

SOCIAL SERVICES FUND SUMMARY

Weld County Department of Human Services continues to face challenges created by the economic downturn and the infusion of dedicated funding received through the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA). The acceptance of this funding has been contingent on the submission of mid-year funding requests, often with little time to fully develop a plan to spend the dollars in a coordinated manner to best serve the needs of the Weld County community. As we move through 2010, we will be refining the projects that have been initiated, in order to ensure that they meet their intended objective.

The total Social Services Fund budget is \$24,491,500. The programs are funded by property tax of \$6,166,333, and state and federal funds of \$18,325,167. 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.

As consumer costs for fuel, utilities, and food continue to rise, and as homeowners face mortgage foreclosure situations, more Weld County citizens are being placed in a position of requiring assistance. Food Assistance, Medicaid, and LEAP caseloads have experienced significant increases in the past year. The department anticipates growth in OAP over the next decade due to the number of citizens that are reaching retirement age. The Department has increased the amount of resources dedicated to detecting client fraud. The major challenge associated with fraud is the difficulty of establishing the true household composition.

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. There are efforts underway to modify the Medicaid eligibility determination functions of CBMS, in order to streamline the application process. Weld County will support these efforts only if they do not negatively impact those seeking to apply for this assistance. New legislation enacted in the 2008 Legislative Session placed restrictions on the amount of TANF County Reserve counties are allowed to maintain. Weld County continues to maintain a County Reserve balance well within the statutory guidelines, and has acquired other counties' reserves, in an effort to adequately fund our programs and assist the other counties in complying with this legislation.

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 increasing the rate paid per child/per day to providers who undergo trainings and assessments to enhance the quality of the care provided. Other efforts have been, and continue to be, implemented to ensure that funds are being used to provide services to best serve the citizens of Weld County.

The demand for Child Welfare services continues to expand in Weld County, as it has throughout the State. The Department is continuing to seek out and encourage the provision of services, with their associated costs, early in the involvement with families, in order to avoid the need for more costly services as the involvement continues. Working with the Interagency Oversight Group, the Department has moved toward a policy of utilizing local placement options for children, whenever possible, to increase parental involvement and to decrease caseworker travel costs. The need for Supervised Visitations has become a significant issue in recent years. The Department continues to participate in State-wide discussions regarding the potential of amending the method used to allocate available Child Welfare appropriations among counties. The current discussion involves some fairly minor changes to the allocation model, itself. The emphasis is on providing counties with a better understanding of the model, so that we may use this knowledge in making programmatic decisions in such a way that they both provide high quality services to the citizens of Weld County and maximize our opportunity for available funding.