

# TALBOT COUNTY

Department of Social Services



## 2025 Annual Report



Maryland

Department of Human Services

TALBOT COUNTY

Department of Social Services



## Vision

We envision a diverse, interdependent, resilient and welcoming community in which people support themselves, their families and one another.

## Mission

We collaborate with people in need, protect children and vulnerable adults and promote safety, well-being and equity in our community.

## Guiding Principles

- We serve our community with excellence.
- We value and support our employees by creating a culture of health, well-being and safety.
- We collaborate with community partners to ensure delivery of comprehensive services.
- We commit to, invest in and work toward racial equity and inclusion in our agency and in our community.
- We cultivate a deeper understanding of our role and our shared responsibility with the community to support and protect children, families and vulnerable adults.

## Executive Leadership Team

Linda Webb, LCSW, Director

Christine Abbatiello, LCSW-C, Assistant Director of Child Welfare and Adult Services

Juana Blue, Assistant Director of Family Investment

Monique Sykes-Moore, Assistant Director of Child Support

Ben Pittsley, Assistant Director of Administration

## Management Team

Lee Newcomb, LCSW-C, Adult Services Supervisor

Nikki Robey, LCSW-C, In-Home Services Supervisor

Krystal Christ, LCSW-C, Child Protective Services Supervisor

Megan Yowell, LCSW-C, Out of Home and Adoptions Supervisor

Lauren Krasko, LCSW-C, CAC Supervisor

Allayne DeShields, Family Investment Supervisor

Leonard Palmer, Family Investment Supervisor

Lorraine Johnson, Family Investment Supervisor

Cherelle LaBove, Family Investment Supervisor

Paris Quillet, LCSW-C, Special Projects Coordinator

Traci Corbin, Human Resources Supervisor

Meloney Morris, Human Resources Officer

Kelley Werner, Executive Assistant

## FY 2025 Talbot County Social Services Board Members

Elaine Wilson, Chair

Samantha Jeter, Vice Chair

Pete Leshner, County Council Representative

Sarah Cloxton, Legislative Liaison

Sandy Brown

Rev. Susan Browning

Dean Kenderdine

Dorri Gowe-Lambert

Jackie Reyes

Andrew Hollis

# MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTOR

Friends and Colleagues,

Welcome to the Talbot County Department of Social Services (TCDSS) Fiscal Year 2025 Annual Report.

FY 2025 was a year of continuing growth and change, but isn't that true of most years? For example, in this fiscal year, Talbot County Department of Social Services was selected as one of six Maryland jurisdictions to process SUN Bucks - summer SNAP benefits for eligible school-aged children - for the State of Maryland. As a part of this process, we onboarded a cohort of ten new employees at one time - a first for us. This group of talented young people taught us much about our onboarding and orientation processes, the way we supervise and integrate new employees, and our organizational values. We have made many revisions to our former practices thanks to their feedback and experiences....and patience.

FY 2025 was year 2 of our current 3-year strategic plan, and we continued to engage our agency leadership, administrative, and Performance Improvement Teams to implement the plan, which has as its primary goals:

- Cultivating a diverse and compassionate organization that provides equitable access, services and opportunities to staff and the community.
- Attracting, developing, and retaining staff with the skills, knowledge, and ability to work collaboratively to serve the community.
- Supporting and promoting the health and well-being of staff, customers, and the community.
- Continuing to serve our community as a high performing organization.

You will see throughout this report the many ways in which we are working toward the achievement of these goals. You will also see the many ways in which our Performance and Quality Improvement structure and activities work daily to move our PQI work forward.

I submit this for your review, acknowledging the hard work and commitment of the TCDSS team, every member of which contributed to our ability to achieve our mission and serve our most vulnerable neighbors. We could not have served our community without you, our many community partners, who demonstrate daily the depth of your commitment to supporting us in achieving our vision of a diverse, interdependent, resilient and welcoming community

in which people support themselves, their families and one another. You have our most sincere gratitude for the support you have provided year after year. Thank you to our Social Services Board, Talbot Community Connections, the Talbot County Council and county government, and our many partners, including government agencies, non-profit and faith-based organizations, families, families by choice, resource families and other generous individuals. It is with the deepest gratitude for each individual and community contribution that I offer this brief overview of our 2025 accomplishments.

In Service and Gratitude,

Linda C. Webb, LCSW



# ACHIEVEMENTS

- TCDSS has been accredited by the Council on Accreditation since 2003, and reaccreditation occurs on a 4-year cycle. We began our most recent reaccreditation process in the fall of 2024 with the submission of our application and preliminary self-study. From January to June 2025, the agency reviewed and finalized self-study and onsite evidence that would be submitted to the Council on Accreditation. The standards submitted for reaccreditation included those in the Administration and Management, Service Delivery Administration, and Service areas. The finalization of the reaccreditation process will be completed in FY26.
- In June 2025, TCDSS partnered with the Talbot County Department of Emergency Services to conduct an emergency shelter exercise. TCDSS employees operate emergency shelters when short-term emergencies require a large number of county residents to leave their homes (e.g., long-term power outages). Emergency shelters are operated in partnership with many other organizations, including Talbot County Public Schools, Talbot County Health Department, Talbot Humane Society, and others. The shelter exercise provides an opportunity for TCDSS and community partner staff to understand the basics of emergency shelter layout and operations.
- Talbot, Kent, Queen Anne's, and Caroline County Departments of Social Services hosted an event recognizing September as National Kinship Care Month. The event celebrated family and family by choice who are caring for related children. The event included a crab feast, door prizes, and arts and crafts for the children.
- Summer youth employment is a supported employment opportunity for youth engaged in child welfare programs among the local Department of Social Services on the Mid-Shore. The program offers soft skills training, job placements, field trips, socialization, hourly pay and a closing ceremony. The local Departments partnered with Delmarva Community Services to serve transition aged youth in fiscal year 2025. TCDSS sponsored the participation of three young people in the program this year.
- Four Talbot County residents were accepted into the Public Assistance to Entrepreneurship (PA2E) program, which provides business development training, tools, and techniques to individuals receiving public assistance who dream of owning a business. This year's participants represented a wide range of business interests, including cosmetics/make-up, shelter for unhoused individuals, mobile phlebotomy and diagnostics, and landscaping. Of the four Talbot County participants, one successfully finished the course and is now actively pursuing the necessary resources to launch their venture, a small-scale homeless shelter in Talbot County.

- TCDSS helped one individual acquire a vehicle through the Transportation Assistance Program, which provides reliable transportation to eligible individuals with limited income, thereby increasing mobility and accessibility and enriching the lives of the individuals and their families.

- In August of 2024, the NPEP program hosted a trip to Jolly Roger Amusement Park in Ocean City for two families striving to improve relationships with their children. Participants and their children were invited to spend the day enjoying the amusement rides, water park, and miniature golf. Transportation and meals were provided by the program as were beach towels, sunscreen, and other items needed to ensure that all were comfortable.



- The Human Resources team developed an Employee Referral Incentive Program that was put into place as an internal recruitment and retention tool. This was utilized for difficult-to-fill vacancies, such as Social Workers. The Human Resources team created flyers to share at career fairs that outline the Social Work career path and descriptions of all entry level positions. A Supervisor Checklist and an Orientation Schedule Checklist were developed and put into place to ensure that all new employees were receiving the same important information during their onboarding and orientation process. Together these efforts have helped support retention of staff and the development of a future workforce.
- A Job Fair was organized to fill two Family Investment contractual positions. Eleven candidates attended and both the Family Investment Specialist I and Work Opportunities Coordinator positions were filled.

# COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS

- The TCDSS Public Education and Advocacy Team (PEAT) participated in a wide variety of community outreach activities and events this year. These opportunities ranged from client-focused events and community education to recreational support and community partnerships. In FY25, PEAT attended or presented a total of 116 outreach/education events, which directly reached over 7,000 people! In addition, PEAT has supported the strengthening of existing partnerships and the creation of new partnerships this year. Creative outreach that prioritizes meeting the community where they are has continued to grow this year, including regular on-site services provided at the Talbot County Free Library (TCFL), MD Food Bank “Shop the Truck” events, St. Michaels Community Center, Farmer’s Market in St. Michaels, Talbot County Public Schools, local apartment complexes, Talbot Interfaith Shelter and the Days Inn, which is a hub for unhoused individuals in the county.

- Empower Me is a child abuse prevention program adopted in Talbot County in 2014 as a community initiative. TCDSS has remained the lead agency and has been diligent in carrying the message of personal safety. This year, 43 presentations were delivered to elementary classrooms in Talbot County Public Schools, The Country School, Polaris Village Academy, and Saints Peter and Paul School. Empower Me was also delivered in the Presbyterian Preschool and to parents from the Country School; Department of Social Services staff in Kent, Queen Anne’s, Caroline, Dorchester, and Talbot Counties; and two presentations were delivered in the community. A total of 919 children and adults participated in conversations about personal safety through the Empower Me presentations.



- The TCDSS Wellness Committee rented a raised bed at the Presbyterian Church of Easton’s community garden. Fourteen staff members participated in planning, planting, weeding, watering and harvesting the vegetables, which were placed in the agency foyer for customers to take home. Educational information on the benefits of fresh produce was also supplied.





*2025 Red Sand Project - For All Seasons Partnership*

- TCDSS partnered with For All Seasons to participate in the Red Sand Project, which helps raise awareness about human trafficking. Red sand is placed in sidewalk cracks to symbolize those who “fall through the cracks” as human trafficking victims.
- TCDSS and the Talbot County Children’s Advocacy Center (TCCAC) recognized Child Abuse Awareness month in April 2025 in collaboration with the staff, the TCCAC multidisciplinary team (MDT), the TCCAC Advisory Board, and the community. A photo of the Talbot County multidisciplinary team and TCCAC Advisory Board members was published in local media outlets. In addition, each of the organizations represented on our MDT placed blue pinwheels and child abuse prevention signs outside of their agencies. There were pinwheels - a symbol of the carefree childhood we wish for all children - throughout Easton and Talbot County.
- To further develop the local human services workforce, TCDSS provided educational excitement and resources about careers in human services through career events, job fairs and individual student connections with Talbot County Public Schools (TCPS). Through this partnership with TCPS, the development of a human services high school intern track was developed. The pilot for this high school internship will begin in FY 2026.
- The TCDSS Adult Services Unit partnered with the Talbot County Commission on Aging to host a Senior Resource Fair in May 2025. More than 30 vendors participated in this free and informative event for the community.
- The Non-custodial Parent Employment Program (NPEP), which helps parents who are court-ordered to pay child support, held a job fair in November 2024 to support TCDSS customers and other community members. Out of the 34 job seekers who attended, six were NPEP participants, each of whom

registered with at least one employment agency. Of those six, three were placed on a work assignment. One of the three was hired directly by an employer and has since been named Regional Employee of the Year, earning a \$1,000 bonus as a result.

- The second annual TCDSS Resource Day, a collaborative effort between the Family Investment and Child Support units, took place in September 2024. A total of 28 participants attended the event, visiting vendors to gather information and resources and share lunch together. Future plans include expanding the resources and educational opportunities offered during this event.
- TCDSS continued to provide financial support to the Healthy Families program as its operations moved to the Talbot County Health Department. Healthy Families is a home visiting program that provides nurturing parent-child relationships, promotes healthy childhood growth and development, and enhances family well-being by reducing risk and building protective factors.



*TCDSS Staff at 2025 Multicultural Festival*

# COMMITMENT TO EQUITY AND INCLUSION

Equity, diversity, inclusion and belonging are core values of the Talbot County Department of Social Services. We began deepening our awareness of their importance in the delivery of human services in 2018 when an interest in understanding racial equity was included in a staff survey used to develop our training plan for that year. In fiscal year 2025, TCDSS continued its equity journey in a number of ways.

With the support of a Talbot Family Network Equity Grant, TCDSS delivered to interested staff a training series designed to support the implementation of the agency's equity statement, which was developed in fiscal year 2024. As a part of this initiative and with resources provided by the local Racial Equity Coalition, we created Our Equity Statement in Action - a brief list of behaviors showing the ways in which we put our commitment to equity into practice. This list is displayed in our lobby in both English and Spanish languages.

Our Equity Team offered many opportunities for employees to learn about equity-related topics through a variety of activities, including a Cost of Poverty Experience and training sessions on the Developmental Disabilities Administration, neurodivergence in the workplace, LGBTQ+, the practice of redlining in Maryland, and environmental justice. Special events were held on Juneteenth and during Black History Month during which video education was provided with an opportunity for discussion and peer support.



The agency further developed and refined our Equity Dashboard, used to capture data across programs to identify disproportionalities. Discussions were held in agency administrative and Performance Improvement Teams to try to understand the genesis of any identified disproportionalities and brainstorm ways in which we may contribute to their reduction.

Finally, TCDSS worked with the University of Maryland School of Social Work's Center for Restorative Change to provide staff with skills to apply our equity learning to our work in the Talbot County community. Training on the SHARP Framework was delivered to the TCDSS management team and staff interested and available for the 2.5-day series. During each of these two training cohorts, an "appetizer" introductory session was offered to community partners and cross-systems interest is growing as a result. In total, nearly 50 TCDSS employees completed the training, and 17 community partners attended the introductory session. From there, TCDSS has been supporting SHARP Framework implementation through supervision and the sharing of examples of the Framework in practice during executive team, management team, unit and performance improvement team meetings.

During this year, we further refined our Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) data dashboard to understand the ways in which individuals of different races and ethnicities move through our programs and services. We continued our practice of quarterly Conversations on Equity during which staff meet to learn about and build comfort with discussion of various topics. We maintain a hard copy library and digital resource list of books, videos, music, and other learning materials. We continue the practice of annual equity organizational assessments by surveying staff to measure progress and identify areas in need of attention. This journey, while at times difficult, is necessary if we are to serve all members of our community in a way that is kind, effective, and sensitive to individual needs. So, we learn, we grow, and we continue on this journey together.



*Stephanie Collazo, TCDSS employee  
sharing her Juneteenth art*



Talbot County Department of Social Services

# EQUITY STATEMENT IN ACTION

**TREAT EVERYONE FAIRLY**

**RESPECT ALL PEOPLE**

**LEARN AND IMPROVE**



**FIGHT RACISM AND UNFAIRNESS**

**LISTEN TO THOSE WHO ARE OFTEN LEFT OUT**

**MAKE SURE EVERYONE CAN APPLY FOR OUR SERVICES**



**BUILD TRUST**

**WORK TOGETHER**



**TO LEARN MORE AND PROVIDE FEEDBACK**

Scan the QR code here!

# CHILD WELFARE AND ADULT SERVICES

The Child Welfare and Adult Services Division works with county residents and community partners to protect, stabilize, and strengthen families. We focus on strategies that promote the safety and well-being of the children, families, and adults we serve while promoting their independence and resilience.

## *Child Protective Services and Consolidated In-Home Services*

Child Protective Services responds to allegations of child abuse and neglect. In-Home Family Services works with families to provide stabilization services with the goal of minimizing risk and reducing future out-of-home placements.

In-Home Family Service programs are designed to promote the safety and well-being of children and their families, enhance a parent's ability to create a safe and stable home environment, and maintain permanency while preserving family unity. In-Home Family Services are designed to enable a child to remain safely at home while receiving intervention services. The In-Home Family Services unit conducts Risk of Harm and 30-day assessments, assessments of families of Substance Exposed Newborns, and a continuum of services designed to prevent out-of-home placements.

### **From July 2024 through June 2025, we:**

- Held 19 Family Team Decision Making meetings, which convene family members during key child welfare decision points for the purpose of establishing a team to engage families and their support network to assess the family's needs and develop service plans.
- Provided Consolidated In-Home Services (CIHS) and Interagency Family Preservation Services (IFPS) to 15 families. Consolidated In-Home Services is a continuum of services, initiated following a CPS investigation, 30-day assessment, Risk of Harm or Substance Exposed Newborn assessment or a transfer from another ongoing child welfare service, such as Out-of-Home Placement. Interagency Family Preservation Services are offered to prevent the out-of-home placement of a child at imminent risk of removal.
- Conducted 31 Risk of Harm and 30-day assessments, which are assessments to determine if a child is safe and identify risk factors. Services are provided for families whose needs can be addressed within 30 days and to evaluate a family's need for ongoing services. Coordination and referral to community resources is an important aspect of this service.
- Conducted 9 Substance Exposed Newborn (SEN) assessments, which involve determining the safety and risk of harm to a substance exposed newborn and the interventions or services that may be needed. Services are developed to address the risks and needs of the entire family, reduce the number of sub-

stance exposed newborns placed in out-of-home placements, increase the number of families engaged in community resources, and increase access to treatment resources and community resources across a broad continuum.

Child maltreatment allegations meeting investigative criteria can be addressed through two different pathways - investigative response or alternative response. The investigative response is the traditional forensic approach to the investigation of child maltreatment allegations in which a finding, or investigative determination, is made and a maltreater is identified. The alternative response is a collaborative approach, utilized for allegations of low-risk neglect and physical abuse in which the family's needs and circumstances are assessed, and services are implemented to reduce the risk of future maltreatment. In fiscal year 2025, we:

- Responded to 49 reports of child abuse or neglect using an investigative response.
- Responded to 38 reports of child abuse or neglect using an alternative response.
- Received 511 reports of child abuse or neglect and responded to all requests for information and/or community resources.

### *Talbot County Children's Advocacy Center*

The Talbot County Children's Advocacy Center (TCCAC) provides a multi-disciplinary response to allegations of child abuse. TCCAC ensures that victims of child sexual abuse, assault or serious physical abuse and their non-offending caregivers have access to support services in a safe, culturally respectful environment in a child-focused setting.

#### **From July 2024 through June 2025, we:**

- Conducted 53 medical examinations for children in the five Mid Shore counties (Talbot, Caroline, Kent, Queen Anne's, Dorchester) and provided a full chart review of 13 children's medical histories to assist investigators in identifying chronic abuse patterns.
- Conducted 80 forensic interviews for the Mid Shore counties.
- Provided Victim Advocacy services:
  - 214 children and non-offending caregivers served.
  - 1,203 victim advocacy sessions provided.
- Provided emergency financial assistance to 59 children and 25 caregivers to support stabilization after disclosure of abuse.
- Provided traditional mental health or alternative therapy services:

- 81 children were referred to mental health providers.
- 21 children and 9 caregivers utilized TCCAC therapies.
- TCCAC also offered access to a variety of alternative therapies and services to support individualized recovery:
  - Two eight-week therapeutic art groups were held this year. 18 children between the ages of 12 and 17 years participated in the groups, which focused on building connections between the mind and body, including the spiritual components of healing, and helped participants understand their feelings and create a path towards healing.
  - One caregiver and victim retreat was conducted. The goal of this retreat was to provide victims with a safe, trauma-informed space to build confidence, resilience, and healthy relationships. The group also aimed to strengthen caregiver-victim bonds and increase mutual understanding, support, and positive connection.
  - One event was organized in collaboration with a local organization called Close Quarters Defense. This was a private event for victims who had come through TCCAC and for Multidisciplinary Team (MDT) members. 7 girls, 4 parents, and 13 members of MDT, including 8 law enforcement, one mental health therapist, and 4 TCCAC staff participated in the event. Law enforcement partners were paired with the girls and acted as mentors for the event while the TCCAC staff supported the parents who participated. The participants were tasked with a real-life simulation of saving a victim from a unique situation. The participants learned methods of empowerment while actively overcoming obstacles to protect themselves and others. They demonstrated the ability to remain focused, trust their teammates, and work together to achieve a common goal. A small ceremony was held at the end, and each participant earned a trophy. After the ceremony, dinner was served to provide the opportunity for all participants to mingle and get to know each other better.
- 21 members of the Multi-Disciplinary Team (MDT) were sent to 88 trainings including 5 conferences focused on improving the investigations, prosecution, and treatment of child abuse. Members from all disciplines represented on the MDT were trained this year.
- 37 case staffings were held with the goal of increasing the sharing of information, ideas and resources and facilitating joint problem solving, networking, and the collaborative development of a specific plan to investigate and treat child abuse.
- To ensure the wellbeing of the MDT, a TCCAC mental health therapist provided 33 therapeutic sessions to members of the MDT.
- 1 team building event was held for 17 members of the MDT.

- TCCAC hosted an all-day team DISC training for 15 MDT members. DISC is an assessment that focuses on four domains: dominance, influence, steadiness, compliance. The training session focused on increasing our understanding of the behavioral and communication styles of others.



2025 TCCAC Hero's Event

## *Out of Home Services (Foster Care), Adoption and Respite Care*

Out of Home Services provides safe, stable, and temporary out-of-home placements for children who can no longer remain in their own homes. With the goal of permanency for children, placement options include adoption, placement with a relative (family or family by choice), reunification with biological family and/or caregivers, and Another Planned Permanent Living Arrangement (APPLA).

### **From July 2024 through June 2025, we:**

- Provided out-of-home services to 21 youth
  - 11 of these youth were aged 14-20 years old, considered the transitional age.
  - 7 children and youth had their cases closed through the achievement of permanency as follows:
    - Adoption
    - Exited foster care at age 21
    - Reunification
    - Relative/Kin Guardianship
- Held 39 Enhanced Youth Transition Planning meetings using the Achieve My Plan (AMP) youth engagement model with transition aged youth in foster care. This enhanced planning process is designed to help young people aged 14 to 21 years of age prepare for a successful transition out of foster care.
- Collaborated with the Child Welfare Academy to help plan the Annual Resource Parent conference which was held virtually in April 2025.

Additional training events that were planned through other agencies and organizations were shared with resource families throughout the year.

- Held 3 training events and offered monthly support groups facilitated by Families Connected for resource parents.
- Held 6 Resource Parent Appreciation events, including tickets to Jolly Rogers Splash Mountain and Amusement Park, attendance at a Shorebirds Baseball game, a summer Crab Feast, a “Thanks for Giving” event and our annual winter Holiday Party.



## *TCDSS Option Respite Program*

Option Respite provides parents with scheduled and emergent short-term childcare services that offer temporary relief, improve family stability, and reduce the risk of abuse and neglect. In fiscal year 2025, we:

- Served 16 children from 11 families.
- Provided 366 overnight episodes of respite.

## *TCDSS Nurturing Parenting Program*

The Nurturing Parenting Programs are a family-centered trauma-informed initiative designed to build nurturing parenting skills as an alternative to abusive and neglectful parenting and child-rearing practices. In fiscal year 2025, we:

- Delivered one session of parenting education at the Talbot Interfaith Shelter.
- Served 34 parents and 78 children by delivering three parent education sessions for the community, one of which was held fully virtually and two of which were hybrid sessions.

## Adult Services

Adult Services provides vulnerable adults, age 18 and over, with services to protect their health, safety, and welfare, and to prevent or remedy neglect, abuse or exploitation.

The Adult Services unit consists of three different service delivery programs. The first - Adult Protective Services (APS) - provides investigative services to the elderly and vulnerable adults to protect them from abuse, neglect, self-neglect, and financial exploitation.

The second - the Social Services to Adults (SSTA) program - is a case management service that provides assessment, service planning and connection to community resources.

Finally, the In-Home Aide Services (IHAS) program serves adults who need assistance with activities of daily living to remain in their own home and maintain independence when possible.

### **From July 2024 through June 2025, we:**

- Conducted 193 Adult Protective Services (APS) investigations and assessments.
- Conducted 2 Adult Public Guardianship review board meetings, reviewing the cases of 8 individuals.
- Provided services to a monthly average of 6 individuals receiving Adult Protective Services, 11 individuals receiving In Home Aide Services cases, and 14 individuals receiving Social Services to Adults.
- Provided services that supported the ability of 100% of the adults served to remain safely in the community.
- Maintained 1 provider of Project Home, a supportive housing program for persons with mental illness or other disabilities, by offering an adult foster care family model of care that provides a stable, family-like living arrangement in the community.



# FAMILY INVESTMENT SERVICES

Family Investment provides income support to those in need. Assistance includes food supplements, cash assistance, Medical Assistance, Long Term Care Medical Assistance, and emergency assistance. These programs help the residents of Talbot County maintain healthy households while they work toward independence. Family Investment also includes the Work Opportunities Program, which provides employment readiness and job placement services.

## **From July 2024 to June 2025 we:**

- Awarded \$1,050 in job retention bonuses to 7 individuals who retained employment for 30, 60 and 90 days after receiving benefits.
- Completed 2,785 applications for income support.
- Issued a combined annual total of \$7,615,576 in Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits consisting of an average monthly benefit amount of \$634,631 issued to a monthly average of 2,363 adults and 1,473 children.
- Issued a total of \$388,880 in SUN Bucks benefits to 3,251 Talbot County children during June, July, and August. The SUN Bucks program provides summer SNAP benefits to school-aged children who qualify for free or reduced-price meals. SUN Bucks offers grocery assistance to supplement meals during the summer months when children do not have access to school meals.
- Issued an average of \$32,009 in Temporary Disability Assistance (TDAP) benefits to a monthly average of 75 individuals.
- Served a monthly average of:
  - 763 individuals receiving Community Care Medical Assistance
  - 547 individuals receiving SSI Medical Assistance
  - 114 individuals receiving Long Term Care Medical Assistance
- Issued a combined annual total of \$51,756 to a monthly average of 51 adults and 138 children receiving Temporary Cash Assistance (TCA).
- Issued a combined annual total of \$5,218 to a monthly average of 5 individuals receiving Public Assistance to Adults (PAA).
- Issued a total of \$4,868 in Emergency Assistance for Families with Children (EAFC) for 10 households.
- Answered a total of 4,581 calls on our customer service phone line.
- Provided interpreter services 547 times during the year.

# CHILD SUPPORT SERVICES

The Child Support Program is federally funded and requires each state to establish standards to measure the effectiveness of the program. Performance is measured in the areas of paternity establishment, child support order establishment, collection of current child support and payment on arrears.

The Child Support program operates on the federal fiscal year (October 1 through September 30). This year, we collected and disbursed a total of \$2,514,464.00 in current child support and arrears.

Talbot County Child Support Performance Federal Fiscal Year 2025				
	Establishment of Paternity	Establishment of Child Support Order	Current Collections	Collections on Arrears
Goal	100.00%	92.96%	68.44%	72.28%
Actual	102.66%	92.33%	68.05%	71.08%

The Child Support program participated in the statewide Driver's License Amnesty Program in August 2024, to celebrate Child Support Awareness month. Talbot County collected \$1,650.00 and facilitated the reinstatement of 8 drivers licenses for non-custodial parents.

## *Responsible Fathers Program*

The Responsible Fathers Program provides peer support and education sessions for men and women incarcerated at the Talbot County Detention Center with goals of reducing recidivism and strengthening family relationships. Responsible Fathers utilizes the evidence-based curriculum Inside Out Dad for men and Understanding DAD for women.

### **From July 2024 through June 2025, we:**

- Held 63 classes for men.
- Held 19 classes for women.



### *Talbot County Young Fathers/Non-custodial Parent Employment Program (NPEP)*

The Child Support Program is supported by the Talbot County Young Fathers/ Non-custodial Parent Employment Program (NPEP), which provides one-on-one case management services to non-custodial parents by identifying, assessing, and addressing barriers to economic stability and employment. NPEP provides referrals to community partners for services in the areas of mental health, substance abuse, job readiness, and employment resources. Although the NPEP Coordinator position was vacant for 6 months, the following was accomplished between July 2023 and June 2024:

- Enrolled 10 parents.
- Served a total of 14 parents.
- Assisted in 7 full-time job placements.
- Collected \$15,697.77 in child support from parents participating in the program.
- Celebrated family and connection by hosting a trip to Jolly Rogers Splash Mountain and Amusement Park in Ocean City, MD for five families consisting of 3 adults and 9 children.

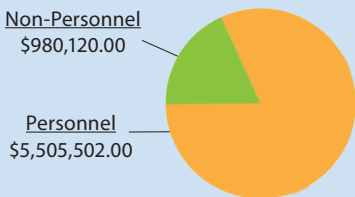
# ADMINISTRATIVE SERVICES

The Administrative Division facilitates quality service delivery to our customers and our community by supporting TCDSS employees in the areas of human resources, budget management, accounting operations, procurement and purchasing, fleet operations, information technology and communications, inventory and supply management, facilities and lease management, and security services.

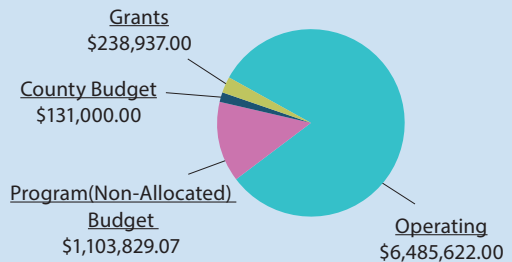
## From July 2024 through June 2025, we:

- Continued to provide IT equipment, training and support for employees both in the office and on telework status.
- Provided support to 77 individuals, including TCDSS employees and
  - One Talbot County Health Department employee who provides substance abuse screening and peer support onsite
  - One Maryland State Department of Education, Office of Child Care employee by providing office space.
- Supported employees in continued professional development
  - One employee obtained the Master’s level social work license (LMSW).
  - Five employees obtained the Master’s level clinical social work license (LCSW-C).
- Added and filled one state contractual position in the Family Investment unit.
- Added one Social Worker position in the Children’s Advocacy Center, which was filled with a former intern.
- Filled 16 positions (including the 2 new positions listed above).
- Promoted 10 individuals to advance their careers and fill internal vacancies.
- careers and fill internal vacancies.
- Hired a former social work intern to fill one of our social work vacancies.

## FY2025 Operating Budget Personnel vs. Non-Personnel



## FY2025 Overall Budget



# PERFORMANCE AND QUALITY IMPROVEMENT (PQI)

Quality in the human service field is more important than it is in manufacturing. In the latter, you can easily throw away or rework the flaws. In human service, we do not have that luxury. We must strive to make it right the first time, every time. A multi-faceted approach has therefore been developed at TCDSS, which includes a PQI Central Council working with Performance Improvement Teams (PIT Teams) from each program area. The precepts are communication, evaluation, planning, training, staff empowerment, and teamwork. Participation is considered critical to an effective PQI process. All staff members are encouraged to participate in PQI activities.



**From July 2024 through June 2025, our PQI Central Council and Performance Improvement Teams (PIT) accomplished the following:**

## *PQI-CENTRAL COUNCIL (PQI-CC)*

- Hosted its sixth annual PQI-CC training as a part of our annual All Staff Development Day.
- Continued the enhanced orientation process, which includes group orientation, shadowing and individual meetings. New staff continued to participate in agency orientations and in-person PQI-CC meeting observation as a part of new hire orientation. The team evaluated the timing of new staff shadowing a PQI-CC meeting and adjusted the schedule to have shadowing occur following new staff agency orientation.
- Reviewed materials and prepared evidence to support the accreditation process with the Council on Accreditation. The PQI-CC Bylaws and PQI Plan were updated to align with current practices and updated procedures.
- Reviewed all surveys and distribution processes for each and adapted as needed. Following the aggregation of survey results, data was shared throughout the agency and process summary reports outlining action steps were used consistently. This year's surveys included the community partner survey, resource parent survey, customer survey, racial equity survey and employee engagement survey.
- The customer survey distribution continued as a year-long process, and we increased access by including paper, text, email and QR code delivery options. Enhancements this year included adding a daily text distribution of

the survey link to customers who visited the agency. This year's distribution gathered the largest number of responses to date, with feedback from every program area in the agency.

- Added a safety update to the PQI-CC agenda to ensure regular communication about important safety issues.
- Maintained the Care to Share improvement recommendation process with an increase in submissions. 16 were received this fiscal year. 13 were resolved and 3 remained under review at the end of the year.
- Conducted quarterly presentations available to all staff on community resources. Performance Improvement Teams (PIT) organized the presentations, and staff feedback was reviewed by PQI-CC. This year, three quarterly presentations were delivered.
- Supported the development of the LGA (Administrative Division) PIT team, AET (Administration Excellence Team) with its launch. The team has met consistently and worked to refine its purpose and goals.
- Supported the cross-training plans developed by the Family Investment Improvement Team (FIIT), the Child Support Improvement Team (CSIT), and the Services Excellence Team (SET) by assisting with planning and scheduling.
- Reviewed the agency's Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Dashboard and provided support to the PIT teams as they prepared for review of the dashboard in their teams.
- Reviewed recommendations from the PIT teams to enhance the agency's accessibility to customers and staff. Through this process the following changes were made:
  - Cane holders were installed at the reception desk
  - American Sign Language (ASL) online interpreter service was reviewed with all staff
  - An interview room was organized to allow wheelchair accessibility
  - Handicapped parking spot reminders were sent to all staff
  - Painting of customer-only parking spots was scheduled
  - Chairs in the Family Team Decision-Making (FTDM) room were replaced
  - Mobile fingerprinting resources were shared with staff
  - All gender signage was added to all single stall restrooms
  - Document translation needs were identified and translation began.
  - A new outdoor application box was installed



- An additional room was set up for staff use for private training/meetings or customer interviews
- Recommendations for increased LGBTQ+ affirming practices were distributed to all staff
- Supported the new employee group orientation offered to all staff in January 2025 and the new employee focus groups. Recommendations from both activities have been reviewed and implemented.
- Reviewed newly developed supervisor orientation checklists and supported all PIT teams in reviewing them and providing feedback to support implementation.

## *PERFORMANCE IMPROVEMENT TEAMS*

### **Child Support Improvement Team (CSIT)**

- Reviewed critical updates, legislation and practice changes monthly.
- Supported the annual Driver's License Suspension Amnesty program and strategized ways to best reach clients in need of this relief. These efforts resulted in increased collections statewide.
- Participated in cross-training sessions with Family Investment and Services. Through these sessions, communication was strengthened and potential future practice shifts were identified through collaboration between foster care and child support.

- Examined the need for increased collections and identified appropriate increases in show cause filings as a strategy. Filing goals for each worker were established to help meet this goal.
- Celebrated a full year of stability in the NPEP Coordinator position, allowing for increased partner relationships, job fairs, referrals and data collection.
- Began collecting and reviewing equity related data for the agency EDI Dashboard, which allowed for discussion of implications and identification of future curiosities.
- Focused on wellness through regular sharing of self-care plans, wellness walks, participation in team wellness learning opportunities, individual participation in the Wellness 360 program and group review and discussion of wellness related Ted Talks.

### **Family Investment Improvement Team (FIIT)**

- Reviewed program compliance reports at monthly meetings and identified areas in need of improvement. Compliance rates increased after the unit was restructured and new staff acclimated to their new roles across Family Investment (FIA) programs.
- Explored TCA program compliance and enhancements. The team reviewed data regularly and identified areas for improvement when compliance rates were not met. The team focused on consistently sharing information with clients about transitional benefits.
- Increased outreach and engagement with the agency Public Education and Advocacy Team (PEAT). FIA delivered presentations at the local senior center and the library and hosted the 3rd annual resource fair at TCDSS. FIA also participated in multiple community resource fairs. FIA has partnered with PEAT to conduct monthly outreach at the Days Inn motel, providing services on site to clients by assisting with setting up online accounts, applying for programs, and addressing account issues.
- Collected and reviewed EDI dashboard data. Additional areas for data collection were discussed and feedback provided to leadership.
- Created a cross-training plan and coordinated a monthly presentation from program areas across the agency, increasing staff knowledge about agency programs and strengthening cross-unit relationships and communication. Additionally, FIIT enhanced their intra-unit cross training to increase FIA staff knowledge and skills across FIA program areas.
- Led the agency in developing cross unit projects such as the TCDSS Resource Day, Holiday Giving, Kindness Egg Hunt, and Biggest Loser program coordination.

- Continued to actively support the agency Wellness initiatives and was a large contributor to the fresh produce distribution to customers. This year, the FIIT team enhanced accessibility to produce and resources by the addition of a shelf in the agency vestibule to promote access to resources and items without the burden of security/check-in.

### **Services Excellence Team (SET)**

- Supported retention of licensed social workers by continued reimbursement of licensing fees and associated costs.
- Organized training to meet the Ethics and Implicit Bias social work licensure continuing education requirements.
- Prioritized building the workforce by participating in two events to promote awareness of the social work field and provide education and connection with future students at Easton High School. Social Work internships have been maintained and a partnership with Talbot County Public Schools was established to develop high school intern opportunities.
- Created a cross-training plan and coordinated a monthly presentation from program areas across the agency, increasing staff knowledge about agency programs and strengthening cross-unit relationships and communication. Additionally, program “refreshers” were developed and delivered throughout the year to ensure all Services staff are familiar with the programs and services available.
- Identified the continued need for increased knowledge, review of data, and practice shifts related to equity. This year the team began facilitating equity learning in SET meetings, added equity as a topic on the Services Unit meeting agenda and participated in training on the SHARP Framework.
- Reviewed the agency EDI dashboard twice and met with the Services leadership to further develop and understand the goals for use of the data.
- Implemented a case transfer procedure that was drafted in FY24 and implemented this year following feedback and revisions.
- Delivered “Building Connections” to Services staff to provide an overview of the available Kinship Navigation and Family Finding services and worked with staff to brainstorm strategies to increase the use of Family Finding to support Kin First practice within the Family Matters philosophy.
- Prioritized public awareness of the needs of vulnerable adults and delivered presentations on financial exploitation in the community with multiple partners.
- Continued to prioritize staff resilience and self-care by reviewing all available internal and external supports and encouraging access.

## **Administrative Excellence Team (AET)**

- Established goals, team norms and developed leadership in this, their first year.
- Led the review of accessibility touchpoint improvement recommendations. AET assisted with the logistics of many of the recommendations from across the agency and provided valuable feedback.
- Reviewed the EDI dashboard and identified areas relevant for their ongoing review.
- Reviewed their needs and goals for cross training, job shadowing and cross unit projects/relationship building and determined they will need to prioritize these efforts in FY26.
- Prioritized developing an equitable front desk coverage procedure and schedule in addition to updating the front desk guide.
- Identified the challenge of maintaining an up-to-date staff calendar and sought support from leadership to improve this. Noticeable improvements were documented, supporting reception's ability to best meet customer needs.
- Committed to providing customer appreciation items with a wellness-related theme. Recipe cards to accompany the free produce available from the agency were created and well received by customers, affirming this practice for FY26.





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