

Date: February 11, 2026

Time: 1:30 pm

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 Shaddock-McNally, Commissioner Kristin Stephens, County Manager Lorenda Volker, Assistant County Manager Laurie Kadrich, Human Services Director Heather O’Hayre, Division Managers Jill Maasch, Thad Paul, Vanessa Fewell, and Business Operations Coordinator Kalene Rowley.

UC Health Collaboration to Ensure Access to Medicaid and SNAP - Vanessa Fewell

- Division Manager Vanessa Fewell: The partnership aims to increase timely access to Medicaid benefits, as well as Food Assistance (SNAP) and other wraparound services, for UC Health patients. This initiative is in response to a 2025 state rule change requiring counties to have formal, structured relationships with medical providers.
- Division Manager Vanessa Fewell: A dedicated Community Support Specialist (an existing FTE) will be stationed on-site at Poudre Valley Hospital (PVH) and Medical Center of the Rockies (MCR) to process combined-case applications, including Medicaid (and Long-Term Care), SNAP, and other cash programs.
 - The current demand from UC Health is 115 applications per month, and the specialist's processing capacity is approximately 126 applications per month.
- Director Heather O'Hayre: Provided details on staffing, noting the position is an existing staff member (FTE), not new. The specialist will split time: PVH (Monday, Wednesday, Friday), MCR (Thursday), and in-office day for training/support (Tuesday). Larimer County is the first county to launch this partnership since the state rule passed.
- Commissioner John Kefalas: Asked if the specialist will assist with non-county programs, such as hospital financial discount programs.

- Division Manager Vanessa Fewell: Confirmed the specialist's scope is limited to programs within the division (like Aid to the Needy Disabled), but they will be embedded with hospital financial counselors and social workers to facilitate collaboration and referrals for other assistance.
- Commissioner Kristin Stephens: Inquired about the effect of new Medicaid work requirements and verifications on application processing in a hospital setting.
- Division Manager Vanessa Fewell: Explained that many verifications can be done through back-end system interfaces or via a patient's phone, minimizing the need for physical paperwork.
- Director Heather O'Hayre: Added that the initial partnership is a pilot focused on Larimer County residents, but there is a goal to expand to a regional approach with Boulder and Weld counties. Also, a similar co-location model is committed to being replicated at the Wellington Community Center.
- Commissioner John Kefalas: Suggested adding two key metrics for evaluation: 1) the number of repeat visits to the Emergency Department being prevented, and 2) the total Medicaid dollars brought into the UC Health system as a direct result of the partnership.
- Division Manager Vanessa Fewell: Agreed to incorporate the suggested metrics into the program's evaluation.

CCCAP Collaboration with Grand & Jackson Counties- Vanessa Fewell and Jill Maasch

- Director Heather O'Hayre: Introduced the Intergovernmental Agreement (IGA) with Grand and Jackson Counties for the Child Care Assistance Program (CCCAP). Larimer County has been assisting them due to persistent staff hiring and retention issues in those smaller, remote counties.
- Division Manager Vanessa Fewell: Detailed the collaboration, where Larimer County provides eligibility processing services, including new applications and recertifications, Quality Assurance (QA) reviews, and fraud investigation/recovery on behalf of the two counties. They will also take on provider contracts in the future.
- Division Manager Vanessa Fewell: The total case load for the two counties is small (21 cases in Grand and 1 in Jackson), which is a "drop in the bucket" compared to Larimer County's 650 cases/children, but provides a vital service to those 22 families.
- Division Manager Vanessa Fewell: A mutual benefit for Larimer County is that the work helps existing staff maintain proficiency in intake and application processes, which is crucial during a current hiring freeze.
- Division Manager Vanessa Fewell: Workload sharing is managed through state systems (no paper passing needed) and shared Google Drive folders for documentation.

- Director Heather O'Hayre: Clarified that the staff member supporting Grand County is not a remote worker; the paperwork is handled by the Larimer County office, with the exception of the staff member being in the Grand County office on Tuesdays.
- Commissioner Jody Shadduck-McNally: Praised the arrangement as a great service and a glimpse of what regional "hubs" could be like, noting the significant challenges small communities like Jackson County face, such as retaining people due to high insurance costs (up 30% or more) and the inability to provide quality assurance with limited staff.
- Commissioner John Kefalas: Acknowledged the significant population difference between Jackson County (~3,500) and Larimer County (~10 times as many).
- Commissioner John Kefalas: Asked if Jackson County's underspending on their child care allocation could be used to assist Larimer County with potential overspending.
- Director Heather O'Hayre: Confirmed this practice, stating that the relationship originated when Larimer County reached out to purchase some of Jackson County's underspent allocation, framing it as the "Larimer way" to foster relationships for future reciprocal help.
- Commissioner John Kefalas: Described the partnership as a "very proper *quid pro quo*."
- Director Heather O'Hayre: Provided an update that the Intergovernmental Agreement is drafted to last through June 2027, covering the current state fiscal year and the next, with a plan to revisit the arrangement in 18 months.

Semi-Annual Fiscal Update- Heather O'Hayre

Adult Protective Services (APS)

- Director Heather O'Hayre: Expressed this as one of the agency's greatest worries due to continuously increasing workload from an aging population and a lack of a multi-year funding strategy from the state.
- Director Heather O'Hayre: Stressed that there is "no back stop" for APS overspending, meaning 100% of the overspent amount goes directly to the county's fund balance or county dollars, citing the previous year's \$400,000 overage covered entirely by the county.
- Director Heather O'Hayre: Clarified that APS is a mandated public safety program; law requires a response to reports of at-risk adults experiencing exploitation, abuse, or life-and-death self-neglect issues, and the front door cannot be closed to those who qualify.
- Director Heather O'Hayre: Stated the program is significantly overspent, already 65% spent at the half-year mark, which is 15% over its allocation.

- Commissioner John Kefalas / Director Heather O'Hayre: Discussed the state's multi-sector strategic plan on aging, with Director Heather O'Hayre noting that while the population is an area of focus for the Governor's office, there are "no conversations happening" about what the funding strategy for the program looks like.

Child Welfare

- Director Heather O'Hayre: Noted the total funding for Child Welfare is nearly \$28 million across multiple underlying funding streams.
- Director Heather O'Hayre: Cautioned that the strategy of intentionally overspending to be covered by other counties during closeout is risky, as three counties were not closed out the previous year.
- Division Manager Thad Paul (Division Manager, Child, Youth, and Family): Reported that Larimer County was the very last county to be covered at closeout last year.
- Division Manager Thad Paul: Stated the current overage projection is about \$1.5 million across the big three funding sources (core, block, and workload money), which is a 50% reduction from last year's \$3 million overage.
- Division Manager Thad Paul: Confirmed the spending reduction is primarily due to a staff reduction of about 25 positions since the beginning of the previous year, achieved through attrition, not layoffs.
- Director Heather O'Hayre: Added that they have increased case load standards in some areas to balance the budget while closely monitoring to ensure no negative impact on child safety.

Child Care Assistance Programs (CCCAP)

- Director Heather O'Hayre: Noted that after two years on a freeze, there is a significant reduction in expenditures (currently 8% under budget).
- Director Heather O'Hayre: Announced that the conversation has begun with the state department to explore transitioning from a freeze to a wait list if the underspending trend continues.
- Director Heather O'Hayre: Confirmed that the federal restraining order is still in effect, and the state has sufficient funding to sustain the program through May 31st, with a final judicial decision on the matter expected by the end of February.
- Director Heather O'Hayre: Explained that provider rate increases were a three-year process mandated by a federal audit finding to bring Colorado into compliance with how providers are paid, and the state is currently asking the new federal administration for flexibility to potentially not implement the third-year increase.

Colorado Works (TANF)

- Director Heather O’Hayre: Stated the program is intentionally slightly overspent this year.
- Director Heather O’Hayre: Explained that this is due to budgeting for supportive services (e.g., transportation, job certification) to stabilize families adapting to new federal work requirements.
- Director Heather O’Hayre: Also cited the intentional spending as a strategy to reduce the county’s TANF reserves before a potential state proposal (to be decided by the Joint Budget Committee on February 24th) to reduce the maximum allowed county reserve cap from 40% to 20%.
- Director Heather O’Hayre: Confirmed that a recommendation to pause the Cost of Living Adjustment (COLA) for Basic Cash Assistance is in the Governor's proposed budget and will be decided by the JBC on February 24th.

Other Programs and Initiatives

- Office on Aging:
 - Director Heather O’Hayre: The office is on track and is actively pursuing additional grant opportunities, including a regional grant to serve residents from Boulder and Weld counties in Larimer County facilities, and a grant to expand Social Security benefits navigation.
 - Director Heather O’Hayre: The office is also exploring the possibility of billing Medicaid for services to help diversify its budget.
- Centralization and Districting Proposal:
 - Director Heather O’Hayre: Reported that the Joint Budget Committee (JBC) did not support the Healthcare Policy and Finance budget request to centralize key services due to the state department’s failure to demonstrate that long-term savings would warrant the significant initial spending.
 - Director Heather O’Hayre: An alternative proposal to districting was finalized by a small working group of human services directors (with instrumental support from Larimer County's Hannah Ditenberger). CCI is now strategizing on how to propose these alternatives.
 - Director Heather O’Hayre: Discussions are ongoing; no final bill is available to formally review yet. A significant bill will be required to make the changes, and a formal legislative proposal is expected in the next 3-4 weeks.

- Commissioner Jody Shadduck-McNally: Commended staff for their work, including securing an increase in the timeline for the changes despite initial non-negotiable items.
- Commissioner Kristin Stephens: Added that it appears the centralization efforts, if they move forward, may focus on different services than initially proposed (call center, quality assurance, scanning documents, and fraud).
- Commissioner Kristin Stephens: Noted that from the state's perspective, districting is "not negotiable" due to the high redundancy of managing 62 different human services departments across the state.
- Commissioner Kristin Stephens: Highlighted that Larimer County is currently meeting all quality assurance (QA) requirements, noting that QA is not optional and that millions in fiscal sanctions are at stake for counties not meeting these requirements.
- Director Heather O'Hayre: Confirmed the Governor's office is driving the proposal more in recent weeks due to pushback that the state department worked on it for 18 months before counties were informed. The initial proposal was not feasible for counties (e.g., centralized calls impacting Larimer County residents).
- Commissioner John Kefalas: Asked if the coming legislation would be a JBC bill. Heather O'Hayre responded that it is not believed to be a JBC bill, but the JBC will discuss the shared services component and districting the TANF program on February 24th.
- Commissioner John Kefalas: Asked about learning from the state of Wisconsin. Heather O'Hayre explained that Larimer County is researching Wisconsin's system, which has a similar county-administered/state-supervised district structure, focusing on their quality assurance process and their technology that screens applications for required fields before submission.
- SSBG and TANF Legal Update
 - Commissioner John Kefalas: Asked for clarification on whether the temporary restraining order that applies to CCCAP also applies to the freezes on TANF and the Social Services Block Grant (SSBG).
 - Director Heather O'Hayre: Confirmed that the legal action (a case filed to stop the freezing of funds) applies to all the programs together, including SSBG (which funds about 6% of child welfare and 10% of adult protection).
 - Director Heather O'Hayre: Clarified that the state-supported funding for the Child Care Assistance Program (CCCAP) has an end date of May, but SSBG and TANF function differently as entitlements (almost like a line of credit) and are therefore "not as dire."

Closing Comments:

- County Manager Lorenda Volker: Commended Director Heather O'Hayre for her good communication and the helpful detailed reports from Policy Analyst Hannah Ditzenberger. Stressed that the work, while discussed in administrative terms, is fundamentally about caring for and serving the people in the community.
- Commissioner Kristin Stephens: Thanked Lorenda Volker for grounding the discussion, reiterating the importance of the services to the most vulnerable people and the need for efficiency with "dwindling dollars."
- Commissioner Jody Shadduck-McNally: Offered final thanks to all for staying engaged and "wrestling this for the benefit of our residents and our county," and thanked County Manager Lorenda Volker and Assistant County Manager Laurie Kadrach for their support.
- Commissioner Jody Shadduck-McNally: Adjourned the meeting.