

2015 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:

- ▶ Supporting the recommendations of the DHS Program Uniformity and Simplification work group to simplify income and reporting requirements for economic assistance program recipients. Simplification, uniformity and alignment of eligibility processes for income maintenance programs will enable counties to provide better service to clients, improve administrative operations and allow for more cost effective modernization of human services technology systems.
- ▶ County Representation on the MNsure Board of Directors. Public health care consumers and counties assisting them have experienced numerous challenges in securing Medical Assistance through MNsure. Given the fact that counties are providing eligibility and enrollment operational support for the large majority of MNsure enrollees, it is important that counties have a formal role in MNsure governance to ensure all aspects of MNsure operations are considered when setting priorities and making decisions.
- ▶ Aligning state law with the federal requirements for expedited issuance of Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits. Currently, state law has timelines that are different from the federal requirements for issuance of benefits
- ▶ Supporting data exchange across medical, welfare, public health, corrections, law enforcement and education systems to improve coordination of care and integrated care delivery systems. Current law creates unnecessary barriers for sharing of information between agencies within the same county which inhibits effective coordination of care.
- ▶ Clarifying the statutory definition of "threatened sexual abuse," for purposes of assessing child safety and initiating court action. Current law applies to parents who are known to have no contact with the child, mandates a rigorous response that may not be warranted, and requires filing a petition to terminate parental rights. The rigorous response should be directed to parents or household members who have direct contact with or unsupervised access to the child.
- ▶ Support the DHS recommendations to increase opportunities to automate child support activities. Through eliminating required withholding percentages, automating recreational license suspensions and discontinuing interest charging on arrears child support processes can be automated and more efficient.
- ▶ Support the DHS recommendations to utilize administrative processes in child support where a court order may not be required. Utilizing an administrative process for subsequent income withholding and removal of unused medical support will simplify and expedite the processes.

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:

- ▶ **Investing in Child Welfare Services.** Over the past decade there has been a reduction of \$36 million in state grants to counties that support child welfare work. It is critical for the state to reinvest to ensure that the state and counties are adequately resourced to protect vulnerable children.
- ▶ **Resourcing statewide expansion of the text message/new media suicide prevention service** 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.
- ▶ **Funding transportation services that assure educational stability for children in foster care.** It is often in the best interests of a child to remain in their home school district while in foster care. Currently, counties and school districts have limited options for funding transportation services to keep children in their home district.
- ▶ **Increasing access and funding for the Basic Sliding Fee (BSF) childcare assistance program.** Access to childcare is critical for families to maintain self-sufficiency. Funding levels have not been sufficient in this program, jeopardizing the states' ability to move more families to economic stability.
- ▶ **Align child support calculation formulas to economic realities to enhance parental support for children.** Realistic and collectable child support orders can be achieved by imputing potential income at 100% of the Federal Poverty Guideline and at 30 hours per week.



Minnesota Association of County
Social Service Administrators

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2015 Legislative Priorities

For the 2015 Minnesota Legislative Session, MACSSA has designated the following items as top priorities for the Association:

Administrative Simplification of Economic Assistance Programs

- ▶ Simplification, uniformity and alignment of eligibility processes for income maintenance programs will enable counties to provide better service to clients, improve administrative operations and allow for more cost effective modernization of human services technology systems.
- ▶ The Minnesota Legislature took a large step forward in 2014 by passing legislation that simplifies and aligns eligibility processes for the Minnesota Family Investment Program (MFIP), General Assistance (GA), Minnesota Supplemental Aid (MSA) and Group Residential Housing (GRH) programs.
- ▶ MACSSA supports passage in 2015 of the recommendations of the DHS Program Uniformity and Simplification work group to simplify income and reporting requirements for economic assistance program recipients.

Invest in the Child Protection System

- ▶ The heightened public interest in Minnesota's child protection system provides an opportunity for the state to build an enhanced model for protecting children.
- ▶ In addition to looking at policy and practice, building a strengthened system will require resources. Over the past decade there has been a reduction of \$36 million in state grants to counties that support child welfare work. It is critical for Minnesota to reinvest to ensure that the state and counties are adequately resourced to protect vulnerable children.
- ▶ MACSSA looks forward to working with the Legislature, Administration and stakeholders to examine how resources, policy, and practice can be strengthened to ensure Minnesota is best positioned to protect vulnerable children.

Enhance Capacity for the Mental Health System

- ▶ The Governor and stakeholders have declared 2015 the "Year of Mental Health," in recognition of the need to address significant gaps in the state's mental health infrastructure.
- ▶ A shortage of adequate and affordable community housing, crisis beds and psychiatrists are just some of the many factors placing stress on the service delivery system at the local level.
- ▶ As Minnesota moves towards a health care model, the role of counties as the local mental health authority and the significant county funding supporting the current system are issues that will need to be resolved.
- ▶ MACSSA looks forward to working with the Legislature, Administration, and stakeholders to address critical gaps in the state's mental health infrastructure.

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