

Sandusky County

Department of Job and Family Services



PUBLIC ASSISTANCE DIVISION

2022 Annual Report

The Public Assistance Division of Sandusky County Department of Job and Family Services administers programs which provide either cash, food or medical assistance to eligible individuals or families. Funding for these programs is from a combined source of federal and state dollars. An individual or family may receive one, two or all three programs, in any combination. These programs are:

1. Medicaid
2. Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)
3. Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) in Ohio known as Ohio Works First (OWF)
4. Prevention, Retention, Contingency (PRC)

In 2022, there were 4,166 applications filed for public assistance benefits for Sandusky County residents, an average of 347 applications per month. One application may be used to apply for all programs. This application is either a paper application or an online application submitted through the state customer portal. If a customer wishes to apply for only Medicaid, that may be done by using a paper application, applying through the portal, calling the statewide Medicaid Hotline or by calling the agency Call Center.



Sandusky County participates in a Shared Services program, jointly sharing a call center phone system with eight other counties to better serve our applicants and recipients. The benefits reflected in the annual report will be benefits which were processed for, or issued to, Sandusky County residents.

The impact of COVID-19 upon the Public Assistance Division was great and has since continued into 2023. The agency was fully re-opened to the public in 2021. Regardless of the status of being open to the public, benefit processing and applications continued with no interruption. The agency still has use of drop boxes and a drive thru option for submitting documents. Regulations regarding self-attestations for many eligibility factors still exist although it appears these will be coming to an end soon. This allowed authorizations to occur at a much faster rate, often on the day of the interview. Even though the agency re-opened to the public, many case managers choose to continue to work remotely on a hybrid schedule. This is possible through the use of the existing technology, with support from the state. Workers are required to come into the agency on the CORE day and when assigned particular duties which require a physical presence.

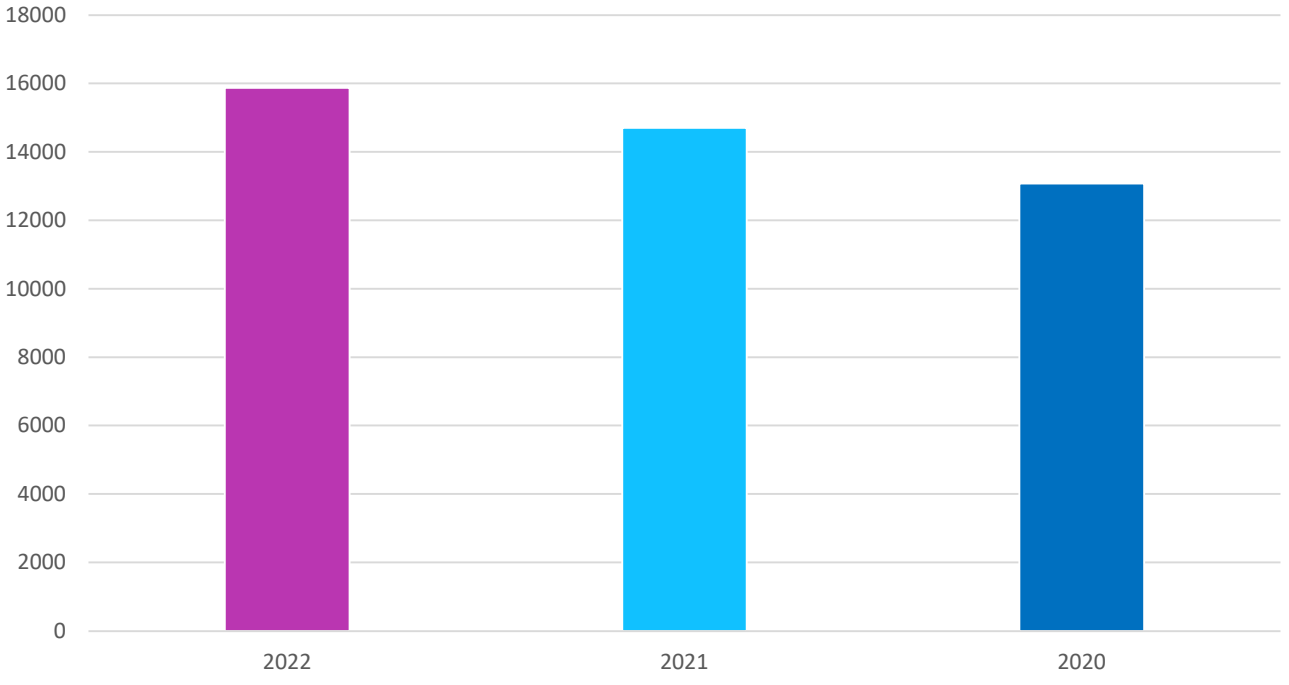
Medicaid

Medicaid is the largest program administered by this department, both in number of recipients and in the cost of the program. The expansion of Medicaid in 2014 saw a substantial increase in the number of recipients. Medicaid recipients are low-income individuals of all ages. Based upon the population estimate from the US Census Bureau, 30% of the residents of Sandusky County are Medicaid recipients. Due to the Public Health Emergency, regulations were put into place which prohibited the termination of Medicaid for any individual who was receiving the benefit as of March 18, 2020, except in cases of death, verbal withdrawal from the program and verification of out of state residency. There has been a steady increase in the number of recipients. As a result, there was a 7.17% increase in Medicaid expenditures. The expenditures listed here are the cost of payments to the Managed Care Plans for coverage of the recipients or for Fee for Service payments. Actual expenditures to providers based upon paid claims in not included in these totals.

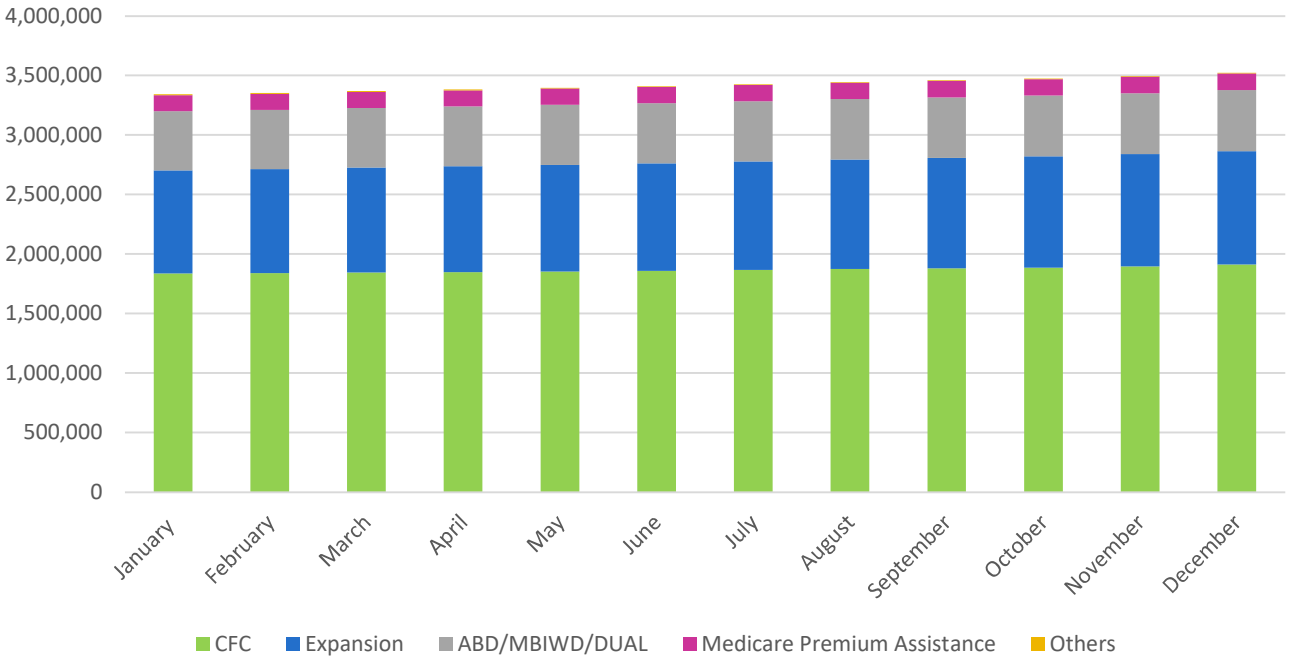
Medicaid Recipients

	2022	2021	2020
Average Monthly Medicaid Recipients	15,871	14,704	13,080
Recipient Difference in Relation to Prior Year	7.63% increase	12.42% increase	6.12% increase
Average Monthly Expenditure	\$11,594,057	\$10,791,480	\$10,249,710
Annual Expenditure	\$139,128,690	\$129,497,769	\$122,996,530

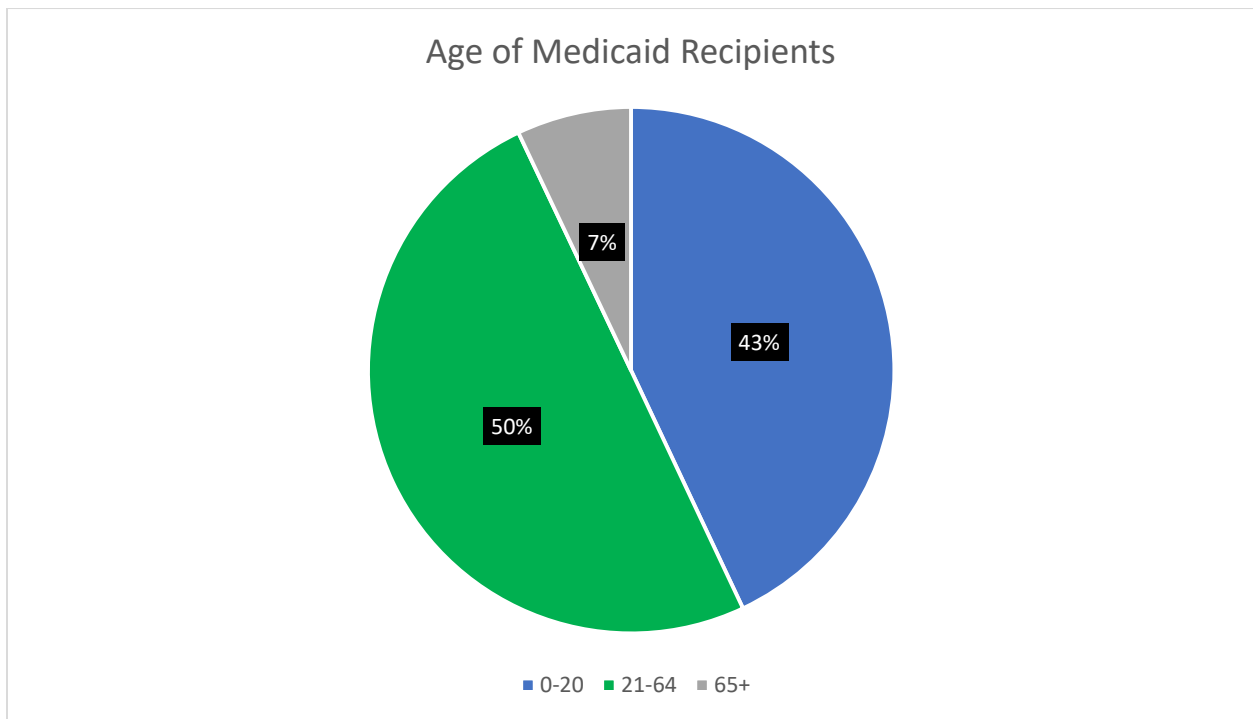
Average Monthly Medicaid Recipients



Medicaid Recipients by Program Type



Eligibility for Medicaid is determined based upon program requirements. Every individual is required to meet financial eligibility standards. Other eligibility requirements exist such as age or disability. The category for which one is determined to be eligible determines the funding stream for payment and the amount of federal reimbursement. The majority of the Medicaid recipients are categorized as those in the Covered Families and Children group. This includes not only the Medicaid eligible children 0-20, but also the parents of these children, who reside in the same household. Expansion recipients are those who are generally 21-64, who would not have qualified for Medicaid prior to the expansion of the program in 2014. Those individuals who have been determined disabled by Social Security or are over the age of 65 make up the third category of recipients. MPAP individuals (Medicare Premium Assistance Program) receive only Medicare Premium assistance, the payment of their Part B premium and/or their cost-sharing portion. Other includes recipients of Alien Emergency Medical Assistance and other recipients who cannot be categorized in the other programs.



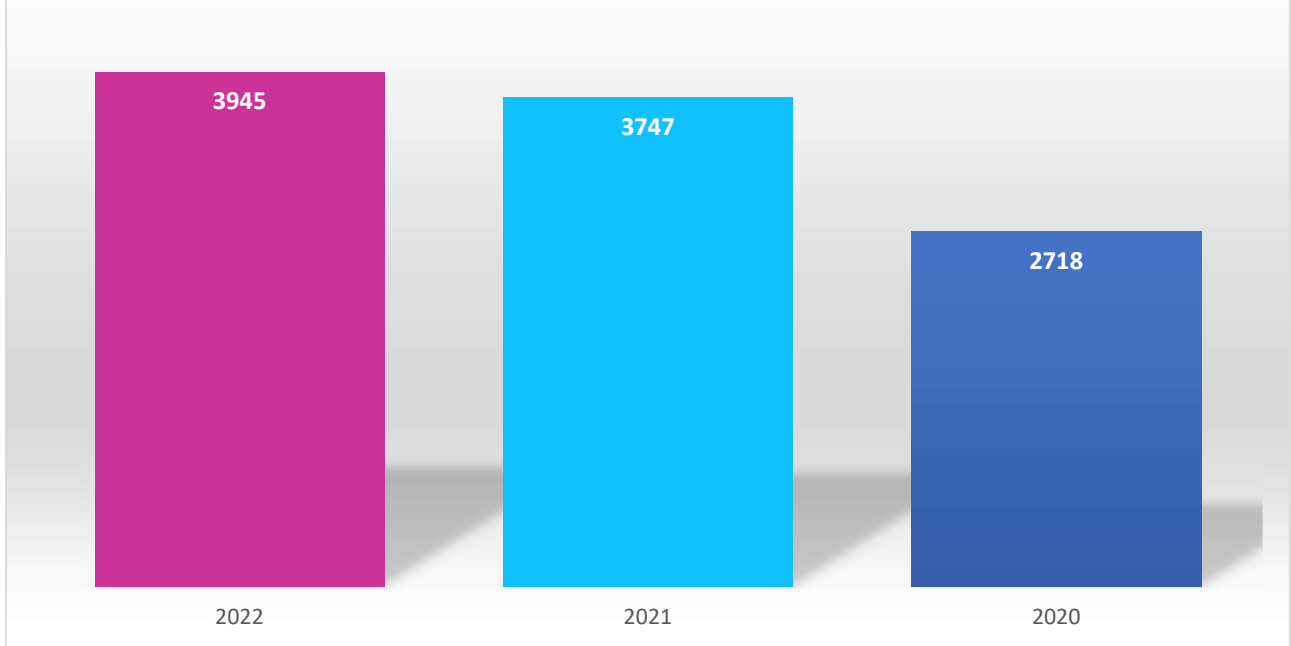
Recipients 0-20 and 21-64 years of age are very similar in percentages. The smallest group is those over 65, but they tend to have the more expensive health care needs.

Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program

This program provides food assistance to individuals and/or families via the Ohio Direction Card System (EBT Card). Many waivers were obtained by the State of Ohio from the Food and Nutrition Service to provide additional benefits to recipients in starting in 2021 and going through 2022. Each month, supplements were issued to recipients so that each assistance group received the maximum allotment for the assistance group size. In addition, for families including children eligible or the Free and Reduced Meals program, additional benefits were issued to replace the meals which would have been received at school, since schools were closed. In some school districts in Sandusky County, all elementary school children receive free meals, therefore caretakers of all children received Pandemic EBT to replace the meals from schools. Thus, benefits were issued to SNAP recipients and also to households who were not a part of the "regular" participant population. Pandemic EBT benefits issued to families with school-age children are not included in the benefits shown in this report.

SNAP	2022	2021	2020
Average Program Blocks	3,945	3,747	2,718
Caseload Difference in Relation to Prior Year	5.15% increase	37.86% increase	13.40% Increase
Average Monthly Expenditure	\$1,487,139	\$1,313,372	\$978,416
Annual Issuance	\$17,845,671	\$15,760,469	\$11,741,002
Issuance Difference in Relation to Prior Year	12.41% increase	34.23% increase	70.05% Increase

SNAP Monthly Average Caseload



The unduplicated count of recipients of SNAP for 2021 was 8,278 individuals.

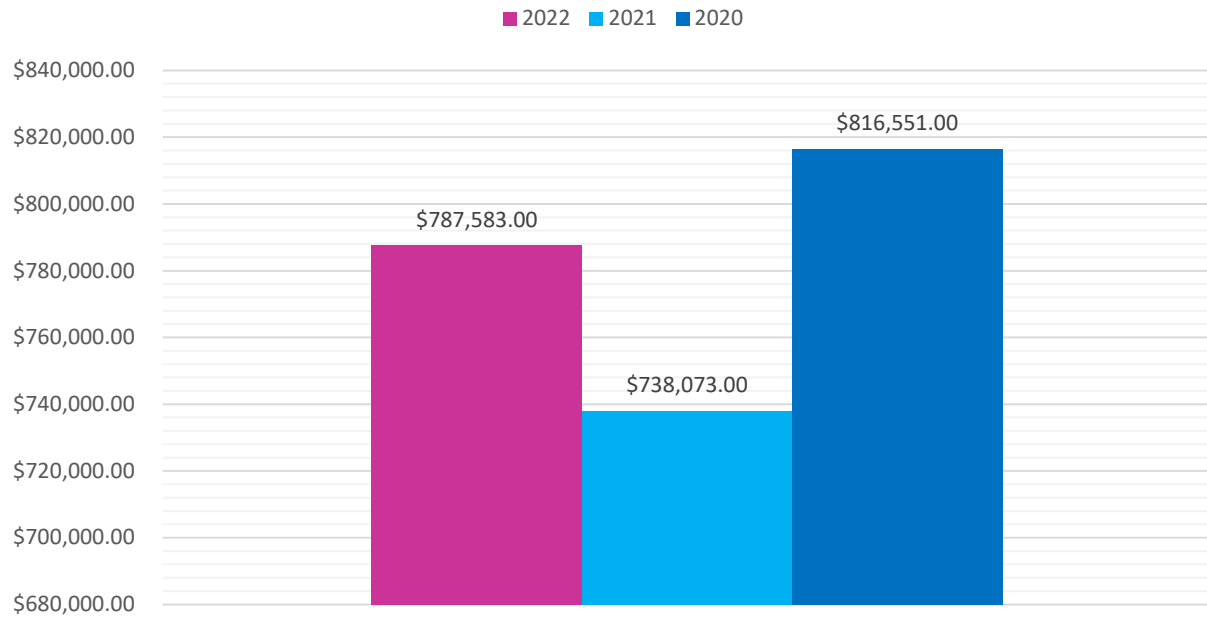
SNAP	2022	2021	2020
SNAP Expenditures			
Total Issuance	\$17,845,671	\$15,760,469	\$11,741,002
Average Monthly Allotment Per Case	\$376	\$350	\$359
Average Monthly Allotment Per Person	\$180	\$147	\$170
SNAP Recipients			
Average Cases Per Month	3,945	3,747	2,718
Average Persons Per Month	8,278	8,927	5,733

Ohio Works First (OWF)

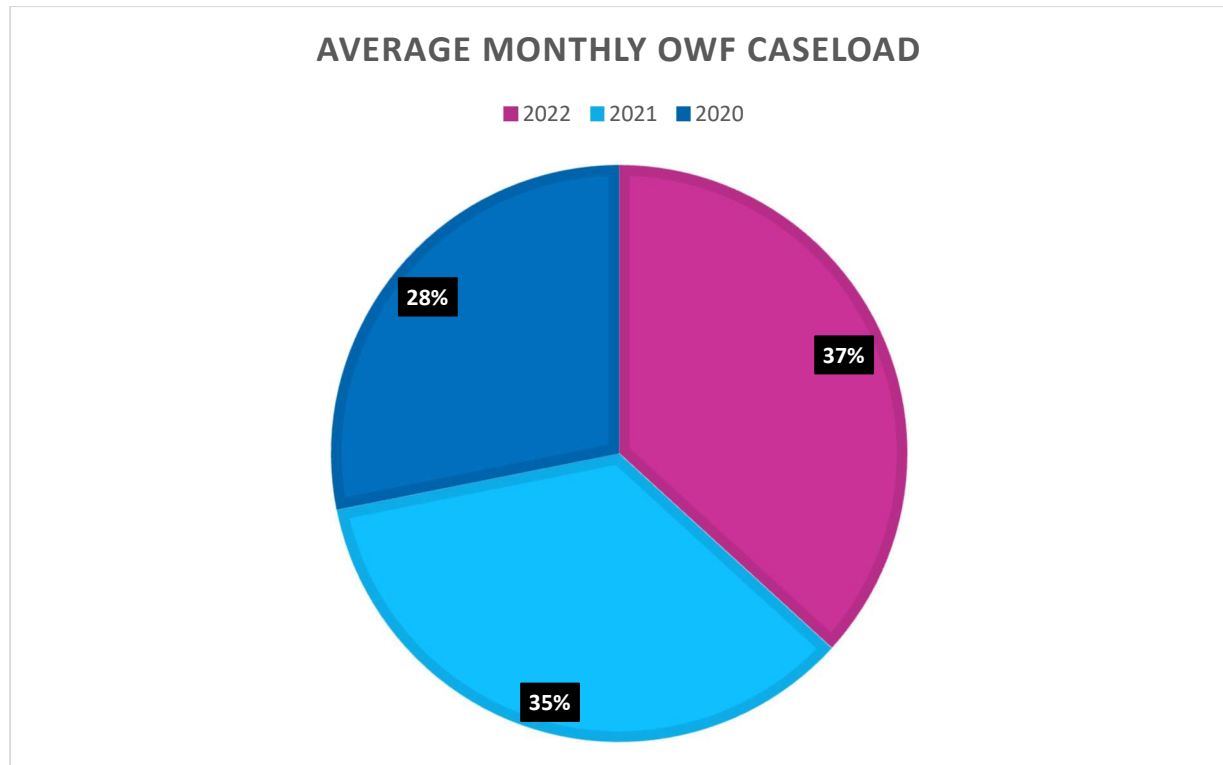
The program provides financial assistance to families with children and/or pregnant women. This program requires a work activity unless the individual meets an exemption. Cash assistance may be time-limited to 36 months in the lifetime of an adult recipient. The majority of the cases are child-only cases, either due to a disabled parent in receipt of Supplemental Security Income, or the adult in the household is not the parent, but a caretaker relative, legal guardian or legal custodian. The increase in recipients continues to be attributed to the COVID-19 pandemic and the resulting loss of employment by many individuals.

OWF	2022	2021	2020
Average Monthly Caseload	238	227	182
Caseload Difference in Relation to Prior Year	4.73% Increase	24.73% Increase	10.3% Increase
Average Monthly Expenditure	\$65,631	\$61,506	\$68,046
Annual Expenditure	\$787,583	\$738,073	\$816,551
Expenditure Difference in Relation to Prior Year	6.49% Increase	9.61% Decrease	13.7% Increase

OWF Expenditures



AVERAGE MONTHLY OWF CASELOAD

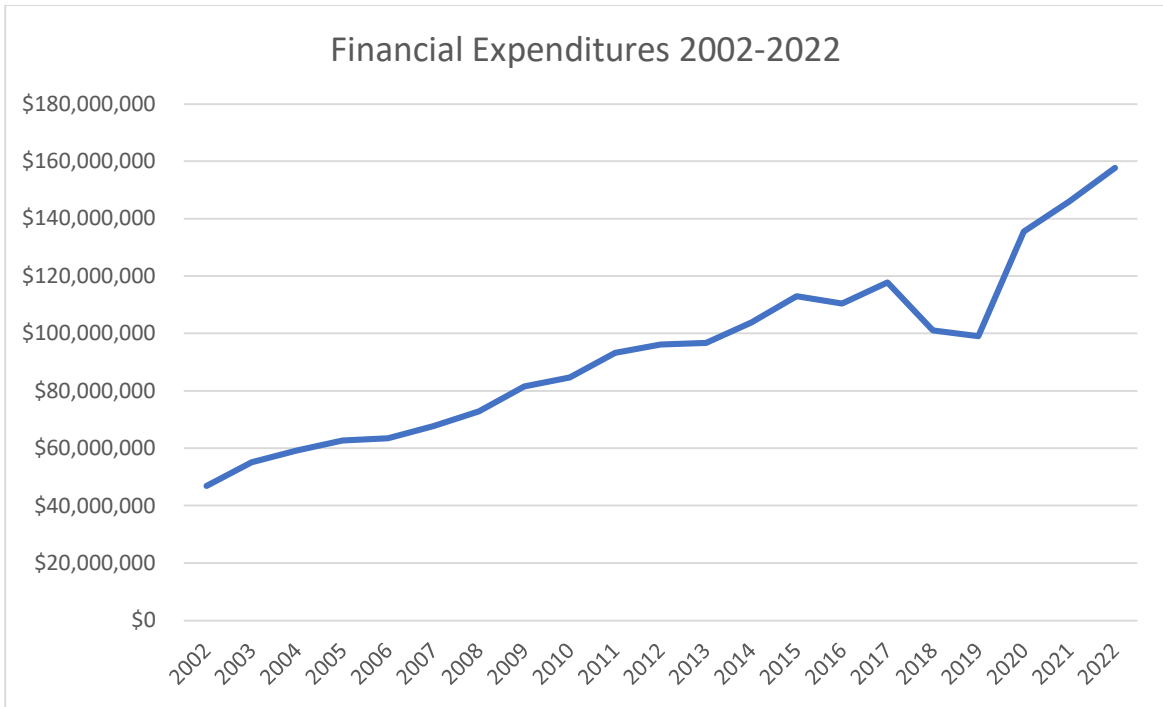


The unduplicated count of recipients for 2022 was 440 individuals receiving OWF cash assistance.

History of Financial Assistance Expenditures

OWF, Medicaid, Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program,
Disability Financial (program ended 12/31/2017) and Disability Medical
Assistance (program ended 11/1/2009)
(Excluding administrative costs)

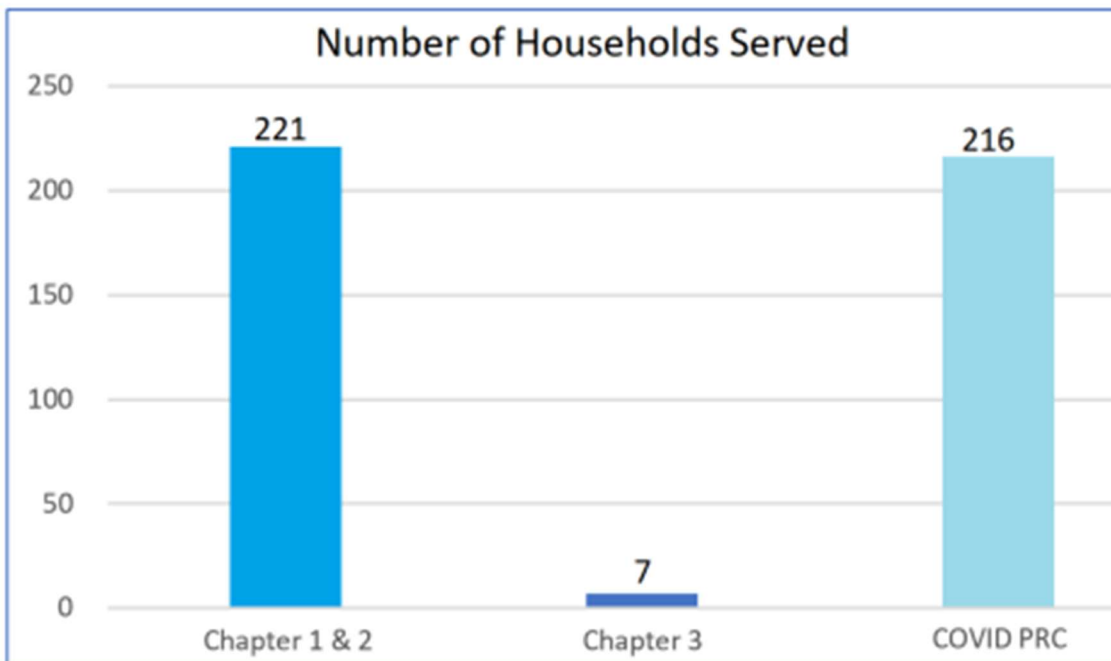
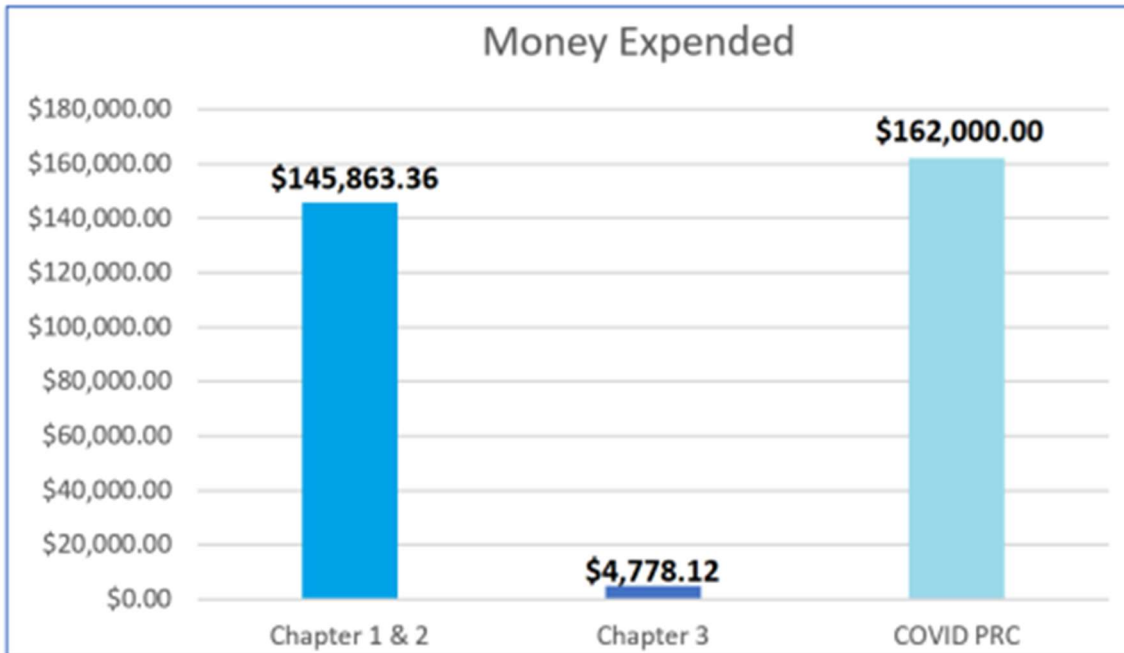
Year	Payment Amount
2002	\$46,879,845
2003	\$55,058,388
2004	\$59,282,751
2005	\$62,688,157
2006	\$63,495,940
2007	\$67,680,178
2008	\$72,844,595
2009	\$81,487,803
2010	\$84,710,107
2011	\$93,228,691
2012	\$96,172,544
2013	\$96,722,438
2014	\$103,833,784
2015	\$112,933,117
2016	\$110,467,328
2017	\$117,801,285
2018	\$101,007,922
2019	\$99,034,855
2020	\$135,554,083
2021	\$145,996,311
2022	\$157,761,944



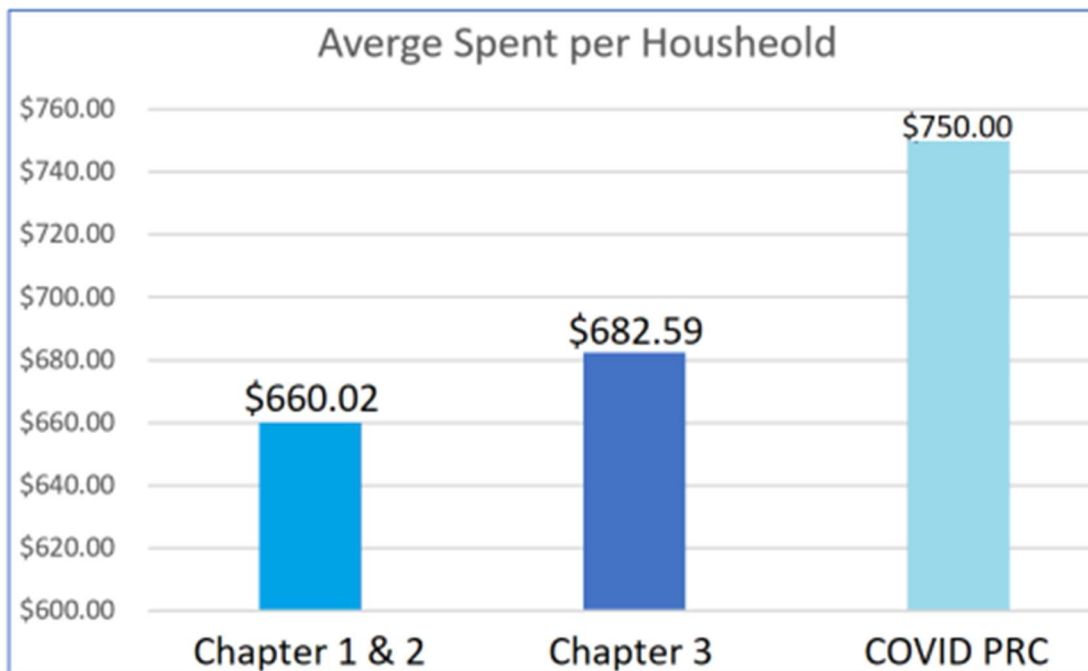
Total program expenditures in 2022 reached an all-time high compared to the years past.

Prevention, Retention Contingency

In 2021, the Public Assistance Unit took over this program, which provides work supports and other services to help low-income families in times of need. The types of services offered are clothing and shelter, Domestic Violence housing relocation assistance, Disaster assistance, transportation (including auto repair expenses), and employment and training.



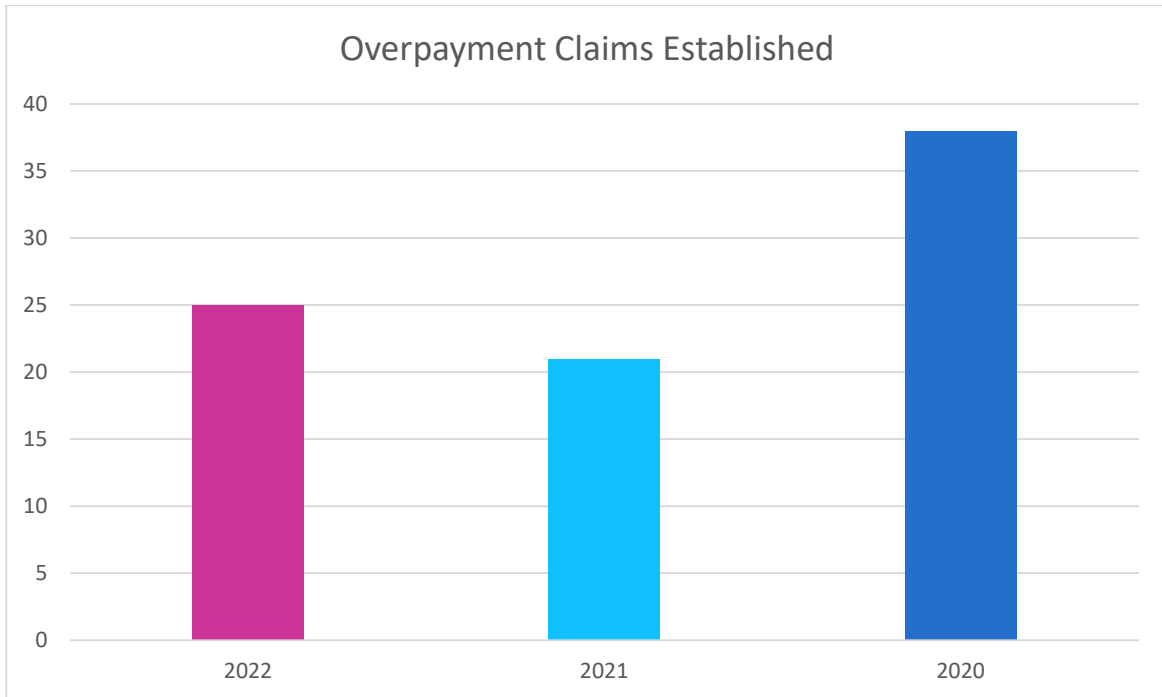
In 2022, Sandusky County spent a total of \$312,641.48 in PRC funds to help a total of 444 families. In 2021, 235 families were served. \$145,863.36 was spent under Chapters 1 and 2 of the PRC plan which covers a range of services such as car repairs, home repairs, furniture, rental assistance, school supplies, and work-related expenses such as uniforms. Services provided under these two chapters are designed to help families become stable so they can continue to provide a safe living environment for their children.



\$4,778.12 in PRC funds was issued under Chapter 3 of the PRC plan which covers the needs of Kinship Care situations. Through this program, the agency provides stabilization services such as beds and bedding, clothes, car seats, and highchairs to children in foster care situations. In addition, Sandusky County was able to fund a special program that issued a one-time grant of \$750 to families who also qualify for the TANF program. This funding came through a special Covid-related grant received from the state. Sandusky County was able to serve 216 families through this special program.

Overpayment and Collection Activity

The county is required to pursue the collection of overpayments received by assistance groups for both household errors and administrative errors. Household errors occur when a customer does not provide accurate information regarding his/her situation or fails to report changes as required by regulations. The responsibility to report changes differs depending upon the program. Administrative errors occur at the agency level or for reasons beyond either the customer's or the agency's control. The Public Health Emergency played a huge role. In addition, due to the issuing of maximum allotments for all eligible households for each month, overpayments only existed if the household income exceeded the 130% standard, or if there was a change in the household size. As a result of the suspension of interim reports, there were no reporting responsibilities for such things as a change in household composition, income which was less than the 130% standard, or shelter costs. Now that interim reports are required again, these figures will change. These factors all had a significant impact upon the potential existence of overpayment claims.



There are multiple means available to the agency to collect overpayments. These collections can be for claims from previous years. In meeting this obligation, the agency collected the following amounts.

Overpayment Collections

	2022	2021	2020
Cash – Total	\$9,728.01	\$11,820.75	\$3,540.75
SNAP	\$6,935.01	\$10,279.75	\$1,541.25
OWF	\$2,793.00	\$1,541.00	\$ 1,999.50
Recoupments - Total	\$7,784.00	\$11,869.00	\$11,589.00
SNAP	\$7,184.00	\$11,406.00	\$11,589.00
OWF	\$600.00	\$463.00	\$0.00
SNAP via Eppic	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
SNAP Under Issuance Offsetting	\$1,204.00	\$2,702.00	\$3,990.00
Cash Under Issuance Offsetting	\$203.00	--	--
STOP (Collection on cash claims through State offsetting)	\$45.00	\$395.00	\$1,339.00
TOP (Collection on SNAP claims through federal offsetting)	\$24,583.76	\$13,830.32	\$27,663.59
Medicaid Collections	\$12.53	\$161.45	\$1,836.00
TOTAL	\$61,072.31	\$40,617.07	\$49,958.34

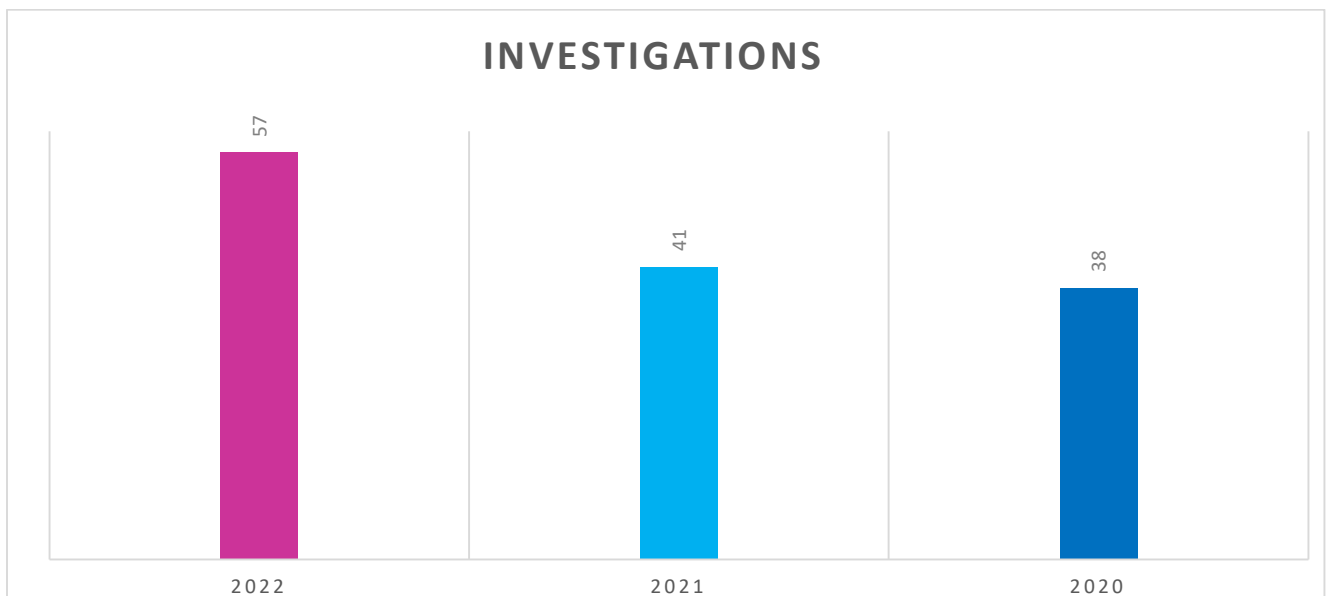
Agencies receive incentive monies for the collection of overpayments. The amount of the incentive varies with the program and the type of overpayment. For SNAP overpayments collection of an inadvertent household error overpayment results in 20% incentive returned to the county and for an intentional program violation the county receives 35%. When a Medicaid overpayment is collected, the Federal Share is 73.6%, the Non-Federal Share is 26.4% and the county receives 50% of the Non-Federal Share, with the remaining 50% going to the State. In 2022, Sandusky County received \$7,706.21 in incentives for collection of SNAP overpayments and \$161.45 for collection of Medicaid overpayments.

	2022	2021	2020
SNAP	\$7,695.93	\$7,706.21	\$8,440.30
Medicaid	\$12.53	\$161.45	\$245.73
TOTAL	\$7,708.46	\$7,867.66	\$8,686.03

Regulations changed in 2020 regarding the establishment of Medicaid claims. An overpayment must first be determined valid by the State of Ohio, unless determined by the Court. The collectable amount, which previously was the capitation rate paid to the Managed Care Plan, is now only the amount of any services rendered to the ineligible individual. This change in rule, along with the continued eligibility of Medicaid recipients due to COVID-19, has and will result in a significant decrease in the establishment and collection of Medicaid overpayments, for 2020 and the future. With the public health emergency potentially coming to an end, that will be different.

INVESTIGATIONS

One of the responsibilities of the Public Assistance Division is to conduct an investigation when a fraud complaint is received by the agency. These referrals are received from agency case workers, contacts from the public via telephone calls and walk-ins, tips submitted to the agency website, and complaints made at the state level which are then funneled down to the agency. These investigations may or may not result in a referral for an overpayment or a change in the benefits currently being received by the household. In some instances, the customer was not required to report the change, but once the agency is aware of the change, action must be taken to adjust the benefits accordingly. The agency contracts with the Sandusky County Sheriff's Office for a deputy who is assigned to the agency to handle fraud complaints along with other duties such as building security and child support enforcement. In 2022, 57 investigations were conducted.



Income and Eligibility Verification System (IEVS)

IEVS Matches are received on a regular basis and indicate that a customer may be employed or may be in receipt of social security or unemployment compensation benefits. These matches are processed to establish whether the information is known to the agency. When the information is not known, this may have a direct impact on the customer's continued eligibility for assistance. In many cases, any unreported information may result in the establishment of an overpayment claim. The process is currently not accurate. Duplicate matches are sent in consecutive quarters and multiple matches may be sent for one case, due to the difference in the way that programs blocks are established in Ohio Benefits. ODJFS is aware of the issues with system generated alerts and is working to correct known problems. However, the agency is still directed to process matches which are received.

