



SHELBY COUNTY GOVERNMENT DIVISION OF COMMUNITY SERVICES™

Addressing underlying conditions of wellbeing and justice, for all to reach their full potential

Community Connections

A Newsletter of the Shelby County Government's Division of Community Services

Vision Statement

The Shelby County Division of Community Services strives to be a highly organized team and partner, dedicated to promoting a strong community where all people are able to reach their full potential.

Mission Statement

The Division of Community Services promotes ongoing economic security and independence for the people of Shelby County. We do this by promoting, coordinating and delivering services that address the underlying conditions for wellbeing and justice.

The Power of Proximity

A Message from the Director's Office



One of our nation's most visible thought leaders, Bryan Stevenson (*Just Mercy*), said recently that in order to be change agents we need to "get proximate". This means that that we must be willing to get closer to the issues that we are trying to address and the people that we are supporting towards empowerment. Proximity changes our perspective, compels our response, and keeps

us committed to work that we do each day.

Whether you realize it or not, the Division of Community Services is working daily in different ways to be more proximate. We are doing this by exploring new locations throughout the community to provide services. The first ever Pop Up Service Fair was held this past month, as a way to not just take information to community fairs, but actually allow people to be served on site. We are expanding our presence on social media platforms so that more and more people can be connected to the work that we do every day and are able to provide feedback about services received and needed. Through trainings like the Poverty Simulation attended by staff as an experiential

learning opportunity help us to better understand challenges faced by those living at and below poverty levels.

Not one of these things alone is enough to ensure that we capitalize on the benefits of proximity. In fact, there are many more ways that we have not even begun to explore that could be helpful in our efforts. Getting proximate is not something we do once and pat ourselves on the back for, it is a principle that we must weave into our organizational culture and operations. Proximity is necessary if we are to ensure that we are truly partners with our clients in our work. It is only through true partnership that we will ever be able to see successful outcomes for individuals and our community as a whole. I agree with Stevenson and others who argue that there is great power in proximity. As we move ahead in the weeks and months ahead, I encourage each of you to consider ways that you can contribute individually and collectively to unleashing this power that can change Shelby County for the better.

Inside this Edition

◆ Director's Message	1
◆ Welcome New CSA Director	2
◆ The Division Insider: Community Services Agency	2
◆ Beyond the Walls of Government	4
◆ Find Us Around Town	4
◆ Community Spotlight: Sensory World Memphis	5
◆ April is Child Abuse Prevention Month	5
◆ Peace Over Violence Denim Day Campaign	6

Social Media Blitz



Find Us, Like Us, and Follow Us!



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The Division of Community Services Welcomes New Deputy Administrator of the Community Services Agency

Since October of 2017, the Community Services Agency (CSA) has been in the capable hands of Cherry Whitehead-Thompson. Whitehead-Thompson is an energetic leader who considers her work important, but her occupation of being a mother to be the center of her life. Her plans for the future consist of creating strategic partnerships that will reinforce CSA’s strategic plan, increasing community awareness of CSA’s programs via targeted market strategies, and overall, truly creating a highly sought after service model for the agency. In addition to the aforementioned, Whitehead-Thompson shares a strong desire, with her staff, to elevate CSA by improving operations, the overall customer experience and ensuring that the programs effectively assist customers with moving from poverty to economic stability. Outside of the work setting, she enjoys mentoring young girls, reading, singing and finding new singing talent on YouTube.



Community Services Agency Programs

The Community Services Agency (CSA) is a federally grant funded agency that provides “safety net” services to eligible residents of Shelby County through the Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) and Community Services Block Grant dollars. The program services provided, via the aforementioned funding sources, are as follows:

Low Income Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP)

Each program serves to prevent disruption in services by providing utility assistance to individuals and families once per fiscal year (July 1st-June 30th). **Appointments are taken daily by calling 901-222-4280.**

Regular Energy Assistance Eligibility Requirements

- A resident of Shelby County; and
- Income of less than 150% of the current federal poverty income guidelines



Emergency Energy Assistance Eligibility Requirements

Energy Crisis is defined as having experienced a sudden, unexpected, uncontrollable loss of financial resources; life threatening conditions or any circumstances that threaten the stability of the household if energy assistance is not provided. Eligible recipients must:

- Be a resident of Shelby County;

Continued on page 3





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Community Services Programs Continued

Emergency Energy Assistance Eligibility Requirements Continued

- Provide documented proof of the unexpected, uncontrollable circumstance;
- Have documented proof of a cut-off notice or disconnected services;
- Have income of less than 150% of the current federal poverty income guidelines; and
- Live in a household that contains a senior citizen (60 years old+), a child under the age of 6, or someone who is disabled.

The **Community Services Block Grant** (CSBG) provides for programming to alleviate the causes and conditions of poverty in communities.



Rent/Mortgage Assistance Program

This program serves to prevent residential eviction or foreclosure due to having experienced an extenuating circumstance that occurred during the past 120 days prior to the program application date. The maximum award for each household is \$1,000.00 per calendar year. **Appointments are taken on Wednesdays only, beginning at 8am by calling 901-535-2200.**

Eligibility Requirements:

- Resident of Shelby County;
- Documented proof of the unexpected, uncontrollable circumstance;
- Documented proof of the pending eviction or foreclosure;
- Income of less than 125% of the current federal poverty income guidelines; and
- Live in a household that contains a senior citizen (60 years old+), a child under the age of 6, or someone who is disabled.

Medical Prescription Assistance Program

This program was created to assist uninsured and underinsured Shelby County residents with the cost of medical prescriptions. Eligible residents can receive up to \$500.00, for one person in the household, once a program fiscal year (July 1st-June 30th). This program does not cover the cost of narcotic prescriptions.



Family Support Self-Sufficiency Program

This program is designed to help families become less dependent on government aid. It provides longer term, more in-depth support to participants who want to develop the skills to acquire and sustain stable income and housing. This program is limited in the number of persons who can participate at any given time. **For more information or to make an appointment to be screened for services, call 901-222-4200 .**





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Community Spotlight: Sensory World Memphis

Sensory World Memphis fills a need to help children who are autistic. Sensory World is owned and operated by Justin Gibbs and Jeremy Whitley, both of whom have practical experience with Autism and sensory disorders, as well as the education to lead in the community. Justin and Jeremy graduated from the University of Memphis. Justin graduated with a BA in Psychology and Jeremy with a BA in Biology. Justin is a former education assistant for Collierville Schools. In working with special needs students, they saw the need for a store that supplied parents, caregivers, and schools with the supplies and equipment needed to support those children who have complex needs.

Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD) are a complex set of neurological disorders that severely impairs social, communicative and cognitive functions. Individuals with ASD suffer from cognitive impairments, though some have typical or above average IQs. Typical ASD behaviors include stereotyped actions (hand flapping, body rocking), insistence on sameness, resistance to change and, in some cases,

aggression or self-injury. Between 30-50% of people with autism have seizures. Autism was originally believed to be a form of schizophrenia brought on by a traumatic experience or bad parenting. This is not the case. No one is sure what causes autism. Through twin studies, scientists have determined that autism is a genetically based condition. Autism was first described by Dr. Leo Kanner in 1943. He reported on eleven children who showed a marked lack of interest in other people, but a highly unusual interest in the inanimate environment.

The Division of Community Service recognizes these 2 young men for seeing a need to help our autistic community. April is National Autism Awareness month. Sensory World finds a way to bring excitement to the community by hosting different events to engage autistic children.



Thank you Sensory World for your diligence to help the community and also for your selfless services! To learn more about Sensory World Memphis, click [here](#).

April is Child Abuse Prevention Month

Child abuse or neglect most often takes place in the home at the hands of a person the child knows well—a parent, relative, babysitter, or friend of the family. There are four major types of child maltreatment. Although any of the forms may be found separately, they often occur together. (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services)

Signs that a child is being abused may include:

- **Neglect** - Signs of malnutrition, poor hygiene, unattended physical or medical problems
- **Physical abuse** - Unexplained bruises, burns, or welts. Child appears frightened of a parent or caregiver
- **Sexual Abuse**— Pain, bleeding, redness, or swelling in anal or genital area, age-inappropriate sexual play with toys, self, or others, age-inappropriate knowledge of sex
- **Emotional Abuse** - Extremes in behavior, ranging from overly aggressive to overly passive delayed physical, emotional, or intellectual development



Each of us should know how to intervene if we suspect child abuse. Every adult in the State of Tennessee is a mandated reporter which means that they are compelled to contact the Tennessee Department of Children’s Services (DCS) or local law enforcement to file a report if they think any child under 18 is being abused.

Many people hesitate to report. Remember, it is not your job to investigate. It is the job of DCS or law enforcement to decide if abuse is taking place. Make the report to protect the safety of a child. If you don’t report, the child could face further abuse or even death.

To report abuse, call the Tennessee Department of Children’s Services Child Abuse Hotline at (877) 237-0004.





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Crime Victims Center & Rape Crisis Center Supports Peace over Violence Denim Day Campaign in honor of Sexual Violence Awareness Month

For the past 19 years, Peace Over Violence has run its Denim Day campaign on a Wednesday in April in honor of Sexual Violence Awareness Month. The campaign was originally triggered by a ruling by the Italian Supreme Court where a rape conviction was overturned because the justices felt that since the victim was wearing tight jeans she must have helped her rapist remove her jeans, thereby implying consent. The following day, the women in the Italian Parliament came to work wearing jeans in solidarity with the victim. Peace Over Violence developed the Denim Day campaign in response to this case and the activism surrounding it. Since then, wearing jeans on Denim Day has become a symbol of protest against erroneous and destructive attitudes about sexual assault. In this rape prevention education campaign we ask community members, elected officials, businesses and students to make a social statement with their fashion by wearing jeans on this day as a visible means of protest against the misconceptions that surround sexual assault. This year's Denim Day was April 25, 2018. Read more [here](#).



Deborah Davis-Williamson, CVC & RCC Manager, sporting her denim adorned with an **Embrace Your Voice, End Sexual Violence Takes All of Us Campaign Poster**



Robin Newsom, Chaunty Caver, Maquisa McQuarter and Tunnisha Deer of the Rape support survivors by wearing denim at the Rape Crisis Center.





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Published by the Office of Community Engagement and Outreach for the Shelby County Division of Community Services
Keisha Walker, Administrator

Beyond the Walls of Government

The Division of Community Services (DCS) is committed to bringing information and direct services out of our **Beyond the Walls of our Government** offices and into the neighborhoods where they are needed. We presented our first "Pop-Up Service Fair" at the *Frayser Community Family Fun Day* in honor of Dr. Martin Luther King on April 7 at the Ed Rice Community Center. Staff members from the Community Services Agency, the Aging Commission, the Office of Justice Initiatives, Veterans Services and the Crime Victims Center/Rape Crisis Center and the Office of Community

event was designed to meet two goals. The first is that persons in need get connected to services and programs that can help them through their current crisis to help them on their road to stability. The other is to give participants information to share with their families, friends, neighbors and church families about the programs provided by this valuable division of County government. I believe that Pop-Up Service Fairs are a great way to meet those goals."

The reaction of neighborhood participants at the event was very positive. When asked if she got the help she needed, one attendee stated, "I feel



Engagement and Outreach were out in full force at the event and met with each participant individually to discuss their specific needs.

In addition to having the opportunity to sign up for direct services, each person who came through the Pop-Up Service Fair received a bag with information about the services provided by the Division and how to access them. Keisha Walker, the Administrator of Community Education and Outreach said,

like I have had a ton of bricks taken off my shoulders. I have hope again." Many noted that it was much more convenient to be able to have initial screenings for services done in their neighborhood. Recipients said that the staff members they worked with were polite and helpful and that they would definitely refer others to the Division should they need assistance. As always, the staff of the Division of Community Services showed the community their hearts as well as their expertise in service delivery.

Find Us Around Town at Neighborhood Events!

Shelby County Division of Community Services is Coming to a Location Near You!

Join Us at One of the Community Events Listed Here to receive information about the following :

- Services for older adults & adults with disabilities
- Rent , mortgage, utility & medical prescription assistance
- Services for multicultural & Hispanic individuals
- Mental health services
- Veterans services
- Crime Victim services

***Services available on site at these events

Click here to invite us to your event or organization.

MAY 1ST
9AM-2PM

SENIOR EXPO
AGRI-CENTER INTERNATIONAL

MAY 5TH
110AM

FRAYSER COMMUNITY ASSOC.
COMMUNITY FESTIVAL @
ED RICE COMMUNITY CENTER
2907 N. WATKINS ST.

MAY 12TH
10AM TO 2PM

MIRACLE IN MAY COMMUNITY DAY
@ GREATER FAITH TABERNACLE
MINISTRIES
905 E. SHELBY DR, 38116

MAY 12TH
10AM TO 2PM

NUEVA VIDA CHURCH
MOTHER'S DAY PARADE &
COMMUNITY FAIR
4845 WINCHESTER RD.

MAY 19TH
NOON TO 3PM

LITERACY FAIR AT RIVERVIEW
COMMUNITY CENTER***
1891 KANSAS ST

JULY 21ST
11 AM TO 3PM

BACK TO SCHOOL FAIR @
GREATER NEW KINGDOM ***
531 E. TRIGG, 38106

