

# LINCOLN COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES

## 2008 ANNUAL REPORT

To: The Honorable Lincoln County Board of Supervisors

### MAJOR ADMINISTRATIVE ACTIVITIES

#### **Contract for Administration**

Administrative contract with Developmental Disabilities is entering its final year of a three-year agreement. This arrangement has been cost effective for the Department of Social Services and the County. With Family Care now on the horizon, the County should consider continuation until Family Care implementation.

#### **Administrative Changes**

Many of the internal changes in departments to reduce costs required ongoing management assistance and direction. Child Support still does not have adequate administrative support, but plans are underway to address this. All other departments are doing well, maintaining positive approaches.

The Long Term Support Unit continues to utilize Child Protective Services staff to address work overload. Analyzing and reassigning duties among different units continues as an effort to equalize work loads. As with most of the County, Social Services experienced many changes and improvements in 2008 with printing/scanning/communication technology.

### MAJOR PROGRAM ACTIVITIES

#### **Adult Services Unit (Long Term Support)**

The Adult Services Unit provides services and programs to the elderly and physically disabled to enable them to remain independent in their homes and community. Funding for these services is through the Community Options Program (COP) and Community Integration Program (CIP).

In 2007 the guardianship procedure was improved, additional clients were served so that grant funding was utilized 100%, and an Adult Services Center was created by merging the Long Term Support Unit and the Commission on Aging with one person supervising both units. This merger provides enhanced, streamlined services to residents of Lincoln County and continues to be a successful partnership.

#### **Juvenile Services Unit (Child Protective Services)**

In 2008 the Department of Social Services continued to provide an array of services to the children and families of Lincoln County. Through the effective deployment of federal Title IV-E funds, the department was able to continue supporting the services of the Family Resource Centers in both Merrill and Tomahawk as well as the Intensive In-Home Treatment services contracted through Children's Service Society. Through the effective use and targeting of appropriate families for the Intensive In-Home Treatment Program, thousands to potentially hundreds of thousands of dollars were saved by the county through prevention of out-of-home placements.

Through Safe and Stable Families' money in 2008, Lincoln County was once again able to continue to financially support the mentoring program Kinship of Tomahawk and a number of other youth activities geared to both supporting the youth in the county as well as providing opportunities to bring families together for more traditional activities.

The In-Home Parent Education Program, which is operated by two social workers currently on staff, was provided to families in the community that were able to benefit from support and education in the area of properly parenting their children. This service is provided to the families in their home environment and is at no cost to the families.

In 2008, additional services continued to be provided by existing staff to further serve the needs of the families and the youth in Lincoln County. These additional services include Errors in Thinking and Anger Management classes for youth that are currently being provided case management services by social workers. Furthermore, the role of Independent Living Coordinator and Foster Care Coordinator has been expanded to provide educational and training services for the youth as well as the foster parents of Lincoln County. After-hours electronic monitoring of juveniles placed on court orders is also being accomplished through the leasing of equipment and the billing of parents of the juveniles for this service. The service of electronic monitoring is a far less expensive alternative, for both parents and the County, than placing juveniles in a secure detention facility.

It should be noted that all these activities and services continued to be implemented in 2008, despite having one less social worker on staff.

### **Economic Support Unit**

In 2008 the Economic Support Unit continued to work for low-income households in determining eligibility for various assistance programs. Those assistance programs mainly include:

- **Food Share** which is funds to help families purchase food through the use of a debit card (formerly known as Food Stamps).
- **Medical Assistance/BadgerCare Plus** which helps recipients with the cost of medical bills. Categories served under these programs include families with children, elderly, blind and disabled, nursing home residents, community waiver recipients, and Medicare premium assistance. Each category has different eligibility requirements.
- **Wisconsin Shares** (also known as Child Care Assistance) provides financial assistance to families with the high cost of daycare expense. Lincoln County continues to contract with Forward Service Corporation to determine eligibility for this program, thereby providing seamless service to W-2 recipients.
- **Wisconsin Home Energy Assistance** provides a benefit to qualifying households one time per heating season. With the rising costs of energy, the number of households applying for this benefit increase every year.

The BadgerCare Plus Program, an updated version of BadgerCare, was initiated by the State in 2008. Changes to this program, as well as the economic slump in 2008, have caused a significant increase in cases. This is true of all programs, a trend which is expected to continue.

With the administrator position in this unit being replaced with a lead worker, plus filling one full-time vacant position with three part-time workers, the results in cost savings is significant as well as increased staff availability.

### **Child Support Unit**

Due to the reduction of the federal share of funds allocated to counties in 2008, Lincoln County Child Support received as much as \$100,000 less than prior years. With a combination of outsourcing the legal services and replacing the administrator position with a lead worker, the department did an outstanding job providing services at previous levels. Child Support staff operates at one of the lowest cost-per-case ratios in the State of Wisconsin.

In closing, our organization would like to recognize the Lincoln County Board of Supervisors, the Social Services Committee, and the entire staff for their time and efforts to maintain the provision of services to the residents of Lincoln County.

We consider it an honor to work for Lincoln County and appreciate the continued support and assistance of the Board of Supervisors, governing Committees, and individual county departments that work closely with our agency.

Respectfully submitted,

Michael Loka, Committee Chair

Terry Schmidt, Director