

SOCIAL SERVICES FUND SUMMARY

Weld County Department of Human Services continues to face challenges created by the economic downturn, the uncertainties of continued adequate funding for programs, and the reporting requirements associated with the programs administered.

The total Social Services Fund budget is \$26,697,167. The programs are funded by property tax of \$9,995,400, and state and federal funds of \$16,701,767. Social Services is down \$1,867,333 from 2011 primarily due to the Building Healthy Marriages program's five year grant expiring September 30, 2011. This program was funded at \$2,395,000 in 2011. 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 and Low Income Energy Assistance (LEAP) caseloads have continued to experience significant increases in the past year. The department anticipates growth in Old age Pension (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.

The Colorado Benefits Management System (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. Health Reform will likely also impact the manner in which Medicaid eligibility is determined. Weld County will support these efforts only if they do not negatively impact those seeking to apply for this assistance. Weld County has fully exhausted its Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) County Reserve and is seeking to purchase TANF funds from other counties that may be caught under this new legislation. New legislation enacted in 2011, and supported strongly by Weld County, modified the legislation enacted in 2008, which limited the amount of reserves a county could carry, by setting the limit at 50 percent of the current year's Colorado Works allocation and by allowing funds that are reverted to be made available to counties with low TANF Reserves.

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 Child Care Automated Tracking System (CHATS) system has been replaced with an upgraded system, based on an electronic attendance record of children in care to drive an automated payment to the provider for hours for which the care has been authorized.

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 Inter-agency 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 case-worker 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 method used to allocate available Child Welfare appropriations among counties. 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. Weld County is anticipating an over-expenditure of its Child Welfare allocation in excess of \$4,000,000. This over-expenditure will be partially mitigated by the usage of excess Federal funds earned, but will require the infusion of additional County General Funds to fully absorb.