



Greene County Department of Human Services Annual Report 2025



I. INTRODUCTION

Greene County Department of Human Services provides programming for seniors, veterans and youth. Greene County provides services to the senior population thorough the AAA (Area on Aging) under the regulation of NYS Office for Aging, Veterans services are regulated by the NYS Department of Veterans Affairs and NYS Office of Mental Health DWYER Peer Project Program, while the Youth Bureau are regulated by NYS Office of Children and Family Services (OCFS) providing advocacy and support to children through our pre-Prevention Diversion program and the distribution of grant funding from OCFS for youth development and team sports programming across the county.

II. SERVICES PROVIDED

a. Department of Aging

- i. Wellness In Nutrition Program (WIN)
 - 1. Nutrition Education
 - 2. Congregate Meals
 - 3. Home Delivered Meals
 - 4. Evidence Based Programming at the 5 Senior Center Locations
- ii. AAA Transportation
 - 1. Shopping Bus
 - 2. Medical Transportation
- iii. Health Insurance Information Counseling and Assistance Program (HIICAP)
- iv. Community Services for the Elderly Program
 - 1. Caregiver Support
 - 2. Legal Services
- v. Expanded In-home Services for the Elderly Program (EISEP)

b. Veterans

- i. Benefits Claims Assistance: VA Disability Compensation, Survivor Benefits, and Appeals
- ii. Benefits Counseling: VA Healthcare Enrollment Assistance, Education Benefits, and other benefits associated with state and local veteran's programs
- iii. Advocacy & Outreach
- iv. Medical Transportation to VA Healthcare Facilities
- v. Fresh Connect Program: Farmers Market Checks provided to veterans to use to purchase fresh, locally grown produce in an effort to help promote healthy living.

c. Youth Bureau

- i. Pre-Prevention Diversion Program for at risk youth
- ii. Youth Program Pass-thru Funding from NYS Office of Children and Family Services
 - 1. Youth Development Funding
 - 2. Youth Team Sports Allocation
 - 3. Youth Sport Education Funding Infrastructure

III. 2025 RECAP - AGING

Greene County Department of Human Services faced several significant challenges in 2025. Rising food costs and overall inflation greatly affected our ability to manage expenses for the nutrition program, as well as increased costs for our contracted service agencies. In addition, a growing demand for in-home services, combined with a shortage of available providers, had a substantial impact on many seniors who rely on these supports. Although we were able to achieve some cost savings through staff turnover and reduced contracted services, these savings came with consequences, including reduction of in-home care options and limitations in the services we could provide.

Despite the challenges, we were able to see a 10% growth in overall services provided to the 60+ population. We had a 25% reduction in the total individuals served for home delivered meals using the guidelines set criteria, however that was countered with a 30% increase in congregate attendance. This is good to see as it's supporting our efforts to keep seniors engaged and active, attending congregate nutrition centers allows seniors to socialize, attend health and

evidence-based programming as well as receive nutrition services and our meals.

We also seen tremendous growth in seniors served through our NY Connects and case management programs with a 67% increase from 2024. This growth is undoubtedly related to contracting our NY Connects program to The Healthcare Consortium in April of 2025. This contract resulted in a significant increase in connectivity with the people we serve. The NY Connects team is a valuable resource to residents of all ages and has led to a much more streamlined referral for aging and veteran services specifically. Aging alone has seen an increase of 18% in referrals and clients served.

One service the department continues to depend on is our volunteers, formerly known as the AmeriCorps RSVP Volunteer Program. GCDHS volunteers support key areas of our work, including the nutrition program (both home-delivered and congregate meals), medical transportation, friendly visiting, and participation on the Aging Advisory Committee. In 2025, after the loss of our AmeriCorps RSVP Grant and the retirement of our long-tenured volunteer coordinator, we established a partnership with Catholic Charities to help manage our medical transportation and friendly visitor services. Under this new model, our case managers assess clients in advance to determine eligibility and need, then refer them to Catholic Charities to coordinate transportation or in-home support. This partnership has been an invaluable asset to our department and has expanded our ability to effectively serve clients who rely on these essential services.

The Greene County Department of Human Services underwent significant restructuring in late 2024 and continues to evolve to meet the needs of the agencies and programs we support. In late 2025, following the retirement of our DHS Deputy Director, we appointed a new Director of Aging Services to better align the Aging Department with Veterans Services. While several factors contributed to this decision, the primary goal was to enhance our ability to serve communities throughout the county. We remain committed to streamlining access to services and expanding the support available to those in need.

IV. 2025 RECAP - VETERANS

Greene County Veteran Agency underwent substantial growth in 2025 with the integration of Greene County Vet2Vet, Joseph P. Dwyer Peer Support Program, a

program providing peer support to veterans and their families, raising awareness about the unique struggles veterans face, and building a stronger veteran community with camaraderie and mutual support while honoring the veterans for their dedication to our country. The Vet2Vet program is **100%** confidential and **FREE** for all participants and it provides non-clinical support and advocacy to the military community as well as their families by connecting them to resources such as benefits (SSI, SSD, service connection), food pantries, housing assistance, social activities and much more.

Greene County Vet2Vet hosted and supported numerous groups and functions in 2025 to 1,133 veterans and 266 family members. In addition, they hosted and tabled many events such as their annual Community Day celebration in September which attracted nearly 500 community members to support and honor those who served and their families. The residual proceeds of the Community Day Event went to a scholarship fund for children of veterans. In June of 2025, \$5,000 in proceeds from the 2024 Community Day were awarded to five high school graduates in three of the local school districts.

Veteran Service Agency worked diligently on updating data collection and increasing contacts and connections with the veterans and families they served in 2025. Significant strides were made to rebuild their presence in the community; this includes the creation of the Veterans Roundtable Meetings which are held monthly and are open to any stakeholders and community members who want to be involved and support veterans and their families.

Additionally, the Veteran Service Agency (VSA) veteran benefits staff provided 2,900 services in 2025 on behalf of 1,012 veterans. There were 157 new veterans who reached out to the VSA for benefit assistance and below is the percentage breakdown by war time era. We will continue to track this data in the future to identify trends and help us to find the best way to provide outreach to underserved populations such as OEF/OIF veterans.

Veterans by War Time	Percentage
WWII	1.08%
Korea	2.16%
Vietnam	53.34%
Gulf War	15.30%
OEF/OIF	10.45%
Peacetime	17.67%
Total	100.00%

In late 2025, the Greene County Veteran Service Agency (VSA) relocated from its former offices in the Greene Medical Arts building to the newly repurposed Marshall and Sterling facility. This move has significantly enhanced the Agency's ability to serve veterans and their families. The expanded space now accommodates larger gatherings and provides a safe, welcoming environment where veterans can meet, connect, and engage with one another.

The relocation also enabled the co-location of the VSA with the Vet2Vet program. This integration has strengthened day-to-day operations by increasing office coverage and creating a more cohesive, collaborative environment. As a result, veterans now benefit from a streamlined, one-stop setting for accessing a full range of support services.

V. 2025 RECAP – YOUTH BUREAU

In 2025, the Greene County Youth Bureau implemented several key programmatic changes to better meet the needs of the youth and families we serve. Our former Pre-PINS program was renamed Pre-Prevention to more accurately reflect the supportive services we provide. The Pre-Prevention Program is a voluntary, early-intervention point of entry for youth and families experiencing incorrigible behaviors or school avoidance/truancy that may otherwise lead to involvement with Family Court, the Juvenile Justice System, or Probation.

Due to statewide changes in the Juvenile Justice System, PINS cases have declined significantly, and school-avoidance trends have shifted. As a result, it became necessary for the Youth Bureau to realign our programming with preventive services offered by DSS and community-based agencies. This alignment ensures that youth are connected to appropriate support as quickly as possible to achieve the best possible outcomes.

In addition to program restructuring, the department launched a youth internship initiative in partnership with local colleges and Catskill High School. This program offers on-the-job training within Greene County Human Services for students interested in public service careers, while allowing them to earn Career and Technical Education (CTE) credits. In 2025, two students successfully earned CTE credit through this initiative, and we anticipate expanding participation in 2026.

The Youth Bureau also served as a dedicated worksite for the Columbia-Greene Community College Workforce Investment Office's Youth Summer Employment Program. Funded through NYS Social Services Law, this program provides paid, realistic work experience to young people. In 2025, our worksite hosted six youth interns across a variety of departments, including Administration, Buildings & Grounds, Nutrition Services, and Veterans Services. DHS staff developed a structured program, offered skill-building opportunities, and fostered strong connections that supported each youth's growth and success.

Lastly, the Youth Bureau expanded its volunteer program to welcome youth volunteers as part of our ongoing efforts to promote community service and create intergenerational engagement opportunities. Four high school students from three school districts joined us as volunteers, contributing to programming across all service areas. We look forward to continuing to grow this initiative in the coming years.

VI. DEPARTMENT RESTRUCTURING

In addition to staffing changes, the organization made substantial facility improvements throughout 2025. These included the opening of our new Veterans Center in the former Marshall & Sterling building, a complete renovation of the building façade at our central kitchen in Athens, continued digitization and clean-up of historical records, and various updates to the main office. We also removed or organized cluttered areas and surplus office furniture, not only at the main office but across our nutrition sites as well. Our ongoing goal is to present a more welcoming, organized, and professional appearance to our clients and the public.

GCDHS has continued to expand its programming and outreach efforts in both nutrition and veteran services. We have increased the number of presentations and events offered at our senior nutrition sites and the Veterans Center. In addition, we have strengthened partnerships with organizations such as Greene County Public Health, the NYS Department of Homeland Security, and others to deliver health and emergency preparedness classes, as well as health, nutrition, and social activities for the populations we serve.

We continue to enhance our monthly newsletter by expanding the information we provide on upcoming events and senior club activities. We've also added

dedicated sections for Veteran Services, Vet2Vet programs, Family Nights, and Youth Bureau activities. Additionally, we have updated our website to include easier access to forms, service links, and resources. To further support our community, we've added real-time activity and event calendars to both our Veterans and Aging sites, ensuring that clients can quickly find information about the opportunities and services available in their local communities.

Looking back on the goals established in 2023, we have continued to make steady progress as we transition away from pandemic-era contingencies and return to more typical operations. Over the past year, we have focused on rebuilding capacity, strengthening internal processes, and ensuring continuity of services.

Per Diem staffing levels have steadily increased since late 2024 and continued throughout 2025, which has significantly supported our ability to resume normal activities and improve overall efficiency. In addition, we've taken important steps to address longstanding organizational needs, including the revision and creation of operating procedures to ensure they are current, relevant, and aligned with our post-pandemic environment.

We have also made progress in developing plans to maintain service continuity during unexpected closures, such as those caused by inclement weather or building-related issues. A key component of this work was the creation of a per-diem staffing pool that we can rely on during periods of reduced staffing levels. This resource strengthens our ability to remain operational and responsive under a variety of circumstances.

While we are encouraged by the improvements made this year, we recognize that continued attention and effort will be essential as we move forward. We remain committed to building this foundation and advancing these initiatives into 2026.

Early 2025 we partnered with CCSI, an agency who assisted us with financial records preparation to ensure that we are maximizing all our state dollars for best use and across the county. The agency supplied us with financial documents that were in the moment snapshots of what funds we'd exhausted and what each program costs Greene County. This allowed the county to shift expenses to alternate allocations allowing the department to best utilize financial aid from state and federal sources.

Late 2025, the department made an investment in the TIPCO EVA system, which is an AI-powered virtual assistant platform developed by TIPCO Automated Systems. This system was designed to help government health and human services agencies such as Human Services, Veterans and Social Services automate routine tasks and improve service delivery. It has helped significantly reduce call volume for staff, improve access for clients by providing instant responses, streamline eligibility processes, case management, and client communication.

VII. 2026 GOALS:

In 2025, the agency began laying the groundwork for expanding programming and services for aging adults, youth, and veterans. While meaningful progress was made, the pace of development was affected by significant staffing changes and limited personnel capacity. Despite these challenges, the commitment to expanding and improving services remains a central priority for 2026. The agency is positioned to build upon last year's efforts by strengthening operations, enhancing programming quality, and increasing service accessibility across all populations we serve.

Throughout 2025, several areas of operational deficiency were identified as needing improvement. These will continue to be addressed proactively in 2026. Among the most critical needs are the completion and implementation of updated standard operating procedures, efforts to reduce clutter and improve organization at both agency offices and off-site centers, and necessary upgrades to equipment and building infrastructure—particularly within the nutrition programs. Additionally, the agency plans to implement a comprehensive fleet management system, strengthen records retention practices through increased digitalization, and continue the expansion of service delivery through contracted agencies.

A major area of focus for 2026 will be improvements to our nutrition centers and the services provided at these sites. Many centers are currently operating with equipment that has exceeded its useful lifecycle, and replacing this outdated equipment will be essential to maintaining safe, efficient, and high-quality meal service. The agency also plans to enrich the programming available at nutrition centers by expanding activities such as bingo, arts and crafts, and health and

wellness offerings. Nutrition menus will be updated to include food allergen information, helping seniors make informed choices and supporting those with dietary restrictions such as sensitivities to shellfish or gluten.

Public communication and community outreach will also be enhanced in 2026. The agency will update the Round Table newsletter, improve its social media presence, and refresh its websites to provide more timely, accurate, and accessible information. A department-wide calendar of events will be added to ensure residents can easily locate upcoming activities, services, and opportunities for engagement.

Another key priority for 2026 is expanding home-based services for seniors who require additional support to remain safe in their homes. This will include exploring creative methods of service delivery, identifying additional contracted providers, and strengthening partnerships with organizations capable of offering home-based assistance. In addition, the agency will continue to focus on expanding legal service options for seniors and veterans. Services such as estate planning, wills, and trusts remain underutilized, despite their potential to significantly help individuals plan for periods of incapacity or long-term care needs. While these services can be costly, the agency intends to collaborate with community partners who can offer educational presentations and connect residents to external resources.

Overall, the agency's 2026 priorities reflect a commitment to strengthening internal operations while expanding and improving the services available to the community. Through systematic improvements, strategic partnerships, and a continued focus on meeting the needs of seniors, youth, and veterans, the agency aims to deliver a higher standard of support and accessibility for all residents in the coming year.