

## **Stamford Social Services Department**

The Department of Social Services provides Stamford's citizens with information about, and assists them to assess eligibility and access programs and/or resources available to meet a myriad of needs and/or protect basic human and legal rights.

The department is staffed by **four full-time (cross-trained) employees**. Staff are responsible for responding to, planning, administering, implementing, managing and/or making referrals in connection with a myriad of programs and services. A significant amount of the department's daily work is unplanned as staff is required to respond immediately to regular interruptions from the public (**although no "walk in" inquiries this year, telephone and email requests continue unabated**) for advice and assistance with a range of issues that affect Stamford's youth, family, adult and senior populations (birth to death).

### **Unique to 2020 - Covid-19 responsibilities**

All incoming non-emergency calls to the City of Stamford were routed and rotated to the homes of Social Service department staff, who responded 24/7 from March through June. Department staff participated in myriad city led efforts to maximize citizens' access to testing and insurance. The department's director was responsible for monitoring the availability of an adequate food supply in the community and working with community partners to ensure provisioning and deliveries to vulnerable members of the community. The department's outreach coordinators also assisted with translations and, on behalf of the Mayor, recorded public service messages to Spanish speaking communities; the mandated services director worked with local churches to maximize mask distributions.

To maximize the vaccination rate to the highest degree possible, we are currently working on plans to identify, and to reach out on a 1:1 basis to members of the community who are not affiliated with any religious, cultural, educational, social, political, etc. group or institution, and thus, require individual attention to an unusual degree.

### **Unique to 2020 – Census 2020 activities**

Stamford's Complete Count Committee is a city-wide effort to ensure that all Stamford residents are counted in the decennial census. Ensuring a full count of the city's population has a direct relationship to the amount of federal dollars that will be allocated to Stamford throughout the next decade. Leveraging our existing relationships with hard-to-reach communities within the city, Social Services staff were instrumental in increasing the rate of response from households who had not understood the importance of the census, and would not have otherwise responded.

### **General Housing Issues and Inquiries**

On a daily basis staff provide written or verbal assistance, substantive advice and appropriate referrals in response to inquiries on virtually all housing related inquiries: landlord - tenant rights; rental assistance; security deposits (including "return of"), discrimination, homelessness, housing code violations, evictions, subsidized housing,

public housing, senior housing, inclusionary zoning, privately sponsored affordable housing, requirements and limitations of HUD, tax credit and state funding programs, and foreclosures .

### **Application Assistance**

On a daily basis trained staff explains medical bills and provides one-to-one application assistance with respect to a number of federal, state and municipal benefit programs for which individuals may be eligible. Arranging for needed services on an individualized basis and, as needed, on a bi-lingual basis is time intensive and **even more so this year as all application assistance in connection with the following programs has been remote.**

- Access Health Connecticut (Obamacare);
- HUSKY and Title XIX (also known as Medicaid);
- Medicare Part D;
- Medicare Savings Programs (for income eligible seniors) including: QMB which pays Medicare Part A & B premiums, Medicare deductibles and Medicare co-payments for eligible seniors; and SLMB and ALMB which pay the Part B premium
- SNAP (federally funded food stamp program provides assistance to persons meeting monthly income limits)
- Subsidized Senior Housing
- Easy Access (subsidized transportation for disabled individuals); and
- The State of Connecticut Rent Rebate Program (income qualifying Stamford residents sixty-five or older, or disabled and receiving disability payments may be eligible to receive a partial refund of rent and utility payments from the State).

### **Mandated Services - Evictions**

After a residential eviction has occurred Connecticut law requires any unclaimed property of the evicted tenant(s) to be removed from the rental premises (by a state marshal) and delivered to a municipally designated location for storage. The Department's Mandated Services Coordinator is responsible for administering the eviction storage program. **While not a complete bar, the eviction moratorium has greatly reduced the workload related to this program.**

### **Mandated Services - Relocations**

Under Connecticut landlord tenant law, landlords are required to comply with the provisions of municipal codes (including housing, health and fire) that affect the health and safety of their tenants. When municipal inspectors charged with code enforcement responsibilities find residential conditions that constitute immediate or serious threats to occupants' health or safety, the subject premises are declared "unfit for human habitation" and "condemned." Occupants displaced as a result of condemnation orders may be legally eligible for financial assistance from the municipality to cover specific costs associated with permanent "relocation." (As permitted by law, Stamford holds non-code compliant landlords liable for reimbursement of relocation payments made to, or on behalf of their displaced tenants.) The Department's Mandated Services Coordinator is responsible for administering and service delivery in connection with Stamford's relocation program, including determining, on a case by case basis, whether local code

enforcement activities have resulted in displacement and, if so, whether, and what benefits displaced families and/or individuals may be eligible for.

Stamford Social Services Commission - Fair Rent

Connecticut's Fair Rent statute protects tenants against excessive rent increases. Inquiries about potential relief under this statute have been minimal this year. Landlords whose tenants have been able to pay existing rents don't seem to be seeking more.

