

## **Ottawa County Job and Family Services 2019 Annual Report**

### **Stephanie M. Kowal, Director**

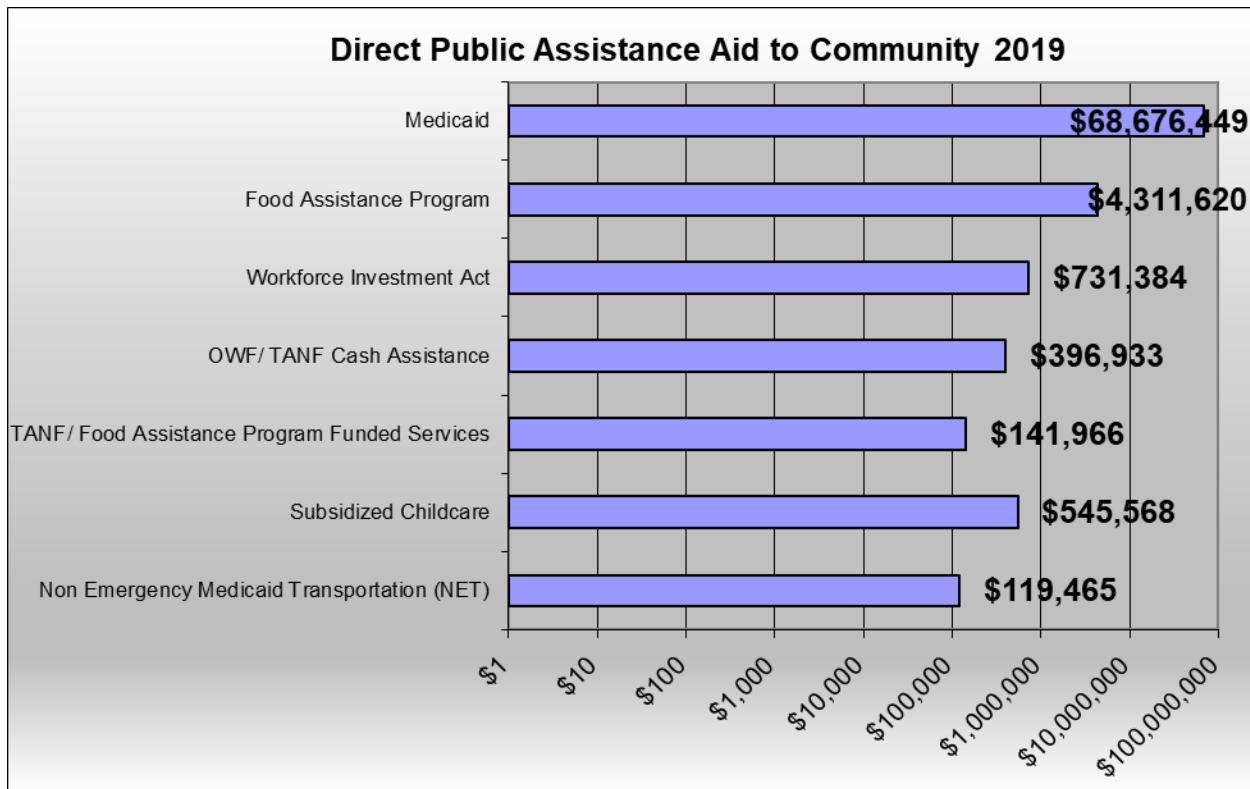
In 2019, the Ottawa County Department of Job and Family Services celebrated 75 years of providing services to the residents and businesses of Ottawa County. The Agency administers Federal, State and County Public Assistance, Child Support, Children and Adult Protective Services and Workforce Development programs. We are in the Ottawa County Resource Centre at 8043 W. SR 163, Suite 200, in Oak Harbor. Over the course of 2019, the Agency partnered with the State of Ohio, to provide a variety of resources our residents can use to apply for benefits, obtain information on the status of individuals' cases, and ensure financial support of their children. Additionally, while the number of individuals utilizing services from the agency has increased, much of our work may be provided by internet, phone or mail, rather than requiring individuals to incur the expense of travel to and from the agency to apply for help.

The Ottawa County Department of Job and Family Services was the conduit for over \$81 million in federal and state aid, and child support payments, that benefited the families and residents in Ottawa County. These funds were spent primarily in local grocers, physician and other medical offices, long term care facilities, businesses and other vendors and providers in and around Ottawa County. The administrative cost to provide these safety net services was 3.9% of the total budget. The 45 staff of this agency are invested in ensuring the safety net services are provided to our community members.

**Workforce Development** provides services to local residents and businesses. This was done through a combination of federal funds including the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act, and Temporary Aid to Needy Families. Through coordination with economic development resources, Workforce Development aided in upgrading the skills of job seekers and the workforce of Ottawa County businesses. Services that benefited job seekers more directly include resume writing, career counseling, job matching, employment testing, training and supportive services for employment. Youth and adults utilized job search services in the OhioMeansJobs Ottawa County center over 2556 times throughout the year. The Workforce Development program matched business investments in upskilling their employees with over \$288,000. Total workforce investments of training and employment related supportive services for layoff aversion clients, job seekers and those just entering the workforce exceeded \$730,000.

**The Income Maintenance (IM) Department** administers the four major public safety net service programs to our residents: Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, Medicaid, Subsidized Childcare, and Cash Assistance. The mission of the IM department is to see that every eligible person in Ottawa County receives the services they are entitled to in a prompt, professional and efficient manner.

Benefits for the *Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program* are used to supplement an eligible individual's or family's budget for food and nutrition, using an Electronic Benefit Transfer card. The total amount issued in 2019 was \$4,311,620 to 2,869 adults and 1,912 children.



*Cash Assistance*, or the Ohio Works First (OWF/TANF) is a monthly cash assistance program for families with minor children and an income below 185% of the Federal Poverty Level. Many times this provides the only financial assistance that grandparents and other relatives have available to help when they take young family members into their home. OWF benefits totaled \$396,933 in 2019 to 222 children and 15 adults.

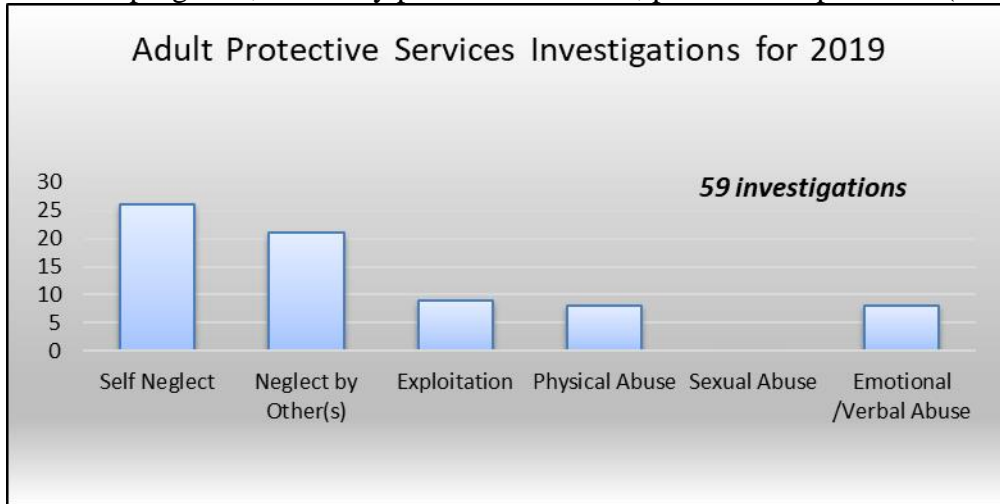
*Subsidized Childcare* provides much needed support to low income families trying to achieve self-sufficiency through employment and/or job training programs. Over the course of the year, 188 children received quality childcare that aided their educational and emotional development. At the same time, \$545,568 was paid in childcare payments to assist their parents in gaining and retaining employment. In addition, Ottawa County has worked with 6 licensed home-based providers to ensure they are providing top quality social and educational resources to our youngest residents through Ohio's Step Up to Quality program.

*Medicaid* has undergone several changes with the implementation of the Affordable Care Act, including expanded health care eligibility low income adults. The total amount of Medicaid benefits issued in 2019 was \$68,676,448.77 to an average of 6,835 Ottawa County residents.

The *Benefit Recovery and Fraud* program utilizes data matching and fraud reports to identify individuals who have received benefits for which they were not entitled and then set up repayment options. In 2019, the Ottawa County unit recovered \$22,817.

**The Family, Adult and Children Service Unit** provides a variety of services designated to ensure the safety and well being of children and seniors by promoting healthy family

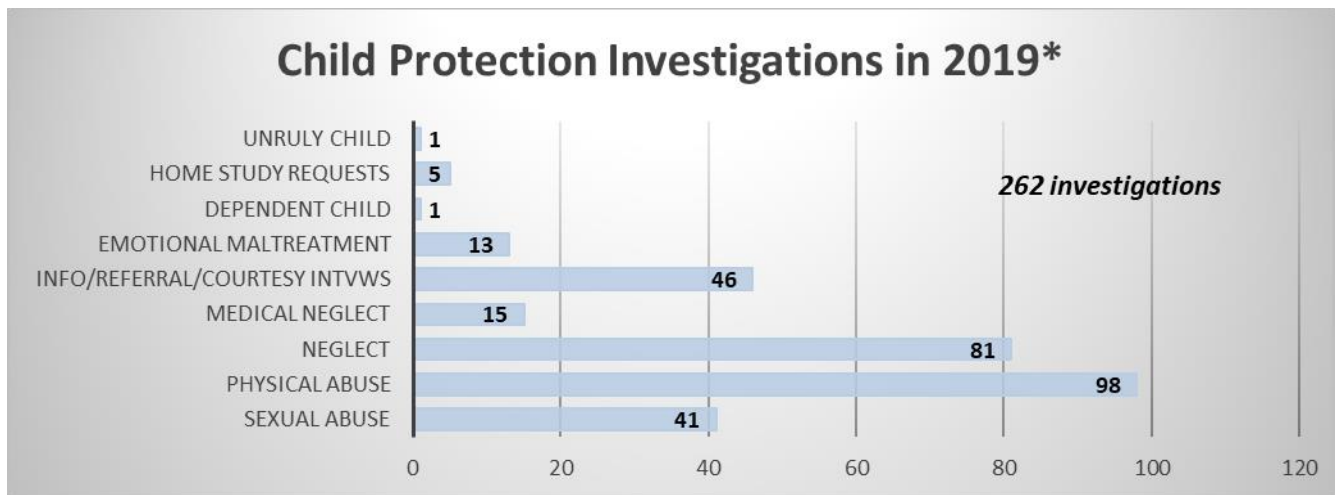
relationships, preserving the integrity of the family unit and promoting self-sufficiency. The unit provides services ranging from abuse/neglect investigations, subsidized childcare, emergency assistance programs, voluntary protective services, protective supervision (ordered by the Court),



substitute (foster) care and adoption to those children who are abused, neglected or dependent. Confidential complaints of child and/or elderly abuse or neglect are received in

person, in writing or by phone. Through a partnership with several organizations in the community, there has been an increase in awareness of elder abuse (age 60 and older) issues, and the agency conducted 59 investigations in 2019.

In 2019, the Family, Adult and Children Service Unit conducted 262 investigations of alleged child abuse or neglect. Also in 2019, Ottawa County joined a number of other Ohio Counties in implementing the Sobriety-Treatment-And-Reducing-Trauma (START) practice of working

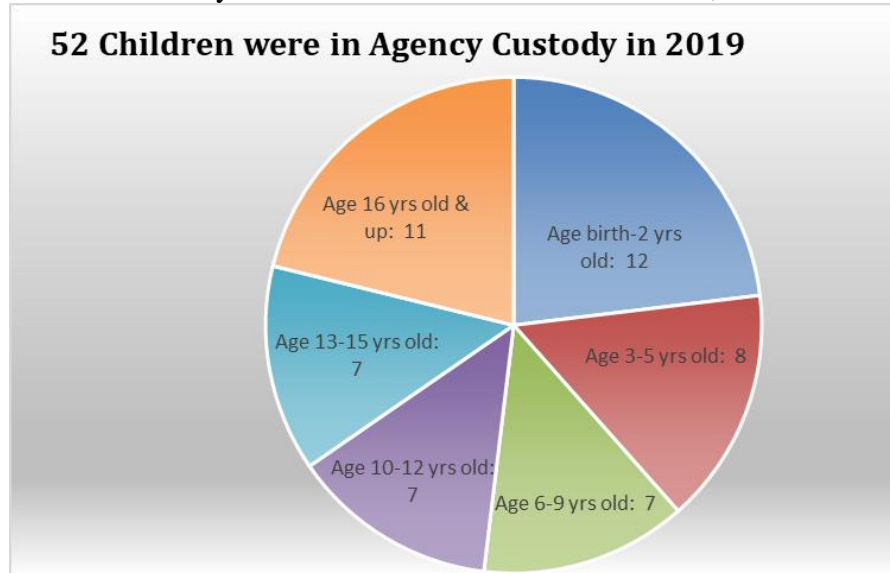


\* Note that reports often included multiple allegations within same report

with families with open abuse or neglect cases where the parent has recognized that their use of drugs or alcohol is a contributor to their family's instability, and they are ready for change. This program pairs families with fast access to mental health and substance use treatment, as well as coordinated case services from a children services worker and family peer mentor. This model of services combines the parents' readiness to embrace a sober lifestyle with the resources

available to help them accomplish that goal and allow children to return to their homes with a higher likelihood of long-term success.

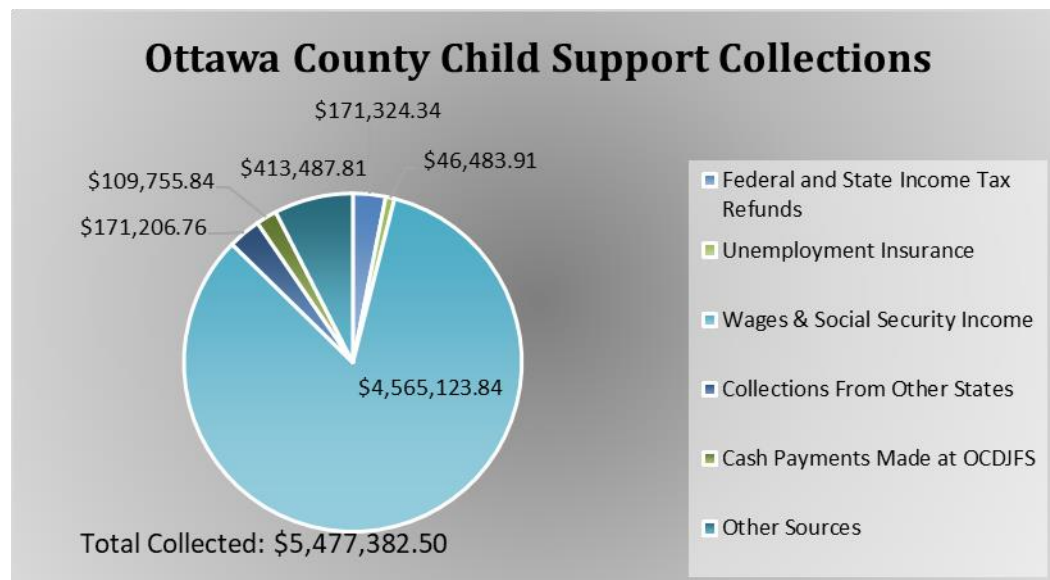
When children are not able to safely remain in their homes, the agency is responsible for taking over their custody and control. Over the course of 2019, there were 52 children in the custody of



the agency, and over \$1.3 million was provided in foster care, adoption assistance, and other family supportive services to a multitude of families in Ottawa County. Foster care is a frightening experience to children, as they often move into the homes of caring but unknown people. However, through new resources from the state of Ohio, Ottawa County was able

to provide additional financial resources to assist relative caregivers who took custody or placement of children in the agency's foster care. Approximately one-half of the children in the agency's custody in 2019 were safely placed with caring relatives or family friends while the agency worked with their parents to prepare them to safely care for their children in the future.

**The Child Support Enforcement Agency (CSEA)** provides numerous services including the establishment of paternity and child support orders, medical insurance or cash equivalent orders, location services, enforcement and collection of child and spousal support orders, and adjustment and review of existing child support orders. Financial support of a common child is one of the



surest ways to ensure a family is self-sufficient. The CSEA provides services for individuals who have a child support case that was established in Ottawa County. It does so by

working with businesses and other agencies in Ohio and around the world, in order to collect and distribute financial support for children. In 2019, the Ottawa County CSEA was responsible for an average of 2,017 active cases per month and collected \$5,477,382.50 in child support payments for the year. Ottawa County was also recognized as the Highest Performing Medium-Small County, as it collected over 80% of current child support owed in 2019. For a third grant cycle, the Agency has secured a grant from the Federal Office of Child Support, to assist in the operation of Joyful Connections, a supervised visitation and exchange center, which allows children to maintain a healthy relationship with both parents, in a neutral and safe environment. Additionally, federal dollars were brought into Ottawa County through partnerships between the Child Support division, Ottawa County Juvenile Court and the Ottawa County Sheriff's Office.

For more details on programs offered through the Ottawa County Department of Job and Family Services, check us out at [www.ottawacountyjfs.org](http://www.ottawacountyjfs.org), and [www.ohiomeansjobs-ottawacounty.com](http://www.ohiomeansjobs-ottawacounty.com).