

**Dukes County Social Services Annual Report FY21**

Supervisor: Sarah Kuh, MPH skuh@mvhealthcareaccess.org

Social Services Caseworker: Delilah Meegan socialservices@dukescounty.org

Phone: (508) 696-3844

Physical Address: 9 Airport Road, Edgartown MA

Mailing Address: P.O. Box 190, Edgartown MA 02539

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. The population that the department serves ranges in age, socio-economic status, and education levels. We provide services in English, 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.

DCSS Services

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
* Unemployment, both normal and Pandemic Unemployment
* Emergency and non-emergency food programs
* Social Security Disability Income and Supplemental Security Income
* Department of Transitional Assistance cash assistance for families with children and disabled adults

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.

**COVID Impact**

Our services were impacted by the pandemic in several ways. From the beginning of the pandemic in March 2020 until May 2021, when vaccinations were available, our direct contact with clients was sharply reduced. We shifted to a primarily remote service provision model and conducted interviews and submitted applications with clients mostly by phone. In addition, many of the benefit programs we help people with implemented emergency protections for members, so that we did not have to provide the usual level of support for our clients. Some of our application numbers were lower for FY21 than previously as a result. One area that increased dramatically was assistance with unemployment benefits, which saw a dramatic increase in FY21 due to the much higher number of claimants.

Another area of impact from the pandemic is in the provision of emergency assistance. We were fortunate to be included in the front line public service agencies that received funding to provide emergency assistance to our community. The MV Community Foundation – grant --

**APPLICATIONS**

Applications submitted in FY21 for state and federal assistance on behalf of individuals and families who are Island residents.

In FY21 DCSS submitted:

* **53** SNAP applications on behalf of **76** individuals
* **29** Fuel Assistance applications on behalf of **58** individuals
* **4** Social Security Disability Applications
* **12** Emergency Cash Assistance applications for **18** individuals
* **21** Utility Assistance Applications on behalf of **31** individuals
* **9** Housing Assistance Applications on behalf of **17** individuals
* **16** Unemployment applications were made

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.

SS, SS Disability x 45

DTA (follow up) 124

Gift Cards, Food Assistance : 79 Food, Utilities: 21

Housing/Homeless Assistance x 84

Unemployment x 190