

Minnesota Association of County Social Service Administrators

2013 Legislative Initiatives

Minnesota counties recognize the budgetary challenges that face Minnesota's Legislature in this biennium and beyond. In our efforts to partner with policy makers and contribute solutions that move the state toward a more sustainable human services system, MACSSA recommends:

Simplifying Human Services Programs

Administrative simplification has the potential to dramatically improve efficiency and effectiveness. It is a critical component to creating a more sustainable human services system.

MACSSA recommends:

- ▶ Authorizing administrative removal of medical support obligations to a non-custodial parent in situations where the custodial parent elects not to carry medical insurance that is being reimbursed through the medical support obligation of the non-custodial parent.
- ▶ Automating recreational license suspension when a child support obligor is in arrears in an amount equal to or greater than three times the obligor's total monthly payment. Automation will align this process with the statutory language governing automobile license suspension for failure to pay child support or maintenance payments.
- ▶ Simplifying the administrative requirements for the Medical Assistance, Economic Assistance, and Food Support programs.
- ▶ Amending statute governing licensed family child care to reduce exceptions to safe sleep position and to allow timely investigations of deaths in family child care. Statutory changes are necessary to provide counties with additional authority and ability to promptly investigate and remedy unsafe practices.
- ▶ Prohibiting the payment of medical expenses by Medical Assistance (MA) when an individual is in a penalty period for improper transfer of assets. Currently when an individual is found to have improperly transferred assets MA payment for nursing home and home and community based services is prohibited, but general medical expenses are allowable. This reduces the impact of the penalty as individuals are able to use monthly income to pay for nursing home expenses.
- ▶ Authorizing increased accessibility to the Department of Public Safety's Driver Vehicle System (DVS) for public program eligibility determinations. Currently county financial workers must obtain information from the client regarding value of motor vehicles, which often results in delays in application processing. Allowing increased access to the DVS will promote efficiency and enable quicker eligibility determinations.
- ▶ Expanding streamlined eligibility of MA to include any person whose basis for eligibility is disability or elderly and who receives benefits from Social Security Administration. Individuals in this benefit category have conditions that make their basis for eligibility unlikely to change over time.
- ▶ Providing counties the authority to issue temporary SNAP EBT cards for non-expedited care takers in situations deemed appropriate by the county. Currently it is expected to take approximately 5 days to issue an EBT card via mail to a non-expedited caretaker with further delays expected for homeless and transient caretakers. This places pressure on counties and local food shelves as a significant number of caretakers who need immediate access to food.
- ▶ Allowing counties 48 hours excluding weekends and holidays to interview applicants who meet the expedited criteria for Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program eligibility. Currently, counties are required to provide same day interviews to applicants who meet the expedited criteria and issue benefits within 5 days. Allowing an additional day to satisfy the interview requirement will provide counties with flexibility without jeopardizing the clients receipt of benefits within the mandated timeframe.
- ▶ Transferring child care background studies to the Minnesota Department of Human Services to ensure a consistent method and interpretation of results without regard to county of licensure.
- ▶ Align the timelines for service eligibility and financial eligibility by extending the period from 60 to 90 calendar days in which the face to face long term care assessment is valid to establish service eligibility. Due to delays in the submission for financial assistance applications or delays in providing verification information the establishment of financial eligibility may extend beyond 60 days the LTCC assessment may have to be repeated without any changes in client circumstances.

Investments in Technology

A technology infrastructure which assures efficient administration of publicly-funded human services must be developed.

MACSSA recommends:

- ▶ Supporting the Department of Human Services efforts to modernize human services technology systems. Updating the state's aging human services technology infrastructure is essential to effective administration of programs and achieving client outcomes.

Aligning Funding with Outcomes for Vulnerable Populations

Achieving expected outcomes has become increasingly difficult due to an unsustainable rate of growth in health care and long term care spending combined with decreasing State revenues. Investments must be strategically re-focused in programs that cost-effectively achieve desired outcomes.

MACSSA recommends:

- ▶ Providing sufficient state funding and resources to the child support service delivery system to ensure desired outcomes for recipients. Failure to maintain funding and resources jeopardizes Minnesota's ability to access Federal incentive funding and places the state at risk for fiscal penalties in the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program if compliance thresholds are not met
- ▶ Passage of the Northstar Care for Children Act. The disparity in payment between Relative Custody Assistance/Adoption Assistance and foster care is a barrier to achieving permanency for children. Passage of the Northstar Act would allow the state to access federal funding to assist in relative placements.
- ▶ Resourcing the expansion of the text message/new media suicide prevention service currently available in the Northeast quarter of Minnesota to allow for statewide use and more effective outreach and connection to youth at risk for suicide. Suicide rates in Minnesota continue to be unacceptably high among all age groups and the traditional use of "hotlines" has not addressed the evolving methods that many people, especially younger Minnesotans, use to reach out for help.
- ▶ Expanding investments to family home visiting for at-risk families with newborns and young children to divert at-risk families from more cost intensive services.
- ▶ Statewide Expansion of the Parent Support Outreach Program (PSOP). PSOP provides voluntary supportive services to families reported for child abuse and neglect. This evidence based prevention program has resulted in reducing the number of new reports of maltreatment and the need for more cost intensive services.
- ▶ Authorizing continued and expanded statewide funding for the school-linked mental health initiative for children and youth. Demonstration funding for this initiative has resulted in significantly increased access to and engagement in mental health services for children and youth. The demonstration funds will expire at the conclusion of the 2012-2013 school year. Additional state supported is necessary to sustain and expand this cost-effective service model.
- ▶ Assuring the Commissioner of Human Services has equal opportunity at debt recovery based on a first claimed/first paid basis.
- ▶ Dedicating state child care funding to eligible young parents, through age 21, seeking child care to enable them to finish high school or obtain a GED. A high school diploma or GED is an essential foundation for self-sufficiency. Investing in child care resources for young parents will better enable them to achieve independence and reduce the need for continued economic assistance.
- ▶ Authorizing counties to assess annual non-refundable child care licensing study fees of up to \$200 and up to an additional \$100 for background studies. Current maximum fees are not sufficient to support these services.
- ▶ Providing counties an equivalent level of tort protection to that of the state for child care licensing functions.

MACSSA looks forward to engaging with the Legislature and all critical stakeholders to explore and pursue the recommended solutions.

For more information please contact:

Eric Ratzmann, MACSSA Director
ratzmann@mncounties.org
651-789-4340

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