

## **Ottawa County Job and Family Services 2020 Annual Report**

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

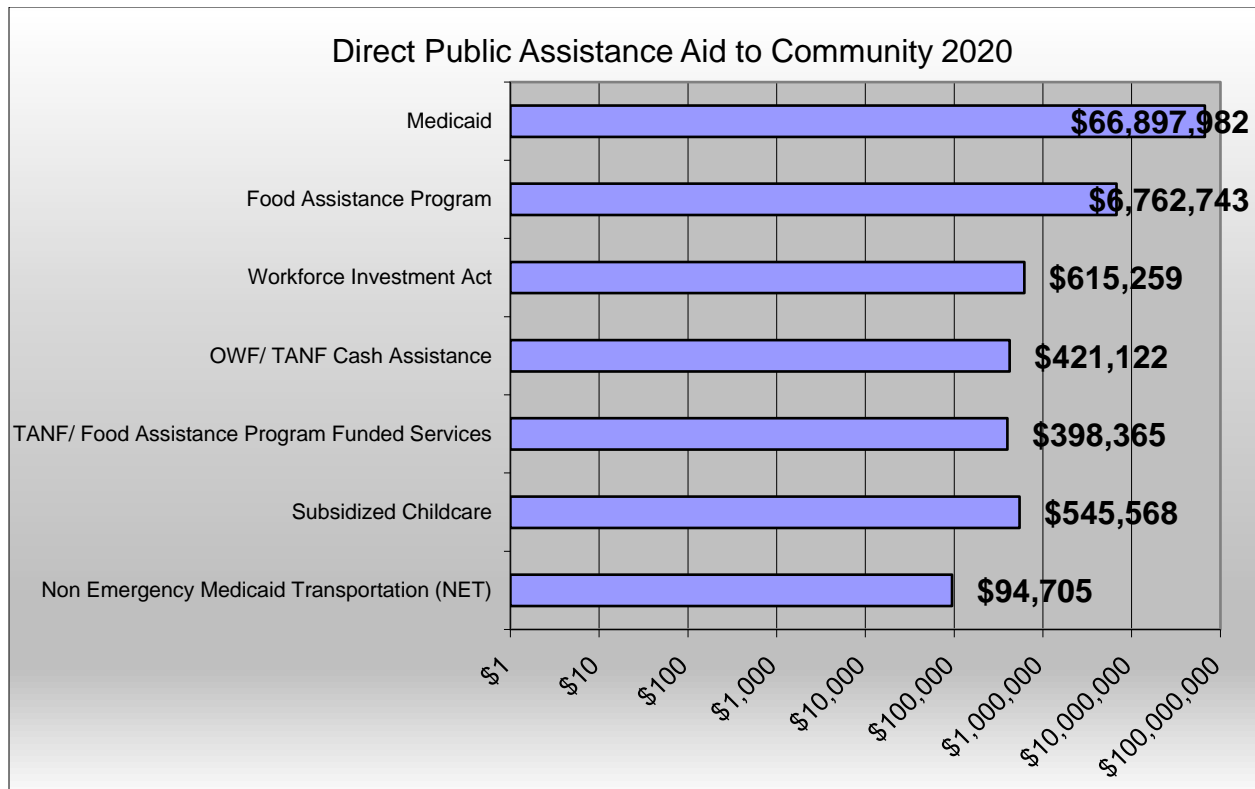
The Ottawa County Department of Job and Family Services administers Federal, State and County Public Assistance, Child Support, Children and Adult Protective Services and Workforce Development programs to residents, employees and businesses in the county. We are in the Ottawa County Resource Centre at 8043 W. SR 163, Suite 200, in Oak Harbor. Over the course of 2020, 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. This was particularly helpful to ensure services and benefits were available during the COVID19 pandemic. Additionally, many of the program eligibility and statistics for 2020 were unique due to federal waivers, a larger than normal amount of people unable to work, and other challenges from the pandemic.

The Ottawa County Department of Job and Family Services was the conduit for over \$83 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 3.8% of the total budget. The 46 staff of this agency are invested in ensuring the safety net services are provided to our community members.

**Workforce Development** provides services to 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 2000 times throughout the year. This was done through a combination of in person and virtual appointments. Total workforce investments of training and employment related supportive services for layoff aversion clients, job seekers and those just entering the workforce exceeded \$615,000.

**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 2020 was \$6,762,743 to 2,974 adults and 1,964 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. Often, 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 \$421,122 in 2020 to 226 children and 26 adults.

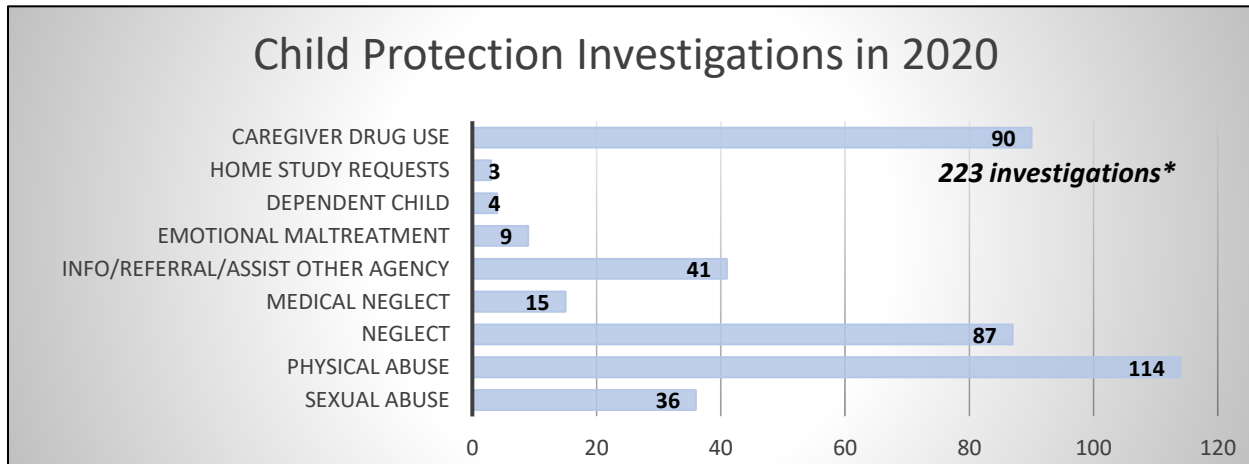
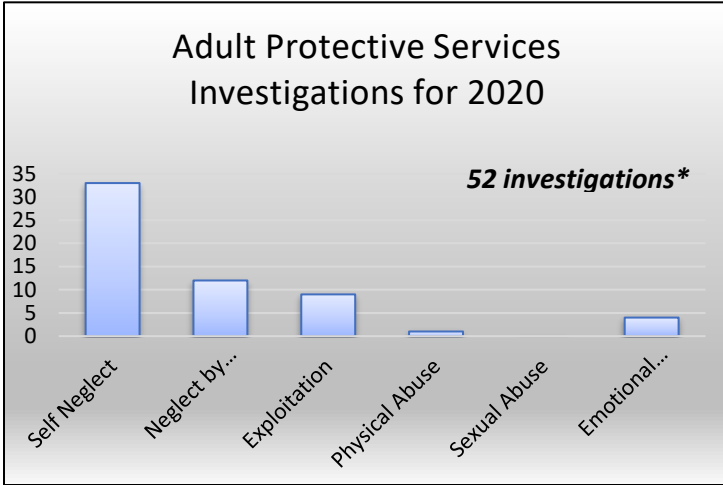
*Medicaid* has undergone several changes with the implementation of the Affordable Care Act, including expanded health care eligibility low income adults. Over a twelve month period (July 2019 to June 2020), the total amount of Medicaid benefits issued was \$66,897,982.46 to an average of 6,792 Ottawa 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 2020, the Ottawa County unit recovered \$12,082.

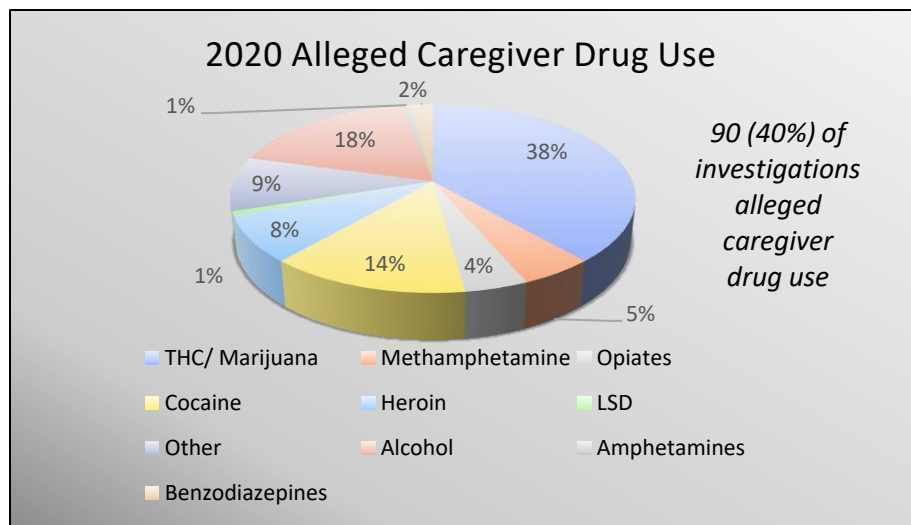
**The Family, Adult and Children Service Unit** provides a variety of services designated to ensure the safety and wellbeing of children and seniors by promoting healthy family

relationships, preserving the integrity of the family unit and promoting self-sufficiency. The unit

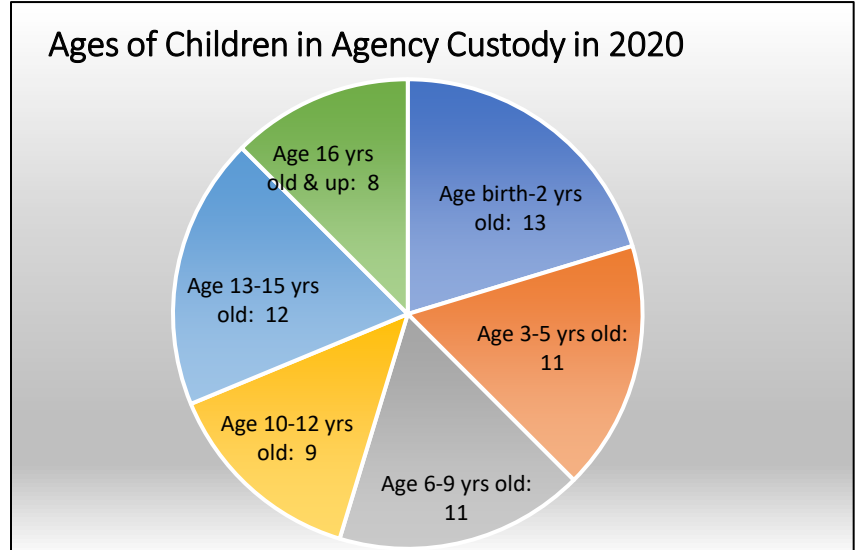
provides services ranging from abuse/neglect investigations, subsidized childcare, emergency assistance programs, voluntary protective services, protective supervision (ordered by the Court), substitute (foster) care and adoption to those children who are abused, neglected or dependent. Confidential complaints of child and/or elderly abuse or neglect are received in person, in writing or by phone. **\* Note that reports often included multiple allegations within same report**



In 2020, the agency investigated 52 reports of elder abuse and 223 reports of child abuse or neglect. One of the factors that contributes to risk for vulnerable populations like children and the elderly, is inappropriate use of drugs and/or alcohol. Ninety (90) of the child protection investigations opened included allegations of drug or alcohol use by the caregivers.



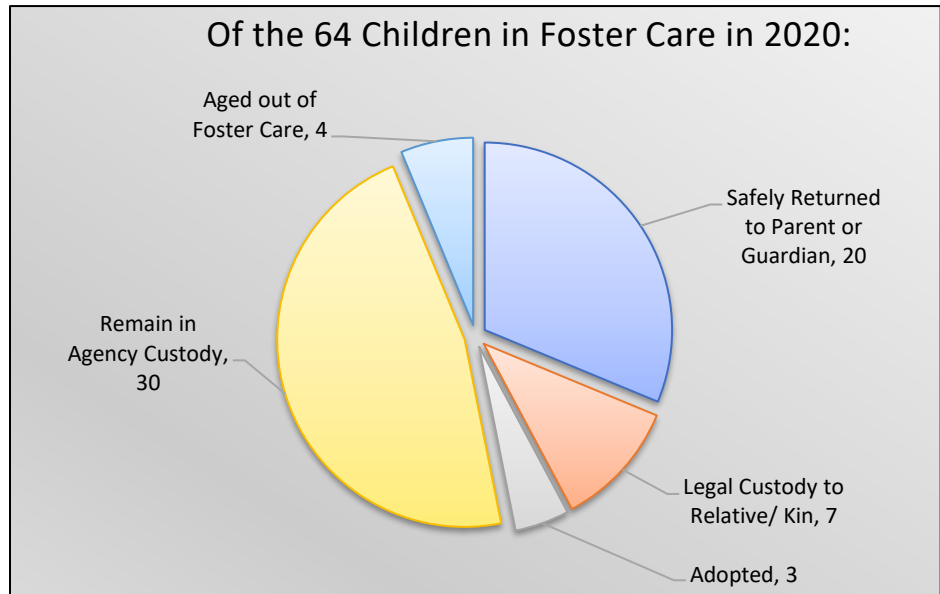
When children are not able to safely remain in their homes, the agency is responsible for taking over their custody and control. Over the course of 2020, there were 64 children in the custody of the agency, and over \$1.6 million was provided in foster care, adoption assistance, and other family supportive 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 2020 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. Additionally, of the 64 children in agency custody, just under half were able to safely return to family, relatives or were adopted into a forever home.

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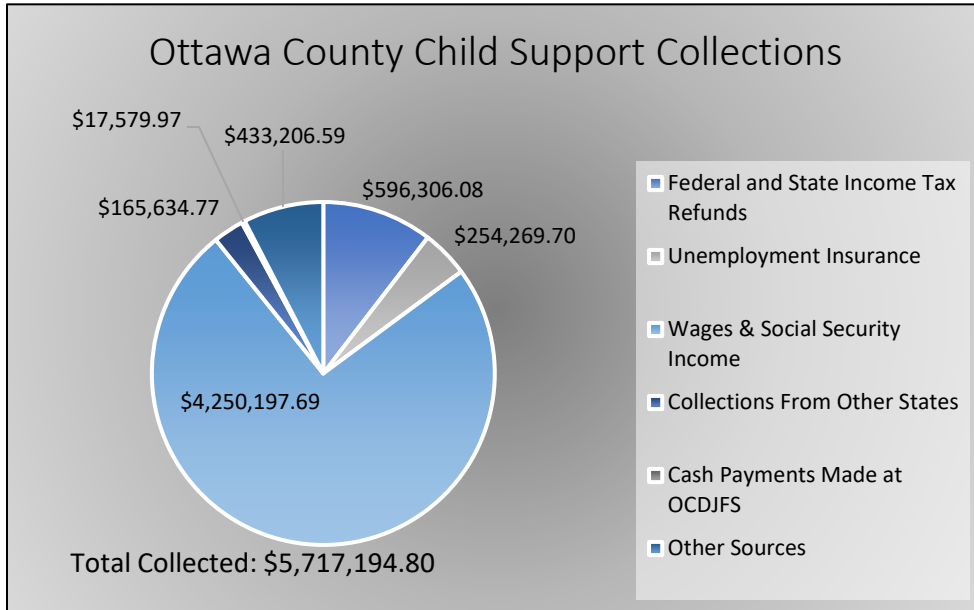


**The Child Support Enforcement Agency (CSEA)** provides numerous services including the establishment of paternity and child support orders, medical insurance or cash equivalent orders, location services, enforcement and collection of child and spousal support orders, and adjustment and review of existing 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 2020, the Ottawa County CSEA was responsible for an average of 2,000 active cases per month and collected \$5,717,194.80 in child support payments for the year. Ottawa County was also recognized as the Highest Performing Small

County, as it collected over 80% of current child support owed in 2020. 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).