**Dukes County Social Services Annual Report FY19**

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Background

In 2015 Dukes County created its Social Services Department (DCSS) in response to the community’s need for assistance with safety net programs, public benefits, and resources for low income Islanders under age 60**.** DCSS connects needy Islanders with a variety of programs and services that support economic self-sufficiency for residents of Martha’s Vineyard. The population that the department serves ranges in age, socio-economic status, and education levels. We provide services in English and other languages, including Portuguese and Spanish.

DCSS Funding

The department is funded by the six towns of Martha’s Vineyard and grants from the Community Action Committee for the Cape and Islands (CACCI), the USDA via DTA’s SNAP Outreach Grant from UMass Medical School, and the South Shore Community Action Committee Fuel Assistance Program. We are staffed by a part-time Social Services Caseworker as well as a part-time Program Assistant.

DCSS Activities

The Social Services department’s primary functions include, but are not limited to, application assistance for the following programs:

* SNAP (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program)
* WIC (Women, infants and children)
* Fuel Assistance
* Utility Assistance
* Emergency and non-emergency food programs
* Social Security Disability Income and Supplemental Security Income
* Department of Transitional Assistance cash assistance

The Department provides information and referrals to local and regional agencies that can offer services and resources to complete addressing the needs of every client and household that we serve. DCSS facilitates applications and referrals for childcare subsidy programs including Bailey Boyd and voucher programs, emergency housing and rental assistance, Cape Cod Times Needy Fund, and unemployment insurance.

Clients receive application assistance for outside agencies that address housing and homelessness and are advised of their options as to what is available to them in terms of rental assistance, housing search assistance and support, homeless shelters and programs available as well as resources that can support presently homeless individuals. DCSS works closely with the County’s Homelessness Prevention Program, the Houses of Grace, and the Warming Shelter.

Information and referrals are made to agencies like the Housing Assistance Corporation, Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission, the Cape Cod Organization for the Rights of the Disabled (CORD), and Community Action Committee for the Cape and Islands (CACCI). Locally, the department collaborates with organizations ranging from Elder Services, Martha’s Vineyard Hospital, Martha’s Vineyard Community Services, The Resource Institute, Salvation Army, The Clergy Fund, Vineyard Housing Office, the Vineyard Committee on Hunger, Vineyard Health Care Access Program, and many additional agencies on the island.

Local and regional agencies refer their clients to the Social Services Department as a valuable and helpful resource. **The outcome of this collaboration is that clients receive complete wrap around services in a multitude of areas.**

The Department sponsors in collaboration with CACCI the Volunteer Income Tax Assistance Program which is an island wide**, free tax preparation program,** geared towards households under the age of 65 from January through April.

**APPLICATIONS**

Applications submitted in FY19 for state and federal assistance on behalf of individuals and families who are Island residents.

In FY19 DCSS submitted:

* **120** SNAP applications on behalf of **144** individuals
* Fuel Assistance applications on behalf of **77** individuals
* **9**  Social Security Disability Applications
* **6** Cash Assistance applications for **17** individuals

DCSS is a SNAP Outreach Partner via our contract with the Commonwealth Medicine SNAP Unit at the University of Massachusetts Medical School. We participate in trainings and receive regular updates to stay current on changes to SNAP and related programs. The County also hosts an annual site review to ensure we are meeting our program goals and objectives. Sarah Kuh is an Island representative to the Department of Transitional Assistance Cape and Islands Advisory Board.

**ASSISTANCE**

Assistance includes information, referral, follow-up and advocacy for social services related to client self-sufficiency.

Proposed Program Expansion

We currently have grant funding for a 19-hour/week position. The demand from the community for our services exceeds what we can provide in this part-time capacity and clients may have to wait to get the assistance they need. The granting organizations do see the need for the expanded hours and are willing to increase their funding. Additional funding is however needed to cover the benefit package of an employee over 20 hours per week.

We would like to offer additional hours of service to the clients as well as provide additional services with the goal of moving clients beyond public benefits and well fair and towards economic self-sufficiency, when possible and appropriate. These enhanced services include job training, mentoring/coaching for low-income individuals and families, and related life-skills development to create economic independence.

revention (Karen)

1. Warming Center (Rebecca)
* FA training September