

**GUNNISON/HINSDALE BOARD OF HUMAN SERVICES
MEETING MINUTES
June 15, 2021**

The June 15, 2021 meeting of the Gunnison/Hinsdale Board of Human Services was held in the Board of County Commissioners' meeting room located at 200 E. Virginia Avenue, Gunnison, Colorado. Present, either in person or via Zoom, were:

Jonathan Houck, Chairperson [ABSENT]	Joni Reynolds, Health and Human Services Director
Roland Mason, Commissioner	Marlene Crosby, Deputy County Manager
Liz Smith, Commissioner	Melanie Bollig, Clerk to the Board
Greg Levine, Hinsdale Co. Commissioner [ABSENT]	Other Persons Present as Listed in Text

CALL TO ORDER: Commissioner Mason called the meeting to order at 8:55 am.

AGENDA REVIEW: There were no changes to the agenda. **Moved** by Commissioner Smith, seconded by Commissioner Mason to approve the agenda, as presented. Motion carried unanimously.

PRESENTATION BY COLORADO DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES (HS): C-stat, Distinguished Performance Award: Health and Human Services Director Joni Reynolds explained the State's C-stat award to the Board. She outlined that the State Department of Human Services establishes standards for performance particularly around those individuals applying for public assistance. Most of the timeframes are set at a 90-95% achievement level. The State also looks at safety and well-being, especially concerning adult protection and child welfare, again looking at timeliness of referrals and follow-up with the families, making sure those cases have the appropriate documentation on a periodic basis. She went on to share that there were actually 30 measures evaluated in the scope of this award. The State compared Gunnison County HS to about about 30 smaller counties, and then also to all counties state-wide. Gunnison County receives State reports on a monthly basis and they review these reports monthly, as well, in order to determine if there are areas needing further monitoring for opportunities and improvement.

At this point, the Colorado Department of Human Services joined in via Zoom to share in the awards celebration and presentation of their C-stat award. Those making contribution on Zoom included: Valerie Cassano, Performance Management Division director at the Colorado Department of HS; Anne-Marie Braga, Deputy Executive Director for Community Partnerships at the Colorado Department of HS; Kara Harvey, Division Director for Aging and Adult Services; Mary Clair, Policy Analyst with Colorado Child Support Services; and Darek Dzien, with Colorado Childcare Services. During the ceremony, it was revealed that this was the fourth time in which Gunnison County Department of HS had received this award, and that they were the fifth highest-ranking county in the state, meeting 76.6% of their monthly C-stat goals for 2020. Several names in the Gunnison County Department of HS were also noted, including Brad Wheaton, Sebastian Akesson, Brian Gage, Laura McLoughlin, Shelley Tucker, and Anthony Kellum. Commissioners Mason and Smith presented the award.

PROGRAM UPDATES: Economic Security & Child Support Services

1. Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP). Economic Security & Eligibility Manager Brad Wheaton went over updates outlined in the flyer included in that week's portfolio. He noted that in 2019, benefits issued totaled \$1,259,585; for 2020 that rose to 2,224,355 – a 77% increase; and for 2021, year-to-date amounts were showing an increase of 19% over 2020 year-to-date comparisons. Brad reported that there were 1,000 individuals in the county currently relying on food security through the SNAP program. At the state and federal levels, maximum allotment had been given, plus an increase of 15% starting in March of 2020. In May of 2021, the federal government also added an emergency allotment of \$95. These extra allotments are expected to end in the Fall of 2021, so Brad added that he is planning strategies that let the community know when these added allotments will be cut off, as well as collaborating with the Food Pantry regarding increased need from people who rely on SNAP.
2. Pandemic Electronic Benefit Transfer (P-EBT). Brad let the Board know that the State had approved the P-EBT benefit for children who are not already under SNAP or free lunch benefits. Families will receive \$217 per child as a one-time benefit to help with additional food needs in the home. This was approved for the 2020 school year, and should be approved shortly for the 2021 year as well.
3. Medicaid. Brad explained that all Medicaid members coming into the pandemic were locked into medical coverage through the Public Health Emergency (PHE), and that this included all types of Medicaid benefits. During the pandemic, there was a 16% increase in the Medicaid caseload. With the Medicaid locked-in coverage probably expiring at the end of the year, his team will have over 800 Eligibility Reviews to complete between 7/1/2021 and 6/2/2022 for the locked-in members.
4. Child Support. Brad reported that through the pandemic, his team members Anthony Kellum and Shelley Tucker, were able to collect 71.6% of current child support owed. This was well above the State's goal of 65%; Brad added that most counties the size of Gunnison County were not able to come anywhere near the state goal, let alone exceed it. This was mentioned in the C-stat award presentation as well. In April, Shelley Tucker was also named Gunnison County's new Child Support Specialist. Anthony Kellum has moved out the county, but is still helping out in a contract work capacity, in order to aid Shelley in making the transition.

5. Community Service Block Grant. Brad explained that he helps Betsy Holena, who manages Adult Protection Services programming, with this grant. This grant was used heavily through the pandemic, with the peak of those helped coming in May 2020. For the entire year of 2020, DHHS was able to help 200 households with over \$128,000 in rent-mortgage assistance. For 2021, the COVID-related housing assistance had dwindled, and current, unmet demands were for affordable housing and help in procuring it.
6. C-stat Award. Brad noted that he believed this was DHHS's 5th consecutive year to receive the award (rather than 4th consecutive year noted by the State presenters). Director Joni Reynolds agreed. Brad then praised his team and the County staff volunteers who helped staff the twice-a-week COVID clinics, often needing 40-50 people for the larger clinics. Brad went on to acknowledge Brian Gage, who had helped out in the incident command center as Planning Section Chief, while still maintaining his leadership role at DHHS.

LEGISLATIVE UPDATES: HHS Director Reynolds presented the Board with the following topics for updates.

1. Child welfare reforms. HHS Director Joni Reynolds informed the Board that the State is still working out the child welfare reforms, based on the federal changes needing implemented at the state level. She advised that this will mean an adjustment to child welfare allocations as well as reimbursements for out-of-home placements. Both of these could have a negative effect for Gunnison County, as one of the smaller counties. She went on to explain that the intent is to reduce the work done for interventions, and to do more upstream, prevention-type of work. Director Reynold added that this approach is still very limited at the federal level as to what programs qualify for prevention funding. DHHS is implementing prevention training, but there is still not a federally-approved program for parenting and parenting prevention-type programs, other than the Nurse Family Partnership (NFP), which Gunnison County already utilizes. This program only has 30-35 families who qualify for it yearly, and therefore does not help a large number of those needing assistance.
2. Adult protection services. HHS Director Reynolds explained that a similar strategy will apply in this area as well; instead of looking for who's at fault, they will focus on identifying solutions that can positively affect the situation. She added that Gunnison HHS already utilizes this approach.
3. Childcare assistance program. HHS Director Reynolds let the Board know that legislation had added a statute to do a market study analyzing the cost of implementing this type of program; however, this was postponed in 2020 because of the pandemic and it was not rescheduled until 2023. She warned that if this market analysis was not performed sooner, then they would really begin to see a disparity in what the rates are, versus what the actual costs are for families in that program. There was currently conversation in the legislature pushing for an earlier analysis, and Director Reynolds asked the Board to exercise any opportunity they might have to help influence an earlier date outcome.
4. A bill passed supporting protection of public health workers. HHS Director Joni Reynolds let the Board know that public health workers' information can now be requested to be suppressed through the County or the public records. She added that she was presently compiling a list of those public health worker requesting this be done.
5. Creation of a Department of Early Childhood. HHS Director Joni Reynolds wanted to flag this for the Board's attention, noting that the addition of another department will create another set of administration and bureaucracy at the state level which will impact her small department of HHS. Commissioner Smith added that she had an invitation to sign up for an open-forum "transition advisory group" working on development of this new department. She asked if Director Reynolds had someone who would be interested in also joining the open forum. Director Reynolds acknowledged that she and two other persons would be interested in joining.

NEXT MEETING: The next meeting was scheduled for August 17, 2021.

ADJOURN: Moved by Commissioner Mason, seconded by Commissioner Smith to adjourn the Board of Human Services meeting. Motion carried unanimously. The meeting was adjourned at 9:38 am.

Minutes Prepared By:

Melanie Bollig, Clerk to the Board

Minutes Approved August 17, 2021:

Jonathan Houck, Chairperson