

## MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTOR

It is with great pleasure that I present the Queen Anne's County Department of Community Services Annual Report for FY2024.

The report encapsulates dynamic initiatives, from successful events to impactful programs that continue to make a meaningful difference. Success of the programs offered are a testament to the staff and recipients of service.

Join us in celebrating the accomplishments of the past year and embracing the opportunities that lie ahead in our shared journey toward a stronger Queen Anne's County.

Sincerely,

Catherine Riggs Willis, LMSW



## QAC Department of Community Services

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## MISSION STATEMENT

The Department of Community Services will provide services to its constituents so that they may lead full, productive lives with dignity and purpose. We provide individuals and families with information, programs and services that focus on sustaining and enhancing their quality of life.

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## Queen Anne's County Department of Community Services

### ANNUAL REPORT FY24



## AREA AGENCY ON AGING

(SENIOR CENTERS, COMMUNITY CARE & TRANSIT)

- QAC Active Aging & Senior Centers have seen an amazing FY24. Participants and staff members have been thrilled to continue their in-person programming, celebrate the first anniversary of the Active Aging Center, take advantage of the new digital sign-in system at all centers, and benefit from the completion of the major renovation at the Sudlersville Senior Center.
- FY24 welcomed 2,254 participants and delivered 82,632 units of service. In addition, the 4 Senior Centers served 6,792 meals to 502 congregate participants.
- The Commission on Aging also welcomed back the Town Hall, the first one since the COVID-19 pandemic, which hosted 78 attendees, 8 panelists and 10 staff members in 2023.
- Home Delivered Meals served 14,240 meals to program participants; 48 of which are at a high nutrition risk.
- The Farmers Market program saw 40 participants through FY24.
- The Senior Care program received a grant for \$550,000, allowing us to provide essential in-home care services from the Departments of Health and Social Services for 103 seniors. In addition, Ombudsman visits are being handled in-person at our Nursing and Assisted Living Homes and have provided services to 209 individuals.
- County Ride Fare Free in 2024 generated 34,000 rides (5,000 more than in 2023), which includes the 100+ individuals that use County Ride bus and van services to commute to work every week. Fare Free will continue throughout 2025 due to its incredible success and overall appeal to the public.



## HOUSING AND COMMUNITY SERVICES



- The Homeless Solutions Program regularly helps fund the efforts taken by the Division of Housing, where we transition individuals and families from total homelessness into safer living situations. In FY24, HCS used \$43,542 provided by the HSP, to assist 42 families with rapid rehousing and eviction prevention services. An additional \$15,000 was provided by ERAP, which was utilized for security deposits and rental and utility assistance for homeless individuals. These additional funds helped 27 individuals over 11 households.
- The 2024 Make a Difference Day event was an absolute success, largely in part by the Committee, sponsors, and huge number of volunteers and donated items/funds. The 2024 event was the largest to date, bringing 104 families out, totaling to 205 participants (78 more than last year). 51 vendors were present to offer information and services like suits, haircuts, dental checkups, and food.
- The Moderately Priced Dwelling Unit Program expanded exponentially in FY24. HCS provided 4 MPDU loans and 1 Critical Workforce loan to families and individuals for homes within QAC. We have also seen a dramatic increase in available MPDU rental units, increasing from 14 to 20 over FY24, and are already preparing to have more available in FY25.
- The Community Development Block Grant was utilized this fiscal year to assist the Sudlersville Senior Center and attached Foxxtown Apartments. \$650,000 was used to reroof the entire building, along with additional repairs caused by the damaged roof, such as drywall and paint damage, new carpets and flooring, broken and damaged ceiling tiles, and other problems.
- The Housing Livability and Rehabilitation Program was awarded \$37,500 for the 48th round of the Maryland Affordable Housing Trust in FY24, which allowed them to provide assistance for emergency home repairs for 5 people. In addition, \$19,000 in grant funding was provided to 11 individuals, split between Housing Authority tenants and outside individuals. \$56,745 was also awarded to 9 families from the Special Loans program to improve habitability in their homes.

## LOCAL MANAGEMENT BOARD

- Queen Anne's County Community Partnerships for Children and Families (Local Management Board) was awarded the Community Partnership Agreement Award for \$412,567 from the Governor's Office for Children. This secured funding for 6 local programs in the priority areas of Opportunity Youth, At-Risk Youth, and Children Affected by a Caregiver's Incarceration.
- FY24 saw a total of 46 vouchers issued to members of our community for the Transportation Voucher Program. These vouchers provide access to bus rides, sedan services, car repairs, registration and tag renewals, and other transportation needs, which the LMB will be looking more closely at moving into FY25.
- In FY24, the Local Care Team served 10 new youth and was able to review a total of 33 cases (15 more cases than last fiscal year).
- Character Counts achieved an incredible goal in FY24, securing 102 coaches, and has succeeded in obtaining a 100% coverage in K-5 classrooms throughout QAC. In addition, coaches have been placed in CMS, MMS, STMS, and SMS. 3,688 students were served and over 900 volunteer hours were met (valued by the state at over \$30,000). Their goal for FY25 is to increase classroom coverage in middle schools by placing more coaches and open a dialog with high schools about allowing their students to become role models and coaches.
- Through various events hosted in local communities, the LMB has distributed over 1,800 of the 2,000 Chromebook laptops to eligible households across Queen Anne's and Caroline Counties. The goal is to have the remaining laptops given out by early 2025.

## PUBLIC HOUSING AUTHORITY OF QUEEN ANNE'S COUNTY

- Near the end of FY24, the Housing Authority and Queen Anne's County Department of Community Services entered a stronger partnership, wherein County staff could oversee day-to-day operations and help the Board of Directors with long term management of the properties and their residents. Both teams have worked hard to overcome the new challenges that have been faced and have been solely focused on maintaining and improving their efforts in serving the residents of this county with their housing needs.
- Since joining the Department of Community Services, the Housing Authority Facilities Team has been able to assist with and complete 485 work orders/after-hours calls. Alongside work orders, they will continue renovating units and improving general community facilities, such as the new playground for Fisher Manor (construction starting in the Spring of 2025).
- Taking into consideration all communities managed by the Housing Authority, the occupancy rate currently sits at an average of 91%. Vacancies across all communities remain relatively low, averaging around 14 per month, and are mostly due renovations and inspections moving slower than anticipated.
- While many projects won't see construction until 2025, several large projects are already in motion and an action plan has been laid out for: a new playground at the Fisher Manor complex, developing a partnership with a Community Solar company to reduce tenant energy bills, and improving security measures across all communities, along with a few others.