

# Tioga County Department of Social Services 2024 Annual Report



2024

## Commissioner's Advisory Council

**Patrick Aquilio**

Tioga Outreach Director  
Catholic Charities of  
Tompkins/Tioga

**Barbara Case**

Superintendent  
Spencer-VanEtten  
Schools

**Galen Morehead**

Outreach Svc Coord.  
Tioga County Rural  
Ministry

**Susan Ruff**

Advocacy Director  
Southern Tier  
Independence Center

**Sophie Torres**

Nutrition Educator  
Cornell Cooperative Ext.

**Jill Bennedum**

Exec. Director of Special  
Education  
Owego-Apalachin Schools

**Chad Edred**

Dir. of Programs  
Southern Tier  
Independence Center

**Lori Morgan**

Director of Community  
Services  
Tioga County Mental  
Health

**Todd Schaffer**

Executive Principal  
Newark Valley Schools

**Fran Bialy**

Executive Director  
A New Hope Center

**Dr. Eric Knolles**

Superintendent  
Waverly Schools

**Sister Mary O'Brien**

Executive Director  
Tioga County Rural  
Ministry

**Sue Medina**

Deputy Public Health  
Director  
Tioga County Public  
Health

**Timothy Calice**

Superintendent  
Newark Valley Schools

**John McNulty**

Public Policy Specialist  
Southern Tier  
Independence Center

**Joshua Roe**

Superintendent  
Tioga Central Schools

**Dr. Kristi Snyder**

Executive Director  
Cornell Cooperative  
Ext.



*Thank you for  
participating  
in our  
Advisory  
Council  
Meetings.  
We appreciate  
your input  
and  
Information  
Sharing*



The year 2024 proved to be a steady and productive year for the Tioga County Department of Social Services. Our staff continued to provide quality service to the County to help keep individuals, young and old, safe in our communities, encouraged struggling adults towards a better sense of ongoing self-sufficiency and strengthened families and supports for those in need of such services. We have stabilized the challenges of vacancies created through the time of COVID. The Department has an energetic and vibrant group of new people, working side by side with our seasoned veterans, and we continue to meet our core mission of delivering services in an ***“empathetic, timely and customer focused manner”***.

I want to take a moment to thank the Administrative team...Liz, Julie, Mickelle and Brenda...who are by my side every step of the way supporting the work that we do, always being present and engaged. Since stepping into this role in 2003, I have always valued what the team around me brings to the table. We accomplish everything together and their talent, support and dedication are unwavering.

The pages that follow will give more detail about the year behind us. We welcome your feedback and questions and as always, thank all of our community partners for their support in delivering the services that so many in our communities rely on. We look forward to a promising year ahead as we continue to play our role in keeping Tioga County a safe and welcoming place to live, work and play.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Shawn L. Yetter". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Shawn L. Yetter,

Commissioner

## Mission Statement

The Social Services Department works to promote self-sufficiency and protect citizens by providing financial and social services to eligible Tioga County residents through program development, application of the law and encouragement of responsibility in an empathetic, timely and customer focused manner

## Vision

To be the most respected Department of Social Services, having a culture which values responsibility, efficiency, teamwork, compassion, excellence and universal respect.



## Values

**Responsibility:** Accepting personal and professional accountability for the delivery of dependable, reliable services.

**Integrity & Ethics:** Ensuring optimal standards of service with honesty, trust and dedication.

**Equality:** Promoting fairness and impartiality among all

**Respect & Compassion:** Expressing consideration and empathy toward others.

**Excellence:** Encouraging and motivating the best in others and ourselves.

# Administrative & Supervisory Staff

## ADMINISTRATION

Shawn L. Yetter, Commissioner  
Elizabeth Myers, Deputy Commissioner  
Mickelle Andrews, Director of Administrative Services  
Julie Whipple, Director of Employment & Transitional Supports  
Administrative Secretaries: Brenda Holt, Gail Perdue,  
Lisa Williams

## LEGAL DEPARTMENT

Mari Townsend, First Assistant County Attorney  
Nicole Pence, Second Assistant County Attorney

## ADMINISTRATIVE SERVICES DIVISION

Jade Relyea, Accounting Supervisor  
Andrea Rossi, Principal Social Welfare Examiner

## EMPLOYMENT & TRANSITIONAL SUPPORTS DIVISION

Debra Goodspeed, Principal Social Welfare Examiner  
Tara Hauptfleisch, Principal Social Welfare Examiner  
Kelly Kelley, Principal Social Welfare Examiner  
Samantha Webster, Child Support Enforcement Coordinator

## TIOGA EMPLOYMENT CENTER

Jackie Burdick, Manager

## SERVICES DIVISION

Sarah Moore, Grade A Supervisor  
Donna Corbin, Foster Care/Adoption/Home Finding / Preventive Supervisor  
Sarah Tiffany, Foster Care/Adoption/Preventive/Raise the Lower Age/PINS Diversion Supervisor  
Kimberly Bailey Poreda, Training Supervisor  
Joylynn MacNaughton, Adult Services Supervisor  
Stephanie Galeano, Child Protective Services Supervisor  
Cassandra Moore, Child Protective Services Supervisor  
Tyna Eldred, Child Advocacy Center/Safe Harbour Coordinator



327 Years of Experience

# Tioga County Legislature



Martha C. Sauerbrey  
*Legislative Chair*

Jackson D. Bailey II  
*County Administrator*

William Standinger, *Chair*  
*Health & Human Services Committee*

Jake Brown

\*Ray Bunce

Ron Ciotoli

Keith Flesher

\*Tracy Monell

\*Dennis M. Mullen

Barbara Roberts

\* Health & Human Services Committee

# Employment & Transitional Supports

## Child Support

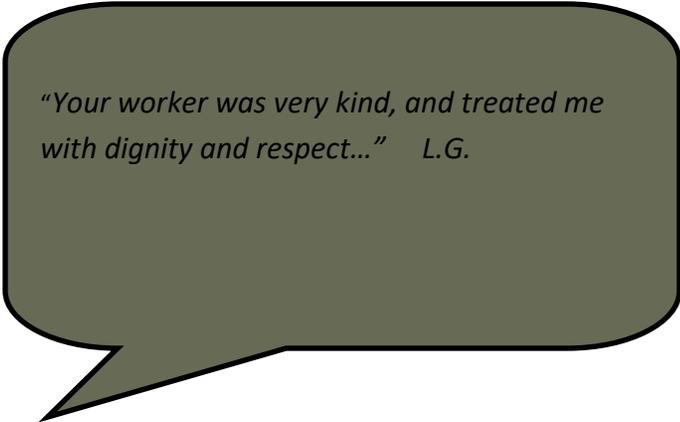
The Child Support Enforcement Unit collected \$5.3 Million in 2024 for the benefit of children and families of Tioga County. The average monthly caseload was 1,844. The staff of two Child Support Investigators, a Senior Investigator and the Coordinator, supported by two Accounting Associates, filed a total of 533 petitions, a slight increase from 2023.

## HEAP

The Home Energy Assistance Program (HEAP) is a vital program that helps low-income households with the cost of heating, cooling, and heating equipment maintenance. For the program year ending September 30, 2024, the HEAP unit processed 3,487 benefits totaling over \$2.2 million. In addition, HEAP assisted 95 homeowners with the repair or replacement of their primary heating equipment for \$206,132. Two permanent staff and a Supervisor do this with the help of five seasonal staff members!

## SNAP/Medicaid

The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) and Medicaid Unit processed over 15,500 “tasks” in 2024. These tasks include processing applications, recertifications and changes. In addition, the unit received over 18,500 phone calls and conducted nearly 500 face-to-face interviews. The staff of seven Social Welfare Examiners, two Senior Examiners, a Principal Welfare Examiner and two Office Specialists were able to provide SNAP benefits for over 5,000 individuals per month, as well as maintain Medicaid eligibility for over 3,000 individuals.



*“Your worker was very kind, and treated me with dignity and respect...” L.G.*

## Temporary Assistance & Employment

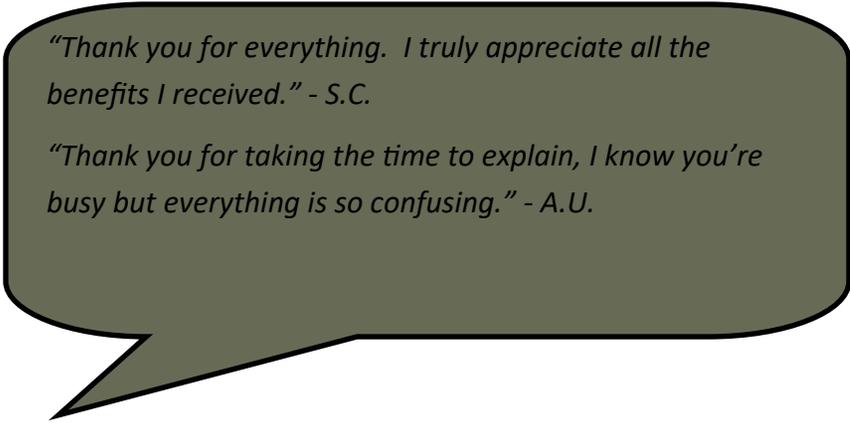
In 2024, the Tioga Career Center's reception, which services Temporary Assistance, Employment & WIOA customers, signed in over 5,000 walk-in customers and handled nearly 9,000 phone calls. This staff, consisting of two Social Welfare Examiners, five Employment Specialists, a Senior Examiner, a Principal Examiner and one Office Specialist managed a Temporary Assistance caseload of 200 cases. With the assistance of our Disability Case Manager, eighteen Safety Net Assistance cases were closed due to the receipt of SSI.

Employment Specialists meet weekly with Temporary Assistance adults who are able to work. In 2024, thirty of them had job placements.

Two of the Employment Specialists are working with in the new Family-Centered Case Management State initiative. These staff have worked intensely to assist individuals dealing with homelessness.

DSS has been a site for the Voluntary Income Tax Assistance program (VITA) since 2004. In 2024, 225 tax returns were processed, resulting in over \$450,000 in Federal and State tax refunds!

Childcare Assistance had an average of 185 cases, helping with the cost of child care for over 350 children.



*"Thank you for everything. I truly appreciate all the benefits I received." - S.C.*

*"Thank you for taking the time to explain, I know you're busy but everything is so confusing." - A.U.*

## Tioga Career Center/WIOA (Workforce Innovation & Opportunity Act)

With a staff of two Employment Counselors and a Manager, Tioga Career Center provides a range of customer-driven employment services to both individuals and job seekers. In 2024 they served over 800 customers with Unemployment assistance and mandated appointments. Other function of the Center are BOCES GED classes, resume creation, job search assistance, and online application support. They also offer job postings, hiring events, on-the-job training opportunities, and job fairs to employers.

# Tioga County Youth Bureau

Using funds allocated to counties by NYS Office of Children’s and Families Services (OCFS), Tioga County awarded \$101,256 to thirteen community organizations and municipal recreations programs for the program year 10/1/23—9/30/24. These non-profit groups applied for funding to support the work they are doing to serve the youth of Tioga County:

*Catholic Charities YESS*

*Cornell Cooperative Extension At-Risk Youth Apprenticeship*

*Cornell Cooperative Extension Family Resource Center*

*Kali’s Klubhouse*

*Lions’ Camp Badger*

*Newark Valley Summer Recreation*

*Spencer-VanEtten PAVE program*

*Tioga Central Field Hockey Club*

*Tioga County Arts Council*

*Tioga Boys & Girls Club*

*Tioga Opportunities Fatherhood Initiative*

*Town of Owego—Waterman Summer Recreation*

*Waverly Recreation*



# Administrative Services

## Accounting

This unit continued to meet the needs of the Agency, in spite of significant staffing challenges. The staff of three Accounting Associates and a Supervisor is responsible for all payment processing , as well as proper claiming to maximize the Federal and State reimbursement for the taxpayers of Tioga County. In 2024, Accounting submitted claims for over \$11.2 million in reimbursements.

## Systems

Systems is responsible for providing access and user support for all Agency staff equipment, both hardware and software. In addition, they meter mail for almost all County departments. This unit of two mail clerks and one Principal Welfare Examiner provide agency-wide services such as data entry, processing state reports, and creating custom databases for departments across the Agency. In 2024 over 113,000 pieces of mail were processed. The Principal also maintained an average of 110 Foster Care & Adoption Subsidy Medicaid cases.

## Fraud & FEDS

Two Fraud Investigators, supervised by the same Principal Welfare Examiner who manages Systems, processed 188 Fraud referrals in 2024. Of those, fifty-nine required repayments to the Agency of over \$64,000. This unit also processed 159 overpayment referrals, resulting in almost \$38,000 referred for collection. In addition, using our Front End Detection System (FEDS) process, seventy-two of 135 referrals were “founded”, resulting in cost savings of almost \$46,000 per month.

## Resource Recovery

Our Resource Assistant collected over \$22,000 in repayments in 2024. In addition, almost \$228,000 was collected against estates and over \$3,800 was recovered against accident settlements. Our Paralegal works as a liaison with the County Legal Department and a resource for staff for various issues. He monitors over 35 contracts necessary for routine operation of our services.



# Adult & Children's Services

## Adult Services

In 2024, this unit received 371 Adult Services referrals. They completed 148 intakes and sixty-one assessments. In addition, they conducted 93 Adult Protective investigations. They worked with a monthly average of 47 individuals, with most cases receiving financial management services.

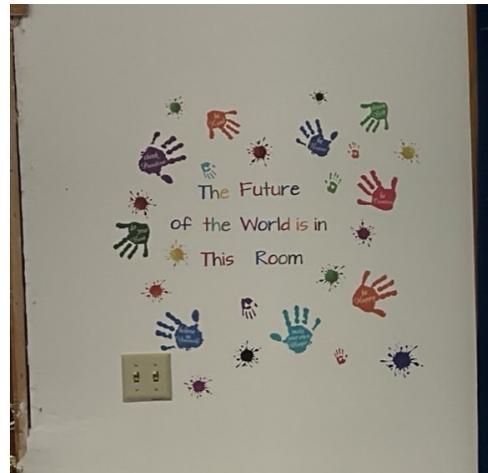
## Child Advocacy Center & Safe Harbour

The CAC served 95 children and their families in 2024. In addition 62 youth were served by the Safe Harbour Program.

This Center provides a comfortable environment for children and families to seek services related to traumatic experiences.

*"Thank you. I wish I had more people in Tioga County that could have you as a Rep Payee!"*

*-OPWDD Case Manager*



## Child Protective & Preventive Services

In 2024, this unit received 1072 “Hotline” reports—805 investigative and 267 Family Assessment Response. Of the 283 investigations, 137 were indicated and closed and 31 were indicated and opened for Preventive Services. 64 children from 37 families were served. In addition, 12 families were discharged from Preventive Services.

## Foster Care/Adoption/Home Finding

There were twenty-seven Foster Care admissions in 2024 (twenty-three abuse/neglect & four Juvenile Delinquents). Fifteen children were discharged from Foster Care. In addition ten children were freed for adoption!

## Staff Development

The Staff Development Senior Caseworker “onboarded” 21 new DSS employees in 2024. Of those, 6 were new Caseworkers and received over 1300 hours of training! 762 participants attended 409 state-sponsored virtual trainings, and 456 participants attended 53 local trainings.





Marley Norton  
1st Quarter



Alyssa Kinney  
2nd Quarter



Amy Link  
3rd Quarter



Amber Johnson  
4<sup>th</sup> Quarter

## Tioga County Department of Social Services Employees of the Quarter—2024



*Kelly Kelley  
Supervisor of the Year  
2024*

