

SOCIAL SERVICES FUND SUMMARY

The total Social Services Fund budget is \$45,887,094. The programs are funded by property tax of \$12,226,460, state and federal funds of \$33,660,634, and the potential use of fund balance to cover both anticipated and unanticipated cost overruns.

As with businesses and organizations around the world, 2020 has presented the Department with unique challenges, unlike any we have encountered previously. The economic downturn created by the COVID-19 lockdown of business operations and the pressures placed upon the oil and gas industry, both globally and locally, has caused many residents of the county who previously experienced income security to require assistance, both for meeting basic needs and for locating and being trained for employment. At the same time, funding for the administration from the State level has been reduced for State Fiscal year 2020-2021, due to many of the same economic events.

In order to meet these needs, the Department has taken measures to expedite verification of eligibility of applicants for programs and continues to work with local industry representatives to identify employment opportunities. Likewise, the way in which services are delivered to the senior adult population, which is directly impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic, have been modified. Despite the increased difficulties in delivering meals to these residents created by social distancing directives, practices have been modified in order to increase provision of these resources.

The Family Resource Division has taken a lead role in coordinating the resources available to address the needs of Weld County residents in instances where those needs may not be fully addressed through traditional assistance programs. The department has provided shelter, transportation, utility and other assistance to individuals who demonstrate the ability to meet these needs in the future but present an immediate need due to circumstances beyond their control, such as the economic downturn.

Assisting parents in identifying and affording day care continues to be a high priority. At the height of the COVID-19-related lockdown, the department took measures to assist parents and providers with temporary measures that reduced the impact of the downturn. As the lockdown eases, the department will return to ongoing policies regarding this assistance. Efforts have increased towards recruiting, training, and certifying new providers of these services, along with similar efforts to increase the availability of foster care providers in the county, so that children in need of such services can be kept closer to home and in a loving home-like environment.

The efforts to reduce congregate care placements of children and youth have been very successful, both in reducing the cost of the Child Welfare program and providing a more nurturing environment for those in out-of-home placement. Placement of children in kinship settings has replaced more restrictive settings as the initial focus when presented with a need for placement. This prepares the department well for the impending implementation of the Family First Prevention Services Act. While 2021 will continue to present challenges which may stretch capacity, both fiscally and organizationally, the department is in a good position to meet those challenges and connect Weld County residents to the resources needed to thrive.