



**Prince George's County  
Department of Social Services**

# Collaborative Pandemic Responses

Building Stronger Communities, One Family at a Time...

# Supports Provided to Youth in care and Resource Parents

- ▶ The Department identified funds that were used to offer additional support at the onset of the pandemic and assisted Resource Parents with funding to offset expenses associated with virtual learning and other needs.
- ▶ Distributed 234 netbooks to youth in care
- ▶ Coordinated with the courts to conduct remote hearings for removals and regular status check ins.
- ▶ Executed National Adoption Day Celebration touch free Drive Through
- ▶ **Conducted Youth Specific Outreach and Activities**
  - ▶ Conducted 3 day health education workshop for youth
  - ▶ Coordinated PSA and voter registration drive for youth
  - ▶ Conducted financial literacy workshops



# Initiatives to Address Food Security

- ▶ With an average of almost 73k SNAP households in Prince George's County, Maryland Money Market incentives help direct that spending at farmers markets, where food choices are healthier than at many area supermarkets
- ▶ Active participation on the Food Security Task Force responding to Countywide food security challenges.
- ▶ In partnership with the Food Equity Council, weekly development of a Countywide Community Food Distribution Alert highlighting active food distributions by area as well as other critical food related announcements.



# Initiatives to Ensure timely Access to Resources

The Department has experienced more than a 250% increase in applications for assistance since the onset of the pandemic. To meet that increased demand, the Department has employed a number of strategies and taken advantage of all possible federal and state government relaxed program rules, procedures, and processes for mainstream benefits (i.e.; SNAP, TCA, and Medical Assistance) to ensure program applications are processed as quickly as possible including:

- a. Interviews were waived for all programs thus making it easier to process applications;
- b. Initial verifications for first time applicants were postponed thus making it easier to establish eligibility;
- c. Certification periods were extended thus allowing benefits to continue without completing recertification. Recertification resumed in April 2021;
- d. SNAP recipients were granted maximum allotment for their household size irrespective of the amount they are eligible for. As an example, a household of one eligible for \$16 will receive the maximum allotment of \$204;
- e. Households were granted a 15% increase in SNAP through June 30, 2021;
- f. Closure of Medicaid cases were suspended except for individuals who are deceased, moved out of state, became eligible in another Medicaid coverage group, or requested their case closed.

# Initiatives to Ensure timely Access to Resources (cont.)

- g. TANF and SNAP work requirements were relaxed;
- h. Statewide processing model where applications and redeterminations were assigned to all the case managers across the state for processing thus leveraging economies of scale to efficiently complete these cases and achieve program outcomes;
- i. TANF and TDAP grants were increased by to \$100/person/month;
- j. PEBT was implemented to provide benefits to children who were eligible for free and reduced school meals; and
- k. Extension of the health care enrollment period.

March 1, 2020 - March 30, 2021			
	TCA	FSP	Energy
Applications received	15,598	105,976	15331
Applications processed	16,942	105,217	10241
Applications approved	9,355	71,743	6766
<i>Percentage approved</i>	55.00%	68.00%	66%
Pending	305	1,689	5090*

\* New pending (3,991) and auto deny under review (1,099)

# Initiatives to Ensure timely Access to Resources



## ▶ Eviction Deferment and Disposal Pilot

During the summer of 2020 when Courts temporarily opened for eviction hearings at the end of the first eviction moratorium, the Department partnered with local landlords and the Landlord Tenant Section of the Office of the Sheriff to defer and/or permanently dispose of **1,753** Warrants of Restitution keeping vulnerable residents in their homes during the pandemic.

## ▶ Financial Assistance since March of 2020

- \$2.91M in direct emergency rental assistance
- \$1.78M in emergency rental assistance (partnership with DHCD)
- \$8.16M in direct utility and arrearage assistance
- \$155K in rapid rehousing assistance



# Affordable Care Act (ACA)

## MHBE/PGC Health Connect

- ▶ The Maryland Health Benefit Exchange (MHBE) launched a Coronavirus Emergency Special Enrollment Period (SEP).
- ▶ More than 140,000 Marylanders have gotten insurance; 30,000 from Prince George's County.
- ▶ Health navigators coordinated outreach efforts such as distribution of flyers at testing and food distribution sites.
- ▶ Marketing efforts included but not limited to billboards; radio ads; and placement of videos and ads in retail, gas stations, social media, and media partner websites.
- ▶ Collaboration with the Office of Community relations on virtual town hall meetings, and webinars have included presentations by navigators and program leaders to share how residents can gain access to health coverage.

## American Rescue Plan Act

The plan will:

- ▶ Give working families a \$1400/person check.
- ▶ Extend current unemployment insurance benefits/eligibility to September 6th.
- ▶ Help Americans stay in their home.
- ▶ Increase the Earned Income Tax Credit.
- ▶ Expand childcare assistance.
- ▶ Give families an additional tax credit to help cut childcare costs.
- ▶ Provide additional \$1 billion to states to cover for TANF recipients as a result of the crisis.
- ▶ Lower or eliminate health premiums for lower/middle income families enrolled.

# Response for Persons Experiencing Homelessness

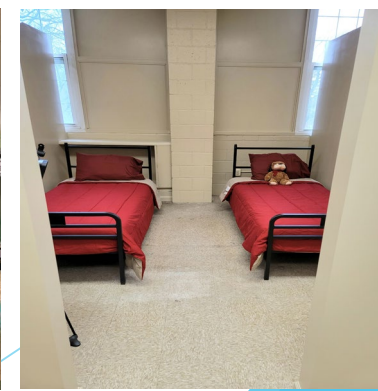
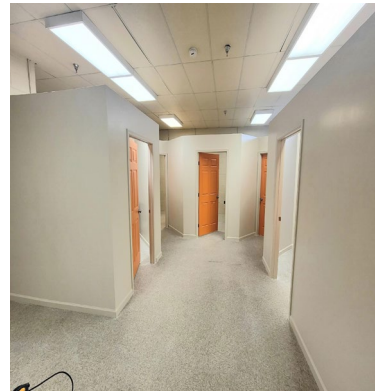
## Non-Congregate Shelter



- ▶ 622 residents experiencing homelessness and/or presenting with other high risk conditions have been sheltered since inception:
  - ▶ 465 adults and 157 children
  - ▶ 390 households (82 families with 314 individuals & 308 singles)
- ▶ 324 residents who were Persons Under Investigation (PUI) or COVID-19 Positive (POS) received temporary quarantine or isolation sheltering since inception.
- ▶ Services offered onsite include meals, security, housekeeping, case management, behavioral health services, and rapid rehousing.
- ▶ 346 residents exited shelter since inception; 78% (269) of which went to more stable housing.

### Dormitory Shelter Modifications

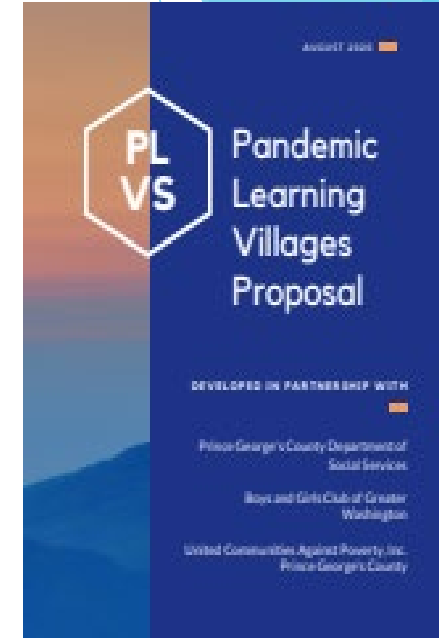
Space reallocation at Shepherd's Cove Shelter to support social distancing





# Initiatives to support student success

- ▶ **Learning Village for Students Experiencing Homelessness**
  - PGCDSS partnered with the Boys and Girls Clubs of Greater Washington and United Communities Against Poverty, Inc. to operate an educational learning village for youth living at the Shepherd's Cove Shelter. BGCGW and UCAP now jointly manage operations due to the collaborative support from PGCDSS.
  - Other Homeless Service Providers have followed suit and instituted similar student centered services in other family serving shelters and Prince George's County was recognized for this work by HUD in a recent national TA call.
- ▶ **School based crisis intervention**



Service Type	Total Students
<i>Students Connected to Services</i>	350
Chronic Absenteeism and Disengagement in Distance Learning	169
Medical Assistance	43
Housing Assistance	27
Food and Supplementary Cash Assistance	51
School Supplies / Tools	41
Other Supportive Services	62



# Supports Provided to Workforce

- ▶ The Agency recognizes that COVID fatigue and burnout are of grave concern and has taken the efforts to mitigate the effects and support healthy self-care. The agency mandated trainings and provided other supportive trainings.
- ▶ Trainings
  - ▶ Trauma Informed Care
  - ▶ Mental Health First Aid
  - ▶ Vicarious Trauma
  - ▶ Time management
  - ▶ Holiday blues
  - ▶ Managing Grief and loss
- ▶ We also have encouraged:
  - ▶ The use of EAP services for support and offered pre-scheduled voluntary groups and individual sessions; and
  - ▶ Incorporated a self-care section in our weekly internal agency newsletter, encouraging self-care and identifying resources and techniques.

***This Week In Self-Care***

*You asked, and the Staff Well-Being Committee answered!  
Keep reading for this week's self-care tip.*



***Time for Some Spring Cleaning!***

Declutter your life and be on your way to becoming happier and healthier. Having too much clutter in your life can be a burden. A cluttered living space can zap your energy at home. A disorganized desk or digital life can be distracting. An overbooked calendar can be exhausting to maintain. Clutter in any shape or form can ramp up your stress without even realizing it. You have the power to declutter your life and choose what makes you happy. And doing so may actually improve your health and boost your mood.

# Supports Provided to Workforce

- ▶ *DSS In Brief* (Monthly): 12 issues
- ▶ *Week In Review* (Weekly): 32 issues
- ▶ Other Emailed Communications: 19 issues

## Highlights:

- ▶ Introduction of *Self-Care Tips* section from Staff Well-Being Committee
- ▶ Introduction of birthday/work anniversary shoutouts
- ▶ Personalizing the subject line of distributed emails

