2011

Suffolk County Department of Social Services Annual Report

"The legitimate object of government is to do for a community of people whatever they need to have done, but cannot do at all or cannot so well do for themselves -- in their separate, and individual capacities." – Abraham Lincoln

Commissioner Gregory J. Blass
DSS
12/31/2011

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A Message from the Commissioner…

Dear Reader,

On behalf of everyone at the Department of Social Services, I present this report of our operations for 2011.

We at DSS began 2012 the way we have begun many years in the past: looking behind with much gratitude, looking ahead with mixed feelings of optimism and concern, and taking pride in our work, with compassion for those we help each day. DSS performs public service in its purest form, in that our highly capable and dedicated staff are determined to make the world a better place for countless families and individuals who are truly in need. Consider this report a snapshot of the victories and challenges we experienced while working to complete that mission in 2011.

The best news I have to report is that we avoided layoffs as proposed in the 2012 county operating budget. Almost 300 positions, vacant and filled, were slated for elimination in this department alone. The County Legislature heard the series of urgent reports that we gave to illustrate how the department would suffer if this (or any) number of our workers were let go. Soon after, the Legislature adopted a budget that contained 88 layoffs. Fortunately, none of these were in DSS.

The downside of this is that the 2012 Operating Budget is for only six months, instead of the usual twelve, unlike any other county operating budget anywhere else in this state. I don't need to tell you how traumatic layoffs would be to our already overwhelmed work areas. We are going to do our best to accomplish the same goal as before and spare this department and our clients a truly devastating circumstance. We are grateful that County Executive Steve Bellone decided not to proceed with most of the proposed DSS layoffs for 2012.

While much of this report relates to numbers, statistics, trends and other hard data related to our services and programs, what is not directly stated on these pages speaks to the real spirit of compassion that underlies the work of this department. I ask that while you examine the graphs and figures, you consider that this department and its workers are certainly blessed with usefulness simply because we have helped to make this world a better place for so many people who have nowhere else to turn.

Sincerely,

Gregory J. Blass
Commissioner, Department of Social Services

Department Overview

What We Do

The Department of Social Services (DSS) enriches the quality of life for Suffolk County residents who find themselves in need by providing child support enforcement services, food stamps, temporary financial, housing, medical and home energy assistance, as well as protective and preventive services for vulnerable children and adults.

Why We Do It

The goals of the Department are:

1) to provide applicants and clients with the tools, services, and opportunities necessary to enable self-sufficiency, encourage personal responsibility, and ultimately foster independence, and

2) to preserve and strengthen the families of Suffolk County.

Client Benefits Administration (CBA) Division Overview

What We Do

The mission of Client Benefits Administration (CBA) is to provide financial assistance and service-related programs to programmatically eligible individuals and families. Through these services and programs, clients are encouraged to become independent and self-supporting. Since cash assistance to recipients is now time limited, many transitional programs address employment barriers and ease recipients into self-sufficiency.

CBA provides services to economically disadvantaged individuals, many of whom are medically and/or mentally impaired and face other barriers to self-sufficiency. Each case disposition has become more involved for Client Benefits examiners, as they also perform separate determinations on these cases for other programs such as Food Stamps, Medicaid Assistance and Child Care. Applications that are determined ineligible after extensive screening are not reflected in caseload reporting.

How We Do It

A. Temporary Assistance -- Temporary Assistance provides allowances to recipients for shelter, heating fuel, electricity and other basic needs. Recipients' needs are met through cash assistance or restricted payments. In addition, Temporary Assistance provides emergency or diversion benefits to individuals who do not need ongoing assistance, but whose needs can be met through a one-time benefit. By September 2011, the Temporary Assistance caseload in Suffolk County was 8,892, an increase from the September 2010 caseload of 8,184 representing an 8.7% increase.

B. Food Stamps -- Food Stamps provide a monthly benefit to supplement an individual's or family's food needs. For many, the Food Stamp Program is a transitional program, providing temporary support as clients shift from temporary assistance to employment and self-sufficiency.

   The Food Stamp caseload has significantly increased over the last several years, due to the NYS Food Stamp Initiative reducing eligibility criteria and increasing outreach efforts, especially to those exhausting their Unemployment Benefits (i.e. the unemployed and those underemployed), By the end of September 2011, Suffolk County's Food Stamp caseload was 51,070 - a 21.8% increase over the 41,928 food stamp cases open in September 2010.

   Since Food Stamps are 100% federally funded, these benefits have a positive impact on the local economy.

C. Home Energy Assistance Program (HEAP) -- The HEAP Program provides heating and domestic energy assistance to Temporary Assistance recipients, Food Stamp recipients, low-income families and elderly residents. The program also

allows for repair or replacement of essential heating equipment for homeowners. As of March 2011, HEAP has processed 43,013 applications, as compared to 39,857 for March 2010, which represents an 8.1% increase. In order to handle this increase, DSS Policy and Procedure staff cross-trained permanent center examiner staff on processing HEAP benefits. This initiative was imperative since temporary staff that process HEAP applications are prohibited from working overtime. The 2011-2012 HEAP season opened on 11/16/11, two weeks later than normal, due to Federal fiscal constraints.

D. Child Care Services -- Temporary Assistance recipients and low-income families are eligible to receive childcare subsidies funded through the NYS Child Care Block Grant (CCBG). This funding allows these individuals to secure affordable childcare benefits while they are employed and/or participating in TA training or other programs aimed at self-sufficiency. During the first six months of 2010, prior to opening the waiting list, there was a monthly average of 4,333 children receiving childcare subsidies. By ending the waiting list system, we were able to provide childcare subsidies to many more working families. However, if program growth increases, it is likely that DSS will have to lower the income eligibility guideline.

E. Fair Hearings -- The Fair Hearing process establishes the rights and obligations of applicants, recipients and the Social Services Agency by conducting a review of actions or determinations affecting benefits under Temporary Assistance, Food Stamps and Medicaid programs. Department representatives defend actions taken on Temporary Assistance, Food Stamp, Medicaid, Child Care, and HEAP cases before NYS Administrative Law Judges. During the first 9 months of 2011, the Fair Hearings Unit conducted 6,171 hearings with an 84% success rate.

F. Employment Programs -- The mission of the Client Benefits Employment Programs is to assist clients who are applying for or receiving assistance with becoming independent and self-sufficient. Since Welfare Reform in 1996, the Department has significantly reduced the number of individuals and families receiving assistance. Although Temporary Assistance and Safety Net caseloads significantly decreased following Welfare Reform, we are experiencing a steady caseload increase resulting from the current economic downturn. In addition, the Department continues to serve numerous individuals with medical, psychiatric and/or substance abuse related impairments. These individuals are particularly challenging to assist when it comes to increasing their self-sufficiency.

The primary objective of the Employment Programs is to successfully reach the fifty percent (50%) TANF/SN-MOE participation rate threshold set by the US and State governments. During the last quarter of the Federal Fiscal Year 2010–2011, Suffolk County averaged a combined TANF/SN-MOE participation rate of 36.8%. This rate, when combined with the anticipated 16% caseload reduction credit for Federal Fiscal Year 2010-2011, has allowed Suffolk to achieve the

federally mandated participation rate of 50% thus far. Suffolk's participation rate was ranked 4th of the 58 districts during the last quarter of 2011.

G. Disabled Client Assistance Program (DCAP) -- DCAP staff assists Temporary Assistance clients who have long-term disabilities with applying for Supplemental Security Income (SSI) benefits. The Unit advocates for disabled clients, arranges for and provides medical evaluations to substantiate the claims, and assists individuals through the SSI application and appeals process. During the first 9 months of 2011, 169 Safety Net and 54 TANF/SN MOE recipients were awarded SSI benefits, which resulted in a gross cost avoidance of $3.1 million.

H. Compliance Unit -- Through October 2011, the Compliance Unit processed an average of 105 FA/SN MOE eligibility denials per month based on non-compliance with employment program requirements. In addition, the Compliance Unit is responsible for processing active cases that are in noncompliance with employment program requirements. As of October 2011, the Unit also imposed an average of 201 sanctions upon noncompliant TA recipients.

I. Employability Unit (EMP) -- The EMP staff conducts a comprehensive assessment of all TANF applicants, and schedules any medical, psychiatric and drug/alcohol evaluations that will aid in determining the employability of the individual. Once employability is determined, this unit refers those individuals who are capable of employment to SWEP for work activity assignment.

J. EAC Sanction Intervention Project -- This project, administered by the Education and Assistance Corporation (EAC), provides intensive case management services for TANF/SN MOE individuals under long-term sanctions. Those who are readily employable are provided with bona fide offers of employment. Those who are not employable are referred to community resources in order to address their employment barriers. This initiative supports the Department's ongoing efforts to re-engage non-compliant clients. As a result of these efforts, the following outcomes have been achieved through October 2011:

1) 1,569 sanctioned clients were served

2) 987 sanctions were lifted for participating in employment

3) 267 cases were referred for closing

4) Subsidized Employment Initiatives

Accomplishments/Notable Happenings

A. Employment Training Grants -- Suffolk County Department of Social Services was awarded three 100% federally funded American Rapid Recovery Act (ARRA) subsidized employment-training grants, as follows:

1) Green Jobs Program ($360,139) -- SCDSS entered into contract with the Education and Assistance Corporation (EAC) to provide soft and hard skills training in temporary "green jobs" such as weatherization and environmental conservation to TANF, SN and low-income individuals. EAC, in partnership with the United Way, will provide the training at their Green Academy in Deer Park. EAC will also provide GED and case management services. Upon completion, the participants will work with the Suffolk County Department of Labor to find permanent jobs in the "green" employment sector.

2) Health Care Jobs Program ($126,821) -- The Health Care Jobs training program will provide paid training and work experience to TANF and SN individuals with training or backgrounds in the health care field. Under the terms of this program, Suffolk County Department of Health Services will hire eligible individuals referred by the Department of Labor. These individuals will be placed in temporary positions for up to 18 weeks, during which time they will gain valuable health field experience in the county's health centers. The participants will then work with SCDOL to find permanent positions in the growing health care field.

3) Transitional Jobs Program ($208,265) -- The subsidized Transitional Jobs training program will provide temporary employment and training to TANF, SN and low-income individuals. Under the provisions of this program, the SCDOL will hire individuals for a 13-week period, during which they will work in a supervised, team environment gaining valuable work experience. The basic transitional employment skills they will acquire during this period will provide these individuals with the experience they will need to enter private sector employment.

These three subsidized employment initiatives were extended through June 30, 2013.

B. Employment Participation Rate - During the last quarter of the Federal Fiscal Year 2010–2011, Suffolk County averaged a combined TANF/SN-MOE employment participation rate of 36.8%. This rate, when combined with the anticipated 16% caseload reduction credit for Federal Fiscal Year 2010-2011, has allowed Suffolk to achieve the federally mandated participation rate of 50% thus far. Suffolk's participation rate was ranked 4th of the 58 districts during the last quarter of 2011.

C. The Safety Net Project - The 2011-2012 State Budget increased the local districts' share of Safety Net Assistance from 50% to 71%, while reducing the State's share from 50% to 29%. This cost shift will be offset by the State's plan to reduce the

local district's share of Emergency Assistance for Families and Family Assistance costs from 25% to 0%. The purpose of this initiative was to aggressively examine these caseloads and develop strategies to maximize Federal reimbursement, thereby reducing local expenditures.

Challenges

A. Compliance with Stipulation Order of Settlement -- In 2007, the National Center for Law and Economic Justice and the Empire Justice Center (EJC) filed a lawsuit, Maryann C. vs. Janet DeMarzo as Commissioner, to challenge the failure of the Suffolk County Department of Social Services (SCDSS) to timely process applications for food stamps and Medicaid. The Plaintiffs and the Department reached an agreement on how to settle the case for the class and the Stipulation enumerating this agreement was signed and so ordered on June 8, 2008.

As a result of this agreement, the Department is obligated to perform/provide the following for/to Plaintiffs:

- Timely processing of Food Stamps and Medicaid applications;
- Timely processing of Combined applications;
- Provide monthly monitoring reports specifically enumerated in Order;
- Quarterly Sampling and reporting of Food Stamps, Medicaid and Combined applications (100 records of each type);
- Immediate corrective action on those cases that still require processing and have been reported as not being timely processed; and
- Case files, as requested.

Plaintiffs assert that Defendant remains out of compliance with the Stipulation and Order of Settlement and have filed motions in US District Court for contempt and extension of the jurisdiction of the Court.

B. Change in Reimbursement Rate -- The 2011-2012 State Budget increased the local districts' share of Safety Net Assistance from 50% to 71%, while reducing the State's share from 50% to 29%. This cost shift will be offset by the State's plan to reduce the local district's share of Emergency Assistance for Families and Family Assistance costs from 25% to 0%. Announced in April 2011, this change was retroactive to January 1, 2011. The long-term, negative implications of the State reducing its fiscal commitment to Safety Net Assistance are significant, since the Safety Net population is increasing at a faster rate than the TANF population, as families exceed the TANF 5-year limit and as the number of childless adults on assistance increases. In light of this growth coupled with the reduction in the State reimbursement for these cases, Client Benefits implemented the Safety Net Project. The purpose of this initiative was to aggressively examine these caseloads and develop strategies to maximize Federal reimbursement, thereby reducing local expenditures.

C. Child Care Services -- Suffolk County receives an annual allocation under the Child Care Block Grant from New York State. For the State fiscal year 2010 (4/1/10-3/31/11), Suffolk County received $32.3 million. For the State fiscal year 2011 (4/1/1-3/31/12), Suffolk County received $29.9 million. This reduction in funding resulted in raising parent contributions to care, lowering income guidelines as well as discontinuing childcare assistance cases. The instability of childcare funding impacts not only low income families but also local child care providers. In turn, this $2.4 million reduction in State funding negatively affects Suffolk County's economy.

D. myBenefits -- The Department successfully implemented the use of myBenefits, which provides a single secure internet portal for Suffolk County residents to apply for Food Stamps online. The Food Stamp e-application is available to anyone with internet access. Applicants can log on at home, in a library or through a non-profit community agency to submit an electronic application directly to one of our Client Benefit Centers.

   Since May of 2011, the Department has received record numbers of FS applications: 2,082 in May, 2,346 in June, 2,359 in July, 2,690 in August and 2,724 in September. Electronic applications appear to be a significant factor in this increase, with 637 e-apps received in May, 743 in June, 799 in July, 916 in August, and 951 in September. The growth in electronic applications from May 2011 to September 2011 is 49.3%.

E. Casework Overload - Managing continuous increases in applications and caseloads has been an ongoing challenge for the division. Over the past 24 months, applications and caseloads for all programs have increased dramatically. Comparing September 2011 figures against September 2009 figures, it is evident that Suffolk has witnessed unprecedented growth – particularly since post welfare-reform efforts were put in place. By September 2011, the Temporary Assistance caseload in Suffolk County was 8,892, representing 7.5% increase from September 2010 caseload of 8,277 (according to official caseload report MR10077). The combined Family Assistance and Safety Net application rate increased by 11.8% and caseloads increased by 39.7%. See Appendix A for details, specifically regarding Family Assistance.

   During the 3rd quarter of 2011, there was an average of 5,240 children receiving childcare subsidies, which represents an increase of 22%. By opening up the waiting list, we were able to provide childcare subsidies to many more working families.

   As of March 2011, HEAP has processed 43,013 applications, as compared to 39,857 for March 2010, which represents an 8.1% increase.

   The Food Stamp application rate increased by 33% from 2,068 received during September 2009 to 2,741 received in September 2011. Food Stamp caseloads

have gone up 52.6% since September 2009. Since May of 2011, the number of Food Stamps applications has continued to climb, reaching record highs: 2,082 in May, 2,346 in June, 2,359 in July, 2,690 in August and 2,724 in September. Electronic applications appear to be a significant factor in this more recent increase, with 637 e-apps received in May, 743 in June, 799 in July, 916 in August, and 951 in September. The growth in Electronic applications from May 2011 to September 2011 is 49.3%. All FS caseload statistics are according to NY State WMS Report WINR1240.

F. Increase In Basic Allowance -- In 2009, Chapter 57 of the Laws of 2009 amended Section 131-A of the Social Services Law to increase the TA standards of need and basic allowance. On July 1, 2010, the TA basic allowance increased by 10%. This basic allowance was supposed to increase again on July 1, 2011; however, the 2011-2012 State budget delayed the third year of the TA grant increase until July 2012. This increase will raise the TA standard of need and result in initial and continuing eligibility for additional persons applying for or in receipt of TA, and may affect specialized budgeting procedures. In addition, the increase will result in a reduction in Food Stamp (FS) benefits for TA households. The amount by which districts will be reimbursed for the local share of the additional costs to provide the grant increase will be 50% of the difference for Federally Non-Participating (FNP) cases and 25% of the difference for Federally Participating (FP) cases, capped at the size of each case's budget deficit. Unlike the 2010 increase, which was absorbed by the State, the 2012 increase will financially impact the local districts.

G. HEAP Online Applications -- In 2012, the Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance (OTDA) will allow individuals to apply for HEAP online. Suffolk County's Food Stamp application rate increased by approximately 28% when OTDA implemented the electronic filing process; this was a historic rise. We anticipate a similar increase in the HEAP application rate. The electronic filing of HEAP applications coupled with rising fuel prices will increase local expenditures.

H. Staffing -- As a result of the economic downturn, the Client Benefits Division is responding to increased requests for assistance as it struggles to meet State and Federal mandates and provide benefits to those qualifying. Ongoing staffing shortages are making it increasingly difficult to manage the high caseloads and ensure that applicants'/recipients' needs are met expeditiously.

I. Participation Rate Requirement -- The Deficit Reduction Act of 2005, which reauthorized Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF), enforces the Welfare-to-Work mandate, which requires 50% of Family Assistance (FA) and Safety Net-Family Assistance (SN-FA) families to participate in a countable work activity. Failure to achieve this participation rate percentage may subject Suffolk County to a Federal fiscal penalty. In light of the poor economic conditions, the Department faces significant challenges in creating new and innovative

employment opportunities that serve the complex needs of our TANF population in order to meet this mandate.

J. Child Care Council's Supportive Services Contract - $126,937 -- The Client Benefits Division contracts with the Child Care Council of Suffolk to be stationed at the Department of Labor to provide TA recipients with information, referrals and assistance with DSS required documentation to obtain authorized child care services. These services ensure that Temporary Assistance families lacking childcare are not impeded in their participation of work activities or employment. This initiative is just one of the reasons Suffolk's participation rate was ranked 4th of the 58 districts during the last quarter of 2011.

The Child Care Council of Suffolk has lost a $126 thousand grant to provide childcare outreach services in conjunction with our employment programs. The resource facilitated the identification and procurement of childcare services to assist public assistance recipients in participating in employment activities. The program was co-located at the Department of Labor to reduce the delays in finding and obtaining childcare. Clients will now have to seek out and secure their own childcare, delaying their participation in employment activities.

Medicaid Services Division Overview

What We Do

It is the mission of the Medicaid Services Division to determine applicants' eligibility regarding Medicaid programs, and to ensure that all clients are given whatever benefits they are entitled to in a timely manner.

How We Do It

It is important to note that there is no single Medicaid program. Traditional Medicaid has been transformed over the past several years into an umbrella program, encompassing a dozen or more different health insurance programs. All of these programs have different access points, rules, income and resource standards, timeframes, mandates, verification requirements, retroactive payment periods and each provides different levels and types of care. Below are a few of the programs and services utilized to make sure that all eligible individuals receive Medicaid.

A. Medicaid Provider Fraud Project -- In 2006, DSS began the implementation of the Medicaid Provider Fraud, Waste and Abuse Demonstration Project. An Investigative Auditor is responsible for overseeing and coordinating the efforts of all the agencies involved, and is the liaison to the OMIG (Office of the Medicaid Inspector General), several contracted agencies, the NYS Department of Health (DOH) and the eleven other demo counties. In addition, the Department has an investigative staff working in connection with the Special Investigations Unit to pursue Medicaid recipient fraud. Currently, the OMIG has only authorized pharmacy, durable medical equipment and transportation service provider types for audit. We have been submitting provider audit requests since 2008 and have recommended a total of 125 providers for audit targets. There are 32 providers in various stages of the audit process, 12 audits have been completed and the audited Medicaid providers have paid $187,797 in gross recoveries to the OMIG.

B. Managed Care -- The number of Medicaid clients enrolled in managed care plans climbed by 55% (35,858 individuals) from January 2009 to October 2011. As managed care exemptions and exclusions are phased out, most Medicaid recipients will be enrolled in a managed care program.

C. Non-Emergency Medical Transportation -- Medicaid is required to provide transportation to medical appointments and services. This results in the authorization of several hundred thousand trips a year. In 2010, an RFP was awarded to Servisair, which is now serving as Suffolk County's transportation broker. The goal of the broker is to enhance transportation services to the clients and reduce the overall Medicaid transportation cost. Cost savings will result from the greater efficiencies and coordination of services made possible by the utilization of a broker's services.

The Division's primary concern in 2012 will be to maintain the success achieved in 2011 regarding compliance with mandated timeframes. The statuary timeframes for processing Medicaid applications are 30 days for children and pregnant women, and 45 days for adults. A concurrent concern and focus will be the requirement to re-determine the eligibility of every Medicaid case every year, as well as process the case changes that occur during the year. Additional barriers and obstacles must be overcome in order for the Department to be able to reach compliance with the processing time standards, both on an overall average and an individual application basis.

Accomplishments/Notable Happenings

A. Timeframe and Lawsuit Compliance -- In 2009, the County negotiated the settlement of a lawsuit regarding the timely processing of Medicaid applications. Essentially the settlement requires that the County:

   1) Process all Medicaid applications within the number of days the law requires and provide documentation of the County's compliance to the plaintiffs on a regular basis.

   2) Implement a process to expedite applications for people who demonstrate that they have emergency medical needs.

   The Medicaid Division achieved an average processing time of 29 days in 2011, the lowest processing time ever achieved by Medicaid. This compares to an average processing time of 38 days in 2010, 46 days in 2009, 63 days in 2008 and 83 days in 2007. Another way to look at this improvement is to compare the number of applications unprocessed at the end of the month. In September 2007, there were 7,954 unprocessed applications at the end of the month. By March 2009, there were 5,252 unprocessed applications, and by March 2011, there were 2,510. Achieving such a low number of applications still being processed is even more remarkable considering the record high of 7,039 applications received in March.

   As part of the lawsuit stipulation, we are required to provide quarterly samples to the plaintiffs. Medicaid achieved 100% compliance in the most recent (September) quarterly sample. Maintaining this level will require the appropriate level of staffing to handle the anticipated workload increase.

B. Cost Avoidance -- Third Party Health Insurance (TPHI) Unit has been successful in ensuring that commercial insurance carriers are billed before Medicaid pays a medical bill. The TPHI Unit is now tied directly into the State TPHI system, thereby allowing the State to update recipient insurance information. This should increase the number of recipients with Third Party Health Insurance information. From 2008 to 2010 the amount of cost avoidance that was shifted to private

insurance jumped by 35%, from $19.5M to $26.5M. The cost avoidance total for the first four months of 2011 is $7.7M.

C. Processing Time Reduction – In 2011, the Medicaid Division achieved an average processing time of 29 days for client applications. This is the lowest processing time ever achieved by Medicaid. This compares to an average processing time of 38 days in 2010, 46 days in 2009, 63 days in 2008 and 83 days in 2007.

Challenges

A. State Cap on County Contribution to Medicaid -- In 2005, the State passed legislation capping the amount that the counties are required to contribute towards the cost of Medicaid. The Cap, which limited county exposure, becomes more critical during times of rapidly increasing expenditures. The cap amount is based on the net 2005 County share and can only increase by a maximum of 3% each year over the 2005 base year amount. As part of the cap, all the costs the County incurs in administering the Medicaid program are 100% reimbursed by New York State.

The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) reduced Suffolk's share of the Medicaid costs through the end of June 2011 by increasing the federal share of the Medicaid costs. The enhanced Federal Medicaid Assistance Percentages (FMAP) expired on June 30, 2011, when the federal reimbursement reverted from 61.59% to the normal 50%.

B. State Mandated Changes to Medicaid Eligibility Process -- New York State has implemented major changes to Medicaid eligibility that will result in increases in the application rate as well as in the percentage of applicants found eligible.

The major changes to Medicaid eligibility are:

1) Elimination of the face-to-face interview requirement for Medicaid and Family Health Plus -This change was effective April 1, 2010. Medicaid experienced an increase of 863 applications per month for the 12-month period subsequent to the change, compared to the 12 preceding months. Medicaid separate determinations are now required for all Temporary Assistance applicants who fail to appear for their interview. Prior to the new requirement, Medicaid averaged 142 referrals per month. In the first half of 2011, this number increased to an average of 768 applications per month.

2) New citizenship documentation requirements - Section 211 of the Children's Health Insurance Program Reauthorization Act (CHIPRA) is another federal regulation enacted to simplify the application process and reduce the ranks of the uninsured. It is expected that this will increase the number of people eligible for Medicaid in Suffolk.

3) The Medicare Improvement for Patients and Providers Act of 2008 (MIPPA) - The MIPPA program, which was implemented last year, generated an additional 4,859 Medicaid applications in 2010 and has had a substantial impact on the processing workload. This Act requires that an application for the Federal Low Income Subsidy (LIS) also be considered an application for the Medicare Savings Program (MSP).

4) Chapter 58 of the Laws of 2010 expanded attestation of income resources and residence at renewal for Medicaid recipients who are receiving community coverage with community-based long-term care - This change in regulation further simplifies the documentation requirements for Medicaid and FHP applicants.

C. Increase in Applications/Recipients -- The rapidly and continuously increasing number of applications submitted each month that need to be processed, and the resulting huge increases in the number of people receiving Medicaid, are the primary issues that need to be addressed. The monthly average of applications submitted increased by 50% since 2008; the 2011 average is 6,200 applications per month. As of the end of October 2011, there were 179,806 Suffolk County residents receiving Medicaid Services, or about 12% of the entire Suffolk County population. This number does not include the 44,982 youth enrolled in Child Health Plus. We anticipate that we will continue to experience sustained growth in the application rate during 2011 and 2012, and that the changes in eligibility enacted into law by New York State will exacerbate these trends. See Appendix A for details.

D. Increase in Caseloads for Community Undercare/Recertifications -- Over the past several years, the Medicaid Division has concentrated its efforts and staffing resources on reducing the initial eligibility timeframes. This emphasis on eligibility, when combined with the tremendous increase in the number of people on Medicaid, resulted in an increase in 2009 to an unmanageable caseload level of 2,400 cases per Examiner I. The Department added staff that reduced recertification caseloads to 1,350 cases per examiner, but caseloads will continue to grow due to increases in the application rate and opening rate, as well as the continued increases in the numbers of cases that remain open at recertification.

The regulatory changes that make more people eligible for Medicaid caused an explosive increase in applications and a corresponding increase in eligible applicants. The community Medicaid caseload has grown by 28,403 cases since January 1, 2009. In January 2009, 3,981 renewal applications were mailed, compared to the latest mailing of 6,290 renewals, a 58% increase. The NYS Enrollment Center assumed responsibility for about 60% of MA's recertification caseload in mid- 2011, but they were unable to handle the volume and we resumed that function in November.

E. Lack of Overtime for Chronic Care Application and Recertification Processing -- Determining eligibility for Chronic Care (nursing home) applicants requires an intensive 5-year review of applicants' financial records. Increased training, workflow initiatives and reallocation of staff have not significantly reduced the backlog. During the three-month period when overtime was authorized, the backlog of applications was reduced by 20%. Reinstating overtime for experienced and productive staff is a priority in 2012, to reduce the chronic care application timelines.

   Overtime will also be needed in the first half of 2012 to address the mass re-budgeting of Chronic Care cases to update the budgets with the Social Security and COLA increases. These budgets must be updated in a timely manner as regulations prohibit going back more than six months to recoup increases in clients' NAMI (net available monthly income). Failure to process these changes timely has been the subject of a NYS audit that identified loss in revenue.

F. Caseload Increase for Medical Services Bureau Home Care Assessments/Shortage of Registered Nurses -- The home care workload has experienced double-digit caseload growth. In the last year and a half (2009 vs. 2011 average), the home care caseload has grown by 22%. As part of the Medicaid Redesign Team's recommendations, changes to several of the Medical Services Bureau's home care programs necessitate that non-dual eligible individuals who are enrolled in Medicaid managed care programs be transitioned to managed care plans as the services move from a fee-for-service benefit to an in-plan benefit. Several of the Medicaid home care programs, including the Consumer Directed Personal Assistance Program (CDPAP), Shared Aide (SA), and Geographic Clustering have helped eliminate some of the problems experienced in previous years in securing home care caseload coverage. However, the shortage of Registered Nurses is still a major concern. State mandates continue to increase local district responsibility, while our professional nursing staff has experienced a nearly 50% vacancy rate in 2011. Advertisements and continuous recruitment by Civil Service have proven insufficient to fill vacancies, and caseloads are more than 40% higher than the accepted manageable level.

G. Increased Backlog/Strain on Resources -- As part of the CDPAP assessment process, the new regulations require the use of a three-page plan of care, entering into a written agreement between the district and the consumer/designated representative describing the parties' responsibilities, and issuing discrete authorization/re-authorization notices. Prior to the issuance of the regulations, CDPAP was administered under the Personal Care Services regulations; the assessment was conducted utilizing a one-page plan of care which is currently incorporated into the "Q" Continuum System, and the provider agency/fiscal intermediary obtained the consumer agreement. The impact of these additional requirements will increase the amount of time needed for staff to conduct the assessment as well as the resources to process the paperwork.

H. MA/Food Stamp Processing Unit Staffing -- The Medicaid Division is establishing a new unit to perform similar Medicaid/ Food Stamp activities for the SSI population. This will enable staff to be allocated more efficiently and provide improved services. Initially the unit will process Undercare Food Stamps activities, but will expand to eligibility functions in early 2012. This will require additional staffing.

Family and Children's Services Administration (FCSA) Division Overview

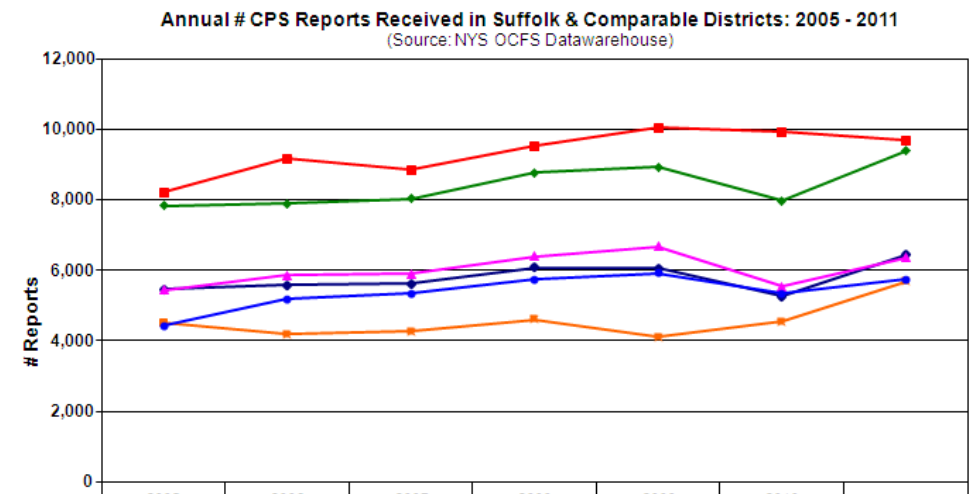
What We Do

Through Family and Children's Services Administration (FCSA), the Department is responsible for the investigation of reports of child abuse and neglect and adult protective services. This division also provides foster care and adoptive services and services for preserving, reuniting or rehabilitating families indicated for abuse or neglect.

Accomplishments/Notable Happenings

A. Decline in Child Protective Investigations Intake & Caseloads

The intake of new reports of child abuse and neglect peaked in 2009 at 10,057 and has gradually declined by 1.3% in 2010 and by 2.4% in 2011 to 9,691. Suffolk County's drop in new CPS reports in 2011 is remarkable in that while Suffolk's intake decreased by 2.4%, the intake in the other five large counties in the state increased sharply by 7% in Westchester County to 27% in Nassau. Several of these counties, though, unlike Suffolk, experienced steep declines in 2010. Suffolk County, because of its large population, continues to have the highest intake of new reports of any district in New York State outside of New York City.



	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
Erie	7,842	7,903	8,027	8,762	8,932	7,966	9,382
Monroe	5,458	5,573	5,618	6,081	6,052	5,255	6,443
Nassau	5,449	5,864	5,910	6,404	6,686	5,535	6,366
Onondaga	4,520	4,176	4,270	4,604	4,114	4,549	5,689
Suffolk	8,205	9,174	8,847	9,534	10,057	9,926	9,691
Westchester	4,415	5,188	5,337	5,749	5,913	5,350	5,745

B. Record Low of Children in Foster Care

Children come into foster care for a variety of reasons including illness, death or incarceration of their parents, and as a result of neglectful or abusive family

situations when there is imminent risk of harm. Despite the high intake of new reports of child abuse and neglect, the number of Suffolk County children in foster care has dropped to the lowest level on record. At the end of 2011, there were 630 children in foster care. This is a decrease of 43% from the end of 2002 when the number of children in care peaked at 1,102.

One of the most positive trends and a strong contributing factor to the current decrease in the foster care population is Social Services' improved performance in identifying and placing children with relative caregivers and other non-biological "relative" resources instead of foster care. At the end of 2011 a total of 534 children were in the N-docket custody of relatives/family friends. These relative resources are appropriate and stable placements for children.

C. Increased Adoptions

In 2011, the Child Placement Bureau finalized the adoption of 85 children. This is an increase of 10 children from 2010, representing an increase of 13%. With 85 adoptions, Suffolk County was responsible for 30% of the 285 adoptions for New York State (OCFS) Region V, a region of nine districts including Nassau and Westchester Counties.

D. Enhanced Family Finding

In order to increase permanency for children and further reduce foster care placements and costs, Family and Children's Services has implemented "Enhanced Family Finding." Enhanced Family Finding is a strategy that includes using electronic/computer based strategies for finding extended family members to help children and youth to make permanent family connections. The target population is long staying children in foster care, children aging out of care, youth placed at a distance from family and siblings, and youth without regular, consistent visiting with family. The goal of Family Finding is to develop a network of caring individuals around the child who are committed to decision making, lasting relationships, and permanency. Family Finding is a six step model that involves discovery, engagement, planning, decision making, evaluation, and follow-up supports. Family Finding is not only the right thing to do for our youth, but it will further help reduce foster care placements and costs in Suffolk County.

E. Family Assessment Response

Suffolk County continues to expand the practice of Family Assessment Response [FAR] as an alternate to the traditional CPS investigation. FAR provides for an assessment of a family's needs and strengths rather than an investigation of the allegations in a child abuse and maltreatment report. The expectation of FAR is that families will be more likely to seek necessary help when a less adversarial, less threatening, approach is taken. Only reports that involve clear, imminent

danger to the child or that involve potential criminal charges are put on an "investigations track." Suffolk County started its FAR program in June 2010 and through the end of the first quarter of 2012 has addressed 441 reports of child maltreatment.

FAR has increased access to appropriate services, especially for the basic family needs of food, housing, and utilities. FAR has broadened the involvement of the community in meeting family service needs by more often referring to nontraditional service providers and self-help groups. FAR results in families being served more holistically with referrals to additional community supports that can help lessen stressors and promote family and child well-being. Moreover, significantly fewer Family Court petitions are filed against FAR families and parents served by FAR report being quite positive about the intervention. In 2011, FAR continued working on community outreach developing stronger relationships with schools, private social services agencies and treatment providers.

F. Child Welfare Services and Disproportionality

The Family and Children's Services Division regularly receives report cards from the state that detail Suffolk County's success and that of other counties in achieving key child safety, permanency and wellbeing measures. Included with the state guides are reports on race and ethnicity statistics for children in the child welfare system – statistics that reveal disproportionality within our system. Disproportionate Minority Representation (DMR) occurs when the percent of a particular minority group (racial, ethnic) involved with the child welfare system is significantly higher or lower than that group's percent in the general population.

Similar to many other counties in the state and the state as a whole, the data for Suffolk reveals that there is a disproportionate number of African American youth, and to a lesser degree Hispanic youth, in the child welfare system. Suffolk County's rate of 8.6 black children in care for every white child places the county in what the state defines as a category of "extreme disparity" along with 17 other counties. According to 2009 data, black youth comprise 9.3% of Suffolk County's child population yet 40.6% of children in foster care. When compared to their ratio in the general population and to that of white youth in foster care, there were 8.6 as many black youth in foster care than white youth in 2009.

There is no one single cause of disproportionality. Studies have identified many possibilities such as: the impact of poverty; family distrust of child welfare and cultural misunderstanding within the system; racial bias among CPS reporters; differences in parenting practices; and institutional racism – the combination of policies, practices or procedures embedded in bureaucratic structures that have systematically led to unequal outcomes for minorities.

To address disproportionality, Suffolk County is participating in a statewide pilot project to analyze the issue, heighten system and community awareness, and to begin to promote policies and practices that gradually reduce it. Understanding the trends and factors contributing to disproportionality ultimately will help in developing strategies to improve outcomes for all children and save the county millions of dollars by reducing the overall number of foster care placements.

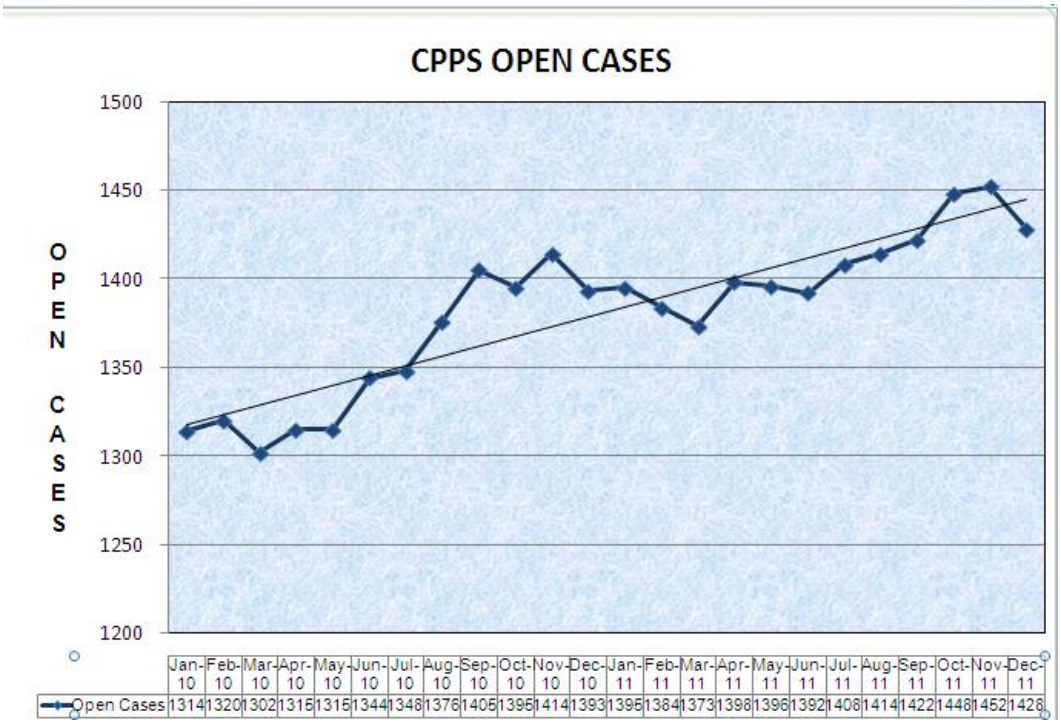
G. Decline in Adult Protective Services Referrals

Adult Protective Services received 1,192 new Protective Services for Adults (PSA) referrals in 2011 – a decrease of 11% as compared to 2010. As of December 31, 2011, the APS caseload was 497 cases compared to 528 cases at the end of 2010.

Challenges

A. CCPS Casework Overloads

In November 2011, the CPPS caseload reached record levels at just under 1,500 open cases serving nearly 3,000 children.



B. Child Welfare and Rising Petitions in Family Court

Family and Children's Services filed 7,694 child neglect and child abuse petitions with Family Court in 2011. This is a rise of 2,382 petitions (45%) over the 5,312 petitions filed in 2007.

While the filing of child abuse petitions has fluctuated in the past five years from a high of 510 in 2010 to 356 in 2011, the filing of neglect petitions has shown a consistent and dramatic rise from 4,928 in 2007 to 7,338 in 2011. This is an increase of 2,410 petitions or 49% in five years. These petitions are the bulk of the court work from Family and Children's Services and are at the core of ensuring the protection of vulnerable children. The rise in neglect petitions is an indication of the increasing seriousness of the cases reported to CPS including the rise in cases involving findings of prescription drug and opiate addiction.

Housing Services Division Overview

What We Do

The mission of the Division is to meet the immediate shelter needs for homeless eligible clients, both families with children and single adults. The Division monitors the clients' compliance with regulations, ensures that they search for permanent housing and maintains their eligibility for financial assistance. The Division assists clients in relocating to permanent housing by providing financial assistance to meet moving costs and security, and by inspecting proposed permanent housing to ensure that it meets health and safety standards. The Division also provides homelessness prevention services to assist at-risk clients in retaining their housing.

How We Do It

In addition to the daily diligent work efforts of staff assigned to the Division's Central Placement, Inspection, Finance/Payment, Removals, and Casework Units, below is one of the programs used by the Housing Division to ensure that all homeless individuals and families and those at risk of homelessness in Suffolk County have a place to live.

A. The Homelessness Prevention and Rapid Re-Housing Program (HPRP) -- The Department contracts with Family Service League and the Economic Opportunity Council to administer the Homelessness Prevention and Rapid Re-Housing Program, which provides financial assistance to individuals and families who are not eligible for traditional Temporary Assistance programs. This program is designed to prevent and reduce homelessness throughout Suffolk County through the provision of financial assistance (short-term assistance with rent and/or arrears, utility assistance, housing relocation assistance, landlord-tenant negotiation, legal assistance and on-going case management). As of the end of year 2011, 1,565 individuals in 556 households have been served since this program's inception.

Accomplishments/Notable Happenings

A. Family Service League's The Linkage Center (TLC) – The Department's contractor, Family Service League, opened a third dormitory for homeless adults at The Linkage Center during late 2011. This dormitory increased the number of available beds from 48 to 60. While this expanded capacity was and will continue to be limited to the peak winter months (from approximately November to March), Family Service League committed to re-opening the third dormitory if needed by the Department in an emergency such as the large-scale eviction of tenants by a landlord or local municipality or displacement of tenants by a natural disaster (flood, fire, etc.)

B. Family Service League's TLC Extension Program -- Family Service League's TLC Extension Program opened in November 2011. This program allows up to 20 homeless adults to remain at TLC during normal business hours in lieu of

reporting to the local DSS Center. While in the Extension Program, clients receive case management, supportive services, and other services designed to address the underlying reasons for their homelessness and help them to achieve permanent housing. This program is also beneficial in that it removes up to 20 homeless adults per day from the overcrowded DSS Center lobbies.

C. Stand Up for the Homeless 2011 -- One of the first initiatives of the 10-year Plan Committee was to create an event that would provide homeless individuals with a comprehensive outlet aimed at assisting them with a variety of goods and services. The event, which is called "Stand Up for the Homeless", took place for the fourth time in August 2011 and it was a huge success. This year's event brought together approximately 478 homeless clients with volunteers and staff from 58 agencies to provide food, clothing, haircuts and medical testing as well as access to information and other useful services.

D. RFQ Issued for Shelter Services for Homeless Families and Single Adults -- The Department advertised a Request for Qualifications (RFQ) for shelter services in October 2011 and subsequently received a total of 28 responses, including thirteen (13) from agencies not currently contracted with the Department. Following a review process, eight new agencies were deemed qualified; the Department will work with these agencies to complete the contract process, locate appropriate sites and, ultimately, open new homeless shelters, increasing the number of units/beds available within shelter settings. This will enable the Department to remove homeless clients from motels, which are used when the number of homeless clients exceeds the capacity of the shelter system.

Challenges

A. Lack of Affordable Housing -- The major obstacle to reducing homelessness continues to be the lack of affordable rental housing that meets health and safety standards. The availability and cost of decent rental housing is impacted by many factors, notably the mortgage foreclosure crisis, the local economy, property taxes and the enforcement of ever more restrictive zoning laws. The cost of renting in Suffolk County has dramatically increased over the last decade and the availability of affordable rental units is low. The foreclosure crisis has also impacted renters. A number of renters lost housing due to their landlord's foreclosure problem.

All indications suggest that the number of rental units available to low income families will continue to shrink unless there is some direct governmental action to stimulate the development of low and moderate income housing.

B. Shortage of Family Shelter Providers -- During 2011, the Department added four (4) additional congregate family shelters, bring the total to forty four (44) in Suffolk County. The addition of these shelters has alleviated but not eliminated the need for motel placements.

C. Increase in Emergency Housing Family Caseload – Over the past two years, the number of homeless families in emergency housing has increased significantly. The average monthly homeless family caseload increased from 309 in 2009 to 359 in 2010 to 431 in 2011. See Appendix A for details.

   Because of the increased demand for emergency housing, the Department has had to supplement the shelters with motel placements. The average monthly number of families in motels increased for 26 in 2009 (8.4% of the families) to 56 in 2011 (15.6% of the families) and 110 in 2011 (25.5% of the families).

D. Increase in Emergency Housing Single Adult Caseload -- Following a reduction in the average monthly number of homeless single adults in emergency housing from 205 in 2009 to 197 in 2010, the number increased to 249 in 2011. There is very little housing being developed for singles. Increased code enforcement activities by local municipalities have further reduced the number of units available for singles. See Appendix A for details.

Child Support Enforcement Bureau (CSEB) Division Overview

What We Do

The mission of the Child Support Enforcement Bureau is to ensure that custodial parents of children in the County receive child support owed to them by their child's non-custodial parent.

Accomplishments/Notable Happenings

A. Collections -- In 2011, Suffolk County's Child Support Enforcement Program efforts resulted in the collection of $151,894,862. This is the tenth consecutive year that CSEB has collected over $100 million dollars. As of June, 2012 total collections are 77,490,012, slightly ahead of last year's pace. (See Appendix A for details.)

   Although Suffolk County's Child Support Enforcement Bureau (CSEB) continues to be one of the most successful local programs in the State in terms of total dollar amount of collections, meeting the demand for child support services from parents continues to be a major challenge.

E. Savings and Cost Avoidance -- There are major savings/cost avoidance facets of child support collections. Child support payments collected on behalf of custodial parents receiving temporary assistance are used to reduce TA costs. The funds collected by CSEB have a major impact upon Suffolk County's ability to reduce TANF expenditures. Forty three percent (43%) of the court-ordered caseload have been, or currently are, TANF recipients. In addition, the child support payments CSEB collects directly impact the custodial parent's ability to discontinue TA. In 2011, 560 TANF clients receiving child support payments became self-sufficient and no longer needed assistance.

F. Child Support Collections via Incarceration Purge Payments at Family Court and County Jail -- In a collaborative effort with the County Attorney, Family Court and Suffolk County Sheriff, CSEB has been successful in collecting support payments at Court and jail to purge incarceration orders. In 2011, 126 respondents were sentenced to up to six months in jail, and 98 made support payments totaling $206,448 to purge incarceration.

G. Customer Service -- In July 2005, the NYS Child Support Helpline (CSH) began to take calls from Suffolk parents; it continues to be a valuable asset to the program. Callers experience shorter wait times to speak with a customer service representative regarding their case issues. Each incoming call is documented in the parent's child support case record. In 2011, the CSH received 121,617 incoming calls.

Challenges

A. Obtaining Court Ordered Medical Support Orders -- The Federal and State Offices of Child Support imposed the requirement that every case must have a court order addressing medical insurance for the dependent children. This requirement was imposed retroactively to the entire caseload. Caseload review efforts are continuing, with court petitions resulting in appropriate cases; as of June 2012, 24,776 cases had medical insurance orders in place, compared to 11,174 cases in August 2000. This represents an increase from 25% of the total current court ordered caseload to 53% that includes medical insurance orders. However, over 21,000 cases are still without medical insurance orders. To date, there have been no State or Federal performance goals established in this area.

B. Interest on Money Judgment Cases -- The calculation of interest due on money judgment cases established before 1996 continues to be an issue. CSEB is still bringing cases into compliance with the State's methodology. An estimated 268 project cases still require review, and individual cases contain multiple judgments to be calculated.

C. Undistributed Collections -- The high amount of collections reported as undistributed is another area of concern. CSEB has been focusing on this issue since January 2001, and through June 2012 we have released over $37.5 million dollars in funds previously reported as undistributed. Suffolk was one of seven (7) local districts working on NYS DCSE's Undistributed Collections (UDC) Task Force. CSEB piloted some of the projects dedicated to reducing overall UDC in New York State. However, the overall results of the Task Force projects were not as effective as had been expected, and undistributed collections continue to be of concern statewide. In 2011, we released $3.09 million dollars previously reported as undistributed.

D. Staffing -- CSEB is currently maintaining high performance in Support Establishment (SEP) and Paternity Establishment (PEP) with use of overtime and the help of temporary staff; however, backlogs have continued to increase in all enforcement units. CSEB has a high percentage of staff that has been with the program for a significant period of time; their experience has assisted us in maintaining high performance thus far. However, we anticipate losing many key experienced staff in 2012.

Finance Division Overview

What We Do

A. Finance Administration

FA coordinates the activities of all Units in the Finance Division. FA is also directly responsible for coordinating the preparation of the Department's Operating and Capital Budget Requests, the submission and tracking of Legislative Resolutions, tracking overtime and temporary staff costs, processing conference attendance requests, and processing Representative Payee payments for Adult Protective Services. Moreover, Finance Administration is responsive to the fiscal concerns of the program divisions.

B. Accounting Unit

The Accounting Unit's priority is the timely and accurate processing of client, vendor, provider, and childcare provider payments. Child Care payments were processed in compliance with Local Law 2-2008.

The Unit's responsibilities are diverse. In addition to the Services and TA Payment Sections, the unit is also responsible for the Purchasing Section and the Accounts Payable Section. These sections are responsible for all administrative payments for the Department.

The Purchasing Section is responsible for processing the purchases of all supplies, equipment and services for the Department. This section monitors administrative expenditures and transfers funds between accounts as necessary. The Unit works with the Purchasing Department to resolve problems and insure the timely issuance of purchase orders. The Unit is also responsible for the updating the annual list of Department notaries, and monitoring leased equipment.

The Accounts Payable section processes the non-direct service payments to vendors. This Unit is responsible for the payments of contracts, consultants, supplies, equipment, and employee travel vouchers. It also processes payments for the Handicapped Children's Program, other Social Services districts, Special Act school districts, and for "social admissions" into hospitals.

The responsibilities of the Accounting Unit also include monitoring the Department's bus token and petty cash accounts, the Daniel D. White Memorial Fund account, and regular accounting functions. The Unit also prepares fiscal reports for the Department based on monthly expenditures, and reviews all emergency prescription drug vouchers to ensure that the charges for medications comply with the approved Medicaid rates. Additionally, this Unit is responsible for various financial oversight functions within the Finance Division, including the Annual Fiscal Reviews and per diem rate setting for the Department's Emergency Homeless Shelters, reviewing requests for rate increases from

childcare providers, and conducting Token, Vault Card, and Petty Cash account reviews. The Unit also reviews Living Wage Hardship applications for Child Care providers before they are sent to the Department of Labor for review and approval of the hardship awards.

C. Revenue

This section consists of three sub-units: Federal & State Aid Claims, Collections, and Assets & Resources.

1) Federal and State Aid Claims -- The Federal & State Aid Claims Unit must continuously adapt to a changing fiscal environment relating to both Suffolk County and New York State revised fiscal systems and financial reporting requirements. These efforts will be significant in 2011 and 2012 regarding the fiscal changes necessary to comply with numerous State mandated welfare reform initiatives and major funding stream modifications. This section also provides the fiscal data and information needed by the program divisions to effectively manage department programs.

2) Collections -- The Collections Unit is responsible for collecting refunds and recoveries, as well as for maintaining the accounts receivable subsidiary system for landlord security deposits and other debts. The unit must ensure that these cash receipts are properly recorded in the county's general ledger system, as well as in the Department's records and the New York State Cash Management System (CAMS).

3) Assets and Resources -- The Assets & Resources (A&R) Unit's function is to secure claims, collect claim-related revenues, and identify and evaluate assets and resources of applicants/recipients to defray the cost of assistance paid on their behalf. Claims are secured with bonds & mortgages, and estate and negligence liens. The unit is also responsible for reviewing and authorizing payment for burials of deceased indigent Suffolk County residents.

   The Fiscal Review Section of the A&R Unit provides the research function as well as Retroactive SSI Accounting, and Prescription Resource Review for A&R. The fiscal information relating to Temporary Assistance benefits, which may be recovered on claims maintained by A&R, is researched, compiled and reported by the Fiscal Review Section. Each report is in the form of a Statement of Assistance. The unit also reviews client eligibility of past emergency prescription vouchers to maximize reimbursement.

   A&R has increased the efficiency and productivity of the Unit by taking a proactive approach to securing potential claims and pursuing recoveries.

Accomplishments/Notable Happenings

A. Compliance -- The Accounts Payable sub-unit of Accounting has successfully maintained a 30-day vendor payment cycle. During the last year, the Unit continued to incur staff turnover, with several positions remaining vacant.

B. The Bond and Mortgage Collection Project (A&R) -- In April 2010, the Commissioner's Office initiated the DSS Registry Match. Since its inception, the DSS Registry has enabled A&R to identify $743,500 of potential recoveries involving bond & mortgages, estate claims and MA liens through December 2011. Additionally, through December 2011, A&R has recovered $87,759. With the DSS Registry Match, A&R gained online access to the Suffolk County Land Records Database. This access has been extremely beneficial to A&R and has been the primary resource used by us to achieve the substantial Public Assistance recoveries reported below in the Bond & Mortgage Collection Project statistics. Additionally, access to the database has allowed us to verify property ownership and assisted us with the execution of our bond & mortgages.

   From January 2010 through December 2011, the Bond & Mortgage Collection Project has identified $2.3 million of potential Public Assistance recoveries. The amount of PA recovered through December 31, 2011 as a result of this project totals $867,000.

   On August 16, 2010, the re-recording of the pre-1987 DSS bond & mortgages commenced. Through December 2011, $779,s832 has been collected on the re-recorded mortgages. Cost saving benefits have also been realized since some of these mortgages would have inevitably been missed on title reports and been referred to the County Attorney's Office for foreclosure.

   The County Clerk's Office has provided tremendous assistance to A&R with the re-recording of our pre-1987 bond & mortgages, the DSS Registry Match, and access to the Suffolk County Clerk's Land Records Database System. Each of these items has facilitated A&R in obtaining recoveries and securing future claims.

This project is eligible for a NACo award.

C. Asset Recoveries - Assets and Resources (A&R) has increased the efficiency and productivity of the Unit by taking a proactive approach to securing potential claims and pursuing recoveries. During 2011, A&R recovered $5.5 million of prior assistance granted.

Challenges

A. Compliance with Prompt Payment -- The Accounting Unit continues to struggle to maintain payment processing at its current levels with overtime and temporary

staff. In 2011, this unit is estimated to process over 540,000 payments with 64% going to clients and 34% going to different service and childcare providers; 2% of payments are going for other various departmental functions. Out of these payments, 453,600 of them per year must be made in a timely fashion based on State regulations or Suffolk County's prompt payment law.

In fact, compliance with prompt payment is an issue throughout the Finance Division. As caseloads increase, so does the number of payments, all of which need to be processed within thirty days.

B. Staffing Shortages -- Staff promotions in the Purchasing Section have presented a challenge to processing the section workload without delays, and a backload continues to be present in all areas of recovery for A&R. Appropriate staffing will aid in the recovery of public assistance.

Administration Division Overview

What We Do

A. The Commissioner's Response Unit (CRU)

CRU fields questions and concerns from Temporary Assistance (TA) applicants and recipients, assists former TA recipients who have questions concerning transitional programs such as Day Care, Medicaid, and Food Stamps, and acts as a liaison for former clients with the Child Support Enforcement Bureau to ensure the continued collection of court ordered support payments. They also perform various outreach services and initiatives for the benefit of those families and individuals who are not eligible for or do not wish to partake in DSS programs or services.

The CRU also liaises with locally elected officials on behalf of the Commissioner, to resolve complaints against the Agency, accept suggestions from the elected, and accept acknowledgement when the Commissioner has addressed a particularly difficult issue.

Additional duties and responsibilities of CRU staff include accepting applications for the Daniel D. White Fund, attending community meetings on behalf of the Agency when the Commissioner or Deputy is not available, and administering the Agency's Campership program.

The Unit supervisor accepts all press calls on behalf of the Commissioner, coordinates the release of public information with the Commissioner and the County Executive's staff, fills in for the Commissioner's Assistant when she is unavailable or out of the office, and represents the Agency on the Welfare to Work Commission. He also serves as an Agency representative on our own Limited English Proficiency committee, alongside the CRU's Spanish speaking designee.

B. The Assistant to the Commissioner

The Assistant to the Commissioner assists in the Commissioner's Response Unit, creates and coordinates a 3,000 piece mailing for notification to clients of EITC (Earned Income Tax Credit), keeps track of proposed county and state legislation that would impact the Department of Social Services, notarizes the Commissioner's signature on various court documents, and manages ordering, preparation and distribution of over 12,000 application packages per month for the four DSS centers, Child Support Enforcement Bureau, Housing Division and Medicaid Division.

The Assistant also serves as Coordinator of the internship program at DSS, Legislative Liaison for constituent issues and/or concerns, and Coordinator for the

Commissioner's Advisory Council. The Commissioner's Advisory Council is a State mandated group consisting of service providers, client advocates and consumers. Duties as Coordinator of the CAC include preparing meeting notices and agendas, and transcribing minutes for the three committees as well as the full council. The current membership of the CAC stands at 42. The Assistant also represents the Commissioner on the following committees:

- Suffolk County Women in the Courts Committee
- Bay Shore COMPASS (Community, Parents, Schools & Students)
- Disability Advisory Board
- County Executive's Task Force on Family Violence
- Criminal Justice Coordinating Committee
- Food Policy Council
- Veterans Services Stand Down
- HIV Commission

Additionally, the Assistant conducts Informational Fairs at public libraries throughout the county, organizes training in Social Services programs two times each year, and coordinates the Department's annual "Stand Up for the Homeless" event.

How We Do It

A. The Commissioner's Response Unit

During 2011, the Commissioner's Response Unit successfully resolved inquiries and complaints for over 30,000 individuals, which represents a continued increase compared to the previous year.

Because program eligibility guidelines do not reflect the high cost of living in Suffolk County, many working but poor individuals are not eligible for assistance. To address this issue, the CRU information and referral line is used to direct those in need to the plethora of programs administered by the Federal, State, Towns and non-profit social services providers. The CRU has created and maintains a "Community Resource List", which contains all food pantries, soup kitchens and other support services in the County.

The CRU also administrates the Commissioner's Homeless Outreach Project. In 2009, the Commissioner piloted a project in the Bay Shore area to help connect the recalcitrant homeless, who do not use government services or shelter resources, to the various programs that assist with food, clothing, shelter, and case management. In 2010 and 2011, the CRU worked with several non-profit organizations to expand the pilot to other parts of Suffolk County. DSS volunteers and non-profit social services providers have helped educate the homeless not using government services as to the availability of food, clothing, shelter and most importantly, ongoing case management services.

The CRU also administers a number of other homeless outreach efforts, including but not limited to a trio of outreach drives. For these drives, staff members collect holiday gifts for the homeless individuals and families with children who participate in programs administered by Client Benefits Administration, as well as personal needs kits and clothing for the homeless, which are donated by area schools and community members. The drives were quite successful in 2011.

Above: One of the "Comforts for the Homeless" toiletry kits we received in 2011.

Accomplishments/Notable Happenings

A. NaCo -- The Department was given a NaCo award for both the Fairs and the training sessions run by the Assistant to the Commissioner in 2011.

B. A Success Story -- Fifty-five-year-old Mr. V. was living in his car when he met Angela Miller during one of the late-night homeless hotspot investigations that characterize our after-hours homeless outreach program. When they met, he had almost no income to speak of, had no phone, and relied on a local post office to receive and hold his mail. With Angela's help, he was able to apply for and receive food stamps as well as Medicaid. We are overjoyed to report that as of January 2012, Mr. V. is no longer in need of food stamps, and lives in an apartment.

C. Project Overtime - Ever-increasing caseloads and workloads throughout the agency have resulted in the widespread use of overtime. While it has allowed the Department to manage the increase in work, it has not always been granted in a systematic manner that results in the most efficient use of overtime resources. Additionally, the fair and equitable distribution of overtime is an issue that has been highlighted by the Department's staff in a recent inquiry from the

Commissioner. At the Commissioner's request, a committee was convened to examine the processes surrounding authorization, allocation and use of overtime in the Department, to identify certain issues which hinder the Department's ability to ensure that the application/use of overtime is efficient, fair and cost-effective. Each Division has established a plan to this end that has been approved by the Overtime Committee.

D. Partnering for Operational Efficiency Team (POET) - The mission of POET is to provide an analysis of opportunities for change within DSS which specifically promote significant and efficient business and process transformation. The team will engage management and staff in collaborative discussions and/or operational reviews which explore the re-engineering of workflow processes designed to increase operational efficiencies and/or promote quality improvement (QI) initiatives. The process has begun with each Division conducting a self-assessment to analyze their goals/objectives, strengths/weaknesses, succession plan, and opportunities for improving quality and efficiency.

E. Medicaid Prescription Fraud Program - Through the reciprocal relationship established by Special Investigations Unit with the OMIG and the Suffolk County Police Department, a coordinated effort has begun to ensure that the Medicaid recipients identified in prescription fraud allegations are not part of a broader based conspiracy, or criminal network. SIU holds periodic meetings with the OMIG and the SCPD, with the common objectives of bringing individuals participating in prescription diversion, Medicaid card fraud, or any other Public Assistance fraud to a quick arrest and/or referral to the Suffolk County District Attorney's Office for prosecution, and protecting taxpayer dollars.

F. Medicaid Provider Audits - DSS signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the NYS DOH Office of the State Medicaid Inspector General's (OMIG) to participate in a Medicaid Provider Fraud, Waste, and Abuse Project. This program receives oversight from the OMIG for approval to conduct audits, coordinates investigative activities with them, and oversees audits conducted by a contracted agency to ensure they are in conformance with the OMIG procedures. As of November 30, 140 audit requests were submitted to OMIG. 51 targets have been approved for investigation, 37 audits are in process. From the 13 audits that have been completed, over $3.5 million in recoveries have been identified. Over $700 thousand has actually been recovered from providers to date. Suffolk County receives a 25% share of all recoveries.

G. Faith Based Housing Initiative for Homeless Singles Refusing Shelter – The Commissioner's Response Unit (CRU) staff are working with cooperating agencies to create church based rotating drop-in centers for the homeless. In 2011, CRU created their first church shelters in the North Bay Shore, Brentwood and Central Islip area, in association with Pronto of Suffolk. This group of shelters compliments the Maureen's Haven program on the East End and the HIHI program in Huntington. For 2012, our goal is to create one similar

operation in Patchogue, Port Jefferson or the Amityville, Wyandanch, Copiague, Lindenhurst area.

H. Homeless Winter Street Outreach - The CRU, in cooperation with Adult Protective Services, Emergency Services, Suffolk County Police Department and the Department's non-profit partners, has begun a coordinated after hours effort to locate the homeless during cold weather emergencies when temperatures are below freezing. The CRU is responsible for putting the homeless outreach teams together and deploying them in areas where the homeless are known to congregate.

Challenges

A. Staffing and Workload -- The main challenge that the Commissioner's Office currently faces is a staffing shortage, juxtaposed with the continual workload increase that all DSS personnel are currently experiencing.

Personnel Division Overview

What We Do

The Personnel division of DSS is comprised of several subunits.

The Facilities Management Unit manages the daily needs and long-term planning for all nine DSS buildings. This includes maintaining existing space, anticipating changes, determining space allocation, and scheduling building repairs. Projects include the renovation of existing space to accommodate the needs of personnel and to increase workflow efficiency and productivity.

It is the responsibility of the Security Unit to oversee and ensure the safety of all staff, clients, and visitors at DSS facilities.

The Special Investigations Unit's primary function is to ensure that the expenditure of public funds is limited to those who are legally entitled to receive these benefits. Through a variety of fraud prevention programs and State mandates, SIU takes measures to prevent, detect, and investigate fraud.

The SIU is an effective force in uncovering, prosecuting and deterring welfare fraud in Suffolk County. By uncovering fraud of unreported assets, income, household composition, dual assistance, fraudulent vendor billing, misuse of funds, and the filing of false applications, the Unit's Investigators save taxpayer dollars.

In cases involving fraud, SIU will identify any overpayments and take recovery measures. So far this year, 12 individuals have been referred to the District Attorney's Office for criminal prosecution. These cases met the criteria of grand larceny, for a total of $220,818 in overpayments.

How We Do It

A. Facilities

The Stockroom maintains inventory control of supplies and forms needed by the Department and ensures timely delivery of supplies to all DSS locations.

The Mail Services Unit is responsible for all incoming mail. This includes the sorting and distribution of all incoming and inter-departmental mail. This Unit is also responsible for logging checks and money orders received by the Department.

Couriers deliver mail between all Social Service locations, as well as other County Departments. They are also responsible for transporting financial instruments to the Finance Division and to the bank.

B. Security

For several years, security staff training, both in-house and by outside vendors, has focused on a proactive approach.

C. SIU

1) Fraud Prevention Programs

a) FEDS -- The Front End Detection System (FEDS) is a State mandated fraud prevention program designed to identify ineligibility and eliminate potential overpayments prior to case acceptance and ongoing assistance. Field investigations are conducted to ensure the validity of Temporary Assistance applications. As of October 2011, the FEDS Unit completed 2,172 investigations with an overall denial rate of 38.1%.

b) FEDS for Child Care -- Suffolk County also participates in the optional fraud prevention program, FEDS for Child Care cases. This program investigates clients applying for Child Care, to identify ineligibility prior to case opening. Since October 2011, SIU completed 164 investigations, which resulted in the denial of 117 Child Care cases, for an overall denial rate of 71%.

c) Eligibility Verification Review (EVR) -- EVR of Child Care cases is designed to identify ineligibility and to eliminate potential overpayments to open cases. EVR is an optional fraud prevention program that reviews cases to determine if there is any an unreported household change or unreported income that will affect the client's eligibility to receive benefits. At any time during eligibility, recertification, or during Undercare maintenance, the EVR program can be used to assign investigative resources to verify ongoing eligibility. Through October 2011, SIU completed 62 investigations, which resulted in the closing of 32 Child Care cases, for an overall closing rate of 51.6%.

2) Databases -- SIU uses various databases to match individuals receiving assistance elsewhere. A review and investigation of each report is necessary, followed by appropriate action and response back to NYS. These matches include:

a) Felon Match - Criminal Justice system searches for persons known to be fugitive felons or violators of probation or parole. Through November 2011, we received 23 reported matches.

b) Prison Match - Criminal Justice and the Department of Correctional Services searches for currently incarcerated recipients, and through November 2011, they found 576 matches.

c) Interstate Match - Public Assistance Recipient Information System PARIS and PARIS DOH Computer Match detects Temporary Assistance (TA) and Medicaid recipients who are receiving benefits in more than one state at a time. Through November 2011, we received a total of 1,406 reported matches for TA, and 1,696 reported matches for Medicaid.

3) Provider Audits -- SIU also works cooperatively with the NYS Office of the Medicaid Inspector General (OMIG) on the Medicaid Provider Fraud, Waste and Abuse Demonstration Project.

In 2006, DSS signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the NYS DOH Office of the State Medicaid Inspector General's (OMIG) to participate in a Medicaid Provider Fraud, Waste, and Abuse Project. Our Medicaid Division receives approval from OMIG to conduct audits, coordinates investigative activities with them, and oversees audits conducted by a contracted agency to ensure they are in conformance with the OMIG procedures.

Provider Audit Requests Submitted to the OMIG thru 11/30/11	140
OMIG Approved Audit Targets	51
Audits Completed	13
Recoveries Identified in Final Audit Reports	$3,516,355
Actual Recoveries Received by OMIG from Providers	$703,399
Audits in Process	37

The OMIG determines the categories of service available for audit under the Demo project. Currently, the OMIG has limited the authorized categories for audit to pharmacy, durable medical equipment and transportation service provider types. The SIU queries and analyzes Medicaid claims data (contained in the Data Warehouse) by utilizing Medicaid data mining software to identify outliers within these provider types. Potential audit targets are submitted by the SIU for OMIG approval. Once these provider requests are approved, Medicaid Provider Compliance Reviews are conducted by the contracted auditing firm and are overseen by the Investigative Auditor to ensure they are in compliance with the OMIG's policies and procedures. In June 2008, SIU began to refer Medicaid Providers to the OMIG for their approval to conduct audits.

We are in the process of reviewing the Medicaid claims data to select the next audit targets for submission to the OMIG. Audit submissions to the OMIG for the Provider Compliance Reviews are based on providers with high volume/payments.

Suffolk's local share of the recoveries, based on OMIG guidelines, is approximately 25% of the Net recoveries (total recoveries less program expenditures).

4) Medicaid Prescription Drug Fraud Program -- The Special Investigations Unit investigates prescription fraud allegations received from the New York State Office of the Medicaid Inspector General and the Suffolk County Police Department. Through the reciprocal relationship established by SIU with the OMIG and the SCPD, there is a coordinated effort to ensure that the Medicaid recipients identified in these allegations are not part of a broader based conspiracy or criminal network.

   SIU holds periodic meetings with the OMIG and the SCPD with the common objective of protecting taxpayer dollars and bringing individuals participating in fraudulent activities involving prescription diversion, Medicaid cards, or any other Public Assistance fraud to a quick arrest and/or referral to the Suffolk County District Attorney's Office for prosecution.

Accomplishments

A. Security

There were no reported injuries to staff by clients or visitors in any of our facilities in 2011. This is directly attributable to the proactive approach adopted by the Unit. In 2011, the security guards at our centers handled and then reported 3,893 total incidents, including but not limited to 291 police responses, 492 verbal disturbances, 30 physical altercations and 228 instances of injury or other medical circumstances.

Challenges

A. Staffing -- The main issue faced by Personnel is staffing shortages within all of its subunits.

B. Portion of Medicaid Fraud Recoveries -- The other issue, faced by SIU in particular, is a paltry share (25%) of Medicaid fraud recoveries. The rest of the recoveries go directly to the State.

Information Technology (IT) Division Overview

What We Do

The purpose of IT is to support the divisions, programs and units of the Department in the attainment of their established goals and objectives through the use of technology. Technological solutions must be available to increase worker productivity, improve communications across all program areas, facilitate ease of access to information that supports management decisions, and positively impact the quality of services delivered.

The centralized Contracts Unit, a subunit of IT, is responsible for the processing of all Department contracts. The responsibility of contract management includes the drafting of all contracts, contract amendments, contract revisions and budget modifications, assignment and assumptions of contracts, letters of agreement and memoranda of understanding, as well as Requests for Proposals (RFPs), Requests for Qualifications (RFQs), and bids.

Contracts is responsible for processing contract compliance documentation, including obtaining, processing, monitoring and reporting Living Wage Law and Lawful Hiring of Employees compliance, and for working in coordination with the Department of Labor.

The workload in Contracts requires extensive coordination within the Unit, with the DSS program Divisions, the Purchasing Unit of the Department of Public Works and the Department of Law.

Contracts executed approximately 325 contracts for various DSS programs and services during 2011. At the same time, we have processed several bid contracts, two RFPs and an RFQ.

Challenges

A. Information Services

1) Staffing -- This Unit handled over 21,035 Help Desk work orders YTD 2011.

   The Help Desk is currently staffed with only seven full-time employees, which is one for every 268 end-users. Industry standards recommend a 1-75 relationship. Further, the IT division has 47 positions, of which 14 are currently vacant. The current vacancy percentage of 30% has been difficult to endure without significant loss in services or responsiveness to the User Divisions of this department.

   Effective July 1, 2012, the 2012 operating budget eliminates 8 positions; of which four (or 50%) are filled. The loss of these filled positions will have considerable impact on the IT Division. As you consider the priority of the IT positions against other critical positions in this department or county, I ask that

you keep in mind the dynamic relationship of a support division to the user divisions. The IT Division continues to accept added responsibilities concurrent with the technological advancement of the programmatic units that it supports. As the Department becomes more dependent on the use of technology in daily operations and continues to transition from manual processes to in-house information systems, this Division must add qualified staff to handle the increased workload. As the workload increases, even if staffing levels remained constant, time to resolution of outstanding work orders increases.

This adversely impacts end users' ability to complete their daily work. A decrease in available staff due to unfilled vacancies or layoffs compounds this problem. Inadequate staffing in this division creates delays in the workflow processing of all user divisions, and their ability to timely authorize client benefits, make vendor payments (childcare and shelter provider, etc.), and utilize tools for management reporting.

2) Diversity of Platforms and Software Programs -- The County has established standard specifications for hardware purchases. However, software purchases are driven by the needs of the Division/Programmatic Unit resulting in a very diverse mix of software programs within the Social Services Department. This diversity requires detailed knowledge of multiple software programs by Unit staff in order to respond to the Divisions' requests for assistance and support.

3) Lack of Adequate Desktops and Laptops -- IT submitted a detailed list of desktop computers deployed, for which DSS has requested funding to replace. All are well beyond the 6 year replacement cycle required by the County and are well beyond their useful and productive life besides. DSS does not have spare equipment to deploy when one of these devices breaks down, and repairing them is becoming increasingly difficult with the following impacts:

- Service calls are increasing and repairs are costly, both with respect to financial and staffing resources.
- Downtime of the machine and poor productive use even when functional (slowness and access to newer technologies) reduces the work efficiency of end users.
- It is difficult to find parts for these aging machines even when repair is warranted to extend the useful life.

There are 419 devices, ranging from 7-10 years old, which should be replaced; DSS has requested replacement of less than half of these devices (200) in the RX submitted to DoIT. We understand that budget funding is limited and has been restricted, but the lack of replacement devices is becoming critical for this department.

Note: Purchases of equipment for this department are eligible for Federal and State aid (upwards of 60-90%), which reduces the net cost of the county overall.

4) Customization and Specialization of Database Applications -- The IT Division developed 57 database applications in-house. Database developers continue to maintain these applications and/or add new functionality as requested by programmatic Divisions. These database applications must be developed in-house due to the lack of highly specialized third party programs available to meet Department needs.

Adequate resources are needed to build, maintain and support these database applications, which are used by DSS staff in the performance of their duties. In addition, end user access can be provided more efficiently with newer versions of web-based development licenses and tools, as well as virtualized environments.

Budget resources required include funding for updated hardware and software licenses, and tools necessary to take advantage of new technologies and to obtain manufacturer's support of the software. Budget resources for staff include funding for additional network and systems technicians and/or database developers; and/or funding for training of existing staff on these new technologies.

B. Data Entry Operations

1) Persistent Backlog -- This Unit handled over 346,364 transactions for 85,156 applications processed in 2010. This represents an overall reprocess rate of 4.06 transactions per application.

During 2011, the average weekly backlog was 81, with a high of 283 in November, 2011. Backlog for the Erisa Law Scanning operation is 1,922, with a high of 2,950 in September, 2011.

C. Contracts

1) Impending Results of County Attorney Layoffs -- Contracts did not enjoy the benefits of a quick turnaround prior to the recent County Attorney layoffs. However, now that they have taken place, a serious backlog is expected, which in turn will result in contracts not getting signed, agencies DSS partners with not receiving payment for the services they offer. Furthermore, not being able to make payments on time for services because less staff are in the Unit and less County Attorneys are employed will result in a loss of revenue, as well as a slower turnaround.

DSS Employees of the Month for 2011

JANUARY -- NAOMI NIEVES

Naomi Nieves works in the Riverhead Center. She is more than capable of keeping up with the large quantity of work in the unit and consistently produces quality work in a timely fashion. She is dedicated to assisting her co-workers and clients with their needs, and often provides staff with guidance and encouragement; she inspires her co-workers to maintain professionalism and strive towards successfully completing their work goals; she easily calms clients with her caring demeanor and ability to relate agency requirements in a comprehensive manner; and her professionalism and knowledge of the job have allowed clients, employees, and community representatives to rely on her for assistance on a regular basis. Her work ethic, professionalism and dedication make her a pleasure to work with.

FEBRUARY – LOIS YORK

Working in Medicaid Undercare since 2005 as an Examiner I, Ms. York consistently goes above and beyond all expectations in order to assist clients and their representatives. Her sincere, positive attitude shines through in her telephone calls, and she is able to help our clients feel more at ease regarding important situations concerning healthcare benefits. Ms. York is highly regarded by her peers and her supervisors for her job knowledge, positive attitude, and cooperative nature; what's more, she enthusiastically accepts assignments and frequently assists her colleagues with difficult cases.

MARCH – KIM ORSANO

During Kim's six years with CSEB, she has proven to be an efficient and hard worker who is totally dedicated to the successful operation of the Bureau.

Ms. Orsano has a knack for understanding the individual needs of each member of her group, and continuously helps them to perform at their best. She has done an excellent job fine-tuning and re-training the unit staff to work more independently and take on more complicated assignments. Kim gained the trust and acceptance of the unit staff in a short period of time, and has developed an excellent working relationship with the members of the other sections of CSEB as well; she is always friendly and responsive to concerns brought to her from other work areas. Kim's attitude toward work is very positive; she always has a smile on her face, and makes the time to assist anyone who is seeking her guidance.

APRIL – CHRISTINA MAHER

Christina Maher was transferred to the BICS Unit in December 2008; within a few months, she had leaned the unit's processes, and revamped them to run more efficiently. By June 2009, she was made supervisor of the unit and received a promotion to Programmer Analyst. Christina's demeanor is always pleasant and professional. She has always treated her fellow workers in DSS with the utmost respect and courtesy, and handled occasional resistance with the utmost diplomacy.

MAY – ANN MELISURGO

Ann Melisurgo joined the Housing and Employment Services Division in May 1993. She worked her way up to a Social Services Examiner I in May 2000. Now, she takes responsibility for and runs the entire Supportive Services program for Suffolk County. Ann demonstrates amazing patience and compassion for clients, but strictly adheres to the program guidelines and parameters at the same time. Her attitude and work ethic have never faltered. She is always well-organized, professional, and courteous to clients as well as fellow employees.

JUNE – DONNA IUORNO

Donna Iuorno is the only Clerk Typist in the CSEB Riverhead Family Court Unit. She is responsible for duties that are performed by Senior Clerk Typists in other offices, such as providing court reports for each courtroom each day, processing orders, keeping attendance and keeping the stats for that unit. She is also responsible for interviewing litigants after they have appeared in court. Donna has earned the respect of her co-workers and Court staff and is known for going above and beyond on a daily basis. She is reliable, dedicated, knowledgeable, friendly, professional, and conscientious.

JULY – JEAN L. WALKER

Jean Walker is well suited to her position as an Examiner III in CBA at the South West Center, where her excellent program knowledge and her ability to streamline workflow within her units have enabled her staff to maximize productivity and eliminate wasted time and effort. Her ability to identify staff training needs and provide or develop training for those individuals has increased the ability of her staff to meet the emergency needs of those who come to our office in crisis. She is well organized and can multitask under even the most hectic conditions; her ability to remain calm is unmatched; she recognizes situations that could potentially escalate and addresses them before a crisis occurs; she possesses excellent communication and leadership skills that inspire others; and she has the ability to recognize the needs of each individual applicant and strives not only to provide the benefits they are entitled to, but to identify resources and programs that can provide additional assistance to those in need. Ms. Walker is a true professional who represents the Agency with a level of courtesy and humanitarianism that personifies the best DSS has to offer.

AUGUST – THERESA E. WARREN

Theresa Warren's motto–"Treat others the way you want to be treated"—is quite evident in the level of courtesy and respect she extends to co-workers and clients alike. Theresa is very professional, conscientious, self-sufficient, and is always willing to share her vast knowledge with her co-workers at the Smithtown Center. When any of Theresa's co-workers were out on extended sick leave, she was the first to ask what she could do to help. Her remarkable rapport with applicants is proven by the fact that many clients have contacted the Department to commend her.

SEPTEMBER – MICHELE STEELE

Michele Steele is a caseworker in Child Protective Investigations. She handles even the most difficult cases with patience and understanding, and is always professional, polite, and respectful. Her demeanor and good casework skills enable her to work as cooperatively as possible with families at crucial points in their lives, ensuring the best possible outcome for the family.

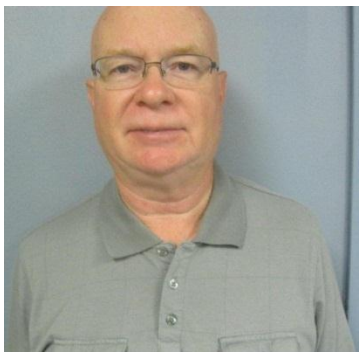
OCTOBER – STEPHEN A. LAURI

Stephen Lauri, who has worked in the Finance Unit for eleven years, is one of those people who just gets the job done, no matter what the circumstances are. Last winter, with two feet of snow on the ground, Steve was in the office by 9:00 AM making sure that the payments were going out to our clients. His dedication was and still is an inspiration to the entire unit. He is cross-trained in Services as well as TA Accounting and can be counted on to assist the TA unit at a moment's notice. Steve is extremely professional, organized, and proactive in his approach to his work.

NOVEMBER – PATRICIA A. MARTIN

Patricia A. Martin is an Assets Analyst in the Assets and Resources Unit, and successfully performs the difficult casework typically assigned to a Senior Assets Analyst. She is eager to assist her co-workers, and can be depended upon to handle critical issues professionally. She takes the initiative to improve procedures within A&R by utilizing her excellent organizational and computer skills.

DECEMBER – DENNIS J. CORBETT



When Dennis started working with IT four years ago, he was immediately thrown into creating a very complicated database using a programming technology that was new to DSS and unfamiliar to him, and that would entail coordination between state users, outside county agencies, and FCSA.

Turnaround time for responses from SCPD significantly decreased as a result of Dennis's outstanding work with the database; additionally, the SCPD Central Records staff received an award at the Task Force to Prevent Family Violence Awards Day 2010 as a result of using it. Dennis was also responsible for creating the Feedback Submit page and database for our Internet.

Dennis is consistently thorough about getting the job at hand done quickly and accurately, is always eager to assist and find solutions to any and all issues that pop up on a daily basis in the IT Unit, and has a great rapport with his co-workers and supervisors.

The Suffolk County Department of Social Services

Gregory J. Blass, Commissioner

3085 Veterans Memorial Hwy

Ronkonkoma, NY 11779

Phone: (631) 854-9935

Fax: (631) 854-9996

Service Center Hours: Monday – Friday 8:00AM - 3:00PM, excluding county holiday closures

Emergency Numbers

You can always call 911 in any emergency.

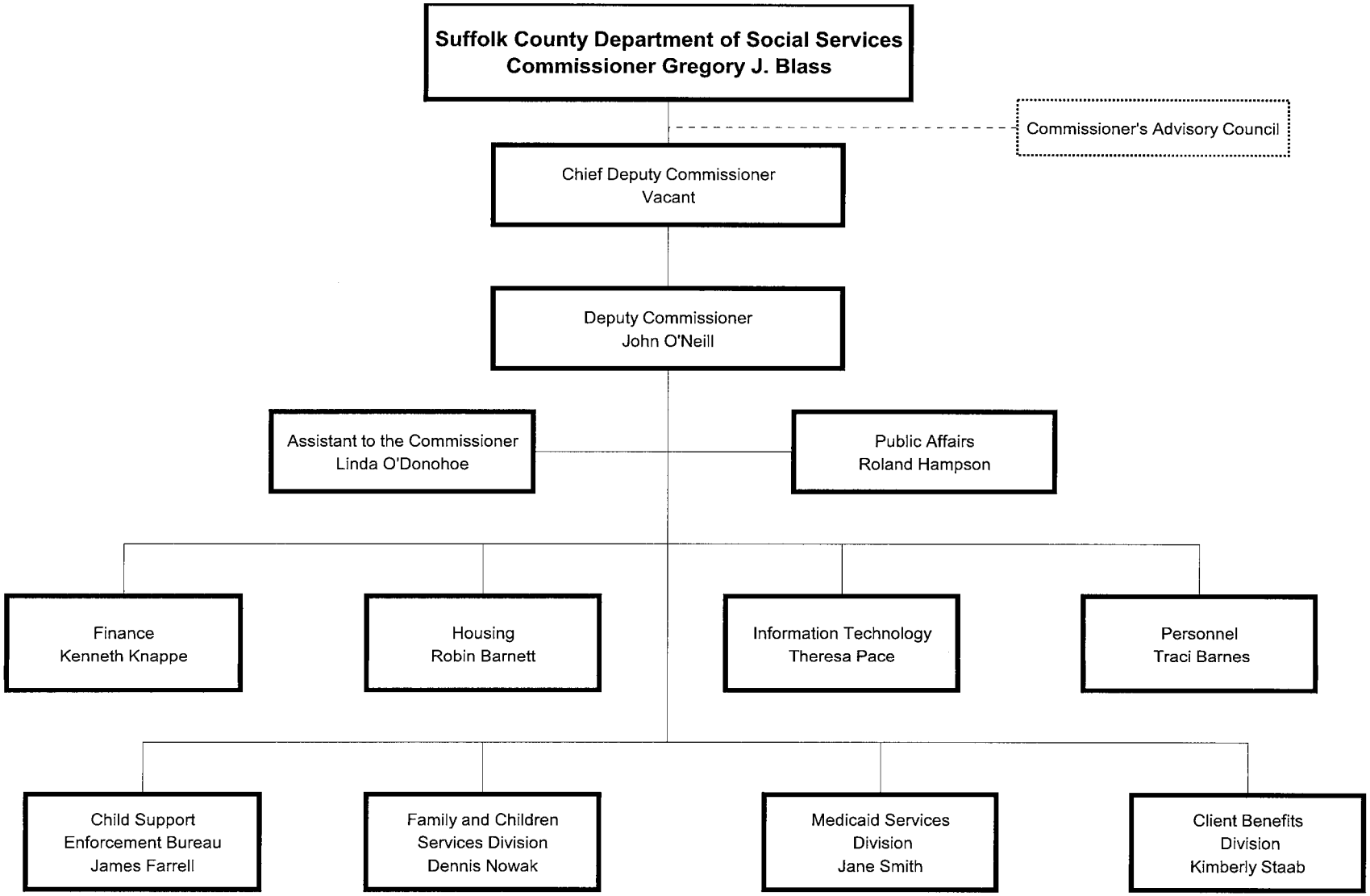
DSS Emergency Services Hotline (after 4:30 PM & Weekends): (631) 854-9100

In the event of specific emergencies, please call:

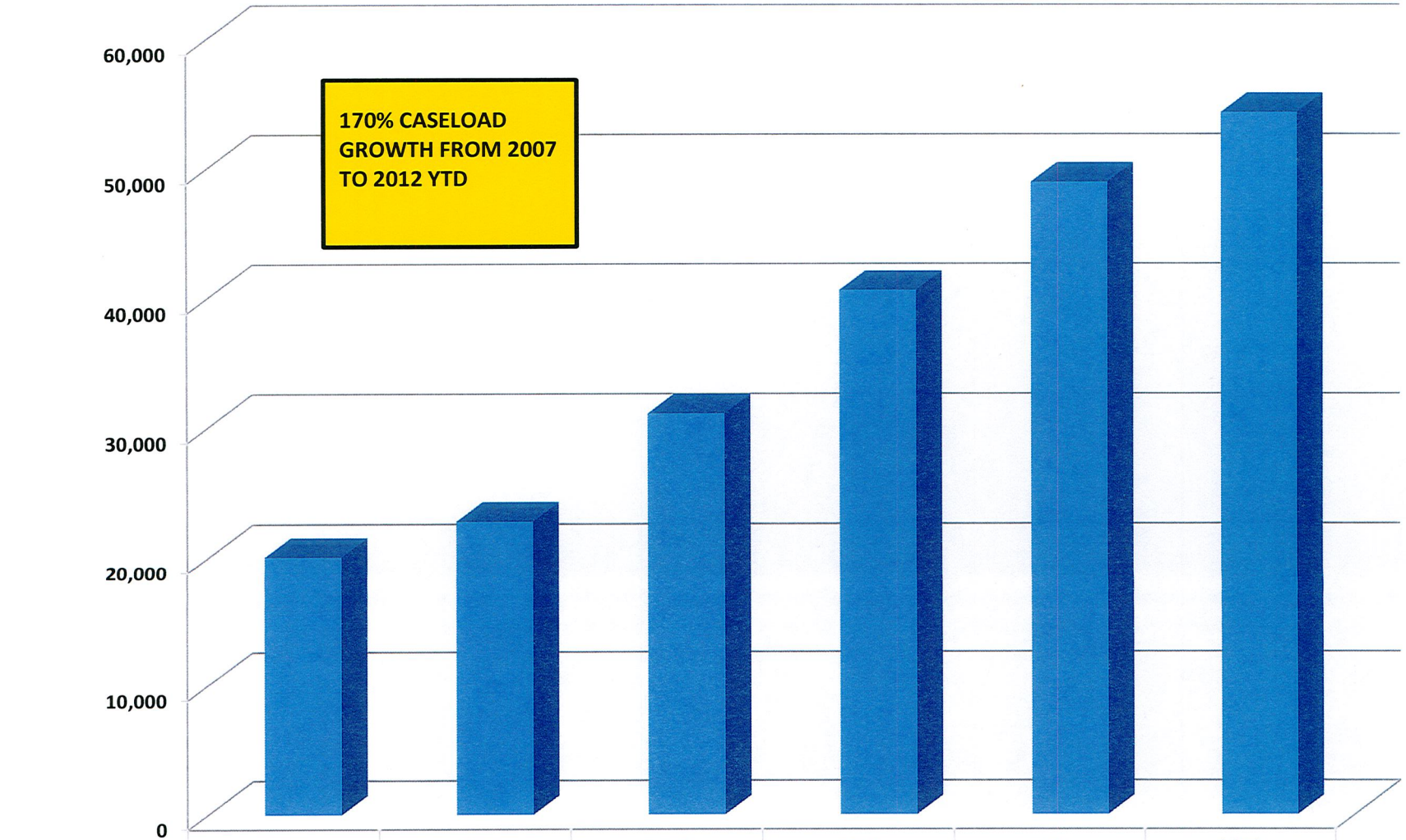
•Child Abuse Hotline 1 (800) 342-3720

•Abandoned Infant Information 1 (866) TLC-BABY or 1 (866) 852-2229

•Adult Protective Intake (631) 854-3195, (631) 854-3196, (631) 854-3197

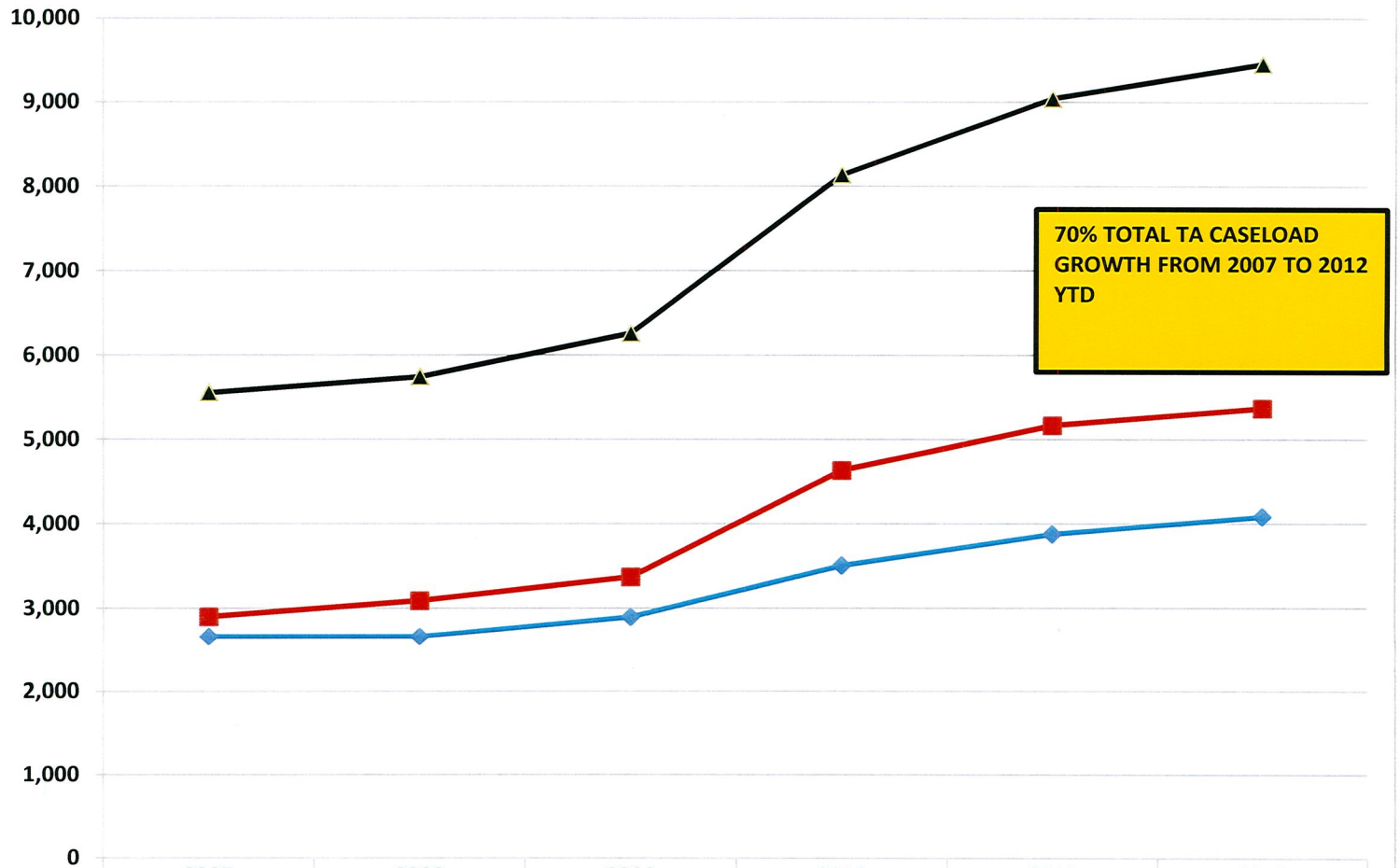

Suffolk County Department of Social Services
Commissioner Gregory J. Blass
Commissioner's Advisory Council
Chief Deputy Commissioner
Vacant
Deputy Commissioner
John O'Neill
Assistant to the Commissioner
Linda O'Donohoe
Public Affairs
Roland Hampson
Finance
Kenneth Knappe
Housing
Robin Barnett
Information Technology
Theresa Pace
Personnel
Traci Barnes
Child Support
Enforcement Bureau
James Farrell
Family and Children
Services Division
Dennis Nowak
Medicaid Services
Division
Jane Smith
Client Benefits
Division
Kimberly Staab

KEY METRIC CBA- NON-TEMPORARY ASSISTANCE- FOOD STAMP CASELOAD TREND 2007 TO 2012



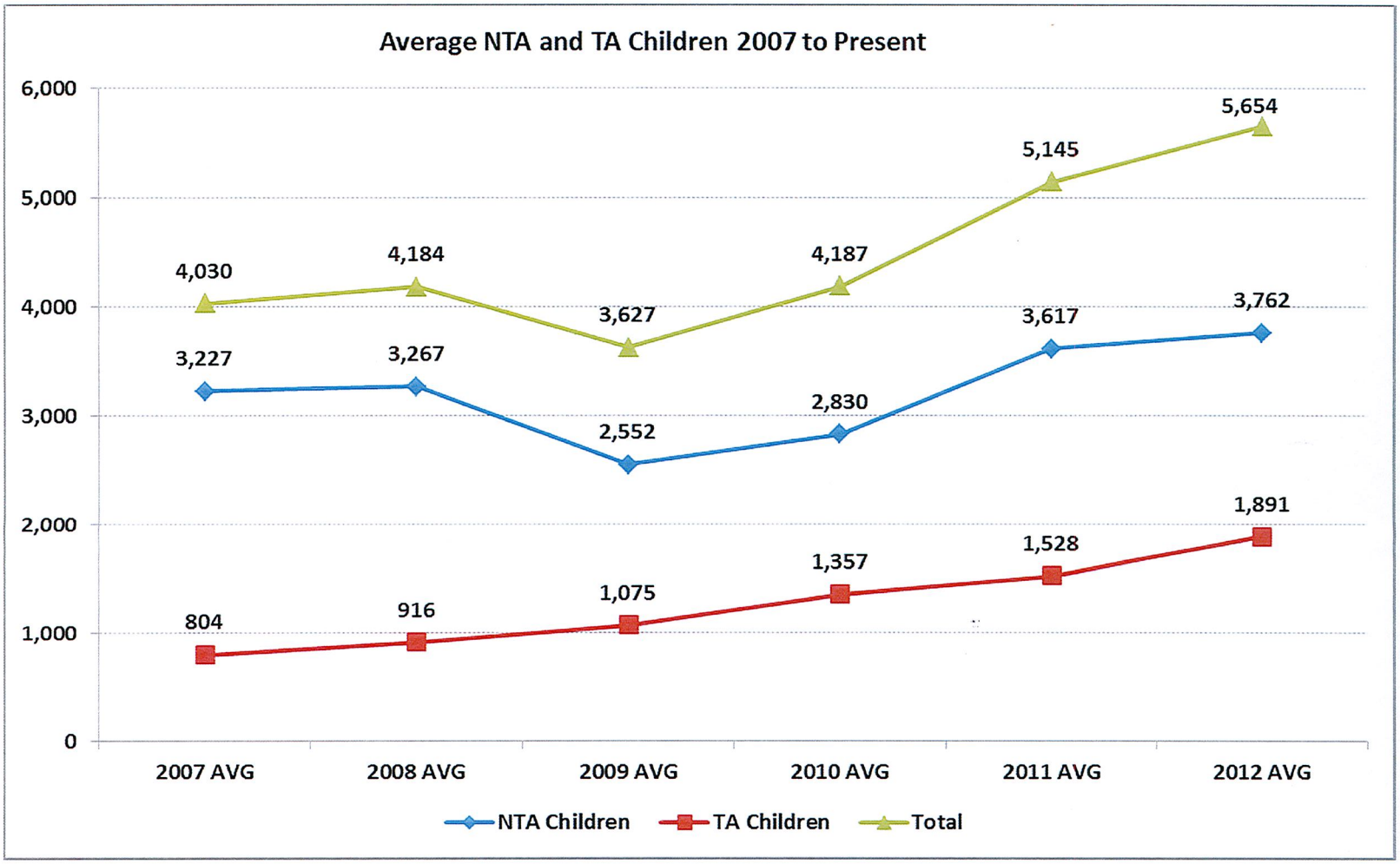
	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
NTA-FS Caseload	20,095	22,835	31,097	40,591	48,930	54,303

KEY METRIC CLIENT BENEFITS ADMINISTRATION- FAMILY ASSISTANCE AND SAFETY NET TREND 2007 TO 2012

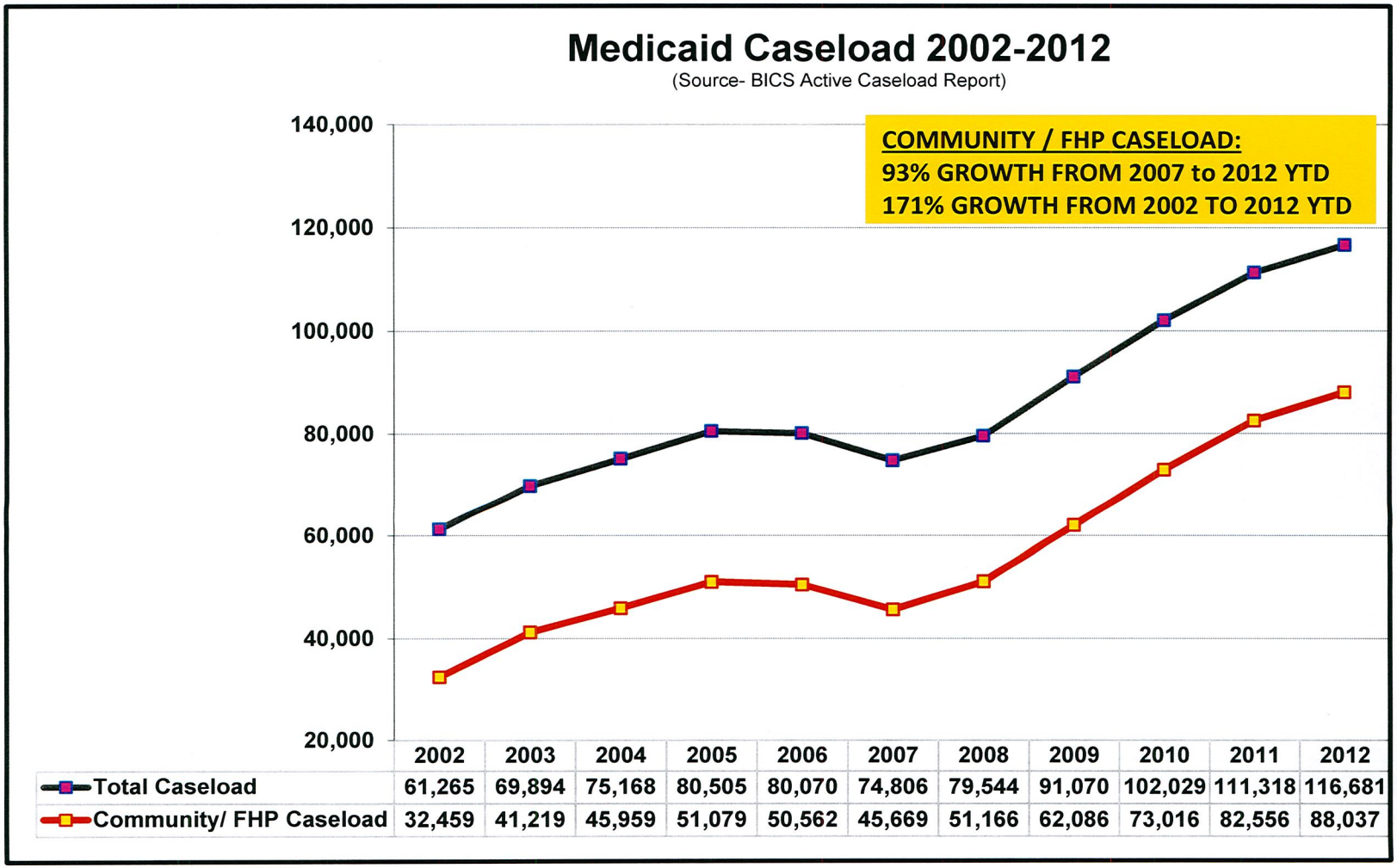


	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
FA	2,655	2,656	2,892	3,503	3,874	4,082
SN (Combined)	2,898	3,086	3,368	4,632	5,165	5,369
Total TA Caseload	5,553	5,742	6,260	8,136	9,039	9,450

KEY METRIC CBA -CHILD CARE TREND 2007 TO 2012

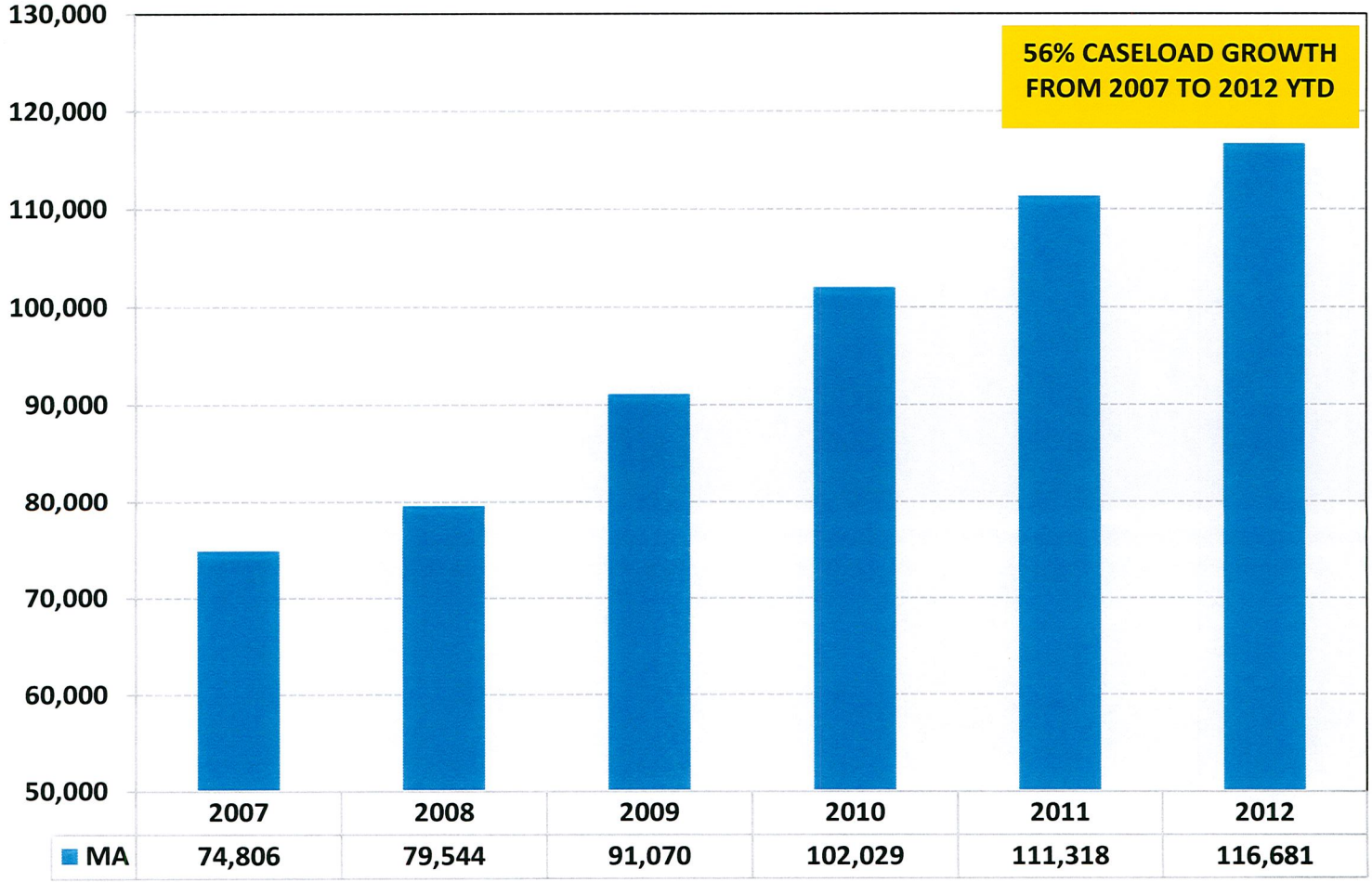


MEDICAID – GROWTH DRIVEN BY COMMUNITY/ FHP CASES

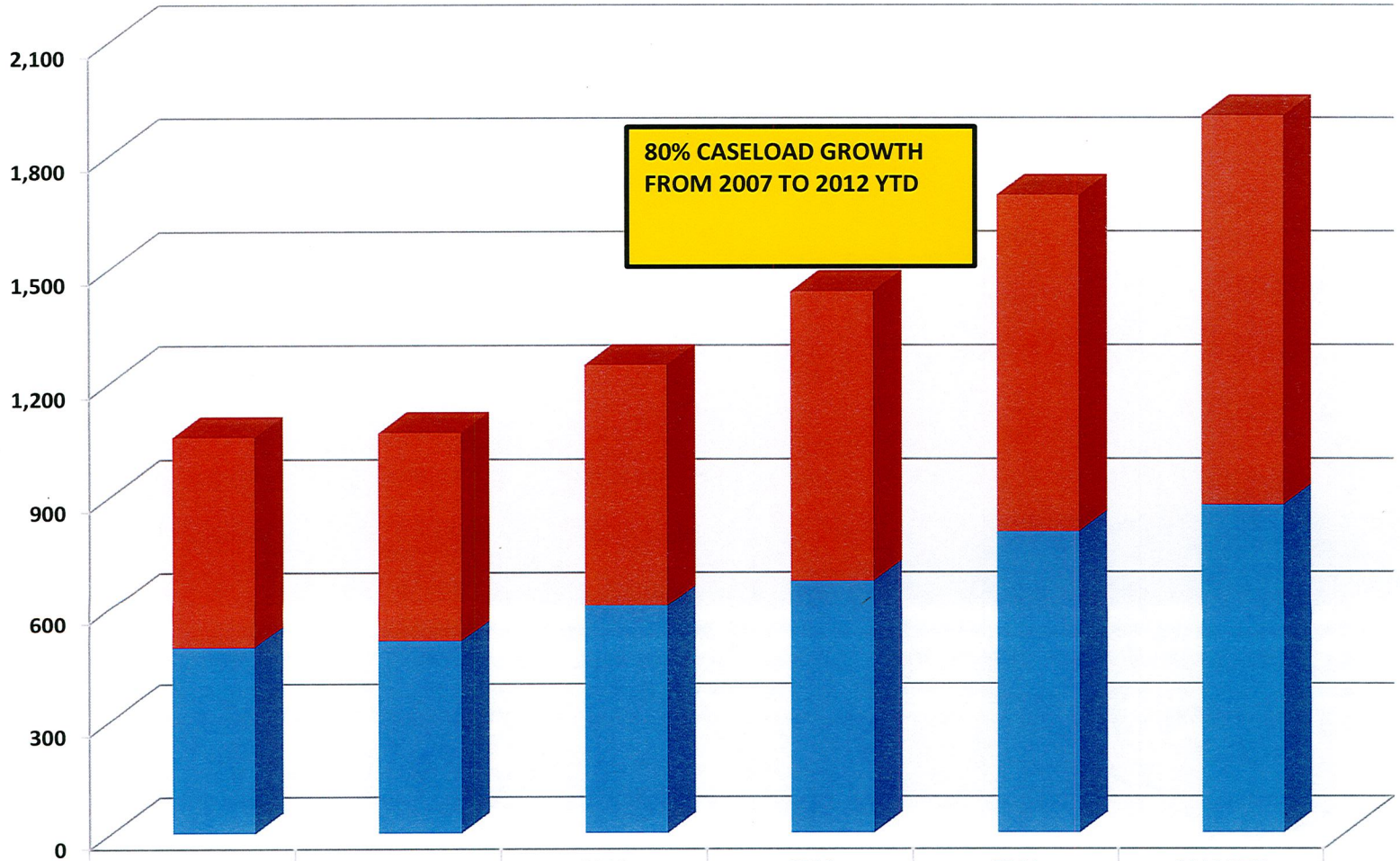


	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
Total Caseload	61,265	69,894	75,168	80,505	80,070	74,806	79,544	91,070	102,029	111,318	116,681
Community/ FHP Caseload	32,459	41,219	45,959	51,079	50,562	45,669	51,166	62,086	73,016	82,556	88,037

MEDICAID – CASELOAD TREND 2007 TO 2012

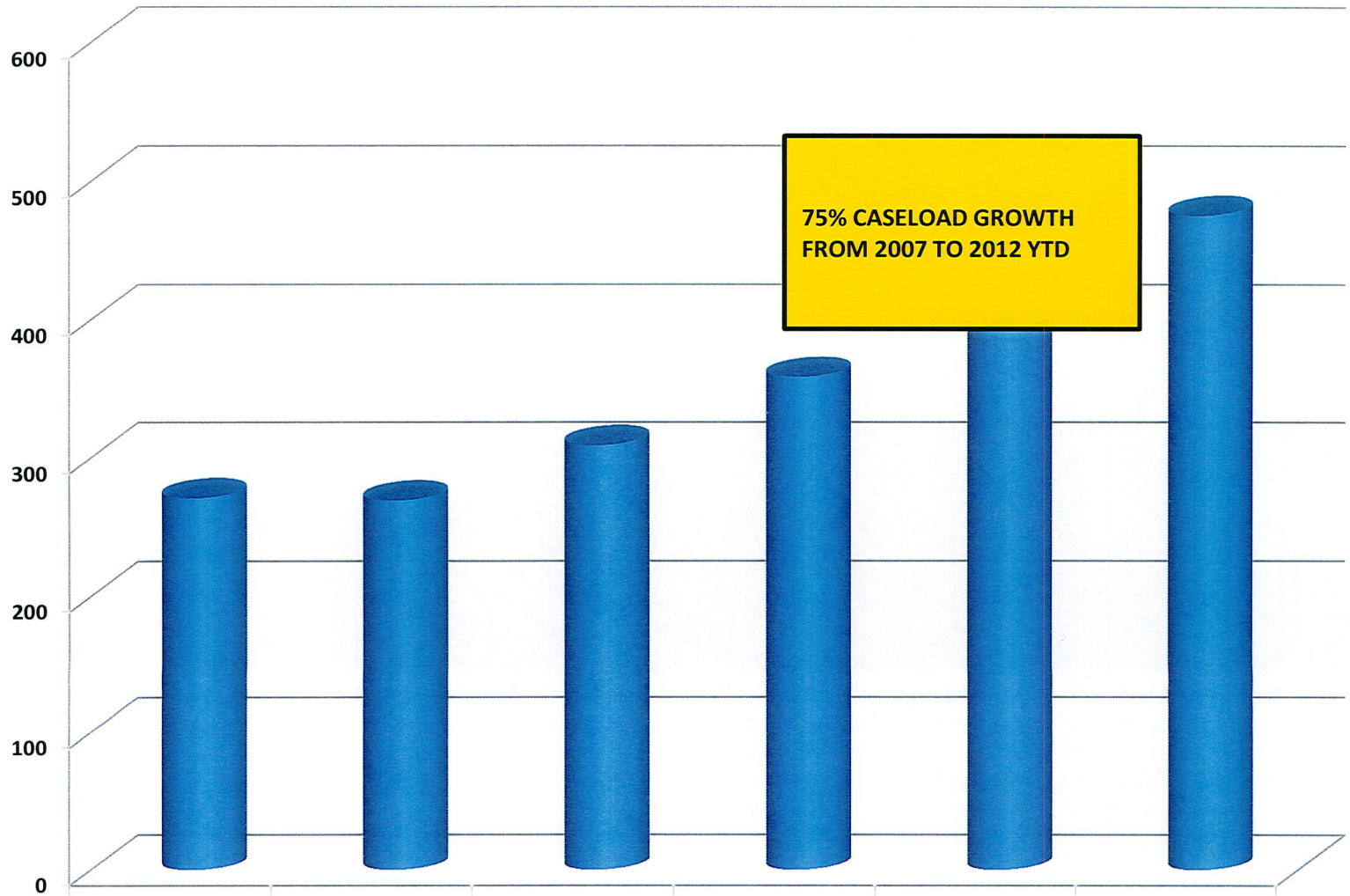


KEY METRIC HOUSING- EMERGENCY HOUSING TREND 2007 TO 2012

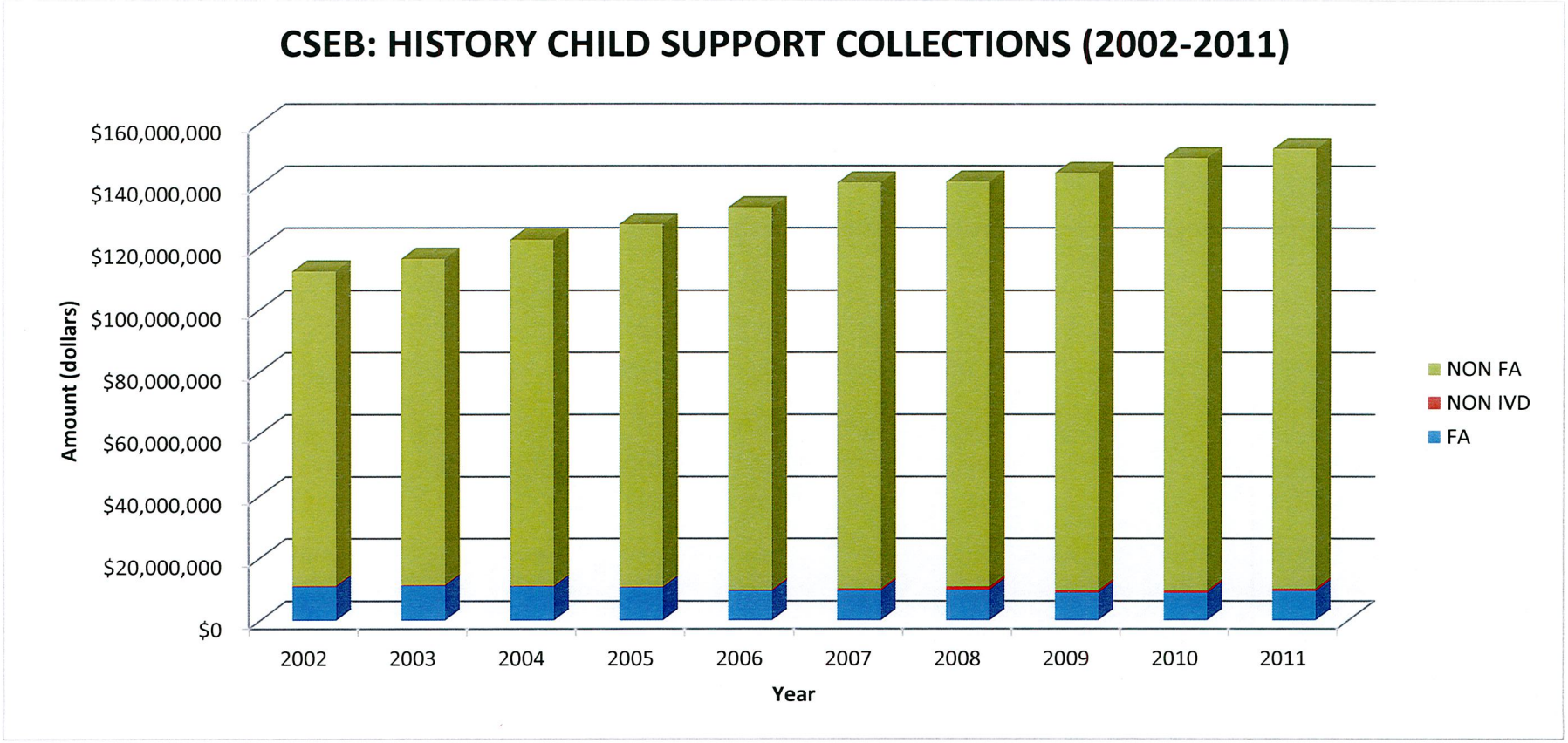


	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012 YTD
Children	561	557	639	766	890	1,030
Adults	494	510	606	673	804	874

KEY METRIC HOUSING-HOMELESS FAMILIES TREND 2007 TO 2012

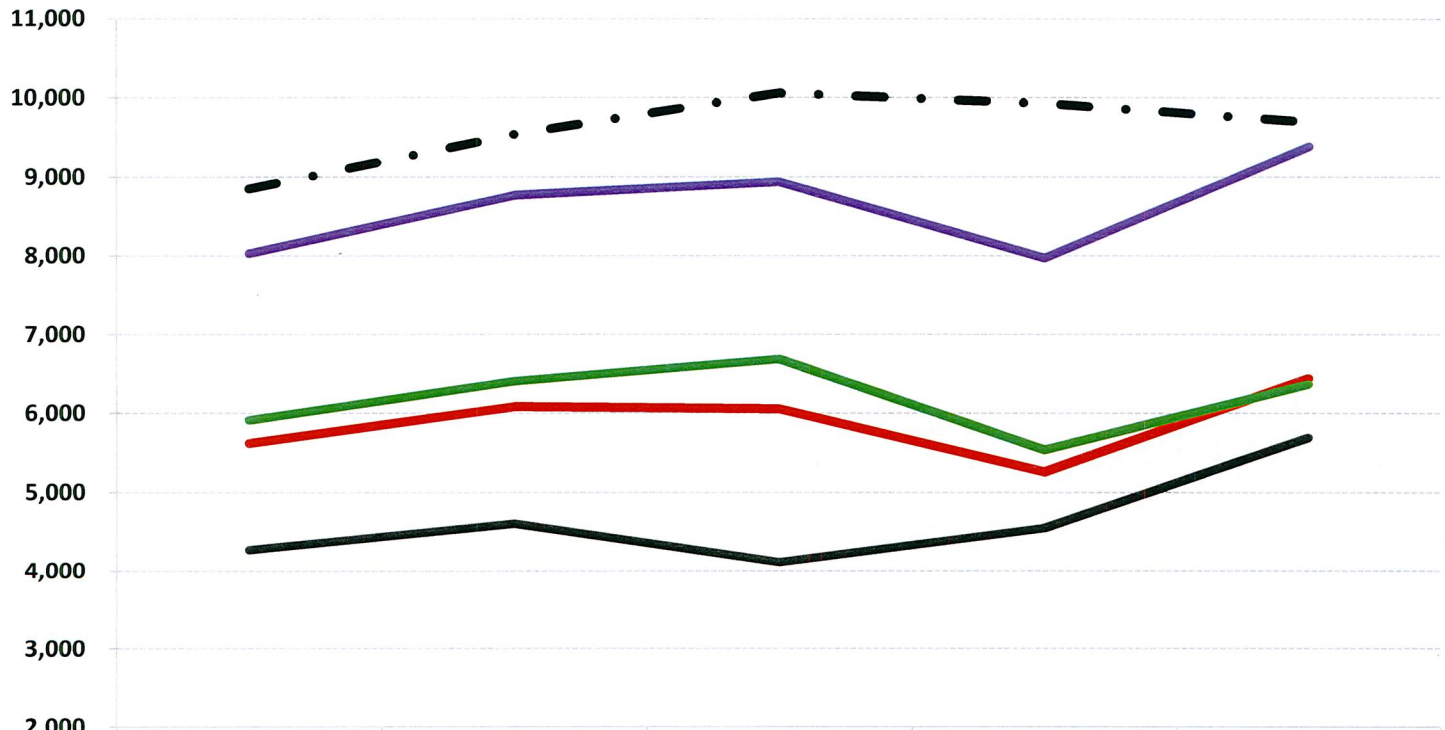


	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012 YTD
Avg Families	271	270	309	359	431	476



Year	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
Total FA & NFA	$112,148,257	$116,147,675	$122,327,358	$127,266,399	$132,527,121	$140,247,497	$140,151,107	$143,213,605	$148,137,979	$151,158,213
NON FA	$101,237,219	$104,956,532	$111,349,548	$116,578,959	$123,002,267	$130,648,702	$130,299,023	$134,291,444	$139,279,901	$141,736,784
NON IVD	$195,820	$167,440	$133,870	$133,748	$321,590	$584,770	$988,760	$767,422	$695,066	$736,649

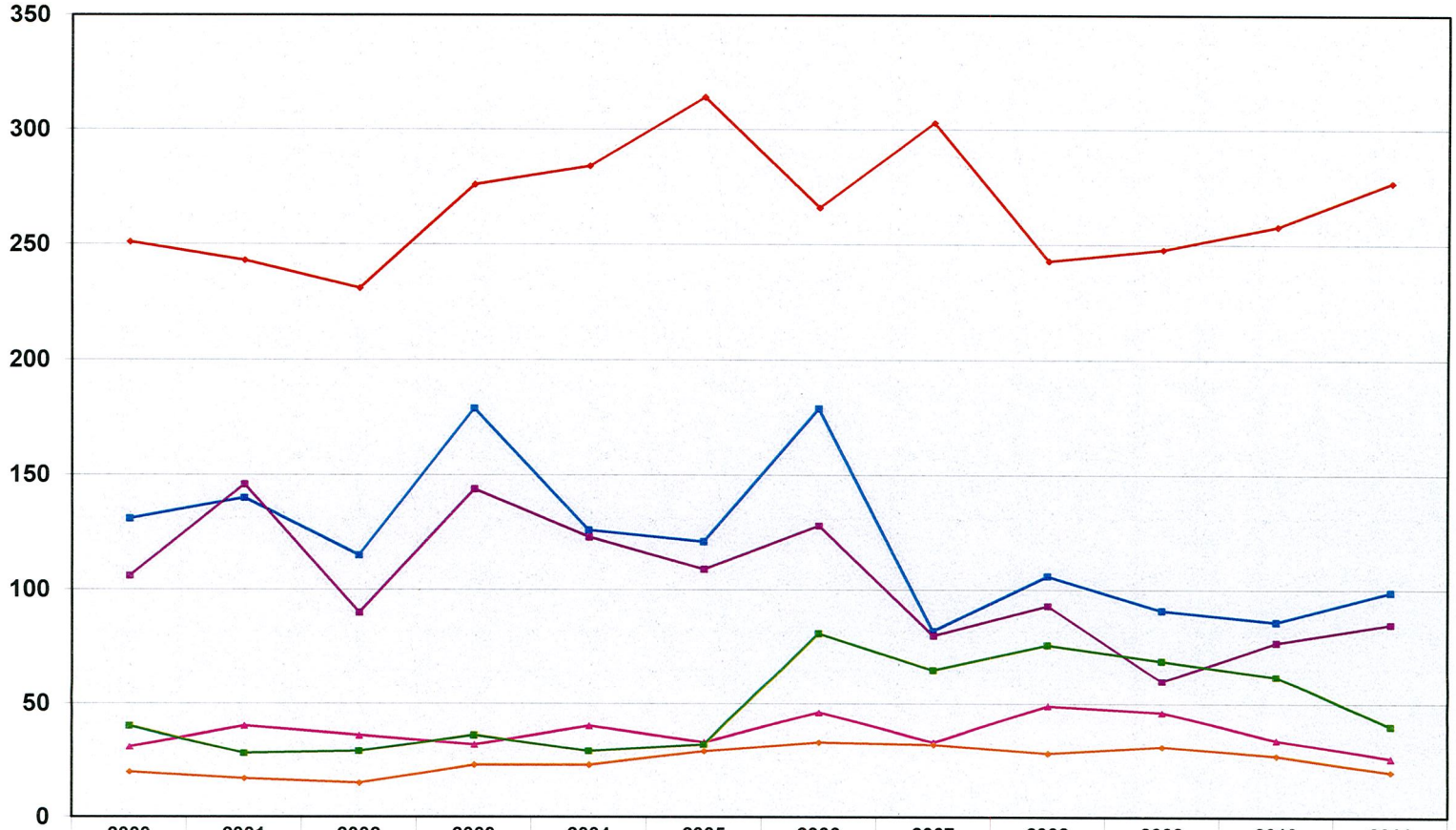
KEY METRIC - CPS ANNUAL # OF CALLS RECEIVED 2007 TO 2011



	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
Suffolk	8,847	9,534	10,057	9,926	9,691
Erie	8,027	8,762	8,932	7,966	9,382
Monroe	5,618	6,081	6,052	5,255	6,443
Nassau	5,910	6,404	6,686	5,535	6,366
Onondaga	4,270	4,604	4,114	4,549	5,689

Children Discharged - By Discharge Reason: 2000 - 2011

(Source: NYS OCFS Discharges From Foster Care Summary Report)



	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
Return to Parent	251	243	231	276	284	314	266	303	243	248	258	277
Release to Relative	131	140	115	179	126	121	179	82	106	91	86	99
Release to Own Responsibility	31	40	36	32	40	33	46	33	49	46	34	26
Adoption	106	146	90	144	123	109	128	80	93	60	77	85
Trial Discharge	20	17	15	23	23	29	33	32	28	31	27	20
Other (incl. Order of Court)	40	28	29	36	29	32	81	65	76	69	62	40
Total Children Discharged	579	614	516	690	625	638	733	595	595	545	544	547

NOTE: Due to delays in systems data entry, current and sometimes prior year figures are subject to change.

Foster Care Trends (Admissions / Discharges / In Care): 2000 - 2011

(Source: NYS OCFS Datawarehouse)

	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
# Children Admitted	565	556	562	635	578	523	608	434	502	515	462	447
# Children Discharged	579	614	516	690	625	638	733	595	595	545	545	547
# Children In Care at EOY	1069	1038	1102	1078	1062	977	896	768	720	742	700	630

NOTE: Due to delays in systems data entry, current and sometimes prior year figures are subject to change.

The Suffolk County Department of Social Services

Gregory J. Blass, Commissioner

3085 Veterans Memorial Hwy

Ronkonkoma, NY 11779

Phone: (631) 854-9935

Fax: (631) 854-9996

Service Center Hours: Monday – Friday 8:00AM - 3:00PM, excluding county holiday closures

Emergency Numbers

You can always call 911 in any emergency.

DSS Emergency Services Hotline (after 4:30 PM & Weekends): (631) 854-9100

In the event of specific emergencies, please call:

•Child Abuse Hotline 1 (800) 342-3720

•Abandoned Infant Information 1 (866) TLC-BABY or 1 (866) 852-2229

•Adult Protective Intake (631) 854-3195, (631) 854-3196, (631) 854-3197