



Board of Social Services

MINUTES

August 8, 2016

**Commissioners' Conference Room
Second Floor – County Administration Building
10:00 am – 12:00 am**

In Attendance: Commissioner Lew Gaiter, Commissioner Steve Johnson, Commissioner Tom Donnelly, Linda Hoffmann, Neil Gluckman, Laura Walker, Heather O'Hayre, Jim Drendel, Thad Paul, Lori Metz, and Ann Marie Grobarek.

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

Introductions & Announcements

Commissioner Donnelly welcomed everyone and called the meeting to order. Director Laura Walker asked if there were any additions to the agenda. Commissioner Gaiter had asked earlier in the week for clarification on the difference in liability for counties that participated in the caseworker work study and those that did not. Jim Drendel, Child Youth and Family Director, will respond to that question later in the meeting. There were no further additions.

Child Protection Caseworker Compensation Next Steps

Laura Walker followed up on the progress and next steps in addressing Social Caseworker compensation concerns about turnover, recruiting challenges and Fair Labor Standards Act changes effective October 1st of this year. The Department paid out incentives in June over the course of two payrolls and feedback has been positive. Employees have indicated that it also makes a difference to know that salaries will be adjusted by this fall.

The next step is to work with Bridget Paris, Human Resources Director, in order to determine how to permanently adjust base pay levels. Currently, the starting hourly pay has been increased to \$24.28. Discussions with Human Resources will consider the salary range spread, since there will only be a difference of 16.5% between the starting and maximum salary for a Social Caseworker as of January 1st. Most positions in Larimer County have a 40% spread, although other counties average around 35%. It will be important to address concerns about salary compression and encourage growth potential so employees have a greater desire to stay long term.

Thad Paul, Child Youth and Family Deputy Division Manager, reported that previous to the additional pay, 28 out of 69 Social Caseworkers had left. Six have left since the additional pay. Commissioner Donnelly said he appreciated that this position has to do very stressful, difficult work and agreed with the priority of these efforts. Laura Walker said that the hope is to have details figured out by the end of August and be able to put changes into effect in September or October.

Larimer County Interagency Oversight Group (LCIOG/1451) Funding Issues

Thad Paul presented a handout showing projected funding issues for the Larimer County Interagency Oversight Group (LCIOG) that coordinates programs addressing truancy and keeping youths out of the criminal justice system. LCIOG is funded by divorce fees and funding is dependent upon Larimer County making specific outcomes. The challenge is that many more counties have started applying for programs like this and more people are competing for money from the same source. In addition, divorce fees fluctuate and have been decreasing. By Fiscal Year 2019, we will be out of money and will not be able to fund \$900,000 worth of programs.



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Commissioner Johnson asked how we have saved this program in the past, as he remembers hearing before that there would be no more funding. Jim responded that funds from CORE and the IV-E waiver funded LCIOG this year, which was possible because the State covered those costs. However, as salaries increase, those extra funds will not be available. If the State would take congregate care out of the allocation formula, Larimer County would benefit, but they have no incentive to do so.

Additional Agenda Item: Work Study Impact

Commissioner Gaiter had heard from a Weld County Commissioner that if Larimer County participated in the work study done for caseworkers that could mean that the County could potentially be held liable in some situations for not having enough workers. Jim Drendel responded that in order to be held liable we would have to be responsible, which does not fit what happened with the work study.

The work study indicated that we were short 13 to 15 workers, but the State has only provided enough funding to add 5 workers for our County. The study recommended that the State needed 700 additional workers. The number was adjusted to 500, but the State has only authorized enough funding for 200 workers. Commissioner Gaiter asked if we would get enough workers to bring us up to the recommended amount. Jim responded that it is doubtful as Colorado Department of Human Services Director, Reggie Bicha, has expressed a preference for hiring nurses over caseworkers and misrepresented the turnover rate for caseworkers in a hearing, demonstrating that he does not feel a sense of urgency regarding filling these positions.

Employment First Program Funding Changes

Heather O'Hayre, Deputy Director of Human Services, provided a handout regarding Employment First with an overview of the federally funded program, upcoming changes and funding challenges.

Any person who does not meet federal exemption criteria must attend Employment First activities in order to receive food assistance (SNAP). Improving unemployment rates in Colorado have resulted in 35% more counties being eligible for a share of the federal funds.

We have been told that the State takes approximately 80% of the funding for their own administrative fees and then funds the counties with the remaining 20%, despite having a small staff. There will be a 50% reduction in our allocation for the next year, but we predict that program costs will continue to increase. The Workforce Center has 4.5 employees who handled on 763 clients a month for Fiscal Year 2015 and 808 clients a month for Fiscal Year 2016. Laura Walker has committed to pay for this program through Fiscal Year 2017, but starting July 1st (Fiscal Year 2018), the Department may have to make some difficult decisions.

Commissioner Gaiter asked about what potential impact this could have on our budget requests moving forward. Laura Walker said she does not support counties or local government supplementing funds that should be provided at the State level, so she would not recommend a request for local funding in her budget for Fiscal Year 2018.

Commissioner Johnson asked if there was a way to opt out of the program, and Laura responded that possibility is being explored. Jessica Durand, Colorado Department of Human Services, said she



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believes there is a potential to make a case at the local level that Larimer County should opt out of the program since we have sufficient employment and there are not enough sustainable wage jobs or enough people with the skillset to fill them. Laura indicated that she and Joni Friedman, Workforce Center Director, would need to put together documentation and it would need to be reviewed and approved ultimately by the Commissioners. Joni is also exploring a voluntary program which would have an impact on the funding sources. Within two years the State will have to rewrite their plan, and Laura is very interested in making sure the counties are at the table when it is drafted, but she believes that there will be more options to opt out of the program. Our plan is to give it this year to see what happens. This program is making a difference and our people are getting employment at a much higher level than the rest of the State.

Adult Protective Services Rule Changes

Lori Metz, Adult Protection Social Caseworker Manager, presented a handout with a summary of proposed changes in the Adult Protection Rule and the Department's concerns, including the following:

- A reduction of documentation timeframes from 14 days to 10 days creates an unnecessary workload burden for county staff.
- Requiring notification to the State to remove access to CAPs for a user no later than the person's last day of employment does not allow for situations where an employee may give no notice and would result in a county being out of compliance.
- Changing the intake requirement to ensure a case is assigned in the correct county within one hour of the referral is not possible. The requirement should remain one business day.
- According to the Secretary of State's Website, including best practices and guidelines within the rule itself could result in citations, fines or other consequences for noncompliance as it could be interpreted as rule (or law) and not a "best practice".
- The change to closure language should include the phrase "related to client safety" in order to clarify that a client may have other identified needs that do not require an open Adult Protection case.

The State has held feedback sessions, but no input was written down until the participants specifically requested that it be documented. These rule changes are being added despite a 40% increase in referrals due to increased mandatory reporting requirements for elderly and disabled adults.

Jim Drendel added that at a CHSDA meeting, 11-12 counties voted unanimously to oppose these rules. Commissioner Johnson asked when this would be on the agenda. Heather O'Hayre reported that Sub-PAC will be reviewing the changes again in September, so it will not be until later in the year. Feedback from July's Sub-PAC was not in the most recent documentation brought to the meeting. This shows a pattern of them listening to the feedback but not really hearing as they are not making any of the recommended changes.

Commissioner Johnson asked that we reach out to our Adult Protection counterparts in Summit County and Washington County and ask them to speak to their Commissioners who are on the board with Commissioner Johnson. Lori Metz committed to following up with them.



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Commissioner Donnelly wanted to acknowledge Lori Metz for doing an outstanding job in working on an Adult Protection situation in Loveland where the people in that neighborhood were very thankful for all she did for a resident in their area.

Child Care Assistance Program Rate Changes/Waiting List

Laura Walker presented on statutory rule changes for CCAP requiring a mandatory increase to reimbursement rates for CCAP providers that have been discussed previously and are now being implemented. This change to competitive rates is beneficial for providers in Larimer County as they have had the same or decreased rates for the past several years.

The Department will ask for a rate increase in the August 9, 2016 Admin Matters meeting that will go into effect in September of this year. This will mean rates will increase to \$10 to \$30 a day for child care and encourage more providers to offer CCAP slots. Factors including classroom configuration, class sizes and employee training can impact quality "levels", which will determine the reimbursement rates. Commissioner Johnson asked why the Department recently decided to go with State rates instead of negotiating local rates with providers, and Laura responded that we did this since we knew the statutory rate changes were coming.

This increase in provider rates will require that Larimer County start a waiting list as the Department was overspent by about \$500,000.00 in 2014. Since the State was underspent in their funding, they were able to cover our over-expenditure, but that cannot continue. The Department of Human Services has informed the Early Childhood Council (ECC) of this issue to ensure the community gets this information. The waiting list would start 9/12/2016. Commissioner Donnelly asked if this meant we would have to drop children from the program. Laura Walker replied that we cannot do that, but there is normal attrition from families who have income increases and come off the program or when people relocate.

C-Stat Dashboard Review

Laura Walker provided an overview of the C-Stat dashboard through June 2016. Laura reported a few notes regarding this dashboard including:

- A change to how the State reports things which has resulted in some of the rows showing an "X" where changes have occurred.
- The lawsuit result mandating a 95% timely processing rate for a number of programs has been modified. HCPF gave Larimer County permission to drop Medicaid from that list of programs as our processing numbers have consistently been satisfactory. This may mean that other programs will also drop off.
- The computer blackout Larimer County experienced at the end of June will have an impact on our outcomes as workers could not meet their deadlines. The State has been notified that this happened, but they will not make a note on the report indicating the technical issues as a mitigating factor in outcomes.

Laura Walker emphasized that her priority remains the people who we serve, not the numbers on the dashboard.

Client Activity Report

Ann Marie Grobarek, Business Operations Coordinator, presented an overview of the department's client activity. Ann Marie reviewed: monthly average caseloads, program activity, complaint totals, and results from the client follow-up survey regarding complaints from April 1, 2016 through June 30, 2016.



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During the 2nd Quarter of 2016:

- The Food, Medical & Financial Assistance Program caseload has decreased by 1.4% to 64,437.
- Child Support collected over \$4,851,800 dollars.
- Children, Youth and Family received 1,742 referrals, and 94% of children with a case plan to remain home did.
- We received a total of 3 complaints during the 2nd Quarter.

Just as a reminder, the Department has changed the number used to report the monthly average caseload for Child Protection. Instead of listing the total number of open cases plus new referrals, the Department reports the total number of children on open cases. This is a more accurate representation of who is the priority in the work we do. This will result in the charts and report looking odd for the next 4 quarters while the old numbers drop off the report.

Meeting adjourned.