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Dodge County Department of Human Services

Strategic Plan 2011-13

To use our resources wisely and to be most effective in our work, we must collectively know what we are trying to accomplish and how we will do it. In other words, we need to know where we are going [vision], how we will travel [mission], and we need a map and itinerary [comprehensive and strategic plan], and a compass [core values] to guide us.

Vision for Dodge County

A safe, healthy, nurturing community that embraces learning, working, and independence in an ever-changing world.

While Dodge County Human Services is not fully responsible for achieving this vision, we have a hand in it especially for our most vulnerable residents.

Vision, Mission & Core Values

Mission

Dodge County Human Services provides residents with a continuum of services to help meet their basic needs so that they can live with dignity, independence, and opportunity in a safe and supportive environment.

Core Values

In all that we do, we are committed to:

- **Dignity & Respect** Every person is worthy of high regard, and we demonstrate this by acting in a professional, timely, private and confidential manner. We show our compassion by acting in an empathetic and understanding way.

- **Stewardship** We are accountable for getting the best value possible from the resources made available to us, and we achieve this through innovation and continuous improvement.
- **Trustworthiness** We act with integrity and honesty in our actions and decisions.
- **Collaboration** We work cooperatively with others as we cannot do it alone.
- **Personal Growth** We empower people to become self-sufficient, independent, and healthy.
- **Diversity & Equity** We acknowledge that there are different views of the world than our own, and we assure equity in access to our services.

Comprehensive & Strategic Plan

What We Do for the Community

Dodge County Human Services comprises seven work teams responsible for administering an array of programs funded by federal, state, and county government, and supervised by the State. The teams work to assure that services are made available to clients in a coordinated, timely, professional, and efficient manner. Each team provides information and referrals to other department and community programs.

Veteran Services are provided under the administration of Human Services to promote and enable a cooperative and unified service delivery to customers, particularly those who can benefit from both service areas.

Following is a brief description of each team and the programs and services they provide.

Financial Assistance Team

The Financial Assistance Team is responsible for administering eligibility for the following programs:

- Minnesota Health Care Programs, including Medical Assistance and MinnesotaCare
- Food Support Program
- Diversionary Work Program

- Minnesota Family Investment Program (MFIP)
- Child Care Assistance Programs for current and past MFIP participants and through a Basic Sliding Fee program
- Emergency Assistance Programs
- General Assistance
- Minnesota Supplemental Assistance
- County indigent burials

The department contracts for employment and training services that are coordinated with cash assistance programs. The department also collaborates with other counties to contract for fraud investigation services.

Child Support Enforcement Team

The Child Support Enforcement Team:

- Establishes paternity
- Locates non-custodial parents
- Obtains, maintains, changes, and enforces orders for child financial and medical support, and spousal support
- Collects and disburses child and spousal support
- Provides information & makes referrals

Accounting & Collections Team

The Accounting & Collections Team:

- Conducts and records financial transactions
- Prepares multiple fiscal and statistical reports to meet funding requirements and aid in agency management
- Aids in preparing the annual budget for the department.
- Serves as the fiscal agent for the Dodge County Family Services Collaborative
- Calculates and collects fees owed to the agency for out-of-home placements, detoxification services, medical estate recoveries, and public assistance overpayments
- Bills other third party payers such as Medical Assistance
- Assists the county Finance Department in collecting delinquent mobile home taxes.

Children & Family Social Services Team

The Children & Family Social Services Team provides services and case management to people in the following programs or categories:

- Child protection family assessment and investigation services
- Child protection case management services

- Family Group Decision-Making Services
- Parenting Support Outreach Program
- Court-ordered case planning conferences (parallel protection process)
- Child and family welfare assessment and case management services
- Truancy services
- Placement prevention and reunification services
- Child-in-need-of-protection services court proceedings
- Out-of-home placements for children
- Children's mental health services
- Minor parent services
- Permanency and adoption services for children
- Diversionary Work Program assessments and services
- Licensing of family child care homes
- Licensing of child foster care homes

Adult Social Services Team

This team provides services and case management to people in the following program categories:

- Case management for children and adults with developmental disabilities
- Home and community-based waiver services for people with disabilities who are otherwise at risk of needing care in a hospital, nursing facility, intermediate care facility, or a similar facility.
- Common entry point for the reporting of vulnerable adult maltreatment
- Vulnerable adult assessments and adult protection case management
- Emergency guardian and conservator services
- Adult mental health services
- Chemical dependency assessment and treatment for adolescents and adults
- Pre-commitment screening for people with mental illness or chemical dependency
- Adult services case management
- Fiscal case management
- Intake and referral to Project Home (services to address homelessness)
- Long term care consultation services in partnership with Dodge County Public Health
- Licensing of adult foster care homes
- Assessment and services for participants in Divisionary Work Program

Veterans Services Team

This team provides services and case management to veterans and their surviving spouses in the following categories:

- Service-connected disability benefits

- Non-service connected pension benefits
- Educational benefits
- Vocational rehabilitation
- Home loans
- Burial benefits
- Dependents' and survivors' benefits
- Health care
- Life insurance
- Substance abuse care
- Minnesota Department of Veterans Affairs benefits, including coverage of dental and optical services, special needs, and education.

Support Services Team

This team provides general administrative services that are essential to the successful operation of the agency. This includes conducting receptionist and clerical duties, providing data entry and processing, applying specialized computer skills, imaging and managing documents, completing special projects and services for other units, and handling inventory and purchase of office supplies and equipment.

The team also provides executive assistance to the Director to aid planning, development, implementation, and monitoring of many aspects of the department's daily and long-range functions.

Our Path to the Strategic Plan

Introduction

For some time, we have been aware of the need for comprehensive and inclusive strategic planning, more coordinated service delivery, addressing resource challenges created by the current economic environment, as well as being able to communicate to the public how we are effectively and efficiently using public funds to serve our community. Using an inclusive and collaborative process, our charge was to develop a three-year strategic plan that will result in a dynamic, accessible, coordinated, community-wide human and veteran service delivery system. The strategic planning process will ultimately result in improved outcomes for customers and our community through:

- A shared vision, mission and core values for a comprehensive human and veteran services system
- A talented, dynamic, and professional staff that strives for maximized potential while applying evidence-based practices in providing the best possible service to our customers
- An integrated and coordinated delivery model that leverages existing community partnerships and technology for greater efficiency

- A comprehensive safety net of services for Dodge County's customers in need
- A plan for a performance measurement system
- Flexibility to address emerging needs over time

Strategic plan development team

A core development team was established with representatives from each of the Human Services units. Representatives from a number of other Dodge County departments were invited to participate as well.

Jane Wilcox Hardwick, Director, Dodge County Human Services
Jim Elmquist, Dodge County Administrator
David Erickson, Dodge County Commissioner
Peggy Espey, Director, Dodge County Public Health
Paul Kiltinen, Dodge County Attorney
Janet Mahle-Hinds, Dodge County Assistant Attorney
Eric Thompson, Dodge County Drug Court Coordinator
Jane Sheeran, Administrator, Fairview Care Center
Roger Hanson, Dodge-Fillmore-Olmsted Probation Officer
Julie Holgate, Dodge County Adult Services Unit Supervisor
Cathy Skogen, Dodge County Financial Unit Supervisor
Valerie LaPorte, Dodge County Children & Family Services Unit Supervisor
Kelly Madsen, Dodge County Office Support Supervisor
Shelley Koen, Dodge County Human Services Fiscal Supervisor
Todd Nelson, Dodge County Veteran Services Officer
Jennifer Adamson, Dodge County Human Services Social Worker
Jeremy Allen, Dodge County Human Services Financial Assistance Specialist
Ann Kruger, Dodge County Human Services Office Support Specialist
Cindy Minnihan, Dodge County Human Services Financial Worker
Katherine Schrandt, Dodge County Human Services Social Worker
Amanda Smith, Dodge County Human Services Children's Mental Health Case Manager
Brie Thompson, Dodge County Human Services Social Worker
Shannan Thompson, Dodge County Human Services Child Support Officer

Consulting team

Diane Amundson and Associates provided a framework for the plan and development process and facilitated the meetings of the development team and the gathering of information from clients, other stakeholders and external partners.

Community and internal partners' input

This plan builds upon the input of several community organizations, our customers, our internal county partners and the entire Human Services staff. Their input was valuable in the development of this plan.

Refining the vision, mission and core values

We examined the vision, mission and value statements that were established in 1991. Leaning heavily on the input submitted by our internal and external customers, we refined these statements to reflect our current thinking about what we do, what we aim to achieve, and what guides us in that quest for the coming years.

Strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (SWOT)

As we examined what we aim to achieve, we had to honestly assess what we do especially well, what we need to work on to be as effective as possible, and what other things are going on in the world that create opportunities for change and improvement or that make it more difficult for us to achieve this vision.

Some of the strengths identified include:

- Good teamwork within and across units
- Customer-focused
- Good relationship with some community partners
- Strong county board support
- Timely case processing
- Small size makes the department easier to navigate for clients, and staff know multiple programs
- Meeting or exceeding federal and state standards in a number of areas
- Good stewards of public resources

Some of the weaknesses identified include:

- Low staff morale in some areas
- Customer service and collaboration not always at its best
- Poor relationship with some community partners
- Outdated, cumbersome technology
- Bilingual capacity not adequate for client base
- Inadequate training in some areas
- Small size limits ability to specialize and to develop robust delivery systems
- Client transportation system not fully developed

Some of the opportunities identified include:

- Reductions in state funding force creative approaches
- Human services fund balance may enable greater investment in preventive services
- Regional collaboration may add value to service capacity
- Federal health reform may increase number of people with health insurance

Some of the threats identified include:

- Further funding reductions
- State programs, like General Assistance Medical Care, being eliminated or significantly reduced
- Resistance to change
- Caseloads growing beyond staffing capacity due to economy and aging of population
- Regional collaboration taking lots of energy and focus and reducing local control
- Loss of knowledge and experience with staff retirements and turnover
- General public unaware of impact of human services

Trends

We identified a number of external trends that will likely affect human services delivery in the coming years, including:

- Caseloads increasing in a number of program areas
- State funding of county operations decreasing
- Greater than normal community pressure to restrain county levy growth
- Healthcare costs increasing
- Aging populations
- High unemployment rates
- Greater public discourse with government entities
- Greater collaboration among counties
- Growth in cultural diversity, increase in Hispanic population in county, and increase in number of customers with limited English language proficiency
- Shortage of foster care providers
- Changing practice standards requiring continuing education
- Regional collaboration

These trends, in combination with the SWOT analysis, informed where we should focus our agenda for change.

Identifying strategies and initiatives

Finally, through a focused exercise and much discussion, we developed a comprehensive list of strategic initiatives that would aid us in the final development of our plan. These initiatives were prioritized and grouped into three key focus areas. Each focus area is defined and has a specific goal. Each strategy is identified and then broken down into initiatives. These initiatives are assigned a champion and a process team. Upon endorsement of this plan, the team will identify specific objectives that are time and measurement-based. These objectives will be realized when required tasks are completed and/or processes are fully incorporated into the way we provide our services.

Strategic Plan

While reviewing the Human Services Strategic Plan, the reader should consider that the overall strategies are not prioritized within this document, and that the numbers are used simply for easier reference to and discussion of these items. The reader will also notice a certain and intended consistency in the general needs across all areas: the need to increase the level of awareness throughout the community (including providers and clients) of available services; the need to expand availability of services through better coordination, efficiencies and decreased duplication; and the need to improve clients' ability to access services.

It must be acknowledged that additional work is essential for the successful implementation of this plan. Redrafting and fine-tuning the plan, prioritizing strategies, initiatives and tasks, deciding on outcomes that are realistically achievable, and choosing indicators that can be used as benchmarks and measurements will be the work of the initiative teams, comprised of service providers and convened and supported by the Department's Management Advisory Team. The plan includes an overall plan definition, focus areas, a goal for each focus area, strategies and focused initiatives required to reach our goals.

1. Effective and Efficient Operations within the Confines of Budgetary Requirements

Focus:

To provide outstanding service to Dodge County customers by efficiently managing human and fiscal resources to most effectively meet the needs of our customers

Goal:

To effectively administer human services programs in an environment of unpredictable and unsustainable funding.

Strategies & Initiatives	Champions
Take collaborative steps to optimize efficiencies and effectiveness	
1. Work with probation, public health, drug court, law enforcement and schools to reduce out-of-home placement costs and to improve outcomes for at-risk children	Valerie LaPorte
2. Prepare for and participate in efforts to increase value and reduce costs through collaboration with other counties	Jane Hardwick
3. Increase collaboration with public health to ensure maximum use of resources and best quality of customer service	Jane Hardwick
4. Collaboratively plan and budget for projected aging of population and the economic environment	Cathy Skogen
Utilize technologies to increase operational efficiencies and effectiveness	
5. Develop a technology plan to meet departmental needs	Shelley Koen
6. Drive move to secure e-mail systems	Kelly Madsen
Ensure policy and operating procedures enhance effectiveness and efficiencies	
7. Communicate, follow and update the human services strategic plan	Todd Nelson
8. Develop and maintain a policy database that is readily accessible to all human services employees	Kelly Madsen

2. Outstanding Internal and External Customer Service

Focus:

To establish Dodge County Human Services as an agency that provides services unmatched by our peers

Goal:

Provide the absolute best quality of service for our customers within the resources available

Strategies & Initiatives	Champions
Actively collaborate with community organizations, schools, law enforcement, churches and civic leaders to improve customer service outcomes	
1. Identify trends in active cases that can facilitate education needs or help in early identification/redirection of problematic activity in future cases	Diane Tlougan
2. Identify and actively participate in outreach efforts to more effectively communicate human services programs	Julie Holgate
Hold all employees accountable to same customer service standards	
3. Refine policy related to ethics and conflict of interest	Julie Holgate
4. Identify generally applied customer service standards	TBD
Develop culture that allows for creativity and innovation in serving customers	
5. Empower employees to look for more efficient and effective ways to accomplish day-to-day tasks	TBD
6. Activate a continuous improvement process to investigate innovation, best practices and creative thinking in human services-related activities	Todd

3. Recruit, Hire and Maintain Valued Human Assets

Focus:

By putting our employees first we will provide outstanding customer service

Goal:

To employ the brightest, most creative, responsive, respectful, trustworthy and effective employees

Strategies & Initiatives	Champions
Utilize recruiting and hiring practices that specifically speak to our core values and organizational goals and requirements	
1. Develop a strategic recruiting and hiring methodology	Kelly Madsen
Provide effective and efficient training for employees	
2. Develop formal training plans for each position	Kelly Madsen
3. Utilize continuing education activities to accentuate employee professional development plans in order to facilitate increased responsibility throughout the Human Services delivery system	TBD
4. Increase cultural competency of existing staff	TBD
Retain high quality staff by creating and maintaining a positive work environment	
5. Conduct internal audit and correct deficiencies and conduct recurring climate assessments to ensure internal health of division	Jen Adamson & Julie Holgate
6. Develop and maintain staffing commensurate to caseload and performance expectations	TBD
7. Foster a professional work atmosphere that makes employees proud to be a part of the team	Jen Adamson & Julie Holgate

Taking it forward

This is a dynamic document. This initial work in developing and recording a strategic plan provides a foundation on which a sustainable and ongoing planning process can successfully build. We will need to apply all of the talent in the organization to effectuate this plan.

The Management Advisory Team along with the core strategic planning team will continue to prioritize initiatives and push for their completion/implementation. They will also continue to update and redefine this document as needed to meet our service needs.

Plan's Adoption

The Dodge County Human Services Strategic Plan has been adopted and approved by the Dodge County Board of Commissioners effective January 1, 2011.