

Department of Health and Social Services

Division of Social Services (DSS)



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Division Director**

**Joint Finance Committee Hearing
Fiscal Year 2026 Budget**

February 25, 2025

Good afternoon, Representative Williams, Senator Paradee, members of the Joint Finance Committee and members of the public.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak with you today and present our accomplishments and Fiscal Year (FY) 2026 Governor's Recommended Budget (GRB).

Accomplishments



During the most recent SFY DSS distributed **benefits** to over

368,393

individuals



11,413

Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF)



5,153

General Assistance



14,354

Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP)



172,223

Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)



18,065

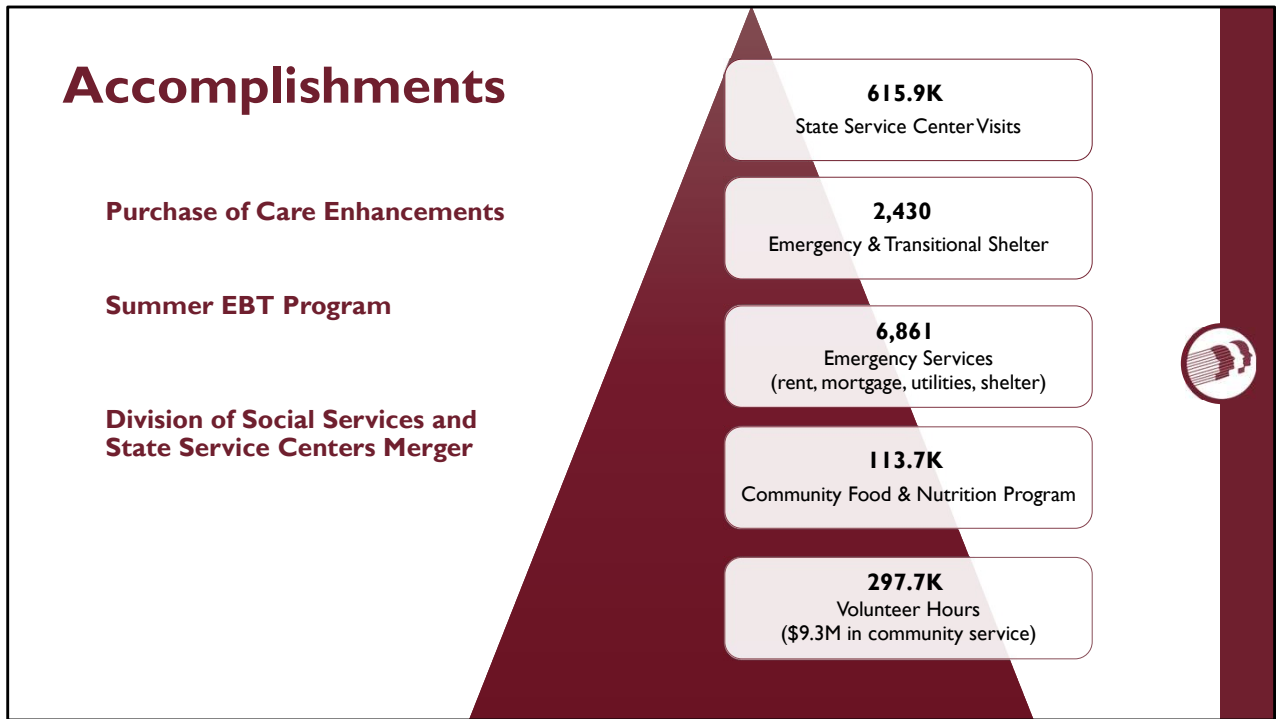
Purchase of Care (POC)



During FY 2024, Division of Social Services (DSS) distributed benefits to over 368,393 of Delaware's most vulnerable, ensuring access to essential benefits and services that promote well-being and economic stability, including:

- Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF): 11,413 individuals received support toward self-sufficiency.
- General Assistance: 5,153 individuals relied on this financial lifeline.
- Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP): 172,223 individuals received nutrition assistance/food benefits.
- Purchase of Care (POC) Program: 18,065 unduplicated children received quality childcare.
- Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP): 14,354 individuals received energy assistance

These programs represent real families, children, and individuals relying on DSS services to meet basic needs. Continued investment strengthens economic stability, health outcomes, and workforce readiness, reducing long-term state costs.



DSS has made strides in the Purchase of Care Program, including aligning provider rates with the 50th percentile of the 2024 Market Rate Survey, eliminating co-pays for families below 150% of the federal poverty level (FPL), expanding eligibility from 185% to 200% FPL, and compensating providers for up to 10 absent days per month, instead of five.

The Summer Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT) Program was launched in FY 2024 to provide additional food benefits to children during school breaks. This year 79,835 children participated, with a total of \$9.6 million in food benefits distributed.

In Fiscal Year 2025, the Division of State Service Centers and the Division of Social Services merged to form a single, more efficient division, to better position our workforce to provide integrated and coordinated services to individuals and families. Previously operating in the same buildings and serving the same population, this merger eliminated redundancies, enhanced staff training and improved the customer experience. Emergency services remain accessible, reinforcing the “No Wrong Door” policy through seamless access at 15 State Service Centers and four standalone DSS locations.

We are proud to share that in FY 2024, 615,900 client visits were recorded at our Centers, 2,430 individuals and families were housed through our emergency and transitional shelter partners, 6,861 households received emergency assistance such as rent, mortgage or utilities, 113,665 visits were recorded by statewide food pantries funded through the Community Food and Nutrition Program, and our volunteers contributed 297,699 hours of equating to \$9.3 million dollars of service.

FY 2026 Governor's Recommended Budget (\$ in Thousands)

	GF	ASF	NSF	Total
FTEs	301.1	0.00	206.6	507.7
Dollars (\$)	\$144,541.2	\$2,577.8	\$110,411.9	\$257,530.9



Budget Definitions:

GF – General Funds

ASF – Appropriated Special Funds

NSF – Non-Appropriated Special Funds

FTEs – Full Time Equivalent Positions

Our Division's **FY 2026 GRB** includes:

\$144,541.2 [One hundred forty-four million, five hundred forty-one thousand, two hundred dollars] in **General Funds (GF)**;

\$2,577.8 [Two million, five hundred seventy-seven thousand, eight hundred dollars] in **Appropriated Special Fund (ASF)** spending authority; and

\$110,411.9 [One hundred ten million, four hundred eleven thousand, nine hundred dollars] in **Non-Appropriated Special Funds (NSF)**;

For a total of:

\$257,530.9 [Two hundred fifty-seven million, five hundred thirty thousand, nine hundred dollars].

FY 2026 Governor's Recommended Budget

- \$ 1,485.0 – Smart Food Program



Your fingertip guide to help you shop smart, save more and eat well!

Learn more about...



The GRB includes a request for \$1,485.0 [One Million, Four Hundred Eighty-Five Thousand] to support the launch and maintenance of the Smart food program.

DHSS is working with r4 Technologies Inc. to implement the Smart Surplus Nutrition Assistance Program for Delaware. This program will benefit approximately 61,500 Delaware households by making surplus nutritious foods available at a lower cost to SNAP recipients.

SNAP recipients will be able to use a mobile app in conjunction with their EBT cards at participating retailers to access coupons for purchasing fruits, vegetables, dairy, and whole grains. The program aims to reduce food waste while improving food and nutrition security in the State. The anticipated date for rollout of the Smart Surplus Program is June 2025.

Looking Ahead

Modernization

New CAPS System to be integrated with ASSIST

Upcoming projects at Northeast & Williams SSCs in FY 2025

Queuing system implementation



DSS is modernizing how we deliver services to Delawareans in need. One key initiative is replacing the Client Assistance Program System (CAPS) which manages emergency assistance programs for housing, utilities, clothing, medications, and more. The new CAPS database will integrate directly with ASSIST, the existing online application system for the DSS entitlement programs. This change will streamline eligibility determination and case management, enhance data sharing, and improve service coordination across programs.

DSS successfully leveraged the state's initial investment in this project to secure additional funding from the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services to expand this important work.

State Service Center modernization efforts will continue in FY 2026. As seen in these photos, the Appoquinimink State Service Center lobby was reconfigured to enhance security and customer experience. This year, similar projects will take place at Northeast and Williams State Service Centers to enhance front desk operations and pilot a new queuing system.

This queuing system will allow us to track visitor data more effectively, reduce wait times, and provide a more seamless customer experience. By streamlining check-in and service navigation, we will be able to allocate resources more efficiently, ensuring timely and effective assistance for those we serve.

THANK YOU



Thank you for allowing us to present today. We are happy to answer any questions you may have.