

SOCIAL SERVICES FUND SUMMARY

Calendar Year 2015 is shaping up to be a year of significant change for the Weld County Department of Human Services. Internally, the department is putting the final touches on the implementation of its up-front document imaging system and evaluating the level of success achieved through various departmental staff reorganizations. Externally, the department will continue to 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 the department's care, expanding the scope of the project to include trauma-informed care services. Counties in Colorado will likely take on the responsibility of determining eligibility for all Medicaid applicants, including those previously served through a state-wide vendor, due to their choice to apply on-line for Medical services, only. Additionally, issues arising from implementation of the Affordable Care Act (ACA) will continue to drive the need toward more innovation and efficiencies within the Assistance Payments Division of the Department. The passage of HB 14-1317 will produce noticeable changes in the delivery of Child Care services throughout the State. It strips away many of the tools counties previously had to control costs and stay within budget, leaving Waiting Lists as a last resort tool. Weld County has historically avoided the use of such Waiting Lists, because they tend to reward those residents who apply early for assistance, while leaving others who may be at greater need for those services behind, simply because of their relative delay in applying. Finding ways to abide by the requirements of this Act while, at the same time, maintaining a fair and equitable means of delivering services will be one of the department's most significant planning challenges.

The total Social Services Fund budget is \$31,570,900. The programs are funded by property tax of \$8,438,837, state and federal funds of \$23,902,000, 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 approximately 170% from 2006 through 2011, reached a plateau during the first few months of 2012, and decreased by approximately 11% at the end of 2013. On the contrary, Colorado Works Basic Cash Assistance payments have continued to increase by a small percentage each year.

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, the department has identified changes to its internal practices that have enabled it to deliver services in more timely and accurate ways, and will continue to identify practice and policy changes that will further this effort.

Weld County will be starting the State Fiscal Year 2014-2015 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.