

KENT COUNTY

Department of Social Services

2025 ANNUAL REPORT



Maryland

Department of Human Services

KENT COUNTY

Department of Social Services



Dear Community Partners, Advisory Board Members, and Staff,

I am pleased to share that we have entered a new chapter of growth and resilience. As we reflect on our progress, we are especially grateful for the unwavering support of our community partners, whose collaboration was instrumental in our successes over the past year.

We have officially finalized our updated Strategic Plan, a roadmap designed to deepen the impact of our shared work. This vision is supported by our recent success in overcoming legislative hurdles that posed challenges to our service delivery; through strategic advocacy, we ensured our customers' needs remained the priority. To support this forward momentum, we have celebrated several internal promotions, placing proven leaders in key roles to better facilitate our collaborative efforts.

Sustaining Vital Support

A cornerstone of our recent operational success has been the successful implementation of our second year of SNAP benefits. Navigating the transition into this second year required meticulous planning and a deep commitment to continuity. By streamlining our renewal processes and enhancing our outreach, we have successfully maintained a steady lifeline for hundreds of families in our community, ensuring that food security remains a foundation rather than a variable for those we serve.

Strengthening Our Foundation

We are also investing heavily in the systems and skills that define the customer experience:

- **System Upgrades:** Our team has successfully transitioned to an upgraded CRM system, improving data accuracy and customer satisfaction.
- **Professional Development:** Our staff have completed comprehensive safety and customer service trainings to ensure every interaction is secure and supportive.
- **Actionable Feedback:** We have launched a new customer survey that will provide the insights necessary to refine our programs in real-time.

Ultimately, these improvements are aimed at one goal: increasing the cohesiveness between our agency and your vital organizations. When our internal systems are solid and our partnership is seamless, we create a more effective safety net for those we serve.

Thank you for your continued trust and dedication to our collective mission—we look forward to reaching new milestones together.

With gratitude,

Shelly Neal-Edwards, LCSW-C, Director

Child and Adult Services Division

The Services Division operates through a family-centered, strengths-based approach. By recognizing the unique culture and traditions of Kent County, we collaborate with community partners to ensure the safety, permanency, and well-being of our most vulnerable citizens.

Child Protective Services & Investigations (FY25)

Our investigative team balances immediate safety needs with long-term family stability.

- Investigations: Conducted 55 investigations into child abuse and neglect (28 Investigative Responses; 27 Alternative Responses).
- Family Meetings: Facilitated 19 Family Team Decision Making (FTDM) and Facilitated Family Meetings (FFM). These sessions included 19 parents, 38 kin/fictive kin, 36 professionals and 11 youth, prioritizing kinship placements and keeping children in their parents' care whenever safely possible.
- Community Education: Provided Mandated Reporter training to multiple community partners to strengthen our local safety net.

Family Preservation & In-Home Services

We have consolidated our In-Home programs to provide a spectrum of support tailored to the specific risks and safety factors within a household.

- Scope of Impact: Served 44 families through various In-Home programs.
- Substance Exposure: Supported 8 families with substance-exposed newborns, focusing on safety assessments and early intervention.
- The START Program: Our Sobriety Treatment and Recovery Team—a collaboration with the Kent County Health Department—served 7 families struggling with parental substance use disorders involving children ages 0–5.
- Kinship Navigator: Assisted 11 families in avoiding out-of-home placements by preserving family ties and coordinating community resources.
- Inter-Agency Support: Completed 16 voluntary assessments to prevent family breakdown and handled 8 service requests from out-of-state jurisdictions, law enforcement, and the courts.

Out-of-Home Placement & Foster Care

When children cannot remain at home, we work to provide a nurturing environment through our network of resource homes.

- Children Served: Provided Out-of-Home Services to 9 children, including 3 in voluntary placements.

- **Foster Resource Development:** Managed 5 Resource Homes and 1 Formal Kinship Home. We actively recruited new parents through PRIDE training and processed 7 new inquiries this year.
- **Permanency & Success:** Celebrated the successful reunification of one youth with their parents.
- **Appreciation & Joy:** Hosted an appreciation event for 7 resource parents and 6 youth in February 2025, and coordinated holiday gift deliveries for 6 youth through our community partners.

Adult Services & Protective Oversight

We provide a lifeline for adults and seniors, offering both case management and protective interventions.

- **Social Services to Adults (SSTA):**
 - 14 adults through intensive case management and 25 via information and referrals.
 - Provided In-Home Aide Services (IHAS) to 12 customers to support independent living.
- **Adult Protective Services (APS):**
 - Completed 33 investigations into adult welfare and maintained 13 continuing cases.
 - Managed Adult Public Guardianship for 6 individuals at the start of the year, concluding the year with 3 individuals under care.
- **Crisis Intervention:** Provided emergency support to 2 adults in immediate need.



Family Investment Division

The Family Investment Division empowers families to achieve independence through work, personal responsibility, and community engagement. We provide a comprehensive range of family-centered supportive services, including:

- Financial Assistance: Temporary Cash Assistance (TCA), Temporary Disability, and Emergency Assistance for Families with Children.
- Health & Nutrition: Food Supplement Programs (SNAP) and Medical Assistance (Community and Long-Term Care).
- Career Development: Work Readiness, Job Placement, and Youth Employment programs.
- Energy Support: Supplemental home heating assistance through the Office of Home Energy Programs.



FISCAL YEAR 2025 IMPACT REPORT

(JULY 2024 – JUNE 2025)

Food & Nutritional Security

- Food Supplement Program: Distributed an average of \$374,508 monthly (\$4.49 million annually) to support 1,323 households.
- Maryland SUN Bucks: Ensured children had access to healthy food during the summer months when school meals were unavailable. This program provided \$120 in benefits per eligible child (\$40/month for June–August), serving over 600,000 students statewide.

Health & Energy Assistance

- Medical Assistance: Provided monthly support to an average of 99 families and individuals through Community Medical Assistance and Long-Term Care programs.
- Energy Assistance (MEAP/OHEP): Delivered \$341,174 in critical heating and energy assistance to 973 Kent County households.

Youth & Career Empowerment

- Summer Youth Employment: Through our Work Opportunities Program, three TCA youth (ages 14–17) participated in a regional four-week employment program in July, earning wages and stipends while gaining valuable professional experience.

Community & Holiday Outreach

Our division bridges the gap for families during the holiday season through strong community partnerships:

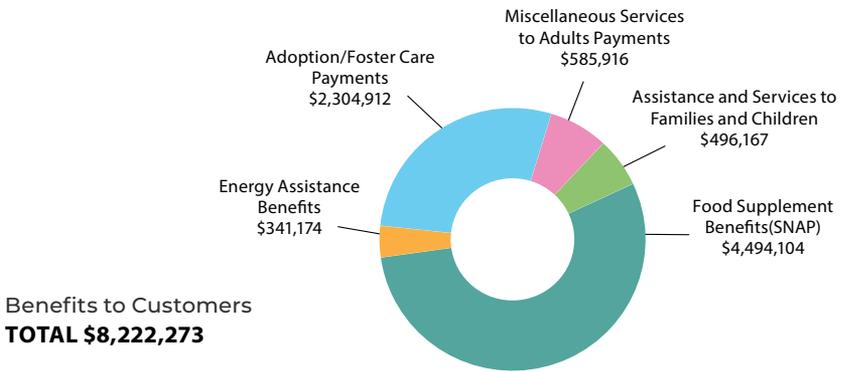
- Adopt-A-Family: Matched 16 families with 15 community sponsors to provide holiday gifts.
- Holiday Referrals: Connected 123 families to the Brighter Christmas Program and 97 individuals to the Lions Club Christmas Basket Program.
- Kent County Elks: Facilitated the distribution of 20 Christmas Dinner boxes to local families in need.

Administrative Division

The Administration Division provides the essential infrastructure and support required for Kent County Department of Social Services employees to deliver high-quality service to the community. By managing the agency’s internal operations, this division ensures that frontline staff can focus entirely on their mission.

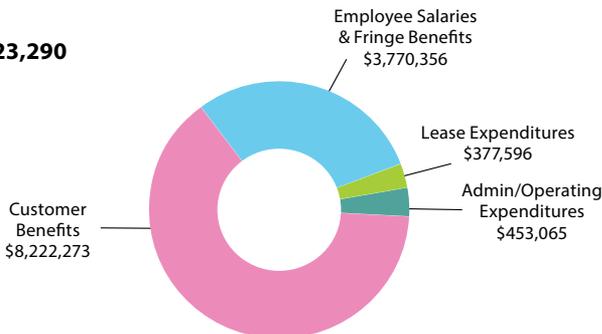
Key support functions include:

- Operations & Finance: Budget management, accounting, procurement, and contract management.
- Personnel & Tech: Human resources, information technology, and communications.
- Logistics & Facilities: Fleet operations, inventory and supply management, mail services, security, and lease/facility oversight.



*The efficiency of these administrative functions translates directly into community support. In Fiscal Year 2025 (July 2024 – June 2025), the Kent County Department of Social Services successfully distributed over **\$8 million** in benefits to local families and children.*

Spending **TOTAL \$12,823,290**





The Kent County Office of Child Support Administration

The Kent County Office of Child Support Administration operates on a fundamental belief: every child in Maryland deserves the emotional and financial backing of both parents to grow into a healthy, productive citizen. This year, we are proud to join our partners across the country in celebrating the 50th anniversary of the national Child Support Program, honoring five decades of strengthening families and securing the futures of our children.

We serve as a dedicated resource for both custodial and non-custodial parents. Our office streamlines the child support process by offering a comprehensive suite of services, including:

- **Paternity Establishment:** Facilitating affidavits of parentage, court orders, and genetic testing.
- **Order Management:** Establishing formal support and health insurance orders, as well as modifying existing orders to reflect current circumstances.
- **Financial Oversight:** Collecting current support and managing the recovery of arrears (past-due payments).
- **Employment Assistance:** Helping non-custodial parents secure stable legal employment to meet their obligations.

Federal Fiscal Year 2025 Accomplishments

In the past fiscal year, our office has made significant strides in securing the futures of local children:

METRIC	ACHIEVEMENT
Total Funds	Distributed Collected and distributed nearly \$1.5 million in support and arrears.
Collection Rate	Successfully collected 61.70% of all current child support due.
Arrears Recovery	Secured payments in 65.76% of cases with overdue obligations.
Paternity Goals	Exceeded the Federal Performance Goal for Paternity Establishment.
Workforce Support	Referred 18 parents to the RISE Program for employment and training.



Kent County RISE Program

(Re-Engaging Individuals through Successful Employment)

FY25 Overview

Financial Summary

During the fiscal year 2025, Kent County's RISE Program:

- Total Amount Collected: \$9,100 from participants.

Program Participation and Success Stories

In FY25, the RISE Program proudly served 18 participants. Among them, we witnessed inspiring success stories that highlight the program's impact:

- Employment Achievement: 6 participants are employed. 1 participant has remained employed over 90 days.
- Substance Abuse and Recovery: 5 or more enrolled participants have reported substance abuse as their leading barrier to employment. However, demonstrating resilience, they agreed to participate in the Child Support Support Court for Kent County

Judicial and Service Changes

The Circuit Court for Kent County kicked off a pilot model, Child Support Support Court (CSSC). This change in the judicial process in Kent County Child Support Cases has increased the volume of referrals as well as court reviews every month. The RISE Program remained steadfast in providing comprehensive, wrap-around services to the Non-Custodial Parent (NCP) population as a team while one case manager retired and a new case manager for Kent County was onboarded. 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 currently has four case managers serving all 9 counties on the eastern shore of MD. The RISE program serves each participant in the county where they reside, no matter the jurisdiction of their child support case.

Partnerships and Community Support

We are fortunate to have robust partnerships with the Kent County Child Support Administration (CSA), the Circuit Court for Kent County, 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 2025 has been a year of immense growth 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 who we serve.

Meet the Team





Our Most Valuable Asset



Maryland

Department of Human Services

KENT COUNTY

Department of Social Services

Office of Child Support Administration

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