

JOINT FINANCE COMMITTEE HEARING
FISCAL YEAR 2023 BUDGET



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DIVISION DIRECTOR

DIVISION OF SOCIAL SERVICES
Department of Health and Social Services
February 23, 2022
Virtual Conducted Via Zoom

Good Afternoon Senator Paradee, Representative Carson, members of the Joint Finance Committee, and members of the public.

I am Tom Hall, Director of the Division of Social Services (DSS). With me today is Marcella Spady who serves as our Division Deputy Director and Victor Ting who is our Division's Chief of Administration.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak with you today and present our accomplishments and Fiscal Year (FY) 2023 Governor's Recommended Budget.

DIVISION OVERVIEW

MISSION STATEMENT

To provide prompt, respectful, and accurate services that promote the potential for self-sufficiency for all Delawareans.



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Our Division manages the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program, the General Assistance (GA) program, the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), the Purchase of Care (POC) program, Medicaid eligibility and Employment and Training (E&T) programs

DIVISION OVERVIEW

Program Enrollment as a Percent of State Population

December 2021

Purchase of
Care
1.86%

Supplemental
Nutrition
Assistance
Program*
11.76%

Medicaid
Eligibility
30.20%

Cash
Assistance
Programs**
1.06%

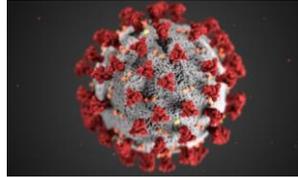
State Population	979,920
Percentage of Delawareans receiving assistance (304,933)	31.12%



*Formerly known as food benefits.
**Cash assistance is General Assistance and Temporary Assistance for Needy Family program.

On this slide, the percentages shown for each program reflect the program's caseload as a percentage of the state population. Clients may participate in more than one program.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS – COVID-19 RESPONSE



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Our Division is actively involved in supporting Delawareans impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. Some of the activities we have conducted include:

- Issued Pandemic Electronic Benefits Transfer (pEBT) benefits to families;
- Issued Emergency SNAP and TANF allotments to households;
- Delivered meals to Delawareans affected by the COVID-19 pandemic; during the pandemic, we have delivered 996,245 meals;
- Implemented numerous policy and procedure changes to support the vulnerable populations we serve; and
- Reduced childcare burden for families by paying monthly parent co-pays, and for providers by paying for additional absent days.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS – TRADITIONAL PROGRAMS AND SERVICES

- 94,000 clients assisted in person at DSS offices by the DSS triage “Pronto” team during 2021
- Assisted 467 clients obtain employment in calendar year 2021
- Partnered with community groups and employers to provide subsidized youth employment to over 160 youth from low-income families.
- Provided case management services to families left homeless as a result of Hurricane Ida
- Requested waivers to reduce the need for in-person applications
- Provided emergency pandemic food assistance benefits (P-EBT) to an average of 44,824 students per month
- Maintained online and virtual client interviews and fair hearing proceedings



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This slide outlines some of our accomplishments in 2021.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS – TRADITIONAL PROGRAMS AND SERVICES



ASSIST Application Created Real Time Application Feedback to Workers

Implemented system changes to include nudges, checklists, and policy assistance resources to rely less on external after the fact quality checks for error reduction.

- Used elements of behavioral economics to make system changes for workers to make precise selections of data elements.
- New system nudges, checklists, and policy queries implemented.
- The system can measure impact of new programming by tracking worker's responses to nudges/checklists and the choices avoided or corrected.



Stabilization Grants to Child Care Providers

Through a partnership with the Department of Education and the University of Delaware, DSS implemented a new grant program for Child Care providers.

- \$93 million allocated to grants to child care providers
- Grants awarded based on approved expenses incurred by providers
- By the end of January 2022, \$70 million has been obligated to 786 providers
- 88% of eligible programs (860 out of 974) submitted applications.
- 28% of the grantees are non-POC providers
- Round 4 which started in February 2022 will give providers an opportunity for a second grant.



Rapid COVID Response

Highly agile response to the COVID crisis to enhance access to and ensure continuity of social services to families in need during the pandemic.

- Issued over \$12 million per month in Pandemic EBT benefits to families with Children
- Issued over \$120 million in Emergency Allotment benefits to SNAP and TANF households
- Reduced Child Care burden by paying \$500,000 in monthly parent co-pays
- Extending renewals for all programs based on federal program guidelines to avoid benefit closures
- Expanded paid child care absent days from 5 to 15 per month.



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The current slide shows some of the efforts started or maintained during 2021.

- In our ASSIST Worker Web system, we introduced elements of behavioral economics to make system changes to actively cue workers of potential case errors.
- Through a partnership with the Department of Education and the University of Delaware, DSS implemented a new Stabilization grant program for Child Care Providers.
- We issued over \$120 million in Emergency benefits to SNAP and TANF households.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS – COMMUNITY BASED SERVICES

Community Partner Support Unit (CPSU)

- Serves as a bridge between DHSS divisions and community organizations that serve clients eligible for state benefits.
- Trains community partners to help their clients apply for their state benefits through the ASSIST Service Portal. Over 5,000 applications were submitted by partners in 2021.
- Provide employee-support services, subsidized wages, and transportation to employers who hire our clients.
- Provided case management services to over 1,500 residents with complex needs and multiple barriers.
- Helped 467 clients find employment in 2021.

Dual Generation Center

- Worked with 1,500 families during 2021.
- Helped 20 families secure housing.

Group Violence Intervention (GVI)

- Expansion to Dover.

Case Management Services

- Case Managers are currently working with 500 families residing in hotels and motels as a result of the pandemic. As a result of this work during 2021, 257 families were assisted in obtaining permanent housing and 75 were helped in finding employment.



Strengthen Communities:



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This slide highlights some of the work of the staff providing community-based services. Some the accomplishments are:

- We expanded the Group Violence Intervention program to Dover;
- We served over 9,000 families through the Stand-by-Me financial empowerment program; and
- We received over 5,000 applications from community partners through our ASSIST online application portal.

LOOKING AHEAD



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The Division will initiate or expand the following activities in the calendar year 2022:

- Prepare families for the reduction in benefits that will occur as the pandemic ends;
- Continue to refine the implementation of case management services to assist families in becoming self-sufficient and lessen their need for safety net programs; and
- Continue to make innovations in case processing and client services.

WORKFORCE CHALLENGES

- 12 % Merit Vacancy Rate
- 40-50% Daily Absent Rates at Some Offices During Height of Pandemic
- Minimum Three-Month Learning Curve for New Workers



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DSS like most entities struggled with the staffing issues created by the pandemic. At times during the pandemic, we have had office absenteeism as high as 50%. DSS has a highly trained workforce that must understand complex federal and state programs. We have needed to maximize the staff resources we have at a given time to meet the workload challenge. The Division took advantage of telecommuting which kept those well enough to work, involved in the daily processing. Many staff worked overtime hours to assist. The Division, when needed, instituted an all-hands-on-deck approach. At those times, anyone who was technically competent in processing cases, including supervisors and administrators, were enlisted in keeping up with our work.

FY 2023 GOVERNOR'S RECOMMENDED BUDGET

FY 2023 Governor's Recommended Budget (\$ in thousands)

	GF	ASF	NSF	Total
FTEs	194.3	0.0	191.4	385.7
Dollars (\$)	94,379.3	1,275.1	88,163.4	183,817.8

Budget Definitions:

GF – General Funds
ASF – Appropriated Special Funds
NSF – Non-Appropriated Special Funds
FTEs – Full Time Equivalent Positions



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The slide above shows the DSS budget included in the FY 2023 Governor's Recommended Budget (GRB).

Our Division's FY 2023 GRB is:

- \$94,379.3 [Ninety-Four Million, Three Hundred Seventy-Nine Thousand, Three Hundred dollars] in General Funds (GF);
- \$1,275.1 [One Million, Two Hundred Seventy-Five Thousand, One Hundred dollars] in Appropriated Special Fund (ASF) spending authority; and
- \$88,163.4 [Eighty-Eight Million, One Hundred Sixty-Three Thousand, Four Hundred dollars] in Non-Appropriated Special Funds (NSF).

FY 2023 GOVERNOR'S RECOMMENDED BUDGET

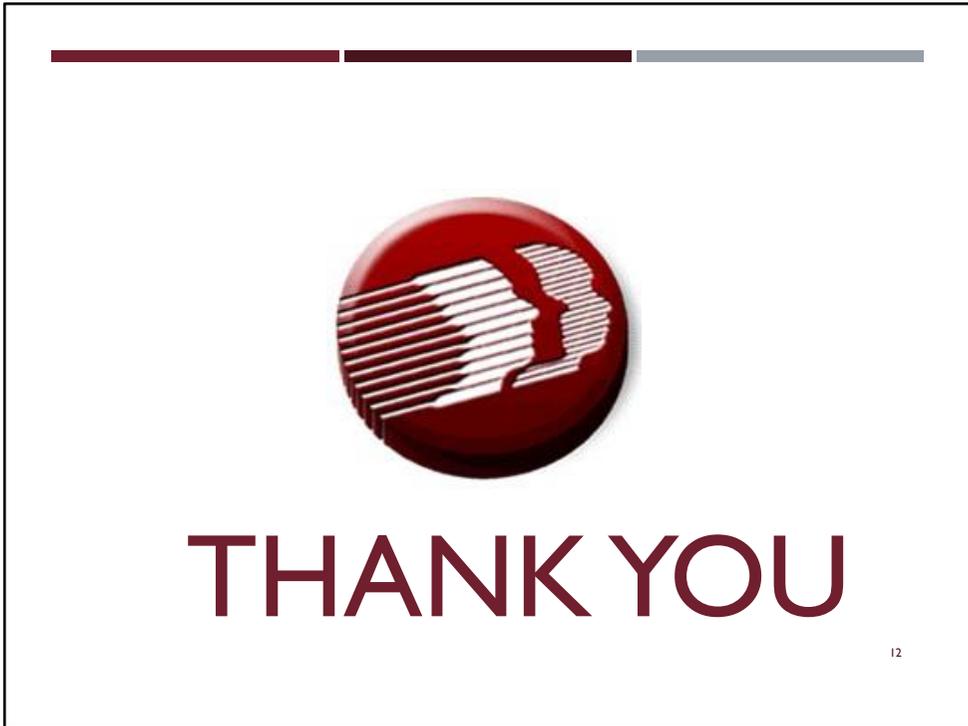
- Purchase of Care increase \$1,196.5
- License & Maintenance \$1,323.2



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The Governor's Recommended Budget also includes

- \$1,196.5 [One Million, One Hundred Ninety-Six Thousand, Five Hundred dollars] for the Purchase of Care program to support projected caseload growth as we begin to return to Pre-pandemic caseload levels (11,500 now versus 16,000 in 2019); and
- \$1,323.2 [One Million, Three hundred Twenty-Three Thousand, Two Hundred dollars] for information and technology License & Maintenance funds to support the Delaware Eligibility System (DEMS, also known as ASSIST Worker Web) system programing needed to revert to pre-pandemic processes.



Thank you for the opportunity to share with you the challenges and opportunities facing the Division of Social Services.

I look forward to your questions.