



Board of Social Services

MINUTES

May 9, 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, Ed Rutherford, Jim Drendel, Katy Mason, Lynda Meyer, Donna Geyer, 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. There were none.

Senior Tax Workoff Program

Laura Walker, Human Services Director, introduced the presentation on the Senior Tax Workoff program, which is funded by the Commissioners with General Fund dollars. Katy Mason, Human Services Program Coordinator, provided a presentation that detailed the background of the program and some information about the program this year, including:

- The program started in 1981 with a budget of \$3,000 and now has a budget of \$30,000.
- Participants can do work for the County to pay up to \$400 of the Larimer County portion of their property tax bill.
- Approximately 90% of the people who apply for positions are placed, providing much needed assistance for the County Fair and in the Departments of Human Services and Natural Resources. The biggest challenge is not having the right mix of positions as there are not enough clerical positions for the applicants who would prefer that sort of work.

Commissioner Johnson asked if the Senior Tax Workoff program could include local non-profit organizations. Katy responded that the expanded communication and coordination with outside agencies was beyond her capacity as the only staff person coordinating the program. Commissioners Gaiter and Donnelly expressed a desire by the Board to see an expansion of this program and more flexibility. They recommended making it a priority to find Katy some assistance. Laura responded that she would consider this when making next year's budget proposal.

Donna Geyer is a citizen who participated in the Senior Tax Workoff program for the first time this year. Donna was placed in a position in the Office on Aging, doing data entry of answers from a survey sent out to clients. Donna said it was very interesting work, and the \$250 she received helps her finances. Donna said that it was very rewarding to feel like she is doing something beneficial to help the community. Commissioner Donnelly thanked Donna for sharing her experience and explained how much the Commissioners value this program, citing how they have advocated for the program and increased the funding by 50%.

Child Youth & Family Survey

Jim Drendel, Child Youth & Family Services Division Manager, presented survey results from his case workers and managers using a survey presented by the State of Tennessee and Chapin Hall, an agency recognized for providing effective tools and research for the child protection field, at a conference he attended. This tool, tested for validity and reliability, measures six different "domains" of work culture that affect an employee's feeling of security in their job. The State of Tennessee and Chapin Hall presentation discussed an increasing vilification of child protection case workers by the media, showing a clip of a newscaster mentioning a case worker's suicide at the end of a news story about a child fatality in an off-hand, dismissive way. Items discussed from the Larimer County results included the following:



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- It appears that supervisors need to improve their ability to recognize when they are feeling stressed because they routinely put in the most number of hours.
- The last three categories should translate to a higher number than we have for Safety Organizing, so there may be some confusion in that area. The first priority moving forward will be to take a closer look at why employees rated that category lower.
- Employees feel like they can bring up problems and tough issues, can admit mistakes and can share with their supervisors when they are having a difficult time.
- This survey was initiated in the hopes that it could provide input on why our turnover rates are so high. Turnover in child protection went from 19% two years ago to 35% this year, which will most likely be 40% before the end of the year.

The next step is to meet with small groups and go through domains, asking for information on how to make their ratings improve. Larimer County results for Psychological Safety were impressive, and Jim attributes that to the success of the Resilience Alliance. People who attend the Resilience Alliance have dramatically different retention numbers; however, this is a voluntary program and not everyone attends.

Jim referred to a study he has been using for a few years that surveyed over 3,000 employees in twelve counties in California. They indicated the number one reason to stay in a position was the money. Two employees who left Larimer County this past year said they went to work for Weld County because they were getting \$10,000 more a year. Jefferson County starts their employees at \$49,500 a year, which is a much higher pay rate than we have and which resulted in other counties raising their salaries.

Commissioner Donnelly asked how our structured compensation program could be that much off base when Larimer County philosophy is to pay the median of the market salary to remain competitive. Discussion followed, and Commissioner Johnson recommended that this was a question that needed additional research and consideration by our compensation and budgeting experts. The Commissioners recommended that we provide additional information on this topic and would like to discuss this before the next Board of Social Services. Laura indicated that she and Jim will be meeting with the Human Resources Director, Bridget Paris, to address these issues and will then bring it to the Commissioners.

Ombudsman Report

Laura Walker presented the report from the Office of the Child Protection Ombudsman for fiscal year 2015-2016 that we received from the State. The report we received only shows complaints received through February at this time. There are 24 complaints against Larimer County in the report, which is comparable to other counties of our size. The dispositions of the complaints either affirmed the actions Larimer County took in the case, were closed for an administrative reason or resulted in a referral to additional services and resources. Larimer County did not have any of the findings that would be concerning, which include non-compliance with policy or law, deviation from best practice standards, or initiating an investigation. The Ombudsman does not share the case names or results of their complaints in any way except for this report.

SNAP Overissuance

Laura Walker provided information regarding an article that was in the *Coloradoan* regarding overissuance of SNAP. The reporter chose to use the data from the State regarding overissuance because it was less favorable than our County data. This is related to Hunger Free Colorado's concerns because they rated counties on accuracy, but Larimer County was number 1 and we were 3rd in timeliness, although we were very close to the county that placed 2nd.

Commissioner Gaiter asked for clarification on what an intentional client violation was. Laura explained that this shows times when a client intentionally misrepresents the number of people in their home or the



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income they make. Commissioner Johnson said he has friends who qualify for Food Stamps who do not want to go through the trouble of applying since they get such a small amount, so it does not make sense to hold the County responsible for people who could be eligible for Food Assistance not applying.

C-Stat Dashboard Review

Laura presented the C-Stat Dashboard for Larimer County as of March 2016. We are in the red for 7 out of 24 of the metrics on this dashboard, but the Big 10 Counties combined are in the red for 8. Four metrics are significantly better than last month's report. Laura has made every effort to send the message that we have a limited amount of money which restricts the work that can be done, despite our employees working hard and being willing to put in overtime when possible.

Commissioner Johnson mentioned that the funds provided by CDHS are not sufficient, but he recognized HCPF for being good county advocates and obtaining an extra six million dollars for statewide county administration.

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 January 1, 2016 through March 31, 2016.

During the 1st Quarter of 2016:

- The Food, Medical & Financial Assistance Program caseload has increased by 2.86% to 65,353
- Child Support collected over \$4,890,626 dollars.
- Children, Youth and Family received 1,853 referrals, and 95% of children with a case plan to remain home did.
- We received a total of 3 complaints during the 1st Quarter.

For 2016, the Department is changing the number used to report the monthly average caseload for Child Protection. Instead of listing the total number of open cases plus new referrals to the total number of children on open cases as 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.