-sided, black and white printing continued to be encouraged to reduce paper and ink costs.

Human Services Committee meeting minutes and department monthly statistics are now distributed via email.

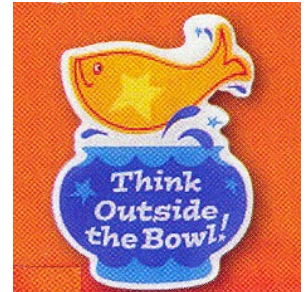
Discontinued payment to Burnham Center for Reserved Bed.

FISH *Fresh Ideas Start Here*

We're looking for your ideas. If your suggestion is implemented and is shown to save time, money, or both, without compromising service, you will be awarded the FISH Recognition Award by the Commissioner and the Management Team.



OUR FIRST FISH AWARD



Cindy Lane was “Thinking Outside the Bowl” in 2009. Cindy is the Principal Social Welfare Examiner for the Temporary Assistance , Food Stamps and HEAP programs.

Cindy Lane’s idea: Eliminate printing case budgets for State mass reauthorizations. These budgets are now available in WMS history. This idea not only resulted in a savings of valuable staff time but paper and shredding costs too.

CONGRATULATIONS CINDY!



PERSONNEL 2009 RETIREES



Gail Mabie, Senior Support Investigator 35 Years of Service

Gail Mabie began working for Otsego County Department of Social Services in 1976 as a Clerk. In 1978 she took the position of Key punch Operator before becoming a Data Entry Machine Operator in 1981. Gail was promoted to Financial Investigator in 2004 and to Senior Support Investigator, supervisor of Child Support Enforcement, in 2007. Gail retired on August 29, 2009.



Susan Bastian, Keyboard Specialist 17 Years of Service

Susan Bastian began as a Typist in the PINS Diversion office in 1992. In 1994 she transferred to the County Attorney's office. She became a full-time Typist/Keyboard Specialist in the Department of Social Services in 1996. Sue retired on October 17, 2009.



Gladys Hunt, Clerk 26 Years of Service

Gladys Hunt started working for Otsego County in 1981 at the Meadows Nursing Home until 1987. She began working for the Department of Social Services as a Clerk beginning in 1988. Over the years Gladys worked in various units including Income Maintenance and Resources. Gladys retired on June 26, 2009.



Gloria Jean Wayman, Senior Data Entry Operator 15 Years of Service

Gloria "Jean" Wayman began as a Clerk in 1994. In 1996 Jean became a Data Entry Machine Operator. Jean was a Social Welfare Examiner for a short period of time in 2006 before becoming the Senior Data Entry Machine Operator, supervising the WMS Data Entry unit, in May 2006. Jean retired on August 29, 2009.

