

Date: Monday, November 13, 2023

Time: 10:00 AM

Location: Commissioners Conference Room Second Floor - County Administration Building

BOARD OF SOCIAL SERVICES MEETING MINUTES

This meeting was recorded, broadcast online and archived.

Introductions and Announcements

- County Manager Lorenda Volker, Commissioner Kristin Stephens, Commissioner Jody Shadduck-McNally, Commissioner John Kefalas, Human Services Director Heather O'Hayre, Division Managers Thad Paul, Lori Metz, Jill Maasch, Gordon Coombes, Deputy Division Managers Katie Heckman, Jonathan Anderson, and Executive Assistant Kaylee Strouse.

Additions to Agenda

- Human Services Staff Co-locating in Wellington
- Options for Long Term Care
- American Public Human Services Association

Decision-aid Tool: Thad Paul, Katie Heckman, Jonathan Anderson

Link to Presentation: [Decision-aid Tool](#)

- Within our Child, Youth, and Family division, our Red teams are responsible for evaluating the referrals received regarding abuse/neglect. These referral decisions are based on individual perspectives along a group decision making process. This past year, the Department received over seven thousand referrals.
- The Children, Youth and Family Division is utilizing a tool developed by Auckland University and researched by Princeton and Harvard Universities to determine its effectiveness in our practice. We first used the tool as a random control trial for the last four years so that it would be utilized on some referrals but not others, while the universities conducted the research evaluation.

- The research is in the process of being published but shows initial promising impacts on the reduction of racial disparities in our child welfare referral decision process.
- The tool, now called the Larimer County Decision-aid tool (LDAT), uses information that is gathered in Trails and provides a risk score based on the severity and extent of a family's history. The risk score was created by using an algorithm that is using data points, and past case history. The system was then able to identify 170 data factors, 77 of those were weighted. These data factors generate a risk score that attempts to quantify the risk that the child will enter out of home placement in the following two years.
- The intent is that we are able to objectively utilize information from Trails to identify ways to intervene differently for families. For example, if a referral does not meet criteria but the tool is indicating a high risk score, it provides information about the potential need for services. Preventative care could be recommending a family to a community partner or utilizing the prevention grant through the Children's Bureau.
- This tool is a decision-aid tool but it does not make the final decision. Meaning, once information about a family or individual is put into Trails, the LDAT then provides the RED team with a score. The team then evaluates all of the available information, the risk score included, and determines the next steps.
- It is recognized that families from marginalized populations are routinely over represented. This tool will help the Department to be more objective when deciding what is best for the child.
- Regarding the risk score, if there are two children in the home, they may have different scores. This is due to the 170 characteristics that the tool is evaluating. Also, if a family moves out of Larimer County, the information in Trails remains available.
- As families continue to evolve, the tool will continue to evolve. Meaning, areas that are weighted now may not be in a few years. This is due to the tool continuing to use algorithms to improve and provide the best recommendation possible.
- Going forward, the tool will have a dashboard for supervisors to better understand their team's workload. The dashboard will include workload balance based on the complexity score, and will keep risk factors and primary tasks at the forefront. Once a case is closed the family will be asked to complete a feedback survey regarding their experience with the Department.

Legislation Update: Heather O'Hayre

Link to Documents Referenced: [Legislative Update](#)

- To ensure that our local legislators have resources about various legislative priorities, the Department has prepared documents that go in depth into each area.
- Stuart Jenkin is our new Legislative Analyst. He has nine years of experience with tracking and analyzing bills, ballot initiatives, and local ordinances. Previously, he has worked at Healthier Colorado as the Policy and Advocacy manager.
- The Child Welfare Interim Committee has concluded their work. During their recent meeting, they reviewed 10 draft bills and have since narrowed it down to 5 bills. It is possible that all 10 bills will run in some way due to individual members moving forward with the bills separate from the committee.
- Bill number one, Kinship Foster Care Homes includes sponsors Senator Zenzinger, Senator Kirkmeyer, Representative Pugliese, and Representative Young. The purpose of this bill is to expand kinship support and to align with changes happening federally. It also examines how to provide financial support to kinship caregivers who do not want to become certified foster parents.
- Bill number two, Children's Behavioral Health Statewide System of Care includes sponsors Senator Kirkmeyer, Senator Michaelson-Jenet, Representative Duran, and Representative Pugliese. The bill focuses on providing behavioral health resources for all children, regardless if they have insurance or not.
- Bill number 5, Accessibility for Persons in Child Welfare Matters includes sponsors Representative Young, Representative Bradley, Senator Kirkmeyer, and Senator Fields. The bill will focus on expanding strategies within the Colorado Department of Human Services and Health Care Policy and Financing (HCPF) for high acuity youth. This is to ensure that resources are available so that youth do not have to stay in the emergency room any longer than necessary. Funding will be provided by counties through the child welfare funding for a portion of this in combination with state funding. This will be a three year process to ensure providers and placements are in compliance and licensed.
- Bill number 6, Accessibility for Persons in Child Welfare Matters focuses on language access in child welfare processes and documents. This includes translating all our documents to be in a client's native language. There is other discussion about individual needs based on cognitive or physical different abilities. Therefore, a separate bill may be coming to help address these concerns.
- Bill number 7, Concerning Measures to Enhance Child Welfare System Tools includes sponsors Senator Kolker, Representative. Duran, Representative. Evans. The primary focus is to evaluate Trails as a system and engage a third

party vendor to evaluate the risk assessment tools. This is also a part of the differential response practices.

- It is important to note that without the necessary funding, the Department will not be able to meet the expectations without the financial resources for all five of these bills.
- Commissioner Kefalas asked about Senate Bill 23B-002, to be discussed during the upcoming Special Session on December 5th. The proposed bill will allow students in low-income households to receive food assistance during the summer months through electronic benefits transfer (EBT). Director O'Hayre responded that at this time, it is our understanding that there will be very little impact to our processes at the county level as this work will occur at the State level to issue the benefits out to families directly through the EBT cards following changes implemented in the Colorado Benefits Management System. There may be questions that will come to us from residents in the community and we will help provide additional information as it is available.

Department Activity Report - Heather O'Hayre

Link to Presentation: [Department Activity Report Q3 2023](#)

- In March 2023 all food benefits cases reverted to their regular benefit amounts. However, even with that change, the Benefits and Community Support team has the largest case loads in history.
- For the first time in several years, Benefits and Community Support is not requiring mandatory overtime. In fact, the division is now able to process applications and issue food assistance the same month that they are received.
- The payment overview gives a high level overview of what resources the department is providing.

Other Business

- Options for Long Term Care Program - Lori Metz
 - With the support of the Commissioners, in August the Department filed a formal protest to the Department of Health Care Policy and Financing regarding their decision of the award. The Department of Health Care Policy and Financing decided to uphold their decision to transfer the Case Management Agency contract to Region 10 to Foothills Gateway. As a result, the Department has begun transitioning the program to Foothills Gateway.
 - Once the decision was made, the Department was placed in cohort 3 for the transition. The timeline would have been April 1, 2024 through June 30, 2024. However, after further discussion, the Department requested and was moved to cohort 2. The timeline for this cohort is November 1,

2023 through February 2024. This request was made to limit the impact of this transition on clients.

- This decision will also affect 30 staff members. The Department has worked closely with Human Resources to ensure staff are transitioning in the best way possible; some of the resources include debrief sessions, assisting with creating a resume, a severance package, and offering virtual job fairs. The Economic and Workforce Department is informing staff about a potential job opportunity within Larimer County based on their experience. Some of the staff members have also taken jobs within Human Services. Foothills Gateway is interested in engaging with our staff to discuss the opportunities with their agency moving forward.
 - It is important to the Department that while this transition is happening, that we are still able to provide the necessary support to our clients. However, clients have been notified by the Department of Health Care Policy and Financing that beginning March 1, 2024, Foothills Gateway will be their case management agency. Should the public have any questions, the Department is recommending them to the State [website](#).
- Human Services Staff Co-locating in Wellington - Heather O'Hayre
 - One of the Department's strategic planning committees is addressing access and outreach of our services countywide. This committee is responsible for identifying places within the county that the department can increase access to our programs and resources. One possibility is to have a colocation at one of our community partner locations. In addition, the committee is researching places within the community that the department does not have a partnership but could still colocate. The hope is to begin a pilot program in 2024.
 - In regards to Wellington, under the prevention team the resources have been expanded. The prevention grant was originally focused on two zip codes but has since been expanded into Wellington, among other areas. The Department has also committed to a community group that should a resource center be opened in Wellington, we would be interested in housing some staff at that location.
- American Public Human Services Association - Heather O'Hayre
 - Over the last several years, the Department has been working with the American Public Human Services Association (APHSA) to identify opportunities for innovation, and continuous quality improvement of our services. APHSA offers a local council for county directors from state supervised county administered state. The local council was recently

hosted at our 1501 Blue Spruce location. During their visit, the Department's leadership team was able to highlight some of our work, including our efforts on employee retention and well-being to Human Services staff.