

## **Human Services Planning, Coordination and Funding**

### **Introduction**

This paper combines three different, but interrelated topics that were proposed for discussion at City Council's 2004 retreat: 1) regional coordination of human services, 2) increased human service agency funding, and 3) enhancing the community's access to human service information and resources.

The City of Longmont has long recognized that among many things that make a city great are its residents. Throughout our history, the City has sustained an active role in ensuring that its residents develop skills and have access to resources and services that strengthen their lives and our community. For many Longmont residents, this means providing a "safety net" to ensure that their basic needs for food, housing, and health care are met, in addition to making sure that they are able to grow and develop in a safe, supportive and nurturing environment.

As our community experiences significant changes in demographics and in our economy, so too do we see changes in human service needs and in the availability of resources to meet those needs. Within these last few years, we have seen tremendous economic and population growth followed by economic recession. The result has been that services have not kept pace with the demand. The impacts of TABOR and other State constitutional amendments have severely restricted the State government's ability to sustain funding for basic mental health, housing, health care and other social services. These service demands have been "pushed" down to local governments, which are also struggling to maintain existing levels of service with reduced revenues.

The purpose of this document is to assist City Council in its discussion of these issues related to human service demands, and how we may wish to plan and fund human services in the future, in order to maximize our resources and enhance service provision to our residents.

### **Background**

Human services coordination opportunities: In allocating funds to human service agencies that serve Longmont residents, the Longmont Human Relations Commission (HRC) attempts to distribute those funds in a manner that equitably supports a continuum of services ranging from primary prevention to treatment services. The HRC believes that it is important to fund a continuum of services that focuses as much on prevention and early intervention programs that can significantly reduce/eliminate the need for more costly treatment and care services in the future, as it does on meeting basic needs. However, in the past couple of years, the HRC could not overlook the compelling needs of Longmont children, youth and adults who are experiencing significant challenges in meeting their basic needs at this time. To make matters worse, the State has drastically reduced Medicaid funding and other funding support for essential human service programs, which has severely impacted local agencies' ability to sustain, let alone increase, service levels to individuals and families who need basic services such as dental, medical and mental health care, in-home support services and transportation. As a

result, over 40% of the City's 2004 human service agency funding will go toward helping to meet these basic needs.

The HRC and local officials throughout the County are concerned that this trend will continue, given the slow turnaround in the economy and the impact of TABOR and other State constitutional amendments on the State's budget. The need for local governments to engage in collaborative human service planning efforts on a county and/or regional level is more compelling than ever if we are to maximize our local resources yet maintain a balance of service provision. In particular, staff wishes to highlight three collaborative planning opportunities which have the potential to make a significant impact on the Longmont community: 1) helping children get a healthy start in life, 2) implementing a new, community-based paradigm to end chronic homelessness, and 3) implementing a coordinated funding process with other major local government funders.

*Early Care and Education of Children:* For nearly four years, the City of Longmont, the St. Vrain Valley School District and several Longmont children's service agencies have been involved in an effort to ensure that young children throughout Boulder County have a healthy start in life and are ready to learn when they enter school. The Early Care and Education Council of Boulder County (ECECBC) was established to lead this effort to plan and implement a comprehensive, coordinated, quality early care and education system that could accomplish this desired outcome. The ECECBC has recently released the results of two studies that it commissioned to help improve the availability and affordability of child care, and to adequately finance a system of quality child care. Copies of these studies are included as attachments to this discussion paper, along with the 2003 report on the status of children in Boulder County. A local ad hoc group of Longmont representatives has recently come together to review the results of these studies. This informal, ad hoc group is encouraged that several of the recommended "best practices" to improve school readiness already exist in our community, such as the Longmont Head Start program; however, our local program only serves a very small portion of the eligible children due to limited federal Head Start funding. This ad hoc group is recommending that representatives from the City of Longmont and the St. Vrain Valley School District lead an effort to build awareness of the importance of early care and education; create a community vision of what early care and education is for the Longmont community; and help mobilize additional resources to ensure that all Longmont children have a healthy start in life.

*Ending Homelessness:* The previous discussion paper regarding homelessness suggested that City Council consider developing a comprehensive plan to end homelessness, based on the new Housing First model. Should City Council provide direction to staff to proceed in this manner, it will be important for Council to also consider ways to engage other local governments throughout Boulder County in a similar process. In this way, we have a greater likelihood of truly making a significant impact on ending chronic homelessness, rather than "pushing" the issue to other local communities.

*Coordinated Funding Process:* Throughout the past several years, the County's Human Services Coordinating Council (HSCC) has periodically discussed whether it should

pursue ways to coordinate human service agency funding processes (e.g. common application form, joint public hearings, etc.) among the different local governments and/or other major funding entities. The potential benefits are improved efficiencies in the application process (for both applicants and funders) and enhanced abilities to identify duplication of efforts and/or ways to maximize how resources are utilized throughout the County. However, this has not been seriously pursued in the past due to each entity's concerns about losing "local control." Should the City of Longmont explore ways of overcoming these barriers and pursue some type of coordinated human service agency funding process?

Human service funding levels: The City of Longmont first began funding outside human service agencies with a portion of Federal General Revenue Sharing funds. In the mid-1980's, with the eventual loss of revenue sharing, the City increased its property tax levy to sustain outside human service agency funding through the General Fund. The amount allocated to agencies equaled .75 mill. In 1995, the City changed its financial policies to allocate a portion of total General Fund revenues (1.3%) to human service agencies, so that the amount of available funds would increase proportionate with General Fund revenue growth. In 2000, City Council increased this percentage to 1.35%. This resulted in a 250% growth in human service agency funding throughout the last decade and early 2000's. With the decline in our local economy over the past two years, the human service agency funding levels have remained relatively flat. In 2004, the City will distribute \$672,552 to 30 non-profit human service agencies that:

- Aid People in Crisis: Providing immediate services for people in emergency or acute situations.
- Strengthen Children, Youth and Families: Providing services and programs that promote and meet the developmental needs of children and youth.
- Provide Health Care: Providing education, prevention and treatment services and programs that sustain physical and mental well being.
- Support Work and Independence: Providing services and programs that promote and maintain self-sufficiency for adults.
- Enhance Community Climate and Support: Enhancing the community's capacity to assist those in need, and ensuring that all residents have full access to services and resources.

In 2002, the City initiated a new child care certificate program that enables child care providers to serve children from low income families. The Council funded this initiative from one-time funds and has continued to fund it from one-time funds in subsequent years. In 2004, City Council allocated \$120,750 to this program, which serves approximately 17% of the 560 low-income children who live in Longmont and are eligible for assistance. The HRC recommends that the City moves toward funding this service from ongoing, rather than one-time funds, and increases the percentage of human service agency funding to 1.6% - 2% of General Fund revenues to stabilize and expand resources to children, as well as other critical human needs. The HRC realizes that this transition might need to be phased-in over time, based on the available revenues and other competing City service needs.

In considering whether the City of Longmont should increase its level of funding to non-profit human service agencies, City Council has questioned how Longmont's efforts compare to other communities. The following is a summary of how other Boulder County communities fund human service agencies:

- Boulder County Government funds non-profit human service agencies through its annual contract process and also through a dedicated 1.5 mill levy, which voters approved in 2002. In 2004, the County funded 50 non-profit human service agencies for annual operating expenses, for a total amount of \$3,769,169. The County does not set a fixed percentage of its General Fund revenues for these human service agency contracts. The County Commissioners determine annually whether the agencies will receive an increase to their contract and whether they will invite new agencies to apply for funding. For the past several years, the County has not opened up its process to new agencies. Of the 1.5 dedicated mill levy, one mill is designated for Imagine!, the community center board that provides developmental disability services to Boulder County residents. The remaining .5 mill is allocated to County human services to help replace the loss of State funding. In addition, Boulder County voters approved a dedicated "Worthy Cause" tax in 2000, and again in 2003, to help fund capital expenses for designated emergency shelter, transitional housing and health care services. The current Worthy Cause tax sunsets in 2008.
- The City of Boulder allocates approximately \$2.3 million each year to human service agencies, according to human service priorities outlined in the City of Boulder Human Services Master Plan. The City allocates 40% of a dedicated .15% sales tax, which was approved by voters in 1992, to human service agencies. In 2004, 30 agencies (51 programs) will receive these funds.
- In 2003, the City of Louisville allocated \$20,000 to 12 non-profit agencies from its General Fund revenues (which was the same level as 2002). The Finance Committee reviews the competitive funding applications and makes the funding recommendations.
- The City of Lafayette does not directly fund human service agencies. The City does, however, contribute \$5,000 to help sponsor the annual "Lasso Lafayette" event, which raises funds for human service agencies that serve Lafayette residents. Volunteers from local non-profit organizations sell tickets to this event and, in return, these agencies receive a portion of the proceeds based on the percentage of tickets sold by each specific agency's volunteers.
- The Town of Superior has established a contingency grant program, which the Town Board designates up to \$2,000 each quarter to fund a variety of one-time projects (not ongoing operational support) that benefit Town of Superior residents. Human service agencies can apply for these contingency funds, along with many other community groups and organizations. The Town Board can include ongoing operational support for human service agencies in its annual Town budget; however, no human service

agencies are currently funded in the Town's annual operating budget, nor are receiving Contingency Grants.

As you can see, local governments assume various roles in human service agency funding and utilize a variety of approaches for determining funding levels. Does the Longmont City Council wish to further examine its role in human service agency funding? Does it wish to explore increasing the current percentage of General Fund revenues to fund the child care certificate program, other early care and education programs and/or other human service programs on an ongoing basis? Is Council interested in engaging in some type of collaborative planning effort to focus its funding support on the most compelling needs?

Community access to human service information: In preparing for the 2002 and 2003 human service agency funding processes, the Longmont Human Relations Commission conducted focus groups and surveys with neighborhood group leaders and key informants throughout the Longmont community. The purpose of these data gathering efforts was to obtain additional perspectives about unmet human service needs and the City's role in addressing these needs, while trying to sustain services which the City already funds. One of the areas identified was the need for residents to have greater access to information about current human services that are available in the community. The respondents indicated that it is quite difficult to navigate through the complexity of the existing human services systems and resources that are available to the community. They further clarified that "just-in-time" access was critical, as well as some type of single entry point.

In 2003, the State of Colorado initiated the first of several planned "211" human service information and referral lines, which is a huge step toward addressing the access need identified by the Longmont community and most all of the communities throughout the State. The 211 line is designed to provide immediate information and referral services to people who call seeking assistance with human service needs. The calls are answered by staff on duty. As of October 2003, most Longmont residents can access 211 service through the 10-county call center located at Mile High United Way in Denver. This call center serves Boulder County from 8:00 a.m. – 8:00 p.m. Monday – Friday. By the end of 2007, the 211 information line will be available to all residents throughout the State of Colorado on a 24/7 basis.

Currently, this service is being funded through grants and other sources of seed money. Sustaining its continued operation beyond the start-up phase will require stable and ongoing sources of funding. The City of Longmont may wish to explore how it can support this service, should it prove to be a valuable resource to our community members. Specifically, in the short term, we can explore ways in which the City can market this service to our residents (web access, etc.). In the longer term (after the pilot phase ends in 2007), the City may wish to explore ways to help financially support this service.

### **Discussion Questions**

1. Is City Council interested in taking a leadership role within the community and/or County to explore ways to collaboratively address early care and education, homelessness issues and/or coordinating human service agency funding processes?
2. In what ways is City Council interested in expanding its financial support of human service agencies?
3. In what ways is City Council interested in enhancing the Longmont community's access to information about human service resources?

### **Attachments**

1. Early Care and Education Council of Boulder County 2003 Annual Report
2. 2003 Status of Children in Boulder County
3. Economic Impact of the Early Care and Education Industry
4. Promoting School Readiness for Latino Children in Boulder County
5. Colorado 2-1-1