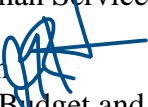






April 20, 2023

MEMORANDUM

TO: Krystal Oriadha, Chair
Health, Human Services and Public Safety Committee

THRU: Josh Hamlin 
Director of Budget and Policy Analysis

FROM: David Williams 
Budget and Policy Analyst

Anya Makarova 
Senior Budget and Policy Analyst

RE: Department of Social Services
Fiscal Year 2024 Budget Review

The Department of Social Services is a quasi-State agency and receives most of its funds and personnel directly from the State (these funds are not captured in the County Budget Books because they are not grants but direct funding). This Report focuses on the County's portion of the Department's overall budget unless specified otherwise. In FY 2024 Total Budget inclusive of direct State funds accounts is \$70.3 million, with 56% funded directly by the State.

Budget Overview

- The proposed budget for the Department of Social Services is \$32,347,800, representing an increase of \$6,134,000 or 23.4% above the FY 2023 Approved Budget.
- Changes in the FY 2024 Proposed Budget are primarily driven by the \$2,402,100 (36.2%) increase in the General Fund. This is necessitated by annual salary adjustments, the addition of a new Community Developer 3G position, increased technology costs, and increased fringe benefits. There is also a \$3,731,900 (19.1%) increase in grant funding included in the FY 2024 Proposed Budget. This increase is caused by anticipation of a series of new grant awards and enhancements for existing programs.

- Accounting for \$23,314,700 out of the total proposed budget of \$32,347,800, 72% of the County’s portion of the Department’s budget is anticipated to be grant funded. This is a 4.6% increase from FY 2023 estimated grant funds portion of the total budget (67.5%).

Actual Fiscal Year 2022 to Proposed Fiscal Year 2024

Fund	FY 2022 Actual	FY 2023 Approved	FY 2023 Estimated	% Change - Est vs App	FY 2024 Proposed	\$ Change, Prop vs App	% Change
General Fund	\$ 5,077,331	\$ 6,631,000	\$ 8,373,300	26.3%	\$ 9,033,100	\$ 2,402,100	36.2%
Grants	14,012,134	19,582,800	17,357,800	-11.4%	23,314,700	3,731,900	19.1%
Total	\$ 19,089,465	\$ 26,213,800	\$ 25,731,100	-1.8%	\$ 32,347,800	\$ 6,134,000	23.4%

Budget Comparison-General Fund

Category	FY 2022 Actual	FY 2023 Approved	FY 2023 Estimated	FY 2024 Proposed	Change Amount	Percentage Change (Approved Budget)	Percentage Change (Estimated Budget)
Compensation	\$ 1,506,328	\$ 2,999,100	\$ 2,363,800	\$ 3,000,400	\$ 1,300	0.0%	26.9%
Fringe Benefits	428,087	764,800	576,300	765,100	300	0.0%	32.8%
Operating Expenses	3,142,916	3,242,500	5,433,200	5,267,600	2,025,100	62.5%	-3.0%
Subtotal	\$ 5,077,331	\$ 7,006,400	\$ 8,373,300	\$ 9,033,100	\$2,026,700	28.9%	7.9%
Recoveries	-	(375,400)	-	-	375,400	-100.0%	100.0%
Total	\$ 5,077,331	\$ 6,631,000	\$ 8,373,300	\$ 9,033,100	\$2,402,100	36.2%	7.9%

- The Department’s FY 2024 General Fund proposed spending is comprised of 33.3% of funds allocated for compensation, 8.5% allocated for fringe benefits, and the remaining 58.4% allocated for operating expenses.

Compensation

- In FY 2024 the General Fund compensation expenditures are budgeted at \$3,000,400, representing an increase of \$1,300 above the FY 2023 compensation budget. The increase is driven by annual salary adjustments, State salary adjustments, funding for one (1) new Community Developer 3G position and the removal of the costs that will be charged directly to grant programs.
- In FY 2024, the authorized General Fund staff complement is proposed at 29 full-time positions, which represents an increase of one (1) position above the FY 2023 level.

General Fund Authorized Staffing Count

	FY 2022 Approved	FY 2023 Approved	FY 2024 Proposed	Change Amount	Percentage Change
Full-Time Civilian	27	28	29	1	3.6%
Total	27	28	29	1	3.6%

Fringe Benefits

Fringe Benefits Historical Trend				
	FY 2022 Actual	FY 2023 Budget	FY 2023 Estimated	FY 2024 Proposed
Compensation	\$ 1,506,328	\$ 2,999,100	\$ 2,363,800	\$ 3,000,400
Fringe Benefits	\$ 428,087	\$ 764,800	\$ 576,300	\$ 765,100
Fringe as a % of Total Employee Compensation	22.13%	20.32%	19.60%	20.32%

- In FY 2024 fringe benefit expenditures are proposed to increase by \$300 above the FY 2023 approved budget level.

Operating Expenses

- The FY 2024 General Fund operating expenditures are proposed to increase by \$2,025,100, or 62.5% above the FY 2023 approved budget level, or a 3.0% reduction from the FY 2023 estimated level of operating expenditures.
- A comprehensive list of proposed operating expenses is provided in response to the *FY 2024 First Round Budget Review Question No. 28*.
 - The most significant increases are proposed for Operating Contracts category (\$2,000,300 increase due to increase in contract for the Warm Nights Shelter operations) and the Vehicle Equipment Repair/Maintenance category (\$65,400 increase).
 - The category with the largest proposed decrease is the General and Administrative Contracts category with a \$70,000 spending reduction due to a decrease in the Food Equity contract.

Recoveries

- There are no proposed recoveries for FY 2024 representing a 100% decrease from FY 2023. Compensation and fringe benefits will be directly charged to grant programs.

Grants

Category	FY 2022 Actual	FY 2023 Approved	FY 2023 Estimated	FY 2024 Proposed	Change Amount	Percentage Change
Compensation	\$5,037,695	\$7,980,400	\$7,235,800	\$9,558,600	\$1,578,200	19.8%
Fringe Benefits	627,262	1,197,100	1,098,900	1,433,800	236,700	19.8%
Operating Expenses	58,478,038	11,145,900	9,297,300	13,062,900	1,917,000	17.2%
Total	\$64,142,995	\$20,323,400	\$17,632,000	\$24,055,300	\$3,731,900	18.4%

- In FY 2023, the Department anticipates spending \$17.6 million in grant funds, which represents 87.0% of the FY 2023 Approved Grant Funds Budget of \$20.3 million. Despite high vacancy rates for grant funded positions, the Department does not anticipate returning any grant funding in the FY 2023.

- The FY 2024 Proposed Grant Funds budget is \$24,055,300, representing an increase of \$3,731,900 or 18.4% above the FY 2023 approved level, or a 36.5% increase above the FY 2023 estimated level of grant funded expenditures.
- The Department has received an award notification for one (1) new project that is not featured on the FY Proposed Budget Book: a National Children’s Alliance Military Installations grant for \$50,000.
- Out of the 26 grant funded programs included in the FY 2024 Proposed Budget, the following five (5) have the largest budgets:
 - ***Permanent Housing for the unsheltered (\$4,924,500)*** – The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development provides funding to assist people experiencing unsheltered homelessness and vulnerable people in rural communities.
 - ***Welfare Reform Work Opportunities/Block Grant Funds Program 02, 08, 10 (\$4,516,400)*** – The Maryland Department of Human Resources provides funding to support the cost of providing employment related assistance to clients of various benefit programs. Job development, referrals, placements and job-seeking skills training are some of the components of this initiative which seeks to reduce welfare dependency through employment. This approximate level of funding has been available to organizations in Prince George’s County in past years but has been spent through state contracts with vendors.
 - ***Office of Strategic Partnerships and Community Solutions (\$2,345,400)*** – The Prince George’s County Public Schools provide funding to place school and community engagement advocates in schools with challenging dynamics (academic performance, truancy, or suspension rate) to support student success. Advocates assess family needs, identify and connect families to resources that address barriers to student achievement and foster family stability through individualized case management.
 - ***Affordable Care Act-Connector Program (\$1,900,000)*** – The Maryland Department of Human Resources provides funding to coordinate outreach activities to reach uninsured individuals and small businesses in Prince George’s County.
 - ***Homelessness Solutions (\$1,710,000)*** – The Maryland Department of Housing and Community Development provides funding for outreach, emergency shelters, homeless stabilization services and the Homelessness Management Information System.
- The FY 2024 budget proposes a Grant Funded staff complement of 229 positions comprised of 15 full-time and 214 limited term grant funded positions (LTGF). While the total number of proposed grant funded positions remains unchanged from FY 2023, there is a reallocation of 10 positions from Grant Funded limited term category to full-time Grant Funded staffing complement.

Grant Program Funds Authorized Staffing Count

	FY 2022 Approved	FY 2023 Approved	FY 2024 Proposed	Change Amount
Full-Time Civilian	5	5	15	10
Part-Time	0	0	0	0
Limited Term	224	224	214	-10
Total	229	229	229	0

- The following grant programs provide funding for most of the grant funded positions in FY 2024:
 - *Office of Strategic Partnerships and Community Solutions* program is authorized five (5) full-time Grant Funded positions and 74 LTGF positions in FY 2024.
 - *Welfare Reform-Work Opportunities/Block Grant Funds Programs 02, 08, 10* is authorized four (4) full-time Grant Funded positions and 47 LTGF positions in FY 2024.
 - *Maryland Energy Assistance Program (MEAP) and Electric Universal Service Program (EUSP)* is authorized three (3) full-time Grant Funded and 29 LTGF positions.
 - *Family Investment Division (FIA) Temporary Administrative Support Program* is authorized 18 LTGF positions.
- Additional details on grant funds are available on pages 531-537 of the *FY 2024 Proposed Budget Book* and responses to the *FY 2024 First Round Budget Review Questions No. 5-9*.

Covid-19 Relief Funds

- The Department was allocated \$8 million in American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) that is set to support the acquisition of a permanent facility for the Warm Nights (Homeless Shelter) Program in FY 2023. The Department in conjunction with the Office of Central Services is in the process of securing the appropriate site for this facility.

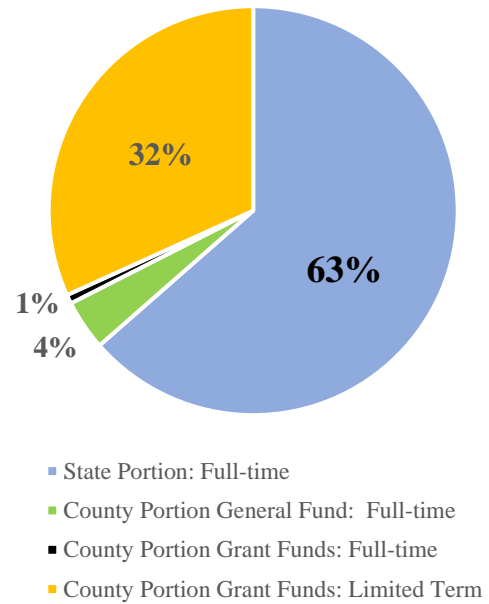
Staffing

- In FY 2024, the General Fund staffing complement for the Department is proposed to increase by one (1) full-time position, and the Grant Funded staffing is proposed to remain at FY 2023 level with a reallocation of 10 positions from limited term Grant Funded category to full-time Grant Funded category. This will result in 29 General Fund full-time positions; 15 full-time Grant Funded positions; and 214 limited term Grant Funded positions for FY 2024.
- According to the Department, “*all positions include din the ZFY 2024 Proposed Budget are fully funded.*”

- In FY 2023, the Department’s General Fund full-time authorized staffing level is 28 positions. Grant funds provide for five (5) full-time and 224 limited term positions.

- In FY 2023, as of March, the Department had eight (8) General Fund civilian vacancies, which equates to 28.6% General Funded full-time vacancy rate.
- In FY 2023, as of March, the Department had two (2) Grant Funded full-time vacancies. This represents a Grant Funded full-time vacancy rate of 40.0%.
- In FY 2023 as of March, the Department had 116 Grant Funded limited term vacancies. This represents a limited term Grant Funded vacancy rate of 51.8%.
- In addition to the County portion, 448 civilian full-time positions are authorized and funded directly by the state of Maryland. One hundred and fourteen (114) of the State positions were listed as vacant, as of March, representing a vacancy rate of 25.5%.

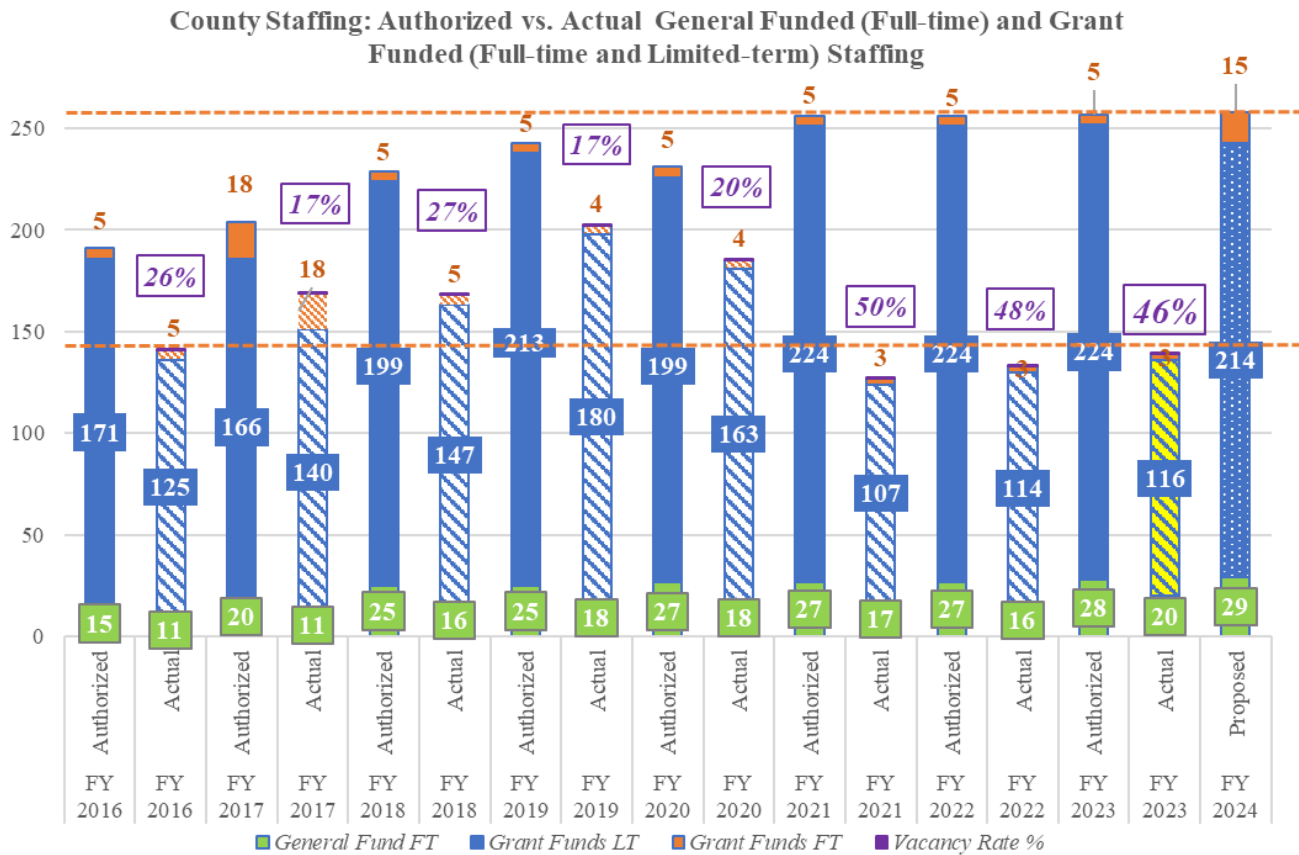
FY 2023 Authorized Staffing by Funding Source (State and County Positions)



- The accompanying table reflects a multi-year distribution of actual filled positions throughout the Department’s divisions. Significant staffing decreases can be seen for the Child, Adult, and Family Services Division and the Family Investment Division, largely driven by the decreased number of positions funded directly by the State (not State grants).

Actual Staffing by Division												
Division	FY 2021 Actual Filled Positions				FY 2022 Actual Filled Positions				FY 2023 Actual Filled Positions			
	County: General Fund	Grant Funded		State Funded	County: General Fund	Grant Funded		State Funded	County: General Fund	Grant Funded		State Funded
	FT	FT	LT	FT	FT	FT	LT	FT	FT	FT	LT	FT
Community Programs	5	3	19	0	4	2	30	0	5	2	21	0
Child, Adult, and Family Services	6	0	10	0	6	0	10	248	8	0	6	153
Family Investment	0	0	40	0	0	0	40	240	0	1	63	169
Local General Administration	6	0	23	0	6	0	0	28	7	0	18	19
Other	0	0	15	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

- For the County funded portion of the Department’s staffing complement, over the past years the Department *did not* attain its authorized level for either General Fund or Granted Funded positions and has operated with double digit vacancy rates as can be seen from the accompanying graph:



▪ Employee retention and attrition:

- In FY 2023 to date the Department has lost 40 employees (39 employees were Grant Funded).
- All 39 Grant Funded employee separations were due to resignation. The Department reports that for Grant Funded employees, many are “*leaving and seeking more competitive salaries and full benefits through internal merit or outside employment.*”
- While 40 employees lost to attrition represents only the number of employee separations on the County side, attrition reasons vary by the type of position and the Department further explains that “*For the State merit positions, lack of competitive salaries and benefits compared to other agencies in the region creates difficulties in retaining or recruiting. For all staff, the pandemic has added another layer of uncertainty and anxiety and we have seen a slight increase in overall attrition, particularly in positions that must conduct work in-office, face-to-face, or in hybrid work mode.*”
- The Department also has identified as a challenge the current lack of such retention activities as professional development. Note that the Department’s *Operating Expenses* budget has no funds for the Training expenditure category in both FY 2023 and FY 2024.

- Positions most affected by attrition include: LTGF Community Developers, State merit positions in the Family Investment and in the Child, Adult and Family Services Division, Social Work Supervisors.
 - The impact of high attrition levels, high turnover rates and operating with high vacancy rates varies by each program, initiative and service that the Department provides. Nevertheless, overall, the staffing challenges result in difficulties in ensuring continuity of care for the clients, increased caseloads for the remaining personnel, increases in application processing time, higher likelihood of errors for eligibility programs, increased anxiety, burnout and stress for the remaining employees. Furthermore, with management of numerous grant funded programs that rely on grant funded staffing, inability to fill grant funded vacancies may impede the Department's ability to execute grant funded initiatives. The Department reports that continuity of care and caseloads are most affected by attrition in child welfare and homeless/crisis response programs.
 - The Department continues to offer a hybrid work schedule for some employees offering three (3) days in the office and two (2) at home to meet the increased demand for remote work and retain employees.
 - Offering hybrid schedule and supplement for the Social Work Supervisors and the student loan forgiveness program have been identified by the Department as some of the most promising retention strategies that have been implemented to date.
- Recruitment and employee hiring overview:
- Consistently high vacancy rates are indicative of long-standing recruitment challenges and the Department's ongoing inability to fill vacant positions.
 - In FY 2023, the Department has retained an Human Resources Manager and Assistant Manager. As a result, the Department has seen an improvement in timeliness of recruitment activities and on-boarding and was able to increase retention efforts. The Department's Human Resources team has four (4) specialists (three State and one County).
 - the Office of Human Resources Management (OHRM) assist the Department in filling vacant positions by providing NEOGOV online recruitment platform for full-time General Fund positions. To augment the OHRM's efforts, the Department also advertises on Social Services related websites, newspaper sites and select virtual job boards.
 - The Department has identified the following reasons, which contribute to recruitment challenges: *"the inability to offer and pay for training or educational advancement for agency staff other than social work positions"* and *"the hiring process is protracted and potential candidates accept other opportunities while waiting to be hired."*
 - With regards to competitiveness, the Department noted that it *"has little to no discretion in determining compensation rates for merit positions. The rates are prescribed by the State and the County respectively and the grade scale of the position. County salaries are generally higher than State salaries however, neither are competitive with the local market for similar skill sets and experience (typically 30% less)"*.

- The Department reports that due to new partnerships and strategies it was able to have a slight reduction in vacancies for General Fund full-time and Grant Funded full-time positions (see the accompanying table on the Department’s vacancies on page 9). These improvements have been largely due to posting vacancies for longer periods of time and posting on pay for service sites such as Indeed and LinkedIn. Vacancy rates for Grant Funded limited term and State positions continue to be high, which is also a recognized industry problem across the country.

	FY 2021 Vacancies	FY 2022 Vacancies	FY 2023 Vacancies	Change	Change, %
General Fund: full-time	10	11	8	-3	-27%
Grant Funds: full-time	2	3	2	-1	-33%
Grant Funds: limited term	117	110	116	6	5%
State Funded: full-time	61	112	114	2	2%
Total	190	236	240	4	2%

- The Department also notes that *“the limited pool of qualified applicants”* continues to be an issue.
 - In FY 2023 the Department contracted with a talent search firm for assistance in streamlining the recruitment of qualified candidates, especially for the Social Work Supervisor positions. According to the Department, the firm met the same challenges the Department faces and was not able to find viable candidates. The cost of the contracted firm was deemed to be *“one of the major cons”* and the Department does not plan on using talent search firms in the future.
 - The Department reports, that on average, it takes 89-150 days to fill General or Grant Funded full-time positions and approximately 30-75 days to fill Grant Funded limited term positions.
- In FY 2024 the Department plans the following changes to improve employee recruitment and retention: *“our HR team is revising our recruitment and onboarding process for LTGF positions to provide a standardized orientation process. We are also integrating the human resource policies and practices on our intranet to ensure clarity and ease of access, providing professional development trainings to promote growth and career advancement and staff well-being initiatives to include trauma informed care.”*
 - To meet its workload demands while operating with high vacancy levels and high employee turnover for certain positions, the Department continued to contract temporary employees. The Department has between five (5) to ten (10) temporary employees. Overall, while use of temporary personnel is a short-term feasible solution to the staffing challenges, use of temporary employees is not an ideal solution due to the required investment in training and inability to fill higher skill positions due to the lack of necessary required expertise.

- For a more in-depth information on the Department's staffing, please refer to the responses to the *FY 2024 First Round Budget Review Questions No 10 – 27 (pages 10-14)*.

Workload and Program Management

- The Department made/plans to make the following organizational changes:
 - Expanded online application process with expanded options for document uploading and case processing.
 - Options for combination of office-based and telework schedules to provided extended hours and improve staff recruitment and retention.
 - Improved accommodations for customers with special needs and the use of drop boxes for residents who may not be technologically proficient or have access to technology.
 - Expanded the use of virtual platforms for staff meeting, training, client interviews, and case management sessions with clients.
 - Filled the vacant Associate Director position, creating two Associate Director positions.
- ***Prince George's County Department of Social Services FY 2022 Annual Report*** is available as *Attachment E* provided in response to the *FY 2024 First Round Budget Review Questions*.
- The Department's key FY 2024 goals of equal priority continue to be:
 - To *provide intervention services to abused, neglected, or impoverished children, adults, and families in order to ensure safety and reduce the risk in their living environment*. Additionally, for adults, the goal is to reduce the recidivism rate for repeat allegations. Achievement of these objectives requires completing Child Investigative and Alternative Responses, and Adult Protective Service Investigations timely. This effort requires involving families and relevant parties in the decisions made for the well-being of children and vulnerable adults. Lastly, meeting this goal requires recruiting, training, and equipping staff to ensure they are able to provide effective child, adult, and family services.
 - The second goal is to *stabilize families and individuals in need through increased access to services*. To achieve this goal, the Department provides expanded client-centered services, increase points of access, and assist those receiving income support services (TCA, FSP, medical, childcare subsidy, EAFC, and energy) to become self-sufficient and independent. The Department assists people experiencing homelessness including emergency shelter, rapid rehousing, and permanent housing, and facilitate independence. The Department is working to increase the number of vulnerable eligible households achieving stability.
 - The third goal is to *assist individuals, adults, and families in need to achieve and maintain permanence by connecting adults and families to community-based agencies and department services*. This is to be achieved by providing in-home services to families that

are at risk of abuse or neglect in their home as well as recruiting an adequate number of quality foster and adoptive homes. The Department strives to support guardianship, adoption and developing long-term permanent relationships for youth who desire to remain independent or do not achieve permanency. The Department also facilitates the process of reunifying vulnerable adults with their families. For individuals experiencing homelessness or who are unstably housed, the Department assists with promoting stability and independence through the supportive, housing first model that is designed to remove lack of housing as a barrier then provide comprehensive supportive services.

Community Programs Division

- Community Programs Division’s key programs/services/initiatives include:
 - *Homeless services* (street outreach, emergency shelter, rapid rehousing, and permanent supportive housing).
 - *Crisis assistance* (utilities, rent and mortgage arrearages, food and other disasters).
 - *Site-based case management for at-risk youth* in select middle schools to reduce chronic absenteeism, suspensions, and poor educational outcomes.
 - *Special Initiatives*: Youth Homelessness Demonstration Program and the COVID-19 Non-Congregate Overflow Shelter.

- Community Programs Division’s key concerns include:
 - *Homeless Services*: Increase in persons seeking shelter who are elderly, have severe somatic and/or behavioral health needs, those who have stayed in placed not meant for human habitation for a prolonged time. Such clients have complex housing and supportive services needs, which are difficult to address through homeless services programs. The Department notes that “*the homeless systems have seen similar trends in increases in persons with high acuity somatic and behavioral health needs with little to no appropriate permanent housing settings available for this population. This has resulted in significant increases in length of stay which has limited the system’s capacity to accept and accommodate new homeless households and increased shelter turnaways.*”
 - *Crisis Assistance Services*: Increase in persons seeking eviction prevention and relocation assistance. A significant shortfall in assistance funds is anticipated as court backlogs resolve and rents continue to increase. A special concern is the availability of funds to meet the needs of the residents who lack a federally recognized residency status.
 - *Site-based case management for at-risk youth*: housing instability for families, use of substances (specifically marijuana), and parental disengagement from the education process of some parents make the Division’s academic, attendance and behavioral interventions difficult to implement.

- Community Programs Division’s special initiatives include:
 - The Division entered the second year of implementation of the Youth Homelessness Demonstration Program.

- The Department’s Food Equity Office is developing outreach initiatives targeting the County’s undocumented residents and the elderly population.
- Additional information about the Community Programs Division’s achievements, challenges, performance metrics, etc. is available in response to the *FY 2024 First Round Budget Review Questions No. 32-38 (pages 15-24)*.

Child, Adult, and Family Services Division

- Child, Adult, and Family Services Division’s key programs/services/initiatives include:
 - *Adult Protective Services* provides services to assist elderly or vulnerable adults.
 - *Child Protective Services (CPS)* is responsible for ensuring the safety and well-being of children by investigating allegations of abuse and neglect.
 - *Family Preservation Unit* is a home-based service designed to keep the family unit together; assist families in creating stable and nurturing home environment; promote healthy child development; and prevent out-of-home placement.
 - *Foster Care* provides short-term care and supportive services to children who are unable to live at home due to child abuse and neglect. Children are placed in family foster homes, kinship care, as well as congregate care.
 - *Policy, Practice and Ready by 21* provides housing, mentoring, education, independent living, vocational, and financial support, and emotional well-being to youth aging out of foster care.
- Child, Adult, and Family Services Division’s key concerns include:
 - *Adult Services*: High caseloads due to staff shortages.
 - *Child Protective Services*: High caseloads due to staff shortages.
 - *Family Preservation*: The Program has experienced a decline in referrals for service. The reasons have not been identified yet. The Program is voluntary.
 - *Foster Care*: Securing appropriate placement for children continues to be a challenge due to the needs of the youth in the Department’s care. Many young people have existing or emerging behavioral health concerns. The Department notes that “*of particular concern has been a growing trend of multiple placement disruptions and an increased need for supportive services (i.e, mobile crisis, one-to-one mentoring) to maintain children in their current placements. Further complicating that is the vast reduction in placement resources – especially for high need youth with significant complex behavioral or mental health diagnoses – due to limited capacity and quantity of therapeutic resource homes; reduction in size of congregate care. groups homes; limited in State and out of State residential programs.*” Additionally, difficult to place young people often remain in hospital due to the lack of appropriate placement options.

- Additional information about the Child, Adult, and Family Services Division's achievements, challenges, performance metrics, etc. is available in response to the *FY 2024 First Round Budget Review Questions No. 39-45 (pages 25-32)*.

Family Investment Division

- Family Investment Division's key programs/services/initiatives include:
 - The *Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)*, formerly known as Food Stamps, helps low-income households buy the food they need.
 - *Temporary Cash Assistance (TCA)*, Maryland's Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) program provides cash assistance to families with dependent children when available resources do not fully address the family's needs and while preparing program participants for independence through work.
 - *The Temporary Disability Assistance Program (TDAP)* helps qualifying low-income disabled Marylanders through short-term disability or while they are awaiting approval of federal disability support.
 - *Medicaid*, also called Medical Assistance (MA) pays the medical bills of needy and low-income individuals. Customers apply for this program through the Maryland Health Benefits Exchange (MHBE) however, the Department processes MA for special populations i.e., Medicare and age 65 and older.
 - The *Public Assistance to Adults Program (PAA)* pays for the cost of care and a personal needs allowance for qualifying needy individuals who live in assisted living facilities (facilities must be licensed by the Maryland Department of Health and certified by Project Home).
 - *Emergency Assistance to Families with Children (EAFIC)* provides emergency cash assistance to families who need emergency help paying rent, utilities, or for other emergencies.
 - *The Burial Assistance Program* provides limited financial help with funeral expenses of deceased recipients of Public Assistance programs when their families cannot afford funeral costs.
 - *Maryland Market Money* incentivizes recipients of federal nutrition benefits to shop at local farmers markets.
- Family Investment Division's key concerns are:
 - *The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)*:
 - Program access: A significant number of people who are eligible are not accessing the services for various reasons. Bridging this gap continues to be a challenge.
 - Staff retention: High caseload averages due to staff shortages.

- Technology: MD THINK (State platform) continues to present user interface challenges for workers and customers.
- *Temporary Cash Assistance (TCA), and Maryland’s Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) programs*: No services have fallen short of expectations.
- *The Temporary Disability Assistance Program (TDAP)*: No reported challenges.
- *Medicaid* (also called Medical Assistance): The number of uninsured uninsurable residents remains high due to undocumented residents who do not qualify for assistance under the program. In addition, there are pockets of uninsured who are eligible but are not insured for various reasons. Reaching out to these residents continues to be a challenge.
- *The Public Assistance to Adults Program (PAA)*: No challenges have been identified.
- *Emergency Assistance to Families with Children (EAFC)*: the Department reports that “*the funding allocated to administer the EAFC program is insufficient to meet the needs of our families amid the ongoing housing crisis.*”
- *Maryland Market Money*: No challenges have been identified. The program is on target.
- Additional information about the Family Investment Division’s achievements, challenges, performance metrics, etc. is available in response to the *FY 2024 First Round Budget Review Questions No. 46-54 (pages 32-42)*.

Equipment & Information Technology (IT)

- The Department has been successfully collaborating with the State’s Department of Human Services in FY 2023, to obtain equipment, information technology, communications, vehicles, hardware, etc. necessary for the Department’s operations.
- The Department continues to use MD THINK, which streamlines the application process by allowing users to apply for several State benefits using a single application. Customers can also complete recertifications, reports changes, and perform other functions. Approximately 60,000 applications for benefits are processed through MD THINK in a year and additional 16,000 applications for Health Exchange and Crisis Assistance are processed outside of MD THINK. The Department works with the State to overcome any issues related to MD THINK operations.
- The Department is currently working with the County’s Office of Information Technology to develop an in-house case management database system to replace the current Social Solutions Efforts to Outcomes (ETO) system.
- No County-funded IT initiatives have been implemented in FY 2023 and none are planned for FY 2024.

Facilities

- The total footprint of the Department’s operations, including presence at partner organizations, broken down by Councilmanic districts, is provided in the response to the *FY 2024 First Round Budget Review Question No 67*.
- The Department has not changed any of its main office facilities in FY 2023.
- The Department’s full community partners list is provided in response to the *FY 2024 First Round Budget Review Question No. 68*.
- The Regional Health and Human Services Center, included in the Health Department’s CIP Budget, will serve as a centralized location for the administrative functions of the Health Department, the Department of Social Services, and the Department of Family Services. Services for older adults, persons with disabilities and family caregivers, and a full-service senior activity center will be provided at this centralized location. The project is experiencing delays and project completion data was changed from FY 2022 to FY 2024. The Health Department reported that this project should be completed by the summer/fall of 2024.
- The Department reports that its current facilities, including the new Health and Human Services building “are able to accommodate the agency’s needs”.