

BOARD OF SOCIAL SERVICES MEETING MINUTES

A recording of this work session is available at: http://larimer.org/bcc/list_worksessions.cfm.

Date: August 12, 2019

Location: 200 W. Oak, Commissioners' Conference Room

In Attendance: Commissioner Tom Donnelly; Commissioner John Kefalas; Commissioner Steve Johnson; Linda Hoffmann, Lorenda Volker; Heather O'Hayre; Shannon Reiff; Laura Sartor; Lisa Silcox, Vanessa Fewell, Katherine Palmer, Carisa Clinton, and Ann Marie Grobarek

INTRODUCTIONS & ANNOUNCEMENTS

ADDITIONS TO THE AGENDA

Commissioner Kefalas asked that there be some discussion about the recent USDA proposed rule change that has implications regarding the SNAP program.

AGING & ADULT SERVICES DIVISION MANAGER INTRODUCTION

Deputy Director Heather O'Hayre introduced the new Division Manager for the Aging & Adult Services Division, Lisa Silcox. This new division is a result of efforts to consolidate programs for aging and people with disabilities including Options for Long Term Care, Long Term Care Eligibility, Adult Protective Services and the Office On Aging. Lisa Silcox was a nurse for the last four years doing hospice and understands the importance of this sort of care in order to keep someone independent as long as possible. Lisa was over the public health nursing for the State of Wyoming for the Department of Health and did a lot of home-based services.

Moving forward, Lisa has a goal for enhancing services for dementia and Alzheimer's disease as one out of every three seniors die with one of those conditions. Lisa also would like to see more evidence-based programs that would help address disease prevention and health promotion. About 80% of our senior population are living with at least one chronic disease that affects them. Lisa would like to continue the high level of service currently provided by the programs and prepare for the demographic shift that is currently in progress.

Commissioner Kefalas asked for clarification of terminology used by the department as Long Term Care is sometimes referred to as Long Term Services & Support. Heather clarified that the State agency of HCPF refers to it as Long Term Care, so that is what is used here. It can be confusing, but Lisa's work will include identifying and clearing up any overlaps or gaps in order to reduce confusion.



Commissioner Kefalas also asked if there would be any efforts from the new division to work with behavioral health and mental health issues and Lisa indicated there would.

CHILD SUPPORT AWARENESS MONTH

Human Services Deputy Division Manager Vanessa Fewell provided a presentation with an overview of Child Support Services with the help of the new Child Support Administrator, Carisa Clinton. Key points of the presentation included:

- Information regarding how having financial and emotional support from both parents making a difference in the eventual success of a child. An additional \$250 a month can significantly impact meeting education goals and future income potential.
- An explanation of “pass-through” for families that receive both child support payments and TANF. Recent legislation sponsored by Commissioner Kefalas resulted in all the money paid for child support being “passed through” to the family receiving TANF.
- One non-custodial parent owed over \$60,000 in arrears and was at risk of losing their professional license. The non-custodial parent worked with the custodial parent to obtain housing for the custodial parent. As a result, the custodial parent felt it appropriate to forgive that debt. So, the family was able to find housing and the non-custodial parent no longer had the outstanding debt.

Commissioner Johnson asked for clarification on how the Child Support process works. Benefits & Community Services Division Manager, Laura Sartor, clarified the process and explained that new regulations are encouraging Child Support to provide more staff involvement in discussion between the two parties. The philosophy from the State has changed, encouraging more interest in trying to help the two parties come to an understanding rather than being heavy handed and “punishing” non-custodial parents. Results have demonstrated this approach provides more child support being paid.

As this is Child Support Awareness month, the staff is wearing green to the meeting and has some green ribbon badges for your lapel or id badge lanyard.

Commissioner Kefalas asked for information on how much money we are getting from the garnishment of gambling winnings. Heather committed to provide information regarding how much has been collected this way and through tax intercepts.

PROGRAM INTEGRITY UNIT UPDATE

Shannon Reiff, Operations Division Manager, provided an overview of the Program Integrity Unit specifically talking about the work being done with fraud and recovery. Shannon recognized the staff attending this meeting, including Nik Montagner, Rita Vasquez-Felix, Michelle Lane and Evelyn Alvarado. Commissioner Johnson asked if they had attended the State conference that was just held, and Shannon confirmed that they had.

Our Program Integrity team is responsible for the following tasks:

- Investigating potential fraud in food assistance, Medicaid, and cash programs,
- Recovering benefits that were issued in error,
- Considering appeals and participating in hearings regarding benefits that were denied or recovery amounts in dispute, and
- Training Income Eligibility Technicians in best practices.



Over the past year, Program Integrity has streamlined several business processes including providing a guided referral form to allow Technicians to identify potential fraud or overpayment of benefits. This allows for prioritization of potential claims so the most egregious issues can be handled first. There has been some reorganization within the department to allow for a better flow of information and services between employees.

When an investigation is done for fraud, this group takes the time to provide client education as most families do not intentionally attempt to defraud the system. But when there are intentional program violations, the team will follow through to stop benefits immediately or refer the case over to the District Attorneys' office for prosecution. The final slide of the presentation indicates what percentage of funds must be returned to either the State of Colorado or the Federal Government when funds are recovered by the Program Integrity unit.

Commissioner Kefalas asked if the group takes some time to look at the data and look at individual programs to identify patterns and trends that can be identified for improvements. Heather said some of this information is already on the Department Performance Report and they can certainly keep that in mind for the future.

LEGISLATIVE PLANNING FOR 2020 SESSION

Heather provided a report on how we watch the legislative process and revisions that will be made for the 2020 legislative session. There will be a representative from each of the four divisions who can take issues specific to their programs back to their staff to get more specialized input. The legislative process can advance so quickly it is important to have the ability to change direction or respond immediately. There will also be connections with the other Departments in the Human and Economic Health division.

SEMI-ANNUAL FISCAL UPDATE

Shannon Reiff provided the twice-yearly update of the fiscal status for the Department of Human Services. The Settlement Report arrived this morning which provided verification that all the allocations covered the expenses except for the County Admin fund. Larimer County was covered for all but about \$86,000 of County Administrative costs. Shannon further reported:

- There are strategies for Adult Protective Services as it appears the funding will be decreased, and our spending would not keep pace with that decrease unless we make some adjustments.
- The purchase from Pueblo County allowed us to be covered for CCAP.
- The Colorado Works allocation was covered by our TANF Reserves, but the State will provide \$800,000 to replenish our TANF Reserves since we only have about half of the allowable amount for TANF Reserves.
- Child Welfare allocations are overspent by about 5% on purpose as we expected to be covered fully by the closeout purpose, which we were.

Commissioner Donnelly asked what funds would cover the overage for the County Admin funds, and Heather and Shannon reported that it would come out of the fund balance, which has about \$10 million in the fund.



C-STAT DASHBOARD REVIEW

Heather O'Hayre provided a review of the C-Stat Performance Dashboard. The State of Colorado has changed the color-coding from red and green to gray and green. The State is working on changing the metrics to focus more on outcomes versus outputs but has not changed anything of yet. Out of the 22 goals, we met 16, which is 4 more than the Big Ten Counties.

Commissioner Johnson asked about the Food Assistance error measure since it shows zero. Heather replied that that result is a consequence of issues with the reporting process.

DEPARTMENT PERFORMANCE REPORT

Heather O'Hayre provided two Department Performance Reports, the previous report and a new one for comparison. The hope is to do away with the old report and start up with the new one.

The old report shows a total number of applications for food assistance, Medicaid and cash assistance programs in aggregate, which does not show the ups and downs of the specific program areas.

- There has been an increase in the number of children served by the Child, Youth & Family Services division which really can only be attributed to causes like substance abuse by parents, behavioral health issues, and domestic abuse. The cases we have are often complex, involving two or three of these main issues.
- Child Support collected about \$4.8 million for this quarter, accumulating over \$19 million in the past year.
- About 25% of the referrals received regarding concerns about potential abuse or neglect are assigned for assessment. Commissioner Donnelly asked what happened to the others, and Heather said they either are referred for education or prevention services for additional information or resources or some factor determines that it is not an issue that warrants an assessment.
- There were no formal complaints in the past quarter because we have revised the complaint process and complaints are now being resolved at lower levels, so they do not rise to the level of a formal complaint.

The new report was created with the assistance of Sylvia Smith as a Senior Business Analyst and provide more meaningful information on the report.

- The first slide focuses on child protection showing information about the specific children instead of the total number of referrals and is broken down by month in order to show seasonal trends. Commissioner Johnson said he likes the graphs and wants to see trends over time.
- The percent of children/youth in out of home placement in family-like setting resulted in questions from Commissioner Donnelly on whether a number would be a better representation of this factor than a percentage.
- Adult Protective Services received 553 referrals, 138 of which were in need of assessment and 107 of which had cases opened. Commissioner Kefalas asked for information on the allegation type, financial or otherwise and to break the population out by age. Heather said there is the ability to show 70 and older or 18-70, which includes people with disabilities. Commissioner Johnson if we could determine whether the alleged abuse happened in the home or at a facility, which Heather said could be provided.
- Heather introduced new metrics about the Ombudsman program through the Office on Aging who provided 373 visits to long term care facilities in the last quarter. The team is growing as



the older adult population grows. Lisa Silcox replied that there are currently there are 40-50 facilities in Larimer County plus assisted living and memory care facilities. In addition, the mandated reporting for adult abuse may also have resulted in more referrals. Commissioner Johnson asked about the frequency of these visits and the outcomes, clarifying that these are different from the licensing visits. Although Heather said they can refer a facility to the licensing agency if they see issues.

- Data regarding food assistance and cash assistance programs have been broken out by program, but Medicaid reports have been affected and this data is no longer available. They are working on trying to find accurate information regarding this program. Commissioner Donnelly compared the old report to the new report and identified that most of the numbers are Medicaid. Commissioner Kefalas asked what percentage of the Medicaid numbers are for long term care, but Heather was not sure that information would be readily available.
- Numbers were reviewed for Child Support, Child Care Assistance, and Program Integrity, including 47 appeals from clients regarding benefits.

Overall the new report is preferred by the Commissioners to the old report and shows a better overview of Human Services work.

Commissioner Johnson asked if Larimer County was finished with hiring the additional workers that were supposed to be hired as a result of the workload study. Heather responded that we have not been able to hire the number we were supposed to hire as the new employees cost us significantly more than the State allowed in the initially funding. The State is looking at potentially stopping the funding for the additional positions. Retention has significantly improved due to compensation adjustments made over a year ago and concentrated efforts made by the organization to address non-monetary issues affecting turnover.

SNAP UPDATE

In response to the request for an update on the changes to SNAP eligibility and how it will impact Larimer County, Heather is working with the State to isolate data specific to Larimer County, but the system is not built to identify information by municipality.

The proposed USDA rule change regarding Broad Based Categorical Eligibility (BBCE) means that every person between the 130% and 200% level of poverty would get an extra \$50 a month in cash, which they would want to fund out of the TANF Reserves. Commissioner Kefalas said we would have to do more analysis but wanted to know if we would be interested in submitting public comment. Heather said the Human Services Directors Association is looking to determine the impact and will send it as soon as she knows the response.

OTHER BUSINESS

NEXT MEETING

Legislative review and new Department Performance Report