



TOWN OF COVENTRY DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES

MISSION STATEMENT

The mission of our Center is to provide all members of our community a single, identifiable and visible agency through which their social, economic, psychological and physical needs can be addressed.

SERVICE CATEGORIES

1. Senior Services
2. Youth and Family Services
3. Services for Individuals with Disabilities
4. Food/Nutrition Services
5. Special Programs

SENIOR SERVICES

The safety and welfare for our eldest residents and that of the general population is the primary focus of our department. Getting our seniors vaccinated and knowing they are safer as a result is reassuring and is keeping our department hopeful.

Health and Wellness programs remain a perpetual focus on our residents ages 60 and older. We continue to strive to have the **Coventry Resource and Senior Center** to be seen as a “one stop shopping” point for all services that this segment of the population may need. Since isolation is the major contributing factor to failure in the community for senior citizens (and most other populations for that matter) the need to connect folks to services, supports and healthy options is what our department is here to do.

The department is fortunate to have very committed staff that is willing to meet all the challenges facing the ever growing needs of our residents. We remain cognizant of funding needs and sustainability once funding sources are exhausted and will continue to seek out and apply for grant funding whenever possible. We continue to foster stronger and creative partnerships with other agencies and facilities which will continue to be necessary for the future success of our department.

The Coventry Resource and Senior Center staff outreach to our seniors each week, via telephone, our Face Book page and also providing sidewalk social work to meet the many varied needs of our seniors. Our Director participates in a social isolation work group with state leaders in eldercare to streamline

services for our elder residents. We continue to connect them to needed services, food, health and mental health services, Low Income Heating Assistance, virtual learning opportunities, recently finished with Medicare Open Enrollment and a variety of vital services including vaccination appointments and transportation coordination as needed.

Coventry Seniors will become part of a state of Rhode Island pilot project with the University of Rhode Island and the RI Office of Healthy Aging entitled: **Digi-Age, Cyber Seniors**, where Coventry Seniors will obtain iPads and get training and support from current University of Rhode Island students to learn how to use their new found skills.

I am the current President of the **Rhode Island Senior Center Directors Association (RISDA)** which also is strong advocacy group for our seniors. Coordinating and resource sharing around areas of need such as; transportation, nutrition, connective and integrated services for Rhode Island seniors is a major focus of this vibrant group.

As of last week we supported House Bill 162 to increase the threshold for seniors living in the community who need home care to receive financial assistance up to and including 250% of the Federal Poverty Guidelines. This will allow more elders in RI and especially for me here in Coventry to remain in their homes for as long as possible.

When open we have professional registered nursing services on site four days per week with a focus on nursing care and nursing education. Our nurses collaborate with the University Rhode Island student nurses to provide seniors with group education on a variety of health and mental health issues.

We have partnered with *Own Your Health Rhode Island* and have coordinated evidence-based health and wellness programs. Programs such as; **Choosing Wisely, Balance, Caregivers, Diabetes and Chronic Disease Self-Management** and hiring outside specialists in Tai Chi, Yoga and other whole health initiatives has strengthened our menu of services. Our recent hire of a new program assistant who is certified in teaching **Zumba** (ages 4-84), **Silver Sneakers** and holds a certificate in **Optimal Health Wellness and sports nutrition** has benefitted Coventry's senior citizens. These programs are presently on hold until we can reopen to our seniors safely. Reopening plans have been submitted and approved and can be activated when it is deemed safe by our Governor's Office, The Rhode Island Department of Health and Our National Center for Disease Control.

YOUTH AND FAMILY SERVICES

The department focuses on families as a whole and do not work with children in isolation from their support systems. Maximizing supports for parents which in turn will benefit children is an ever present focus of our work. We currently provide basic human needs for Coventry residents: access to options to address Food, Shelter, Utilities and more intensive case management when necessary. Our staff sit on the Coventry Substance Abuse Task Force which develops and implements programming on the local level to address substance use and abuse throughout all age cohorts. This is a collaborative effort with our police, municipal and town members to address these important issues.

It remains vital to identify the needs and provide support to families in as timely manner as possible. Statistics show that children who do not attend school have higher rates in drop out, prevalence of drug use and may become more delinquent in the community.

We continue to provide a holistic approach to services and resources that will serve a larger part of our community. Our staff sit on the larger Kent County Prevention Coalition which addresses substance abuse and connections to resources for those community members who are in need.

Our department continues to collaborate with our Coventry Public School Department in bringing resources and collaborative entities into the district. We work closely with administration in grant initiatives and program development to seamlessly provide services to students and families within our town.

Our department provides case-management services to students and families involved in the **Truancy Court** and the **Juvenile Hearing Board** in Coventry. Coventry is participating in a pilot program through the **Rhode Island Family Court** to provide Truancy Court interventions for 5th graders for the first time. We are one of two sites (Warwick) who will begin servicing this age cohort.

COVENTRY-TRAUMA INFORMED COMMUNITY(C-TIC)

*A trauma-informed approach refers to **how an agency, organization, and/or community responsible for providing services** such as mental health, educational, crisis, and/or criminal justice services thinks about providing those services in a way that supports resilience, prevention, treatment, and recovery.(SAMSHA-2019)*

Professional development of municipal staff is a constant focus and we attend many trainings throughout the year. The goal over the upcoming year is to have staff trained on **Trauma Informed Care, Vicarious Trauma and Self-Care**, we are presently collaborating with the Coventry School Department on a 3 year \$440,000 grant initiative supported by the Rhode Island Foundation to have Coventry Public School District seek to become a district of **Trauma-Informed and Trauma Sensitive Schools**.

We have trained many municipal staff, school-based staff and will be seeking to train both the Town Council and School Committee in Trauma Informed Care in 2021.

At this point all of the elementary school staff have received training and group support from Family Service of Rhode Island. The high school and middle school are in the process of receiving training at this time.

The goal is to have Coventry become a Trauma-Informed Community.

Throughout the pandemic, training and support of municipal staff in the areas of self-care and secondary trauma has been a goal. Training of school district staff around the areas of self-care and utilizing trauma-informed practices with students during distance learning has been a strong focus.

Remote and accessible training continues for our families here in town as well. In December 2020, 45 minute supportive training sessions took place for parents and caregivers in two of our elementary schools entitled (**Mental Health of Our Children During Covid-19**) which focused on assisting our families to be aware of mental health needs of themselves and their children and provide a route to access ongoing support.

Food/Nutrition Services-Coventry Food Services/Coventry Community Food Bank

Coventry Community Food Bank prior to COVID-19 was located at 191 MacArthur Boulevard in Coventry. We are a member-agency of the Rhode Island Community Food Bank and is administered by the Coventry Department of Human Services. All programs follow town-wide financial accountability standards are audited on an annual basis.

Due to the COVID-19 outbreak the food bank was temporarily moved to the Coventry Resource and Senior Center to provide drive-up emergency food to Coventry residents. Prior to the COVID-19 outbreak the Coventry Community Food Bank provided food to over 500 individuals per month with most of the households being families with children. We will be moving the Food Bank back to MacArthur Boulevard by the beginning of next month so we can ready our site to accept seniors most likely in the month of May 2021.

Since March 2020 we have provided thousands of Coventry households with vital nutrition. We have helped to address food insecurity. We were averaging about 250 Meals on Wheels out to our community each week and over 60 grab and go meals for our seniors.

Nutrition services for frail and homebound elders is a vital service this department provides and was paramount in importance throughout the pandemic.

Some statistics on Food Distribution during the Pandemic:

- Drive-Up Emergency Food -**2,500**
- Meals on Wheels served since April 1st- **9,794 (updated)**
- Meals on Wheels (shelf meals-3 in each box) $104 \times 3 = 312$
- Blackstone Health (our contract food provider) started the grab and go bag lunch program the week of 4/27/20.
- Total bagged lunches to date-**2355**.
- Blackstone also provided over 100 frozen meals as a back-up during poor weather conditions or long weekends.

Our Food Bank receives donations in the form of food, as well as monetary donations to provide this basic human need to Coventry residents. Food drives throughout our community and fundraisers keep our program seen as a community resource and community connector. Schools, businesses and individuals have taken on the role of food resource gatherers and assist us in our mission throughout the year. This has become and continues to be a community-wide effort. It makes me proud to live in Coventry to see how the community comes together to help its neediest members during a crisis.

Coventry Community Garden:

The Community Garden has been in existence for the past 11 years. It is run by Volunteer Master Gardeners that live here in Coventry. A variety of groups volunteer their time to support our efforts;

including Seniors, those who use our food bank, boy scouts, girl scouts, 4 H, and volunteers from the community-at-large. Every organically grown piece of produce is donated to the Coventry Community Food Bank and feeds our neighbors in need.

If anyone is interested in making a donation to our Food Bank or Community Garden, they can send donations to:

- **Coventry Community Food Bank @50 Wood Street Coventry, Rhode Island 02816**

or

- **Coventry Community Garden @ 50 Wood Street Coventry, Rhode Island 02816**

SERVICES FOR INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES

The department presently provides Day Support and Family Support Services for 23 individuals with developmental disabilities. The **Project FRIENDS Program** originated in 1990 and is one of only a few licensed programs by a state that is run by a municipality. These services have been co-located with our Senior Center since its inception. The goal of “true” community integration and ownership was the driving force behind the program. This was seen as an option for sheltered workshops which the state has recently phased out due to a consent decree to planfully employ individuals within their home communities via a least restrictive environment. The state is coming around to what our agency has known all along that all members of our community should have equal access to services which can increase their quality of life and their independence.

Since the hiring of our new Director there has been a consistent focus on developing best practices. A new Clinical Administrator has been hired who has over 20 years of experience with individuals with Autism and Developmental Disabilities and her input into programming which is strengths based and client-centered has strengthened the program.

Our **Direct Support Professionals (DSP)** are those who provide direct care for our participants in the Project FRIENDS Program are enrolled in a Statewide DSP Certification Program in alignment with the Sherlock Center for Disabilities at Rhode Island College.

Our Director is a member of the **Community Provider Network of Rhode Island (CPNRI)** which is a group of directors of programs that provide direct supports to individuals with disabilities. This group has provided a foundation in advocacy, state level planning, increased accessibility and common core and best practice development and is considered a viable entity and a resource for those with intellectual and Developmental Disabilities throughout Rhode Island.

Grants and Initiatives

Seeking alternative funding through grants to grow our current programming and seek innovation is a perpetual goal for departmental improvement. COVID-19 has provided a need to pivot and focus on provision of vital needs for our seniors and families that we serve.

We have successfully applied for and received funding to complete a drip irrigation system for our community garden across from town hall, all of the new appliances at the Resource and Senior Center (Dishwasher, stove, sinks and refrigeration units and new bocce court was built onsite as well

A new greenhouse was built at the center with grant funds obtained from the Rhode Island Foundation, to benefit our seniors with horticultural therapy and connect them to helping our neighbors in need by starting plants for our community garden and for their own use.

We are presently utilizing a grant from the RI Office of Healthy Aging to drive seniors to access to shopping for their basic human needs, food and prescriptions on a very limited basis. We will also utilize these funds for a portion of the cost to replace one of our vans. This will go out to an RFP bid once again since there was no response to previous one sent out in October 2020.

The Coventry Resource and Senior Center has also applied for Title IIIB funds (Cares Act) to provide additional driver hours to get seniors to their weekly shopping (especially those in elderly and disabled housing here in town). This grant will also provide socialization and connection by adding intergenerational expressive arts programming through Zoom meetings. We will be working with middle school students and seniors to connect them for a mutually beneficial program. I did receive the award notification today to increase opportunities for those we serve.

Special Projects

WATERMAN FISKE FUND

Our department administers assessments for the Waterman Fiske Assistance Fund for the poor of Coventry. We work cooperatively with the Finance Department to assist individuals who meet qualifications of 250% of the Federal Poverty Guidelines for assistance when in crisis for a variety of assistance; such as no heat, unlivable conditions, heat assistance, rental assistance, medical and others.

This year the Waterman Fiske Fund has assisted our most needy residents with costs incurred for their sewer assessments. The Waterman Fiske Sewer Assistance Fund also goes by the 250% of the federal poverty guideline standard.

I will be on placed on a subsequent town council agenda to give a full report of the most recent usage of the fund. I look forward to presenting this on a bi-annual basis.

TIS THE SEASON

Special projects like the *Tis THE SEASON* 'program where we assist people throughout the year and especially around the holidays for food and toys throughout our adopt-a-family program where new toys, clothing and food are donated to help our neighbors in need during the holiday season. We are on schedule to assist over 200 families this Christmas.

THANKSGIVING PROGRAM

Our Thanksgiving Program this year serviced 140 families with Thanksgiving Baskets. One Hundred hot turkey dinner meals were prepared by the Culinary Arts Program at the Coventry High School. All *Turkey-to-Go Meals* were delivered into the community and delivered to seniors by a varied group of volunteers.

Continuity of services is paramount, especially during our present health crisis. Insuring that our residents will continue to receive the services they depend upon for survival and growing new innovative programs to support our mission is a constant focus of our efforts.