



Customer Service **ANNUAL** **REPORT** FY 2021



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FY21 Highlights

- As the safety net for Maryland Citizens, The Maryland Department of Human Services (DHS) continued to serve its Maryland residents with no interruptions during the Pandemic all throughout FY21, expanding as needed to accommodate the increased needs of our citizens.
- The Agency rapidly coordinated with the Maryland State Department of Education to provide Pandemic Electronic Benefit Transfer (P-EBT) funds under the Families First Coronavirus Response Act. In December 2020 the P-EBT funding was expanded to include Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) children, under the age of 6. With this emergency funding, DHS was able to provide good nutrition and stability for children across the state. We provided P-EBT benefits to 550,000 children on average per month, with a total of \$690 million in P-EBT benefits distributed since the program began.
- Child Support Payment Incentive Program (CSPIP): The Child Support Administration (CSA) was highlighted for providing noncustodial parents with a Maryland court order an opportunity to participate in the CSPIP in order to reduce their State owed child support arrears by as much as 50%.
- With the Challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic putting extra stress on our elderly, home care clients and homeless customers, DHS case workers and staff rose to the occasion. Our Local DSS offices have reported many incidents of DHS staff going above and beyond the call of duty; visiting vulnerable adults, helping guide the homeless, even helping families make funeral arrangements.
- DHS recognized two agency divisions and 61 agency professionals from its central and 24 local departments of Social Services across the state with Customer Service Excellence Awards. Recipients were formally honored in a virtual event held during National Customer Service Week in October of 2020.



Recognition Given to Employees

In FY2021, DHS experienced an amplified need for constituent assistance compounded by the unimaginable effects of a global pandemic. The environment of a crisis of this magnitude added unprecedented demand for assurance and guidance which challenged DHS to serve at a level far beyond the provisions of the agency's programs. DHS dug deep to tenaciously respond, meet the demand with persistence, timeliness, dedication and direction, and enhance the agency's repertoire of services for a clear pathway to brighter days ahead.

DHS staff succeeded by urgently pivoting to remotely provide pre-pandemic service levels while facing the same crisis in their personal lives. They weathered an arduous journey of daily updates, pandemic effects and statuses to communicate at a moment's notice; yet DHS persevered with strength, utilizing every avenue to assist through information, relationships and partnerships with sister agencies to better advise direct and streamline opportunities for constituent assistance.

DHS honored staff for their skillful success in demonstrating customer service excellence during service delivery. **Exceptional honorees included two divisional offices and sixty-one individuals across the state.** These honorees were recognized in a virtual event during National Customer Service Week in October 2020. Those distinguished continuously exemplify the customer service standard promised by the Hogan-Rutherford administration to be friendly and courteous, timely and responsive, accurate and consistent, accessible and convenient, and truthful and transparent.

Nominees performed duties with competence, integrity, and compassion, especially during the challenges in unimaginable circumstances.



[DHS Annual Customer Service Excellence Awards Event Webpage](#)

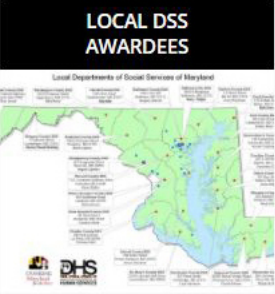
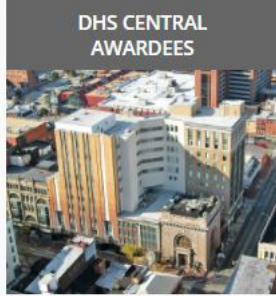
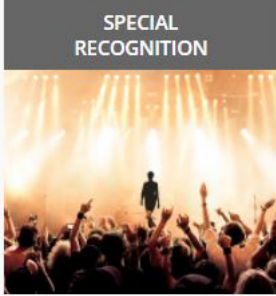
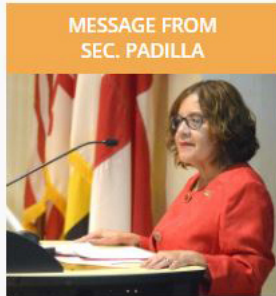
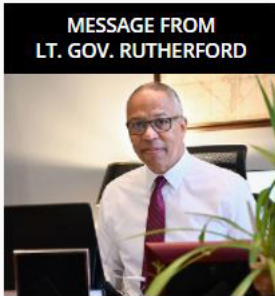
2020

21st Annual Customer Service Excellence Awards



The Customer Service Excellence Award was established over twenty years ago to honor agency employees who serve customers in an exemplary manner. Honorees personify the Maryland Department of Human Services' Vision, Mission, and Guiding Principles. This year's recipients are committed to uphold Governor Hogan's Customer Service Promise and adhere to the Department's G.O.L.D. Standard Customer Service tenets. Their choice to prioritize the practice of customer service excellence while working diligently to assist Maryland's most vulnerable citizens makes them worthy of this recognition.

Congratulations to the 2020 Customer Service Excellence Awardees!





A Selection of FY2021 Customer Service Excellence Award Winners Include:

Office of Technology for Human Services:

The Office of Technology for Human Services (OTHS) met the unexpected challenge in 2020 to execute a mandated work from home order of all staff, in addition to their regular robust responsibilities. With little notice, DHS's OTHS team responded staunchly and was able to ensure all DHS staff had remote capability and could continue the services they provided constituents. Under the leadership of Kenyatta Powers, OTHS supports the agency's hardware, software, Data Center, IT and security services for all locations.

Despite the challenges the pandemic added, OTHS's demands were effectively managed while improving the reliability, performance, and diversity of DHS's infrastructure. The division's consistent support and colossal efforts, regardless of staff location, was commended. The Department of Human Services was honored to recognize the Office of Technology with the 2020 Secretary's Customer Service Excellence Award.

The Division of Administrative Operations

The Division of Administrative Operations (DAO), led by Chief Rainier Harvey, provides core administrative services to the Department's statewide locations. DAO administers Emergency Operations, Quality Assurance, Compliance, Risk Management, Property Management, Asset Management, the Central Distribution Center, Document Center, Fleet, Forms Management / Warehouse, DHS' Mail Room and Stockroom, the Baltimore Field Office of Closed Records, Facility Management, and General Services.

In March 2020, COVID-19 was declared a severe health threat to Maryland residents and state employees. Governor Hogan invoked mandatory tele-work for all state agencies for all non-essential state employees and the Division of Administrative Operations responded without hesitation to the emergency. The team quickly secured personal protective equipment to ensure employee safety while executing a plan to enhance the cleaning protocol of all facilities.

With unprecedented demands on food distribution, the DAO team worked tirelessly to provide nutrition to thousands of food insecure Marylanders. DAO's continued exceptional customer service excellence was commended, honored and recognized with the Secretary's 2020 Customer Service Excellence Award.

Victor Brundage - Operations Specialist

Victor Brundage actively shares policy and training knowledge with all Child Support Administration staff. He has trained the local Departments of Social Services and Office of Child Support directors to use the CSA's Performance Dashboard, as DHS transitions to the MD THINK platform.



Victor takes great pride in being the face of training for CSA's new Child Support Management System (CSMS) with our "**Minute with Victor**" series which details aspects of our new system to be implemented in 2021. Victor is an advocate for local child support offices, offering exemplary customer service while also providing staff with needed information and tools to serve Maryland's families. He is first in line to help when needed. The Child Support Administration was pleased to honor Victor for his Customer Service Excellence!

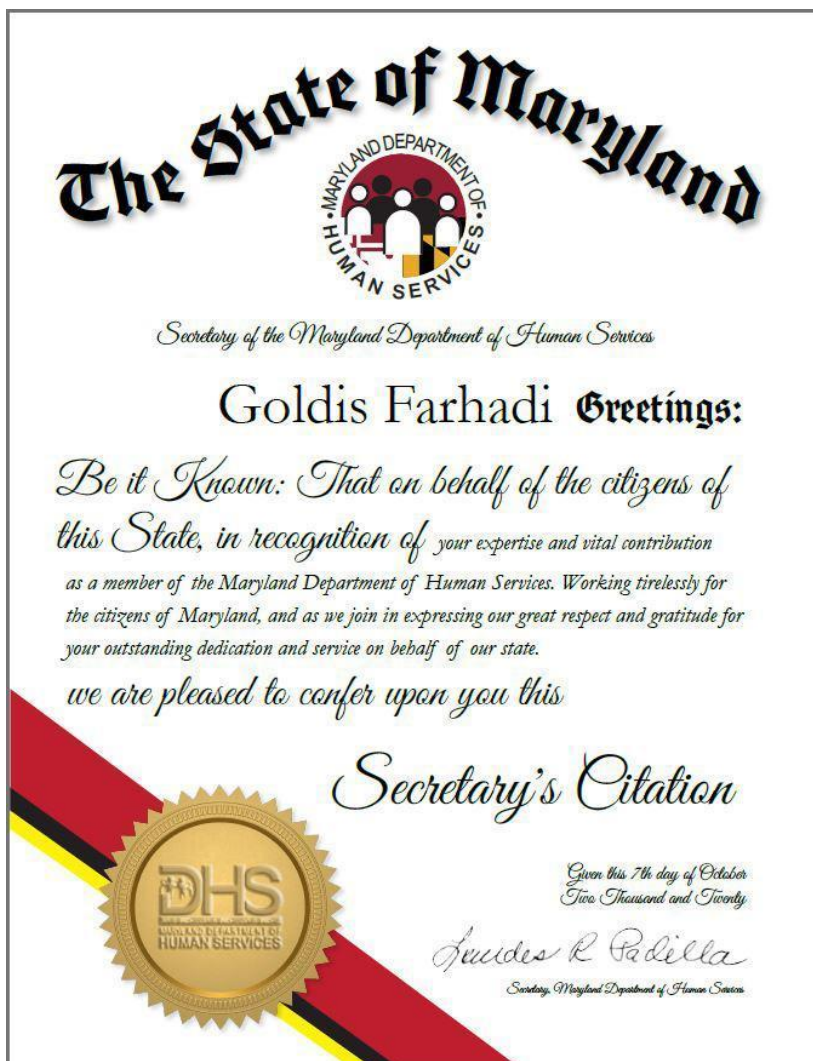
Nominated by: **Kevin P. Guistwite**

Goldis Farhadi - Child Support Specialist II

Goldis Farhadi is a Montgomery County Child support specialist who works diligently to complete her work with accuracy and in a timely manner. Her customer service skills are constantly noted among her peers. There is no task too small or too large for Goldis. If she is asked to help, her answer is always yes. She is dependable, courteous, kind and always gives one hundred percent to her customers and her peers.

Goldis was very deserving of the Customer Service Excellence award.

Nominated by: **Andrea Robinson**



All Customer Service Excellence Award winners received the Secretary's Citation, shown right. During the work from home mandate, members of DHS staff personally and safely distributed the certificates to each winner across the state.

Rosalind Hill, Program Manager for ESAF/Community Outreach

Rosalind Hill is a valued member of Anne Arundel County Department of Social Services and does whatever is needed for customers. Her unit has responded to an increase in applications and need for help due to COVID-19. She cares about customers, treats them with respect and leads her team to do the same by following her excellent example. Her rapid assessment and response provides customers with the available resources they need. She also provides this high-level of service to other units and takes time to explain access to resources. Her peers say that “she never says no to anyone seeking help”. Rosalind deserves the Department of Human Services Customer Excellence Award because she provides the best service and performs beyond the expected effort.

Nominated by: **Karen Taylor and Rachael Maconachy**



A Selection of Staff Recognized by Local Leadership Include:

With the implementation of Business Closures and Social Distancing our DHS constituents experienced a plethora of difficulties in FY 2020. Some local DHS staff went above and beyond the call of duty to help in specialized areas. Several Local staff were highlighted for their exceptional customer service efforts by their local leadership to include:

Wendy S. Tonic - Calvert County

Calvert County Department of Social Services would like to recognize Wendy Tonic, a Community Coordinator for the Calvert County DSS Employment Team, for working with a former Paid Internship customer through the Temporary Cash Assistance Employment Program, who began her Work Experience (WEX) assignment as part of her TCA Independence Plan, with Learning Ladders, Inc. Her successful performance during the WEX period led her to the Paid Internship Program with the same employer. During this time Wendy Tonic arranged for her customer to receive transportation assistance. She provided the necessary resources anytime an issue occurred – bus passes were used frequently. Wendy's diligence contributed to the client being

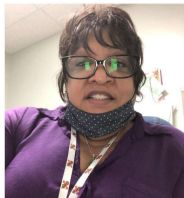
awarded a paid position through the business and received rave reviews from her employer. Mrs. Tonic was always there to provide guidance with any difficult times and was able to reward her with customer incentives that helped the customer purchase the required work-related items. To increase her household's income, she also expressed interest in a security guard position with SCI Corporation. As of April 2021, she is now a full-time employee of the SCI Corporation and works at the Calvert County District Court building. Wendy Tonic's dedication is to be commended for this client's success story.

Nominated by: **Amye Scrivener**

Marti Lively - Kent County

Marti Lively is an adult services case worker in the Services Division and has been with the Department since 1998. Marti worked exceptionally hard through the pandemic, visiting vulnerable adults and adult guardians as often as she could. Marti was faced with the loss of an adult guardian that she had spent many years advocating for and ensuring he had all of the services he deserved. In addition, Marti ensured that he had the funeral services that he requested. At the funeral, Marti was recognized by friends and long distance relatives as a “guardian angel” for everything she did for their loved one. They acknowledged all of the hard work she did for him and how much she cared for him. Marti is truly an asset to Kent County Department of Social Services as well as the community.

Nominated by: **Shelly Neal-Edwards**





Leadership Analysis of FY21 and Summary of FY22 Approach

The Department of Human Service's focus for FY2021 was to ensure accessibility and delivery of services despite pandemic challenges. The mission remained the same, to provide access to assistance programs while perpetuating a high level of customer service to constituents

This involved a need to provide current and real time program data to the Call Center. Additionally, the agency maintained current COVID-19 related materials on the DHS website and rolled out a child protection campaign named "Be Aware of the Signs". School Closures prompted emergency funding for meals for children which the agency provided as 'P-EBT' funds, while still ensuring delivery of our EBT funds, SNAP and cash assistance to existing and new customers.

The department refocused the needs of constituents statewide by providing accelerated deployment of virtual hardware and software to DHS professionals to meet the increased demand for DHS services. The Office of Technology for Human Services (OTHS) continued to ensure staff had secure and seamless access to departmental systems and programs as needed for remote and hybrid work schedules.

The department's Fiscal Year 2021 successes with the MD THINK (Maryland Total Human-services Integrated Network) initiative represent important strides in engagement of constituents online and the provision of more accessible service.


CJAMS was successfully launched statewide and new eligibility platforms continue to be developed. Working to align IT Modernization efforts with a customer-focused culture, DHS continues to add to the many programs and services available to

constituents through the department's consumer portals. Plans for the coming year to implement enhancements to the statewide contact center have continued as well.

DHS' commitment to providing the highest level of customer service has been and remains steadfast. Every piece of feedback received from customers is evaluated, helping us create action plans that enable the department to exceed expectations. We invite you to read more about the department's FY 21 customer experience successes, from the system and business process enhancements to Goal Oriented Leadership Driven (G.O.L.D) standard customer service 'virtual' training and employee recognition programs. Indeed, you will find evidence that customer service is part of DHS' DNA. In every interaction, internal or external, DHS strives to provide timely, accurate, and pleasant service.



Department of Human Services Customer Service Annual Report FY2021



Detailed FY21 Results and FY22 Plans

Properly named the 'Department of Human Services', our agency employs 5400 staff members focused on internal and external customer service for the state of Maryland. 2600 of these employees work in case carrying positions including, Child Support Specialists, Family Investment Specialists, Social workers, Caseworkers and Family Support Workers. The following sections tell the story of our Customer Service Initiatives.

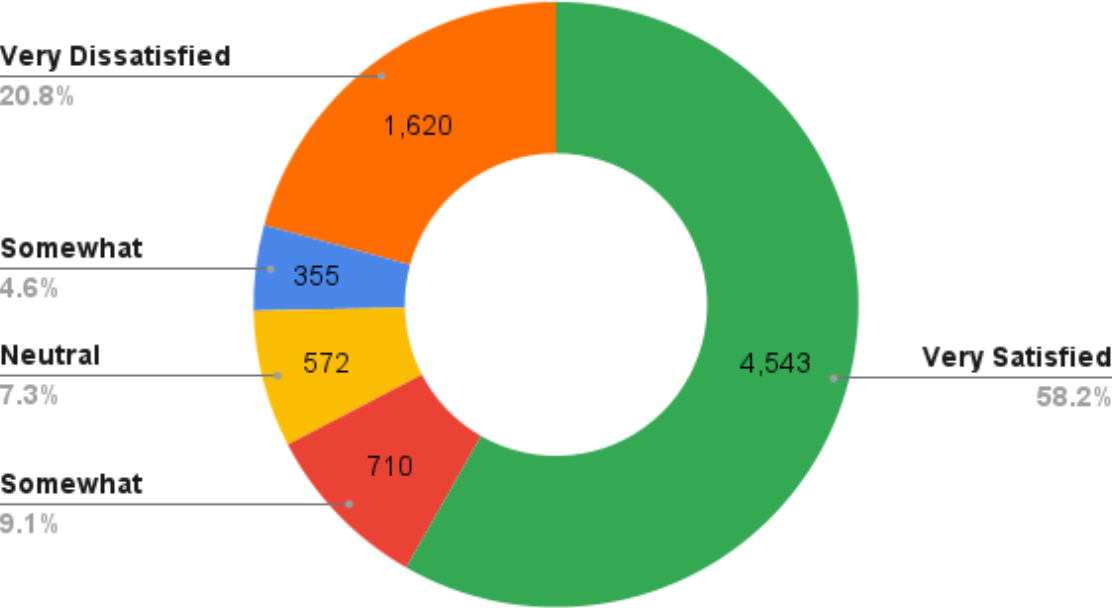


Customer Service Survey Results

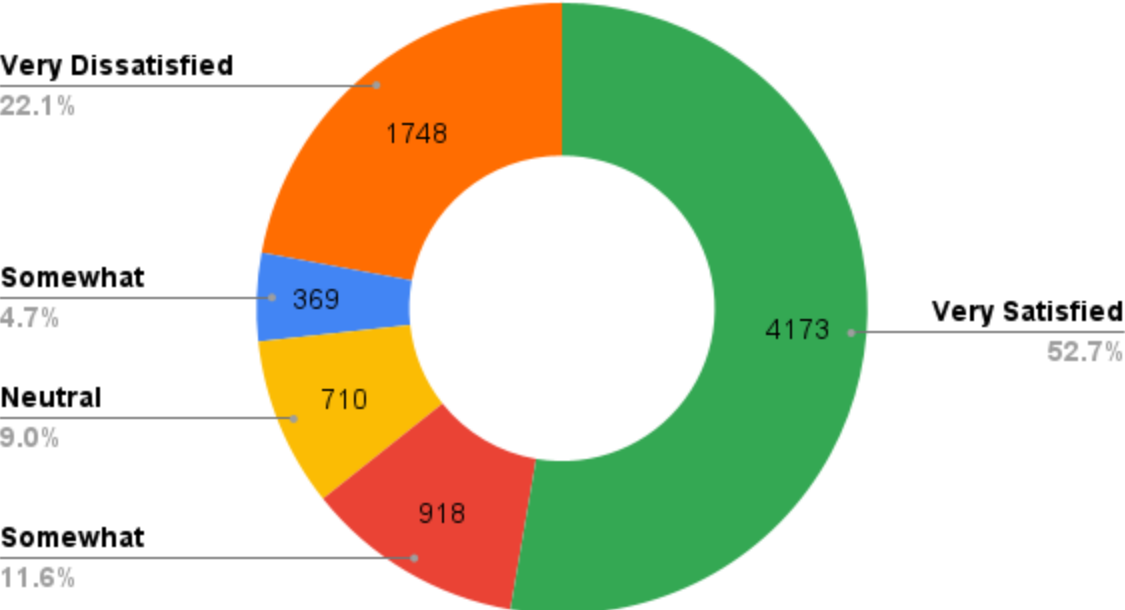
Agency customer survey results are reviewed on a weekly basis. Surveys that include customer comments or complaints are referred to the Constituent Services Office Ombuds team. The Ombuds team is specialized and dedicated to resolving customer complaints.

Satisfaction and effort scores are derived from both DHS email and website surveys. Primary survey results for FY 21 indicate DHS customers had a favorable experience with an overall average satisfaction rate of 66% based on responses from approximately 7800 clients.

Question 1: Overall, how satisfied are you with the customer service provided?



Question 2: The state agency made it easy for me to handle my issue



Note: The graphs above only represent a small percentage of the customers that the agency serves per year.

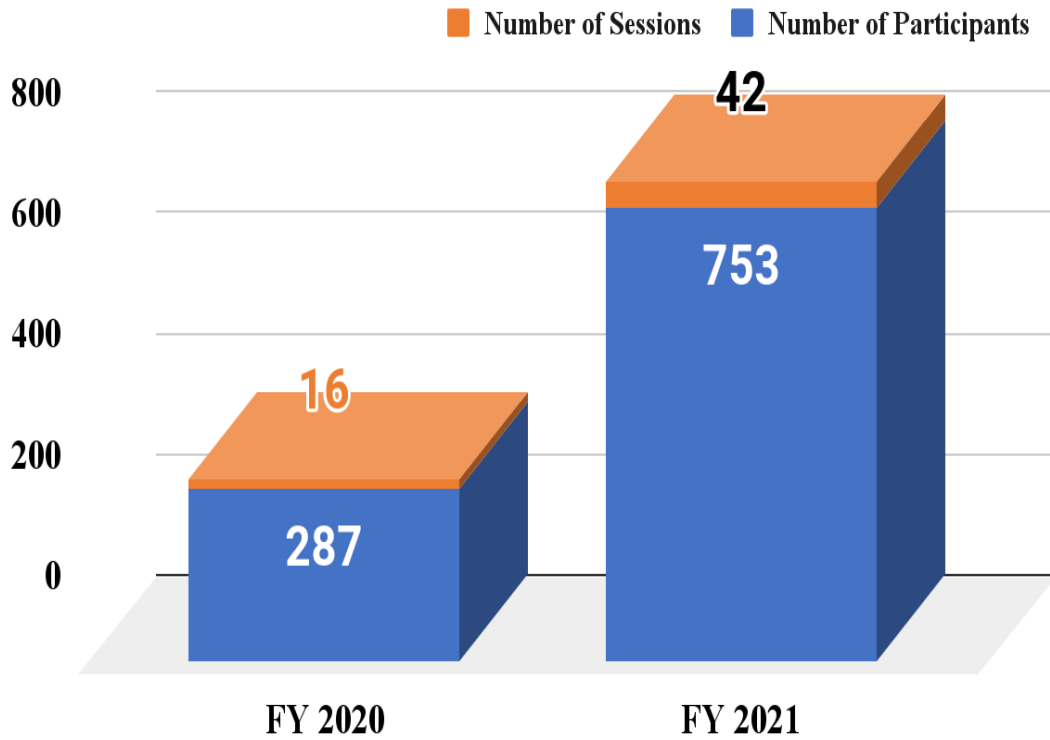
Status of Customer Service Training



DHS introduced G.O.L.D. Standard Service Training in FY 2017 in order to meet Governor Hogan's Customer Service Promise and the expectations that all the staff demonstrate superior customer service. Participants were given the opportunity to engage in a 3-hour course with various concepts in an interactive session that laid the foundation for effective customer service at DHS. In FY 2021, DHS Learning continued offering the G.O.L.D. Standard training to all new staff within 90 days of being hired.

The learning team successfully pivoted due to COVID-19 events and conducted 42 instructor-led virtual training sessions, including five with Closed Captions. These sessions had a total of 753 participants, increasing the number of sessions and participants by 62% over the past fiscal year. Through these sessions, our staff have been able to focus on providing effective customer service in virtual and in-person situations. The agency plans to continue this training and to implement updates as needed.

G.O.L.D. Standard Training FY21 Increase



FY 2020 to FY 2021 Comparison



Customer Inquiry Response Times and Overall Time-to-Resolution

Timeliness of Responding to Customer Inquiries

Even in this extremely virtual environment, the department remains committed to improving overall customer inquiry response times by DHS local offices. The agency experienced a spiked increase in its response times during the onset of COVID restrictions due to an increased call volume, but is happy to report that our response times are back down to our average levels. Most customer inquiries can be resolved in real time by accessing the department's online consumer portals, the self-service selections on the department's IVR system, or by speaking with a live agent at the department's Statewide Customer Service Center (1-800-332-6347). In the last half of FY 21, resolution times for customer inquiry work orders forwarded to local jurisdictions for further assistance dropped to eight days on average. During the pandemic, when local offices were closed to the public, Marylanders could also receive assistance and guidance through the online portal, Mach forms, on the DHS website and Facebook platform.

Best Practices

The following bullets illustrate DHS' best practices and process improvements in handling customer inquiries.

- Customer Relationship Management (CRM) Database: The agency continues to enhance our CRM database functionality. All customer interactions are documented within the CRM. Employees use the CRM to review customer interactions with the department to provide prompt service.
- Customer Service Training transferred to Virtual Platforms, allowing more efficient and accessible training opportunities for mandated training.

- DHS Continued to use multiple information platforms to ensure our customers had up to date information during the pandemic . These platforms include social media, the DHS website, and printed materials.
- 2Gen Website Creation: A Philosophy that Amplifies the voices of Families while aligning and linking systems and funding streams and reorienting family connection skills:
<https://dhs.maryland.gov/two-generation-family-economic-security-commission/>
- The agency continues to build access to our programs online which will eliminate siloed customer information. Continued development of MDTHINK allows great access to programs and services in all three of our programs, including Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), Child Support Services, Housing Aid, and Food Assistance. MdThink continues to develop its eligibility platform across the state and partners with other agencies to unify records and access to programs.
- Program Staff with the help of Communications continue to produce relevant videos like “Know the Signs”, for child protection efforts.
- The agency continues to respond to all Social Media channeled inquiries, in a timely manner.
- Customer Experience Analysis: The agency continues to review customer feedback via customer surveys. Data is used to make process improvements in delivering services.
- Experience Design: The department continues to invest time and resources into aligning IT Modernization efforts with a customer-focused culture, by including experienced DHS program staff in the design process.
- Kent County staff provided outdoor meetings for resource parents to reconnect during COVID-19, while socially distancing; just one example of how the agency pivoted to provide answers for our clients.
- COVID 19 Web Pages, developed in late FY 2020, continue to be updated with accurate and current information and ‘bannered’ on the DHS website to handle customer inquiries more efficiently.

Maryland Department of Human Services
February 18 · 🌐

Check out our most recently updated FAQ sheet regarding Food, Cash, Medical, Energy, and Emergency Assistance bit.ly/37stsYX. Versión en español bit.ly/3durFqb.



DHS
MARYLAND DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES

DHS Answers Your
COVID-19 benefit questions

COVID-19

Maryland DEPARTMENT OF Human Services

SERVICES | FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE | DHS OVERSIGHT | CONSENT DECREE | LOCAL OFFICES | BUSINESS CENTER

Two-Generation Family Economic Security Commission

Meetings

Commissioners and Staff

Reports

Resources

Contact the Commission

Two-Generation Family Economic Security Commission




MARYLAND'S 2GEN COMMISSION

About the Commission

In 2017, Governor Hogan issued an Executive Order creating a Commission to study the possibility of using the Two-Generation (2Gen) approach to transform how state agencies

Maryland Department of Human Services
April 23 · 🌐



Kent County Department of Social Services
April 23 · 🌐

Kent County Resource Families enjoy a reconnection while socially distancing Wednesday night at Worton Park.

Plans for Improvement

DHS' vision is to be a service organization that continuously applies forward-looking strategies. This vision has been emulated recently with the COVID-19 pandemic. The department was able to apply short notice agile strategies to meet immediate customer service needs, leveraging advanced technology to optimize customer interactions, with a focus on professional development of DHS personnel, to provide a holistic approach to customer satisfaction and service delivery.

DHS will continue to use and adapt these forward-looking strategies in the future. The agency is especially thankful to all our IT staff who continue to work hard to ensure that staff working remotely are able to continue their duties seamlessly with their technological support. The agency also continues to open up different channels for

customers to receive prompt assistance with the online portal, forms on the DHS website and social media.

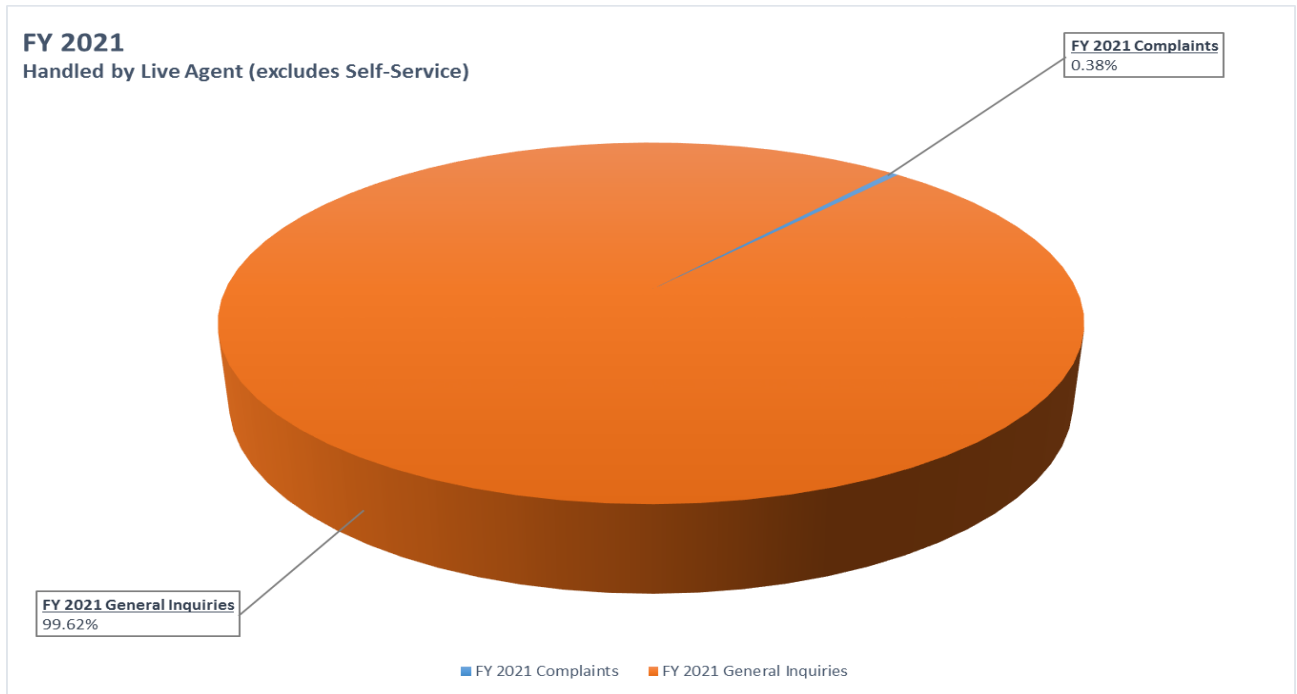


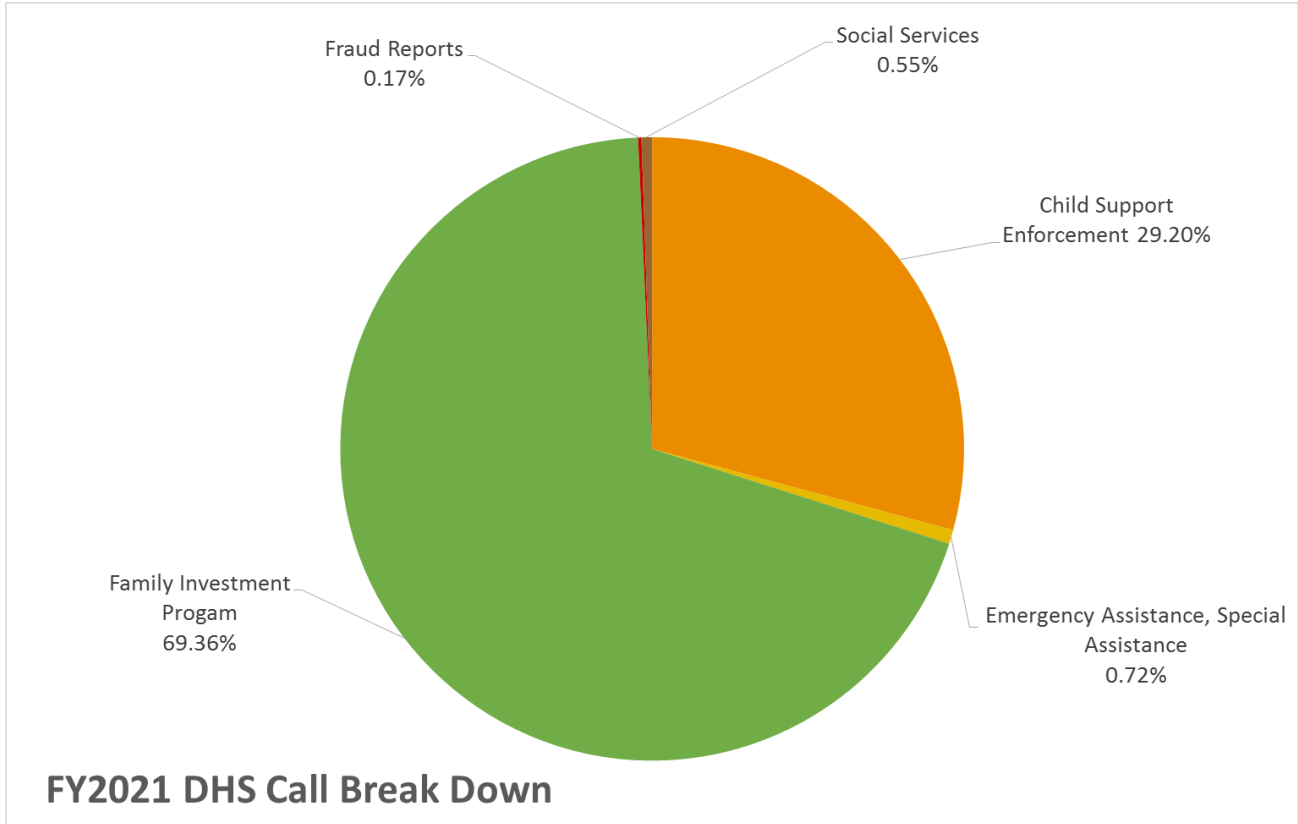
Call Center Data

In FY 21, center staff handled 1,005,583 live customer inquiries. An additional 1,589,236 caller inquiries were resolved via use of self-service prompts within the IVR.

	Calls Resolved via IVR Self-Service	Live Calls Resolved During Initial Contact	Total Inbound Calls Resolved During Initial Contact	Calls Requiring Work Orders	Total Inbound Calls Handled by Live CSRs (excludes outbound calls responding to emails)	% Resolved During initial Contact
Total	1,589,236	614,301	2,203,537	391,282	1,005,583	70%
Monthly Average	128,765	51,192	183,628	32,607	83,799	71%

Call Center Data by Categories

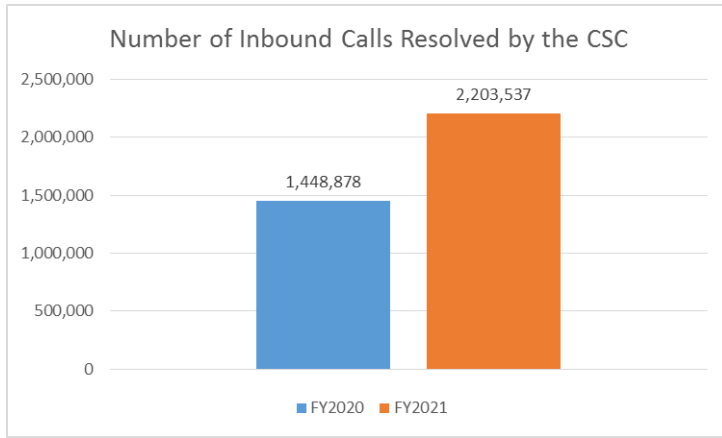




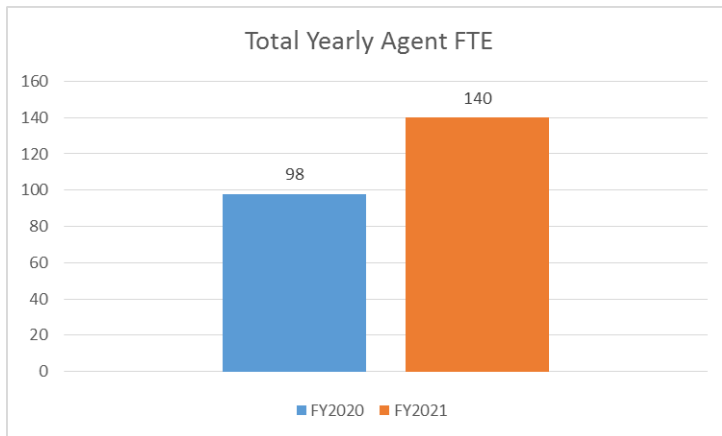
Year Over Year CSC Comparison

Category	FY2020	FY2021	% Increase
Total Inbound Calls Resolved During Initial Contact	1,448,878	2,203,537	52.09%
Yearly Agent FTE (Full Time Equivalent)	98	140	42.86%

Inbound Call Increase



Call Agent Increase



Improving the Customer Experience from Multiple Perspectives

Making Agency Services Available Online

To meet the emergent need of our customers due to the pandemic, the Agency was able to provide new and updated information about the pandemic and available relief online quickly. This was done seamlessly as the MD Think Team continued to develop major upgrades for the DHS program processes on a cloud platform. MD THINK is currently finalizing the Design, Development, and Implementation (DDI) phase. Several exciting milestones are planned for the next two (2) years. The Adult Services and Juvenile Services (CJAMS), and Eligibility and Enrollment (E&E) applications are planned to be in Statewide deployment by the end of FFY 2021. The Child Support Management System (CSMS) is planned for Statewide deployment in FFY 2022.



MARYLAND SERVICES



Family Services

Services to support children and caretakers, including Child Support and information on Foster Care and Adoption services with children.



Health Services & Disability Services

Programs that provide healthcare and assistance for those with disabilities



Jobs & Unemployment

Maryland programs to assist those in unemployment or seeking skills training



Food & Cash Assistance

Financial assistance programs to provide food and cash to those who qualify based on income and other factors



Child Protective Services

Services related to keeping children safe and performing background searches for those intending to work with children



Adult Services

Services to protect and care for elderly and vulnerable adults



Housing & Energy Assistance

Programs that provide energy assistance and cash grants for housing and other emergencies



Vendors & Partners

Organizations that interact with DHS in providing services, including employer New Hire reporting, partner organizations, and providers.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS & Quick Links

- Where Do I Begin?
- Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)
- Apply for Services
- Check Status of Application

Processing Times for Customer Transactions

With all of the departmental benefits available online, customers are able to access services in a streamlined fashion. The agency's online services enabled our constituents to continue accessing standard services during the pandemic. With the development of MD Think in coordination with other agencies, like the Department of

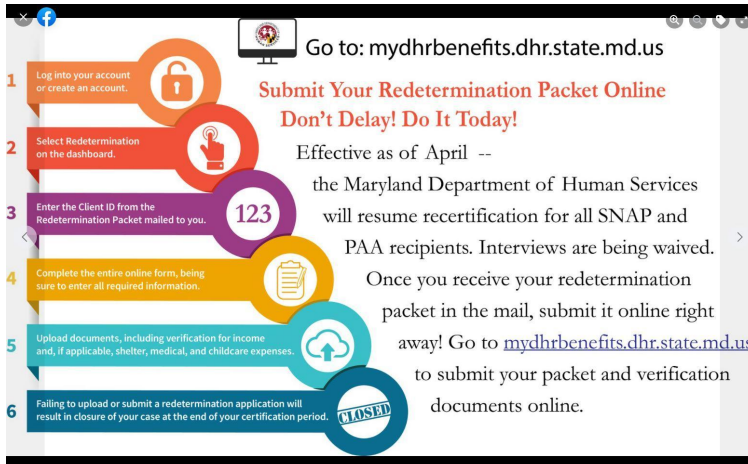
Health, Department of Juvenile Services, and the MD State Department of Education we plan to continue streamlining access to our services for Marylanders.



Social Media Usage to Improve the Customer Experience

During FY 21, DHS continued its efforts to amplify its social media presence and effectiveness as a front door to the agency’s resources and information. To achieve our objective, we used social media to focus on refining our tactics for responsiveness to customers and promoting program/event awareness concerning the agency, its operations, and resources during the COVID-19 pandemic. In FY 21, DHS used platforms Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn to display prompt and instructive customer service for Maryland residents.

At DHS, it is crucial that we exhibit transparency with our customers, maintaining easy access to our services, information, and assistance when necessary. Now more than ever, it is vital for our agency to actively strengthen our inclusive atmosphere on all public-facing platforms to build our relationship with the public in a way that is reflective of our mission to serve.



Data Analysis

The DHS Facebook account has global visibility with followers spreading to 45 countries, 44 cities, and 45 languages. In FY 21, the account had a total of 10,982 followers, accumulating 2,105 followers which reflects a 23.7% increase in comparison to FY 20. On Facebook, DHS frequently fields inquiries from customers, primarily through direct messaging, assisting customers in finding the appropriate solution or resource for their concerns. During the COVID-19 pandemic, these inquiries on social media and overall engagement spiked drastically causing our agency to reevaluate the efficiency of our operations and integrate new procedures to accommodate our constituents. This integration brought forth the inclusion of Constituent Services Office (CSO) personnel. Since October 2020, their additional support has allowed the department to swiftly reply to all direct messages, upholding a 100% response rate and connecting with customers over 1,200 times. As post engagements continued to increase pushing the platform to 10,540-page likes during the time of reporting, DHS continued to improve by interacting on the Facebook page daily.

The DHS Twitter account also has global visibility with active followers expanding across the states of Maryland, Virginia, Pennsylvania, District of Columbia, and more. In FY 21, the account had a total of 5,402 followers, accumulating 950 followers which reflects a 21.3% audience increase in comparison to FY 20. The account maintained a constant engagement

rate totaling 254,000 impressions during the time of reporting. Like Facebook, DHS fields inquiries from customers, primarily through direct messaging, assisting customers in finding the appropriate solution or resource for their concerns. During the time of reporting, the department replied to all direct messages, upholding a 100% response rate and connecting with customers over 70 times.

The DHS LinkedIn account serves as a recruitment tool for the business community. Our audience is essentially stationed within states such as Maryland, New York, Philadelphia, Delaware, the District of Columbia, Massachusetts, and more. On this platform, DHS highlights organizational events, initiatives, and the accomplishments of DHS staff. By spotlighting the great work that we do and the professional development of our staff, we demonstrate that our staff is eager to learn, impressively trained and credentialed, and highly capable of providing remarkable customer service to the people of Maryland. In FY 21, the account had a total of 4,324 followers, accumulating 357 followers which reflects a 9% audience increase in comparison to FY 20. The account's engagement rates total over 23.08%. With over 5,300 page views, DHS continued to improve by interacting on the LinkedIn page frequently.

Forward Thinking

For FY 22, DHS strives to continue delivering excellent customer service online making that initiative a top priority. As mentioned in FY 20, DHS aims to improve our social media presence by offering more content directed to empower, educate, and collaborate with our customers to ultimately help them increase sustainability and access to helpful resources. For this reason, we continue strategizing new approaches to social media and experimenting with the potential inclusion of other social media platforms used by our customers in particular.

DHS is committed to being present and available across the many platforms our customers use, actively engaging with them. Not only do our social media platforms spread awareness about DHS services, but they also serve as the face and personality of our organization. Our goal is to have every customer positively associate DHS with the personality they connect and interact with online. By continuing our social media efforts, DHS will gain an even greater following, brand likability, and reach to Maryland residents.

