



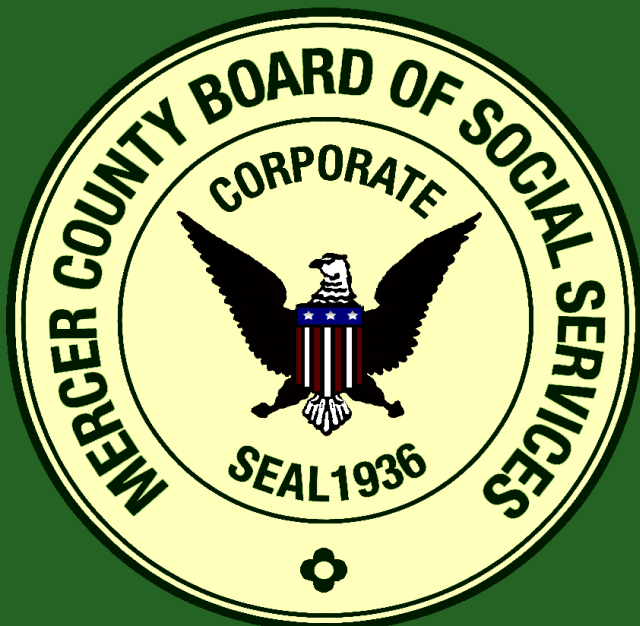
2023

ANNUAL

REPORT

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MERCER COUNTY BOARD OF SOCIAL SERVICES

200 WOOLVERTON STREET

PO BOX 1450

TRENTON, NJ 08650-2099

Telephone: (609) 989-4320

Fax: (609) 394-6638

Website: <http://www.mcboss.org>

Jeffrey M. Mascoll
Director of Welfare



Brian M. Hughes
County Executive
2004 - 2023



The Mercer County Board of Social Services (MCBOSS) has benefited from a long-standing relationship with the County of Mercer. Over the past twenty years, the Hughes Administration championed numerous initiatives to improve the quality of life in Mercer’s communities. In the last two years, MCBOSS partnered with the County through several programs to ensure that the essential needs of Mercer’s residents were met.

In collaboration with the Mercer County Department of Human Services, MCBOSS executed the Emergency Rental Assistance Program (ERAP), which enabled over 2,400 individuals & families to receive assistance with rental and utility expenses which prevented eviction and homelessness. This program successfully concluded in 2023. Furthermore, the partnership with the Mercer County Correctional Center and the Mercer County Department of Human Services enabled over 80 returning citizens’ access the services necessary to make a successful transition back into the community. Ultimately, the cooperation between the Mercer County Office on Aging and MCBOSS aided and supported the immediate needs of at-risk seniors in our community experiencing neglect, abuse or exploitation.

“As you might know, my career began in Human Services, and I believe that government’s first job is to provide a safety net for the neediest and most vulnerable.” As County Executive, Brian Hughes continually recognized the importance of the work that is done at MCBOSS and has publicly stated how proud he was of the work that was completed by MCBOSS employees throughout the pandemic. The essential services provided by MCBOSS enrich the lives of the neediest residents in our community. “As I conclude my term in office on December 31, 2023, I remain dedicated to improving our county and making sure that everyone’s voice is heard.”



MERCER COUNTY BOARD OF SOCIAL SERVICES

200 WOOLVERTON STREET
PO BOX 1450
TRENTON, NJ 08650-2099

Keith V. Hamilton
Chairman



Jeffrey M. Mascoll
Director of Welfare

Dear Friends,

The following pages contain the Mercer County Board of Social Services' Annual Report. This report highlights information on the Board's activities during 2023 and outlines some of the goals as well as challenges expected in 2024. The Board has been serving the vulnerable citizens of Mercer County since 1932. The last ninety plus years have seen a multitude of changes in technology, regulations, programs, and population but the steadfast commitment to providing economic and social services to individuals and families in need remains constant.

The members who serve on the governing Board of MCBOSS have a fiduciary responsibility to the residents of Mercer County to use public funds prudently and efficiently. The members work diligently to ensure that all assistance programs are administered properly and that the agency consistently operates in the best interests of the customers, community and staff.

Despite the uncertainty the unwinding from the public health emergency continues to bring, I am confident that the employees of MCBOSS will treat every customer with dignity, respect, compassion, and professionalism. I encourage you to read the 2023 Annual Report and familiarize yourself with all of the programs offered through the Mercer County Board of Social Services. Together with our community and governmental partners we continue to strive to meet the needs of all Mercer County residents.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Keith V. Hamilton".

Keith V. Hamilton,
Chairman



MERCER COUNTY BOARD OF SOCIAL SERVICES

200 WOOLVERTON STREET

PO BOX 1450

TRENTON, NJ 08650-2099

Jeffrey M. Mascoll
Director of Welfare



TELEPHONE
609.989.4494

Dear Family and Friends,

2023 will be remembered both as a Transitional year and a year of New Beginnings! The concept of “Unwinding” was born and came to maturity in 2023! After 3 years of benefit entitlements being issued under Covid-19 flexibilities and waivers, the Federal Omnibus Bill delinked the receipt of maximum continuous benefits to the end of the Public Health Emergency. 1Q-23 witnessed the beginning of reevaluation and reestablishment of benefit entitlements back to pre-pandemic levels.

Accordingly, the Covid Saga Continued for MCBOS! The staff have literally worked nonstop since Covid brought about the overwhelming demand for services in 2020. Fast forward 3 years, the staff now have the daunting task of ending Maximum SNAP allotments and ratcheting back contiguous & unending Medicaid eligibility. Throughout this very difficult period, the MCBOS Staff have been truly outstanding! We Thank them for their Service! They have consistently exceeded my expectations and I am very proud of their accomplishments!

Moreover, 2023 was the year in which Dan Benson was elected as the New County Executive after the unprecedented 5 time elected tenure of Brian Hughes. Throughout his 20 years in office, the Hughes Administration has been a champion of social justice, a staunch supporter of a better quality of life for all Mercer Residents and a resolute advocate for reducing homelessness for individuals and families in Mercer County. We cannot Thank Brian Hughes enough for always supporting the safety net for the most vulnerable residents of Mercer County!

Moving forward, we look forward to working with the new administration conceptualizing new, innovative, and creative solutions to Mercer’s most perplexing societal problems. I would be remiss if I did not also take this opportunity to Thank our Board for their continued support and our Community Partners for the partnership we share! Working together, I am confident in the future of Mercer County and that the best is yet to come!

Gratefully yours,

Jeffrey M. Mascoll
Director of Welfare



BOARD MEMBERS



Front row, left to right:

J. Delores Baker, Secretary-Treasurer, Jeffrey M. Mascoll, Director of Welfare, Keith V. Hamilton, Chairperson, Christine O'Brien, Vice-Chairperson

Back row left to right:

Paul R. Adezio, County Adjuster, Terrance Stokes, County Commissioner, Margaret Lewallen, Deputy Director of Welfare, Lucylle R.S. Walter, County Commissioner, Eduardo Gittens, Board Member



LEADERSHIP



Jeffrey M. Mascoll
Director



Margaret Lewallen
Deputy Director



Gerald De Lorenzo
Human Services Coordinator



Scott Thompson
Income Maintenance/Case Banking



Geralyn A. Schneider
Finance



Lee E. Micai
Management Information Systems



Michael Danbury
General Services



CORE VALUES & PLEDGE OF SERVICE

- * We are: **A TEAM** - Maximize Diversity
- * We are: **A FAMILY** - Family First
- * We are: **LEADERS** - We love and care for each other
- * We are: **PROFESSIONALS** - Meet / Exceed Expectations
- * We have: **RESPECT** - Follow the Golden Rule
- * We have: **INTEGRITY** - Do the RIGHT thing
- * We have: **RHYTHM** - In order to hit our stride

WE WILL SELFLESSLY SACRIFICE - The Customer & The Agency come first

WE WILL TRANSFORM - Adaptive/Cohesive/Resilient

WE WILL PLAN - Early & Often to stay in rhythm

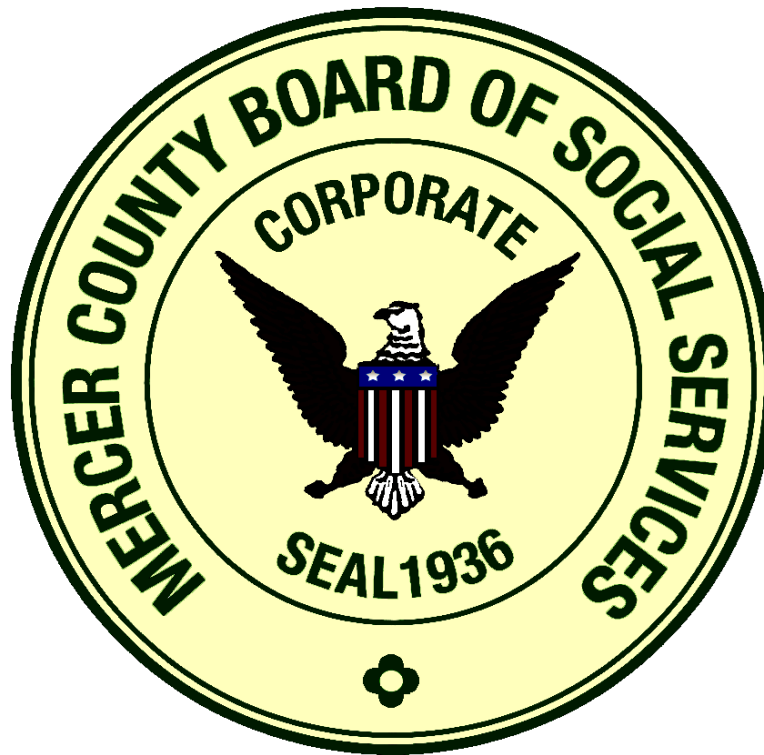
SAFETY IS PARAMOUNT S.T.O.P.P. - Stop. Think. Observe. Plan. Proceed.

OUR PLEDGE OF SERVICE

- * To service you in a timely, courteous and efficient manner.
- * To provide you an opportunity to ask questions regarding benefits and programs or services that are available.
- * To answer any questions regarding benefits, programs or services and have the program explained to you in a manner that will help you understand program benefits and requirements.
- * To provide written notification if your benefits are reduced or discontinued.
- * To keep all the information you provide private and confidential.
- * To provide immediate and/or emergency assistance benefits where applicable. If you can demonstrate you are in immediate need when you apply, you have the right to immediate assistance while your application is being processed.
- * To offer you the opportunity to examine your case file in accordance with the Open Public Records Act.
- * To offer you a fair hearing if you disagree with any action taken on your case or the agency does not respond to your application.



HISTORICAL FACTS



Mercer County Welfare Board was established in 1932 under the authority of New Jersey Statues Annotated (NJSA)44.

**In February 1979,
Mercer County Welfare Board was renamed,
Mercer County Board of Social Services.**



Directors

Richard Dougherty
Patrick Magee
Dennis Micai
Frank Cirillo
Barbara Buckley
Jeffrey Mascoll

Deputy Directors

Helen Wolf
Joseph Ramus
Joyce Gallagher
William R. Krisak
Barbara Buckley
Margaret Lewallen

The Child Support and Paternity Department (CSP) began in 1975 with the enactment of (Title IVD) of the Social Security Act for the purpose of establishing and enforcing support obligations owed by non-custodial parents to their children.

The Food Stamp Act of 1977 (PL 88-525) authorized the Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) to experiment with alternative methods for the delivery of Food Stamp Program (FSP) benefits. Hence, the Electronic Benefits Transfer (EBT) card took the place of food stamp coupons in August 1997.

In 1996, Congress passed the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act (PRWORA) which led to federal changes in public assistance programs.

There were four stated goals:

- * Provide assistance to needy families so that children may be cared for in their own homes or in the homes of relatives.
- * End the dependence of needy parents on government benefits by promoting job preparation, work and marriage.
- * Prevent and reduce the incidence of out-of-wedlock pregnancies and establish numerical goals for preventing and reducing the incident of teen pregnancies.
- * Encourage the formation and maintenance of two-parent families.

Consolidation of Municipal General Assistance Program with Mercer County Board of Social Services began in 1998 and was successfully completed in June 1999.



DIRECTOR'S REPORT



Jeffrey M. Mascoll
Director

2023 truly represented a turning point in the COVID saga for Mercer County Board of Social Services (MCBOSS). “Unwinding” was born, experienced growing pains, and quickly matured in 2023. Internally and in short, “Unwinding” was coined to represent the reevaluation and ratcheting back of maximum SNAP benefit entitlements and years of continuous Medicaid eligibility due to COVID flexibilities and waivers. Externally, “Unwinding” also represented recovery, restoration, and reconnection to our Community Partners in which relationships were physically severed throughout the duration of the Public Health Emergency (PHE).

MCBOSS is incorporated to provide benefits and services to the citizens of Mercer County, thereby enriching their lives individually and collectively. As difficult and challenging as “Unwinding” manifested itself to be, MCBOSS forged ahead with our Business Plan and in our quest to charter new beginnings and Return to Normalcy. Despite working unprecedented overtime to accomplish our objectives in 2023, we remained true to our Core Values and steadfast in our Mission to assist the most vulnerable and be the safety net in the community.



We are proud of all our successes and pleased to be able to share the highlights here with you in this Annual Report. I trust you will find the report insightful in better understanding the full range of services available to the residents of Mercer County.



2023 Year in Review

2023 started out filled with “Unwinding Uncertainty”. Despite “Unwinding” predictions not materializing from the preceding year, the strong expectation was that it was now on the horizon. As a result, the MCBOSS staff was trained and prepared for the consequences of the ratcheting back of COVID-19 benefit entitlements. Furthermore, the prepping of our Community Partners that provide supplementary services such as food banks and soup kitchens, and the society at large proved to be a herculean task. The volume of phone calls and physical visits into MCBOSS reached unprecedented proportions. The ERAP program was also ending mid-year which had a further destabilizing effect.

Customer Service has always been a priority at MCBOSS. To effectively deal with “Unwinding Uncertainty” and the public outcry, critical agency departments were targeted for optimization. Due to the Call Center being inundated with phone calls, data analytics and business processes were reviewed with an eye toward collective service delivery improvement. Additionally, staff retraining was instituted, new interpreters were hired, and new processes implemented both in the Case Bank and Medicaid Departments to bolster being able to effectively handle the increased call volume and foot traffic. I am extremely proud of Team MCBOSS! MCBOSS employees rose to the occasion and weathered the storm.

Visualizing the future enables us to set aside outdated business practices and prepare ourselves to be more relevant for the 21st Century. Internally, the replacement of paper timesheets with the implementation of an electronic time and attendance system was executed. Despite being challenged with “Unwinding Uncertainty”, significant time was spent conceptualizing, configuring, piloting, testing, training, and implementing the electronic time, attendance, and “move to payroll” system. Moreover, the upgrading of the Asset Management System was incorporated. Externally, the state announced the development of the Cash Assistance Program Eligibility System (CAPES) intended to eventually replace both the GA and FAMIS eligibility systems.

The overriding theme in 2023 was undeniably the PHE Unwinding. Other themes prioritized included Safety, Resiliency, and Health and Wellness. Interestingly and concurrently, MCBOSS continued to witness an increase in the demand for new services as COVID extended services were being scaled back. Additionally, an unprecedented volume of phone calls continued to cascade into the Call Center at year end. We continue to recommend to our customers that they take care of business virtually. That said, we are the Board of Social Services and safety net for Mercer County. For those needing to be serviced in person, it is our pleasure in order to be able to do just that!



Challenges and Goals for 2024

2024 truly represents a New Beginning in Mercer County! I would be remiss if I didn't take a moment to recognize our former County Executive Brian Hughes and his 20 years of tireless devotion to improving the quality of life for the residents of Mercer County. I am also excited for our new County Executive Dan Benson as he charts a New Beginning in Mercer County. We look forward to working with the New Administration as we work together improving the continuum of integrated programs and services existing for individuals and families living in Mercer County.

MCBOSS prides itself in providing a wide array of services in concert with our community partners for the benefit of Mercer County residents. My expectation is that we will see the conclusion of "Unwinding" in 2024. "Unwinding" truly representing restoration and recovery. Restoration of programs and services along Federal and State statutory guidelines and Recovery from a pandemic that amplified the inequities and needs of the working poor experienced in housing, health-care, and food insecurity.

MCBOSS will be working in partnership with the Trenton / Mercer Continuum of Care in 2024 to strengthen our Partnerships and Systems designed to protect those most vulnerable in society. The most persistent socio-economic problems will be critically analyzed, the scope narrowed, and targeted action planning put in place. In terms of poverty, Trenton ranks one of the highest communities in Mercer County. For these most disenfranchised members of our communities, herein lies new opportunities for change, growth, shelter, food, case management, and services.

Despite these challenges, MCBOSS continues to be a leader within the community and a source of refuge for our customers. 2024 provides us with a new opportunity to network with our community partners, faith based organizations, and non-profits to extend our Continuum of Care (CoC). Our goals are to sustain viable programs and solutions and to launch new opportunities for individuals and families. It is our core mission to assist those most at risk and most vulnerable in society that bonds, unites, and drives us forward. Together, let us move into 2024 with renewed Vim, Vigor, and Vitality!

An extract of our 2024 Business Plan is highlighted below:

- A. Successfully complete unwinding from pandemic related benefits.
- B. Develop benchmarks for performance in all Departments in an effort to improve efficiency and productivity. These improvements should ultimately optimize the delivery of services to our customers.
- C. Launch employee of the quarter program.

I am proud to present the Mercer County Board of Social Services 2023 Annual Report. Thank you to our Staff, the Board, Mercer County Human Services, DHS, DFD, DMAHS, and our Community Partners for making it all possible!



Director's Medal



**Tiona Edge
Social Worker**



Bringing it HOME Tiona Edge, BA '22

Scholarship support and a weather-proof resolve helped Tiona Edge cross the undergraduate degree finish line. She now joins 80,000 TESU alumni who proudly overcome educational barriers while elevating their communities and making their families stronger.

As a single mother of five, Edge also knows the value of perseverance. She earned her BA degree in Psychology in June 2022 after working toward that goal for years with the help of funding support that stretched her progression. Edge was awarded a \$10,000 scholarship from The Albert M. Stark Scholarship Fund that was established for students who demonstrate academic promise and financial need.

"I know I will be an asset to my employer as well as my community with my degree. I am the type of person whose objectives have never connected to personal gain, but to the success of others," she said. "The scholarship support helped me complete my degree, six years after I started my studies - all while raising my children and balancing multiple responsibilities."

In Trenton, NJ. With her new residential, she was able to secure her "dream job" of helping adults on the state's General Assistance (Welfare NJ) program to work toward self-sufficiency. Offering them the necessary tools and resources, she coordinates with third-party vendors to provide program participants with mental counseling, substance abuse counseling and housing and connects them with community programs that provide basic skills, life skills, diploma/GED programs and hands-on vocational skills training.

"These combined efforts provide our clients with the tools they need to lead productive lives. I am grateful to be able to return what I owe to my local community. It is an honor to say that I am a product of my environment and have that statement stand for something positive. I am proud as a Trenton native, and someone who was educated in the Trenton educational system, to receive a degree from an accredited university in my hometown," she said. "My children are now enrolled in a great charter school that promotes higher education and, as a university graduate, I am now the example they see at home."

The Albert M. Stark Scholarship Fund has already benefited four other TESU students working toward their degree. The scholarship's namesake was inspired by Edge's governmental spirit and commitment to her community.

"When I met Tiona, I met a woman with the heart and passion to make a difference not only for herself and her family but for the lives of others in her community,"

she added. "It was challenging but did it. I am very grateful to everyone in the TESU community who made this possible."

Edge hopes to motivate

feel they may not have the time or energy to pursue a degree.

"I truly hope my story inspires others, especially those in my community who feel as though they're in a thick wall in their career path or academic pursuits," added Edge. "Subsequent to there, it's a great right in our backyard."

To learn more about programs in the Hanes School of Arts, Science, and Technology, visit www.tesu.edu/learn.



DEPUTY DIRECTOR'S REPORT



Margaret Lewallen
Deputy Director

The Office of the Deputy Director coordinates the program operations for the social service programs administered by the Board. The program services division is comprised of three administrative departments working together to produce a coordinated and unified service plan that strives to meet the needs of every individual who requests assistance. The Case Bank Department, the Medicaid Department and the Social Services Department work in collaboration to provide assistance to all citizens of Mercer County and our community partners. Dedicated staff work to meet the various needs of our customers in a competent, compassionate, efficient, and professional environment.

The year 2023 was a year full of challenges and opportunities at MCBOSS. The program areas continued several ongoing projects while also focusing on the unwinding of the public health emergency which officially ended in May, 2023. The Case Bank Department and Social Services Department continued their participation with the Mercer County Department of Human Services and the Mercer County Correction Center under the Returning Citizens to the Community Program (RCCP) which assists individuals returning to the community following incarceration. The goal of the program is to meet all financial, nutritional, medical, housing, and counseling needs of the individual so that this vulnerable population has the tools and support they need to become self-sufficient and avoid re-incarceration. As the liaison for this program, the Management Specialist at MCBOSS handled 83 referrals in 2023.

The Social Services Department continued their partnership with Mercer County Human Services to successfully close out the Emergency Rental Assistance Program (ERAP-2) to households who fell behind on rent or utility payments due to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. From inception, this program provided nearly \$16 million in assistance, helping 2,400 individuals avoid eviction and utility shut-offs.



The Medicaid Department began the unwind of the extended Medicaid benefits which were provided throughout the public health emergency. In April, 2023, the annual renewal process resumed requiring all 22,000 active Medicaid cases receive a new eligibility determination. Despite the increased workload, the department successfully maintained timeliness levels which maximized the funding available under the 2023 Memorandum of Understanding with the Department of Human Services, Division of Medical Assistance.

The Case Bank Department processed over 20 thousand applications for the Supplemental Nutritional Assistance Program (SNAP) and Work First New Jersey (WFNJ) cash assistance in 2023. In an effort to meet the demand for assistance, some process changes were made within the department that improved timeliness and delivery of services. Unfortunately, 2023 saw the first reports from customers that their SNAP or cash benefits had been stolen due to skimming. This was a new form of fraudulent activity that our Fraud Department investigated and addressed. Once approval was received from the Department of Human Services Division of Family Development, nearly \$55, 000.00 in benefits were replaced for customers.

Department Achievements in 2023

- * Staff serviced 55,000 customers in person in our reception area in 2023. This represents a 200% increase in comparison to 2022.
- * Call Center agents handled over 163,000 calls in 2023 and the process improvements made within the Case Bank Department resulted in an overall increase in Call Center efficiency and a decrease in wait times.
- * Customer requests for assistance with shelter expenses and housing increased by 200% in 2023. Any customers who were ineligible for Emergency Assistance were given information and referrals for other resources in the area.
- * Due to the unwinding of the public health emergency, the increased volume of work in the Medicaid programs resulted in over 8,800 new Medicaid applications being processed and 12,000 ongoing Medicaid cases being redetermined.



Challenges and Goals for 2024

- * In an effort to improve efficiency as well as accessibility to customers, all program areas will look to make process improvements wherever possible.
- * Sanctioning for non-participation resumed in 2023 for WFNJ General Assistance customers and is expected to resume for the WFNJ TANF customers in 2024, While this return to pre-pandemic regulations will result in a greater volume of work, it is expected to improve the overall participation rates for WFNJ in New Jersey.
- * The increase in customer benefit reductions or terminations resulting from the increased number of redeterminations being processed will result in a greater volume of Fair Hearing requests for 2024.
- * Despite the ever growing demand for assistance from customers, MCBOS will strive to continue to process all requests for Medicaid, WFNJ, and SNAP benefits within the mandatory processing times.





SOCIAL SERVICES DEPARTMENT



James Cacace

Assistant Administrative Supervisor of Social Services

Barbara Benson

Assistant Administrative Supervisor of Social Services

The Social Service Department is involved in provision of services in a number of program areas. These programs are designed to impact the neediest customers covered under public assistance as well as those with the least resources and serious needs.

The primary recipients of services are those individuals or families who are most vulnerable and lack natural support systems. This population includes: persons eligible for Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF), Supplemental Security Income (SSI), General Assistance (GA) and all residents of congregate living facilities under the purview of the Rooming and Boarding Home Act of 1979. Adults needing protective services and those needing information and referrals are served without regard to income.

Social Service Programs available in 2023:

Adult Protective Services (APS) And Adult Social Services

- * Services provided include investigation of alleged Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation of vulnerable adults 18 years or older residing in the community.
- * Supportive Services may include Home Health Aide, Respite Care, Safe Housing Service, and Legal Services for guardianship, conservatorship and power of attorney.

Emergency Assistance (EA)

- * Emergency Assistance provides emergency services to eligible TANF, SSI, and GA recipients in Mercer County including, temporary housing, temporary placements, rental assistance, food, clothing, and furniture.



Work First New Jersey

- * The Work First New Jersey (WFNJ) program provides WFNJ/TANF and WFNJ/GA recipients with the opportunity to gain job skills, experience, and education necessary to obtain employment and self-sufficiency. Support services such as Transportation and Child Care are made available to recipients who are participating in a work activity.
- * Supportive Assistance to Individuals and Families (SAIF) is a grant program that provides intensive case management services to recipients who have been in receipt of Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) /General Assistance (GA) for 60 months and who do not meet the criteria for exception of time limit.

Emergency Rental Assistance Program (ERAP)

- * The Emergency Rental Assistance Program (ERAP), which began in March, 2021, ended in June, 2023. The program was administered through a partnership with Mercer County Human Services to provide emergency rental assistance to households that had been financially impacted due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The ERAP program assisted with rent, rental arrears, utilities, and home energy costs to avoid homelessness and housing instability.

Department Achievements in 2023

- * Concluded the ERAP program having processed \$15,680,851.00 since its inception to avoid evictions and utility shut-offs for 2,430 households affected by the Covid-19 pandemic.
- * Activated 1,202 Emergency Assistance cases for those residing in unaffordable housing and assisted 320 applicants with one-time assistance. There has been a 200% increase in customers seeking assistance since March, 2023 when the eviction moratorium ended.
- * MCBOSS case managers continued to maintain client engagement and provided supportive services for customers participating in work activities.
- * MCBOSS social workers in the SAIF unit were able to achieve employment for 25 individuals; SSI benefits for 5 individual; and assisted 18 clients in receiving permanent disability benefits.
- * APS social workers assisted 353 seniors in Mercer County with services and assisted an additional 481 individuals with information and resources.
- * APS Social workers participated in several community events to showcase the adult services provided by the Agency.



Challenges and Goals for 2024

- * Lack of affordable housing in Mercer County continues to be a barrier to moving homeless individuals and families to permanent affordable housing. Many times temporary placements must be made out of county.
- * Finding permanent affordable housing for our homeless population as quickly and efficiently as possible remains a priority.
- * The availability of mental health services in the area has not kept up with the need for services.
- * WFNJ and SAIF social workers will continue to provide supports, services, and resources to our customers to achieve permanent employment and self-sufficiency.
- * APS social workers will continue to address senior needs to assist as many individuals as possible maintain independent living in Mercer County.

Shining Moments

The employees at MCBOSS work diligently every day to provide services to meet the needs of the members of our community. The essential services that are provided to our customers enable them to live better lives, reside safely in our community, and achieve self-sufficiency. Every now and then, a letter or email will come in from a customer or a customer's family, recognizing an employee's efforts and expressing appreciation. Below is an excerpt from a letter submitted November, 2023. The worker was commended for his efforts at the December, 2023 Board Meeting.

"I'm writing to express my sincere appreciation for the excellent work that the SAIF social worker and his team have done for me on behalf of my son. At times it was difficult, due to my son's mental illness because he wasn't always cooperative. The SAIF social worker was diligent and unwavering in his support. His leadership, guidance and that of his team have played a pivotal role in helping my son and I to navigate through the challenges we faced over the years. I would like the SAIF social worker and his team to receive a reward or recognition for their hard work."



CASE BANK DEPARTMENT



Pauleen Merluse, Assistant Administrative Supervisor of IM
Scott Thompson, Administrative Supervisor of IM
Kathleen Hull , Assistant Administrative Supervisor of IM

Mercer County Board of Social Services core mission states, MCBOSS is “committed to providing economic and social services to individuals and families residing in Mercer County based on financial need.” While following guidelines and regulations, our responsibility is to ensure the financial needs of the most vulnerable residents of our county are addressed. The Case Bank Department administers the Supplemental Nutritional Assistance Program (SNAP), the Work First New Jersey Program (WFNJ), which includes the Temporary Assistance to Needy Family (TANF) Program, and the General Assistance (GA) Program. We also administer the NJ Family Care Program (NJFC), Refugee Resettlement Program (RRP), and the Supplemental Work Support (SWS) Program. We are proud to provide these services expeditiously and with compassion.

The Case Bank department has fourteen (14) eligibility units, consisting of one hundred-four (104) professional staff whose responsibilities range from interviewing customers for programs to evaluating and determining eligibility. Five (5) additional units are staffed with forty-five (45) clerical personnel who provide valuable support to the entire department. In addition to our main office, the department provides accessibility for our customers by stationing two full-time professional staff to help customers at the following sites: Henry J. Austin (M-F), Capital Health at Hopewell (T, R), and Capital Health at Fuld (M, W, F).

Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) – Provides time-limited cash assistance to single adults or couples with dependent children subject to income and resource guidelines and other non-financial eligibility requirements.

General Assistance (GA) – Provides time-limited cash assistance to single adults or couples without dependent children subject to income and resource guidelines and other non-financial eligibility requirements.



Supplemental Nutritional Assistance Program (SNAP) – Provides nutritional assistance to lower-income individuals and families who meet the financial and non-financial requirements of the program.

Refugee Resettlement Program (RRP) – Provides cash to refugee families who otherwise meet the financial and non-financial requirements of the program.

NJ FamilyCare – Provides medical coverage for single adults, couples, children, and families who meet the financial and non-financial requirements of the program.

Supplemental Work Support (SWS) – Provides employed customers receiving a partial TANF grant, the opportunity to withdraw from TANF, and receive a \$200 grant. They could also be eligible for other post TANF services, such as child care and transportation.

Department Achievements in 2023

- * The Case Bank department processed 21,133 applications entered online to MYNJHELPS.GOV.
- * 6,194 customers took advantage of uploading their verification documents with their applications in MYNJHELPS.GOV.
- * The Case Bank Department utilizes a lobby management system for the front end and manages phone messages from the call center using the QLess system.

Challenges and Goals for 2024

- * The Case Bank Department will focus on filling vacancies as there was an increase in retirements in 2023.
- * Case Bank Department will provide refresher training for all staff to be able to assist customers after the unwinding due to Covid-19.
- * Mercer will be required to implement the Able-Bodied Adults Without Dependents (ABAWD) instructions in 2024.
- * The Case Bank Department must continue to increase our capability to meet the needs of our non-English speaking customers.
- * SNAP work activity requirements are now voluntary but the Case Bank Department will work to better promote the services and opportunities offered through the Mercer County One-Stop.



Shining Moments

At the Board of Social Services, challenges loom like shadows, but a beacon of hope shines in the form of the Case Bank Department. This story is not just about case numbers and paperwork but about the extraordinary compassion and dedication each worker has for our community during certain times of crisis.

How we service customers on any given day can change instantly if the need arises. One day in July, 2023, upon arriving at work, staff discovered the air conditioning in the building was inoperable and we would not be able to see customers in our usual fashion. Staff knew our emergency of no air conditioning could not outweigh the needs of our customers, who had various reasons to be assisted. Workers immediately began serving customers from the parking lot and a triage station in our building lobby. Staff worked from makeshift workstations throughout the building to get the job done. What made this situation extraordinary was no employee complained or questioned why. Every worker in this agency realized our customers' needs came first and worked diligently to meet every request.

Here at the Board, we understand case numbers are needed to track work but we treat every case number as what it really represents: a customer who needs our services, and we do it proudly.





MEDICAID DEPARTMENT



Alice Torres
Assistant Administrative
Supervisor of IM

The Medical Assistance Department at Mercer County Board of Social Services is responsible for administering the state and federal funded medical assistance program for children and adults with low to moderate income and resources. The Medicaid program in New Jersey is known as NJ Familycare and benefits are provided to most eligible recipients through health maintenance organizations. In Mercer County, applicants can select coverage from among five nationally recognized health plans. NJ Familycare is a comprehensive health insurance program that provides coverage for doctors, hospitals, prescriptions, medical testing, various therapies, and preventative care. It also provides long term care in a facility or community setting. There are many different programs under NJ Familycare; all designed to serve different populations. Each program has specific financial standards and regulations. Coverage is available for children, families, pregnant women, single adults, childless couples, as well as the elderly, blind, and disabled individuals in the community and long term care facilities. The coverage for long term care services is known as Managed Long Term Services and Supports (MLTSS).

Plan First is a family planning program which offers limited services to customers for most birth control methods for both men and women, family planning counseling, and family planning lab testing. Customers that are ineligible for NJ Familycare can request to be evaluated for services under the Plan First program.

NJ Familycare also offers a program for prenatal and family planning services to women who are undocumented. New Jersey Supplemental Prenatal and Contraceptive Program (NJSPCP) covers outpatient prenatal services and contraceptive services for women including, but not limited to: prenatal care, prenatal related services, birth control, pregnancy tests, family planning counseling, and family planning lab tests.



Undocumented immigrants or immigrants with less than five years Legal Permanent Residency may be eligible for coverage for emergency services under NJ FamilyCare. As of January 1, 2023, all state residents under the age of 19 regardless of immigration status can qualify for health insurance coverage in New Jersey. Through the “Cover All Kids” program, the state expanded NJ FamilyCare to every uninsured child in the state who is income eligible.

As of April 1, 2023, the NJ WorkAbility program expanded eligibility to all financially eligible individuals over age 16 who have a disability as determined by the Social Security Administration or the Medical Review Team at the Division of Medical Assistance & Health Services. Previously, the program was only available to individuals under age sixty-five (65). Resources and spousal income are no longer countable in the eligibility determination.

Department Achievements in 2023

- * Due to the continuous efforts of staff, timeliness for redetermination processing averaged 94.98% in 2023.
- * In order to increase accessibility, the Medicaid Department established a dedicated telephone number/voicemail box and a dedicated email address for our customers. This has helped provide more efficient and convenient communication for our customers.
- * The Medicaid Intake unit serviced 5,340 customers in 2023. This was a 75% increase over 2022 due to the resumption of the redetermination requirements in April, 2023.
- * The Medicaid Department participated in several successful community outreach events during the year.

Challenges and Goals for 2024

- * Provide excellent customer service to our customers while ensuring accuracy and timeliness in application processing.
- * Aged, Blind, and Disabled renewal application process will be added to the online processing system in 2024.
- * Maintain processing timeliness for all new applications and renewals despite the increased demand brought by the unwinding of the Public Health Emergency.



Shining Moments

Applying for Medicaid coverage for oneself or a loved one can often be a very daunting task. Many times the application is made at a point in time when someone is experiencing major health related issues, the need for coverage is immediate, and the applicant is vulnerable and in need of guidance. The Medicaid Department often receives letters from customers which recognize our staff's caring and empathetic nature. One letter from 2023 that stands out from the rest was from a customer's daughter who was applying for long term care for her mother who was recently placed into a nursing facility. The daughter wrote that over the past several years she had "experienced many personal hurdles due to the complicated process of applying for long term care coverage for her mother's care." She writes that "our staff's responsiveness was incredible and that they were always empathetic during the process". She also noted that the Medicaid staff demonstrated "white glove service skills" and she went on to thank our agency for hiring "top-notch talent who uphold the values of caring, trust and patience."

Despite improvements that have been made to the on-line accessibility for Medicaid applications, many applicants have the need to contact a worker personally who will guide them through the process and assist with obtaining necessary benefits and services. Our experienced staff are available for questions, concerns and to offer support and guidance to customers and families in need of Medicaid services.





CHILD SUPPORT AND PATERNITY DEPARTMENT



Lorna Colligan
Assistant Administrative
Supervisor of IM

The Child Support and Paternity Department's primary goal is to locate non-custodial parents in order to establish paternity and obtain support orders for children. We coordinate genetic testing for all parties including non-custodial parents, custodial parents, and child/children. All residents of Mercer County regardless of if they receive services through MCBOSS are eligible for services from the Child Support and Paternity Department.

Custodial parents that receive cash assistance are generally required to cooperate in establishing paternity and obtaining child support for children in the household. Once paternity is established, a child support order can provide financial self-sufficiency long after a TANF case is closed. The CSP program is overseen by the Division of Family Development (DFD) and the Office of Child Support Services (OCSS). Staff work closely with the Administrative Office of the Courts, consisting of Vicinage Finance Division, Family Division, and Probation.



The Office of Child Support Services is continually looking to improve service delivery. One recent advancement is the implementation of the Child Support Engagement Program, formally referred to as the Child Support Enforcement Program. Through this new program, non-custodial parents are encouraged to become involved in the lives of their children and develop everlasting bonds.



Department Achievements in 2023

- * Transitioned into a paperless department.
- * Completed all data security requirements.
- * Utilized telephonic interviewing.
- * Resumed partnership meetings to work together to achieve our common goals of serving the community and helping families.
- * Returned to in-person trainings in addition to remote trainings. (In-person trainings had been suspended due to the pandemic.)

Challenges and Goals for 2024

- * Continue to pursue child support orders to help custodial parents provide a financially stable environment for children.
- * Strive to establish the paternities needed to obtain orders of child support.
- * Attend ongoing trainings being developed by Rutgers NJCSI.
- * Maximize the benefit of using the QLess system for in-person customer visits and phone inquiries.
- * Continue to serve our customers with compassion and respect.

Shining Moments

Every support order that is established through the diligence of child support staff is an accomplishment. Children deserve to be cared for in all aspects of life. Not only do they need love and attention, they need to have their basic needs met. In many cases, once paternity is established, a non-custodial parent will begin to develop a relationship with their child, which might not have otherwise occurred. By having child support services available, an overwhelming situation can be made easier for a single parent to overcome. As a result, a path can be paved for stability and a successful future.



FRAUD INVESTIGATION DEPARTMENT



Regina N. Brodie
Assistant Chief Investigator

The Fraud Department conducts investigations under state and federal regulations to identify possible fraudulent receipt of public assistance benefits. Federal regulations require specific methods and criteria for identifying allegations of fraud and the appropriate referral for punishment, while recognizing the legal rights of individuals and due process of the law. The department processes referrals from a variety of sources including State of NJ match reports, agency referrals, and the Fraud Tip Line. Once a customer is overpaid, a determination is made to establish an Intentional Program Violation (IPV), Agency Error (AE), or Inadvertent Household Error (IHE) claim. If substantial evidence exists and monetary thresholds are met, the appropriate penalty is imposed. Customers face possible disqualification of their benefits and/or referral to the Mercer County Prosecutor for a possible Theft by Deception charge.

Fraud Administration – The Assistant Chief Investigator manages five units that comprise the Fraud Department and completes all internal investigations. The Assistant Chief Investigator is responsible for monitoring the department’s adherence to state and federal guidelines to ensure timeliness and compliance upon review and also acts as a liaison to municipal, state and federal agencies.

FIS Intake – Staff record and track the referrals that are generated from various sources in and outside of the agency and prepare assignments for other units. The staff are responsible for the maintenance and security of filing in the Fraud Record Room and act as support for all units in the Fraud Department.

Special Investigations Unit – The investigators scrupulously conduct front and back-end investigations to identify, avert and prosecute intentional program violations. The investigators use various methods and resources to gather evidence to authenticate possible claims. The investigators are responsible to interview customers, testify to the validity of the claim, and prepare the case files for disqualification or refer for prosecution.



Claims Determination Unit – This unit identifies if, when, and why an overpayment has occurred. Staff use multiple systems to reconstruct the benefits a customer received during the period in question. Data is gathered from employers and other agencies to provide evidence of a potential fraud that will require further investigation. Once the amount of overpayment is determined, staff will initiate recovery efforts.

Claims Recovery Unit – The Claims Recovery Unit has many functions: collecting outstanding claims that are owed to MCBOSS through both voluntary and involuntary methods; converting non-fraud claims to fraud claims when administrative disqualification waivers and ADH final decisions are received; and transferring claims both in and out of county.

Department Achievements in 2023

- * Staff completed Intentional Program Violation (IPV) training and procedures per DFD guidelines.
- * Implemented procedures to ensure timely replacement of skimmed benefits.
- * Completed phase 2 of the FTI destruction project.
- * Completed phase 1 of the Fraud File Room reorganization project.
- * Completed transition from ABACUS to ONETrac system to process and create claims.

Challenges and Goals for 2024

- * Identify and organize dimming of Fraud records.
- * Fill department vacancies for maximum efficiency.
- * Complete phase 3 of FTI destruction project.
- * Complete phase 2 of the Fraud File Room reorganization project.
- * Complete full collection activity using ONETrac Claims Management System.





Shining Moments

Unfortunately, 2023 saw reports of customers EBT benefits being stolen through the use of skimming. As the year progressed, the frequency of these reports increased as customers discovered that there were no benefits available when they attempted to use their EBT card. Once guidance was received from the Division of Family Development, the staff in the Fraud Department were able to begin the replacement process for many of these stolen benefits but customers were impacted while they waited for the replaced benefits to become available. One particular customer came into the agency right before the Thanksgiving holiday, upset and distressed that she was not able to purchase food for her family's Thanksgiving dinner as her SNAP benefits had been skimmed. Staff from the three units in the Fraud Department worked diligently with her and were able to have her benefits replaced within two days so she was able to provide for her family on Thanksgiving. She followed up after the holiday to express sincere gratitude as she recognized that the combined efforts of the staff helped her family have a happier Thanksgiving.





PROGRAM STATISTICS



18,879

SNAP households



16,299 Children

SNAP Population



18,355 Adults

SNAP Population



829

WFNJ-TANF Families



791 Adults

WFNJ-TANF Population



1,430 Children

WFNJ-TANF Population



674

WFNJ-GA Cases



34,724

MCBOSS Medicaid recipients



8,804

Medicaid Applications



12,347

Medicaid Redeterminations



5,782

Medicaid Changes



92,653

Medicaid Recipients in Mercer



1,202

Emergency Assistance cases activated

200%

Increase in eviction requests



834

Adult Protective Service investigations



415

adults served under the One-Stop WFNJ TANF population



254

SAIF Customers'



1,685

New Child Support Cases



170

Child Support Orders Created



54

Child Support Paternities Established



228

Child Support Complaints and Modifications



FINANCE DEPARTMENT



Geralyn Schneider
Fiscal Officer

Vargee Gobah
Supervising Accountant

The Finance Department has the responsibility for performing the accounting, budgeting and financial reporting activities for the Mercer County Board of Social Services. The supervisory duties are divided into five major areas: administration, payroll, client benefits, collections fiscal, and child support/paternity-bus pass.

Accounting

The State Division of Family Development (DFD) mandates that the agency adheres to the guidelines and procedures outlined in their accounting manual, known as Ruling 12. The majority of receipts and disbursements are accounted for through the following six major accounts:

Administration Account - Record activities for administrative expenses of the agency, such as: salaries, employee fringe benefits, travel expenses, office expenses, and other administrative expenses. Various grant funds contracted to the agency are also maintained in this account.

Assistance Account - Records payments for public assistance benefits known as Work First New Jersey. This account covers the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program and Supplemental Security Income (SSI).

Child Support and Paternity Account - Records funds received and disbursed for the Child Support and Paternity Program. Child Support collections received from Mercer and other county probation offices, direct payments received from absent parents, and third party recoveries are disbursed to clients or returned to the State to reimburse public assistance given to eligible clients.

Clearing Account - Records funds received that represent a recoupment of various types of overpayments and recoveries that are subsequently reimbursed to the State.



Reach Account – Records payments for transportation related expenses such as bus passes and payments for clients who are working or participating in employment related activities.

General Assistance Account – Records payments for public assistance and emergency assistance for General Assistance clients.

Budgeting

The annual agency budget process is a collaborative effort coordinated by the Director and Fiscal Officer. The Finance Department prepares the final budget, which is reviewed and adopted by the Board. The approved budget is then forwarded to the State Divisions of Family Development and Medical Assistance and Health Services for approval. The county appropriation to the Board appears as a line item in the approved County budget. The Finance Department monitors budget expenditures on a monthly basis.

Financial Reporting

The Finance Department prepares weekly, monthly, quarterly, and annual financial reports for internal use as well as external purposes. Reports are submitted for all major accounts to the New Jersey Division of Family Development. Expenditure reports are prepared monthly and quarterly for the agency's special grants. Monthly reports are submitted to the Board for their review and approval. MCBOSS Finance Department prepares Annual Financial Statements. Independent auditors complete the Single Audit for financial and program compliance with NJ Division of Family Development and Uniform Federal Super Circular (2 CFR, Part 200) components.

Department Achievements in 2023

- * Achieved no findings in annual Single Audit conducted by Mercadien, P.C.
- * Fully integrated automated Time system into Payroll system processing, increasing proficiency and accuracy.
- * Closed out Emergency Rental Assistance Program grants.
- * Added technical Auditing/Accounting trained staff member.

Challenges and Goals for 2024

- * Continue cross-training staff for improved knowledge base and gap coverage.
- * Increase technical Accounting knowledge of Department via new staff hiring, internal trainings, and encouragement of continued college educational opportunities.
- * Research new Accounting software for future upgrade.
- * Improve/maintain employee morale.



FINANCIAL HIGHLIGHTS



\$65,105,570

MCBOSS Budget



\$9.6 million

Processed vendor payments for
Administration/Grants.



\$17.2 million

Processed in checks and EBT benefits for WFNJ
(TANF&GA) and SSI customers



\$1.5 million

Collected in Child Support



\$314,134

Recovered in Fraud Claims





SERVICES STATISTICS



3,501,743

Pages Scanned



63,117

Letters mailed



1,484,392

Scanned Applications



5,425

Records Keyed



107,936

Emails Sent/Received



181,988

Call Center/Medicaid
Redetermination calls



9,827

MIS Tickets Closed



1,926

System Access Requests



2,404

RMS Observations



\$54,859.00

Replaced in benefits lost as
the result of skimming



1,184

Fraud Claims



1,000

Child-Support Hearings



360

RMS Validations
Completed



245,497

Pieces of Mail



470

Internal Training Sessions
(3,606 employees)



159

External Training Sessions
(1,460 non-employees)



14,181

Voter Registration Forms



625

Fair Hearing requests



14

Request and Authorization
Records Disposal Forms



650

Funeral and Burial
requests for payments



61

Promotions



74

New Hired Employees



15

Retirees

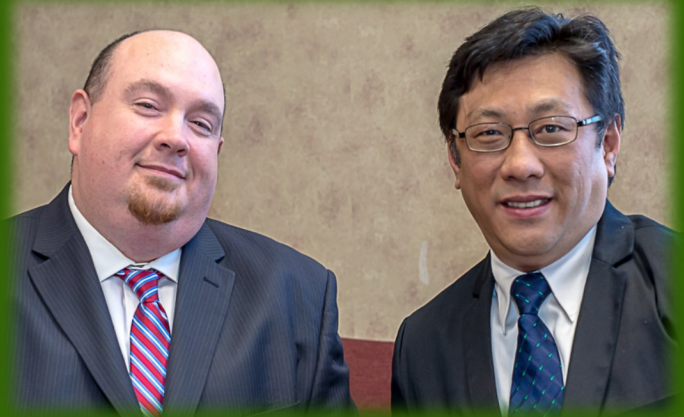


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Social Service Contracts
reviewed



MANAGEMENT INFORMATION SYSTEMS DEPARTMENT



Lee E. Micai
Senior Systems Analyst

Richard Wang
Data Processing Coordinator

The Management Information Systems (MIS) Department: The exclusive provider of information technology services to the agency and acts as a liaison to the State of New Jersey for its applications.

The MIS Department is comprised of a team of Network Administrators, Server Engineers, Application Programmers, Data Entry Machine Operators, Computer Operators, and User Support Specialists (USS). MIS operating units consist of Project Development; Helpdesk Support Center; Document Control; Data Entry; and Enterprise Services. The Department strives to provide excellent service while meeting the needs of MCBOSS employees and customers, and to assure a strong technology foundation for today and into the future.

Senior Systems Analyst (SSA): Responsible for ensuring cost-effective delivery of centralized support services. The SSA provides leadership, management, supervision, and support for the Department. The SSA along with the Department's Secretarial Assistant are responsible for out-sourced support services, vendor management, project management, preparing a yearly budget, expenditure management, and asset management.

Data Processing Coordinator (DPC) : Oversees the daily operation and staffing of the Project Development and Enterprise Services Units. The DPC monitors ongoing performance and productivity; ensures Support Center procedures are followed and requests are prioritized as necessary; identifies aging tickets and determines appropriate actions; evaluates service outages and reports unresolved event notifications to the Senior Systems Analyst.

Supervising Computer Operator : Oversees the Helpdesk Support Center, Document Control and Data Entry Units; administers security access to the building and agency computer systems; and acts as the Security Administrator for all DFD applications.



Department Achievements in 2023

- * Continued Infrastructure Replacement schedule.
- * Implemented Cybersecurity Awareness Training Program.
- * Deployed IT Service Management and Help Desk System.
- * Installed Wi-Fi in Customer Reception Area.

Challenges and Goals for 2024

- * Research and Develop Electronic Records Management, E-Forms & Business Process Automation.
- * Implement Multi-Factor Authentication (MFA.)
- * Refresh On-Site Backup Storage Environment.
- * Enhance Video Surveillance Solution.
- * Research new Customer Relationship Management System.





GENERAL SERVICES



Michael Danbury
Chief Clerk

Rwanda Fullwood
Assistant Chief Clerk

The Administrative/ General Services: Led by Michael T. Danbury, Chief Clerk and Rwanda Fullwood, Assistant Chief Clerk the Department is responsible for facility management and the security of the building. In addition to the Administrative office, the Department consists of the Record Room, Case Processing, Scanning Unit, Eligibility Support Unit, Purchasing/ Stock Room, Mail Room/ Motor Pool, and Building Maintenance.

Record Room: Maintains customer records for TANF, SNAP, and GA. The DIMS Record Management System is used daily to capture customer case record information electronically for these programs.

Case Processing: Maintains customer records for the Medicaid programs. The DIMS Record Management System is used daily to capture customer case record information electronically for these programs.

Eligibility Support Unit (ESU): Issues and mails customer appointment letters for recertification/ redetermination for TANF, SNAS, SNAP, and GA. The unit is responsible for mailing the State Generated Notices (SGN's) to customers, the Medicaid renewal packets for the Aged, Blind, and Disabled programs, and handles the main operator line for the Agency as well as the Medicaid Redetermination line which launched in 2022.

Purchasing Department: Procures necessary supplies required to perform the day to day tasks associated with taking applications and maintaining customer cases. This office also maintains an active inventory to track items in the building.

Mail Room: Ensures incoming and outgoing daily mail is handled quickly and efficiently. This includes mail received from the MCBOS after-hours drop box located near the customer entrance.

Motor Pool: Maintains the fleet of vehicles which are necessary to tend to the needs of the customers of the Mercer County Board of Social Services.



Building Maintenance Department: Handles the routine building maintenance; such as, temperature regulation and paper recycle collection. The department also coordinates building repairs with NEXUS Building Management and other professional contractors as needed.

Department Achievements in 2023

- * Interviewed, hired, and trained new employees to fill essential vacant positions.
- * Continued to meet goal of 100% timeliness in scanning FAMIS/ SNAP and Medicaid applications, redeterminations and case work.
- * Cleared nearly 9,000 backlogged case files allowing the second floor Conference Rooms to resume use as meeting rooms. These rooms had been utilized as secured storage areas for FAMIS and Medicaid case files since 2015.

Challenges and Goals for 2024

- * Maintain staffing by interviewing, hiring, and training new employees to fill vacancies caused by internal promotions and position transfers.
- * Continue to meet timeliness goal in DIMS despite the increased volume of work resulting from the unwinding of the public health emergency.
- * Prepare the Record Room area for renovation.
- * Improve the Agency inventory system.





TRAINING DEPARTMENT



Janita Ming,
Assistant Administrative
Supervisor of IM

The Training Department is responsible for staff development and training. Our goal is to provide quality training programs to MCBOSSE employees which support employee development and organizational effectiveness. The department offers staff the opportunity to improve soft skills and knowledge based skills which leads to increased productivity, job satisfaction and a positive company culture. The training programs encourage continuous improvement, build confidence, and enhance employee engagement.

The Training Department is responsible for conducting federal and state required trainings on an annual basis, new employee orientation, soft skills, and program related trainings. Program related trainings include trainings specific to Work First New Jersey Temporary Assistance to Needy Families, General Assistance, Emergency Assistance, NJ SNAP, NJFamilycare, Child Support Services and General Services.

The professionals in the training department are committed to providing excellent and effective training to the staff at MCBOSSE. The trainings are designed to meet individual, group and departmental needs and objectives.

Department Achievements in 2023

- * Maintained 100% completion rate for state required trainings.
- * Lunch and Learn series was successfully implemented.
- * Primepoint Time Management trainings were successfully completed for all staff on the Time and Attendance system.
- * Quarterly employee newsletter, the Internal Buzz, was launched.
- * Coordinated several successful outreach events with partnering agencies.



Challenges and Goals for 2024

- * Increase training capacity by filling our vacancies.
- * Implement the Primepoint Training module and transfer all training records from the current DEC system to the new Training module.
- * Continue development of the digital library and continue the implementation of the State LMS system.
- * Continue program and personal development trainings to maximize efficiency and productivity within the agency.
- * Develop and conduct more refresher trainings due to the unwinding of the Public Health Emergency.





QUALITY ASSESSMENT DEPARTMENT



David Rimili,
Senior Administrative Analyst

The Mission of the Quality Assessment Unit is to promote effective and efficient service delivery at the Mercer County Board of Social Services by applying expertise in the areas of organizational development, program evaluation, process and practice improvement, and by optimizing technology and resources.

The unit is comprised of the Senior Administrative Analyst, one (1) Senior Program Analyst, two (2) Procedure Analysts, and one (1) Clerk 2.

Unit responsibilities include providing ongoing assessment of various agency policies and processes, identifying and analyzing problems, documenting new and existing policies and processes, developing reference materials, creating quality measurements, performing system testing, conducting compliance reviews, making recommendations for improvement, and administering the Random Moment Study (RMS).

The Senior Administrative Analyst is also responsible for the following areas:

- * Coordinating the RMS.
- * Approving the destruction of records.
- * Imaging system registration.
- * Writing operational and program policies and procedures.



Department Achievements in 2023

- * Completed 2,404 RMS observations and 360 RMS validations.
- * Reviewed and updated agency policies and procedures.
- * Revised the Emergency Preparedness and Crisis Management Plan and Critical Notification System Registration Form.
- * Performed system testing and developed reference material for Fixed Asset Module.
- * Developed reports and reference material for Primepoint Time system.

Challenges and Goals for 2023

- * 100 % Response Rate for the RMS.
- * Assist in creating policies and procedures with subject matter experts.
- * Improve and optimize business processes.





Office of the Human Services Coordinator



Winifred Haynes

Management Specialist

Gerald Delorenzo

Human Services Coordinator

The Office of the Human Services Coordinator operates under the auspices of the Director of Welfare. The office is responsible for the management of all program related contracts at Mercer County Board of Social Services (MCBOSS). This includes contract development, negotiation and preparation. Currently there are sixteen Program contracts, six Home Health Aide vendor contracts and The Café and Vending contracts administered by this office.

The Management Specialist functions as the Agency's Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) coordinator. The office is responsible for managing the procedural process for providing services to individuals with disabilities under section 505 of the Rehabilitation Act and Americans with Disabilities Act. This includes the provision of appropriate services to ensure equal access to programs for individuals with disabilities.

The Management Specialist also functions as the liaison for the "Returning Citizen Community Program" (RCCP). This program is administered through the Mercer County Correction Center (MCCC), in collaboration with the Mercer County Department of Human Services. The overall goal of RCCP is to assist the vulnerable population of returning citizens in their transition from incarceration to home, by providing housing assistance, entitlement benefits, job training, educational needs, workforce development needs, and the need to obtain identification and/or vital documents that are often a barrier for a successful return.

Program Quality Control is another responsibility of this office. The Management Assistant and the Management Specialist act as the Quality Control liaisons for: Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF), General Assistance (GA), New Jersey Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (NJ SNAP), New Jersey FamilyCare (NJFC), and Low Income Home Energy Assistance program (LIHEAP)/ Universal Service Fund (USF) programs. Their responsibilities include coordinating eligibility staff, monitoring program compliance, and developing corrective action plans that may be required to address any program deficiencies.



The Agency's "Road to Success" transportation program initiative is administered through this office. This initiative is funded through a grant from the New Jersey Department of Human Services, Division of Family Development. The purpose of the program is to provide transportation related services to eligible TANF program recipients in an effort to promote and sustain self-sufficiency.

Department Achievements in 2023

- * Successfully completed the renewal of six (6) contracts for Home Health Aide vendors.
- * Facilitated a one-year contract for Jade Café and Vending Machines with an option to extend an additional year.
- * Renewed the position of liaison for "Returning Citizen Community Program" (RCCP).
- * Welcomed a Management Assistant to assist with maintaining contracts, Program Quality Control, and various office duties.
- * Facilitated the program portion of the Mercadien 2022 audit, the FFY 2023 SNAP, and the FFY 2023 WFNJ Management Evaluation audits.
- * Participated in several outreach events in the community sharing information regarding the programs available through the Agency.

Challenges and Goals for 2024

- * Obtain new program grants and increase funding allocations for existing grants.
- * Provide outreach training to staff and the community on the "Road to Success Program" to increase awareness of the benefits of this program.
- * Attend events that strengthen comradery with the community and increase customer accessibility to services.
- * Monitor and assess usage of the Language Line for translation services in order to develop improved communication services.



HUMAN RESOURCES DEPARTMENT



Suzanne Ogborne
Assistant Personnel Officer

Patricia Schwing
Supervising Principal Personnel Technician

The Human Resources Department (HR) is committed to building strong interpersonal relationships with managers, employees, and potential candidates for employment. HR is committed to finding the right person for each role, while allowing individuals to maximize their strengths and abilities. Over the past year, the top priority in HR has been delivering exceptional customer service to the MCBOS employees so that they can deliver the same to our clients.

HR works very hard to ensure accuracy and efficiency while also managing day-to-day responsibilities, which include: administering health benefits and pensions; time and attendance; personnel matters; processing personnel, civil service, and disciplinary actions; administering leaves of absence; and managing performance evaluations.

The department is responsible for ensuring compliance with agency policies, contractual agreements, New Jersey Civil Service regulations as well as state and federal laws.

HR strives to uphold the Core Values of the Mercer County Board of Social Services in order to assist employees in achieving individual success and to contribute to the overall success of the agency.

The 2024 vision for HR is to transform the department into a real twenty-first century operation. This includes cross training all members of the HR team as well as increasing networking presence as an attractive employer for job-seekers. The department goal is always exceptional customer service to both internal and external customers.



Department Achievements in 2023

- * Implemented Primepoint Time & Attendance Timekeeping System.
- * Acted as the liaison to the New Jersey Civil Service Commission, which included processing Promotional and Open Competitive Civil Service Certifications and Announcements and complying with reporting requirements.
- * Attended numerous career and job fairs in an effort to attract and recruit qualified candidates for employment opportunities.
- * Enacted improvements to the Primepoint HRIS modules.
- * Assisted candidates, employees, and Administrators with inquiries and problems.

Challenges and Goals for 2023

- * Implement the Primepoint Leave Module.
- * Improve the employee performance evaluation process as well as implement the Primepoint Performance Evaluation module.
- * Increase efforts to attract talented and eligible candidates to fill vacancies throughout the agency.
- * Continue the professional development of the Human Resources staff which includes cross-training in all areas.
- * Continue to provide excellent customer service to our internal and external customers.





LEGAL DEPARTMENT



Timothy Bauersachs
Chief Counsel

Gregory J. Corcoran
Associate Attorney

The Legal Department oversees all legal actions involving the Agency, provides legal guidance to the Agency's Board of Directors, and advises the Director, Agency Administration, and Human Resources Department on legal matters. The Department handles Child-Support cases; Fair Hearings related to the administration of benefit programs; Funerals and Burials for recipients of certain programs as well as indigent individuals; the bidding and procurement of public contracts; and provides legal guidance and assistance in personnel matters and investigations.

Department Achievements in 2023

- * Represented the Agency in hundreds of Child-Support and Paternity hearings before both Child-Support Hearing Officers and N.J. Superior Court Judges.
- * Represented the Agency in hundreds of Fair Hearing proceedings in the N.J. Office of Administrative Law.
- * Handled hundreds of Funeral and Burial payments for indigent clients, including interacting with Funeral Homes, Directors, families, and processing payment vouchers.
- * Researched and provided legal guidance on personnel matters, Agency policies, and issues.
- * Reviewed and updated procedures for Funerals, Burials, and Fair Hearings.



Challenges and Goals for 2024

- * Successfully handle the increase in Fair Hearing requests resulting from the unwinding of pandemic-related benefit extensions and waivers.
- * Address as many Fair Hearing requests that can be resolved and withdrawn, thereby eliminating the need for the Fair Hearing.
- * Provide excellent legal representation for the Agency's interests in court, Fair Hearings, and Child-Support hearings.
- * Provide thoughtful and helpful legal guidance to our Agency Administration.





LIFE AT MCBOSS

March 3rd, 2023

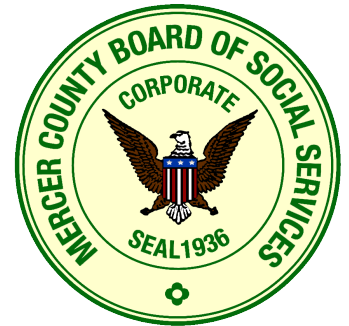
Employee Appreciation Day



Celebrating employees' hard work and dedication.



May 7 - 13, 2023 Public Service Recognition Week



America's dedicated public servants are the lifeblood of our democracy.

Every day, millions of public workers at all levels of government do extraordinary things to make our lives better and our country stronger.

During Public Service Recognition Week, we honor the dedicated Federal, State, Tribal, and Local public servants who embody the spirit of service and endless possibilities that define America.

This week, we recognize the indispensable contributions of our Nation's public servants.

We honor all our public workers who perform critical roles across our country and around the globe.





THE POWER OF GIVING



THE HEART OF NEW JERSEY
GROWS STRONGER WITH YOU.

MCBOSS kicked off the Annual NJECC campaign on October 31st





2023 Ugly Sweater Contest

Sweaters that were designed to be hideous on purpose, first came on the scene in the 1980s. The Bill Huxtable character on The Cosby Show offended the fashion sensibilities of American audiences for eight years by wearing oversized sweaters, ornately designed with oddly offbeat patterns. Then in 1989 Chevy Chase added his own Fair Isle twist to the theme, as Clark Griswold in National Lampoon's Christmas Vacation movie. It wasn't long before ugly Christmas sweaters became a holiday staple.





Deck The Halls Winter Song Contest

Every winter during the holiday season, MCBOS staff come together for a friendly competition. Every year has a theme and for 2023 the theme was to depict a famous Winter Holiday Song.





Deck The Halls Winter Song Contest WINNER: Call Center (Hollis Queens)





COMMUNITY PARTNERS



Many Agencies



WORKING TOGETHER



ONE CAUSE



Years of Service Ceremony







APPENDIX A

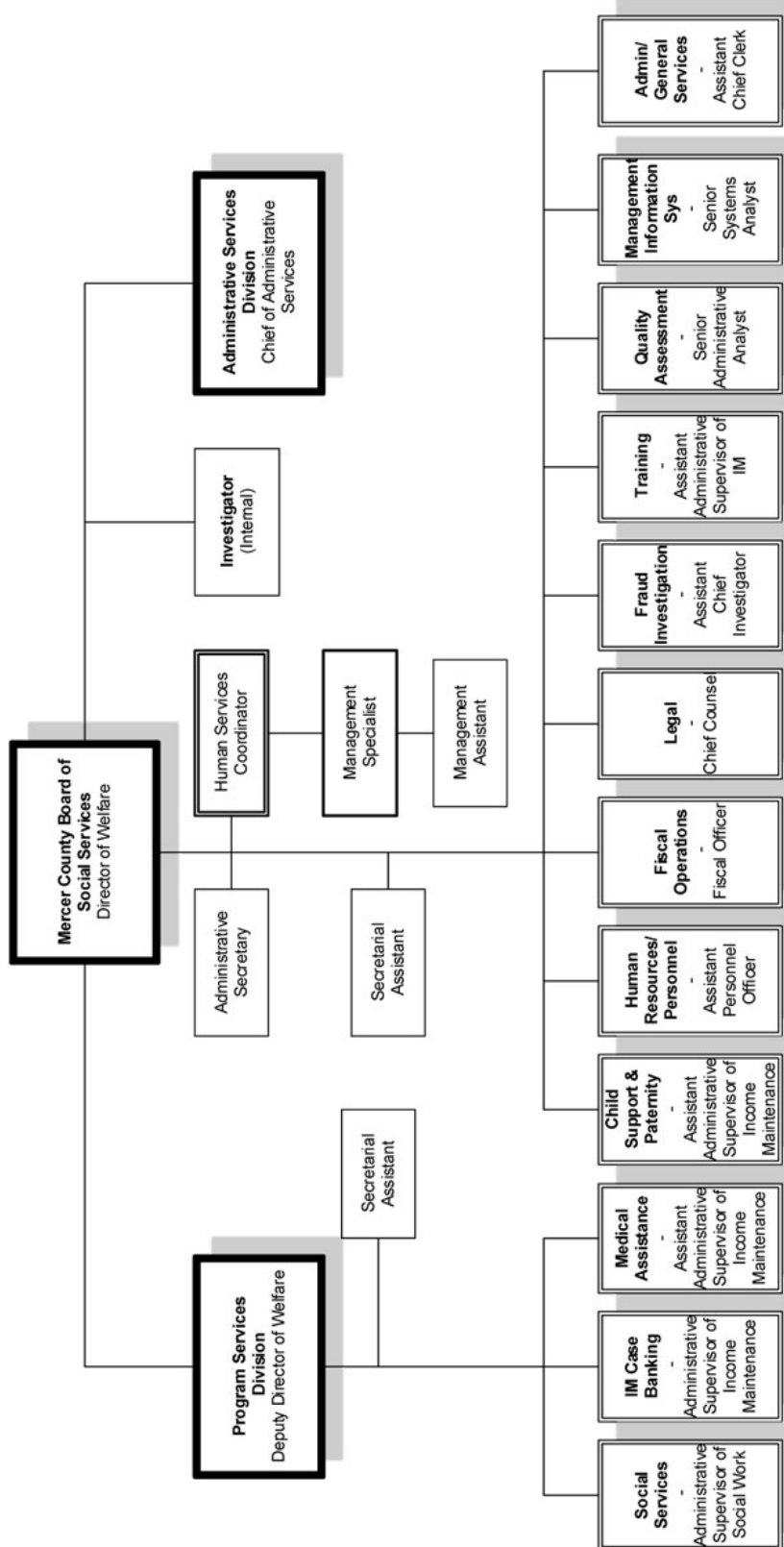
ORGANIZATION CHART



ORGANIZATION CHART

FY 2023

MERCER COUNTY BOARD OF SOCIAL SERVICES





Mercer County Board of Social Services

200 Woolverton St
Trenton, NJ 08611
P: (609) 989-4320
E: mcboss@mcboss.org