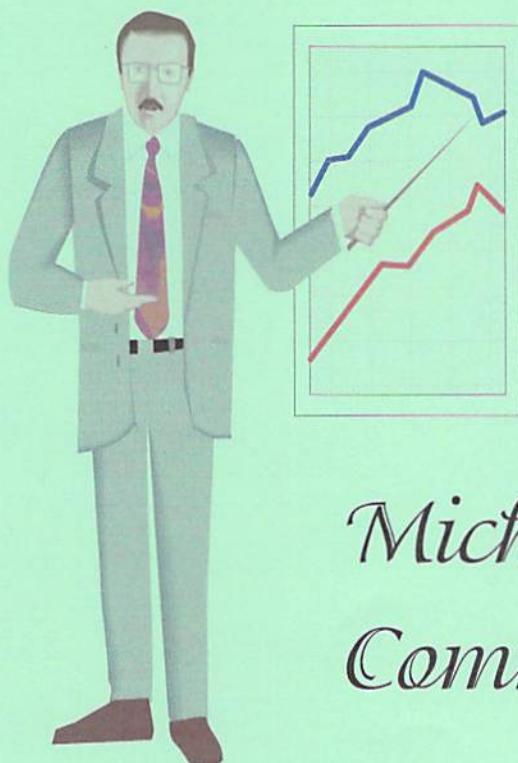


# Madison County

## *Department of Social Services*

2003

## *Annual Report*



*Michael A. Fitzgerald  
Commissioner*



## MADISON COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES

Phone: 366-2248

*Michael A. Fitzgerald, Commissioner*

Fax: 366-2553

Madison County Complex, Building 1  
North Court Street  
P.O. Box 637  
Wampsville, New York 13163

June 15, 2004

Mr. Rocco DiVeronica, Chairman  
Madison County Board of Supervisors  
Wampsville, New York 13163

Dear Chairman DiVeronica:

Several months ago, I took over as the Commissioner of the Madison County Department of Social Services. Each year, the agency publishes an "Annual Report" that details the major accomplishments and caseload facts regarding the department. We discuss the number of clients that receive one benefit or another, the number of child protective investigations completed, or the amount of child support we receive and distribute to needy families. We lament about the increases in Medicaid costs, children's services, and our daily operating costs.

The "Annual Report" that I submit to you this year contains all those facts and figures because that is the business we conduct. The department provides services to residents of this county and those services cost money; however, I also submit to you, this year, how this department is an economic development tool. Where appropriate, I listed the recipients of the dollars this agency expended everyday. From landlords to utility companies, hospitals to doctors, and nursing homes to funeral homes, all are listed with the amount of income they received from this department. The lists are not meant to embarrass the providers or question the costs, but to point out that the department supports employment.

Each dollar that is expended means that a member of our community and his/her employer is surviving. The department contributes \$27 million annually to the

local economy. We are an economic engine and the fortunes of many local businesses depend upon the dollars that we generate, pass through or cause to be spent. While we continue to examine every opportunity to cut costs and improve our efficiencies, I thought it important to note the primary beneficiaries of this department's services.

Medicaid is often thought of as providing assistance for the poor; however, in many ways it supports the infrastructure of the county. Such local companies, as Vineall Ambulance, who was paid nearly \$90,000 in 2003 for their services, benefited from the Medicaid program. Health care providers, like Oneida Health Care Center who took in \$5.9 million and Crouse Community that had nearly \$3.4 million in Medicaid payments in 2003, would have otherwise had to scale back their operations. County providers of service such as the Public Health Department, who billed for \$2.04 million, and the Mental Health Department, who billed for \$1.78 million in 2003, would have had to come to the county tax base to compensate for what Medicaid did not provide. Finally, not-for-profit agencies like the Madison-Cortland ARC, who billed for \$3.5 million, and Liberty Resources, who took in \$2.3 million in 2003, benefited from the Medicaid funding they received.

These providers are just a few of the examples of how the funding provided by the Department of Social Services relates back to economic development within Madison County. Many entities benefit from the services the department provides, such as local grocery stores from the nearly \$3.4 million annually in Food Stamp purchases, the utility and fuel companies from \$1.6 million in HEAP benefits alone, and the Community Action Partnership by receiving \$140,000 in grants and other funding in 2003.

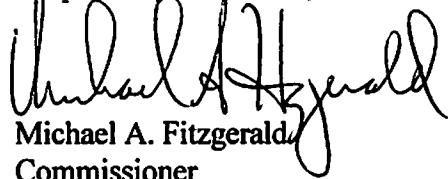
In preparing this, my first "Annual Report," I was fortunate to have the first "Department of Public Welfare Annual Report" from 1952. It was interesting to note that the department at that time provided services to roughly 700 of our citizenry monthly. This compares to the over 17,000 citizens who received services from the department monthly in 2003. It was notable that Aid for Dependent Children (ADC) and Home Relief caseloads at that time were nearly identical to the caseloads in 2003. In fact, ADC caseloads stood at 116 cases monthly in 1952 while in 2003, they averaged 104 monthly. Home Relief cases averaged 54 monthly in 1952 while averaging 55 in 2003.

The real change has occurred in medical care. In 1952, the department spent the grand sum of \$179,103 for all medical-related services. In 2003, the local cost alone exceeded \$10 million with a gross cost (including state and federal shares) of over \$62 million. In fact, the four highest cost categories (nursing homes, waivered services, hospitals, and prescriptions) had gross costs of nearly \$44.5 million in 2003.

The 1952 report is also an historical document, pointing out that in that year, Madison County operated a "county home" and a "county farm." The poor were housed at the home and toiled at the farm, not only to sustain themselves or their families, but to also resell the products of their labor. The 1952 report lists the number of cows, hens and other livestock, bushels of corn, squash and other produce as well as the machinery on hand to operate the farm. While the day may have come and gone for this type of social welfare policy, it is interesting to note that this report is very much within recent memory.

My intent in publishing the "2003 Madison County Department of Social Services Annual Report" is to bring discussion to what it is the agency does. I wish to thank you, the Board of Supervisors, the Social and Mental Health Services Committee, my fellow department heads, community partners, and my staff for entrusting this agency to my leadership. The coming years will bring challenges, no doubt. I believe that the cooperative spirit we all share will bring success to Madison County.

Respectfully Submitted,



Michael A. Fitzgerald  
Commissioner

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER .....	1
ECONOMIC SECURITY .....	4
MEDICAL ASSISTANCE .....	10
ADULT AND FAMILY SERVICES/EMPLOYMENT .....	14
CHILD SUPPORT ENFORCEMENT .....	21
ADMINISTRATIVE SERVICES .....	28
STAFF DEVELOPMENT .....	31
SYSTEMS .....	36
RESOURCES .....	39
CHILDREN'S SERVICES .....	40
PREVENTIVE SERVICES .....	45
CHILD PROTECTIVE SERVICES .....	47
CHILDREN'S SERVICES SOCIAL WORKER .....	50
PARENT AIDES .....	53
INDEPENDENT LIVING .....	54
LEGAL .....	55
INVESTIGATIONS .....	58

## **DEPUTY COMMISSIONER**

In 2003, a total of 13 employees left the Department of Social Services. Two employees were removed, seven resigned, and four retired, including Commissioner James Cary. Seven employees requested and were granted leaves of absence. Five were medical leaves and two were maternity leaves.

The vacancies that resulted from persons' leaving the department occurred at many levels. There were four Caseworker vacancies, three Transportation Aide vacancies, one Support Investigator vacancy, one Social Welfare Examiner vacancy, one Typist vacancy, one Office Assistant I vacancy, one School Services Program Coordinator vacancy, and the Commissioner vacancy.

Three of the Caseworker vacancies were filled by hiring new employees and one was filled through a transfer from another county. The three Transportation Aide vacancies were filled by hiring new employees. The Support Investigator vacancy was filled by hiring a new employee. The Social Welfare Examiner vacancy was filled by promoting a Typist. The Typist vacancy was filled by hiring a new employee. The Office Assistant I vacancy was filled by hiring a new employee. The School Services Coordinator vacancy was filled by promoting a Caseworker, and the Commissioner's vacancy was filled with the appointment of Michael Fitzgerald, who was the Director of Economic Security.

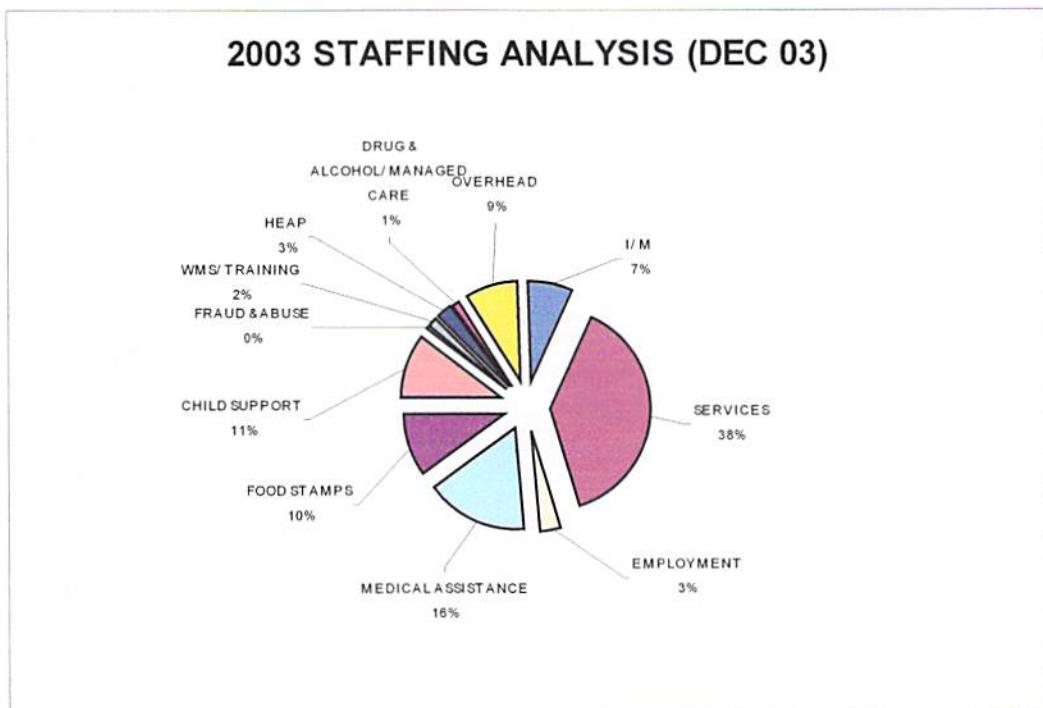
There were a total of four promotions within the department during 2003. A Transportation Aide was promoted to Parent Aide. A Typist was promoted to Social Welfare Examiner. A Caseworker was promoted to the School Services Program Coordinator position, and the Director of Economic Security was appointed to the Commissioner position.

One new position was created during 2003. A Social Welfare Examiner position was created in order to provide food stamp outreach. This position is funded through a United States Department of Agriculture Food Stamps Access Grant and there is no local cost.

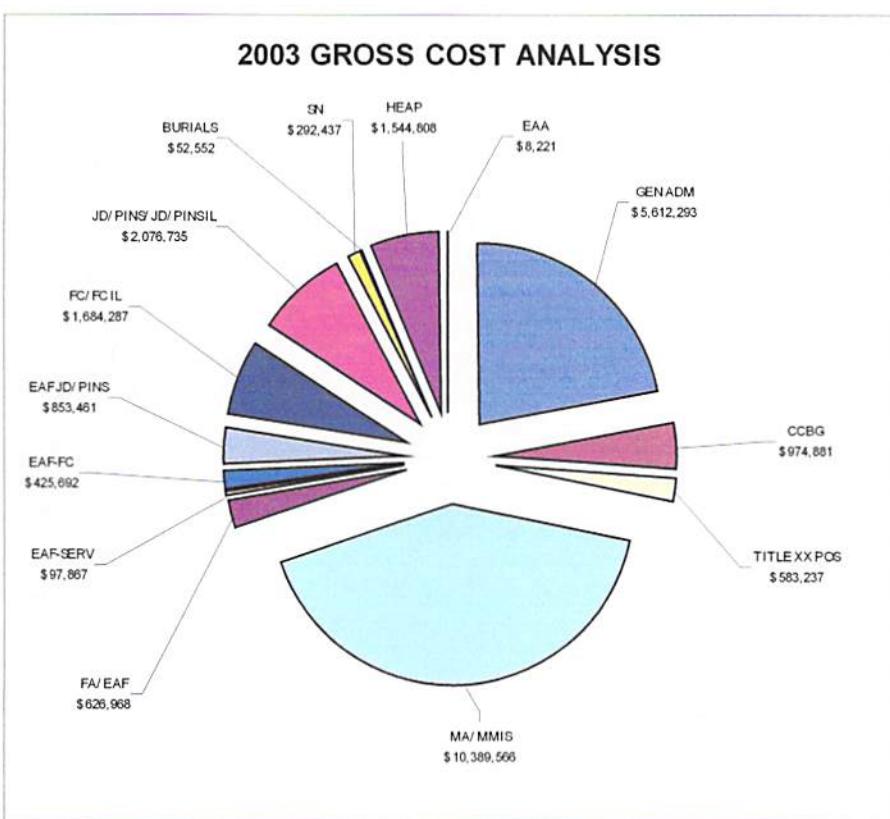
Three positions were eliminated in the 2003 budget. An Account Clerk Typist and a Typist position from the Supportive Services clerical pool were eliminated, and a Senior Clerk position from the Transportation Unit was also eliminated.

In 2003, ten employees of the department qualified for the attendance bonus in accordance with Article 34.7 of the White Collar Bargaining Agreement.

At the end of 2003, there was a total of 113 positions within the Department of Social Services plus four Sheriff's Deputies provided through a contract with the Sheriff's Department to conduct fraud investigations and provide building security.

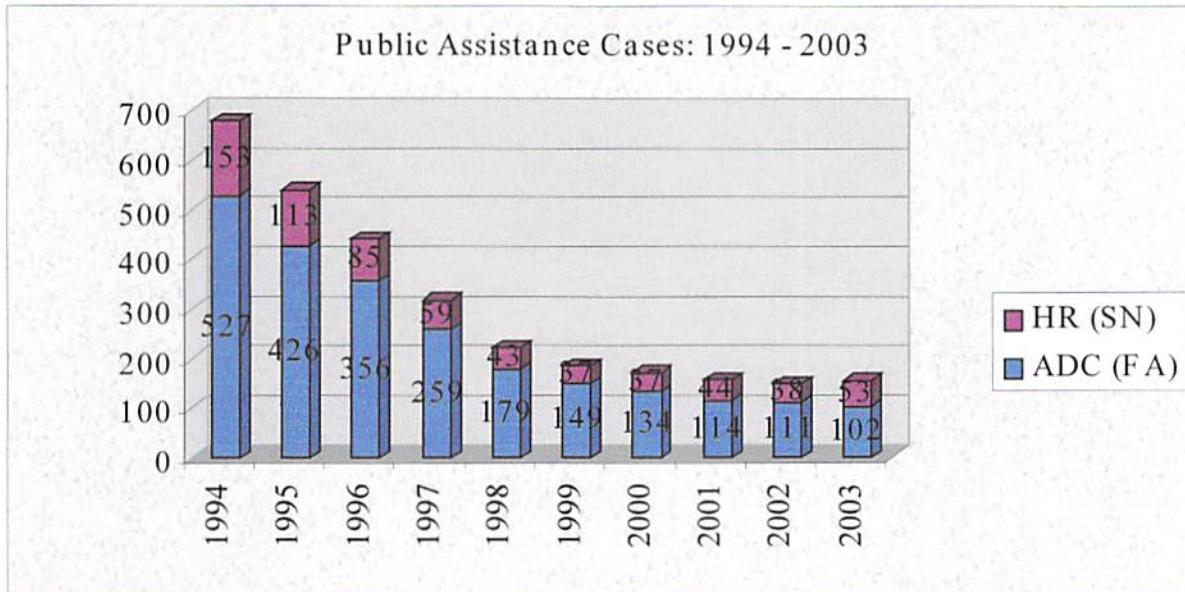


## 2003 GROSS COST ANALYSIS



## **ECONOMIC SECURITY** **(Temporary Assistance)**

The year 2003 consisted of the Madison County Department of Social Services Economic Security unit's continuation of success at keeping the Family Assistance caseloads low. Motivating families to self-sufficiency continued to be our number one goal. This has been accomplished through a variety of programs operated under the Temporary Assistance unit.



Temporary Assistance saw an overall increase in the number of cash assistance cases in 2003. The average number of Family Assistance cases declined 8 percent (111 cases in 2002 to 102 in 2003) while Safety Net cases increased significantly (38 cases in 2002 and 53 in 2003). This resulted in a total caseload increase of 4 percent (149 cases to 155 in 2003), the first increase after eight straight years of caseload decreases. With a struggling economy and uncertainties at the national level, Madison County Department of Social Services was fortunate to see a minimal caseload increase.

We continued to operate or started a wide assortment of services this past year. Highlights include: Continued employment rate participation figures that exceeded the required

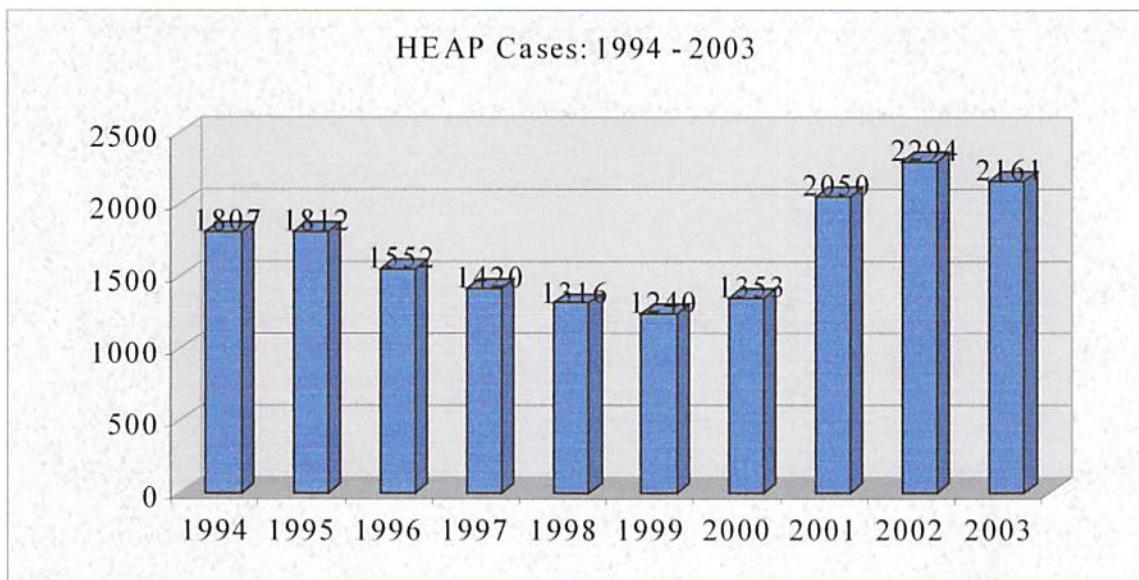
state/federal standard, a software program (Centraport) on computers that allow workers to “switch” between the State Welfare Management System (WMS) and a desktop computer and a Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) site. The VITA program allows low-income families free, electronic filing of income tax information. The program was a successful collaboration between the department, Community Action Program (CAP), and Colgate University. Students from the college prepared over 130 filings bringing more than \$250,000 of federal income tax refunds into the county. The Temporary Assistance unit had 4 staff successfully complete the Family Development Credentialing (FDC) course offered through CAP. The course teaches staff a strength-based model of effectively dealing with their clients.

The unit is also busy preparing for the next “Welfare Leavers Study.” The study – building on the success of an earlier study, the second to be done in New York State – examines the lives of former welfare recipients and serves as a blueprint for future programming. The earlier study presented suggestions to improve our services and has since led to the implementation of a program to improve access for food stamps. The USDA Food Stamp Access Grant has allowed online food stamp screening and application in addition to more community outreach. The online application went “live” October 1, 2003 and through the end of December, 93 citizens of Madison County had applied for food stamps online with another 11 having applied at one of the outreach sites.

The unit was also an instrumental participant in a number of other initiatives currently underway or that will be beginning shortly. The Temporary Assistance unit, together with CAP and SUNY Morrisville applied for and received a transportation grant through the Department of Labor that has allowed the purchase of 10 automobiles for low-income, working families. The unit is also looking forward to collaborating with other local housing providers, such as the HUD agencies, Stoneleigh Housing, Inc., and others to bring additional federal community housing dollars into our community. Finally, the unit is anxiously awaiting notification of our proposal

to replace all locally owned desktop computers through the use of a one-time grant opportunity. This will allow all units with the department to share a common platform to allow more efficient communication. Additionally, the state continues to move ahead with a variety of initiatives (imaging, form filler, and smart interview technology) that would allow more worker time to be spent on getting benefits to those less fortunate and less time on administrative tasks.

The Home Energy Assistance Program (HEAP) saw the first year of decrease after three straight years of increases. Overall, the number of families seeking an energy grant decreased by 133 cases. The rising cost of fuel for heating made it necessary for many families to apply for



benefits. The season was a departure from past years because no “additional” benefits were authorized other than the regular and emergency grants.

The department has also contracted with Stoneleigh Housing of Canastota to process applications for furnace repairs and replacements. As the county’s weatherization agent, they are better suited to determine the heating needs of eligible households and better able to communicate those needs to local heating contractors. Stoneleigh replaced 41 furnaces and repaired 48 furnaces for low-income homeowners in Madison County.

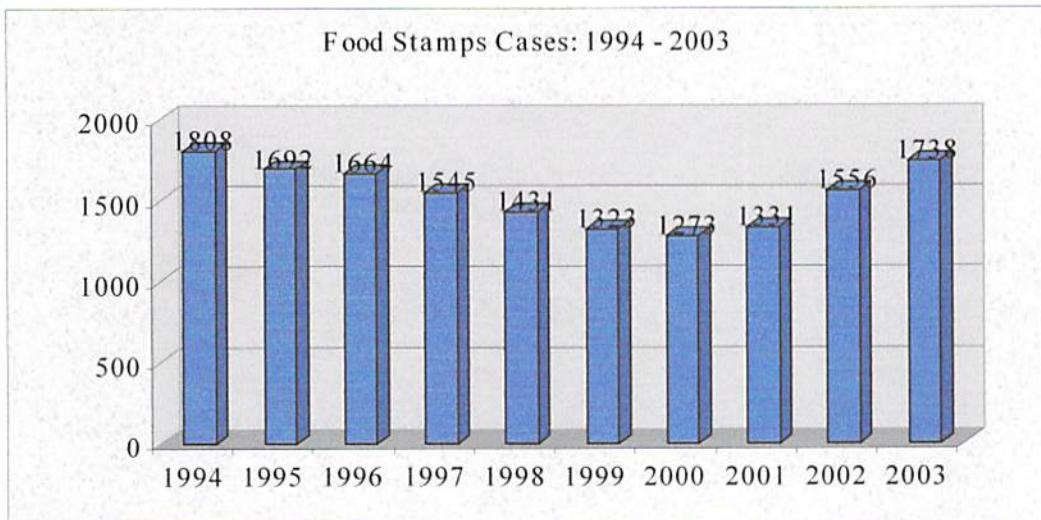
In late January 2003, a family with 4 children applied for HEAP assistance for their furnace. It was extremely cold and they had a baby who was only 3 weeks old. The furnace had not been working for hours and the husband was trying to repair it himself. It was mid-afternoon when the wife decided to take action. She contacted our agency desperately looking for assistance. That night Stoneleigh Housing was able to provide them with 2 electric heaters. Their home was an old farmhouse in need of many repairs. It was determined by Stoneleigh Housing to repair the old furnace at a cost for parts of \$750.54 compared to replacing the boiler system which would have been over \$3,000.

The past year also saw the agency utilize TANF funded services. The money is an allocation set by the state, due in part to caseload reductions that have occurred. The TANF Services Plan was begun in January 2001. This past year, the agency was able to fund three programs for twelve months while two of the programs were eliminated in June after cuts in the amount of the grant.

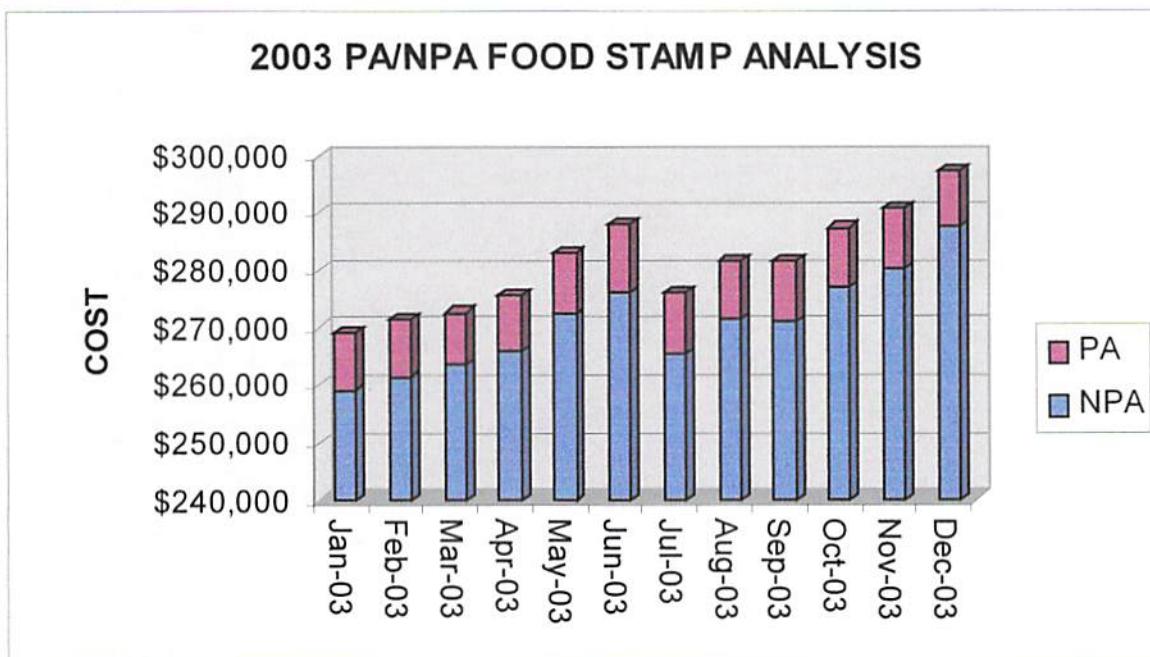
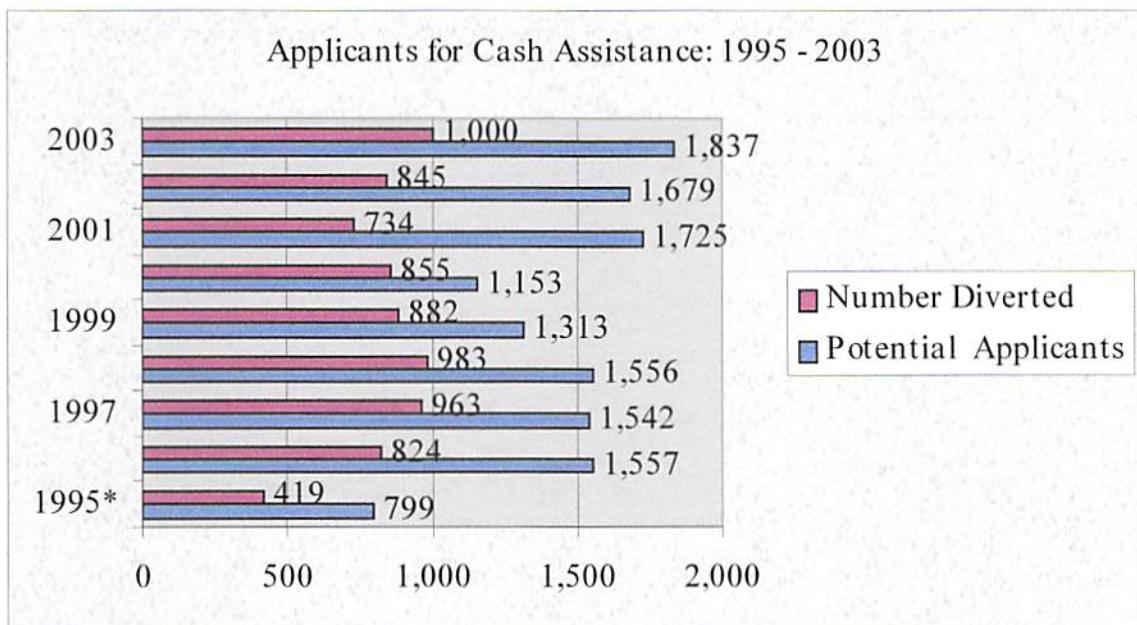
The TANF Services Plan provided funding to the Community Action Program (CAP) to provide a housing stabilization program. The program funded such items as first month's rent, moving expenses, and minor rehabilitation to name a few (427 families accessed this grant in 2003 compared to 190 families in 2002 and 113 in 2001). An example of the kind of assistance the funding provides was a homeless two-parent family of five who arrived at CAP on a frigid Friday afternoon. The father was attending career training at Morrisville College. CAP was able to assist with a security deposit for an apartment. The father found employment working nights and has been able to stay in school.

We saw a continued caseload increase in food stamps with a high of 1,889 cases in December and a low of 1,687 in February. It should be noted that our low case count was higher than the high case count in 2002. We averaged 1,738 cases for the year, representing 3,696 residents of the county. The food stamp caseload has increased by over 400 cases over the past

two years indicating that more of our neighbors need the nutrition food stamps provides. In fact, it is important to note that food stamps, a totally federally subsidized benefit, adds \$281,130 monthly (and nearly \$3.4 million annually) to our local economy by the food purchases made at local grocery stores.



The cornerstone of the Temporary Assistance unit remains the “Front-Door Diversion” staff. This concept was instituted in July 1995 by a group of employees who wanted to offer our clients something more than an application for assistance every time the person came to the Social Services office. This group felt that we could possibly “divert” up to 20 percent of the applications into some other form of assistance (Medicaid, food stamps, day care, HEAP, or directly into private-sector employment). We have seen an average of 58 percent, or nearly 71 per month since beginning the program, of the persons applying for public assistance diverted into some other form of help. The program has saved the county an average of \$32,145 per month or total savings of \$3,407,395 since we began. In 2003, we saw more impressive results: 1,837 persons came into the social services building to apply for public assistance with 1,000 diverted (over 54 percent) for a yearly savings of \$451,000.



## MEDICAL ASSISTANCE

The Medicaid program costs Madison County millions of dollars each year. What people may not realize is the amount of the Medicaid payments that go to Madison County companies. Following is a representation of some of the Madison County businesses that received Medicaid funding during 2003. It is easy to see that the Medicaid program generates income for many Madison County businesses allowing them to continue to operate in Madison County, keeping jobs within the county.

### Medicaid Payments to Madison County Employers

#### **Oneida HealthCare Center**

• Inpatient hospital	\$1,471,453
• Patient hospital	747,620
• Skilled nursing (ECF)	3,703,934
• Child/teen health	<u>3,014</u>
• <b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$ 5,926,021</b>

#### **Community Memorial Hospital**

• Inpatient hospital	\$645,575
• Outpatient hospital	500,277
• Skilled nursing	1,044,739
• Child/teen health program	<u>6,619</u>
• <b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$2,197,210</b>

#### **Crouse Community Center**

• Skilled nursing	\$3,362,198
-------------------	-------------

#### **Madison County Public Health**

• Personal care	\$143,500
• Home health aides	360,684
• Home nursing	499,107
• LTHHCP –waived services	75,128
• Rehab	19,235
• Preschool services (3-5)	400,626
• Early intervention (0-2)	203,100
• Case management	26,964
• Clinic (PCAP)	<u>317,461</u>
• <b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$2,045,805</b>

**Madison County Mental Health**

• Clinic	\$1,768,358
• Case management	<u>12,637</u>
• <b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$1,780,995</b>

**Madison-Cortland ARC**

• Clinic	\$469,545
• HCBS services	2,595,489
• Case management	399,604
• Transportation	<u>53,056</u>
• <b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$3,517,694</b>

In 2003, there was a continuation of new Medicaid program establishment, including the Medicaid Buy-In for Working People with Disabilities (MBI-WPD) that began July 1, 2003. The program offers Medicaid coverage to people with disabilities who are working and earning more than the allowable limits for regular Medicaid. Income limits are set at 250 percent of the federal poverty level and resource levels at \$10,000. The original proposal included a premium payment, which is currently not applicable, as a moratorium is in effect until an automated premium collection and tracking system is available. Eight individuals became Medicaid eligible through the MBI-WPD program in 2003.

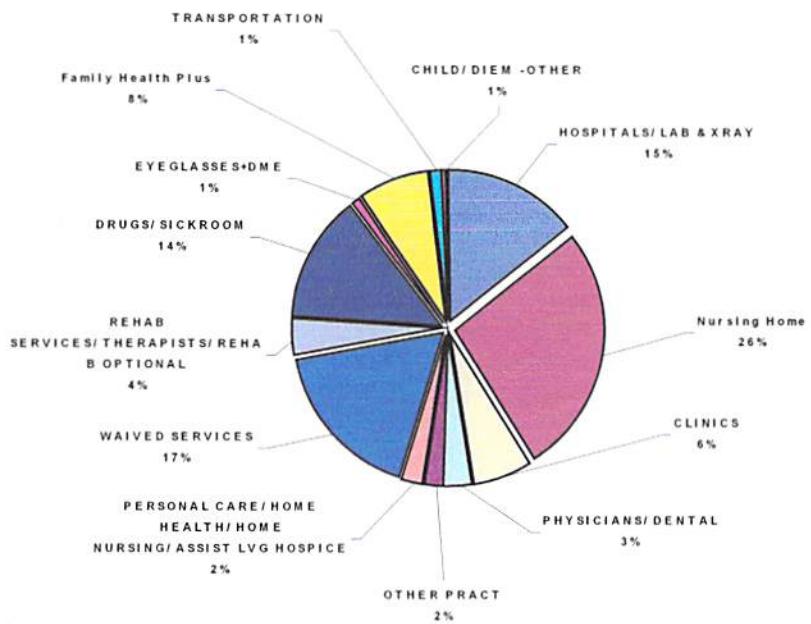
Another fast growing Medicaid program is the Family Planning Benefit Program, which started 2003 with 0 participants and at the end of 2003, had 276.

On a more routine note, caseloads continued to increase during 2003:

MEDICAID PROGRAM	# CASES JANUARY	# CASES DECEMBER	# CHANGE
Regular Medicaid	1786	1803	+17
Nursing Home	334	341	+7
Family Health Plus	480	720	+240
Child Health Plus	489	521	+32
Family Planning	0	276	+276
Medicaid Buy-In for Working Disabled	0	8	+8
SSI	1130	1159	+29
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>4219</b>	<b>4828</b>	<b>+609</b>

Medicaid applications reached an all time high in March with 289.

## 2003 GROSS MEDICAID COST ANALYSIS



### Medicaid Home Care Programs

The year 2003 was proclaimed the “Long-Term Home Health Care Year” by the Chairman of the Madison County Board of Supervisors in honor of Madison County’s Long-Term Home Health Care Program.

The Long-Term Home Health Care Program successfully completed its seventeenth year. This program provided 98 clients with expanded home care services. In 2003, the program admitted 27 individuals, two of which were admitted from nursing homes. The age range was 37 to 96, with the average age being 72. The average DMS-A score was 162. Twenty-four percent were male and 76 percent were female. With skilled care being provided at approximately 46 percent of the monthly allowable cap of \$3872 and health-

related care being provided at approximately 58 percent of the allowable monthly cap of \$2615, home care continues to be a cost-effective alternative to institutionalization.

The Personal Care Program served eight clients in the year 2003.

The Care at Home Program continues to be offered in New York State. Two children received this program in Madison County. The approximate Medicaid cost for both children per month was \$12,352.14.

The Consumer Directed Personal Care Program has assisted 15 individuals. Three of those individuals were admitted to this program from nursing home facilities. This program, at the current caseload count, will cost Medicaid \$361,776 per year. The Resource Center for Independent Living receives approximately \$129,314.88 per year to assist with the Medicaid billing for the program.

Eleven residents of an adult care facility received services through the limited licensed home care services agency, with the approximate Medicaid cost being \$45,759.65 per year.

Madison County's Home Care Programs served 133 individuals in 2003.

## **ADULT AND FAMILY SERVICES/EMPLOYMENT**

The Adult & Family Services (A&FS) Unit investigates reports of impaired adults who are abused, neglected or exploited by others. In 2003, the unit received 132 allegations that required our staff to determine the veracity of the reports and what role we would take in protecting those who had been victimized.

Allegations regarding healthcare, placement, and personal care accounted for one third of all our referrals. An example of considerable teamwork in resolving the above issues occurred in July when we received a request from the Madison County Public Health Department regarding an elderly male. He had been running a fever, had elevated blood pressure, shortness of breath, and an ulcer on his leg and waist area. Despite his Public Health Nurse's recommendation that he be admitted to the hospital for evaluation and treatment, he refused. The caseworker and his supervisor made a home visit and found that in addition to the above problems, he had been incontinent and unable to ambulate which exacerbated his weakened condition. The A&FS staff contacted 911 and he was transported to the Oneida Health Care facility where he was admitted.

The Caseworkers then coordinated a service plan with the admitting physician. This treatment plan required extensive physical therapy and placement in an appropriate rehabilitation center. The client objected to this plan and sought to return home expressing the fear that he would never be allowed to do so if placed in an intermediate care facility. This is a common fear, and not an irrational one, that the elderly often voice to our staff. It took a considerable amount of persuasion and truthful reassurance to finesse compliance from our client. Once he was transferred to rehabilitation, his dread of being unable to return home intensified. He was faced with performing a physical therapy regimen that was

strenuous, a diet that was unpalatable, and now resided in an unfamiliar surrounding. He missed his home, his cat, and cable TV. Once again, our staff communicated with him reassuring him that in order to live at home, he would have to be able to walk and stand on his feet for a specified amount of time. If he failed to prove that he could do so safely, the Public Health Department would be unable to provide the vital services that he required to reside at home.

Regular discharge planning meetings are necessary when a client is temporarily placed in any medical facility (last year we received 49 referrals from healthcare providers). In this case, the Caseworker not only called, but also made repeated visits to the facility and monitored his client's progress. The Caseworker conferred with the physical therapist, the attending physician, and the social worker. During our client's rehabilitation stay, he had a few setbacks and was hospitalized three separate times. After six months, our client was successfully discharged and currently resides at home. During this period, our Casework Assistant, who is representative payee for five Protective Services for Adults (PSA) cases, dutifully paid our client's bills, including his rent and utilities, secured care for his cat, ensured that he received his personal allowance, and disposed of all other debts.

Not all cases require such an intense involvement. We received a referral from a housing project regarding an elderly woman who appeared to be unable to care for herself. A Caseworker made a joint visit with a Public Health Nurse and conferred with the Housing Advocate. They determined that the woman's needs were not acute and, therefore, did not require our intervention; instead, she needed services to remain living independently in her apartment. The Caseworker made a referral to the Office for the Aging (OFA) and worked with the woman's son to establish proper supports and services. We often partner with OFA

and the Madison County Public Health Department, utilizing their knowledge and expertise to benefit our county residents. This elderly lady continues to reside safely and independently in her own apartment.

There are some cases in which we have worked to make sure people can adapt back into the community, returning from an environment where they were dependant upon others to meet their essential needs for themselves and their family members. In a concerted effort of many diverse agencies, which included Office for the Aging, Madison County Public Health, Consumer Services, Children and Family Services, Adult and Family Services, and the Income Maintenance Unit, we were able to obtain adequate housing for an elderly gentleman and his minor children who were being evicted from his residence. Only through this extensive cooperation, could we have secured the adequate support and necessary living conditions. Such teamwork has proven to be the norm rather than the exception and it is notable that our unit's workers serve on or meet with the following committees or agencies: OFA Advisory Board, OFA Inter-Agency Task Force, Madison County Public Health, Madison County Single Point of Access, Madison County Mental Health Sub-Committee, Regional PSA Supervisors, and Madison County Housing. Our willingness and commitment to understand who the other human service agencies and providers are and what they do in Madison County resulted in 58 referrals from them as well as families and individuals.

Not all referrals are successfully resolved in the manner that we would like to see. The process of aging takes a toll on the elderly that can result in dementia, Alzheimer's, and other related diseases, as well as, an array of mental health issues. The severity of these ailments combined with the advanced age of the individual do not often result in recovery. We received five referrals from law enforcement and mental health providers, some of which

required immediate hospitalization and, consequently, one resulted in death. We hope that the development of new medicines as well as an increased community awareness of the available services will continue to improve the outcome for Madison County's elderly population.

The incidence of drug/alcohol abuse/dependence for our clientele continues to increase significantly, as the screenings rose 35 percent from 353 (2002) to 475 (2003); referrals to our contracted Certified Alcohol and Substance Abuse Counselor (CASAC) for evaluation more than doubled from 37 to 78; and the number of cases our Casework Assistant monitored each month nearly doubled from 26 to 47. One may conclude that drug/alcohol abuse continues to present itself as a barrier to employment, as well as, contributing to dysfunctional family behavior. When these clients fail to comply with their treatment requirements, our Casework Assistant confronts their problematic behavior by stringently applying the regulations, which results in a loss of benefits for Safety Net recipients and a reduction of benefits for Family Assistance recipients.

Representatives from two drug and alcohol treatment centers were invited to our agency this year to detail their programs and review the latest in what is occurring in this area. Conifer Park and Tully Hill representatives reviewed the different types of addiction and current treatments and familiarized the Income Maintenance and Adult and Family Services staff with their facilities. This chance to meet these representatives is helpful in understanding their policies, as well as, providing them with an opportunity to question and comprehend our regulations. The Adult and Family Services staff also met with Madison County ADAPT and D. A. Mancuso staffs to collaborate and reflect upon our mutual clientele with the objective of improving the delivery of service.

The mission of the Employment Unit is to assist the unemployed and underemployed to reach a level of self-support that would render them self-sufficient. A Welfare Employment Representative (WER) partners with a New York State Department of Labor (DOL) Services Representative to divert the “job ready” who apply for benefits. If a person is not “job ready,” then the WER and applicant develop a self-sufficiency plan that will utilize the applicant’s strengths and those agency and community benefits that will promote employment to his/her fullest potential. An example of this was a 28-year-old woman whose husband deserted her and their two children. She had very little work experience and had always wanted to attend the Licensed Practical Nurse (LPN) Program at Madison-Oneida BOCES; however, her only income at that time was food stamps and child support for her children.

The client was selected to participate in the InVest Training Program and a slot was given to her to attend the LPN Program. We coordinated this plan through Working Solutions of Herkimer-Madison-Oneida Counties. We routinely refer our clientele to that consortium for employment supportive services.

Returning to school can be a wonderful opportunity for a single person, but for a mother of two, it can present so much uncertainty and stress that it will easily deflate any dream of improving her situation. In anticipation of this hurdle, an InVest counselor, as well as a Bridge College-to-Work counselor, was assigned to her while our WER maintained regular communication. As a team, we tried to instill confidence while helping her resolve the daily problems that she faced to survive. She faced multiple barriers to employment: childcare, transportation, appropriate work clothes, and equipment to name only a few. Our agency made a commitment to support her and her children on Family Assistance. We paid

Erie Insurance Company for her car insurance and the Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV) for her registration through our Food Stamp Employment and Training funding. Our Income Maintenance Unit paid her phone bill so that the phone could be turned back on. Ten months later, this single mother graduated with a grade average of 83. She is working for University Hospital in Syracuse in the Neuro-Science Unit at \$13.03 per hour, 40 hours per week. She no longer receives any form of assistance.

Before an individual officially becomes an applicant, he/she is required to be interviewed by the NYS DOL Labor Services Representative (LSR). The LSR has the ability to refer potential applicants to available jobs as well as check their employment history and determine if they are eligible for Unemployment Insurance Benefits (UIB). Last year our LSR interviewed 559 individuals who were offered 754 referrals to job openings. A total of 37 persons began work as a result of the referral.

If an individual is unable to be diverted to employment and if education is not an option, then we offer a unique opportunity in the form of on-the-job training. A Mobile Work Crew (MWC), which is supervised by an experienced Work Crew Supervisor and where hands-on work enables individuals to learn skills that will ultimately lead to employment is offered. There were 6,272 hours of work completed by the Mobile Work Crew in 2003, which was an increase of 668 hours over last year and 1,846 hours over the year 2001. The completed projects benefited local townships, not-for-profit agencies as well as numerous Madison County departments. These projects ranged from preparing for the nationally renown Gravity Fest for the second year in a row, remodeling town buildings (Cazenovia – repaired porches and installed fencing; Canastota – Police, Clerk's, and Fire Department; and Oneida – removed Armory walls), and not-for-profit buildings (Community

Action Program, Elks Club, Finger Lakes Northern Trail, New Beginnings Church, Canastota Fishing Derby, and Great Swamp Conservancy). The MWC also spent time on minor projects for Madison County departments (cleaning snow off cars for the Sheriff's, DSS, and PHD), cleaning brush (911 communications tower), cleaning refuse (Landfill), and painting and cleaning (Highway).

In addition to the monetary savings and improvements to the county, 38 MWC participants, motivated by their work experience, are now employed. A remarkable example of this was a man who was removed from his domicile by Adult and Family Services Caseworkers, was brought to the agency to apply for benefits, and was found shelter. He walked over two miles every day to be at DSS by 8:00 a.m. to board the MWC bus. The day he secured a job he was required to work the midnight shift, yet as soon as the shift ended he dutifully walked the two miles to DSS. It has been our experience that giving an individual a job empowers him/her and rekindles a desire to be self-sufficient and independent.

## **CHILD SUPPORT ENFORCEMENT**

The Child Support Unit has many functions in the community. The interfacing branches of services available provide the custodial parent with the opportunity to become or remain self-sufficient.

The Child Support Unit provides services to private clients and recipients of services from the Department of Social Services. Either parent, guardian, or caretaker may request assistance from the Child Support Unit on behalf of the children in his/her custody.

Services provided are:

### **Location**

Location is the process by which the whereabouts of an absent parent/putative father are identified and verified. Location activities consist of determining the person's home address, mailing address, and employer and employer's address using automated searches and other local leads.

Knowing the location of an absent parent/putative father improves the ability to complete all other activities for child support enforcement, such as establishing paternity and establishing and enforcing a child support obligation.

Recently, the department was successful in locating an absent parent who had an order that he had defaulted in paying and the custodial parent was not able to locate him for the past three years to enforce the order. The location was completed and enforcement commenced. As of that date, almost \$10,000 had been paid through the Madison County Child Support Unit to the custodial parent for support of the children.

### **Paternity Establishment**

Paternity establishment is the process by which the biological father of a child born out of wedlock is identified and adjudicated. Every child has a biological father; however, if parents are not married, the law does not recognize the biological father as the child's legal father and does not give him any rights or responsibilities to the child. If a mother has named someone as the father of a child, the named party is referred to as the "putative father."

There are two ways for unmarried parents to establish paternity:

- 1) Signing a voluntary Acknowledgment of Paternity form; or
- 2) Having a court determine paternity.

### **Voluntary Acknowledgement of Paternity**

New York State enacted amendments to Public Health Law Sections 4104 and 4135-b to provide for a simple way for unmarried parents to establish legal fatherhood for their children without going to court. When a putative father signs an Acknowledgement of Paternity, he waives his right to a court hearing to determine if he is the father of the child. An acknowledgment has the same force and effect as a court order establishing paternity for a child. It establishes the duty of both parents to provide support for the child. Both parties receive oral and written notice of their legal rights and the consequences of signing an Acknowledgment of Paternity. Immediately preceding or following the in-hospital birth of a child to an unmarried woman, the acknowledgement may be provided by the hospital. The Child Support Unit also has the authority to assist parties in completing the Acknowledgement of Paternity and file with the registrar of the birth county. This has proven to be a very successful paternity establishment tool for the Madison County Child Support Unit.

### **Court Determined Paternity**

In paternity cases, a petition may be filed with the Family Court requesting an Order of Filiation be issued. The petition is a formal request for a specific legal action to be initiated to establish paternity. The purpose of the paternity petition is to notify the putative father of the petitioner's claims, identify to the court the parties involved in the action, and notify the court of petition's claims.

A court hearing will be held as a result of the paternity petition. At the court hearing, the putative father may admit paternity and the court will issue an Order of Filiation. If either the putative father denies paternity or the mother denies the putative father's claim to paternity, either party in a paternity action, or the court itself, can request tests to be performed. The court will advise both parties of their right to request genetic marker tests (DNA).

The Madison County Child Support Unit contracts with a laboratory to perform the legal and medically acceptable genetic testing. The Child Support Unit schedules and coordinates all testing. The testing is scheduled once a month at the Department of Social Services. In the year 2003, the unit tested 163 parties, either court ordered or administratively ordered by the Director of Child Support. Upon receipt of the results from the laboratory, the Family Court sets up a hearing for a court appearance of all parties involved to review the results. If the court decides that the putative father is the actual father of the child, an Order of Filiation will be issued stating that fact.

By establishing paternity for the child, the mother and father are ensuring that the child has the same rights and benefits as children born to married parents.

The Child Support Unit recently handled a case involving an 11 year-old child that was in receipt of public assistance through a grandparent. The child's mother lived in a different state, the putative father had never been contacted, and consequently, no paternity had ever been established. Through the efforts of the Child Support Unit, a putative father was identified and genetic marker testing was completed. As a result of this effort, the acknowledged father has now become an involved party with his child and provides not only emotional support, but also assists with financial support.

### **Support Establishment**

In New York State, it is the legal responsibility of the parents of children under the age of 21 to support them. Support establishment is the process by which an absent parent's financial obligation to his or her child, including medical coverage, is determined and adjudicated (that is, heard and decided on by a court). The goal of support establishment is to assess the absent parent's ability to provide support and medical coverage through a comprehensive financial investigation. Support establishment is an activity performed simultaneously with location and paternity establishment actions when required.

Gathering complete and accurate financial information to provide to the courts is essential so that they may calculate an adequate and equitable support amount. This effort involves investigating and verifying the respondent's employment, wages, health insurance availability and coverage, and other sources of income.

A support petition is a formal written application to a court requesting a judicial action. In support matters, the petition requests the Family Court to issue an order for child support (including medical support). In 1989, New York State enacted legislation known as

the Child Support Standards Act. This act established in law a uniform method of calculating and adjudicating support that is fair, specific, and comprehensive. The major elements used to calculate the support obligation that will be established by the court order are the combined income of both parents, child support percentages (see following explanation), poverty income guidelines, and the other specific needs of the children. The outcome of a support hearing is a child support court order that is in accordance with the Child Support Standards.

The following case is an example in which the Child Support Unit was successful in support establishment resulting in savings to the local Department of Social Services. The Child Support Unit filed petitions and obtained child support obligations for four children. The temporary assistance grant issued to the mother on behalf of the children totaled \$858 per month. The Child Support Unit was successful in obtaining child support in the amount of \$1,046 per month.

### **Support Collection and Enforcement**

Support collection is defined as collecting, accounting for, and disbursing funds paid for an order of child support, childcare, and medical support. Once an order of support has been obtained, the Child Support Unit establishes an account, which will reflect the amount of the support obligation ordered and the frequency of payment required. Accounts are monitored to identify delinquent payers. Support enforcement is the process by which delinquent child support accounts are identified and appropriate actions are taken to collect past due support and to ensure future payments. The process begins when the respondent becomes delinquent in meeting his/her support obligation and ends when delinquent support

is paid and current support payments continue to reach the beneficiary. Support enforcement is important because it enables the child to continue to receive support from an absent parent, reducing the financial stress on the custodial parent. Support enforcement also reduces the burden on Temporary Assistance and Medicaid funds by requiring the absent parent to fulfill his/her court-ordered obligation to his/her child. Enforcement actions initiated by the Child Support Unit include:

- Issuing income execution notices (wage withholding) to employers
- Federal and state tax refund offset
- Lottery intercept
- UIB intercept
- Bank account seizure
- Notification to credit bureaus
- Drivers license suspension
- Passport - Denial

Additional enforcement actions initiated by the Child Support Unit include:

- Professional license revocation; i.e., lawyers, doctors, nurses, etc.
- Jail incarceration

The goal of support enforcement is to identify all delinquent accounts and to take the appropriate enforcement actions provided by law to collect past due support.

- In a case involving federal tax refund offset the Child Support Unit was successful in receiving \$9,139 offset from a delinquent obligor's federal tax refund.
- A lottery intercept was received for \$1,380 and subsequent payments as the obligor is a \$1,000 week "Win for Life" lottery winner.
- The custodial parent happily accepted a bank account seizure payment in the amount of \$2,587.
- A non-custodial parent paid approximately \$14,000 to reinstate his passport.
- A non-custodial parent's driver's license privilege was restored as a result of his payment of \$2,700.

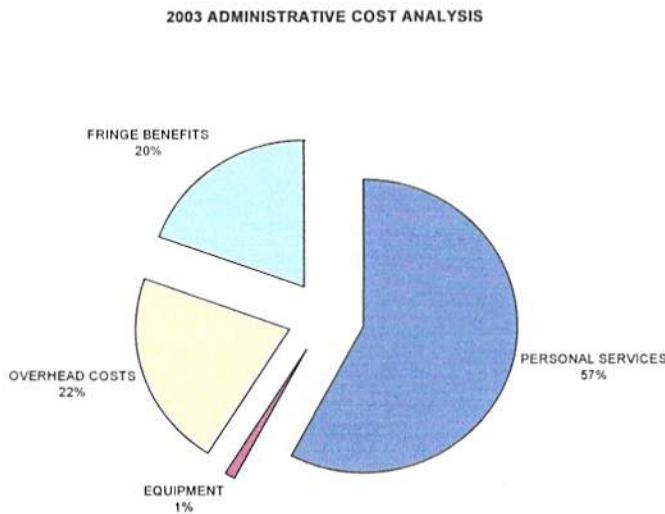
- A \$4,000 payment to a custodial parent was the result of the freezing and execution of the holdings of a non-custodial parent's bank account for delinquent child support.
- A non-custodial parent was recently remanded to 150 days in jail for willful failure to pay child support. The Child Support Unit received a \$2,500 payment to purge his sentence resulting in his release from jail.

The Madison County Child Support Unit collected \$5,667,937 in the year 2003.

## ADMINISTRATIVE SERVICES

In 2003, the Madison County Department of Social Services incurred \$5,612,293 in administrative expenses. Administrative costs increased by more than \$560,000 in 2003 due largely in part to the retroactive settlement to the White Collar Contract and the increased mandated New York State Retirement System contribution.

Salaries in 2003 totaled \$3,242,467, which was an increase of \$282,150 from the previous year. Equipment purchases amounted to \$61,934, an increase of \$61,934. Overhead costs and fringe benefits equaled \$1,209,834 and \$1,098,058 respectively, amounting to an increase of \$15,166 and \$204,767 over 2002.

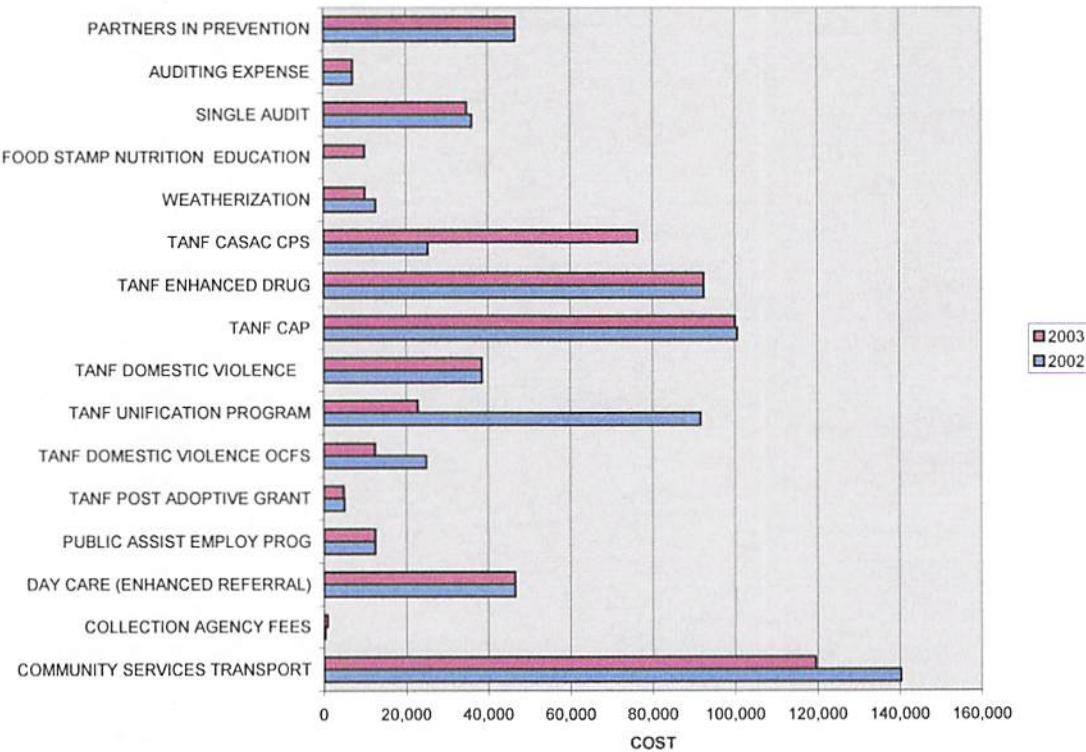


The overhead costs in 2003 totaled \$1,209,834. These costs are broken down into three main categories: Building, \$344,587; operational, \$229,435; and other contractual, \$635,811. With the addition of a Deputy to assist with the transport of children placed in non-secure detention facilities, the largest increase was in security. The higher rate for the professional liability insurance caused the increase in operational costs for 2003. Other

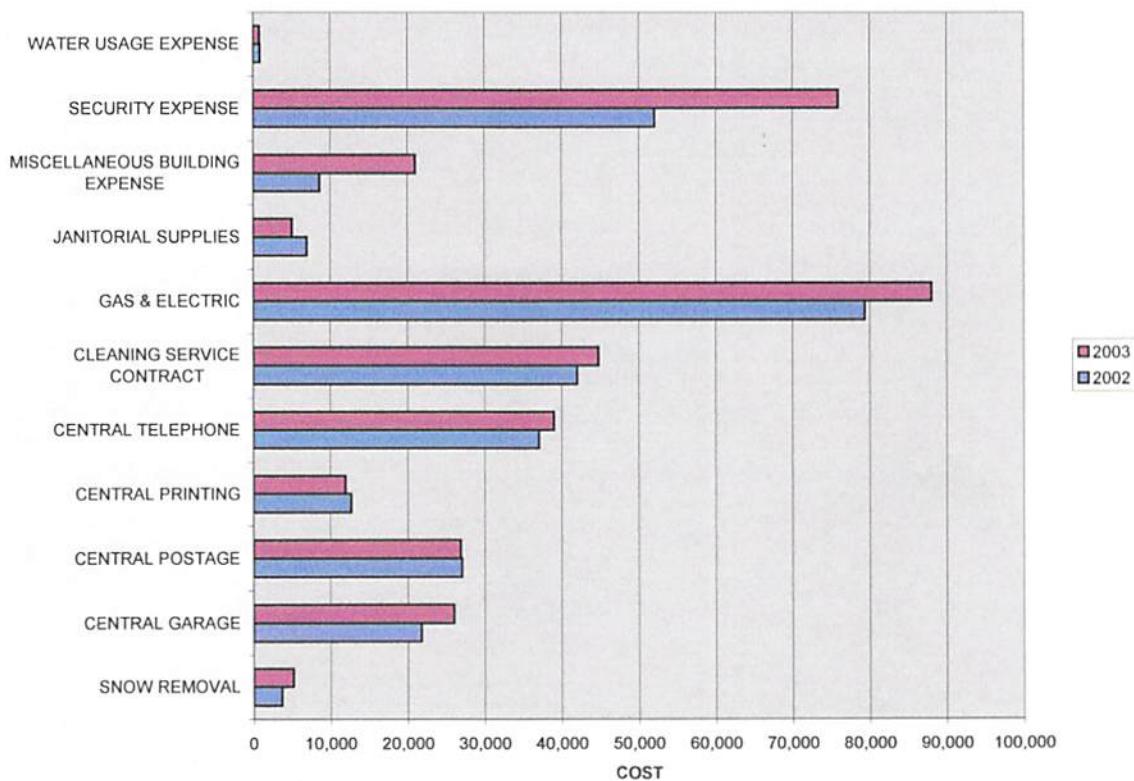
contractual costs saw its largest increase in the Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) Certified Alcohol and Substance Abuse Counselor (CASAC) Child Protective Services (CPS) contract, which, unfortunately, had to be eliminated in 2003 as the result of a loss in TANF funding.

For the first time since 2001, the department was allowed to purchase equipment. The largest expense was the purchase of three automobiles – two vehicles to be used by the Transportation Aides and one vehicle to be used for the transport of children to placement in non-secure detention facilities.

2002-2003 OTHER CONTRACTUAL COST COMPARISON



### 2002-2003 BUILDING COSTS COMPARISON



## **STAFF DEVELOPMENT**

The Staff Development office is responsible for securing and providing training that develops and maintains the skills needed by our staff to successfully perform their job functions and to cope with their ever-increasing job demands. Agency staff completed a total of 1997 hours of locally-arranged and state-provided training in the year 2003. The agency spent a total of \$4,390 in training expenses for the year. This represents monies paid out for meals, travel, lodging, and registration fees for out-of-county trainings. A total of 129 different trainings were available to our staff including everything from new worker orientation to college credit courses.

New worker training was provided in-house to 13 employees. This included both new hires and promoted employees. In-house training is provided as a joint effort between the Director of Staff Development, the Director of the program area, and the individual's supervisor. Some staff members have their training enhanced with programs provided under state contract with one of several colleges including Cornell University, SUNY Albany and SUC at Buffalo. State training is provided at a cost to the local district of \$14 per day. Necessary lodging and the cost of most meals are included in this fee.

It can take a new worker anywhere from two weeks to six months to be fully trained to perform independently in his/her position. For example, let's take a look at the training a new worker assigned to the Child Protective Services (CPS) Unit receives.

*On day one, the Caseworker meets with the Director of Staff Development/WMS for an orientation session. This includes informing the employee of agency policies and procedures, securing an ID badge, getting a tour*

*of the agency, and being introduced to coworkers. The two will also get together on day two for hands-on computer training, including inquiry into the many state systems. The rest of the first week is spent with the supervisor or another experienced Caseworker. During this time, the Caseworker will be observing, accompanying another worker on home visits and investigations, and reading program manuals. If possible, the new worker will accompany an experienced worker to court to observe the proceedings. The first two weeks are spent in giving a new worker a good overview of the job, so he/she will have a frame of reference when the training becomes more specific.*

*New York State has mandated that all Caseworkers must attend new worker core training. Sometime after the first week, a Caseworker will start his/her state-sponsored core training. This 20-day training program enhances the Caseworker's competencies by providing knowledge and skills to effectively work with families. Core training is held on an alternating schedule in Buffalo, Rochester, Syracuse, or Albany. If the employee has to travel more than 35 miles one way to the training, then the state pays the lodging and travel costs. If the distance to the training is less than 35 miles, then the worker must commute each day. The training is spread out over an 8-to-10-week period. When the employee is not at training, there are specific activities that he/she should be engaged in at the office.*

*After completing core training, the Caseworker must attend six additional days of training that concentrates on Child Protective investigations. Once these two state training courses are complete, the worker is allowed to conduct CPS*

*investigations on his/her own. This initial training can cover a period of almost four months. During this time, the worker has not been able to pick up a caseload or be a fully functioning worker causing his/her co-workers to pick up the slack.*

*In addition, there are other specialized state courses that we want all CPS Caseworkers to take. These include Sexual Abuse Interviewing, Medical Issues in CPS, and Legal Issues in CPS. These three courses are all two days in length. We must wait for these courses to be offered locally since the state does not pay for overnight stays for these trainings.*

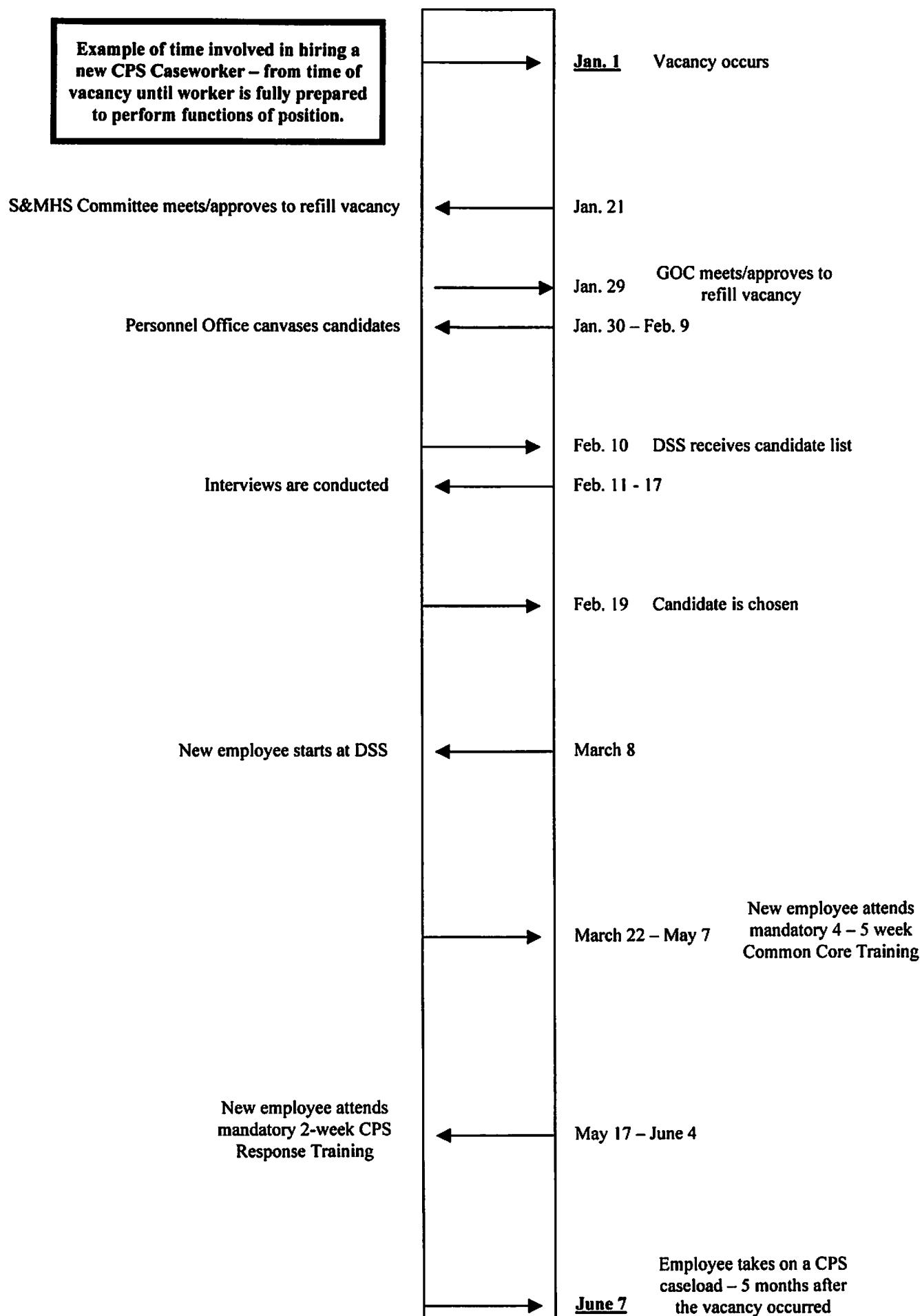
During the year, we were successful in bringing two state trainings on-site. One hundred staff members participated in HIV/AIDS training and 50 employees attended a half day session on “Dealing with Difficult People.”

Employees also took part in training offered locally. These included defensive driving, HIPAA rules and policies, child car seat safety, and various conferences, among others. Four staff members completed 120 hours of “Family Development and Credentialing Program” offered by Madison County Community Action Program (CAP). This program teaches workers how to look at the whole family, find their strengths, and work through the clients’ problems by empowering the family.

Nine employees signed up for e-learning courses offered on-line through Herkimer County Community College, Mohawk Valley Community Colledge, or SUNY Institute of Technology. These courses were provided through the Herkimer-Madison-Oneida Workforce Investment Board. Class topics included “Effective Business Writing,” “Computers in the Workplace,” and “Dealing with Difficult People,” among others.

The year ahead will see the need to offer quality training programs while reducing the cost to the local district. One way this will be accomplished is by participating in more of the state's LearnLinc courses. These courses allow trainees from across the state to gather together in a classroom environment using their desktop computers. Instructors and trainees can interact (speak) with each other while viewing common content on the computer screen. By participating in these courses, the worker (and county) is able to save both time and travel costs associated with off-site trainings.

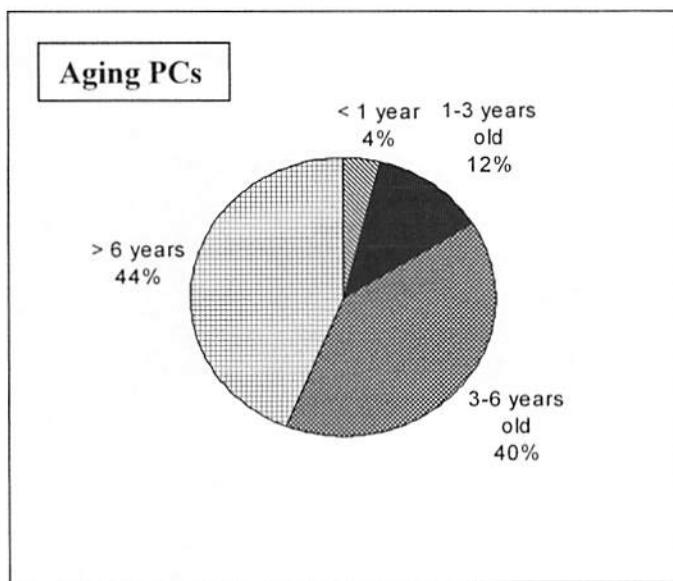
**Example of time involved in hiring a new CPS Caseworker – from time of vacancy until worker is fully prepared to perform functions of position.**



## SYSTEMS

The Systems staff is responsible for the management and functioning of all local (over 60 desktop personal computers) and state computer systems, to include WMS (Welfare Management System), CONNECTIONS (Children's Services), ACCESS (Child Support Collection), EBT (payment management for financial aid programs), EEDSS (Medicaid eligibility), STARS (Statewide Training Automated Registration System), ASAP (Adult Services), etc. Our functions include the planning and coordinating for the installation of new systems, upgrading and maintaining existing systems, performing daily computer operations, and providing technical and end-user support. This unit is also responsible for all data entry and Benefit Issuance Control System (BICS) operations, providing training, and administering system security and access.

It was a tough year for the computer systems at the Department of Social Services! Our local PCs are getting older and older, and with our limited funds, we were once again prevented from updating equipment. We had at least three monitors and two processors fail during the year. With the help of the Information Technology (IT) Department, we were able to scrape together replacement parts to keep all of the affected users up and running.



In May, our local area network (LAN) server had a hard drive failure. This meant scrambling to change our system over to a new server. During this process, workers were without computer support for up to two weeks.

Two other crises occurred in August. First it was the “welchia” and “blaster” worm viruses that infected most of the state’s systems. It was a time-consuming process to “patch” every individual PC to get it functioning again. Because of this, workers were without computer support for about a week. Our systems were also affected by the widespread power outage that occurred in the middle of August. Once again, we had intermittent connection with the state for about a week. Unfortunately, most of our work is dependent upon system communication with the state and our service to our customers was adversely affected.

Towards the end of the year, we were given permission to purchase new equipment. We obtained one laptop to be used by our attorneys while they are at the courthouse waiting for their cases to be called. The two additional PCs will be used to replace some of our oldest PCs.

Below is a list of the computer systems currently supported at Madison County Department of Social Services and the number of terminals associated with each system:

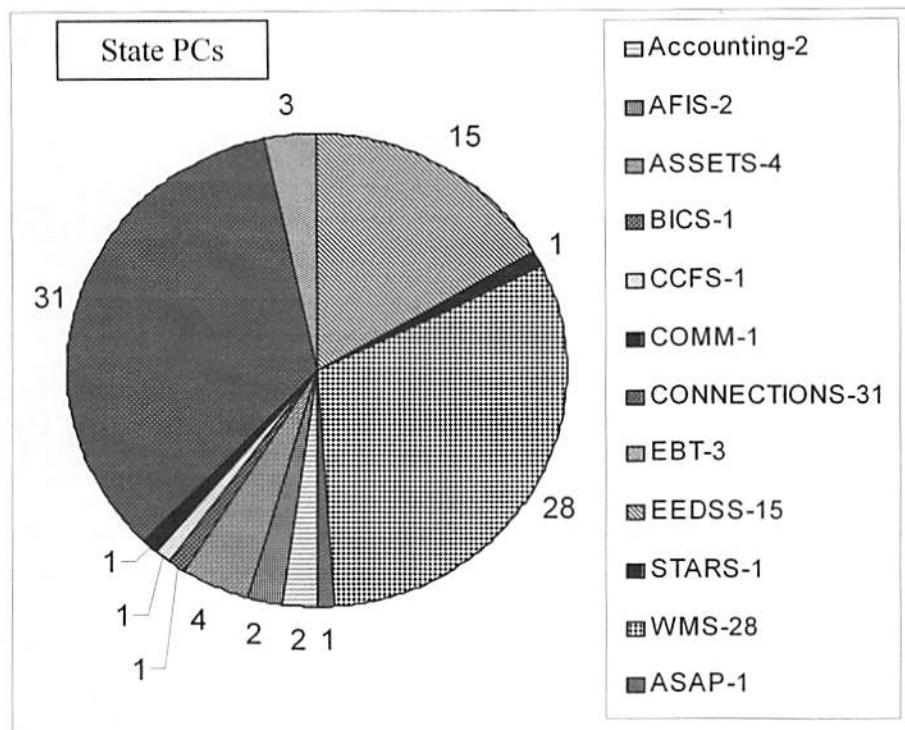
#### **State Systems**

- 2 Accounting
- 2 AFIS (Automated Finger Imaging) - one desk top, one lap top
- 4 ASSETS (Child Support)
- 1 BICS (Benefit Issuance Control System)
- 1 CCFS (Child Care Facility System)
- 1 COMM (Commissioner’s)
- 31 CONNECTIONS - 25 desk tops, 6 lap tops
- 3 EBT (Electronic Benefit Transfer)
- 15 EEDSS (Medicaid eligibility)
- 1 STARS (Statewide Training Automated Registration System)
- 28 WMS (Welfare Management System)
- 1 ASAP (Adult Services)

#### **Local Systems**

- 48 PCs connected to our LAN and 2 laptops
- 3 CONNECTIONS terminals

The year ahead holds promise for updating our many computer systems. The state will be switching over its many local servers to one Human Services Enterprise Network (HSEN) server. The Child Support division will be swapping out 4 ASSETS PCs. The state will also be providing 9 additional ASSETS PCs to us. We also hope to be approved for a child care grant to replace many of our local PCs.



## **RESOURCES**

Our Resource Assistant is responsible for assessing and collecting monies due to the agency from mortgages, estates, assignment of proceeds, and accident liens. This position is also responsible for bank inquiries, taking burial applications, determining the availability of third party health insurance, and collecting medical information for disability determinations.

### **Recoveries for 2003**

Estates	\$ 59,233
Assignment of Proceeds	13,689
Accident liens	4,850
Excess Resources	59,258
Mortgages	14,685
Burial Reimbursement	<u>3,942</u>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$155,657</b>

Twenty-seven burial applications were approved in 2003. The total cost paid out for these was \$53,944\*. Below is the amount paid to local funeral homes:

Burgess and Tedesco, Hamilton	\$4,675
Coolican McSweeney, Oneida	2,045
J. Homer Ball, Canastota	15,691
G. F. Zimmer, Chittenango	6,982
Ironside, Oneida	2,278
Tait, Cazenovia	2,135
Campbell Dean, Oneida	5,432
Paul, Madison	1,650
Fiore, Oneida	2,446
Other	10,610

\*Burial refunds for 2003 totaled \$716.

## **CHILDREN'S SERVICES**

### **Foster Parent Orientation and Status**

We have continued to use the Model Approach to Partnership in Parenting (MAPP) orientation for certification of prospective foster parents. We began the year with 35 certified homes. We certified seven new homes and closed eight homes to end the year with 34 certified foster homes accepting placements, giving us a total of 74 foster care beds. We have found our MAPP-trained parents to be better prepared as foster parents than in the past and they appear to be better able to manage difficult problems.

The position of foster home finder/recruiter, as always, continues to be very important to the Foster Care Program. It is increasingly difficult to find good families willing to give a home to children in need and, therefore, it is necessary to keep as many of our current families as possible. Fostering a troubled child is difficult work for which they are only paid room and board. Many of our families are two-income households with children of their own. It is a very special and dedicated family that can take these children into their homes and provide the care and attention they need. All families are being certified as resource families so they can either foster children or adopt. For that reason, the home finder and adoption Caseworkers facilitate the MAPP Program jointly.

### **Adoption Services**

During 2003, we continued the joint certification process with our new adoptive and foster parents. The basis for combining adoptive and foster parent certification has to do with the fact that the majority of the older, hard-to-place children, who are freed for adoption, have come through the foster care system and have many of the same experiences and issues

as the children in foster care. Also, since we are now dually certifying our families as foster and adoptive or resource homes, it makes sense to have them go through the certification process together. Families with adoptive children placed with them receive the foster care stipend until the adoption is finalized and receive supportive services through our department. Having our families certified as resource homes allows them to either foster or adopt without having to complete two separate certification processes. The adoption Caseworker works closely with the homefinder in the recruiting, training and ongoing recertification of our adoptive/foster families.

The department had 18 children in its custody that had been freed for adoption in the year 2003. Of those children, six had their adoptions finalized in 2003. The remaining 12 children were placed with foster families who planned to adopt them. There were four other children who had previously been freed for adoption who were not in a permanent placement. Three of them were in higher levels of care due to their needs and behaviors. The fourth child turned 18 years old and discharged himself from care.

#### **TASA (Teenage Service Act)**

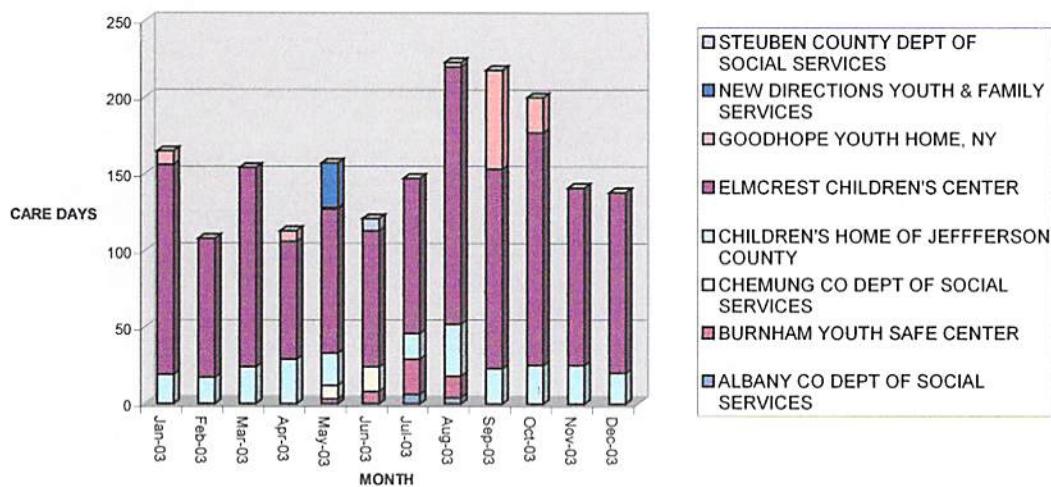
Madison County continues our arrangement with Liberty Resources, Inc., to provide Teenage Service Act (TASA) services as a referral agency with the approval of the New York State Office of Children and Family Services.

#### **Detention Services**

During 2003, the department continued to utilize the services of Elmcrest Children's Center for three contracted non-secure detention beds for our Juvenile Delinquent/Persons in Need of Supervision (JD/PINS) children. We used 1,885 care days for an average of 5.16

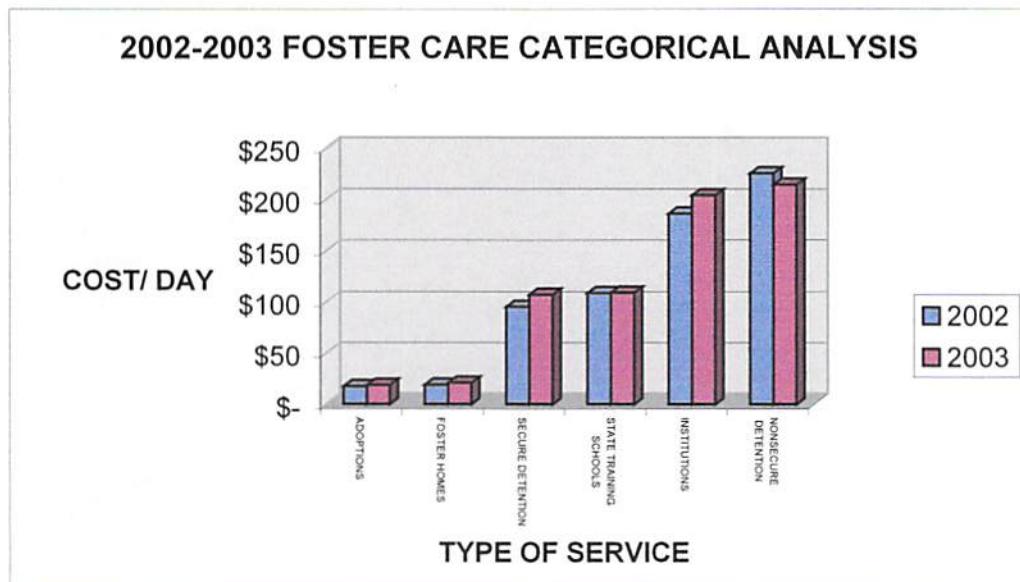
children per day in non-secure detention. This is a substantial increase from 2002, which can be attributed, in part, to an increase in the number of PINS petitions being filed against the 16-to-18 year-old population. Children are placed in detention while a Family Court PINS or Juvenile Delinquency petition is pending and there is a substantial risk that the child will not appear for the next court hearing, or that before their return, they commit an act that committed by an adult would constitute a crime. The situations involved in these cases were such that it was not safe for the children to remain in their parents' homes or they refused to stay there. When there are no other options for these children, detention is the last resort, which, unfortunately, we used frequently in 2003.

#### 2003 MONTHLY NONSECURE DETENTION CARE DAY ANALYSIS



### **Foster Care and Institution Placements**

We began 2003 with a total of 90 children in placement. Forty-eight of these were in foster care. Forty-two were in higher levels of care. Higher levels of care are defined as therapeutic foster care, group home, or a residential treatment center. At the end of 2003, we had 118 children in placement, of which 60 were in foster care and 58 were in higher levels of care. The increase in the number of children in care can be attributed to the high number of children that were placed as the result of a PINS petition this year. This number indicates that the trend toward increased placements in this population, which began following the change in the PINS law allowing petitions to be filed on children 16 and 17 years old, is continuing.



Of the children placed with Madison County foster families, these families have contributed to the local economy by purchasing clothing and other essentials through businesses in Central New York. The following amounts were paid to local businesses by the department for the needs of Madison County foster children:

• Fashion Bug	\$3,364.50
• Priceless Kids	\$1,412.07
• Big Lots	\$ 792.11
• Herb Philipson's Oneida	\$5,239.14
• K-Mart New Hartford	\$3,574.50
• K-Mart Dewitt	\$5,122.46

The children placed in higher levels of care have also provided an opportunity for the department to contribute to the Central New York economy. We have paid the following amounts in 2003 to these facilities for the care of children in the custody of Madison County Department of Social Services:

• Elmcrest Children's Center	\$900,166
• Liberty Resources, Inc. (Daily House)	\$ 39,363
• Madison Group Home (Berkshire)	\$ 92,163
• The House of the Good Shepherd	\$649,680

## **PREVENTIVE SERVICES**

During 2003, we continued to contract with Liberty Resources, Inc., for several preventive service programs. We have made use of our in-house counseling service contracted through Liberty Resources, Inc. This program has 2.5 therapist positions.

Partners in Prevention, a school-based preventive service, continues under contract with Liberty Resources and is jointly funded by this agency, Madison County Department of Mental Health, and the participating school districts. The participating school districts are Oneida, Hamilton, Chittenango and Cazenovia.

The Family Reunification and the Placement Diversion Programs are contracted preventive services through Liberty Resources, Inc. Four social workers and one supervisor staff these programs. Eight children and their families received services from Family Reunification. They worked towards shortening the children's time in higher level placements. Once children are reunited with their families or were placed in a lower level of care, the Family Reunification Program continued to work with them to ensure successful placement. The total number of care days saved through his program was 725. The Placement Diversion Program had 52 children and their families receiving services throughout the year. According to their program statistics, they have prevented 6,550 possible care days for substantial savings to the county.

In 2003, the Preventive and Foster Care Unit employed 11 Caseworkers who managed an average of 86 preventive cases involving an average of 155 children. The Caseworkers worked with the families to prevent having to place the children in foster care. The children's safety in their own home was continuously assessed by these Caseworkers.

Caseworkers also worked with foster care cases as noted in the report on foster care. Two Parent Aides, the Casework Assistant, four clerical support staff and two Transportation Aides assist these Caseworkers.

## **CHILD PROTECTIVE SERVICES**

During 2003, there were 1,060 reports received from the Child Protective Register, a decrease of 23 reports from 2002. This is the first decrease since 1994. Upon receipt of a Child Protective Services (CPS) report, CPS investigators have 60 days in which to make a determination. Twenty eight percent, or 255, of the 1,060 reports received were determined to be indicated. This is the same percentage of indicated reports during the year 2002 (283 out of 1019). In indicated reports, the allegations are found to be substantiated, posing a risk to the children.

The Child Protective Unit opened 29 preventive cases that were transferred to the Preventive Foster Care Unit of Child and Family Services. This follow-up is often needed to allow children to continue in their homes safely. During 2003, there were 17 children found to be in immanent risk of harm and were removed from their homes by Child Protective Services. Of those 17 children, 7 were discharged to relatives within one week. One of these placements lasted only one night. The mother of the children was not willing to allow them to stay with relatives. The next day, CPS requested and was granted an order placing the children with relatives. The CPS Caseworkers work diligently to assist parents in securing appropriate relative resources when their children cannot remain at home. This diligence resulted in a decrease of 29 children placed in 2003 from the previous year resulting in considerable savings to the department.

The CPS unit currently consists of eight investigative Caseworkers who receive an average of 12 reports per month. All of these individuals have remained in their positions for the year resulting in no turnover for investigators. Considering the amount of training and responsibility of this unit, zero turnover is quite an accomplishment.

The CPS Caseworkers conduct both school and home interviews with the children, parents and other pertinent people involved in the process. They complete state-mandated paperwork on each family. The investigators also assist police and make many referrals to community agencies and services.

The year 2003 saw the creation of a Multi-Disciplinary Task Force in Madison County. This team is made up of CPS Caseworkers, police personnel, medical staff, counselors, District Attorney's Office personnel, and victim advocates. This widely used and respected model is designed to lessen the trauma to victims of sexual and severe physical abuse. Training provided to the task force is entirely grant funded in conjunction with the Madison County Sheriff's Department.

The CPS investigators also worked jointly with two Liberty Resources, Inc., staff when reports involved allegations of Drug and Alcohol abuse by the parents or domestic violence in the presence of the children. Both of these programs are also grant funded. This coordinated effort results in immediate intervention and services to families affected by domestic violence or drug and alcohol use.

The CPS investigators will continue to work with various community agencies in 2004 to insure the safety of the children in Madison County.

## 2003 CPS Township Reports

	JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUNE	JULY	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC	Total
Brookfield	5	3	4	1	3	2	2	8	7	2	0	0	37
Cazenovia	1	2	0	2	3	1	1	1	2	7	2	1	23
DeRuyter	2	1	3	1	1	0	6	0	0	0	2	1	17
Eaton	7	3	4	7	7	5	2	3	5	5	5	0	53
Fenner	2	1	1	1	3	0	1	0	0	0	1	2	12
Georgetown	0	3	0	0	0	0	1	2	2	0	0	1	9
Hamilton	0	6	7	4	5	3	7	3	6	6	4	5	56
Lebanon	1	0	0	2	0	0	1	2	0	0	0	0	6
Lenox	14	10	16	13	13	15	19	14	17	15	7	8	161
Lincoln	0	1	0	1	2	0	2	2	2	0	6	0	16
Madison	0	4	2	3	2	4	1	3	5	4	1	5	34
Nelson	0	1	0	3	1	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	7
Oneida	18	18	21	21	19	25	27	30	22	28	12	21	262
Smithfield	1	1	0	1	1	1	1	2	0	0	0	1	9
Stockbridge	6	4	6	1	4	2	2	1	1	2	1	2	32
Sullivan	18	12	16	16	16	18	12	15	15	13	9	14	174
Other Reports	15	9	14	8	15	17	17	9	17	12	8	11	152
<b>Total</b>	<b>90</b>	<b>79</b>	<b>93</b>	<b>85</b>	<b>95</b>	<b>93</b>	<b>102</b>	<b>96</b>	<b>103</b>	<b>94</b>	<b>58</b>	<b>72</b>	<b>1060</b>

## **CHILDREN'S SERVICES SOCIAL WORKER**

The Children's Services Social Work Program was designed to help prevent the placement of "at-risk" children in foster care or higher levels of care, such as a group home or residential facility. There are basically two groups of at-risk children accepted into this program. The first group is children who, due to maltreatment by their caretakers, may need foster care placement so that further maltreatment will not occur. The second group is children who, due to their own emotional disturbance or inappropriate behavior, would require placement in a more structured program. If these children received services in the traditional manner, they would require a higher level of care than their own homes or family foster care. Some children accepted into the program met the criteria for both groups. Safety is always the first concern. There is not an attempt to prevent any level of placement if that placement is necessary to keep a child or children safe.

It is believed that, if safe, it is best for children to remain with their own families, but if placement is necessary, a family setting is better for children than an institutional setting, as long as the children's needs can be met. The primary objective of this program is to support that belief by keeping children with their own families or, minimally, in a family setting while changes are made to improve the overall functioning of the birth family and/or the children.

This objective is met by providing intensive, home-based services by the Children's Services Social Worker (CSSW) with an attempt to minimize the number of service providers involved with a family. It is believed that the professional providing case management services can also be the primary family therapist; therefore, families do not have to meet with multiple service providers, repeating the same information multiple times. They

instead meet with one person to take care of multiple needs. In many instances, the CSSW is able to provide case management, family therapy, and individual therapy to the child or children. At times, referrals do need to be made for services such as substance abuse treatment, psychiatric and psychological evaluations, individual mental health treatment for parents, and parent skills training. Although some families do still meet with more than one service provider, the number of providers is greatly reduced, making the provision of services much more efficient. Also, for the majority of families, once a family begins receiving services through this program, they continue until the close of the case. The Children's Services Social Worker possesses a Masters Degree in Social Worker and is registered as a Certified Social Worker with the State Education Department.

In the year 2003, this program assisted 10 families, involving 16 children. These families had a variety of needs and were provided services based on individual treatment needs and plans. For most families, intensive, home-based case management and family therapy services were provided on a weekly basis; as families' needs changed, services could be provided more or less often. In addition, 10 children received individual mental health therapy provided by the CSSW. This was usually provided on a weekly basis, but was flexible to meet the needs of the individual child. There was a great deal of case coordination and collaboration done with school personnel. Many school districts were very helpful in allowing individual therapy to be conducted during school hours in their facilities. At the same time, the Social Worker was able to provide schools with information and suggestions that would help them best meet the children's educational and behavioral needs. Several parents were referred to individual mental health or substance abuse treatment and two were referred for psychological evaluation.

Overall, the placement of several children in foster care was prevented or their length of time in foster care greatly reduced due to the services offered. Four children were maintained at home rather than in residential placement and eight children were placed in family foster care, rather than a higher level of care, through the services of this program. In addition to the emotional benefits to these children by their being able to stay at home or in a family setting, the cost savings of this program was approximately \$292,463.

## **PARENT AIDES**

During 2003, a total of 57 families received Parent Aide services. Five of these families also participated in visitation with their children while the Parent Aides supervised them. Of the 57 families mentioned above, 23 continue to receive in-home parenting assistance from our two fulltime Parent Aides. One family continued to engage in visits with their children under the supervision of a Parent Aide.

Our Parent Aides are essential in providing families with education, information, and practical hands-on parenting techniques. They also assist families in securing adequate food, clothing, shelter, medical care, and transportation. In addition to basic needs, the Parent Aides received a very generous donation from Frontier Communications. Frontier provided Christmas presents for children in our Preventive Services families. The presents were delivered already wrapped and ready to give to these families.

Success can be measured in many different ways. A Parent Aide cites one example of success when one of her parents learned how to contact other service providers to get her needs met.

The Parent Aides assist Child Protective Caseworkers as well as Foster Care and Preventive Caseworkers. They are often involved in removal and placement planning for children that they work with, as well as being available for court proceedings.

Our Parent Aides facilitated two different types of STEP Parenting programs educating a total of 38 parents in 2003. Of these 38 attendees, 17 people successfully attained completion of the program and acquired the knowledge offered. The Parent Aides sent 123 letters of invitation to parents for parenting classes. Twenty-two people attended the early childhood programs offered, which are geared for parents with children aged zero to

five. Sixteen people participated in the school-age STEP classes offered, which are meant for parents of children aged five to twelve.

### **Independent Living**

We continue to contract with Liberty Resources, Inc., to provide independent living group sessions to those children in foster care who are at least 14 years old. There were 19 group sessions during 2003 at which 12 children attended regularly. During these sessions, the children learn interpersonal skills, cooking, budgeting, shopping, job hunting and other skills of interest to them in preparing them to live independently in the future. All of these young people will be moving to independence sooner than they should, whether they return home first or go directly from foster care to living on their own. The knowledge gained during these groups can be critical to their eventual success or failure in the “real world.”

## **LEGAL**

The Legal Unit was extremely busy during the year 2003, as we continued to provide legal counsel as necessary to all units within the agency. The major caseload of the unit continued to be divided between Children and Family Services and the Support Collection Unit. Our current staff consists of two Attorneys, a Paralegal and an Office Assistant II.

### **Children and Family Services**

The Legal Unit currently has approximately 123 open legal cases that include child abuse and/or neglect, juvenile delinquent supervision and placement, PINS supervision and placement, and termination of parental rights proceedings. To that end in 2003, the we opened approximately 59 new cases, filed over 83 new petitions, prepared approximately 154 court orders, and initiated 7 termination of parental rights proceedings.

This unit has continued to actively work with Child and Family Services to ensure that the department is in compliance with all laws and regulations and to assist the Caseworkers with questions and concerns regarding investigations of neglect and abuse and to ensure enforcement and compliance with all current Family Court orders.

The Legal Unit meets regularly with Child and Family Services supervisors and Caseworkers on individual cases and for trial preparation. The Legal staff prepared for over 59 trials in 2003. In total, the Attorneys made approximately 368 court appearances on a myriad of issues addressing the health and welfare of Madison County children.

In addition to the cases that are filed in Family Court, there are those cases that are reported as a child neglect, investigated by Child Protective Services, and the allegations in the report determined to be indicated or unfounded. In other words, is there some credible

evidence to support the allegations or not? The Legal Unit often meets with the investigator to aid in making that determination. When a case is indicated and closed, there is often a request for a fair hearing by the parent to seek a determination from the state as to whether the local agency's determination was correct. Legal staff handled approximately 19 fair hearings during 2003.

### **Support Collection**

The other major caseload for the Legal Unit is in the area of establishing and enforcing support orders, establishing paternity when a child is in receipt of Medicaid, seeking reimbursement for Medicaid expenditures, and establishing child support orders when children are in receipt of public assistance or is in foster care. In 2003, the Legal Unit Attorneys and Paralegal combined made approximately 1615 court appearances on matters of support establishment and enforcement, paternity, and Medicaid reimbursements. This number includes approximately 660 initial appearances, 230 fact-finding hearings, and 58 referrals to the Family Court Judges on support cases where the Department of Social Services was the recipient of the support. We were also involved in 420 initial appearances, 203 fact-finding hearings and 44 referrals to the Family Court Judges in private support cases. Additionally, this office prepared and submitted approximately 588 orders to the Court. All cases required preparation by the Legal staff for each court appearance whether on behalf of the department or for private support collection cases.

The legal issues presented to this unit regarding support matters include not only establishment and enforcement of orders, but also violations of support orders, referrals to

the Family Court Judges on those violations, requests for warrants and incarceration when necessary, and registration and enforcement of foreign support orders.

### **Child Care Review System Legal Tracking**

The Office Assistant II of the Legal Unit is responsible for tracking all Madison County foster children and reporting the information to the state and federal governments. In 2003, there were 552 transactions entered into the Child Care Review System (CCRS).

### **Other Areas**

The Legal Unit provides legal counsel for all other units within the agency as necessary. These areas include, but are not limited to, the following: Adult Services, Medicaid and public assistance issues, estate matters, bankruptcy, property liens, and foreclosures. Each day there are new legal issues presented to the Legal staff for analysis and answers. We look forward to achieving many new successes in the coming year and feel well equipped with the current staff to achieve those goals.

## **INVESTIGATIONS**

The Investigative Unit is housed at the Madison County Department of Social Services. This unit consists of two part-time Deputy Sheriff Investigators, who do background investigations, three fulltime Deputy Sheriff Investigators, and a fulltime Deputy Sheriff Sergeant, who supervises the unit. We are down one investigator at this time. The hours of coverage are Monday through Saturday 8:00 a.m. to 9:00 p.m.

The Investigative Unit has many functions and responsibilities, one of them being the responsibility for the safety and security of the Madison County Department of Social Services' staff, clients, and property. An Investigator is assigned to "desk duty" during business hours and after business hours for special details.

The Investigative Unit also investigates major crimes, such as rape, arson, robbery, burglary, narcotics and homicide, along with internal investigations as directed by the Sheriff. We assist other local, state and federal law enforcement agencies, as well as, other Madison County departments including the Madison County District Attorney's Office, Child Protective Unit, and Adult Protective Unit.

Another responsibility is validations (front-end detection). An Investigator will conduct a home visit to confirm that all information provided to the Madison County Department of Social Services by the client applying for services is correct. The Investigator will then validate or deny the application, thus preventing fraud and creating savings. Many of the rules and regulations concerning validations and fraud have changed recently making fraud arrests and validation denials very difficult. The unit did 593 validations in 2003. Of these validations, 377 were denied. This is almost double from the 341 validations completed in 2002, and the 289 that were done in 2001. As a

result, in 2003, a total of \$899,691 was saved from being paid out over the year. This is up from \$644,242 saved in 2002. The Investigations Unit submitted an updated operations plan to the New York State Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance for both fraud investigations and validations. This plan was last done in 1993. This plan included a memorandum of understanding between the District Attorney, Commissioner of Social Services, and Sheriff for these investigations and was accepted by the state.

The unit did 148 fraud investigations, almost triple the amount from 54 in 2002 and 28 in 2001. The fraud investigations were received through tips from the public, through case screening from Caseworkers, and leads developed from criminal investigations. As a result, five people were arrested on various criminal charges. In the remaining cases, the clients signed a repayment agreement to avoid criminal prosecution or were closed as unfounded.

In 2002, the Sergeant proposed to the Commissioner and Sheriff that the Sheriff's Transport Unit take over juvenile transports. The Department of Social Services would pay for one transport officer to cover the transport and the Sheriff would provide two officers to cover the transports. This would benefit both agencies in several ways: First, there are trained personnel (specific to transport) doing the transports, and an Investigator and Caseworker are not tied up transporting the juvenile. This saves in paying overtime to the Investigator and Caseworker and the Transport Unit operates with flex hours. Also, when the transport officer is not on juvenile transport, the officer will cover the front desk in the security area of Social Services. This frees up the Investigator from desk duty and makes him available for other investigations. This plan was put into effect for 2003 and has proven to be a valuable move. The Transport Unit did a record-

breaking 158 transports in 2003, almost triple from the 49 transports in 2002. Out of the 158 transports, the Investigators only did 14.

The Investigative Unit has two trained Investigators who specialize in using two separate tools for truth verification – the Voice Stress Analyzer, and the Polygraph. These tools have been used successfully in criminal investigations to assist the Investigators. The polygraph is also used for background investigations for perspective employees.

A new addition to the way that the unit investigates child abuse/sexual assault is the formation of a Multi-Disciplinary Team (MDT). In 2003, the Sheriff along with Social Services received a grant to form an MDT. The grant provides funding for 18 months. Renee Smith-Rotondo was appointed as the Director of the MDT and occupies an office in the Social Services building. The purpose of the MDT is to minimize trauma to the victim and, at the same time, strengthen the prosecution of the defendant. Goals were set along with landmarks to measure where the team needs to be. A protocol and mission statement were put into place and adopted by all of the law enforcement agencies in Madison County. MDT cases are the top priority for the Investigative Unit and all of our Investigators have, and continue to receive, specialized training.

The Madison County Investigation Unit is only one piece of the pie. Other team members consist of law enforcement (other agencies in Madison County), Mental Health Department, medical agencies, District Attorney's Office, and Department of Social Services. Together we have formed a very focused a team with an open line of communication. We meet and train together to better serve the public. The Madison County Sheriff's Investigative Unit has proven to be a step ahead. By being co-located in

the Social Services building, we are in direct contact with Child Protective, Legal, and therapists. This is a large part of being awarded the grant. We have a child-friendly area in the building that is necessary for conducting a forensic interview of a child. We also have a juvenile-approved interview room for conducting interviews of juvenile suspects. This room is also used as an adult suspect interview room. In addition, we have a separate area to interview multiple victims and witnesses. Being co-located at the Social Services building and having the proper facilities to work in is a great advantage to help us better serve the people we are charged to protect.

**The Investigative Unit has proven to be very successful.**