

Family Services Review Commission Meeting

May 7, 2009, 8:30 a.m. to 12:00 noon
HSB-252

Members present: Diane Cohen-Alpert, Ellen Gradison, Yesenia Gutierrez, Tawna Sanchez, Doreen Binder

DHS staff present: Vic Todd, Mickey Serice, Jim Neely, Xochitl Esparza, Eric Moore, Sherrie Burrell, Mary Anne Camp

Members excused: Jessica Chanay

Members absent: Maggie Bagon

Meeting materials sent via e-mail prior to meeting: Meeting Agenda, Draft Minutes of the March 5, 2009 Meeting and April 2, 2009 meeting, March 2009 CAF Public Assistance Caseloads summaries.

Handouts from meeting:

- Eric: Budget rebalance report
- Xochitl Esparza: PAS Update and TANF Time Limits Report
- List of Priority 1 and 2 Legislative Bills being tracked by CAF

Greeting and Roll Call

The meeting was called to order at 8:38 a.m. with a quorum in attendance.

Chair Report:

- Member check-in and meeting agenda reviewed.
- Approval of Minutes: **MOTION:** There was a motion by Diane Cohen-Alpert and seconded by Yesenia Gutierrez to approve the March 5 & April 2, 2009 FSRC minutes as corrected. Vote was unanimous.

DHS Report

Eric Moore – DHS Budget Update – Eric handed out the rebalance report from a recent presentation to the Ways & Means Committee. He highlighted a few items: On pg 5 it shows that in March of '08 UI rate was at 5 ½ %, now a year later it is above 12%. Food Stamp participation on page 6 shows we are following the same increase trend. On page 7 it shows TANF with the same trend. OHP on page 8 also shows the same trend. Page 9 outlines a quick history of the current biennium rebalances. The 2 agencies that took early budget cuts were DHS and Corrections. Education may be taking more hits than DHS. Not just budget reductions were taken, but also other reductions to balance the budget. On pages 10/11 there is a history of what the Department has been doing over the last 1 ½ years. While caseloads went up, staff increases were not possible. 20 million in stimulus funds are being utilized. The stimulus money will not fully offset shortfall, there will still be a deficit.

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Diane asked about the job participation penalty, Eric stated he felt that this may eventually be on the table but has not been discussed so far. He believes that the ARRA legislation has priority and TANF penalties have not gotten attention.

The reshoot process has started. The biggest issue coming up is the economic forecast; this will drive the budget talks. The needs are much greater than what was initially in the budget. Since the budget reduction act there has been a variety of rule changes, funding shifted from federal govt. to the state; the biggest change was in the TCM rules. This week there was a CFR rule change that would eliminate all TCM changes that impacted the 38 million. All dollars that were back filled can be used. Variety of issues being discussed at federal level, for now it looks like rules may be gone. Hope the backfilled funds will stay within DHS to avoid further reductions/cuts that may be coming. It is uncertain how soon the new version of budget targets will be released after the revenue forecast.

A question was asked about directing TANF dollars to Child Welfare. With ARRA monies it will depend on how much TANF is cut. The TANF stimulus money is a rebate, which means the state has to spend money to get money back. Whatever happens within the TANF arena, the Child Welfare cuts cannot be ignored. A whole conversation needs to happen around how to make things work and still maintain some semblance of a program with less funds overall. Based on federal guidance, there is less flexibility to put TANF funds towards Child Welfare. Part of the issue is child safety. In the past not all of the TANF funds were spent, but in the future every single dime of TANF \$ will be used every year; there will be no surplus.

Jim Neely – Jim provided a brief update on field staffing and program delivery. TANF & Food Stamp participation have both been increasing. Self Sufficiency is staffed at 66% of workload. As part of the transformation effort, the new intake model has been rolled out statewide. A report from branches showed they were at 95% same day service for most programs. There has been a shift to the front end of the process and shifting the paperwork has made an impact. Staff has picked up some efficiency, but hasn't made up for the increase in caseloads. Most effort has been focused on the eligibility arena to deal with immediate needs; jobs program reductions have not gotten the attention they need. Staff are able to keep up with most eligibility needs but are seeing accuracy decline somewhat. As part of the re-shoot DHS will see additional staffing put into the budget. TANF is not a mandated program so staffing needs are not included in the budget. Given the attention and increased caseload, DHS is hopeful TANF additional staffing will be included.

TANF was up 672 cases up last month. Statewide, for last 6 months, paper work has not gotten done as timely as in the past. With intake improvements, staff has made some improvements. A commissioner brought up the May 1 new rules regarding single parent households and job loss. All disqualifications seem to have different results regarding TANF benefits. One item stated staff has to speak with Employment Division; how will DHS staff deal with the change? More questions will come up as people lose jobs and are disqualified from UI based on previous problems that shouldn't affect TANF/FS benefits.

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A question was asked about DHS Central Office staff being out in the field and how will they be able to cope and keep errors at a minimum. DHS tries to send staff that is familiar with the programs which makes some aspects of the transition easier.

Action Item: Xochitl will provide an update on UI disqualification issues next meeting.

Erinn – She has had some good meetings with Jessica and Rep. Kotek. This is the most important time to keep TANF going. The rebate level that Oregon has been given is very important, and the match rate is higher than for FMAP. Everything is very much in limbo until the new revenue forecast. Erinn feels it is important to keep people updated on caseload changes. During the reshoot, DHS will inform the Legislature that the cost of business has significantly gone up. TANF has not received the attention it needs. Recommended that members of the commission keep advocating and getting the word out about the real needs of the population.

Discussion items:

TANF Letter: Jessica sent this out after everyone's final approval to all the changes. Her appreciation for all the input was passed on to the group as she is out of town.

FSRC Recruitment: Gail Freedly submitted a letter of intent, her letter is in packet.
MOTION to invite Gail to next meeting. Motion was approved unanimously.

Brainstormed around recruitment: Sherrie will make contact with some community partners. Kimberly talked about contacting someone east of the mountains or Employment Department. An Employment Dept representative would be good balance. Diane has been working with minister at EMO; he has some names in mind but hasn't had a chance to contact them as yet.

Action Item: Sherrie and Kimberly will follow up on their respective ideas.

Question: What about approaching a Legislator? Diane will talk with Jessica. Doreen would like to see someone from the business community.

Action Item: Doreen will ask Bill Early, JeldWen, if he has anyone to recommend. Kimberly will talk to other community colleges to see if there is someone interested.

Next Meeting: The next FSRC meeting is scheduled for June 4, 2009 8:30 a.m. to 12:00 noon in Room 252 of the Human Services Building.