

## BOARD OF SOCIAL SERVICES MEETING MINUTES

A recording of this worksession is available at: [http://larimer.org/bcc/list\\_worksessions.cfm](http://larimer.org/bcc/list_worksessions.cfm).

**Date:** August 13, 2018

**Location:** 200 W. Oak, Commissioners' Conference Room

**In Attendance:** Commissioner Lew Gaiter; Commissioner Steve Johnson; Commissioner Tom Donnelly; Linda Hoffmann; Lorenda Volker; Laura Walker; Heather O'Hayre; Shannon Reiff; Thad Paul; Ann Smith; Carri Ratazzi; Suzi Tallman; Keith Bainer; Randy Hall; Becka Payne; Ann Marie Grobarek

### INTRODUCTIONS & ANNOUNCEMENTS

Commissioner Steve Johnson welcomed everyone and called the meeting to order.

### ADDITIONS TO THE AGENDA

No additions to the agenda.

### CHILD SUPPORT CALL-A-THON RESULTS

Larry Desbien, Child Support Director for the Colorado Department of Human Services (CDHS) presented an award to recognize the Child Support Unit of Larimer County for outstanding accomplishments.

Highlights of their performance from the past year included the following:

- Collected over \$14.3 million in current child support in 2017, which is 66.4% of what was owed. This speaks to a consistency of payment of current on-going support and was the highest rate of current child support collected by the ten large counties in Colorado.
- Consistently achieved the zero-payment rate goal of 28%, reducing the number of cases where non-custodial parents are making no payments.

Keri Batchelder, Programs and Services Section Manager for the CDHS Division of Child Support, provided several handouts showing the percent of cases with no payment, strategies for reducing that percent and the outcomes of the "call-a-thon" strategy from January and February in 2018. Larimer County stepped forward to pilot the call-a-thon, working with CDHS Child Support employees for one or two days to call people who were not making any child support payments. The goal was to get a commitment to make payments. Even if employees could not reach the parents, the cases were reviewed and "cleaned up" with updated information.

In the January call-a-thon, 653 cases were worked. 92 people made a commitment to pay and 57 people made payments, including 10 people who could not commit when reached via phone or text. Of the \$200,000 due, about \$50,000 was collected. Approximately \$25,500 was collected in February. The





cooperative work with State Child Support staff strengthened our relationship with them. Some new approaches, including sending text messages to reach people, has proven to be effective.

Commissioner Donnelly asked for clarification on the “SSA contact list”, which is a list of parents who have applied for disability benefits through the Social Security Administration. Legislation gives Child Support collections tremendous authority to enforce payment. Laura Walker explained that Larimer County’s approach is to attempt to have a personal touch and work directly with a person who owes child support before resorting to automated ways to obtain payment.

#### **CCAP WAITLIST UPDATE**

Benefits & Community Support Deputy Division Manager, Keith Bainer provided an update on the waitlist for the Child Care Assistance Program. There are currently 126 approved applications for families who need assistance with child care costs for a total of 186 children. Since the beginning of 2016 there have been 1255 applications that have gone to the waitlist.

Commissioner Gaiter had asked at a previous meeting for information on why people leave the CCAP program in the context of the long waiting list. People might move to other counties, find other means of child care, or may choose not to reapply. Additional reasons include ineligible individuals in the household, parents not participating in required activities like looking for work or going to school, households exceeding income requirements, or individuals not completing a redetermination to stay on the waitlist.

Commissioner Johnson asked if there was a problem with providers not having enough spaces available for children. Laura responded that used to be a problem but that now the problem has to do with not having enough funds to pay for spots. Additional funds for CCAP were granted by legislative action; however, it only allows Larimer County to cover the costs of current expenditures, not provide for people to come off the waitlist.

#### **SOCIAL CASEWORKER HR INTERVENTIONS: 2 YEARS POST-INTERVENTIONS**

Laura Walker introduced Thad Paul, Child, Youth and Family Services Division Manager, who provided a follow up showing the results of a radical pay increase that was requested and approved by the County Commissioners in 2016. The increase made Larimer County pay competitive with other counties. There were two retention bonuses provided in June and July of 2016, and then the pay rate increase went into effect in October of 2016. Nationally, turnover for a caseworker position is 40%, with an average tenure of two years. Larimer County was at 37% with an average tenure of three years. As of July 2018, the turnover rate is at 13% with an average tenure of three years. Becky Smith, Social Caseworker Manager, just remarked in our last management meeting that her team is the most secure and stable that she has seen in the past two years.

Measures taken to reduce turnover included twelve additional case carrying positions resulting from additional State funds provided after the statewide workload study. This reduced the individual workloads for employees and increases the amount of time a supervisor is available to help employees with questions. And a secondary traumatic stress study was completed that included a detailed survey, facilitated sessions and focus groups with no administration present. The response rate for the survey was an unprecedented 88% and highlighted employee concern about their own physical safety in the building and out in the community.



Child, Youth and Family Services has already provided additional monitoring and secured doorways with fob access. The Division has just completed building safety assessment session with Jay Callaghan, Security Manager and is awaiting recommendations for further actions it can take. A formalized debrief process is now in place that requires any worker who is involved in a fatality or serious bodily injury case to process their reaction with a therapist.

Commissioner Johnson asked for clarification of the goal of all of these efforts, when will you know you have “arrived” at the goal. Laura replied that she wants all job categories to have roughly the same amount of turnover. Less than 15% feels like a healthy amount to her if it is taken as an aggregate. It is also important to look at what we are doing in recruiting and selection of new employees. Are we doing enough to screen for the “soft skills” that determine whether or not an employee will fit our organizational culture? The reality is that this job is not for everyone. You see and hear the most horrible things, but you also encounter wonderful positives. Some people can only do it for a couple of years. Hopefully the Families First legislation will help keep us funded and help families before they walk through our doors.

#### **FUNDING UPDATES**

Shannon Reiff, Operations Division Manager, reported a funding update. Larimer County has not yet heard from the State Settlement Accounting on closeout or surplus distribution except for Child Welfare and Core Services. There is an additional column of 2018-2019 initial allocations expected. Highlights of her report include:

- County Administration is 13% overspent. We have been overspent for the past few years, but these numbers are trending down. Usually we get enough surplus distribution at the end of the year to cover any over-expenditures, and Laura is confident that should happen for this year.
- There will be a reduction in the Adult Protective Services allocation, 5% for administrative services and approximately 14% decrease in services to clients.
- TANF overspending is due to a 14% increase in caseload.
- For both Child Welfare and Core Services, Larimer County purposefully plans to overspend as surplus covers over-expenditures. We received a call today saying that we are completely covered although Laura is not sure where the funds come from.

Commissioner Johnson said this is very interesting and helpful, but it is difficult to determine if this is good news or bad news due to all the moving parts. Laura responded that this snapshot of our funding is about as secure as we have had since Laura has been Director.

Commissioner Johnson asked about how the increase of TANF payments to clients will affect these numbers. Laura indicated that this handout does not reflect that cost as the increase had not been confirmed when it was created. We will still be overspent, but we will be getting an additional half million dollars for our reserves from the State.

#### **CHILD PROTECTION OMBUDSMAN 2017-2018 SFY REPORT**

Laura Walker reported on the State Ombudsman Report. The State Ombudsman’s office received 28 contacts regarding Larimer County. The Ombudsman’s office agreed with our actions on 17 of the complaints, had one duplicate issue and closed two more for lack of information. Seven contacts were



classified as systems navigation issues. Laura said she watches carefully for noncompliance issues, but Larimer had none and there were only two statewide, out of 400 complaints. Laura finds this encouraging. There have been some changes in protocols with the new Ombudsman's office and a shift to focusing on system changes that could improve processes.

Commissioner Johnson asked for specific definitions of the areas of concern which we will provide. Commissioner Donnelly asked if there is an overlap with the Citizen Review Panel. Laura explained that the State Ombudsman's office responds to issues that go beyond employee conduct. Heather added that the Ombudsman's office can remain completely neutral. The Ombudsman's office does not always tell us when there is a complaint and they have access to the Trails system, so we often have no details on the issues or the people involved.

### **SYNERGY PROJECT UPDATE**

Deputy Director Heather O'Hayre reported on the Synergy technology project providing improved case management tools and automating some processes. The OLTC database, the first project, went live in mid-June. OLTC employees have seen a lot of improvements in assigning work and reporting progress on their cases. There has been some great collaboration. The next project involves BCSD and replaces ACT, a tool we currently use, and streamlines our document management.

### **C-STAT DASHBOARD REVIEW**

Laura explained that Larimer met 17 out of 23 of the performance goals set by CDHS in comparison to the 14 met by the other large counties in the State. Two new measurements were added this year.

### **DEPARTMENT PERFORMANCE REPORT**

Heather presented an overview of the department's client activity. Heather reviewed monthly average caseloads, program activity and complaint totals from May 1, 2018 through July 31, 2018.

During the 2<sup>nd</sup> Quarter of 2018:

- The Food, Medical & Financial Assistance Program caseload has decreased by 6% to 61,618.
- Child Support collected over \$4,919,306 dollars this quarter.
- Children, Youth and Family received 1,735 referrals, and 93% of children with a case plan to remain home did. Up 150 children from same time last year.
- We received two formal complaints during the 2<sup>nd</sup> Quarter.

Commissioner Donnelly asked if the decrease in numbers for food, medical and financial assistance programs might be a result of an improving economy. Laura Walker replied that she could not say for sure. Although there is a decrease in public assistance requests, there is an increase in child welfare concerns.

### **OTHER BUSINESS**

### **NEXT MEETING**