

Dukes County Social Services Department

Background: Dukes County created its Social Services Department (DCSS) in response to the community's need for assistance with safety net programs and public benefits and resources for low income Islanders under age 60. DCSS connects needy Islanders with a variety of programs and services that support economic self-sufficiency for residents of Martha's Vineyard. The population that the department serves ranges in age, socio-economic status and education levels. We provide services in English and other languages, including Portuguese and Spanish.

DCSS funding: The department is funded by grants from the Community Action Committee for the Cape and Islands (CACCI), the USDA via DTA's SNAP Outreach Grant from UMass Medical School, and South Shore Community Action Committee Fuel Assistance Program. This funding allows the County to employ a part-time Social Services Caseworker for 19 hours per week.

DCCS activities:

The Social Services department's primary functions include, but are not limited to, application assistance for the following programs:

- **SNAP (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program)**
- **WIC (Women, infants and children)**
- **Fuel Assistance**
- **Utility Assistance**
- **Emergency and non-emergency food programs**
- **Social Security Disability Income and Supplemental Security Income**
- **Department of Transitional Assistance cash assistance**

The Department provides information and referrals to local and regional agencies that can offer services and resources to complete addressing the needs of every client and household that we serve.

DCSS facilitates applications and referrals for childcare subsidy programs including Bailey Boyd and voucher programs; emergency housing and rental assistance; Cape Cod Times Needy Fund; and unemployment insurance.

Clients receive application assistance for outside agencies that address housing and homelessness, are advised of their options as to what is available to them in terms of rental assistance , housing search assistance, housing search support, homeless shelters and programs available and resources that can support presently homeless.

Information and referrals are made to agencies like The Housing Assistance Corporation, Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission, The Cape Cod Organization for the Rights of the Disabled (CORD), Community Action Committee for the Cape and Islands (CACCI), and Women Empowered. Locally, the department collaborates with organizations ranging from Elder Services, Martha's Vineyard Hospital, Martha's Vineyard Community Services, The Resource Institute, Salvation Army, The Clergy Fund, Vineyard Housing Office, The Vineyard Committee on Hunger, Vineyard Health Care Access, Dukes County Veteran's Agent, Councils on Aging and many additional agencies on the island.

Local and regional agencies refer their clients to the Social Services Department in turn as a valuable and helpful resource. **The outcome of this collaboration is that clients receive complete wrap around services in a multitude of areas.**

The Department sponsors in collaboration with CACCI the "VITA Program" which is an island wide, free tax preparation program, geared towards households under the age of 65 from January - April.

The case management includes advocacy services and acting as a liaison on behalf of the clients with a variety of the agencies mentioned previously. Examples may be when clients need advocacy with an agency to receive emergency assistance or clients may need clarity as to what verification documentation to submit to finalize their applications and assistance speaking with an agency to complete the application process.

DCSS provides outreach by attending local food pantries and Serving Hands, being a member of the Food Equity Network, assisting with the summer food program implementation and offering supporting data and input for the most recent Mobile Food Market project initiated by Island Grown Initiative.

SNAP outreach is provided by working with collaborating sites or partners, educating, prescreening, application assistance and support. In addition, we provide program information and referral help – to individuals, families, and community networks based on a comprehensive understanding of food resources and other available benefits.

DCSS is represented at the Department of Transitional Advisory board meetings as needed, is a member of the newly formed Disability Coalition, Food Equity Network and the local Homelessness Prevention Network.

Finally, the Department sponsored a Household Savings Fair this fall (October 28th at the MVRHS) to offer information and resources to Islanders about many of the programs and services listed above.

Dukes County Social Services FY17 Service Summary: 7/1/16 – 6/30/17

APPLICATIONS : *Applications submitted for state and federal assistance on behalf of individuals and families who are Island residents.*

	# applications	# people
SNAP (Food Stamps)	141	193
Fuel Assistance	48	77
Cash Assistance	5	5

ASSISTANCE: *Assistance includes information, referral, follow-up and advocacy for social services related to client self-sufficiency.*

	# encounters
CC Times Needy Fund	17
Child care	14
Consumer assistance	13
CORD (disability services)	8
Disability – Social Security	8
DTA: SNAP/Cash Assistance - <i>referral & follow up</i>	401
Food Assistance (not SNAP)	117
Fuel Assistance - <i>referral and follow up</i>	94
Homeless Prevention/Housing	55
Salvation Army	8
Social Security	17
Transportation	4
Unemployment	8
Miscellaneous*:	19

*Immigration, Legal, Red Stocking Fund, WIC, Women Empowered

TOTAL	783
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Proposed Program Expansion:

We currently have grant funding for a 19-hour/week position. The demand from the community for our services exceeds what we can provide in this part-time capacity and clients may have to wait to get the assistance they need. The granting organizations do see the need for the expanded hours and are willing to increase their funding. Additional funding is however needed to cover the benefit package of an employee over 20 hours per week.

We would like to offer additional hours of service to the clients as well as provide additional services with the goal of moving clients beyond public benefits and well fair and towards economic self-sufficiency, when possible and appropriate. These enhanced services include job training, mentoring/coaching for low-income individuals and families, and related life-skills development to create economic independence.