

KENT COUNTY

Department of Social Services

2024 ANNUAL REPORT



Maryland
Department of Human Services
KENT COUNTY
Department of Social Services



Vision

We envision Kent County as a safe community where individuals and families strive for, achieve, and maintain independence.

Mission

Kent County Department of Social Services advocates for and protects vulnerable children, adults and families through partnerships and collaboration with our community.

Values

Self-Sufficiency: Every adult, child and family should be given the opportunity and means to establish stability and economic independence so that they become and remain self-sufficient.

Customer Service: We maintain a supportive environment that encourages collaborative customer service, high quality delivery of service, and respect for ourselves, our colleagues, and our customers.

Supportive Environment: We support individuals, families and the community by providing accessible services in a dignified and compassionate manner in partnership with our stakeholders.



Executive Leadership Team

Shelly Neal-Edwards, LCSW-C, Director

Kathy Nolan, Assistant Director of Child Support

Julie Handzo, Assistant Director of Family Investment

Nikki Strong, LCSW-C, Assistant Director of Child Welfare and Adult Services

Vastina Fisher, Assistant Director of Administration

Management Team

Sherri Spray, Executive Assistant to the Director

Lindsay Blume, Child Support Supervisor

Brittany Hughes, Family Investment Supervisor

Milahn Trusty, Family Investment Supervisor

Shana Flamer, Family Investment Supervisor

Kathryn McAllister, Adult Services and CAC Supervisor

Mattie Meehan, Family Services Supervisor

Christina Russell, In-Home Services Supervisor

Jennifer Houser, Finance Officer

Social Services Board

Caitlan Gartland, Co-Chair

Hope Braveheart, Co-Chair

Ronald Fithian, County Commissioner, ex officio

Dr. Vienna Walker, Kent County Public Schools

Thomas Herz

Catherine Boyer-Sterling

Susan Ingersoll

Julie Gill

Jasmine Robinson

Lisa Mazingo



Director's Message

As we reflect on the achievements and challenges of Fiscal Year 2024, I want to extend my deepest gratitude for your continued partnership and dedication to the well-being of our Kent County residents. Together, we have made meaningful progress in addressing the complex needs of our community, and your commitment has played a pivotal role in that success.

The Kent County Department of Social Services remains steadfast in its mission to provide essential services and support to those in need. This year, we have focused on strengthening existing programs, innovating new solutions, and enhancing our collective ability to respond to the evolving needs of our community.

I want to highlight several key priorities:

- 1. Collaboration & Coordination:** We are committed to deepening our collaboration with community organizations like yours, recognizing that working together is the best way to achieve lasting, positive change.
- 2. Equity & Inclusion:** Our department will continue to prioritize equitable service delivery, ensuring that all residents, regardless of background, have access to the resources they need to thrive.
- 3. Capacity Building:** We are exploring opportunities to support capacity-building efforts in our partner organizations, so we can all better serve the community.
- 4. Innovation & Impact:** We encourage innovative solutions that address systemic issues in the social services landscape, and we look forward to learning from the creative initiatives led by our partners.

I encourage you to reach out if you have any suggestions, questions, or ideas about how we can better serve our community together in the year ahead. Your input is invaluable to us as we plan for the future.

Thank you for your unwavering support and commitment to the people we serve. Together, we are making a real difference, and I am confident that by continuing to collaborate, we can overcome any challenge that lies ahead.

Respectfully,

Shelly Neal-Edwards, LCSW-C, Director

Child and Adult Services Division

The Services Division works collaboratively with our county citizens and community partners. Through our family-centered approach we strive to engage and support individuals and families in order to achieve safety, permanency, and wellbeing. While recognizing culture and tradition in our community, we utilize a strengths-based approach, tailoring services to the needs. We have continued to promote and strengthen our community partnerships, recognizing a shared responsibility in protecting our most vulnerable citizens.



From July 2023 through June 2024(FY24):

- 74 Investigations of child abuse and neglect were conducted.
- 37 were Investigative Response.
- 37 were Alternative Response.
- 4 Family Team Decision Making Meetings (FTDM) and 5 Facilitated Family Meetings (FFM) were conducted. 95% of children were diverted from out of home placement following a facilitated meeting.
- Mandated Reporter training was provided for multiple community partners in the fiscal year.

Family Preservation Services now encompasses all In-Home programs. These services vary in the intensity and frequency of home visits as determined by the safety and risk factors present in the home environment.

- 44 families were served during FY2024.
- 10 families with substance exposed newborns were served. During the assessment process the focus is on assessing the safety of, and risk of harm to, the newborn (and other children in the home) to determine whether any further intervention is necessary.
- 13 assessments were conducted, this is a voluntary assessment and service provision program for families requesting assistance by preventing further breakdown in family functioning which, if not addressed, might require either Child Protective Services intervention, out-of-home placement, or dissolving of the family unit.
- 7 requests from other agencies were completed. These requests come from other jurisdictions both in and out of state, law enforcement agencies and the courts.
- 13 families received ongoing, In-Home Services from the Department.

- The Sobriety Treatment and Recovery Team (START) served 3 of those families in FY2024. START is a program which serves families with parental substance use disorder who have children from 0-5 including substance-exposed newborns. The program involves collaboration with the Kent County Health Department.
- Kinship Navigator Program assisted 11 families in FY24 with diverting out of home placement, preserving family ties, and assisting with the coordination of community resources.

Out-of-Home Placement

- 11 children were served in Out-of-Home Services and 7 of the 11 were in a Voluntary Placement during FY 2024.
- KCDSS has 5 Resource Homes. In FY 2024, we received 1 inquiry about becoming a resource home and 1 application. We also hosted PRIDE training for the recruitment of new Resource Parents.
- Annual Christmas Gift delivery for 6 youth from community partners.
- An Appreciation event for Resource Parents was held in October 2023.
- Permanency was achieved for 2 youth: 1 youth was reunified and 1 youth was adopted.

Social Service to Adults

- 15 adults were served with Social Services to Adults Case Management.
- 22 adults were served with Social Services to Adults Information and Referral.
- 2 adults were served under Crisis Intervention.
- Provided Personal Care Services to 4 In-Home Aide Recipients.
- Provided IHAS support to 7 Social Services to Adults customers.
- Provided training and educational resources to the community on Adult Services programs.

Adult Protective Services

- 27 Adult Protective Service Investigations were completed.
- 5 Adult Protective Services Continuing customers.
- 6 Persons are in Adult Public Guardianship.
- Provided community outreach and education for Financial Exploitation at local financial institutions on World Elder Abuse Awareness Day. Completed an APS presentation at Amy Lynn Ferris Adult Activity Center.

Kent County RISE Program

(Re-Engaging Individuals through Successful Employment)

FISCAL YEAR 2024 OVERVIEW

Financial Summary

During the fiscal year 2024, Kent County's RISE Program made significant financial strides:

- **Total Amount Collected:** \$37,316.27 from participants, in Child Support funds owed.

Program Participation and Success Stories

In fiscal year 2024, the RISE Program proudly served 14 participants. Among them, we witnessed inspiring success stories that highlight the program's impact:

- **Employment Achievement:** One participant, despite an extensive criminal background, secured a W2 position in Chestertown. This success was further supported by an Earnings Withholding Order (EWO).
- **Substance Abuse and Recovery:** This same participant faced challenges with substance abuse, leading to a relapse. However, demonstrating resilience, they sought sober living housing in Anne Arundel County, secured employment again, and impressively completed an Associate of Arts (AA) degree.



Judicial and Service Changes

Fiscal year 2024 brought changes to the judicial process in Kent County. Despite these adjustments, the RISE Program remained steadfast in providing comprehensive, wrap-around services to the Non-Custodial Parent (NCP) population. Our commitment to adapting and thriving amid change ensures that we continue to meet the needs of our participants.

Service to Non-Custodial Parents (NCPs)

RISE extends its services to NCPs residing in Kent County, regardless of whether their child support cases are filed within the county:

- **Case Distribution:** While the numbers may not reflect solely Kent County cases, our dedication to serving all eligible Kent County residents remains strong.

Partnerships and Community Support

We are fortunate to have robust partnerships with the Kent County Child Support Administration (CSA) and the Kent County Department of Social Services (DSS). These relationships are instrumental in our ability to deliver effective and meaningful support to our participants.

In summary, fiscal year 2024 has been a year of challenges and triumphs for the Kent County RISE Program. Through financial management, participant support, and strong community partnerships, we continue to make a positive impact in the lives of those we serve.

Family Investment Division

The Family Investment Division helps families achieve independence through work, personal responsibility and community involvement. In addition, a variety of family-centered supportive services and assistance are provided.

These include Temporary Cash Assistance, Temporary Disability Assistance, and Emergency Assistance to Families with Children, Local Emergency Assistance, Food Supplement Assistance, Medical Assistance, Work Readiness and Job Placement programs. Home heating needs are supplemented through our Office of Home Energy Programs.



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From July 2023 through June 2024:

- Served 20 families through the Adopt-A-Family Holiday Program, which matches families referred by employees with community sponsors. 20 community members and/or organizations served as sponsors who purchased gifts for the families. 132 Families from Kent County were referred to the Brighter Christmas Program, and 108 individuals and families were referred to the Lions Club of Kent County for the Christmas Basket Program. Kent County Elks supplied 20 Christmas Dinner boxes to our needy families.
- Provided assistance totaling \$959,742 to 980 Kent County households through the Maryland Energy Assistance Program (MEAP) and the Office of Home Energy Programs (OHEP).
- Issued Food Supplement Program Benefits averaging a total of \$338,887 per month (\$4,606,637 Total) to an average of 1,383 households per month.
- Served an average of 452 families receiving Community Medical Assistance and 97 individuals receiving Long Term Care Medical Assistance each month.
- Our Work Opportunities Program funding provided 5 TCA youth ages 14-17 the opportunity to participate in the Regional Summer Youth Employment Program. The 4 week program began July 5th. Participants were provided wages and a stipend for their hours of service.
- Kent County began outreach and support for The Maryland SUN Bucks Program that helps families with school-aged children who receive free or reduced-price meals buy groceries during the summer break when school meals are unavailable. Building on the former Summer SNAP program, Maryland SUN Bucks will help 543,000 children across the state who receive free and reduced-priced meals. Families who qualify for the Maryland SUN Bucks program will receive \$40 for June, July, and August (a total of \$120) for each eligible student.

Child Support Administration

The Kent County Office of Child Support Administration is committed to the philosophy that all children in the State of Maryland deserve emotional and financial support from both parents to enable them to mature into healthy and productive citizens.

The Child Support Administration Office provides assistance to custodial and non-custodial parents in the pursuit of child support services. The office can assist with the establishment of paternity via an affidavit of parentage or court order and by providing genetic testing services, establishing an order for support and health insurance, collection of arrears and modification of an existing order(s) and by assisting non-custodial parents to secure employment.

Federal Fiscal Year 2024 Accomplishments Include:

- Collected and distributed nearly \$1.5 million in current support and payments towards arrears to families and children.
- Collected 55.26% of current child support due.
- Collected payments in 68.9% of the cases where individuals fell behind in their obligations.
- Successfully reached and exceeded our Federal Performance Goal in the area of Paternity Establishment.
- Referred 14 non-custodial parents to our regional employment and training, RISE Program, to assist in obtaining and maintaining employment.



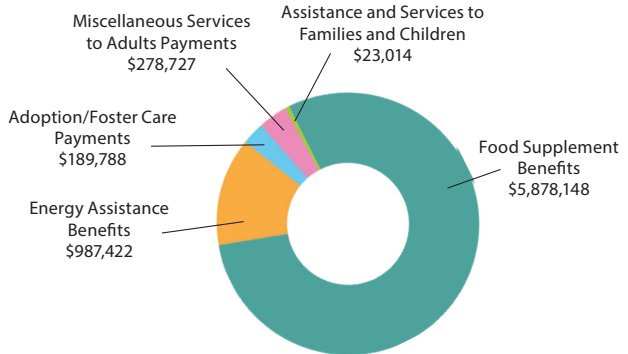
Administrative Division

The Administrative Division provides a wide variety of support to the employees of Kent County Department of Social Services which enables them to provide quality services to customers. Support functions provided by this division include human resources, budget management, accounting operations, procurement/contract management, information technology and communications, fleet operations, inventory and supply management, mail services, facilities and lease management and security services.

Benefits to Customers

Kent County Department of Social Services distributed more than \$7 million in benefits to families and children for fiscal year 2023 from July 2023 to June 2024.

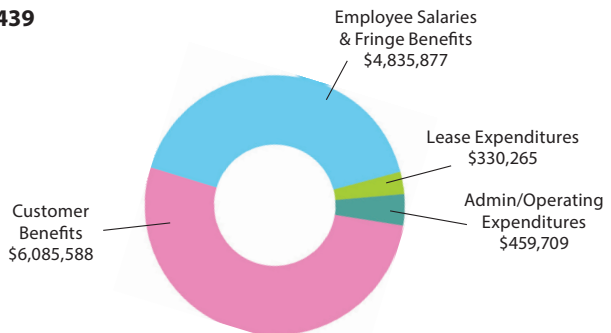
TOTAL \$7,357,100



Operating Budget

Kent County Department of Social Service's overall expended budget of nearly \$12 million included \$4.835.877 in salary & fringe benefits, \$459,709 in administrative operating costs, and \$330,265 in lease costs.

TOTAL \$11,711,439





Traye Landon
Kent County

County Department
Social Services

CREAM TEAM



Maryland

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