

# Allegheny County Department of Social Services

## Fiber services accommodate increased caseload and online applications.

The recession of recent years has, not surprisingly, meant that more people need help. As a result, the Allegheny County Department of Social Services (DSS) has seen a significant increase in the number of requests for its social, economic, community education and resource development programs.

### MORE ACTIVITY, MORE CHALLENGES

John Blevins, Director of the Allegheny County DSS, notes, "People are hurting. From July 2009 to February 2012, there has been a 48 percent increase in Food Nutrition Service cases. That's a big jump."

Located in Sparta, N.C., the Allegheny County DSS provides a broad range of assistance including Children and Family Services, Income Maintenance Services and Child Support Enforcement Services. Adding to the challenges of serving a growing number of clients was the IT change prompted by state budget cuts in 2010.

Blevins explains, "The State of North Carolina used to provide IT support through a state server. Due to budget cuts, the state withdrew IT support from the counties in 2010. So our department had to set up its own network. We spoke with Robin Miller (Inside Sales Coordinator) and Brent Keith (Business Sales Executive) about the options for connectivity that SkyLine/ SkyBest could offer us."

### SKYLINE/SKYBEST OFFERS FIBER SOLUTION

To meet the new network needs of the Allegheny County DSS, Miller and Keith recommended utilizing the SkyLine/SkyBest fiber network and installing a metro pipe. A metro pipe is a unique Ethernet connection that provides business-class reliability and connectivity to the Internet. This specific connection consists of a 3 Mbps symmetrical Ethernet connection to SkyLine/SkyBest with direct access to the Internet. This would replace the costly T-1 line from the state that the department had been using.



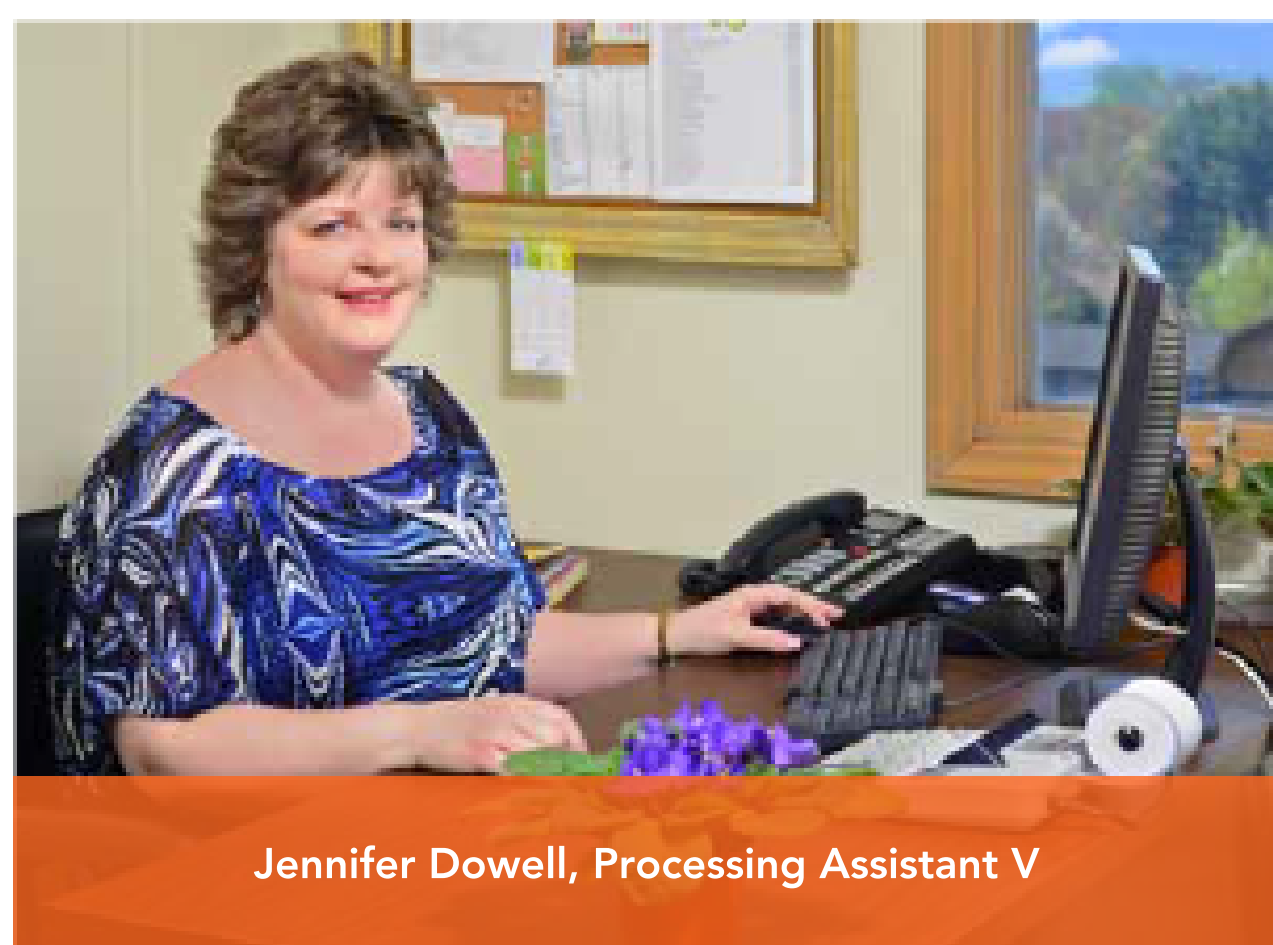
John Blevins in his office at the Allegheny County Department of Social Services

**“Making the switch to a metro pipe doubled the speed of our Internet service while giving us a 34-percent cost savings. Those are extremely valuable benefits, and we were sold.”**

- John Blevins, Director, Allegheny County DSS

By August 2010, the department was up and running with SkyLine/SkyBest fiber services via the metro pipe.

According to Blevins, it was a smooth and seamless transition. He says, "The best thing about it was once our new metro pipe was put in, I didn't have to think about it anymore."



Jennifer Dowell, Processing Assistant V

## Need For Speed

One reason the doubled Internet speed was so important to the Allegheny County DSS is the state's ongoing move to implementing more Internet-based applications. They include:

- **NC FAST** (Families Accessing Services Through Technology) – This application is coming out in October 2012. It's designed to improve the way the N.C. Department of Health and Human Services and county departments of social services do business. NC FAST will enable workers to spend less time on administrative tasks and more time assisting families. Rather than a client having to speak to multiple people to discuss several different benefits, eventually clients will tell their story once and receive all the benefits they are eligible to receive. In addition, NC FAST will make it possible to send files between counties and go across the whole system to see what benefits the client is eligible for.
- **ePASS** (Electronic Pre-Assessment Screening Services) – This is a quick and easy way for people to get information about benefits and services that may help them. By using ePASS, people can start the process of exploring benefits while they're still at home by entering their information online to find out what programs they may potentially be able to receive.

In addition to the enhanced performance provided by its fiber services, Blevins also appreciates the attentive service the department receives from SkyLine/SkyBest. He notes, "SkyLine/SkyBest is local; that's number one for me. They're in our area, and their people are very responsive and quick to answer our questions. I'm really not a tech person, so I especially appreciate the fact that they're willing to explain everything to me. I can count on SkyLine/SkyBest to work hard and put forth the effort."