

Garrett County  
Department of Social Services

2014 Annual Report





*From Our Director*

*As the Director of the Garrett County Department of Social Services, it is with great pleasure that I present to you our 2014 Annual Report.*

*First of all I would like to welcome all of our new staff that has joined us within this year and congratulate those who have reached retirement. I wish all new staff and retirees the best. GCDDSS has had an outstanding year in meeting our performance measures while working vigorously to ensure that we are providing only the highest quality of services to those in need in Garrett County.*

*DHR continues their support by getting position's backfilled so we can continue to provide the needed services to the children and families in our community.*

*Our staff also continues to support local organizations by donating to several charities. The different charities include American Cancer Society, Alzheimer's Association, Cindy's Fund, Maryland Charity Campaign, Soles4Souls, and Warm the Children.*

*As a provider of social services, we continue to be a vital part in implementing the Maryland Health Connection for Garrett County Citizens. The Maryland Health Connection has been an ongoing process and is entering yet another phase of change. Our staff continues to dedicate their time and is collaboratively working with partner agencies to serve the community seamlessly by assisting families with the health insurance application process.*

*Our Child Support staff continued to be a model in the state for performance outcomes and our Finance and Administration staff met goals, identified efficiencies and provided outstanding support for the entire agency.*

*The Agency's Advisory Board remains a positive and valued advocate providing insight into the unique needs of our community and customers. Members of the Agency's Advisory Board play a vital role in DSS information sharing and advocacy. Their knowledge regarding Agency programs and services provides a factual bridge of information between our Agency and the community.*

*As Director of GCDDSS, I value the continued support of my staff, Garrett County Commissioners, GCDDSS Advisory Board, and various contributions of Local Government and community partnerships.*

*Sincerely,*

*Rick Dewitt, Director*

## **VALUES**

We value the effort, experience, knowledge, and professionalism of our employees to respond to the needs and deliver services to our customers.

We value our employees' ability to inform our customers of the programs and services they are entitled and their obligation to actively participate in the process.

We value our partnerships with other community agencies that contribute to the delivery of service to our customers.

We value and respect our customers as individuals as we work together to improve the quality of their lives.

## **MISSION**

We will aggressively pursue opportunities to assist Garrett County residents in economic need, increase prevention efforts, and protect vulnerable children and adults.

## **VISION**

We envision Garrett County residents living free from abuse and neglect while maximizing their potential for self-sufficiency.

Dedicated to: Prevention, Protection, and Self-Sufficiency

---

### **Customers of the Garrett County Department of Social Services have the following rights:**

- To receive appropriate service (s).
- Services which are free from harm and mental, physical and sexual abuse/exploitation by staff.
- An impartial, timely grievance procedure, which affords you the ability to exercise your rights as described in the "Consumer Grievance Policy".
- To receive services in accordance with the applicable individualized Service Plans which conform to the rules and regulations which govern this Agency.
- To participate in the development and/or revision of their Service Plan.
- To receive an appropriate terms and language, explanation of the following:
  - Content and objectives of the Service Plan;
  - Nature and significance of any possible adverse effects caused by the Service Plan;
  - Name, title and role of personnel directly responsible for carrying out Service Plan;
  - When appropriate, other available service providers.
- To privacy and confidentiality of services provided and records maintained.
- To access your Service Plan. If the Case Manager/Services worker responsible for your case determines access to your records would be harmful to you or other interested parties, that information will not be released. Release of information to other agencies can only be done with your written consent unless provided for by regulation.
- To an explanation, in appropriate terms and language usage, of any charges or fees that will be applied before receiving services from the Agency.
- Upon admission to services, to be informed in appropriate terms and language and through written policies by the prominent posting of the above rights.

# Child Support Enforcement

The Child Support Enforcement Unit of GCDSS plays an important role in carrying out the Agency's goal of assisting customers in becoming self-sufficient.

Since 1999 the Bureau of Support Enforcement (BOSE) has been speaking to 9th graders at the local high schools about their growing responsibilities, budgets, and reality of paying child support. This message has been presented to approximately 5,600 students since the beginning of the program. Student feedback indicated that this program has and continues to be enthusiastically received.

## **Child Support Services Include:**

- Locating non-custodial parents
- Collection and distribution of payments-The GCDSS Child Support Unit collected and distributed over \$2,000,000 in FY'2014.
- Obtaining a court order for child support and medical insurance
- Enforcement of court orders- The GCDSS Child Support Unit has met or exceeded the State Stat goal for establishing court orders and paternity
- Review and adjustment of court orders

Paternity Establish Services are available through genetic testing and an In-Hospital Paternity program.

There are a number of administrative tools for enforcing court orders that include, but are not limited to:

- Drivers License Suspension
- New Hire Reporting
- Automatic Earnings Withholding
- Interception of Federal and State Tax Refunds



# Local General Administration

The Local General Administration unit (LGA) is responsible for numerous business functions which include Finance operations, Personnel operations, and Information Technology operations. The Finance division encompasses all financial operations for the agency including accounting, accounts payable and receivable, grants management, budget management, account reconciliations, and reporting. The Personnel division handles all Human Resource transactions, including employer/employee relations, recruitment and retention of staff during vacancies, tracks performance evaluations, and manages all timesheet and leave transactions and reporting. The Information Technology division manages and maintains the agency computer networks and infrastructure, maintains the PALS II leave system for the State and manages all automated systems throughout the agency. Also included in the LGA unit are procurement, inventory management, the management and maintenance of the agency fleet, and facilities management of agency buildings in Oakland and Grantsville.

## LGA Unit Outcomes for Fiscal Year 2014

**Secured grants for over \$78,000 to fund programs not in the general operating budget.**

**Managed over \$9 million dollars in operating funds with no deficits and all resources allocated properly.**

**Assisted the Central office with on-going maintenance of PALS II leave system.**

**Processed over 2,800 invoices and completed over 5,200 financial transactions.**

**Secured funding for all training requests for the department and general resource needs.**

**Insured all operations fall into compliance with OIG Audit standards.**

**Processed multiple Personnel transactions, including exception requests, recruitment, and final hire of several vacancies.**



# Social Services Administration

## Foster Care & Adoption

The Garrett County Foster Care/Adoption Program provides a temporary, out-of-home placement for children whose biological families are experiencing difficulties in parenting and/or supervision. Placement of children occurs within the context of licensed foster families, group homes, and residential treatment centers. Our primary goal, at the time of removal, is to place children with family members when appropriate. The goal of the program is to provide high quality case management services and to secure a safer permanent living arrangement for each child as soon as possible.

The Foster Care Program provides services to vulnerable children from birth to age 21. This fiscal year, we provided services to 95 children. The length of stay for children in the program declined following new legislation and with due diligence from GCDSS staff to pursue permanent placement for cases of children in care for at least 15 months.

Maryland law has allowed foster children to remain in the child welfare system until they reach 21 years of age. Consequently, the Department of Human Resources has adopted a Ready by 21 action plan to support the successful transition of youth aging in our child welfare system. This program targets youth ages 14-20 and is coordinated by one of our workers within the unit. In preparing to turn 21, caseworkers jointly enter into a transitional plan to ensure that youth acquire skills and overcome barriers to completing school, obtaining and maintaining gainful employment, finding adequate and affordable housing, financial literacy, self care, and accessing health and mental health care. In serving these youth, caseworkers ensure that prior to the age of 21; youth are connected to a family member for caring adult prior to exiting foster care.

Our adoption program licenses and matches adoptive homes with waiting children through the Maryland Adoption Resource Exchange Program (MARE). Our local department finalized 2 adoptions and 4 subsidized guardianships this year, exceeding our state mandated goal.

## Adult Protective Services

Garrett County DSS continues to provide quality services to the adult population through voluntary, as well as mandated, programs. Vulnerable adults who have been mistreated, exploited, or have placed themselves at risk receive services under the Adult Protective Services Program (APS). All APS reports are screened by the Supervisor prior to assignment for investigation. If allegations of abuse, self-neglect, or exploitation or neglect by others are proven valid, services are provided to prevent further harm or institutionalization. These services are provided by a lone APS worker, who is backed up by another staff member within the department.

## Social Services to Adults (SSTA)

SSTA is a voluntary program for disabled and elderly adults who may be in need of financial, medical, social or psychological assistance. Customers may also be in need of, and/or eligible for, In Home Aide Services (IHAS). Chore services are provided to help prevent institutionalization. The goal is to enable customers to remain in their community in the least restrictive manner so that their needs are met.

Customer safety is very important while services are being delivered. Customers may be referred to a step up program, such as APS; or they may be stepped down from APS to SSTA/IHAS. The staff began working on a Primary Prevention Initiative in Adult Services which will modify the way natural supportive resources are located to assist vulnerable adults.

The APS and Social Services to Adults Programs have seen an increase in referrals due to community knowledge, increased need and the increased life span of customers. The Department collaborates with the local Area Agency on Aging, the Health Department, and the local Core Service Agency to meet the needs of customers in the most efficient and effective manner.

# Social Services Administration

## Child Protective Services

The Child Protective Services unit consists of 4 Child Abuse/Neglect Investigators, one Continuing CPS worker and one Supervisor. This small unit of employees handles all incoming reports of abuse/neglect from the community and our mandated reporters.

We continue to pursue our efforts towards being a fully accredited Child Advocacy Center (CAC) through the National Children's Alliance (NCA). Meetings are held monthly with our partners that work cooperatively with us on our cases. Dr. Richard Porter, a local forensic nurse, State's Attorney Lisa T. Welch, and law enforcement come together with our staff to discuss every angle of our cases. This has demonstrated greater outcomes for prosecution and securing ongoing services for these children and families. A group comprised of a sampling of the above group once again traveled to Dallas, Texas to attend the national conference designed especially for child advocacy centers.

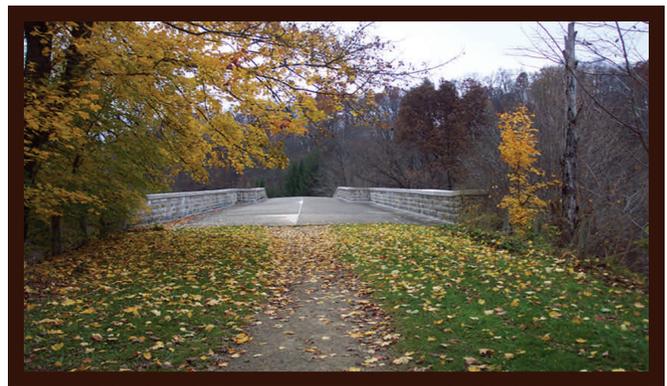
Melissa Orr serves as an ancillary staff member to this unit as a VOCA therapist. She provides counseling to children and families who are victims of sexual and physical abuse. She assists in coordinating our CAC meetings, as well as facilitating the completion of the accreditation standards.

The staff has spent a great deal of time adjusting to a legislated new approach to handling low level reports of child abuse/neglect. This program, Alternative Response, focuses on engaging families in the process of addressing the causes that brought them to the agency's attention, rather than focusing on a "finding" of child abuse/neglect. Garrett County was one of the first counties to pilot this change in service delivery for the State of Maryland. Approximately 35% of screened in cases are now handled through Alternative Response.

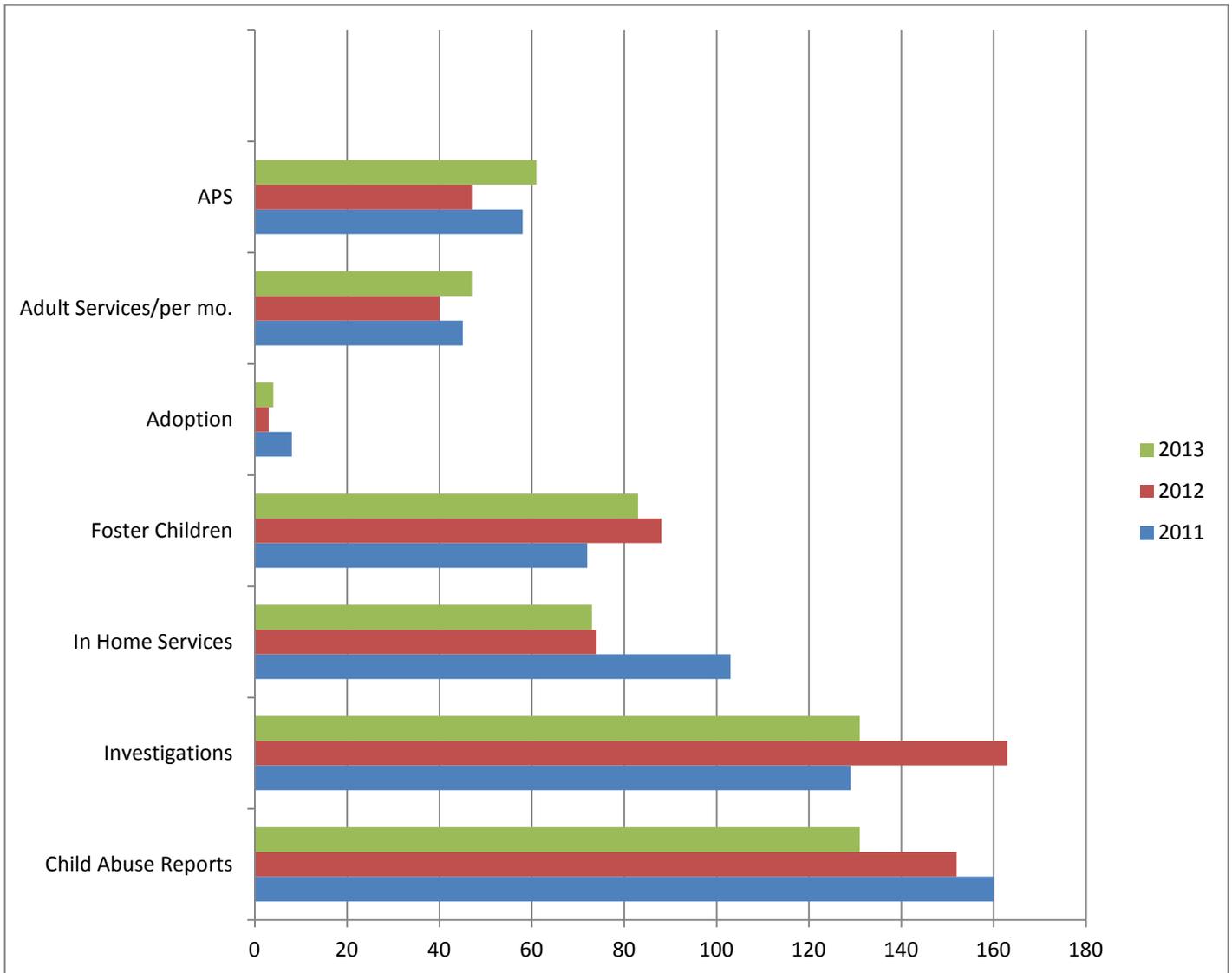
## In-Home Family Services

The Garrett County In-Home Family Service Program is designed to promote the safety and well-being of children and their families; to preserve family unity when children's safety can be supported; to maintain permanency for children; and to empower families to achieve or sustain independence and self sufficiency. The program's goals include enhancing the parents' ability to create a safe, stable, and nurturing home environment that promotes healthy child development; preventing out-of-home placement of children when safety can be promoted to a sufficient proportion; and providing, referring, and coordinating services needed to achieve or maintain family safety, stability, independence and unity.

We receive referrals from our internal partners, as well as outside child serving departments. The unit provides services to about 48 families per month on a voluntary basis and consists of 5 caseworkers and one Supervisor. The biggest challenge in preservation services has been addressing family issues that are combined with the growing substance abuse problem in the county.



# Services Statistics



# Family Investment Administration

The Family Investment (FIP) provides Medical Assistance, Supplemental Nutritional Assistance Program (SNAP) formerly Food Stamp, Purchase of Care (Child Care Subsidy), Temporary Cash Assistance to Families, Temporary Cash Assistance to Disabled Adults, Long Term Care (Medical Assistance for Nursing Home residents), Public Assistance to Adults and Job Readiness, Placement, and Retention services. Family Investment is segmented into four interdependent units, two teams of Case Managers, Garrett WORKS (work opportunities) and clerical support.

Benefits issued by Family Investment are based both on technical and financial criteria as determined by Federal, State, and local policies. Garrett's Family Investment Unit has exceeded the state and federal goal for error rate in all Family Investment programs for ten years running. Since July 2012, Garrett has won three Silver Spoon and two Golden Fork Awards. The award recognized high performance at combination of test taking, application compliance and supervisory reviews.

During the last state fiscal year, the Food Stamp caseload declined by 1%. The Food Stamp caseload decline is hopefully a sign that the recession has finally ended here in Garrett. The Community Medical Assistance caseload stayed steady. Unfortunately, we do not have accurate statistics for the Affordable Care Act. Long Term Care (Nursing Home) Medical Assistance went up by 2 cases. The size of this caseload is dependent upon the number of nursing home beds in the county, as well as residents who qualify. TDAP, a small program that provides case assistance to disabled adults, went up by 5 cases.

The TCA caseload went up by 6 cases. The caseloads remaining fairly steady are an indication that Garrett, following the nationwide trend, is slowly emerging from the recession. The Food Stamp caseload going down last year is a significant indication that the economy is improving.

Garrett WORKS retains its strenuous work program requirements needed to qualify for TCA which discourage many clients. Garrett WORKS helps customers find and retain employment. Jobs skills enhancement offers help for working customers to improve their skills and advance their careers. Thru 5/14 Garrett WORKS exceeded our job placement goal of 20. Garrett County has reached a monthly Universal Engagement average of 100%, and an average monthly Work Participation Rate of 64%.

“Wheels to Work, “ one of our most successful work programs, allowing working customers to purchase or fix their used vehicles with low-cost loans. During FY'14, the program placed or repaired two vehicles. Wheels to Work is a partnership program between Garrett County Department of Social Services and Garrett County Community Action. Unfortunately, funding for this program remains reduced for SFY'15. The program continues to operate with money from the loan fund, which at this time is insufficient to cover the long-term continuation of the program.

SFY'14 is the second year in a row that our Emergency Assistance to Families with Children was depleted prior to the end of the fiscal year. The \$38,708 in this program ran out at the beginning of May.



# Family Investment Administration

The largest caseload handled by Family Investment continues to be the Medical Assistance caseload. During SFY 2013 (the latest complete year), \$50.6 Million was expended for goods and services provided by Medical Assistance in Garrett County. The largest challenge for Family Investment as well as other social service agencies in the county, and the nation, in the past year was implementation of the Affordable Care Act. Everyone is aware of the issues with the ACA, they continue as of this date, and will thru the year as Maryland adopts Connecticut's system. The Health Department is the funded partner for this new program and we will coordinate our efforts with them and other local partners.

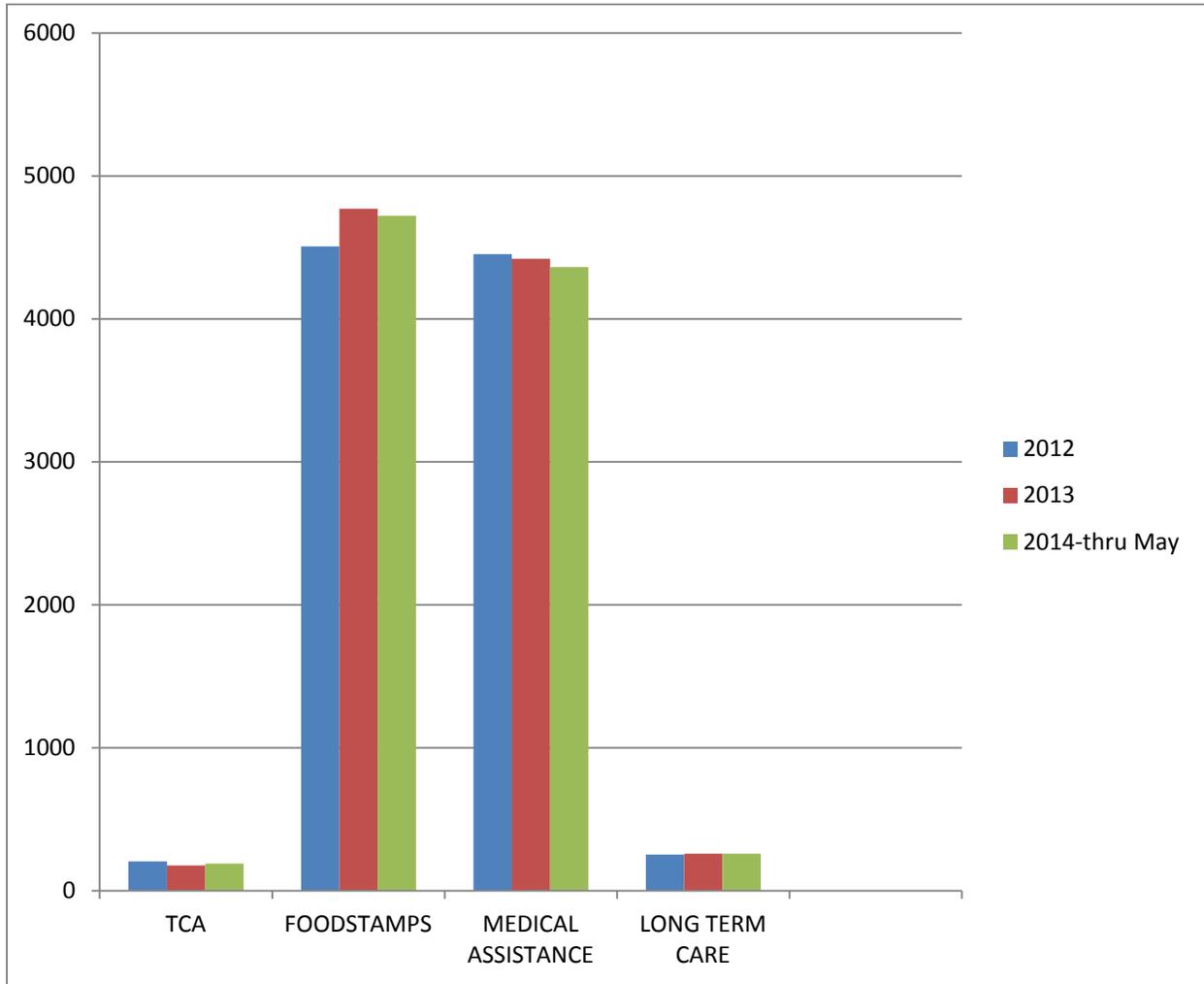
The Child Care Subsidy Program is slated to leave FI to be administrated by a private vendor on 7/1/14.

<u>PERFORMANCE MEASURE</u>	<u>GOAL</u>	<u>ACTUAL</u>
Application Processing Compliance Regular Applications	97%	100%
Expedited Food Stamps	100%	100%
Food Stamp Error Rate	Below 6.0%	0%
Food Stamp Negative Error	Zero Errors	2
TCA Error Rate	Below 3%	0%
MA Error Rate	Below 3%	0%
TCA Job Placements	20	24 as of 5/21/14

---

Temporary Cash Assistance to families	Recipients	189
Temporary Emergency Medical and Housing Temporary Cash Assistance to disabled adults	Recipients/Cases	65
Public Assistance to Adults	Recipients/Cases	2
Purchase of Care (POC)	Children	72
Food Stamps	Recipients	4675
Medical Assistance-Community	Recipients	4383
Medical Assistance-Long Term Care (Nursing Homes)	Recipients	257

# Family Investment Statistics





## **LEADERSHIP TEAM**

**Rick Dewitt**  
**Director**

**Tamra Canfield**  
**Assistant Director Services**

**Tom Rosser**  
**Assistant Director Family Investment  
Administration**

**Phil Gillum**  
**Assistant Director Child Support**

**Alicia Streets**  
**Assistant Director Administration**

## **ADVISORY BOARD MEMBERS**

**Jill Horner, Chair**

**Commissioner, Bob Gatto**

**Suzanne Ryan**

**Linda Green**

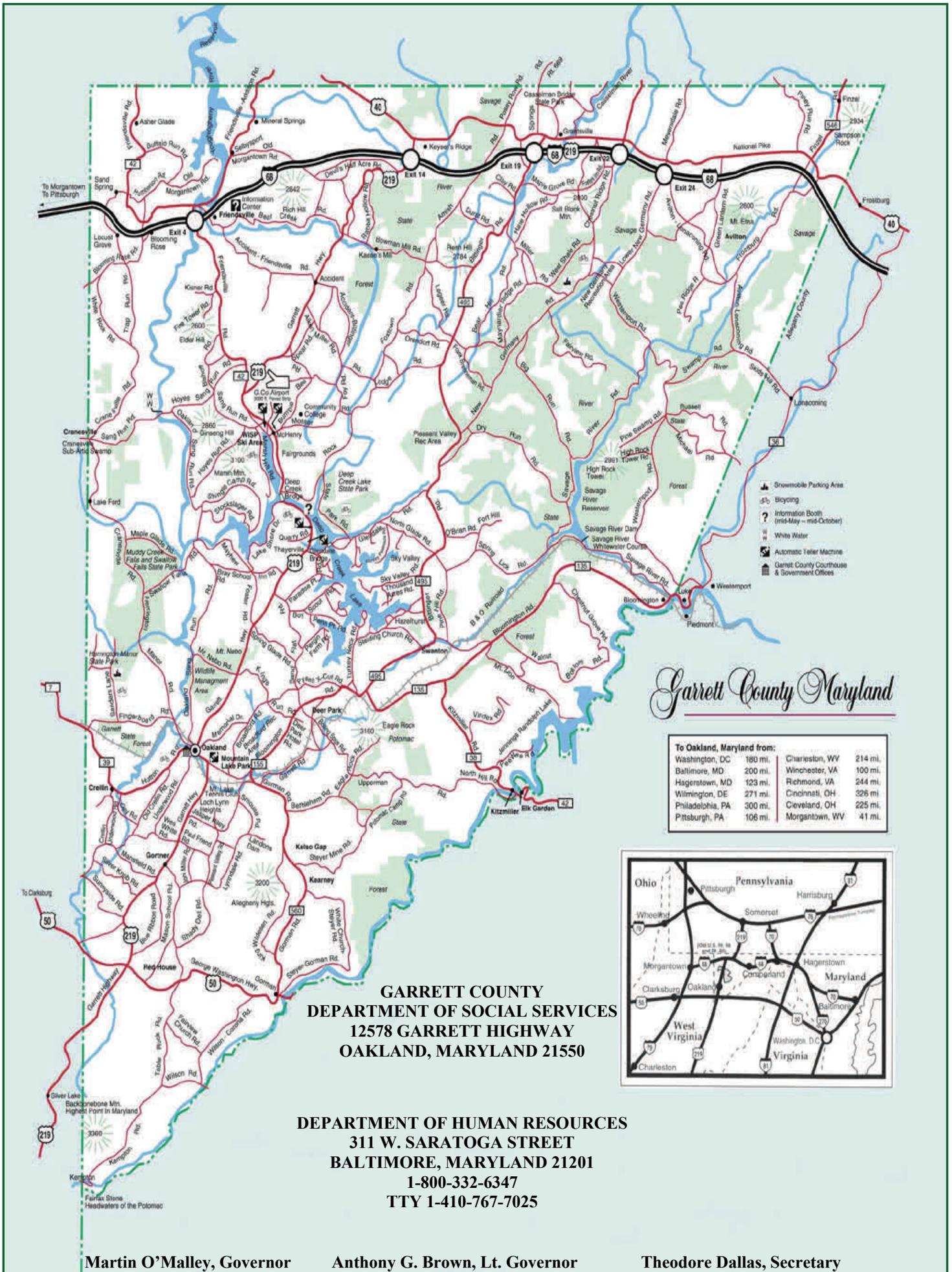
**Jenny McNally**

**Penny Proudfoot**

**Diana Boller**

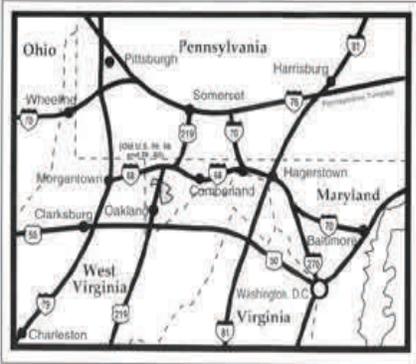
**Susan Fowler**





# Garrett County Maryland

To Oakland, Maryland from:	
Washington, DC	180 mi.
Baltimore, MD	200 mi.
Hagerstown, MD	123 mi.
Wilmington, DE	271 mi.
Philadelphia, PA	300 mi.
Pittsburgh, PA	106 mi.
Charleston, WV	214 mi.
Winchester, VA	100 mi.
Richmond, VA	244 mi.
Cincinnati, OH	326 mi.
Cleveland, OH	225 mi.
Morgantown, WV	41 mi.



**GARRETT COUNTY  
DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES  
12578 GARRETT HIGHWAY  
OAKLAND, MARYLAND 21550**

**DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN RESOURCES  
311 W. SARATOGA STREET  
BALTIMORE, MARYLAND 21201  
1-800-332-6347  
TTY 1-410-767-7025**

**Martin O'Malley, Governor**

**Anthony G. Brown, Lt. Governor**

**Theodore Dallas, Secretary**