

SOCIAL SERVICES FUND SUMMARY

Calendar year 2014 holds great opportunity and concern for the Weld County Department of Human Services. It will be the first full year of our implementation of an Electronic Document Management System, enabling us to scan images of all documents that are presented to us, at the time they are received, so that they can be stored and retrieved electronically, rather than copying, filing, and storing physical documents. We will also participate in the state-wide Title IV-E (Foster Care and Adoption Assistance Entitlement Grant) Waiver Project, designed to provide permanent connections for children entrusted to our care. Senate Bill 12-078 mandates reporting of abuse of at-risk adults and could significantly impact the workload of our Adult Protection Caseworkers. The Department is reorganizing its staff in anticipation of this increase, so that we can be prepared to provide services needed to address this issue. Finally, and likely most significantly, 2014 will bring implementation of some of the most impacting aspects of the Affordable Care Act. We anticipate the requirement of citizens to apply for Medicaid in order to be eligible for services under the Health Exchange and the increase in income levels eligible for Medicaid will create an increase in caseload of 25% - 30%. We are hiring, equipping, and training staff in anticipation of this increase, so that we can be prepared when it arrives.

The total Social Services Fund budget is \$30,399,000. The programs are funded by property tax of \$8,438,837, state and federal funds of \$21,205,333, and the potential use of fund balance to cover unanticipated cost overruns. The Department continues to pursue innovative programs to avoid, or reduce the duration of, clients' need for services. While this may, in some cases, drive greater costs in the current year, it is anticipated that these measures will enable the Department to avoid costs in future years.

Food Assistance caseloads increased substantially from 2006 through 2011, increasing by approximately 170%. However, they appear to have reached a plateau during the first few months of 2012, remaining steady through the remainder of 2012 and the first half of 2013. Other assistance programs administered by the Department, such as LEAP, Aid to the Needy-Disabled, Old Age Pension, and Child Care have been following a similar trend.

CBMS continues to impact the productivity of staff and create delays in the delivery of payments and benefits for Food Assistance, Medicaid, Colorado Works, and State-Only Programs. Many of the inefficiencies creating these delays are being resolved. However, the inefficiencies that remain continue to impact the time required to process cases and the number of cases in pending status. Weld County remains hopeful that modifications currently under development will rectify some of the issues created by the system. In the meantime, we have identified changes to our internal practices that have enabled us to deliver services in more timely and accurate ways, and will continue to identify practice and policy changes that will further this effort.

The settlement agreement of a lawsuit, impacting all counties in Colorado, identifies goals that counties must meet in processing applications for assistance through the CBMS system in a timely manner. Weld County is achieving the goals set forth in that agreement and continually surpasses the state-wide average for timeliness. While our ultimate goal, of course, is to process 100% of applications timely, our compliance with requirements of average processing time continues to exceed 90%.

Weld County will be starting the State Fiscal Year 2013-2014 with a small amount of TANF County Reserve, which will serve to insulate us, to some extent, from the requirement to use county-only funds in covering Child Welfare and Colorado Works over-expenditures. The requirements of Senate Bill 08-177 have increased the percentage of our Colorado Works

allocation that is expended on Basic Cash Assistance, leaving fewer funds available for Supportive Services and Diversion Payments.

Quality day care, at an affordable cost, will continue to be a challenge for working families to obtain. The Department continues to develop methods of providing appropriate reimbursement to providers, being careful to not monopolize the market. The upgraded version of the CHATS system continues to provide challenges for program and fiscal staff. Weld County has worked closely with providers to encourage practices that result in accurate and timely reimbursement for services and provide reliable information concerning the need for services. Expenditures for services have declined, significantly, in many counties within the State. Weld County's expenditures have remained fairly constant, possibly due to the fact that many of the program integrity measures that the new system has brought about were already being practiced in Weld County, prior to the implementation of the new system.

Weld County's efforts toward early intervention in Child Welfare involvements is beginning to produce positive outcomes, both in our outcome tracking measures and in our ability to control expenditures. Our caseworkers are regularly recognized for the accuracy and thoroughness of their case files. Although referrals to the Department continue to increase, the number of cases that ultimately result in intrusive and costly out-of-home placements has decreased significantly, as more families are diverted to treatment and training services in an effort to keep them intact. Recent increases to the amount of Child Welfare and Core Services funds allocated to Weld County have enabled us to implement efficiencies and strategies to improve the decision making process involved in protecting children, while providing permanence and safety in the least restrictive setting, appropriate to each situation. Additional funding from the Title IV-E Waiver will enhance these efforts even further.