

ONONDAGA COUNTY SOCIAL SERVICES
2027 EXECUTIVE BUDGET WRITTEN STATEMENT

SECTION 1:

2026 INITIATIVES & ACCOMPLISHMENTS

- Since January, over 100,000 unique County residents have been served by one or more programs and assisted over 48,000 visitors, a daily average of 287, that have come to the Civic Center.
- Applications remain consistent with last year's numbers. The SNAP caseload has reduced 10% with the implementation of new Federal ABAWDs and non-citizen eligibility requirements. Medicaid caseload has reduced 6.5% with NYS assuming the administrative requirements. Child care assistance caseload remains 26% below its high of two years ago but we anticipate an uptick in open cases with the child care assistance waitlist ended. AI Initiatives: Since January, EVA Phone has received 218,817 calls, successfully answered 58,897 of them and saved 728 hours of staff time. In the same time period, EVA Rights and Responsibility has handled 13,536 calls saving 1,388 hours of staff time. EVA TA Interview has completed 1,148 application questionnaires, saving 191 hours of staff time. EVA's use has been expanded into assisting with Burials, collecting investigation referrals and answering phones calls from landlords and child care providers in Financial Operations. We continue to expand its use.
- The Day Care waitlist implemented June 1, 2025, will end in September 2026 once the list of 500 plus applications is cleared.
- A team of 5 case managers and one case manager supervisor facilitate the Family Centered Services OTDA grant. This team provides service to hotel families to assist them with self-sufficiency, that will ultimately lead to housing. In the previous grant term, the housing case management team assisted 326 unique, unhoused families. Currently the team is working to place 107 families into permanent housing. The lack of affordable and safe housing and the larger family size that are requesting service has made it challenging to place families.
- All four Childhood Poverty Reduction programs are fully operational.
 - 2Gen Onondaga Poverty Reduction Pilot and Expansion has worked with over 300 families as of September 1, 2026. This includes both original participants that joined when we first launched in 2022 and also new participants in our expansion phase. Since its inception, over 120 clients have been employed at some point while working with 2Gen (that is about 40% of the total number of clients), and over 62 clients have entered into some form of vocational training or higher education. Over 1,500 goals around child development, financial empowerment, mental health, housing, education, and social capital have been identified and achieved. Our case managers have made 917 family-based service referrals, centered around education, employment, mental health and well-being, with 238 families utilizing those services. A Financial Counselor has helped over 56 participants with credit building, saving, and buying a car. 2Gen partners with the NE Community Center – Supportive Employment Program and has assisted 88 participants with submitting job applications and creating new resumes.
 - The CNY CHANCE program has local apartments of various family sizes identified in the Padmission database. There are 95 landlords in Padmission, and the CHANCE team continues to recruit new landlords to participate with this initiative. Since inception of the program in late 2025, there have been 160 families placed into permanent housing. These families come from the hotel shelter or the area family shelter. The CHANCE tenant navigators assist the formerly unhoused families obtain and maintain their permanent housing.
 - The Attendance Project launched April 29, 2025, focusing on school absenteeism for Seymour, Delaware, Frazer and Belleuve at first. The program expanded to 8 other SCSD schools by the Fall of 2025. During the 2025 to 2026 school year, program staff worked with over 492 families and approximately 528 students. Outreach efforts resulted in 43% of students improving their attendance rate.
 - Diaper Distribution for Temporary Assistance Families launched in March 2025 with an initial client pool of 600 families and 800 children. By December 2025, the program had provided nearly 1,000 families with over 1,200 children with diapers. In 2026, YTD, the program served 728 unique families and approximately 934 children,

providing 4,340 boxes of diapers. The project offers pick-up and home delivery to address transportation barriers; and has slowly expanded its offerings to include rash cream, wipes, and other diaper alternatives

- All of this has been accomplished with an average staffing vacancy rate of 5%.

2026 BUDGET REVIEW

The department is projected to be within budget for 2026.

SECTION 2:

2027 BUDGET OVERVIEW

The 2027 budget includes standard salary, and wage increases consistent with the baseline budgeting approach. All personnel changes in the department are budget neutral. The 2027 Budget also includes increased cost in maintenance & utilities due to inflation and contract escalators.

Economic Security's 2027 Travel and Training appropriation increases nominally and primarily supports required employee mileage reimbursement and parking. The account also supports professional development related to poverty and trauma-informed assistance, housing, child support, SNAP case processing, welfare fraud investigation, economic mobility and well-being, new LDSS worker training, and participation in statewide policy and commissioner meetings.

The 2027 Contractual Services appropriation increases modestly, primarily due to contractual escalators. The account supports services across three primary categories: Temporary Assistance, Employment and Training, and Community Partnership and Engagement.

The 2027 Professional Services appropriation decreases by \$118,224, primarily due to savings associated with software contracts. The account continues to support genetic testing, process servers, child support attorneys, fingerprinting, interpreter services, child support account maintenance, employee clinical services and expanded use of AI technology.

The 2027 Family Assistance appropriation increases by \$538,559, primarily due to increased caseloads. The Department also anticipates increased demand for emergency housing assistance as rising rents continue to create affordability challenges for individuals and families with limited financial resources.

The 2027 Day Care appropriation increases by approximately \$9 million based on the estimated NYS allocation. Local funding remains at the County's required maintenance-of-effort level.

The 2027 Local Support for Grants appropriation remains flat from 2026 and supports programs including the Early Childhood Alliance and 2Gen Onondaga which provide coordinated, multigenerational support to help young parents and their families achieve greater economic stability and break the cycle of generational poverty.

The increase in State and Federal Aid revenues is primarily driven by reimbursements associated with Family Assistance, Day Care, and eligible administrative costs.

SECTION 3:

2027 STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

- AI Initiatives including Expand EVA Phone, Interview and Companion throughout all aspects of the department to provide excellent client service and time savings for employees so they can focus on the complex duties of their jobs, such as determining eligibility and recertifying eligibility. In addition, use Clinicom, a standardized mental health assessment platform, for mandated drug and alcohol and mental health assessments for individuals applying for Temporary Assistance.
- Continue to recruit and hire to fill all vacancies to meet projected programming expectations.
- Prepare and implement more administrative requirements per new regulations. For example, monitor work requirements for those receiving SNAP and Medicaid and the de-linking of Medicaid from the Temporary Assistance application process.

- Continue year three to implement the Child Poverty Reduction Action Plan programs. These include 2Gen Onondaga Poverty Reduction initiative, part of the County Executive's PIE agenda, a comprehensive program to break the cycle of poverty in Onondaga County; CNY CHANCE - Landlord engagement, recruitment, and concierge service; Attendance project focused on school absenteeism (lead by DCFS) and Diaper distribution for Temporary Assistance Families.
- Continue to work with community partners to expand the current Hospitality Center for unhoused to 24/7 operations.
- Focus on developing the supervisory skills of fifty-five (55) supervisors of direct line staff.