

LINCOLN COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES

2009 ANNUAL REPORT

To: The Honorable Lincoln County Board of Supervisors

MAJOR ADMINISTRATIVE ACTIVITIES

Contract for Administration

The administrative three-year agreement with Developmental Disabilities ended in 2009. Since this arrangement has been cost effective for the Department of Social Services and the County, plans are to continue until Family Care implementation.

Administrative Efforts

The economic slump, which began in 2008, continued to cause a significant increase in request for services in 2009 across all units. However, by continually evaluating staff and workloads, the costs at our department continue to decrease. Projected wage and fringe is down \$300,000 from 2009 to 2010, yet our service level has increased. All departments are doing well in maintaining positive approaches.

The Child Support Unit continues to be one of the best in the State in cost-per-case ratio while still meeting all of the program benchmarks. The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) provided stimulus dollars to supplement the significantly reduced allocated federal matching funds. Intensive efforts have been made to ensure the best use of these ARRA funds to take some of the burden off the unit staff. Analysis administratively continues as to further cost-effective approaches to provide additional support.

Regarding Family Care, our department continues to evaluate all activities and positions. Additionally, some of our employees will no longer be employed by the County as those functions will be transitioned to the new provider. There is much left to be done on both sides to ensure a smooth, seamless process for our consumers.

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 2009 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 2009, 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 2009, 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 were implemented in 2009, and will continue into 2010, despite the reduction of two social workers by not filling those positions when vacated.

Economic Support Unit

In 2009 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 increases every year. This has been exemplified by the more than 2,200 calls received within the first five months of this seasonal program.

The BadgerCare Plus CORE Program initiated by the State in 2009 is an additional version of medical assistance for recipients between the ages of 19 and 64 with no children in the household. Enrollment Services in Madison is responsible to handle this new program; however, the overwhelming response caused a significant delay of benefits and considerable backlog of applications. The State contracted with county Economic Support workers to assist in processing applications during the last few months of 2009.

Child Support Unit

As mentioned earlier, this unit continues to be one of the best in Wisconsin as far as cost-per-case while strained with an ever-increasing caseload. This is particularly significant when considering that the state of Wisconsin has one of the highest support collection rates in the country. Using ARRA funds to cover the cost, a half-time position has been established by gradually shifting a Child Support workload to an existing clerical staff worker. Contracting for legal services has been successful; however, time allotted by the court system to hear Child Support cases is limited to four hours per month. As a result, it often is difficult to manage cases in a timely manner.

In closing, our organization would like to recognize the Lincoln County Board of Supervisors, 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