

LINCOLN COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES

2007 ANNUAL REPORT

To: The Honorable Lincoln County Board of Supervisors

MAJOR ADMINISTRATIVE ACTIVITIES

Administration Contract

This contract was established in 2006 and continued throughout 2007. The purchase of administrative services from Developmental Disabilities has been successful and cost effective for the County.

Administrative Changes

Two administrative positions were eliminated entirely or reduced significantly in 2007 to offset budgetary concerns county wide. Total savings with wage and fringe was approximately \$100,000. Other existing administrative personnel now provide oversight to these areas. In addition, the Long Term Support Unit will be utilizing Child Protective Services staff to address work overload.

Also, late in 2007 the Department of Social Services has again become the oversight agency to Child Support (see report below).

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.

Juvenile Services Unit (Child Protective Services)

In 2007 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 2007, 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 properly parenting their children. This service is provided to the families in their home environment and is of no cost to the families.

In 2007, there were also additional services that are now being provided by current social workers on 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 that are being implemented by the social workers were at no increase in staff in 2007 and have minimal operating expenses.

Economic Support Unit

In 2007 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** 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.

In 2007 the year-long project of scanning existing files to be saved electronically was completed. This was a requirement by the State for all counties and will eliminate paper files for Food Share, Medical Assistance and Wisconsin Shares. Scanning documents will be an ongoing process for all current and new cases.

At the end of 2007 the Economic Support staff were involved in training for the BadgerCare Plus Program. This updated version of BadgerCare will be initiated by the State beginning February 1, 2008, and could potentially expand the number of qualifying households.

Child Support Unit

In mid-2007 the State of Wisconsin informed counties that the Federal share of funds would be reduced. The result in Lincoln County was a reduction of \$100,000. Administration began developing options to services with the reduced numbers. In the end, the plan reflected a combination of outsourcing the legal services and replacing the administrator position with a lead worker in the department.

At the time of this report, services have continued close to the level previously provided. Although all specifics to workloads, contracts, etc. are not finished, we are optimistic that the staff will meet any and all challenges.

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