

JACKSON COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES

ANNUAL REPORT

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Jennifer Abshire, Director

The mission of the Jackson County Department of Social Services is to provide essential human services that protect, strengthen and improve lives in Jackson County.

Our commitment is to provide the highest quality of service through teamwork, professionalism and respect for our clients and the community that supports our work.

A message from . . .

THE JACKSON COUNTY BOARD OF SOCIAL SERVICES

The Jackson County Department of Social Services is a client-oriented agency that responds to all age groups from infancy to the elderly.

We must be responsive and sensitive to the needs of the citizens in our community. At the same time, however, we have a responsibility to the taxpaying community to meet human needs with cost-effective methods.

The staff of the Jackson County Department of Social Services have dedicated themselves to establishing a team approach in which to offer services in the most efficient and effective way possible while ensuring that all citizens receive these services in a professional and courteous manner.

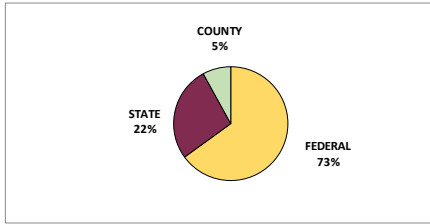
This Annual Report summarizes for the citizens of Jackson County the activities and trends of this County Department of Social Services for the Fiscal Year 2020-2021. The Report is our attempt to convey to the citizens of our county the broad range of services provided by the agency and the number of clients served. It is a voluntary effort to be more accountable for the public funds entrusted to this Department.

Board Members



**Sue Evans, Sherry Rogers-Vice Chair, Charles Wolfe,
Dana Tucker-Chair, Kathy Farmer**

REVENUES FY 2020-2021



FEDERAL	\$58,769,775.92	73%
STATE	\$17,676,207.65	22%
COUNTY	\$ 3,818,457.68	5%
TOTAL	\$80,264,441.25	100%

EXPENDITURES FY 2020-2021

MEDICAID PAYMENTS	\$60,727,441.00
FOOD & NUTRITION SERVICES	\$11,378,553.00
PUBLIC ASSISTANCE ADMINISTRATION (Medicaid, Work First Family Assistance, Food & Nutrition Services, Special Assistance)	\$ 2,400,890.43
SOCIAL WORK SERVICES	\$ 2,338,997.04
WORK FIRST	\$ 1,249,864.12
EMERGENCY CRISIS ASSISTANCE (Low Income Energy Assistance, Fuel, Shelter, Utilities, Medicine)	\$ 273,893.19
OTHER EXPENDITURES INCLUDE:	
FOSTER CARE	\$ 1,134,626.53
CHILD SUPPORT SERVICES	\$ 443,405.02
SPECIAL ASSISTANCE (Adult Care Payments)	\$ 300,658.00
IN HOME SERVICES (Adult Day Care, Aide Services, Home Delivered Meals)	\$ 12,325.59
ADULT GUARDIANSHIP	\$ 3,787.33
TOTAL	\$80,264,441.25

SERVICE PROGRAMS

CHILD PROTECTIVE SERVICE INVESTIGATIONS

Reports of suspected child abuse, neglect and/or dependency are investigated. Services are provided 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Assistance is provided to other counties to ensure safety of children.

- 767 Responses to Reports of Abuse, Neglect and/or Dependency
- 135 Out of County Assists and Home Studies

FAMILY INTERVENTION SERVICES

Provides services to protect children in families where abuse and/or neglect were found. Social Workers engage family members in activities designed to reduce risk, promote stability and bring about permanence for children.

- 41 Families Served
- 85 Children Served

FOSTER CARE SERVICES

Children are placed in the responsibility of the agency through court ordered custody, voluntary placement agreements, or release for adoption. Permanency planning for children provides time-limited and goal-oriented care for children to achieve permanent families as soon as possible.

- 74 Children in Agency Custody as of 07/01/20
- 19 Children Entered Agency Custody through 06/30/21
- 24 Children Left Agency Custody
 - 9 Children Returned to Parents
 - 9 Guardianship or Custody to Others
 - 4 Children Adopted
 - 2 Children Aged Out
- 69 Children Remained in Agency Custody as of 06/30/21

ADOPTIONS

Adoption provides children with legal permanency in safe, loving homes. Adoptions include agency adoptive placements, stepparent and relative adoptions, and independent adoptions arranged between birth parents and unrelated individuals.

- 4 Agency Adoption Finalized
- 5 Non-Agency Adoptions
- 14 Agency Children Cleared for Adoption
- 28 Families Received Adoption Assistance for 46 Children to Help Offset the Costs of Adopting a Child with Disabilities or Special Needs

ADULT PROTECTIVE SERVICE EVALUATIONS

Reports of suspected abuse, neglect and/or exploitation are evaluated and assessments are completed regarding the needs of disabled individuals 18 and older. Services are provided 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

- 208 Responses to Reports of Abuse, Neglect and/or Exploitation

GUARDIANSHIP SERVICES

The Court appoints Social Services as guardian for elderly or disabled adults who are mentally incompetent and cannot make responsible decisions concerning their personal care or their finances.

- 31 Guardianship Clients Served

PROTECTIVE PAYEE SERVICES

Social Services is appointed by the Court, Social Security, or the Veterans Administration to receive and ensure the appropriate use of benefit funds when individuals are unable to do so.

- 22 Payee Clients Served

SERVICES FOR THE BLIND

Assistance is provided to blind/visually impaired clients through Independent Living (IL) Services. The Medical Eye Care Assistance Program assists with exams, glasses, vision related surgery and referrals to other programs when funding is unavailable.

- 13 Clients Received IL Instruction
- 10 New Clients Received IL Instruction
- 10 Case Closures for Clients Receiving IL Instruction
- 5 Medical Eye Care Clients Served
- 8 Clients Referred to Other Resources for Assistance



Miguel and Amanda were granted guardianship of these five siblings.

FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS

MEDICAID AND SPECIAL ASSISTANCE

Medicaid provides assistance with medical expenses for low-income families with children, disabled adults, the elderly and other special populations.

Special Assistance provides a monthly payment to help pay the cost of facility placement or in-home care.

1,756 Applications Processed
5,300 Recertifications Processed

MEDICAL TRANSPORTATION

Transportation to medical appointments is provided, arranged or reimbursed for individuals who are eligible for this service.

1,246 Clients Transported
3,897 Number of Trips Provided
\$ 51,711.59 Direct Payments to Clients
\$ 86,895.51 Payments to Providers

PROVIDERS

\$ 24,428.22 Jackson County Transit
\$ 38,264.01 Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians Transit
\$ 730.00 Freedom Taxi Service
\$ 23,473.28 Mountain Area Transport

HEALTH CHOICE FOR CHILDREN

North Carolina Health Choice provides medical assistance for uninsured children when the family income is at or below 200% of federal poverty level.

337 Active Cases as of 06/30/21



JCDS staff had a fundraiser for United Christian Ministries and collected 14 boxes of food.

FOOD & NUTRITION SERVICES

Designed to raise the nutritional levels in low-income households by providing food assistance to supplement a household's food dollars.

1,405 Applications Processed
837 Recertifications Processed
2,309 Average Monthly Cases

WORK FIRST FAMILY ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

Work First is an employment program for families with children under the age of 18 living in the home. Child-only benefits are available to eligible non-parent relatives caring for minor children.

79 Applications Processed
135 Average Monthly Cases

CHILD SUPPORT SERVICES

Assures that children receive adequate parental support by locating absent parents, establishing paternity, establishing medical and financial support, modifying and enforcing court ordered support obligations.

782 Active Cases
\$2,137,778.33 Total Collections
\$ 49,862.00 County Return and Incentives Earned
41 Paternities Established
55 New Support Orders Established
164 Support Orders Modified
352 Implemented Income Withholdings
2,582 Enforcement Actions Completed

SHELTER/UTILITY ASSISTANCE

The Crisis Intervention Program, Low-Income Energy Assistance, Work First Emergency Assistance, Duke Energy, Energy Neighbor, Emergency Food and Shelter Program, and Helping Each Member Cope are programs to assist people in an energy/shelter crisis. These seven programs accomplished the following:

1,453 Households Served
\$259,171.30 Total Payments
\$ 178.37 Average Payment

GENERAL ASSISTANCE

Assistance for families in a crisis situation

310 Households Served
\$12,279.50 Total Payments
\$ 39.61 Average Payment

PROGRAM INTEGRITY/FRAUD INVESTIGATIONS

Public Assistance cases are routinely investigated to assure accuracy and to address discrepancies. Repayment of benefits is pursued in cases of fraud and overpayment.

34 Cases Investigated
\$ 649.00 Medicaid Repayments
\$ 5,942.49 Food & Nutrition Services Repayments
\$ 6,591.49 Total Repayments
\$17,702.00 Dollar Amount for Claims Established

PROCESSING SUPPORT SERVICES

3,316 Clients Seen In the Agency
12,631 Incoming Pieces of Regular Mail
356 Incoming Pieces of Courier Mail
20,541 Outgoing Pieces of Regular Mail
10 Outgoing Pieces of Courier Mal

ADOPTION DAY



On March 9, 2021, JCDSS employee, Tami Deitz and her husband, Michael, adopted Zane into a forever home.

OTHER ACCOMPLISHMENTS

- Jennifer Abshire retired after 30 years with Social Services. She held many positions over the years and the last five as the Director.
- The agency purchased new cameras and a paging system for the building.
- JCDSS staff collected 35 boxes, plus numerous other items for the elderly for Christmas.
- JCDSS collaborated with Neighbors in Need to collect, blankets, hats, scarves and gloves.
- For Breast Cancer Awareness Month, JCDSS staff donated \$587 to help low-income breast cancer patients purchase wigs, scarves, etc.

SATELLITE OFFICE

A satellite office in Cherokee provides Food and Nutrition Services and Medicaid.

In Accordance with Federal Law and U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) and U.S. Department of Health and Human Services policy, this institution is prohibited from discriminating on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, age or disability. Under the Food Stamp Act and USDA policy, discrimination is prohibited also on the basis of religion or political beliefs.

This is the breakdown for the expenditures for 2020-2021.

Medicaid Payments – 76%
Food & Nutrition Services – 14%
Public Assistance Administration – 3%
Social Work Services – 3%
Work First – 1%
Other Expenditures – 2%
Emergency Crisis Assistance – 1%