

Legislative Budget Analysis  
Proposed FY 2024 Operating and Capital Budgets  
Office of the County Auditor  
Baltimore County, Maryland  
**HEARING DATE: May 9, 2023**



**Department of Social Services**

*Director: Dr. Gregory Branch*

*Budget Office Analyst: Valentina Washington*

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Questions Sent to Department	Wednesday, April 19
Responses Received	Thursday, April 27
Analysis considers all agency responses.	

BALTIMORE COUNTY  
FISCAL YEAR 2024 BUDGET ANALYSIS

**DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES (031)**

BUDGET SUMMARY				
\$ in Thousands				

PROPOSED CHANGE	GENERAL	SPECIAL	TOTAL	% Change Prior Year
FY 2023 - 2024 Change	\$ 515.3	\$ 675.3	\$ 1,190.6	4.9%

**BUDGET TRENDS**

FY 2022 Actual	\$ 12,844.3	\$ 7,047.5 <sup>(1) (2)</sup>	\$ 19,891.8	
FY 2023 Approp.	13,875.0	10,240.6 <sup>(2)</sup>	24,115.6	21.2%
FY 2024 Request	14,390.3	10,915.9 <sup>(2)</sup>	25,306.2	4.9%
<b>FY 2024 Budget Analysis</b>	<b>14,390.3</b>	<b>10,915.9 <sup>(2)</sup></b>	<b>25,306.2</b>	<b>4.9%</b>

<b>POTENTIAL REDUCTIONS</b>	<b>TBD</b>	<b>\$ -</b>	<b>TBD</b>
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<sup>(1)</sup> Reflects audited expenditures \$443,891 greater than the amount reflected in the Executive's budget documents.

<sup>(2)</sup> Includes Non-County Funds totaling \$298,720 (FY 2022) and \$320,026 (FY 2023 and FY 2024) for reimbursement of General Fund salaries not included in any existing Gifts and Grants program.

PERSONNEL				
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PROPOSED CHANGE	GENERAL		SPECIAL	
	FULL-TIME	PART-TIME	FULL-TIME	PART-TIME
FY 2023 - 2024 Change	0	(15)	2	(2)

**BUDGET TRENDS**

FY 2022 Actual	53	43	2	99
FY 2023 Approp.	54	60	2	97
FY 2024 Request	54	45	4	95
<b>FY 2024 Budget Analysis</b>	<b>54</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>95</b>

<b>POTENTIAL REDUCTIONS</b>	<b>TBD</b>	<b>TBD</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>
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**VACANCY DATA**

Positions Vacant as of March 31, 2023*	1	7
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\* Provided by the Office of Budget & Finance, which advised that it is not currently tracking Special Fund vacancies.

For further information contact: Office of the County Auditor

Phone: (410) 887-3193

## DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES (031)

### BUDGET SUMMARY:

The proposed FY 2024 budget for the Department of Social Services totals \$25.3 million, an increase of \$1.2 million, or 4.9% over the FY 2023 budget, as follows.

	General Fund	Special Fund	Total
	(\$ in thousands)		
<b>2024 Request</b>	\$ 14,390	\$ 10,916 <sup>(1)</sup>	\$ 25,306
2023 Appropriation	13,875	10,241 <sup>(1)</sup>	24,116
\$ Increase	\$ 515	\$ 675	\$ 1,190
% Increase	3.7%	6.6%	4.9%

<sup>(1)</sup> Includes Non-County funds totaling \$320,026, which represent General Fund reimbursements for expenditure within otherwise entirely General Funded programs.

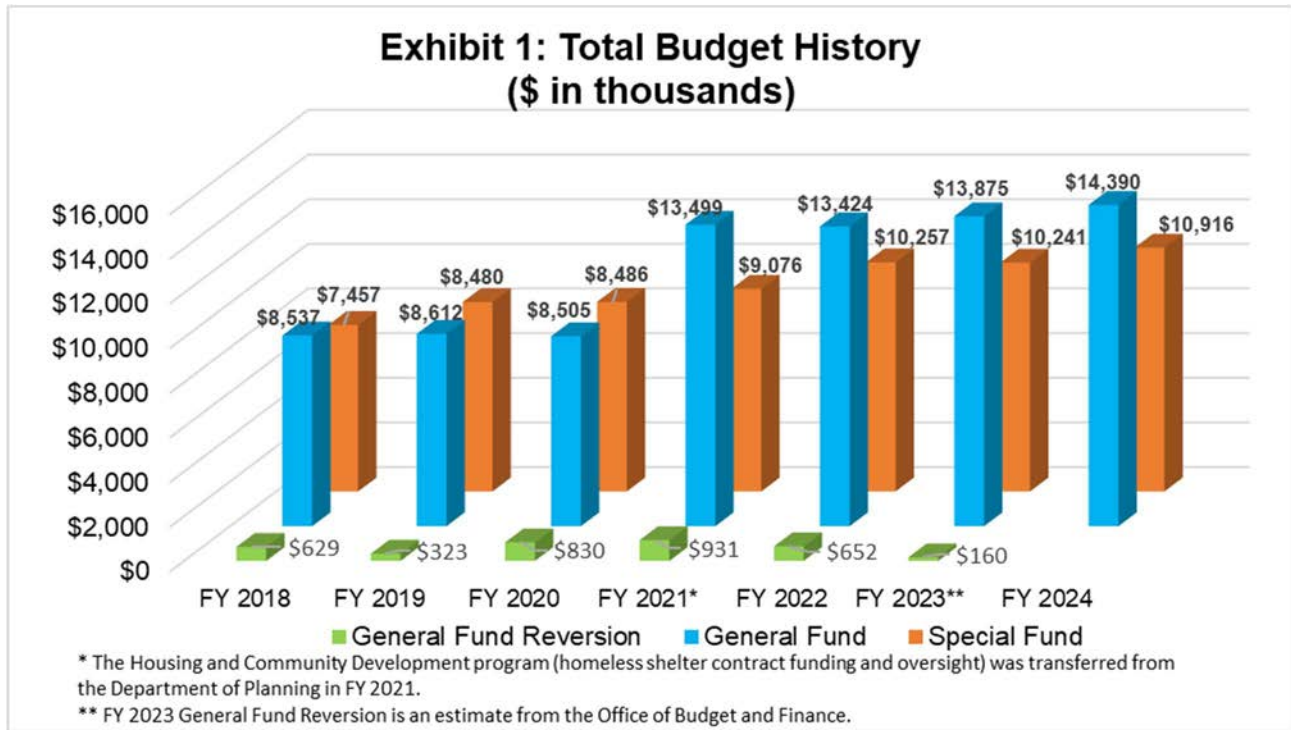
- **General Fund** – The budget increase is due primarily to personnel expenses (e.g., COLAs, increments and longevities, and a position transferred in from the County’s ARPA Gifts and Grants Fund program, partially offset by an increased turnover savings assumption). In addition to this General Fund support, nearly \$1.9 million is budgeted to flow through the County’s General Fund Local Share program appropriation to support the local matching requirements for seven of the Department’s grant programs (including \$1.3 million for the Federal Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), as noted below, under “Special Fund”).
- **Special Fund** – The budget increase is due primarily to the County’s new required \$1.3 million match for the Summer SNAP (Federal Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program) (see #2 for details), partially offset by decreased funding related to several FY 2023 grants that are not recurring in FY 2024.

The Department’s proposed FY 2024 budget comprises less than 0.6% of the total Operating Budget (excluding General Fund employee fringe benefits and other centrally budgeted costs).

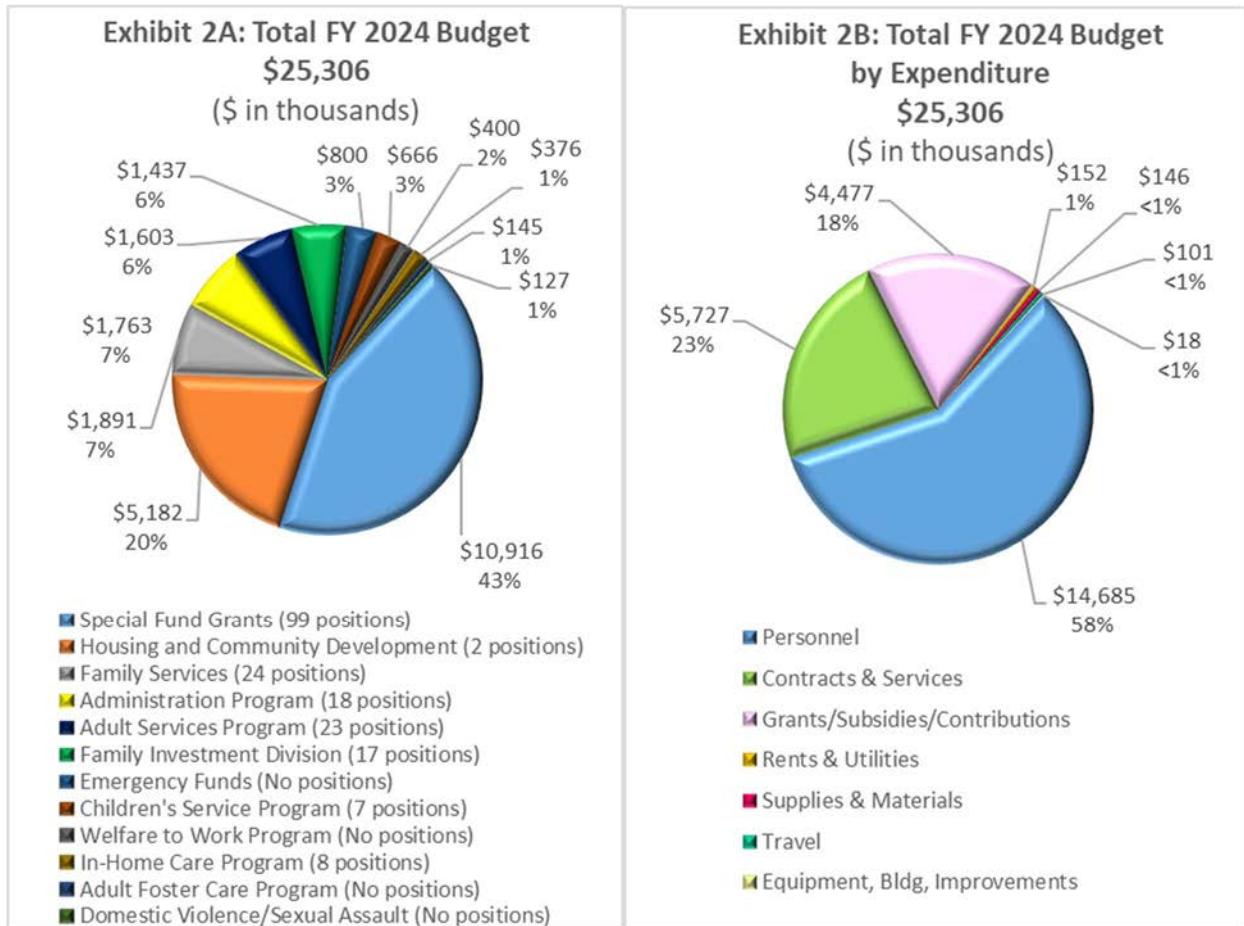
**See Appendices A and B for program-level expenditure/appropriation and authorized staffing levels, respectively, for FY 2022 (actual), FY 2023 (appropriated), and FY 2024 (proposed).**

## DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES (031)

See Exhibit 1 for a budget history and Exhibits 2A and 2B for the distribution of expenses across programs and expenditures, respectively.



## DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES (031)



### POTENTIAL BUDGET REDUCTIONS:

Proposed new General Fund expenditures include \$69 thousand for **one previously ARPA-funded position**, as follows:

- **1 new Human Services Program Manager** – The Department advised: “This position is for the Baltimore County Food Security Coordinator, a position created in FY2021 using ARPA. The department is requesting that this position be authorized in the FY24 General Fund budget.”

The Administration recently advised that the proposed FY 2024 budget includes General Fund costs for this position, as well as 38 additional positions (associated with other departments), funded out of the County’s ARPA allocation during FY 2023. Further, the Administration advised that it will continue

## DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES (031)

to fund 56 positions (General Fund Government-wide) via the ARPA program in FY 2024, with a reevaluation to take place prior to FY 2025 to determine which of those 56 positions will similarly be brought into the General Fund at that time.

The proposed FY 2024 General Fund budget also includes more than \$1.6 million to cover the County's contribution towards the Summer SNAP (the Department's usual \$333 thousand allocation, plus a new \$1.3 million earmark within the County's Local Share Program – a threefold increase). The Administration advised that it intends to grant Summer SNAP benefits to all school age children participating in the SNAP program in June, July, August and December. Specifically, **the Administration advised of its intent to fund costs for 30,000 children at \$40 per child, which would result in a \$1.2 million expense. Assuming conservatively that the entire \$1.3 million is exhausted, the Department's \$333 thousand allocation would remain unutilized.** The Office of Budget and Finance noted, though, that "Caseloads may fluctuate significantly based upon economic conditions, demographic factors and changes in State or Federal rules. The funding in the GF [General Fund] would allow DSS to provide benefits for up to 3,300 additional children if the caseload increases during an economic downturn, due to other changes in Baltimore County's population, or any change in Federal or State program rules. This equates to a 10% variation from the current caseload."

### OPERATING BUDGET HIGHLIGHTS:

#### General Fund

1. **Personnel Expenses totaling \$7.2 million reflect 50% of the General Fund budget and account for the Department's entire General Fund increase of \$515 thousand for FY 2024, as follows:**

- **Increased Salaries for Non-Merit Employees (\$295 thousand):**
  - Individual position increases ranging from \$1 thousand to \$49 thousand (see discussion below)
  - Reflective of **reclassification of 44 non-merit positions**
  - Incorporate the FY 2024 effect of FY 2023 mid-year COLA/equivalent wage adjustment
- **Two 2% COLAs effective July 1, 2023 and January 1, 2024 (\$235 thousand):**

## DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES (031)

- **Fully-funded increments and longevities for Merit Employees** (\$99 thousand)
- Other Changes (net \$15 thousand increase), including:
  - **1 new Human Services Program Manager position previously ARPA funded** (\$69 thousand)
  - **1 deleted Social Worker II position** (\$58 thousand decrease)
  - **FY 2024 effect of the FY 2023 COLA for merit employees**
  - Decreased salaries from retirement/attrition of higher-paid staff
- **Offsetting savings from increased turnover assumption** – from 5.7% to 6.9% (\$129 thousand decrease) due to vacancies and the anticipated retirement of higher paid staff that are replaced with entry-level staff
- **Administrative correction to delete 15 unfunded positions** (\$0) – from the Housing & Community Development Program (7 Social Workers, 5 Human Services Associates, 1 Management Analyst II, 1 Account Clerk III, and 1 Office Coordinator)

### *Staffing Challenges*

The Department advised that it has benefitted from actions the State has taken to address employee retention and recruitment as the Department is comprised of mostly State employees; however, for County employees, while it maintains a lower-than-average vacancy rate overall, the Department struggles to fill vacancies in professional classifications (e.g., Social Workers) where there is significant market competition. The Department's budget reflects the reclassification of approximately 44 positions (\$295 thousand). The Administration advised that it is currently completing an enterprise-wide classification and compensation study.

As of March 31, 2023, the Office of Budget and Finance advised that of the 114 General Fund authorized positions, there were 8 vacancies (including 5 Social Worker and 2 Human Service Associate positions), compared to 7 vacancies (including 4 Social Worker and 2 Human Services positions) in April 2022.

***The Department should be prepared to discuss its proposed funding for personnel expenses, including the expected impact of the reclassifications in attracting and retaining employees in professional classifications. The Administration should be prepared to discuss the rationale for reclassifying many positions prior to the completion of the classification and compensation study.***

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### Special Fund

#### 2. Federal Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)

The proposed FY 2024 budget includes \$1.7 million for the SNAP program, an increase of \$1.3 million, or 392% over the FY 2023 budget. The increased funds represent the County's required match of State funding (the County's Local Share program is earmarked for transfer to the Gifts and Grants Fund) for the Summer SNAP Program. Summer SNAP benefits are provided to school age children during June, July, August, and December to mitigate the temporary loss of meals provided by schools over the summer and winter breaks. The Department advised that the State budgets \$5 million dollars for the Summer SNAP Program and asks counties to voluntarily apply for funding with a required match based upon the school construction funding formula (State pays 56% and County matches 44%). The Department further advised that there are over 30,000 school age children who receive SNAP benefits, and the additional funds allow the Department to provide those children with the additional \$100 per child (\$30 per summer month and \$10 for December) benefit.

***The Department should be prepared to discuss:***

- ***Funding for the SNAP Program, including coordination with Baltimore County Public Schools; and***
- ***Food insecurity among County residents, including the \$2.0 million in planned ARPA funds for related projects (noted below).***

#### ADDITIONAL TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION:

#### 3. American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA)

The Office of Budget and Finance anticipates \$3.2 million in previously appropriated ARPA funding to be used for the following DSS projects in FY 2024:

- Food Insecurity Projects (\$2.0 million)
- Coordinated Entry and Homelessness Prevention Program (\$816 thousand) – a cooperative effort between the Departments of Social Services and Housing and Community Development to provide wraparound services to prevent homelessness. Two teams (total of 15 employees) will perform federal Department of Housing and Urban



## DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES (031)

Development mandated activities, including homeless shelter screening, diversion, and prevention for County constituents.

- Social Workers Expansion (coordinated with the Health Department) (\$275 thousand) – 2 Social Worker (FTEs) and additional services (e.g., cleanup of hoarding situations) to support vulnerable adults
- Community Food Expenditures (\$92 thousand) – to distribute fresh produce from local farmers to the community

***The Department should be prepared to discuss:***

- ***The increased need for nutrition assistance programs and methods utilized to ensure residents receive needed services; and***
- ***The extent to which ARPA projects are being utilized to cover costs that would otherwise be paid out of the Department's operating budget.***

#### **4. Working Group on Resource Coordination to support Victims of Sexual Exploitation, Violence, and Domestic Abuse**

The Department advised that in response to community input regarding the need for the coordination of services for victims of sexual assault and domestic violence, the Department plans to establish a working group that will engage with stakeholders to identify best practices and make recommendations for streamlined service delivery. The Department further advised that the primary objective is to assist with coordination of the array of providers to ensure that individuals and families have access to needed services and that the services provided are customer-sensitive; services are provided mostly by nonprofit organizations that receive federal, State, and private grant funds, donations, and limited County grant funds. The Department also advised that there is no funding in the proposed FY 2024 operating budget specifically identified to support the workgroup.

***The Department should be prepared to discuss the timeframe for establishing the working group, selection of members, and release of recommendations.***

## DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES (031)

### 5. Challenges Facing the Department

The Department advised that general economic and social challenges drive much of its work. Current economic conditions, including high inflation, termination of federal stimulus funding, and forecasts of a downturn, all contribute to increased demand for financial (e.g., SNAP, see #2), medical, cash, energy, and housing assistance. Additionally, social challenges, including rising levels of mental health disorders and the continued opioid epidemic, create needs for departmental involvement with families for child welfare and adult services.

***The Department should be prepared to discuss the sufficiency of its budget for meeting the needs of County residents impacted by economic and social challenges, and its interaction and collaboration with other regional, County, and nonprofit partners, including the County's Local Management Board, to ensure the well-being of County residents.***

BALTIMORE COUNTY  
FISCAL YEAR 2024 BUDGET ANALYSIS  
**DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES (031)**

APPROPRIATION DETAIL					
	FY 2022 ACTUAL	FY 2023 APPROP	FY 2024 BUDGET	NET CHANGE	
				AMOUNT	%
<u>General Fund</u>					
Adult Foster Care	\$ 145,000	\$ 145,000	\$ 145,000	\$ -	0.0%
Welfare to Work Program	399,996	400,000	400,000	-	0.0%
Housing and Community Development	5,171,618	5,149,353	5,182,282	32,929	0.6%
Emergency Funds	220,458	800,179	800,179	-	0.0%
Domestic Violence/Sexual Assault	127,262	127,260	127,260	-	0.0%
In-Home Care Program	332,776	333,681	376,228	42,547	12.8%
Adult Services	1,410,359	1,428,132	1,602,467	174,335	12.2%
General Administration	1,535,476	1,658,354	1,763,305	104,951	6.3%
Children's Services	558,860	600,748	665,468	64,720	10.8%
Family Investment Division	1,173,615	1,356,116	1,437,325	81,209	6.0%
Family Services	1,768,892	1,876,166	1,890,778	14,612	0.8%
General Fund Total	<u>\$ 12,844,312</u>	<u>\$ 13,874,989</u>	<u>\$ 14,390,292</u>	<u>\$ 515,303</u>	<u>3.7%</u>
<u>Special Fund</u>					
<u>Non-County Funds</u>					
General Administration	135,428	128,002	128,002	-	0.0%
Family Investment Division	163,292	192,024	192,024	-	0.0%
Non-County Fund Total	<u>\$ 298,720</u>	<u>\$ 320,026</u>	<u>\$ 320,026</u>	<u>\$ -</u>	<u>0.0%</u>
<u>Gifts &amp; Grants Funds</u>					
<u>Continuing Grants</u>					
GR-1059 Center for Family Success	495,011	572,792	585,705	12,913	2.3%
GR-1060 Child Advocacy Center-Medical Services	148,595	258,376	265,763	7,387	2.9%
GR-1061 State Contractual Temporary Assistance	232,373	523,682	523,682	-	0.0%
GR-1062 Housing Counselor	357,736	393,753	401,603	7,850	2.0%
GR-1063 State In-Home Care Services	115,199	128,124	132,431	4,307	3.4%
GR-1064 Federal Job Network	1,391,757	1,828,487	1,862,431	33,944	1.9%
GR-1065 Rapid Rehousing	262,067	371,342	375,735	4,393	1.2%
GR-1066 Federal Supplemental Nutrition Asst. Program (SNAP)	112,058	341,058	1,678,192	1,337,134	392.1%
GR-1067 Victims of Crime Act	497,974	644,724	668,752	24,028	3.7%
GR-1171 Misc Child Advocacy Center Therapy & Technology Services	-	43,262	43,262	-	0.0%
GR-1172 Child Support	106,350	132,741	138,885	6,144	4.6%
GR-1174 MATCH Infant and Toddler	120,649	136,853	141,230	4,377	3.2%
GR-1175 State Interagency Family Preservation Services	460,719	678,491	707,855	29,364	4.3%
GR-1176 Office of Home Energy Program (OHEP)	1,756,951	2,189,314	2,192,509	3,195	0.1%
GR-1177 State Responsible Father's Project	53,493	101,453	105,562	4,109	4.1%
GR-1178 State Therapeutic Foster Care	268,137	337,194	352,246	15,052	4.5%
GR-1179 Federal Violence Against Women Act	25,434	42,481	42,662	181	0.4%
GR-1180 State Youth Sexual Behavior Program	269,999	282,812	297,847	15,035	5.3%
GR-1329 Misc Client Support Services	-	52,500	52,500	-	0.0%
GR-1330 State Child Advocacy-GOCCP STATE	14,285	27,038	27,038	-	0.0%
Subtotal	<u>6,688,787</u>	<u>9,086,477</u>	<u>10,595,890</u>	<u>1,509,413</u>	<u>16.6%</u>

BALTIMORE COUNTY  
FISCAL YEAR 2024 BUDGET ANALYSIS  
**DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES (031)**

APPROPRIATION DETAIL					
	FY 2022 ACTUAL	FY 2023 APPROP	FY 2024 BUDGET	NET CHANGE	
				AMOUNT	%
<i>Grants Not Anticipated in FY 2024</i>					
GR-2153 COVID-19 CDBG Eviction Prevention	60,000	-	-	-	NA
GR-1331 Federal Child Advocacy-GOCCP FED	-	31,500	-	(31,500)	-100.0%
GR-1370 Federal Coordinated Entry	-	102,623	-	(102,623)	-100.0%
GR-1371 Federal Homeless Services Enhancement	-	500,000	-	(500,000)	-100.0%
GR-1386 Misc Child Advocacy Initiatives	-	200,000	-	(200,000)	-100.0%
Subtotal	60,000	834,123	-	(834,123)	-100.0%
Special Fund Total	7,047,507 <sup>(A)</sup>	10,240,626	10,915,916	675,290	6.6%
Total All Funds	\$ 19,891,819	\$ 24,115,615	\$ 25,306,208	\$ 1,190,593	4.9%

(A) Reflects audited expenditures \$443,891 greater than the amount reflected in the Executive's budget documents.

BALTIMORE COUNTY  
FISCAL YEAR 2024 BUDGET ANALYSIS

**DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES (031)**

PERSONNEL DETAIL								
	FY 2022 ACTUAL		FY 2023 APPROP		FY 2024 BUDGET		NET CHANGE	
	FULL	PART	FULL	PART	FULL	PART	FULL	PART
<u>General Fund</u>								
Adult Foster Care	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Welfare to Work Program	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Housing and Community Development	0	1	0	17	0	2	0	(15)
Emergency Funds	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Domestic Violence/Sexual Assault	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
In-Home Care Program	0	8	0	8	0	8	0	0
Adult Services	11	12	12	11	12	11	0	0
General Administration	8	7	8	9	8	10	0	1
Children's Services	6	1	6	1	6	1	0	0
Family Investment Division	11	6	11	6	11	6	0	0
Family Services	<u>17</u>	<u>8</u>	<u>17</u>	<u>8</u>	<u>17</u>	<u>7</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>(1)</u>
General Fund Total	<u>53</u>	<u>43</u>	<u>54</u>	<u>60</u>	<u>54</u>	<u>45</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>(15)</u>
<u>Special Fund Total</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>99</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>97</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>95</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>(2)</u>
Total All Funds	<u>55</u>	<u>142</u>	<u>56</u>	<u>157</u>	<u>58</u>	<u>140</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>(17)</u>