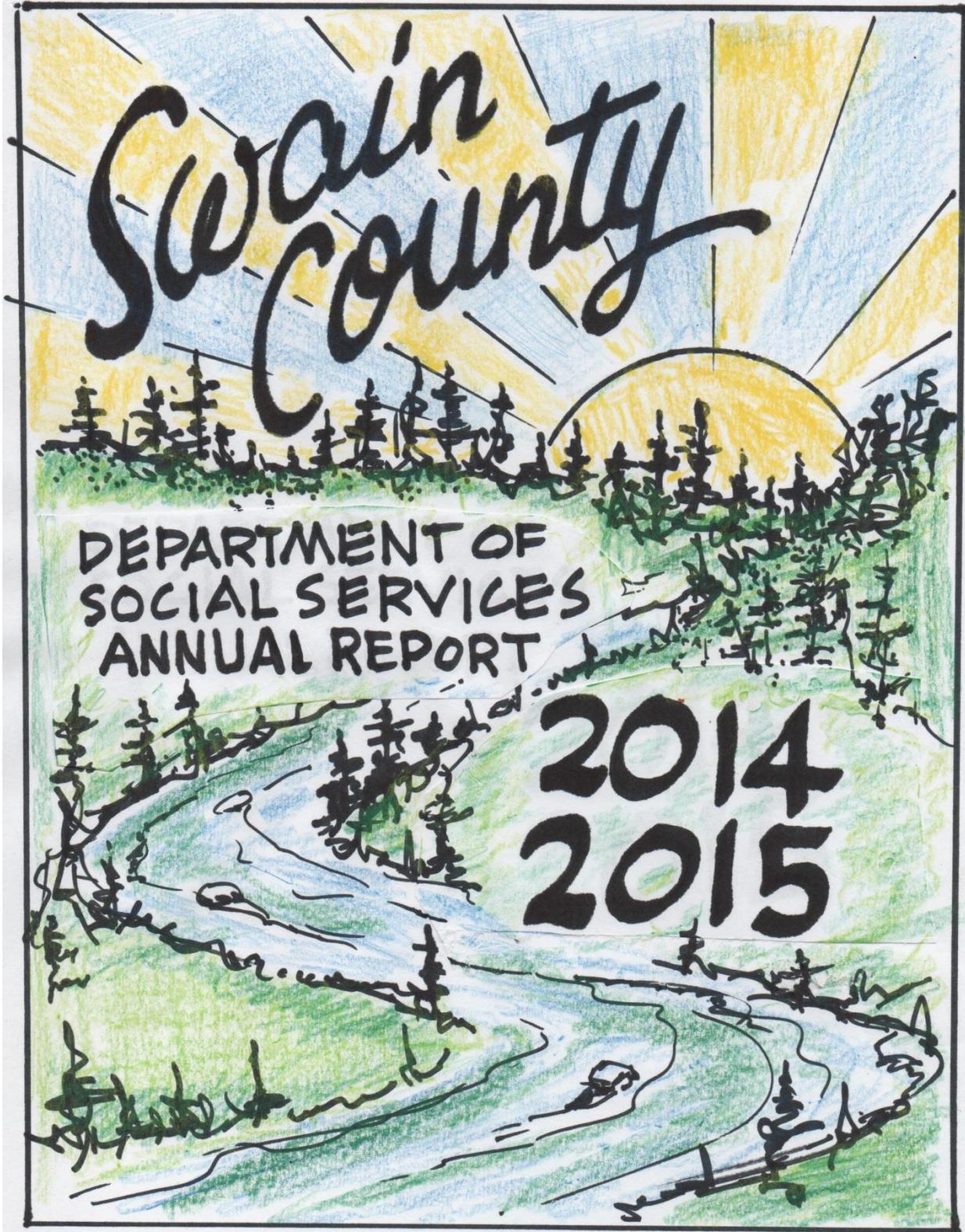


# Swain County



DEPARTMENT OF  
SOCIAL SERVICES  
ANNUAL REPORT

2014  
2015

## Swain County Human Services

2014-2015

### Annual Report

#### MISSION STATEMENT

The Swain County Department of Social Services has the responsibility to meet with clients at their point of need to provide preventive, supportive, and restorative services delivered with competence and compassion.

#### AGENCY GOALS

- Swain County DSS will run an effective, resourceful, knowledgeable, and ethical organization.
- Children at risk of abuse, neglect, and poverty will live in safe, healthy, and stable environments.
- Economically disadvantaged families will become self-determined and not remain dependent on public assistance.
- Families experiencing economic hardship will obtain financial assistance to alleviate their short term crisis.
- Aging and disabled adults will be safe and live in the least restrictive settings.



## Message from the Director....

*This annual report provides a summary of activities of the Swain County Department of Social Services for the fiscal year 2014-2015.*

*Swain County Department of Social Services is a safety net for families. We are charged with a huge responsibility, and we strive to deliver direct services to the citizens of Swain County in a timely manner. People present to our Agency for a myriad of reasons. Historically, Swain County has a high unemployment rate as many seasonal jobs are discontinued at the end of October. Swain County citizens rely on programs such as Food and Nutritional Services, Medicaid, Non-emergency medical transportation, child care subsidy, subsidized housing & heating assistance to supplement their income. These programs are a vital lifeline for our citizens and Swain DSS strives to provide families with resources and services to maximize their well-being and self-determination. It is the goal of this Agency that everyone who walks through our doors is treated with respect and dignity.*

*Sheila Sutton, Director  
Swain County Department of Social Services*



## Connecting to our Citizens



Customers can come to our office at 80 Academy Street, Bryson City, N.C.

Call us at (828) 488-6921, or

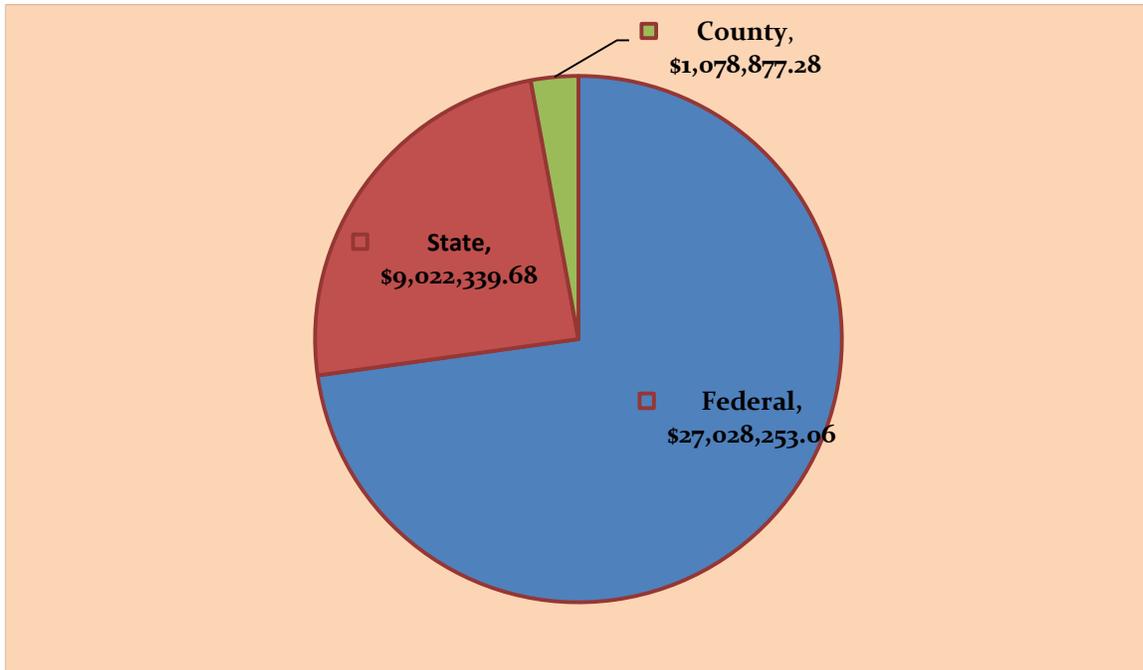
Visit our webpage at [www.swaincountync.gov](http://www.swaincountync.gov)

We want the customer to have a great experience when they walk through our doors. Each person that is in need can be assessed for all of our programs during intake. They only have to tell their story one time, which makes the process less frustrating. For fiscal year 2014-2015 the reception staff logged in an average of 14,544 people for various needs and circumstances. This is an average of 1,212 people per month. We issued 17 work permits, 120 fishing license waivers, and provided 4,869 Medicaid trips for non-medical emergency transportation.



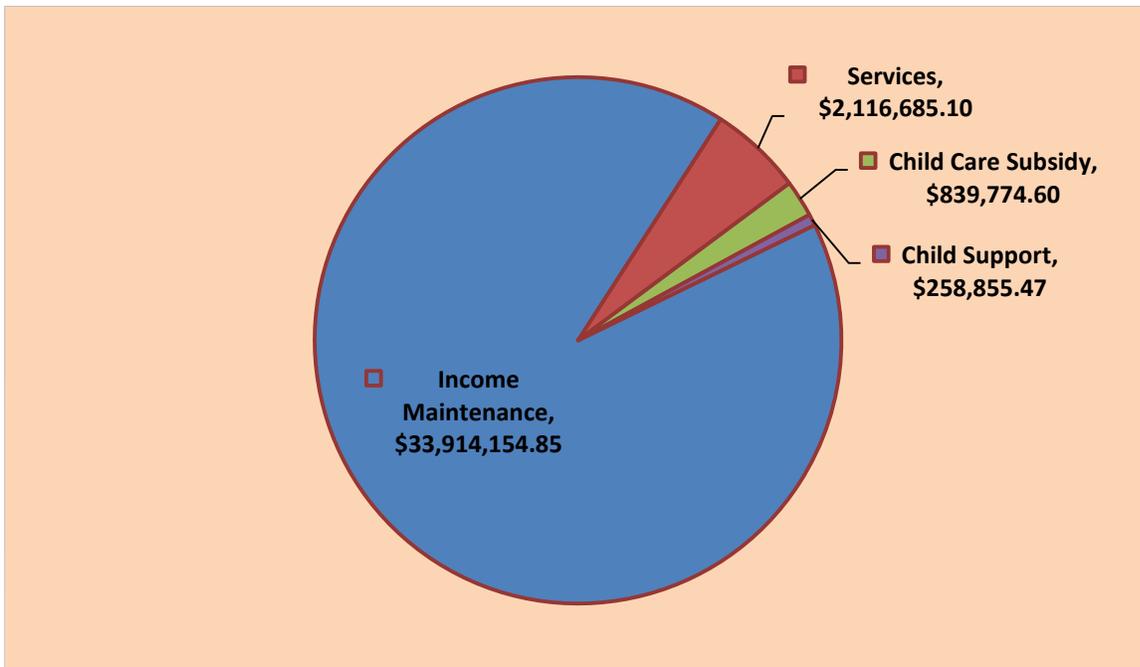
## Revenues

Fiscal Year 2014-2015 \$ 37,129,470.02



## Expenditures

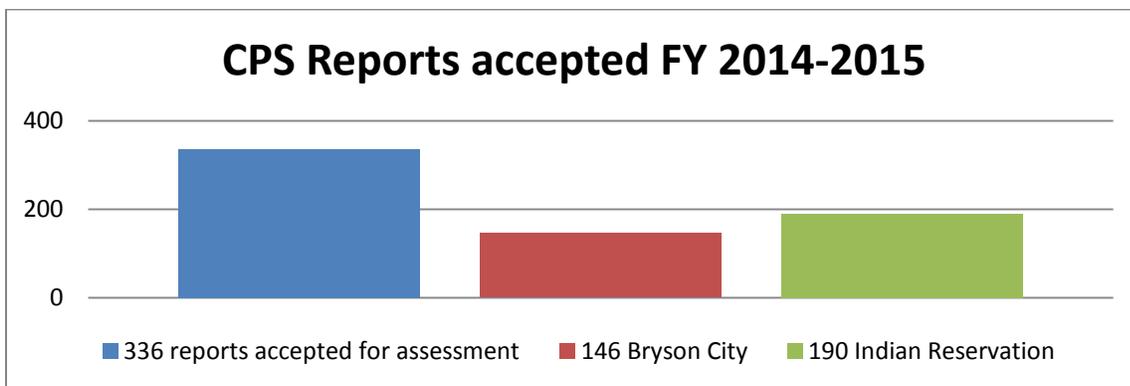
Fiscal Year 2014-2015 \$ 37,129,470.02



## CHILD PROTECTIVE SERVICES

**This is where child welfare begins. Law Enforcement, school personnel, medical professionals, and other members of the community make reports of suspected neglect, abuse and/or dependency every day. The CPS unit consists of 4 investigators/assessors and 1 intake worker.**

Services are provided 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. If you, or someone you know, have reason to believe that a child under the age of 18 is being abused, neglected, or is dependent, you are legally obligated to make a report. To make a report during business hours, please call (828) 488-6921. If it is after business hours or a weekend or holiday, please call Swain County dispatch at (828) 488-2197 and ask for the on-call social worker.

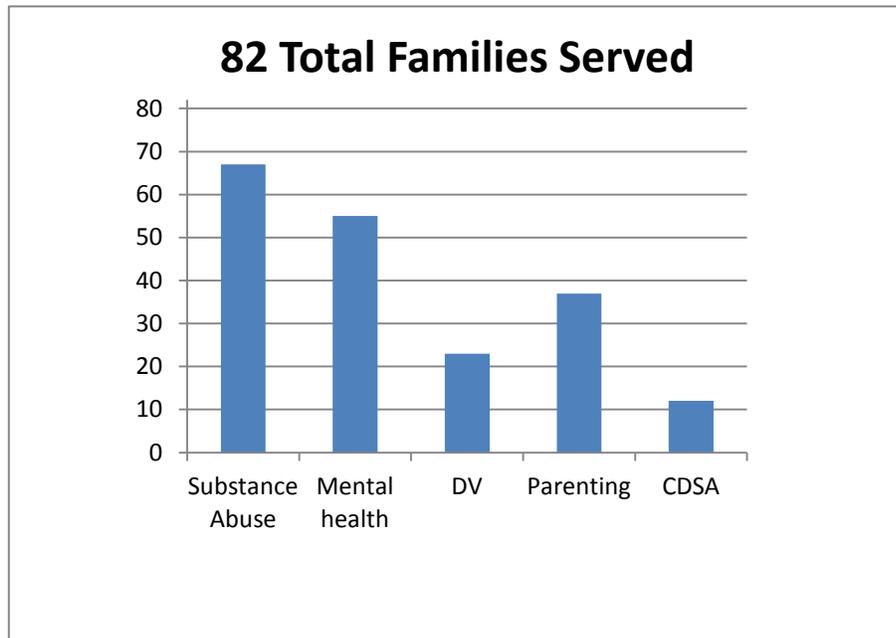


### **MRS: Family Assessment vs. Investigative Assessment**

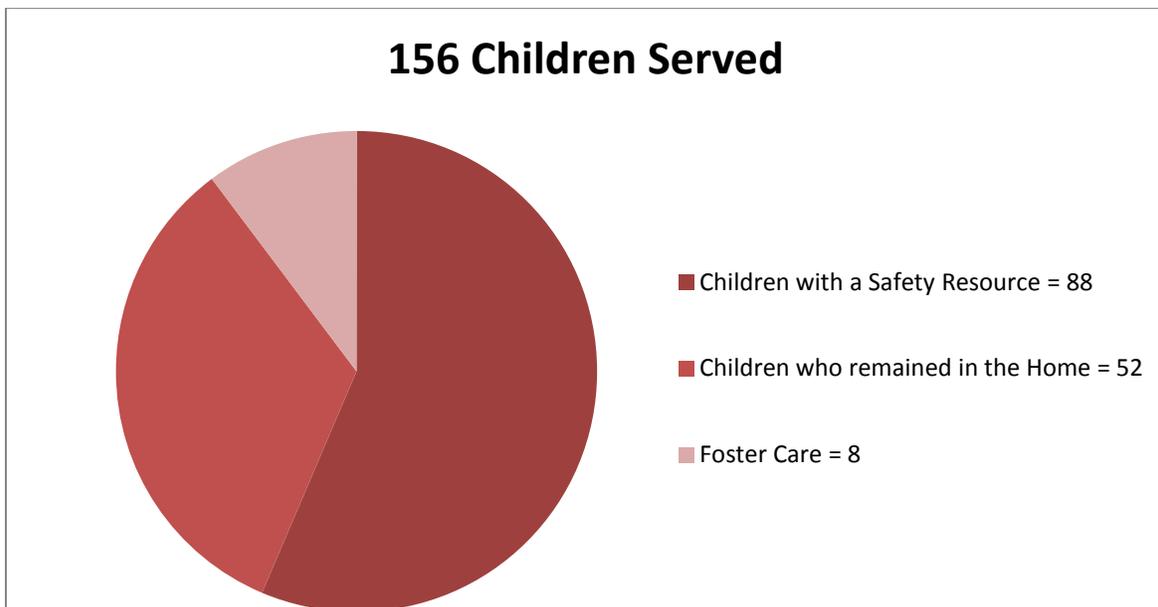
In 2001, the North Carolina Division of Social Services launched the Multiple Response System (MRS). Recognizing that “one size does not fit all,” the MRS was created so that CPS reports could be handled by the counties using the Family Assessment approach in lieu of the Investigative Assessment (or traditional investigation) to address certain reports of neglect or dependency. The Family Assessment approach is more family centered, and first contact with the family is recommended to be pre-arranged with the parent(s) and made with the family as a whole. Together, DSS and families gather information from many sources to complete the assessment. Families are encouraged to use their strengths to learn and grow together, and blame is not placed “on what happened” but rather to seek solutions. All cases of abuse and serious neglect are still investigated using the traditional method and in cooperation with Law Enforcement. In FY 2014-2015, of the 336 reports that were accepted for investigation/assessment, **67 reports (20%)** were accepted for **Investigative Assessment** and **269 reports (80 %)** were accepted for **Family Assessment**.

## FAMILY IN-HOME SERVICES

In-Home Services are legally mandated and provided to families who have had a substantiation of abuse, neglect, or dependency or a finding of in need of services due to safety issues. The goals of these services are to maintain the safety of children, to strengthen the family's capacity to protect and nurture its children, and to preserve or retain children within their own families.



Some of the families had multiple presenting problems that were dealt with simultaneously.



## Foster Care Services

Children are placed in the care of the agency via court ordered custody, voluntary placement agreements, or release for adoption. Permanency planning for children ensures a plan of care targeting the most goal oriented and least restrictive environment for children in achieving one year to permanency.

- 47 Monthly average of children in care in Swain County.
- 34 Total number of children that achieved permanence through reunification with a parent, guardianship, or adoption.

Ever thought about being a foster or adoptive parent? Take this quiz at <http://ncswlearn.org/foster> or fill out the [Foster/Adopt Inquiry](#) and return it to Swain County DSS to find out more information.



There are essentially three types of foster care placements paid for by Swain County DSS: **Family Foster Home, Therapeutic Home, and a Residential Facility.**

The average cost:

Child Age Group	Family Foster Home	Therapeutic Home	Residential Facility
0-5 yrs	\$475 month	\$1,433 month	\$4,279 month
6-12 yrs	\$581 month	\$1,564 month	\$4,437 month
13-18yrs	\$634 month	\$1,638 month	\$4,516 month

**Do you know the difference between custody, guardianship and adoption?**

- **Custody** is when a person or entity (such as a county department of social services) is responsible for the care and well-being of a child and has the legal authority to consent on behalf of the child, but the child's parents maintain their parental rights. Custody can be restored to the parents by the court if the parent proves capable of caring for the child.

- **Guardianship** is when a person is responsible for the care and well-being of a child and has the legal authority to consent on behalf of a child. Under a guardianship arrangement the child's parents maintain their parental rights. However, courts overturn guardianship only if it is determined the guardian is no longer capable of caring for the child or maintaining their safety.
- **Adoption** is the process by which an adult becomes the permanent, legal parent of a child. Adoptions can occur through relinquishments, termination of parental rights, or consent to adoption by a birth parent. Adoption severs the previous legal parent-child relationship and creates a new legal parent-child relationship between the adoptee and adoptive parent. Sometimes children who have been adopted also maintain contact with their birth family. This is called an "open adoption".





## PROTECTING OUR MOST VULNERABLE ADULTS

To make a call of suspected Abuse or Neglect of an elderly or disabled adult, please contact DSS at 828-488-6921 (8:00 am till 5:00 pm) or 828- 488-2196 (911) after hours.

Swain County DSS offers programs that provide support and help protect our disabled and aging adults. The adult social workers strive to find resources to enhance independent and safe living, free from abuse, neglect and exploitation. Appointments and walk-in's are welcome as we meet with adults to determine if their needs can be met by linking adults to resources or assess them for appropriate services. Programs that we administer are:

### **Adult Protective Services (APS)**

APS evaluates the report alleging that a disabled or elderly adult has been abused, neglected, or exploited. In order to screen in an APS report the adult is believed to be mentally or physically incapacitated (disabled), and is not able to perform essential services or does not have a responsible person who can help with essential services, leaving the adult in need of protection. Through respectful interviewing, including medical record reviews, our goal is to determine if services are needed to protect the adult and prevent further maltreatment.

2014-15 APS Report:           67 Reports received  
  34 Evaluations  
  13 Provided Information or Outreach

### **Guardianship           2014-15 Adults in Guardianship: 13**

Swain County DSS serves as the "Disinterested Public Agent" which allows our agency to be appointed guardian of adults who have been determined to be incompetent and unable to make decisions on their own behalf. Adults are evaluated annually to ensure their competency is restored if possible, or if a family member has been identified to resume the role of guardian for an adult.

The four types of guardian appointments are:

Guardian of the Person  
General Guardian

Guardian of the Estate  
Limited Guardianship

**Representative Payee      2014-15 Representative Payee Cases: 17**

Swain County DSS serves as Representative payee for adults who receive SSI, Social Security, or Special Assistance In-Home (SA In Home). The social workers provide case management services to the adult such as budgeting personal spending money, paying their bills, and assessing their needs on a quarterly basis. Representative Payee can be appointed by the Social Security Administration, Court, Veteran's Administration, or voluntarily requested.

**Special Assistance In-Home Program  
2014-2015 SA In-Home Program participants: 5**

Case Management and coordination of services are provided to Medicaid eligible adults. The goal of this program is to allow adults to stay in a private living arrangement as an alternative to an assisted living placement. There are 10 slots allotted by the state for Swain County to provide SA In-Home. Evaluations are completed by the Adult Social Workers.

**Adult Care Home Resident Discharge 2014-2015 Adults assisted: 30**

Swain County DSS is the lead agency in assisting residents of Adult Care Homes who have received a discharge notice without a destination for continued care. A team convenes to determine the needs of the adult and assists in locating placement for the adult.

September 20, 2015 was the closing date of Cornerstone Living Center. 30 residents were discharged to appropriate facilities, or to private living arrangements. Even though this was a sad occasion, with residents having to be relocated, there are plans for a new building to begin construction as early as January of 2016. The Meridian Senior Living Program intends to provide assisted living with a 50 – 80 bed facility, and welcome home as many adults possible who were residents of Cornerstone Living Center.

**Transition to Community Living**

Swain County DSS is responsible for assisting adults currently residing in Adult Care Homes who have been determined appropriate for living within the community, with the location of safe housing, and resources to live independently.

**Adult Care Home Facility Licensing and Monitoring Services**

Swain County DSS licenses and monitors one Adult Care Home for compliance with state/federal regulations. The agency also investigates complaints of non-compliance in facilities.

## FOOD AND NUTRITION SERVICES



**FACT:** The average monthly FNS benefit per person is \$133.85, or less than \$1.50 per person, per meal. The average FNS household consists of 2.1 people with a gross monthly income of \$744.

**FACT:** The overwhelming majority of FNS recipients who can work do so. Almost 70 percent of FNS recipients are not expected to work, primarily because they are children, elderly, or disabled. In North Carolina, almost 73% of all FNS participants are in families with children. Of households with children, almost 87% worked in the previous or following year of receiving and 60% worked while receiving FNS. This supports the strong correlation between unemployment and food stamps.

**FACT:** \$1 in FNS benefits generates about \$1.70 in localized economic activity. Overall FNS pumped about \$2.43 billion into North Carolina's economy in 2012. FNS not only helps low-income people buy groceries, it frees up cash for other expenses, such as medical care, clothing, home repairs and childcare. That benefits local businesses and their employees, which boosts the economy as a whole.

**FACT:** National statistics state that less than 1% of FNS recipients are potentially committing fraud.

### SWAIN COUNTY FOOD AND NUTRITION SERVICES BY THE NUMBERS

#### 2014-2015 YEARLY TOTAL OF APPLICATIONS

1,128

#### AVERAGE NUMBER OF RECERTIFICATIONS PER MONTH

99

#### AVERAGE ACTIVE CASES PER MONTH

1,209

#### Food Vouchers

539

#### LOCAL FOOD PANTRIES

CHEROKEE COMPASSIONATE MINISTRIES (828) 497-2819

GRACE CHRISTIAN ACADEMY (828) 488-1042

VICTORY BAPTIST CHURCH (MANNA) (828) 488-6717

BRYSON CITY PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH (828) 488-2480

LIVING WATERS FOOD PANTRY (916) 868-4373



**PROGRAM**  
**INTEGRITY**  
**2014-2015**

**TOTAL FRAUD**  
**COLLECTIONS**  
**\$ 35,503.91**

**TOTAL FRAUD**  
**CLAIMS**  
**ESTABLISHED**  
**\$ 47.979.11**



**CHILD SUPPORT**  
**ENFORCEMENT**

**TOTAL**  
**CASELOAD**  
**AVERAGE**  
**467**  
**TOTAL**  
**COLLECTIONS**  
**\$775,033**

**2014-2015 EMERGENCY ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS**

CRISIS INTERVENTION PROGRAM

**\$58,857.32 (104) HOUSEHOLDS SERVED**

LOW INCOME ENERGY ASSISTANCE

**\$93,000 (344) HOUSEHOLDS SERVED**

FEMA

**\$650.00 (2) HOUSEHOLDS SERVED**

SHARE THE WARMTH AND COOLING

**\$5,877.19 (27) HOUSEHOLDS SERVED**

GOOD SAMARITAN

**\$497.22 (12) INDIVIDUALS SERVED**

FAITH AND COMMUNITY EMERGENCY SERVICES

**\$1,570.48 (18) INDIVIDUALS SERVED**

DUKE SETTLEMENT/BLOSSMAN GAS FUNDS

**\$15,838.34 (75) INDIVIDUALS SERVED**

**Work first (WF)**

The Work First Family Assistance Program is about helping families achieve self-sufficiency by helping adults support themselves and provide for their children and to help families reach their self-sufficiency goals, Work First provides employment services, other supportive services, and time-limited cash assistance to families with children under age 18. The family is referred to child support to help get additional financial support for the children.

WF Monthly On-going	4
WF Benefit Diversion	16
TANF 200%	1
EA 150% PL	180
Good Samaritan\FACES	38

# MEDICAID



## **NC Medicaid and Health Choice**

Medicaid serves low-income parents, children, seniors, and people with disabilities. North Carolina Medicaid and Health Choice offer different ways that may help pay for some or all of the cost of health care. Each program helps people and families with certain health needs, and income and resource limits. Swain County had an average of 4148 cases in the 2014-2015 fiscal year.

## **Resources available other than Medicaid:**

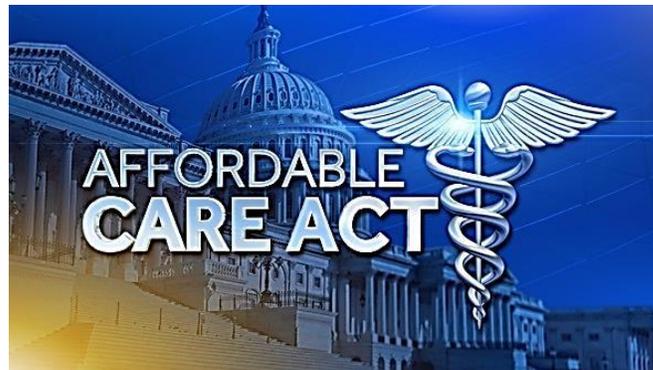
### **SHIIP**

The **Seniors' Health Insurance Information Program (SHIIP)** counsels Medicare beneficiaries and caregivers about Medicare, Medicare supplements, Medicare Advantage, Medicare Part D, and long-term care insurance. The counselors on our toll-free line offer free and unbiased information regarding Medicare health care products. We also help people recognize and prevent Medicare billing errors and possible fraud and abuse through our NC SMP Program. For SHIIP information Swain County residents can call **828-488-3848**, the local office is located at the Swain County Cooperative Extension at 60 Almond School Road Bryson City, NC 28713. You may also go to [www.NCDOI.com/SHIIP](http://www.NCDOI.com/SHIIP) for more information.



### **Affordable Care for those ineligible for Medicaid programs**

The Health Insurance Marketplace is for people who don't have health coverage. If you don't have health insurance through a job, Medicare, Medicaid, the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP), or another source that provides qualifying coverage, the Marketplace can help you get covered. Most people must have qualifying health coverage or pay a fee with their 2016 federal taxes. If you don't have coverage in 2016, you'll pay a penalty of either 2.5% of your income, or \$695 per adult (\$347.50 per child) — whichever is higher. In some cases, you might qualify for an exemption from the requirement to have health insurance. For free in person assistance Swain County residents can contact an affordable health care navigator at 828-550-7908. You may also go to [www.healthcare.gov](http://www.healthcare.gov) for more information.



# SPECIAL RECOGNITIONS



★★★★★★★★★★★★  
 ★ The Smoky Mountain Ride In supports Christmas for the Foster Children by sponsoring an event in June (for the past 4 years) that raises money from their members and from the community. ★  
 ★ They partner with the Swain County Chapter of NCSSA to host this event. ★  
 ★★★★★★★★★★★★

Smoky Mountain Ride-In Present Fundraiser Check to NCSSA



★★★★★★★★★★★★  
 ★ The Grove Church has purchased book bags and all recommended school supplies for the Foster Children for the past 7 years. ★  
 ★★★★★★★★★★★★



The Bryson City Methodist Church provides DSS with Emergency Assistance funds called Good Samaritan. This fund is unique to Swain County and is valuable because it helps individuals who do not qualify for programs that assist families and children. The Methodist Church also provides Easter Baskets to the Foster Children each year.

FACES, which is Faith and Community Emergency Services provides emergency assistance to individuals who do not qualify for other state or federal programs. This money comes to DSS from the 4th Sunday Lunch at the Presbyterian Church sponsored by the Gift Fund, as well as special offerings from the Ministerial Association.



The American Association of University Women presented the Foster Care Unit with Duffel Bags to help children who have been take into custody



“Tribe Called Praise” sponsors a Toy Drive to provide children with gifts for Christmas.



Community Ministers provide DSS staff with devotionals, words of encouragement, and expressions of appreciation.



The Front Desk and Front Services Staff of Harrah's Casino provided gifts for the Guardianship Program at Swain DSS

Swain County DSS partners with the Swain County Family Resource Center in a program called Christmas Cheer. Applications are taken in Nov. & Dec. to assist families in need to provide Christmas presents to 264 children.

Also, Christmas of 2015 was the first year Swain County partnered with the Swain County Detention Center, who provided gifts and money to the Foster Program.



*Thank You So Very Much!*



## Contact Information

**Interim Human Services Director: Administration Building: 488-9273 Ext. 2231**

Kevin King / [k\\_king@swaincountync.gov](mailto:k_king@swaincountync.gov)

**Director:** Sheila Sutton / [sheila.sutton@swaincountync.gov](mailto:sheila.sutton@swaincountync.gov)

**Swain County Human Services Building: 488-6921 Ext. 2021**

**Medicaid/Health Choice Supervisor: Ext. 2043**

Sonia Monteith / [sonia.monteith@swaincountync.gov](mailto:sonia.monteith@swaincountync.gov)

**Children's Services/Intake Supervisor: Ext. 2017**

Erin Pooser / [erin.pooser@swaincountync.gov](mailto:erin.pooser@swaincountync.gov)

**Foster Care Supervisor: Ext. 2042**

Bree Clawson / [bree.clawson@swaincountync.gov](mailto:bree.clawson@swaincountync.gov)

**In-home Services Supervisor:**

**Adult & Community Services Supervisor: Ext. 2012**

Carole Maennle / [carole.maennle@swaincountync.gov](mailto:carole.maennle@swaincountync.gov)

**Food and Nutrition/Child Support Supervisor: Ext. 2011**

Kim Cunningham / [kim.cunningham@swaincountync.gov](mailto:kim.cunningham@swaincountync.gov)

**Fiscal Officer: Administration Building: 488-9273 Ext. 2241**

Lottie Barker / [Lottie.barker@swaincountync.gov](mailto:Lottie.barker@swaincountync.gov)

**Personnel Officer: Administration Building: 488-9273 Ext. 2227**

Elise Bryson / [ebryson@swaincountync.gov](mailto:ebryson@swaincountync.gov)

**Computer Technology: Swain County Human Services Building 488-6921 Ext. 2047**

Kurt Angel / [kurt.angel@swaincountync.gov](mailto:kurt.angel@swaincountync.gov)

**Child Support Enforcement:**

(828) 488-2191 / Fax: (828) 488-8658

P.O. Box 2840, Bryson City, NC 28713

**Board of Commissioners/Human Services Board:**

Phillip Carson, Chair

David Monteith, Vice Chair

Steve Moon

Dr. Ben Bushyhead

Danny Burns