

Date: Monday, August 14, 2023

Time: 10:00 AM

Location: Commissioners Conference Room Second Floor - County Administration Building

BOARD OF SOCIAL SERVICES AGENDA MEMORANDUM

This meeting was recorded, broadcast online and archived.

Introductions and Announcements

- County Manager Lorenda Volker, Commissioner Kristin Stephens, Commissioner Jody Shaddock-McNally, Commissioner John Kefalas, Human Services Director Heather O'Hayre, Division Managers Thad Paul, Lori Metz, Jill Maasch, Gordon Coombes, Program Integrity Manager Jason Chin, Executive Assistant Kaylee Strouse

Additions to Agenda

- None

Program Integrity Team Award: Gordon Coombes and Jason Chin

- The Program Integrity Unit assists the Larimer County Department of Human Services in maintaining integrity and public accountability in the administration of public assistance programs. The team consists of four distinct functions including investigations, claims validations, recovery, and administrative hearings.
- There is generally the perception that some people receive assistance that they are not eligible for or should not be receiving. It is the responsibility of the Program Integrity team to investigate reports of this and follow up as necessary on the very few instances when someone has received benefits they should not have.
- Recently the unit underwent a process change in January 2022. The process has streamlined the work and helped assist with the backlog of investigations. As a result, the unit has closed 205 investigations to date, which is the most closed

investigations in the history of this team. Out of those investigations, there were only 58 cases in which someone received benefits they should not have received. Of those 58 cases, only 24 of them were intentional program violations. These results indicate that fraud is not being committed very often due to measures being taken throughout the Department. If benefits were provided incorrectly, then there are a variety of different responses we have depending on the details of the situation. We always take the opportunity to educate and inform the client about the program requirements. However, depending on the dollar amount, the client may have to pay back funds, or it could be referred to the District Attorney's office for further processing and investigation.

- Programs most often investigated are Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, Temporary Assistance for Needy Families, and Medicaid. The request for investigations come from Human Services staff and externally via a [form](#), email (investigations@larimer.org), or phone (970-498-7625).
- The Program Integrity Unit received the Most Outstanding Group of 2023 by the Colorado Welfare Fraud Council.

Semi Annual Fiscal Update: Heather O'Hayre and Gordon Coombes

Link to Documents Referenced: [Semi Annual Financial Report](#)

- Every August, the Department presents a semi-annual financial report based on the last fiscal year which ended on June 30th as well as an update on the next state fiscal year's allocations.
- One of the areas that was overspent was Adult Protection by two hundred and sixty-five thousand. This occurred statewide because of significant underfunding by the State. A similar overage is anticipated for the upcoming fiscal year.
- Child Welfare was also overspent but the State covered the over spending. It is unlikely that the State will be able to cover overspending to this extent in the future because it is mostly due to vacancies in other counties.
- The Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP) has spent eighty-five percent of total funds. In September 2024, our CCAP resources will be reduced significantly due to COVID stimulus funds ending. This past year, the Department received nine million dollars, the coming year it will be eight point five million dollars, after September 2024 it will be reduced to six million dollars. One of the challenges is the number of children the Department is serving. In addition, the Department is required to authorize CCAP for families for the next twelve months. Another unknown factor is the implementation of universal pre-k. As a result, we are beginning to plan how this will affect the families in our community. Currently, fifty percent of the children served are school age children with the other fifty percent serving kids zero through five years of age.

- TANF or Colorado Works was overspent by one million dollars but was covered with the reserves and securing TANF funds underspent by other counties. This was strategic as it will allow for more resources in the future due to the spending factor on the allocation formula.
- Community Services Block Grant is about twenty-eight percent spent which is where the Department expects to be given that this program runs on a calendar year. A new plan is due October 2023 and will go into effect in 2024.
- County Administration was overspent by about seven percent but was covered in the closeout. Senator Kirkmeyer and Senator Zenzinger advocated on behalf of the counties and the Joint Budget Committee processes to secure seventeen million dollars more for state fiscal years 2022-23, and 2023-24. The Department was given 1.6 million dollars which helped in administration costs as the caseloads continue to grow. It is anticipated there will be a two million dollar reduction in fiscal year 2024-25.
- The Office on Aging has spent eighty-two percent, which is on target. The reason for underspending is due to the ARPA funds and Senate Bill 290. Going forward, there has been a reduction in our base allocation. This has resulted in difficult decisions including a decrease to our community providers.
- AND Navigator has spent seventy-two percent. This program has been very successful which has allowed people to secure their social security benefits in just a few months. Due to the success, there will be an \$80,000 increase for state fiscal year 2023-24.

Child Welfare Legislated and Program Updates: Heather O'Hayre and Thad Paul

House Bill 23-1249

- Link to Document Referenced: [High Acuity Letter](#)
- House Bill 23-1249 was changed significantly at the very end. As a result, the Department is working with Larimer County Interagency Oversight Group (as our local collaborative management program) to prepare for the changes. The team already utilizes a referral form that is completed by law enforcement agencies and other community partners. This referral form is issued to determine next steps and potential services/supports for the family. The referral form may need to be revised depending on the required state template from House Bill 23-1249 that will then create an individual support team for the youth. The team will determine what resources are available to meet the needs that the individual has.
- The Larimer County Interagency Oversight Group has created a subcommittee to help prepare the Department for this change. The goal of the subcommittee is to identify the true population and how to support referred children. The Department is closely working with the community partners to help build this plan as well.

Child Welfare Services Committee

- The Child Welfare Interim Committee is required to have six sessions to learn about the processes and functionality of child welfare. The committee will then have five bills that are introduced during the 2024 legislative session. There are 3 of 6 meetings remaining for the committee. At the August 2nd meeting, counties will present with state partners on high acuity youth and Trails modernization.
- There is a strong interest from the committee about equity, diversity, and inclusion. Colorado Counties, Inc, Colorado Human Services Directors Association, and the Child Protection Ombudsman are currently working on related proposals that will be provided to the interim committee.

High Acuity Youth and System of Core Model

- A System of Care legislative proposal has been submitted to CCI process as a potential legislative proposal that would significantly change the care for children across Colorado.
- Regarding the high acuity youth crisis, that has received a lot of media attention, the Department has experienced times when youth have to spend extensive time in our offices or a local crisis bed because of their needs and having no other place to appropriately receive services. Youth are sent out of state where there are available resources and yet those states are operating in ways that are prohibited in Colorado. At times parents are having to leave their child in the hospital for longer periods of time because the parent does not have a safe environment for the child to return.

Department Activity Report - Heather O'Hayre

Link to Presentation: [Department Activity Report Q2 2023](#)

- The Adult Protection Services referrals continue to increase. The top reasons are self neglect, caretaker neglect, and exploitation. However, the percentage of referrals assigned for assessments has remained stable.
- Regarding the SNAP benefits, the Department is experiencing the highest caseload in Larimer County's history, a twenty-eight percent increase from quarter 2 2020 to quarter 2 2023. Prior to COVID the annual issuance was eight to twelve million dollars in SNAP benefits per quarter.
- The Child Care Assistance Program has experienced about a thirty percent increase in the number of children served from 2019 to today. There has not been a waitlist since 2019. Previously this program did experience a freeze from 2015 to 2019. However, the State then changed the Department's allocation amount due to it being a higher cost of living in Larimer County. This resulted in an almost twenty percent increase. We have very little ability at the local level to stay within funding limitations except for waitlist or freeze.

Other Business

- None