

Connect

WASHINGTON COUNTY

A newsletter brought to you by the Washington County Department of Social Services

In this issue:

- FIA Appreciation
- SERMA Awards
- Mission Advocacy Award
- New EBT Card Rollout
- Much More!

June is Family Investment Appreciation Month!

During the month of June, we celebrate our dedicated employees in the Family Investment Administration (FIA)! These individuals work tirelessly to assist county residents with vital programs such as SNAP, Temporary Cash Assistance, the Temporary Disability Assistance Program, Emergency Assistance, Medicaid, Long-Term Care, and the Sun Bucks program.

Our FIA team members are often the first point of contact for customers visiting our agency, providing crucial support and guidance in the lobby. Their hard work and commitment are invaluable to our community. Thank you to all of our Family Investment employees

The *Best* of FIA Washington County

Between issues of this newsletter, we'll continue to post important information and events on our [Facebook page](#). Be sure to follow it to see what's going on at our office and in the community.

I invite you to reach out to me with any communication matter, question or opportunity to collaborate at james.gossard@maryland.gov or 240-420-2121.

WCDSS Shines at the 2026 SERMA Awards

We are incredibly proud to announce that our agency won three major awards at the State Employee Risk Management Association (SERMA) Conference on Thursday, May 21, 2026! Out of the six awards given statewide to the Department of Human Services, WCDSS brought home half of them.

Congratulations to our dedicated team and outstanding individuals for their commitment to creating a safer work environment!

Our 2026 SERMA Award Winners:

- **Best Practice Award (Agency Award):** Recognized for the development and successful rollout of our Solo Protect mobile panic devices. WCDSS is the *only* county in Maryland utilizing this technology to dispatch immediate help to workers making community and home visits.
- **Individual Achievement Award: Evie Fisher (HR Officer):** Recognized for coordinating multiple essential safety-related training opportunities, including CPR and infection control.
- **Individual Achievement Award: Jennifer Kane:** Recognized for her leadership on the Solo Protect device initiative, the development of our internal training series, and coordinating all agency risk management prevention and response activities.

This recognition highlights our team's commitment to employee health, safety, and well-being. Thank you to all those recognized for making WCDSS a leader in safety and innovation!

To learn more about SERMA, click [here](#).



Kollin Murphy Honored with Mission Advocacy Award

Excellence in public service extends far beyond the walls of our department, and our team members frequently earn recognition on local, state, and national stages.

On May 7th, we were thrilled to celebrate Kollin Murphy from our Dads' Connection Program, who was honored with the Mission Advocacy Award at the 71st Annual [Horizon Goodwill](#) Power of Work Awards.

This prestigious award recognizes individuals who have demonstrated an unwavering commitment to creating equitable opportunities for people facing barriers to social mobility, directly supporting Goodwill's mission.

Through the Dads' Connection program, Kollin provides vital case management services that, in his own words, *"help fathers become the dads they want to become."*

Dads' Connection is a program offered by the Washington County Department of Social Services that provides support services specifically for non-custodial fathers. Its primary goal is to help participants overcome barriers, such as a lack of job skills, education, transportation, or stable housing, to become self-sufficient and more consistent financial and emotional resources for their children.

Thank you, Kollin, for your remarkable commitment and dedication to the families we serve!

To see the amazing video from the awards ceremony, click [here](#).



Thank You for a Powerful Day at the Cost of Poverty Experience



On May 13th our agency hosted the Cost of Poverty Experience (COPE) at Meritus Medical Center, and we want to extend a sincere thank you to all of our community partners who attended.

This immersive, 2.5-hour training simulation was designed to deepen our collective understanding of the realities of poverty, improve our engagement practices, and foster stronger community partnerships. We were thrilled to see such a dedicated group of participants step into family roles or serve as Community Resource Providers to navigate this complex simulation together.

By moving beyond stereotypes and stepping into the shoes of those experiencing generational and situational poverty, our participants gained invaluable insights that will help us serve our community with greater empathy and effectiveness. This event was a vital opportunity to align our efforts and reinforce our shared commitment to fighting the root causes of poverty in our region.

We are incredibly grateful to every individual who dedicated their time to this experience. Thank you for your continued partnership and for your work in helping us build a more supportive and responsive community!



Maryland Moves to Modern, Secure EBT Cards

As a vital partner in supporting Maryland individuals and families, we want to ensure you have the latest updates regarding a major upgrade to the state's Electronic Benefits Transfer (EBT) system.

To combat the rise in benefit theft and card "skimming," the Maryland Department of Human Services is transitioning to a new EBT vendor and rolling out more secure cards. Maryland is among the first states in the nation to implement this upgrade, and your help in spreading the word will be crucial for a smooth transition.

EMV Chip & Tap Technology: Current EBT cards are being phased out. The new EBT cards feature EMV chip and contactless (tap) technology, matching modern banking standards.

Why it matters: Unlike traditional magnetic stripes, which are highly vulnerable to skimming devices at checkout counters, chip technology generates a unique code for every transaction. This drastically reduces the risk of fraud and protects customers' food and cash assistance.

Transition Timeline and Logistics: The state is transitioning to a new vendor, Fidelity Information Services (FIS), and will begin mailing the new chip cards in July.

No Disruption to Benefit Schedules: The distribution dates and benefit amounts for customers will remain exactly the same.

The 30-Day Expiration: Once a new card is issued and mailed, the customer's old card will automatically deactivate approximately 30 days later. It is vital that customers watch their mail and activate the new card promptly.

How can you help? We ask that you share these three critical action steps with the communities and individuals you serve:

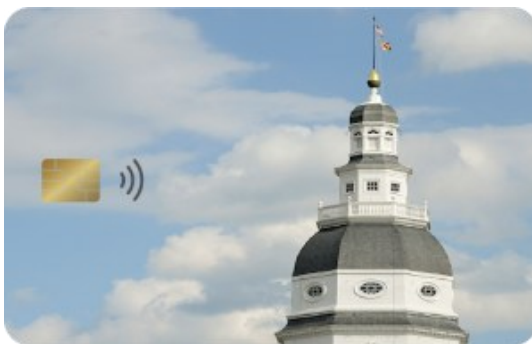
Urge Address Updates: Because the new cards are distributed via mail, customers must ensure their mailing address is completely up-to-date. Please encourage them to verify their details online at benefits.maryland.gov, at our office, or by calling 1-800-332-6347.

Transition to the ebtEDGE Platform: The state is sunsetting the old ConnectEBT app. Customers must download the official ebtEDGE mobile app or use the ebtEDGE Cardholder Portal to manage their accounts.

Promote the "Freeze" Security Feature: The new ebtEDGE app allows users to instantly freeze and unfreeze their cards. Educating customers on this feature is one of the best ways to help.

Thank you for your continued partnership and dedication to keeping Maryland families informed, supported, and secure!

For questions about the rollout of the new EBT Cards, please feel free to email james.gossard@maryland.gov.



When the new EBT cards arrive, they will look like this.



MARYLAND
CHILD & ADULT PROTECTIVE SERVICES

HOTLINE

1-800-91-PREVENT
1-800-917-7383

Sun Bucks Program Returns for 2026



MARYLAND SUN BUCKS IS BACK FOR SUMMER 2026!

SUN Bucks puts groceries on the table when school is out.

Eligible children receive \$40 in June, July, and August, for a total of \$120 per child for the summer.

GOOD NEWS!

MOST students are automatically enrolled and do not need to apply. Your program enrollment letter or letter of eligibility will come in the mail.

If you do not receive a letter but you think that you are eligible, scan the QR code to learn more about eligibility criteria, the application process, and to learn more about SUN Bucks.

Reach us by Email!

Washington County DSS: Your Email Contact Guide



For Family Investment

washington.fi@maryland.gov

Use for questions about SNAP, Medicaid, Cash Assistance, or Emergency Assistance.



For Child Support

washingtoncounty.childsupport@maryland.gov

Includes inquiries about the CAPE and DADs Connections programs.



For Adult, Child & Family Services

washington.familyservices@maryland.gov

Contact this address for all family and adult services matters.



For Collaboration & General Inquiries

james.gossard@maryland.gov

Use for partnerships, community events, or any other general question.

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dhr.maryland.gov/local-offices/washington-county/

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