



Newington Human Services

Mission Statement

We serve residents of all ages to achieve their maximum quality of life by increasing their knowledge, skill and self-sufficiency through a comprehensive continuum of social work and community services.

History

- The Newington Department of Human Services was established in 1955 to assist Newington residents with social, emotional and economic needs. Since the inception of the department, the community has grown and we have evolved into a full-service agency.
- In an effort to meet Newington's changing needs, the Department offers a wide variety of programs that serve children, youth, families, adults, persons with disabilities and the elderly.



Karen Futoma
Director

*Our Staff

**Youth and Clinical/Casework contractual and seasonal staff are utilized, as well.*



Carol LaBrecque
Human Services Coordinator



Patricia Meskill
Clinical Services Coordinator



Rik Huggard
Youth Services Coordinator



Pamela Wassik
Social Worker II



Karen Gagliardi
Administrative Secretary I



Stephanie Soto
Part-Time Administrative Secretary



Maria Gonzalez-Soto
Part-Time Youth Worker

Newington Department of Human Services

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For information, programs and confidential services

COMMUNITY EDUCATION

*Parent Education Workshops/Courses, Support Groups
Prevention/Education Programs*

Topics including: Substance Use-current trends, Early Childhood
Development, Internet Safety, Elderly Care-giving
Diversity & Disability Awareness

*Some Programs offered in Collaboration with Schools, Civic,
Religious, Private & Business Organizations*

SOCIAL CASEWORK

*Food Bank/Clothing Closet, Holiday Food & Gift Program
Basic Needs Assistance, Energy Applications
Housing, homelessness, evictions, & foreclosure issues
Medicare Counseling*

*Medical coverage consultation & referrals
Assistance with Public & Private Financial Assistance Resources
Coordination with Federal, State & Local Agencies*

INFORMATION & REFERRAL

*Day Care, Elder Care, Housing,
Community Resources,
Social Service Agencies*



"A Helping hand for all ages."

CRISIS RESPONSE

*Emergency Disaster Response
Safety checks, Shelter
Dementia, Health, Mental Health
Domestic Violence
Persons At-Risk*

POSITIVE YOUTH DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS

*Adventure Learning Program Success (ALPS)
SCORE After-School Activities
Summer Youth Adventure
Adventure Challenge Ropes Course
Youth Leadership
Mentoring
Community Service Projects*

CASEWORK & COUNSELING

(Children, Youth, Adults, Seniors & Families)

Presenting Issues:

*Child & Family Development
Impact from Divorce, Death or Remarriage
Child or Elderly Abuse/Neglect
Alcohol or Drug Abuse
Police Diversion/Juvenile Review Board
Health, Mental Health
Individual or Family Grief*

Primary Prevention

Positive Youth Development

- **Adventure Learning Program Success (ALPS)**

An integral component of the Health & Wellness curriculum in the Newington Middle Schools, this program complements the school health classes and the goal is two-fold: to promote and encourage the empowerment of students to consciously choose to succeed in their studies and to create a safe school climate and culture.

- **Student Challenge of Recreation Education (SCORE)**

SCORE is an after-school program offered to all middle school students. It's purpose is to connect the important environments of school, community and family; offer youth the opportunity to meaningfully explore leisure time activities, all within the framework of a primary prevention model. Seasonal programs include: adventure challenge, snow shoeing, kayaking/canoeing, ropes course, geo-caching, backpacking, camping, rock climbing, social/cultural activities and more. SCORE runs through the school year and includes school vacation programs.

- **Summer Youth Adventure (SYA)**

SYA is offered to all middle school youth along with high school youth that serve as mentors. Activities include: adventure challenge, snow shoeing, kayaking/canoeing, ropes course, geo-caching, backpacking, camping, rock climbing, social/cultural activities, community service and more. Activities are designed to teach skills in leadership, teamwork, problem-solving and decision-making, while having FUN!

- **Outdoor Challenge Course**

The Department offers an Adventure-Based Ropes Course designed to provide a variety of progressive skill-building challenges for all ages. We use the "challenge by choice" philosophy to guide our facilitation process. Staff are trained/certified

Newington Challenge Course & Outdoor Learning Center

- The Department offers an Adventure-Based Ropes Course designed to provide a variety of progressive skill-building challenges for all ages. We use the “challenge by choice” philosophy to guide our facilitation process. Staff are trained and certified to facilitate individual/group initiatives using low or high elements. Youth groups, sports teams, educational institutions, local organizations, and businesses utilize the course for team building and leadership activities.
- During the fall of 2015, a 24’ yurt was added to the challenge course. This “room” will provide added shelter and camping options, as well as a much needed indoor space for programming. This new facility also provides expanded year-round options at the challenge course. Lowes has generously donated and installed a wood stove and sealed the pine floors and an Eagle scout will be constructing a deck and handicap accessible ramp spring, 2016.



Information & Referral



- As Human Service advocates we assist residents in accessing eligible benefits, services and resources. Skilled and professionally trained staff respond to inquiries regarding housing, financial assistance, childcare, eldercare, mental health, homecare, legal issues and other topics.
- Fiscal year 2014-15, we responded to 9,467 I & R requests.
- This fiscal year, through December 2015, we have responded to 5,394 I & R requests.

Resources

- Staff are regularly exploring and expanding our list of financial resources for eligible residents. Grants, state and federal entitlement programs, as well as private funds and resources are often utilized.
 - Examples include: CRT Energy Assistance, Operation Fuel, Good Samaritan Fund, Larrabee Fund, Veteran, disability benefits, unemployment benefits, Social Security, CT State Department of Social Services, Free/reduced lunch program, Ruth Miller Fund, Special Needs Fund and Small Cities grant.
- Additional Resources
 - Examples include: Infoline 211, Legal Aid, Housing Education Resource Center, Newington Food Bank, Clothing Closet and Holiday Food & Gift program, backpacks and school supplies, winter clothing distribution, Access Health and Medicare, education, substance and mental health treatment, homecare services, etc.

Intake Process

- Initial intake can be done via phone, walk-in, scheduled appointment
- Referrals can come from agencies or individuals, such as police, fire, schools, medical providers, landlords, residents, neighbors, relatives, etc.
- Professionally trained staff obtain vital demographics, presenting issues and relevant background and history.
- Services are provided in a confidential manner.
- Once primary service needs are identified, the person/s is referred to the appropriate staff member for ongoing casework or counseling.

Social Casework

- Social workers provide case management and supportive counseling to adults, elderly and families. Individuals present with their own needs or concerns for others. Referrals come from many different sources including: Police, Fire and other Town departments, neighbors, relatives, self-initiated, schools, medical providers, etc.
- Areas may include financial, medical, disabilities, family relations, mental health or at-risk and crisis intervention.
- Financial issues may include evictions, foreclosures, overdue taxes, utility bills, heat, transportation, employment, medical insurance, Medicare counseling, entitlement applications, eyeglasses, dental, homecare.
- Most situations necessitate multiple sessions and ongoing case management.

Youth & Family Counseling

- Confidential counseling is available to Newington youth, adults and families by skilled, credentialed therapists.
- Presenting issues may include but not limited to family conflict, reaction to death, divorce, depression, anxiety, child and adolescent development, school adjustment, substance use and abuse and suicidal/homicidal ideation.
- Services are available on a sliding-scale fee based on income and family size.
- Appointments are available weekdays and evenings.

Juvenile Review Board

- Is a collaborative effort between Human Services, Police, Schools, Juvenile Court and the Department of Children and Families.
- The Board provides youth (17 and under) who became involved with police due to a minor criminal behavior or those youth referred because of at-risk behavior an alternative to appearing before Juvenile Court.
- Concerns and issues are addressed confidentially and recommendations are determined on a case by case basis. These may include community service, reflective essay, letters of apology and assessment for counseling.

Teamwork & Collaboration

- Human Services staff work closely with town departments to insure and promote the safety and well being of our residents, especially those most vulnerable. When appropriate and necessary, as mandated reporters, we make referrals to DCF and Elderly Protective Services. We have also petitioned Probate Court for appointment of Conservators, when there was no one else to do so.
- We work with the Senior & Disabled Center, Police, Fire, NEMS, Health, Building, Zoning Enforcement, Tax, Highway, Parks & Recreation, Library. Many of us meet regularly to review, share expertise and assist each other regarding blight and safe home concerns.

Crisis Intervention

- We work closely with first responders and schools to assist in crises.
- Examples include fire, water main breaks, loss of power and/or heat, at-risk individuals with mental and physical health concerns that may need services and/or hospitalization, a referral to DCF or Elderly Protective Services, suicides or other deaths, health and safety concerns including hoarding or other dangerous living conditions, homelessness and domestic violence.

Case Illustration 1

Police are called out to an “untimely death” of a youth. Human Services Director is contacted to come to the scene to provide crisis support and resources to the family, including how best to notify other immediate family members in and out of state and the youth’s friends. Superintendent of Schools is also notified and initiates school crisis intervention protocol. Working together, we set up crisis counseling services at the school utilizing our staff and school staff. Ongoing collaborative support services are offered to family, friends and youth impacted. This may be individual or group support, which can be done at the school and/or our office.

Case Illustration 2



An elderly couple is referred to the department for follow up following a 911 response. The 87 year old wife has dementia, which up until recently, has been managed by her husband and adult daughter, who frequently visits. Last night, she left the house in the middle of the night while her husband slept and was found walking in the neighborhood in her nightgown. Fortunately, it was a warm, summer night.

Human Services staff reaches out to the family to further assess the safety and well being of all those impacted. We are told she is becoming more agitated and they fear for her safety and her husband's ability to care for her and keep her safe. There are more frequent times of her thinking he's a burglar and wanting to know where her husband is. Both the husband and daughter want to keep her home as long as they can keep her safe. We will work with the family to explore homecare, daycare, safety devices such as GPS/ID bracelets, Life Alert, installation of door alarms, and if necessary, a referral to Elderly Protective Services. We will also address services and/or resources that may be helpful to her husband and daughter such as meals on wheels, CT Homecare for the Elders, respite services and supportive counseling. Information about long term care options may also be shared for future consideration if safety and well being become more compromised.

Case Illustration 3

A 37 year old single mother of two minor children was recently diagnosed with breast cancer. She is recovering from a mastectomy. Her Dr. is optimistic and believes her survival rate is high. She is concerned about her mortgage payment. She has exhausted sick and vacation time at work and is not likely able to return to work for 2-3 months. Presently, her only means of support is \$120 weekly child support. Her extended family members have assisted her up until now and can no longer do so.

A social worker will explore and assist her in applying for short term and long term disability benefits through insurance or her employer. She may also be referred to the Larrabee Fund and Ruth Miller Fund, two resources available to eligible women meeting certain criteria. Other resources may include homecare, State benefits, free/reduced lunch, exploration of mortgage refinance to lower monthly payments, energy assistance, our food bank and clothing closet, shared living with other family/friends, etc. Our Special Needs fund may also be an option. We will also offer counseling services for her and her children. We will explore after-school and summer youth programs with our department and/or Parks and Recreation that might be a nice distraction for her children. We also have the ability to subsidize children's participation.

Case Illustration 4

A 57 year old disabled male is referred by his elderly parents. He has never worked, struggled in school, doesn't drive and has always lived with his parents. He was never diagnosed, but appears to have intellectual challenges. His parents are now concerned about what will happen to him when they die. They have no other children. They have always taken care of his needs, including meal preparation and laundry. He has never applied for any financial or medical benefits.

A social worker would work with the individual and his parents to obtain an evaluation to determine his level of functioning, his strengths, needs for support and general ADL skills. Financial and medical benefits would be explored, along with agencies that might be able to assist in independent living and work skills training. Housing, social and employment options would also be considered. A transition plan is critical to avoid a crisis upon their death/s.

Newington Food Bank

- Community donations of money, food and clothing allow for the provision of emergency and ongoing assistance to eligible residents year round. Civic organizations, schools, businesses, the faith community, individuals and numerous volunteers support these programs.
- Newington Food Bank offers 1X per month visit for those living below 235% Federal poverty level.

The table below shows the gross income guidelines we utilize:

Household Size	1	2	3	4	5	6
Annual Income	\$27,660	\$37,436	\$47,212	\$56,988	\$66,764	\$76,540

We offer fresh, frozen and nonperishable food items. We also have limited supplies of nonfood items such as toiletries, laundry detergent, and paper goods. We average assisting 140 households monthly.

- FY 2014-2015 there were 1,690 visits representing 7,923 bags of groceries.
- The Senior & Disabled Center created a garden in recent years, donating 100% of the vegetables they grow to our food bank. Other residents and organizations also grow and donate vegetables and herbs to our food bank. Parks & Recreation has generously donated a plot for growing items to be donated to the Newington Food bank.

Additional Food Resources

- The Seniors Farmer's Market Nutrition Program Checks are available to eligible households in the summer. Individuals must be over 60 years old and/or be certified disabled and living in subsidized disabled housing. Food checks usually consist of 6-\$3 checks which can be exchanged at local farmer's markets for fresh fruits and vegetables. Households must be below 185% of the Federal Poverty Guidelines.

Household Size	1	2
Household Income	\$21,774	\$29,470

- The Mobile Foodshare Site Truck comes every other Wednesday in the center of Town. Residents must be screened and registered to be eligible to use it. Residents using our Food Bank also use it, providing an additional 2-3 opportunities to supplement their food monthly.
- FY 2014-2015 there were 1,584 visits and 3,168 bags of food distributed.

Holiday Food & Gift Program

- Eligible residents of all ages are provided with food and winter clothing the week before Thanksgiving and toys and gifts for the December holidays. This past holiday season, 416 households representing 860 individuals were served.
- Following the same guidelines as the Food Bank, residents are screened and interviewed for eligibility.



Clothing Closet



- The Clothing Closet offers year round clothing items with two large programs offered annually. A large winter clothing distribution is offered during the Thanksgiving Basket Distribution Day, serving several hundred individuals and we offer back-to-school supplies, backpacks and clothing in August.
- Upon the transfer of the Transition Academy to Town Hall, we immediately approached their teacher and formed a partnership benefiting both programs. As part of their life skills learning, they have a laundry facility. Several times weekly, they pick up our clothing donations, launder them and return them for sorting and distribution.
- FY 2014-2015 there were 478 visits and 518 bags of clothing distributed.
- For emergent situations, such as fires, provisions are also available.

Boards and Other Volunteers

- **Youth Adult Council**

- Acts as an advisory to the Human Services Department with members appointed by the Mayor representing parents, youth, police, schools, library, business and liaisons from Town Council, Board of Education and Parks & Recreation. Their purpose is to review youth and family issues and foster community education and support among agencies and residents.

- **Human Rights Commission**

- To promote understanding and respect among all racial, religious, ethnic and other groups and to secure equality of and opportunity for all people. Commission members are appointed by the Town Council and conform to State and Federal laws regarding discrimination.

- **Fair Rent Commission**

- To make studies, investigations, conduct hearings and receive complaints relative to rental charges on housing accommodations in order to control and eliminate excessive rental charges.

- **Student Interns**

- College students majoring in social work and human services are placed with our department for 1-2 semesters to enhance their learning and skills in the field. They are involved in many areas of programs and services to receive a well-rounded experience with all populations. In exchange for our field instruction and supervision, we in turn receive additional support for our programs and services.

- Human Services volunteers are a critical asset allowing us to expand our capacities greatly.

- Approximately 200 volunteers assist annually. Some may be occasional while others assist weekly

Volunteer opportunities include assistance with:

Food Bank

Clothing Closet

Holiday Food & Gift Programs

Office Assistance

Youth Program Mentors



Additional Roles

- **Americans With Disabilities (ADA) Coordinator**
 - The Director of Human Services is appointed the Town ADA Coordinator and ensures the Town's compliance with the Federal Law under Title I and II.
 - **Title I-employment:**
 - to insure reasonable accommodation and nondiscrimination of Town employees
 - **Title II-Public Services-State and Local Government:**
 - to ensure access to Town programs, services and activities and prohibits discrimination.
 - To evaluate all facilities under Safe Harbor (built before 2010) or the 2010 standards for accessible design.
 - The Director and Human Services Coordinator are in the final stage of becoming trained and certified ADA Coordinators, with one 4-hour class and exam remaining.
- **Shelter Management**
 - When the Town Manager directs the opening of a shelter for weather or other emergency reasons, the Human Services Department has the lead role in opening, setting up and managing a shelter. The Newington Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) under the direction of the Emergency Manager, will now be a great asset for these and other events.

Year in Review

- Newington Human Services initiated a statewide grassroots effort to address the issues of hoarding, emphasizing health and safety concerns. A working group was established with statewide representation from municipal human service, fire, police, building, animal control, legal, housing, court, public and mental health, CCSU, DCF, Elderly Protective Services to discuss and enhance protocol, policies and intervention strategies. A conference was created and an effort is underway to establish a State Hoarding Task Force.
- The department received a second consecutive year \$10,000 OPM grant to foster positive relations between youth and police.
- Clinical Services Coordinator Pat Meskill was certified to teach Mental Health First Aid Training and has offered training to town emergency responders.
- A yurt was constructed at the Challenge Course to enhance programming and to provide an indoor program room.
- A grief group was established for youth following a youth suicide.
- Social Casework experienced a 3% increase and Positive Youth Development program registrations increased 20% increase.
- Information and Referrals also saw a 31% increase.

Looking Forward 2016

- Early Spring: Ribbon Cutting and Open House for our new yurt
- April: Annual Volunteer Recognition Dinner
- May 9-13th: The Director and three staff, along with three Newington Police officers will attend a free Crisis Intervention Team (CIT) training to enhance collaborative efforts in response to mental health crises.
- Spring and Fall Educational Series offered to the community and town departments on various mental health and other human service topics, including Mental Health First Aid training.
- To further address hunger in Newington by expanding food resources and participation in the Hunger Action Team.