

Tioga County Department of Social Services

2025 Annual Report

In 2025, Tioga County Department of Social Services' divisions managed significant caseloads across child welfare, adult protective services, employment, and financial assistance programs. Despite grappling with staffing shortages, system changes, and Federal uncertainties, the teams remained steadfast. They worked tirelessly to protect children, support vulnerable adults, and assist families navigating economic hardships. Their dedication ensured that essential services continued without pause, securing safety and permanency for children, stabilizing adults in need, and ensuring that impoverished citizens had access to critical economic supports. They demonstrated resilience, innovation, and strong cross-agency collaboration — laying a strong foundation for continued success in 2026.

Major Successes

- Multiple long-term foster youth achieved permanency.
- APS secured safe housing for chronically homeless or exploited adults.
- Temporary Assistance Staff supported a family of six in securing permanent housing.
- Career Center staff provided intensive one-on-one advocacy to resolve unemployment claims.
- Successfully claimed \$10,077,394 in State and Federal reimbursements.

Challenges

- Federal changes and shutdown created delays in SNAP/HEAP created community-wide hardship.
- Staff turnover, burnout, and mental health strain.
- Limited transportation and mental health service availability.
- Statewide foster home shortages leading to 32 of 51 children placed out of county.
- Social Security Administration procedural changes causing delays for rep payee cases.

Goals for 2026

- Strengthen recruitment, retention, and succession planning across the whole agency.
- Support Medicaid transition to MECM.
- Ensure HR1 Compliance including tracking and assisting SNAP ABAWDs with new requirements.
- Enhance Career Center alignment with labor market needs and pursue grant funding.
- Ensure continued quality services to all individuals and families we service

Children and Adult Services

Staff Development:

- 604 participants attended 450 state-sponsored trainings, totaling 3051.75 hours
- 442 participants attended 55 local-sponsored trainings, totaling 675.25 hours
- 11 new hires completed New Employee Orientation totaling 84 hours of training
- 3 new caseworkers received 70 hours of training through modeling and hands-on practical experience

Child Protective/Preventive Services:

- 1102 hotline reports received; 862 Investigative, 240 Family Assessment Response (FAR)
- 609 investigations determined: 107 indicated and closed, 22 indicated and opened for preventive services
- 35 families served, involving 70 children
- 11 families discharged from Preventive Services

Foster Care/Adoption/Homefinding:

- 11 Foster Care Admissions: 9 abuse/neglect, 3 Juvenile Delinquents
- 16 Foster Care Discharges: 6 reunited with a parent, 1 signed out after reaching the age of majority, 8 adoptions, and 2 to the custody of OCFS
- 8 freed for adoption and 6 children placed in pre-adoptive home with an early/mid 2026 adoption planned
- Kinship foster home care placements were at 33.3%, an increase of 7.8% from 2024

Child Advocacy Center (CAC) and Safe Harbor

The Child Advocacy Center served

- 106 children: conducting 101 interviews at the CAC and 5 off-site interviews with the following allegation types
 - 67 sex abuse
 - 34 Physical abuse
 - 4 neglect/ witness to violence
 - Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children (CSEC) 1
 - Multiple victimizations 8
- Arranged for 3 Forensic exams (off site)

The Safe Harbour Program provided

- Advocacy services for 54 individual youth at risk of sexual exploitation
- Held 37 group trainings involving 991 kids
- Held 2 adult trainings involving 80 adults

Adult Protective Services:

- Received 229 Adult Services referrals
- Opened 24 new cases to ongoing services

- 30.4 average ongoing cases each month
- Representative Payee for 57 individuals

PINS Diversion:

- Received 45 PINS Diversion referrals
- Closed 14 PINS Diversion cases
- 20 Active cases at the end of 2025

Highlights:

- 8 children achieved permanency through adoption; 5 of these children had been foster care for over 4 years
- 3 children were discharged within one year of their placement
- Addition of the Parent Support Initiative contract through Children’s Home of Wyoming Conference to provide in home parenting classes and support to open preventive cases
- Adult Protective Services numbers and the increasing needs of clients led to the addition of a 3rd caseworker in Adult Services. This has allowed for a fairer distribution of the work within the unit.
- Expansion of the Child Advocacy Center to include a satellite location in Waverly.
- As the result of the work conducted through the Child Advocacy Center and the Multidisciplinary Team, the District Attorney was able to successfully prosecute and obtain convictions of two individuals charged with Sexual Abuse/Rape of two victim children.

Challenges:

- The Office of Victims Services rescinded a three-year grant award, later announcing flat funding and the requirement for the completion of another application in 2026 for the Child Advocacy Center.
- The impact the work has had on staff and their own mental health.
- Lack of public transportation in the county and limited transportation for families after certain hours
- Lack of mental health services or long waitlists (due to staff, TCMH was closed for just over a month).
 - When clients do not want to utilize the services at TCMH, Medicaid no longer will transport them to services outside of the county.
 - Families/Clients share they are limited to Tioga County Mental Health and its limited locations. They also share their discomfort with coming to the Department of Social Services Building. Many clients talk about coming into the building is a “trigger” for them and coming here for an intake or recurring appointments or groups is something that can impact their recovery whether it is for mental health or drug/alcohol recovery.
- Lack of pro-social activities for teens and families in areas outside of Owego (i.e. Waverly, Richford, Spencer)

- Tioga County experienced the greatest number of children in foster care in over 10 years resulting in an increased workload as well as creating a large fiscal impact to the Department and County.
- Statewide shortage of foster homes has led to children being placed out of county; at the end of 2025 we had 32 of the 51 children in care placed out of county (some of these due reflect placements with relatives who live out of county). This includes a lack of foster homes for children with behavioral issues
- Social Security Administration
 - 2025 brought significant changes to how the Social Security Administration operated leading to confusion at all levels. As Rep Payee of last resort, caseworkers used to be able to reach out to the local Binghamton or Horseheads offices to discuss cases, make changes and ask questions. Following DOGE's involvement, staff were unable to access local offices and instead connected to an office anywhere in the state. These other offices were usually not able to assist and instead would make appointments for the rep payee to speak with the assigned worker, sometimes nearly 2 months out. This causes unnecessary delays and frustrations in many situations where often time is of the essence and clients depend on the income to survive.
- Access to client funds
 - Antiquated accounting processes have been a barrier to assisting APS clients. Representative Payee clients must utilize paper checks to receive their funds from their T-53 accounts managed by APS. Many of these clients don't have transportation or access to banks. Many often struggle with modern technology that allow banking to be done from their phone and some don't have the mental capacity to be able to cash checks on their own. There is even a client who cannot maintain a bank account due to criminal history. In 2023 the APS supervisor learned that many counties were utilizing TruLink debit cards to provide funds to clients and requested this be considered as an alternative for Tioga. In Summer of 2025, this was well underway with a signed agreement, clients identified and the cards being ordered by early Fall. Since that time the project has stalled in the Treasurer's Office. This has left clients frustrated and Caseworkers having to figure out savvy ways to ensure clients have access to their funds.
- Changes to Home Care Programs
 - In early 2025 the New York State rolled out major changes to how Consumer Directed Personal Assistance Program (CDPAP) worked by identifying Public Partnerships LLC (PPL) as the only statewide fiscal intermediary (FI). Despite statewide planning, this transition was clunky and cumbersome due to the magnitude of transitioning all CDPAP clients to the same FI. The Sr. CW/RN worked tirelessly with clients and providers to transition to the new program. Later in 2025, the state implemented new Minimum Needs Requirements which increased the amount of assistance clients require to be approved for home care services leaving many in the community no longer eligible for assistance through Medicaid and having to seek help elsewhere or go without the help.

- Community Services Worker (CSW) out on extended medical leave
 - Adult Protective Services was lucky to find a part time CSW with a nursing background to assist with errands, medical transports, cleaning, etc. Unfortunately, our CSW has been out due to medical needs since October, leaving caseworkers to pick up the duties.

Success Spotlight:

- In 2025, the Department was able to finalize the adoption of two siblings who were adopted together after being in foster care for six years. Their half-siblings were adopted by another family which assists in maintaining sibling connections.
- One foster family adopted the sibling of a child they had previously adopted so they could remain together. Both children have a rare genetic disorder.
- Termination of parental rights proceedings were completed so that one youth could achieve permanency after being in foster care for 5 years.
- One youth that had struggled with behavioral issues both in the home and school was able to complete high school. He chose to remain in foster care after turning 18. He has obtained his learners permit and is working. He is exploring attending SUNY Broome in the fall.
- One family, utilizing the county's new contracted Parent Support Initiative program, was able to discard 2 tons of garbage and waste at their property that was attracting rodents.
- In 2025, the Department was able to partner with a family who has historically be resistant to work with the agency, often accusatory and very hostile when the agency became involved. With the Department's encouragement and support, the family is now working with multiple medical and educational providers to assist them after several of their children were diagnosed with complex medical needs.
- Despite a steady income source of SSDI, the client struggled with chronic homelessness for at least 7 years. She had been referred to APS in the past but had been resistant to assistance, even when faced with losing a child to adoption. However, after reassessing her situation again it became evident that her mental stability as well as her vulnerability to being taken advantage of was a barrier to her being able to manage her income responsibly and meet her basic needs. APS applied to become rep payee to manage her income and worked for months to locate suitable housing, at times with resistance from the client. In August of 2025, she secured subsidized housing and moved into her new apartment. She has maintained her apartment for 7 months, has her bills caught up and now has a small savings in her bank account. The work of the APS caseworker has provided the client a stable home to live independently and safely.

- An APS client has a TBI, substance addiction and has struggled with maintaining stability in his life, including housing. He had been living with his estranged wife who was also his representative payee but this was not a healthy living environment. He left and stayed where he could lay his head at night, including under his mother's porch and the Foundry encampment at times. Following a short assessment period, APS applied to become Representative Payee to assist him in meeting his basic needs. After several months, he secured a trailer to rent. He has been stable in his home for several months thanks to the work of the APS caseworker and community resources including Rehabilitative Support Services (RSS) and Safe Options Support (SOS) who came together to assist this client.
- APS worked with a veteran in his 80's. His work history and military service afforded him a decent income to meet his needs. He suffers from mental illness and has struggled throughout his adult life in maintaining a sense of stability. He often relied on a close family friend and had moved in with their family several times following stays at nursing homes. There were historical concerns regarding this family friend who appeared to have ulterior motives for the involvement with him. It appeared this friend wanted to have access to his funds and worked to control his decision making to keep that source of funds accessible to them. APS worked with the client, the VA and medical providers to become his Representative Payee for his Social Security as well as Fiduciary of his VA funds (managing VA funds was a new venture for APS and the Accounting Dept). Eventually, he was able to leave the home where he was being taken advantage of and secured long-term housing through the VA in Erie, PA where he is safe and no longer being taken advantage of.
- APS received a referral regarding the client's home being infested with rats. A home visit revealed a significant hoarding situation and a massive rat infestation that had taken over the trailer. The client was barely able to move about the trailer and couldn't access her furnace, which was not working, leaving her at risk of harm during the winter months. APS worked closely with her, her landlord and the Department of Health to work up a plan to rectify the situation. APS connected her to a handyman/cleaner who was able to work with the client to get the trailer cleaned out and lay rat traps and poison to mitigate the problem. The work happened fast and Patricia was then able to gain access to her furnace to have it repaired with the help of Tioga Opportunities. As a result of the hard work by all the client was able to remain safe and warm in her home.
- Child (15 years old) had a difficult relationship with her father growing up, and had not ever lived with him or spent a significant amount of time with him. She had always been in the custody of her mother, who was now unable to care for her as she had willfully entered a rehab facility to address her dependence on alcohol. Father applied for and was granted custody of child and brought her into his home with his current wife and the son that they share together. Child was nervous, as she felt that she was an outsider to the family that her

father had built without her. CPS Family Assessment Response (FAR) connected the family to support services. By the end of the case, both the child herself, and the rest of the family described the process as a “coming together” and “not at all the typical CPS experience”. The family described not feeling the pressure of an investigation, while still receiving the benefit of the resources that the Department can bring to our families.

- An educational neglect case was reported for a young teenage child not attending school. When the caseworker started working with the family, he learned the older sister had not been regularly attending school for over a year and the younger sister wanted to follow her sister. During some heartfelt conversations with a single mother who felt unheard and overwhelmed the caseworker was able to learn the family had experienced many traumatic events over the past several years. The caseworker was able to learn that the older child had slowly withdrawn from social activities, friends, family events in addition to school. The caseworker and mother worked together to engage the child in community services; mental health, as well as assisting the family in registering the child in online learning with plans of returning to in school when she is ready. This a great example of The Department and a family working together finding a successful plan of action resulting in positive outcome for all.
- A Safe Harbour Advocate was able to assist a family to find resources that aligned with their religious beliefs. A Safe Harbour youth that the Advocate had been working with since their trafficking was struggling in public school, with their mental health, and experiencing substance abuse challenges. The Advocate met with concerned school personnel about the youth’s challenges and supported their mother in accessing age-appropriate supportive services for substance use, in addition to Mental Health connections. Shortly after, the youth and their family decided to withdraw the youth from public school and seek out alternative learning opportunities. The Advocate worked with and supported the family in their search for curriculum that met the educational needs of the youth, as well as the religious practices/preferences of the family based on what they believed to be best for the youth. They are now regularly moving through this curriculum, attending mental health services, and receiving Safe Harbour services.

Goals for 2026:

- To seek out competent employees, become fully staffed, and retain the staff we have along with continuing to assist in the development of recently promoted employees in their new roles.
- To recruit and certify foster homes that are able to take sibling groups, youth with trauma, mental health and behavioral concerns.
- Increase the provision of Preventive Services to eligible families to reduce risk of future abuse and maltreatment.
- Enhancing contract monitoring to ensure the provision of comprehensive quality services.

Accounting/Systems/Resource and Recovery/Fraud Activities

- The Accounting Department participated in the Office of Children's and Family Services audit for Daycare. They audited 10 families; we worked with the employment unit and together successfully met the needs of the State.
- Accounting participated in the Federal Title IV-E Review, supported by necessary service documentation. Supplemental documentation was promptly submitted and found sufficient, resulting in no further inquiries. Although two findings were identified, the accounting department quickly determined the root cause and implemented corrective actions in a timely manner.
- Accounting continued to face the challenge of turnover in 2025, resulting in a loss of institutional knowledge, familiarity with specific accounting processes, software, and organizational nuances, there was an increased workload on remaining staff, and difficulty finding qualified and experienced candidates. We continue to train new staff and overcome these obstacles as a team.
- Accounting successfully submitted claims for approximately \$10,077,394 in State and Federal reimbursements in 2025. We have received reimbursement for 3/4 of these claims. In 2026 the goal is training staff to learn claiming and further their knowledge in the accounting department.
- Systems completed approximately 1,566 tickets in 2025.
- Systems is responsible for metering mail for almost all county departments including offices at the HHS Complex, Sheriff's Office, Treasurer's Office, DMV, and other departments. We replaced the mail machine in 2025. The mail department metered over 106,199 pieces of mail in 2025.
- Systems successfully upgraded DSS users with second monitors.
- Systems maintain all Foster care Medicare cases, including ICAMA cases. We have transitioned into the ICAMA website, eCarevault. We currently have 108 cases.
- The Fraud Unit and Resource Assistant began working closely together, finding ways to more effectively process overpayments and collections. Forms were combined and updated to make the steps involved more well-defined. Information is shared between the two units regularly to aid in the tracking and collecting of overpayments due back to the county.
- Training and understanding procedures and paperwork is an ongoing challenge as retention continues to be an ongoing issue along with the continual updating of rules and regulations.

Resource and Recovery

- In 2025, \$300,847.65 was collected against estates, \$1,000.36 against burials and \$105,041.00 against MA for a total of \$406,889.01.
- 1330 repayment statements were mailed. \$18,345.17 in payments were collected with an additional \$25,131.79 through the Treasury Offset Program (TOP).

Fraud and FEDS

FEDS (FRONT END DETECTION SYSTEM) REFERRALS

156 FEDS Referrals Received

- 55 Unfounded
- 101 Founded

FEDS Cost Avoidance

- Temporary Assistance \$122,310.00
- Medical Assistance \$228,990.00
- Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program \$255,564.00

FRAUD REFERRALS

218 Fraud Referrals Received

- 196 Unfounded
- 15 Founded
- 7 Pending

15 Inadvertent Household Error (IHE) / Client Error With Claims Establishment

- SNAP \$20,135.00
- Child Care \$3,539.85

OVERPAYMENT REFERRALS

162 Overpayment Referrals Received

- 104 Unfounded
- 51 Founded
- 7 Pending

43 IHE / Client Error With Claims Establishment

- SNAP \$37,428.00

8 Agency Error With Claims Establishment

- SNAP \$6,161.00

Employment and Transitional Supports

HEAP Unit

- The Home Energy Assistance Program (HEAP) is a vital program that helps low-income people pay the cost of heating and heating/cooling repair costs in their homes. The 2024-2025 HEAP Season ran from October 1, 2024, through September 30, 2025. The HEAP Unit processed 2950 benefits resulting in allocations of \$2,059,667 or an average of 698.20 per benefit.
- HEAP also assisted 74 homeowners with repair or replacement of their primary heating equipment, for a total of 174,503.25

Temporary Assistance and Employment Unit:

- DSS started as a VITA site in 2004. Assistance is provided to working individuals to have their tax returns e-filed at no cost. In 2025, for tax year 2024, 216 returns were processed. Since 2006, we have completed 2,945 returns.
- Employment Specialists monitored 1 employable work experience participant who completed work projects for 1 not-for-profit agency in the community; 1 had a positive job placement as a result. (The agency is struggling to secure not-for-profits to assign clients for work experience)
- In 2025, the Tioga Career Center's reception signed in 4,398 walk-in customers. This number is down from 2024 when 5,095 walk-in customers were signed in.
- In 2025, the Tioga Career Center's reception answered and assisted 9,470 incoming phone calls; this number is up from 2024 when 8,979 incoming phone calls were reported.
- Staff meet weekly with employable persons applying for and/or in receipt of Safety Net and TANF to review their job search logs. 313 duplicated Temporary Assistance Customers were assigned to JOBS; of those 313, 28 unduplicated had actual job placements.
- The total number of average Cash Assistance cases decreased from 198 in 2024 to 191 in 2025.
- The number of families in the Family Assistance (TANF) caseload average decreased from 106 in 2024 to 98 in 2025.
- The Safety Net caseload (single individuals and couples as well as families that have reached the 60-month time limit) average was 93 in 2025, remaining the same from 2024
- The Daycare unit is co-located in the Career Center. In 2025, the Daycare caseload was comprised of an average of 204 cases serving an average of 384 children and 340 adults. In 2024, the Daycare caseload was comprised of an average of 185 cases serving an average of 353 children and 275 adults.
- TA staff assisted 33 unduplicated households with applying for and receiving Rental Supplement Program (RSP) funding through OTDA; Tioga County was approved for \$124,850 in funding and authorized payments totaling approximately \$113,000 for the 33 eligible households.
- TA staff helped seven unduplicated households to retain permanent housing with Shelter Arrears Eviction Forestallment (SAEF) funding through OTDA; Tioga County received \$16,784 and authorized a total of \$16,518 of the funds for eligible households.
- Family-Centered Case Management (FCCM) Employment Specialists assisted 51 duplicated households through case management, resolving housing and financial instability.
- The Social Security Disability Case Manager received 23 new Safety Net referrals and 1 new TANF referrals. 10 Safety Net cases were closed due to the receipt of SSI.

SNAP/Medicaid Unit

- Using the “Task-Based” Process Management Model, this Unit processed applications, re-certifications and undercare maintenance for a total of 16,528 completed tasks in 2025.
- This unit received 15,643 incoming phone calls and conducted 509 face-to-face interviews in 2025.
- The average monthly number of individuals receiving SNAP (Food Stamps) benefits in 2025 was 4,918 (approximately 1,518 of these were children).
- The monthly average of the total number of Tioga County individuals on Medicaid in 2025 was 12,094. 3,176 of these cases continued to be managed by FSMA staff, the remainder are on the State Exchange.
- The average number of SSI individuals was 1,065 (159 were children).
- The average number of Chronic Care (nursing home, assisted living and waiver programs) Medicaid cases was 227 per month for 2025.

Successes:

- In 2025, the Employment & Transitional Supports departments continued to maintain a high level of customer service, despite staffing challenges and delays in SNAP and HEAP benefits caused from the federal government shutdown, meaning citizens of Tioga County were provided with housing, food, health insurance, childcare and heat.
- The Temporary Assistance (TA) department continued to support individuals and families in their time of need.
 - A family of six was able to find permanent housing after residing in an Owego campground from June 2025 through September 2025 due to an eviction. The family came into the agency in September 2025, seeking assistance with housing and school enrollment for their children; the children were enrolled in school in September 2025. The TA department was able to secure permanent housing for this family, they moved in on October 1, 2025, and the housing is self-pay, as one of the parents is employed.
 - A single individual had been living with his girlfriend prior to her passing. After her death, he was unable to afford the apartment on his own. With assistance from the Rental Supplement Program in July 2025, he was able to remain in the apartment until more affordable housing was located. The TA department supported him in attending medical appointments, and with the help of the Disability Case Manager, he applied for Social Security benefits. He was awarded Social Security in November 2025 and received his first payment in January 2026. TA secured more affordable housing for him on December 1, 2025, and assisted him with the move. Additionally, working with the Adult Services unit, he now has a representative payee to help manage his Social Security income.

Challenges:

- The 2025 federal government shutdown caused serious challenges for Tioga County families relying on SNAP and HEAP by delaying benefit payments, increasing food

insecurities, stressing household budgets, and forcing community resources to step in while federal funding remained paused. The delay in these vital benefits caused an increased call volume, from concerned clients and their representatives, for SNAP, HEAP and TA staff.

- The HEAP department faced additional challenges as emergency shut offs and furnace repairs and replacements had to be handled with Temporary Assistance eligibility determinations by the HEAP staff. Additionally, once the cold weather period was declared, fuel emergencies required Temporary Assistance eligibility determinations.

Goals for 2026:

- To seek out competent employees, become fully staffed, and retain the staff we have.
- To assist clients during the transition of their Medicaid cases from the local district to Medicaid Eligibility and Client Management (MECM) system.
- To continue succession planning as knowledgeable employees prepare for retirement.
- To continue to assist in the development of recently promoted employees in their new roles.
- To help Able-Bodied Adults without Dependents (ABAWDs) navigate the new program requirements for SNAP, and prevent the loss of these essential benefits.

Child Support Enforcement Unit (CSEU)

In 2025, CSEU celebrated the 50th anniversary of the child support program in New York State. Since 1975 the Child Support Program has been lifting children out of poverty and helping families maintain financial stability. 2025 brought modernization to the program with the new Online Enrollment Tool for applicants and a new screening and referral process for survivors of domestic violence so that all applicants may access child support services safely.

- The Child Support Enforcement Unit collections totaled \$5,111,942 in 2025
- Of that, \$4,818,597.33 was distributed to children and families
- Reimbursements to DSS in 2025 totaled \$293,344.67, 2024 DSS reimbursements were \$352,985.76
- Average monthly caseload in 2025 was 1,751, 2024 was 1,844
- The Child Support Enforcement Unit filed a total of 593 petitions in 2025 compared to 534 in 2024

Youth Bureau

The Youth Bureau is a County funded planning and coordinating agency aimed at fostering the positive development of youth. The Tioga County Youth Bureau receives funding from the State Office of Children and Family Services, and funds are allocated by the Youth Bureau Board to organizations serving Tioga County youth, up to age 21. The Tioga County Youth Bureau funding total from OCFS for October 1, 2024 - September 30, 2025, was \$89,566.

- Youth Development Program allocations of \$45,754 were distributed to nine Community Organizations and Municipal Recreational Programs.
- Youth Sports & Education Opportunity funds of \$20,000 were distributed to five organizations.
- Youth Team Sports funds of \$23,812 were distributed to two organizations.

Tioga Career Center

The Tioga Career Center provides customer-driven employment services to both businesses and individual job seekers in the Tioga County area. The center serves as a one-stop hub for numerous employment-related needs and resources.

Comprehensive Employment Services

- Unemployment Assistance and mandated appointments.
- GST BOCES GED Classes (held Mon & Wed, 1:00 PM – 4:30 PM).
- Resume creation, job search assistance, and online application support.
- Funding opportunities for classroom and on-the-job training.

Community Services & DSS Partnership

- **DSS Employable Outreach:** Working closely with DSS to capture employment needs and providing bi-weekly training classes for employable clients.
- **Weekly Employment Strategy:** Delivering tailored employer suggestions on a weekly basis to connect DSS clients with active opportunities.
- **Collaboration:** Ongoing partnership with Workforce staff, GST BOCES, WIOA Youth Program (Cornell Cooperative Extension Tioga), ACCES-VR, and other local Tioga County agencies.
- **Youth Support:** Transitional and supportive services for students in collaboration with Tioga County School Districts.

Employer Services

- **Business Representative Presence:** Increased visibility of our Business Representative, who works closely with the community to facilitate high-impact recruitment.
- **Recruitment Events:** Frequent job fairs for area employers to bridge the gap between local talent and business needs.
- **Support Tools:** Job postings, hiring events, and on-the-job training opportunities.
- **Marketing:** Job fairs include free advertising via radio, newspaper, and social media.

Unemployment Services

- ID.Me identity verification support.

- Developed contacts with the NYS Department of Labor to resolve claim issues efficiently.
- Assisted over 900 customers with their unemployment needs.

Success Spotlight: Individual Advocacy

Our staff goes above and beyond to ensure no residents are left behind by complex systems. Recently, a gentleman visited the center who had been unable to reach a live representative at the Department of Labor Unemployment Insurance office to resolve critical issues with his claim. Our staff member dedicated 2.5 hours to sitting with him, navigating the "back and forth" of being on hold with the Department of Labor. Due to the extraordinary patience and persistence of the WIOA staff, the gentleman successfully worked out the issues with his claim and received his unemployment benefits. This level of one-on-one effort exemplifies the heart of our mission at the Tioga Career Center.

Challenges

- Budget Cuts: Significant reductions in funding have impacted the center's ability to fully support Tioga County residents and businesses.
- Program Reductions: Notably, the loss of the Literacy Program and the elimination of funding for classroom training have hindered long-term workforce development efforts.

Goals for 2026

- To align education and training with labor market needs, and ensure that job seekers, especially those with barriers, connect with compatible and quality employment opportunities.
- To collaborate with local businesses and agencies to assist job seekers in finding and securing career opportunities.
- To seek out grant funding opportunities to purchase upgraded essential equipment for the career center.