LARIMER COUNTY | Human Services

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Date: February 03, 2025
Time: 10:00 AM
Location: Commissioners Conference Room Second Floor –
County Administration Building

BOARD OF SOCIAL SERVICES MINUTES

This meeting was recorded, broadcast online and archived.

Introduction and Announcements

- Commissioner John Kefalas, Commissioner Jody Shadduck-McNally, Commissioner Kristin Stephens, County Manager Lorenda Volker, Assistant County Manager Laurie Kadrich, Human Services Director Heather O'Hayre, Division Managers Vanessa Fewell, Jill Maasch, Lori Metz, Thad Paul, and Business Operations Coordinator Kalene Rowley.

Additions to the Agenda

- Proposed Change to Agenda Approach:
    - Director Heather O'Hayre proposed a change to the planned agenda. She suggested walking through the finance report while simultaneously highlighting the activity report.
    - The rationale behind this proposal was to provide context to the financial allocations by showing the corresponding workload and caseload data from the Department Activity Report. This would illustrate the reasons behind expenditure levels and fluctuations.
    - This combined approach would involve division managers pointing out relevant pages in the activity report as the finance report was discussed.
    - Commissioner Kristin Stephens voiced support for this revised approach, stating that it would provide helpful context to the numbers.
- Discussion of JBC Testimony:
    - Director Heather O'Hayre explained that at the Friday steering committee meeting of CCI (County Commissioners Inc.), former JBC member and current County Commissioner Rachel Zenzinger had suggested that county commissioners and human services directors testify before the JBC that afternoon.

- Director Heather O'Hayre clarified that the JBC typically allows public testimony once a year, and this was an opportunity for counties to share their challenges and the impact on families.
- Initially, there was a plan for representatives from Larimer County to testify. However, over the weekend, they received information that this particular JBC session was intended for individual residents to share their voices, as they have limited opportunities to engage with the JBC.
- Director Heather O'Hayre stated that she had been in contact with Senator Barbara Kirkmeyer and others on the JBC, who indicated that county testimony would not be appropriate for this session.
- Consequently, Director Heather O'Hayre informed the board that she did not plan to testify at the JBC meeting that afternoon, as other counties were also opting not to.
- Director Heather O'Hayre mentioned a call with Senator Barbara Kirkmeyer earlier that morning. They have been meeting almost weekly to discuss budget items.
- The JBC understood the budget issues, especially with the state budget being challenging that year. It was noted that the JBC had data showing the state was projected to be $24 million over budget.
- The discussion also touched on the letter sent to JBC members about the difference in state funding for CCAP (Colorado Child Care Assistance Program) versus UPK (Universal Preschool Kindergarten) and the impact on families.
- The supplemental processes were happening that week, but a CCAP supplemental might not be addressed immediately.
- Commissioner John Kefalas asked for clarification about the Long Bill and how amendments might be considered. Director Heather O'Hayre explained the options are being discussed by the JBC.
- Commissioner John Kefalas shifted the conversation to federal-level advocacy, mentioning individual meetings with their CD4 congresswoman and discussing Child Care and Development Block Grant (CCDGB) funds. He suggested a follow-up conversation about further action.
- Director Heather O'Hayre agreed and mentioned ongoing conversations with Congressman Joe Neguse and his staff, as well as a request to the state department to partner on federal-level advocacy.
- Commissioner Kristin Stephens added that she had seen Senator Barbara Kirkmeyer at the CCI breakfast and appreciated the conversations Director Heather O'Hayre had with her, which helped Senator Barbara Kirkmeyer

understand their needs, emphasizing the importance of advocacy at both state and federal levels. She also highlighted the need to prioritize critical services and expressed appreciation for Director Heather O'Hayre and the staff's work.

Hope Dashboard Review - Jill Maasch

- Introduction of the Hope Dashboard:
    - Division Manager Jill Maasch introduced the Hope Dashboard as a tool to track and monitor various metrics related to the department's performance and community impact.
    - The dashboard provides a visual representation of data, allowing for a quick and comprehensive understanding of key trends and areas of focus.
- Purpose and Goals of the Hope Dashboard:
    - The primary goal of the Hope Dashboard is to promote transparency and accountability in the department's operations.
    - The dashboard aims to provide insights into the effectiveness of programs, identify areas for improvement, and track progress toward strategic goals.
    - The dashboard also helps in making data-driven decisions and allocating resources efficiently.
- Key Metrics and Indicators:
    - The Hope Dashboard includes a range of key metrics and indicators, such as:
        - Caseload numbers for various programs (e.g., SNAP, Medicaid, Child Welfare).
        - Expenditure data and budget projections.
        - Service delivery statistics and outcomes.
        - Community outreach and engagement activities.
    - These metrics are tracked over time to identify trends and patterns, allowing the department to respond proactively to emerging needs.
- Review of Current Data:
    - Specific program areas were reviewed, including:
        - **Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP):** Discussion focused on the increasing caseload numbers and the associated administrative workload.
        - **Medicaid:** Review of Medicaid caseload and trends, including the impact of the end of the public health emergency.

        - **Child Welfare:** Examination of out-of-home placement data and the factors driving expenditures.
        - **Adult Protective Services:** Analysis of caseload trends and budget challenges.
        - **Office on Aging:** Discussion of service delivery statistics and funding constraints.
- Discussion and Analysis:
    - The discussion included:
        - Exploring the reasons behind increasing caseloads in certain programs.
        - Analyzing the impact of policy changes and economic factors on service delivery.
        - Identifying areas where additional resources or support may be needed.
        - Brainstorming strategies to address challenges and improve outcomes.
    - Commissioners John Kefalas, Kristin Stephens, and Jody Shadduck-McNally expressed appreciation for the transparency provided by the Hope Dashboard and the efforts of the Human Services department's staff.
- Future Use and Development:
    - Director Heather O'Hayre indicated that the Hope Dashboard would continue to be used as a key tool for monitoring and managing the department's operations.

<u>Semi-Annual Fiscal Update - Heather O'Hayre</u>

- Director Heather O'Hayre introduced the Semi-Annual Fiscal Update, explaining that it covers the period through December 31st, 2024, which is the midpoint of the state fiscal year.
- **<u>Aging and Adult Services:</u>**
    - Division Manager Lori Metz, discussed the Adult Protective Services (APS) budget.
    - The Elder Justice Co funds were depleted, and this would be the last report.
    - Client services and administrative funds were combined for the total allocation.
    - Client services funding was at 68% expenditure, and services would cease when the funds were exhausted.
    - Administrative funds were at 66% expenditure, exceeding the expected 50% at the mid-year point.
    - Projected year-end spending on administrative costs was $1.9 million, against an allocation of $1.4 million, creating a significant deficit.

- APS was identified as a budget priority by CCI (County Commissioners Inc.) due to increasing caseloads and administrative costs.
- There was a lack of underspent counties to cover the deficit, meaning the overspending would come from the department's fund balance.
- Division Manager Lori Metz presented data on APS caseloads, showing 277 open cases in quarter four. The staff size was nine full-time case workers, with a historical reduction of one position. Caseloads were rising, and cases were becoming more complex due to challenges in accessing community resources.
- Factors contributing to case complexity included staffing shortages in support service agencies and the ongoing impacts of the pandemic.

- **Children Youth and Family:**
  - Director Heather O'Hayre discussed the Child Welfare allocation, noting that different lines within the allocation have varying closeout processes but all roll into the Child Welfare regular block line.
  - The state projected a collective overspend of $24-27 million in Child Welfare.
  - Larimer County projected an overspend of $3-4 million, which would be covered by TANF reserves or the department's fund balance.
  - County staffing was a significant driver of spending, and the governor's budget for the next year did not include additional resources for this.
  - Spending was driven by community services, staffing, and out-of-home (foster care) expenditures.
  - Division Manager Thad Paul presented data on out-of-home placements.
  - Larimer County's use of out-of-home care was now more aligned with the state average, with a decreased use of congregate care.
  - A new case type, Foster Youth in Transition, serving youth aged 18-21, added about 25 cases to the daily average, increasing costs.
  - The acuity of cases was increasing, leading to higher costs for family-like placements and out-of-state placements due to a lack of local providers.
  - Hospital stays due to the lack of placements were costing $15-22,000 per day.
  - Service community gaps post-COVID and increased costs for local nonprofits also contributed to overspending.
- **Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP):**
  - Director Heather O'Hayre reported CCAP expenditures of $4.3 million against an $8.3-8.4 million allocation, with a projected $1.2 million overspend.
  - Statewide CCAP overspending projections had increased to $24 million due to provider rate increases.

- Larimer County implemented a CCAP freeze on February 1st, 2024, resulting in a 25% caseload reduction.
- The CCAP freeze was expected to continue for a couple of years.
- Director Heather O'Hayre discussed the Joint Budget Committee (JBC) meeting and the opportunity for public testimony. The JBC prefers to hear from residents, so county testimony was not planned for that session.
- Director Heather O'Hayre had discussions with Senator Barbara Kirkmeyer about budget challenges and potential solutions, including supplemental funding or adjustments to the Long Bill.
- Commissioner John Kefalas discussed federal-level advocacy regarding Child Care and Development Block Grant (CCDGB) funds.

- **Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) / Colorado Works:**
    - Spending was at 53% of the allocation.
    - All discretionary spending (Supportive Services) within the TANF budget was stopped to remain within the allocation.
    - The basic cash assistance and case management continued, but supportive services such as housing and transportation assistance were eliminated.
    - The TANF allocation was decreased by 5% in the current state fiscal year.
    - Inquiry was made about whether any services were paused due to federal funding uncertainties.
    - Director Heather O'Hayre noted that some programs were at greater risk than others, and staff were closely monitoring the situation.
    - Division Manager Vanessa Fewell explained the TANF Supportive Services, which include financial aid for housing, transportation, and clothing.
    - TANF recipients can still access CCAP despite the freeze, unlike other individuals.
- **Other Programs:**
    - **Community Services Block Grant (CSBG):** Spending was on track. These funds were being used to replace TANF Supportive Services.
    - **County Administration:** These funds are drawn from SNAP and Medicaid administrative dollars. The county was projected to overspend by $300-400,000, which would come from the fund balance.
    - **Employment First:** This program provides case management for SNAP recipients. It operates on a federal fiscal year.
    - **Office on Aging:** American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds were either spent or allocated. Ongoing allocations were on track. Service reductions had been implemented due to budget cuts.

Department Activity Report - Executive Leadership Team

- **Adult Protective Services (APS):**
  - Division Manager Lori Metz presented data on APS caseloads.
  - In quarter four of the previous year, there were 277 open cases for adult protection.
  - The APS staff consisted of nine full-time case workers.
  - Caseloads were rising, and cases were becoming more complex due to challenges in accessing community resources and staffing shortages in support service agencies.
  - Division Manager Lori Metz noted that the challenges had become more apparent regarding people's needs in the community.
- **Child Welfare:**
  - Division Manager Thad Paul presented data on out-of-home placements.
  - Larimer County's use of out-of-home care was now more aligned with the state average, with a decreased use of congregate care.
  - A new case type, Foster Youth in Transition, serving youth aged 18-21, added about 25 cases to the daily average, increasing costs.
  - The acuity of cases was increasing, leading to higher costs for family-like placements and out-of-state placements due to a lack of local providers.
  - Hospital stays due to the lack of placements were costing $15,000-$22,000 per day.
  - Service community gaps post-COVID and increased costs for local nonprofits also contributed to increased expenditures.
  - Division Manager Thad Paul clarified that the Foster Youth in Transition caseload was included in the independent living category of the report.
- **Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP):**
  - Division Manager Vanessa Fewell presented data on SNAP caseloads.
  - The average SNAP caseload in quarter four was 18,715 cases.
  - In January, the caseload exceeded 19,000 cases, a record high.
  - Caseloads have been steadily increasing since 2021.
  - Division Manager Vanessa Fewell explained that the administrative workload for SNAP was significant, as recipients must recertify roughly every six months, and any household changes must be processed.
  - She also shared that the Medicaid caseload was 38,555 cases in January.

- **Office on Aging:**
  - Division Manager Lori Metz presented information on the Office on Aging caseload.
  - The fourth quarter numbers appeared high due to voucher payments being reimbursed twice a year, in December and June.
  - She highlighted the challenge of maintaining Direct Care Providers due to reimbursement rates, but noted they had been able to avoid a waitlist for services.
  - She also mentioned that they would be reviewing all voucher services and prioritizing required services such as legal assistance.
- The combined review of the finance and activity reports provided valuable context to the numbers and demonstrated the interconnectedness of caseloads and expenditures.
- The Commissioners and Human Services staff agreed that this combined approach was helpful and should be continued in future meetings.
- Director Heather O'Hayre stated that a combined report would be created for future meetings to avoid toggling between documents.

Poverty Reduction Approach - Vanessa Fewell

- Director Heather O'Hayre introduced the Poverty Reduction and Outreach Approach, explaining that it combines several funding streams and strategic efforts aimed at reducing poverty and increasing access to services.
- The approach is a culmination of strategic planning work, community feedback, and lessons learned from the Child Welfare prevention team.
- The goal is to leverage resources more holistically and provide client-centered support.
- Vision and Goals:
  - Division Manager Vanessa Fewell presented the vision statement: "To reduce poverty in Larimer County by providing accessible, client-centered resource navigation and Case Management Services that Empower individuals and families to navigate resources to move towards self-sufficiency."
  - The approach focuses on people experiencing poverty and ensuring equitable access to resources within the Department of Human Services.
  - Key goals include increasing access to resources, improving client navigation, and enhancing self-sufficiency.
- The core of the approach is a team of three case managers who will provide various services:
  - Key goals include increasing access to resources, improving client navigation, and enhancing self-sufficiency.

    - **Outreach Services:** Increasing presence at community events, tabling events, and locations like the Old Town Library. The mobile office is a key component, enabling staff to go to where people are and provide services directly.
    - **Connection to Human Services:** Helping individuals navigate the complex network of services. This includes internal handoffs between department divisions and external referrals to community partners.
    - **Case Management:** Offering two tiers of case management:
        - Brief, solution-focused support for immediate needs (e.g., navigating the food bank).
        - More intensive support for complex cases (e.g., help with benefit applications, housing applications).
- The team aims to provide culturally centered and competent support, with bilingual and bicultural staff.
- Partnerships and Collaboration:
    - Building strong partnerships with community agencies is a crucial aspect of the approach.
    - The team will continue bi-weekly meetings with community partners to identify gaps and brainstorm solutions.
    - Efforts will be made to ensure seamless handoffs and follow-ups to avoid clients falling through the cracks.
- Mobile Office:
    - The mobile office will serve as a key tool for reaching underserved populations and areas without existing community partners.
    - It will provide a physical location where staff can go and people can access services directly.
- Data and Outcomes:
    - The team will track outcomes related to SNAP outreach and the Community Services Block Grant.
    - Data will be used to monitor progress towards goals of increasing access, improving navigation, and enhancing self-sufficiency.
- Commissioner Kristin Stephens asked about the "warm handoff" process, emphasizing the importance of follow-up to ensure clients are successfully connected to services.
- Division Manager Vanessa Fewell confirmed that the team is skilled in this and will continue the practice of making follow-up calls and providing ongoing support.
- Commissioner Kristin Stephens also inquired about the bi-weekly meetings with community partners, noting that these meetings help identify gaps and brainstorm solutions.

- Division Manager Vanessa Fewell expressed excitement about the poverty reduction approach, highlighting the extensive planning and deep thinking that went into developing it.
- She emphasized that the approach is truly prevention-oriented, using public assistance and navigation services as interventions to address poverty.
- The commissioners commended the team's work and expressed support for the initiative.
- The meeting was adjourned.