



Archuleta County Department of Human Services

4th Quarter Report 2022

Our assistance programs include Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), Colorado Works and Adult Financial (cash assistance programs), Health First Colorado/Medicaid, Child Care Assistance, Child Support Services, Family Advocacy, and Low-Income Energy Assistance (LEAP).

Child Welfare and Adult Protective Services offer prevention services. These programs provide strength-based support to a variety of Archuleta County citizens.

## RESOURCE PROGRAMS

### **ELIGIBILITY:**

The Archuleta County Department of Human Services (ACDHS) eligibility Unit was fully staffed in the 4<sup>th</sup> quarter of 2022. However, there was still copious amount of training going on for the two new technicians. In this quarter between the two of them they attended 131.5 instructor led training hours and matched those with the same amount of self-paced computer training that had to be completed prior to the classroom time.

Training for eligibility technicians proves to be a very lengthy task. It can take up to 4 months for a technician to be fully trained in all necessary areas. Our concerns for this time frame have been brought to the State's attention. In response to the concerns The Staff Development Center is now going to host a work group to address the issue and try to streamline the process. The Resource Manager will be involved with the work group.

The Resource Manager attended a Motivational Interviewing Course which was held over two days. Many skills were learned that will assist in contact with clients and also staff interaction. One hour monthly additional trainings are also held and attended by the Manager.

Eligibility technicians were able to attend monthly trainings with the Rise Above Violence team to further their understanding the impact domestic violence has on our clients. The information provided to the technicians increases their knowledge of how domestic violence impacts the client's ability to be self-sufficient. Staff are thankful to have this education and also have a staff contact at Rise Above Violence to help interact with clients in these circumstances.

The eligibility team attended an active shooter training which was hosted by Human Resources. Many important details of how to handle such an incident were shared. Staff reported having an increased knowledge of how to react in a volatile situation.

The Resource Manager and the fraud investigator completed a necessary report showing the impact of the standard medical deduction for Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) and if it was correctly being assessed in Archuleta County. Upon review of the data sent to the state, yes it has been correctly calculated.

The Resource Manager completed the Adult Protection Services (APS) Academy led by the state and is now a certified APS worker. This decision for her attendance was made to have better coverage for all departments.

During this quarter the SNAP max allotment was still being administered. While families are lucky to have the additional benefits, there is still concern for the cliff affect it will cause when the extra amount ceases to exist. The max allotment is scheduled to end February 2023. We anticipate a lot of additional phone traffic regarding this change.

The P-EBT benefit for the Summer of 2022 was issued in December. While our office doesn't issue these benefits, consumers assume it is our department and we receive a lot of phone calls that we have had to field to the State P-EBT office.

As has been the status quo for some time, the majority of interviews are still held by phone. Clients are allowed to come in to the office at any time if they prefer. Clients can also come into the office to pick up Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT) cards so they can access their SNAP benefits.

During the previous quarter the Colorado Works Case Manager position was brought in house. One of the eligibility workers has taken on the additional role along with her normal eligibility duties. This has been quite an undertaking and a learning curve. Having all services under one roof has made things more stream lined and the clients now only have one point of contact with the agency for eligibility when they are on Colorado Works.

The Public Health Emergency (PHE) was still in affect this quarter, so that means clients are still auto passing for Medicaid. When the PHE is deemed over there will be a large population of clients who no longer qualify for Medicaid for numerous reasons.

Even though the team has been very busy, the staff recognize the importance of community involvement. They took time out of their busy schedules to ring the bell for the Salvation Army and gather funds to help the citizens of Archuleta County. These local funds can be accessed by applying with the Pagosa Outreach Connection (POC) Organization.

Applications processed during this quarter:

	Adult Financial	Colorado Works	Expedited SNAP	SNAP	Medicaid
October	6	6	21	57	33
November	2	11	21	55	33
December	6	5	25	69	59

Redeterminations process during this quarter:

	Adult Financial	Colorado Works	Expedited SNAP	SNAP	Medicaid
October	3	2		58	470
November	1	1		35	441
December	2	4		54	607

### **Fraud**

In the 4<sup>th</sup> quarter, the fraud investigator, Sara Cole, received 1 fraud referral and it is currently under investigation. Two previous cases are still open for further investigation of Intentional Program Violations (IPV's). One case was closed as unfounded.

Sara is very close to closing two Food Assistance cases due to fraud. The clients will be banned from the high-level program for one year. She has continued to complete regular case audits for all program areas and has been able to improve efficiency of case comments and data entry with the eligibility technicians.

During this quarter Sara did transfer to a new position within the Department. Once the Fraud Investigator position is filled, Sara will provide training to the new worker.

## CHILD PROTECTIVE SERVICES

In Q4 2022-

DHS received 73 reports of abuse and neglect and for the 4<sup>th</sup> quarter:

- 23 reports were received in October
- 28 reports were received in November
- 22 reports were received in December
- 25 reports were screened in for assessment/investigation. Approximately 29 children were involved.

### **Dependency and Neglect Cases**

There were six active dependency and neglect cases open in the 4<sup>th</sup> quarter. Three cases carried over from the previous quarter. Two cases were closed in December and one case was transferred to the county where the parents reside.

The first case was opened in 2019 and involves two children. All three of the parents involved did have their parental rights terminated in 2021; however, they did appeal the court's decision. All three parents remain incarcerated at this time. The case remains open during the appeal phase. Both of the children have been placed in their permanent home with a maternal family member who has a desire to adopt both children. We should receive a final decision from the appellate court very soon and this case will close. The next task will be to create a negotiation for an adoption subsidy.

The second case involves three children and three parents. Two of the children are able to remain in the home with one parent and protective supervision by ACDHS. That parent appears to be making progress and the children remain safe while in that parent's care. The third child was removed from the home and placed in the custody of ACDHS. This child was reunified with the birth mother who now has full custody. This child is thriving and appears to be doing well. All of the children in this case were determined to be safe and have been reunified with their parent and this case closed in December.

The third case involves one child who was left without a caregiver when both parents were arrested for domestic violence. The child was able to go home with the bio mother on a 30-trial home visit however that trial home visit ended early due to a safety concern. The child had to be removed from the parent's care and placed back into the custody of ACDHS. That child has been placed with a family member who was awarded parental rights. This child was determined to be safe and this case closed in December. However, the father of this child did file an appeal of the Judge's final order giving the family member parental rights.

The fourth case involves a substance exposed newborn who had been left with a family member at the hospital only 8 hours after the child was born. Neither parent returned to the hospital to discharge the baby and a police hold had to be placed on the child. The child was placed in

ACDHS custody so that the child could be released from the hospital. The child is currently placed with a family member. Neither parent appears to be making progress toward sobriety at this time. A judge recently ordered a change in jurisdiction per the parents request as they now reside in another county. This case was successfully transferred.

The fifth case involves two children and two parents. Both children have been exposed to severe neglect and unsafe living conditions. Both children are extremely high needs due to disabilities. Both children were placed together in a foster home in La Plata County but had to be removed due to concerns for physical abuse. Initially the children had to be separated briefly due to the inability to locate a provider that could care for both children. ACDHS was able to locate a foster home in another county that is equipped to care for both children. Both parents have been making incredible progress toward their treatment plan objectives and reunification remains the permanency goal at this time.

The sixth case involves a substance exposed newborn. This child was born exposed to amphetamines, methamphetamines, and tramadol. Due to the extent of exposure in utero this child had to medically detox and was placed on oxygen at birth. ACDHS attempted to safety plan with this family. However, the family violated the safety plan and ACDHS had to take custody of this child. This child is currently placed in a certified foster home in the county. This child is now gaining weight and thriving in her new environment.

### **Foster Care**

The Foster Care Coordinator role is hard to retain. This is partly due to the lack of training provided by the State. ACDHS is a small County without a certified trainer in this program area. There is a lot of self-direction for this role and it can be time consuming to understand all of the requirements for Foster and Kinship care. The Foster Care Coordinator role has been vacant since the end of November, 2022. ACDHS has reached out to La Plata County to assist with Safe Home Studies for potential foster parents.

Currently the Administrative Review Division is working with ACDHS to provide training regarding compliance for out of home placement cases. ACDHS was made aware of updates that needed to be made in specific cases. This will be a great learning experience for all child welfare staff.

## ADULT PROTECTIVE SERVICES

### **Intake/Ongoing Cases**

Q4- Adult protection services

ACDHS received 16 APS referrals for the 4th quarter. Of those 16 referrals four were screened in and a case was opened for services. There are four cases that carried over from the previous quarter for a total of eight open cases in the 4<sup>th</sup> quarter. Three cases were closed during the 4<sup>th</sup> quarter.

Of the four referrals screened in; two were for allegations of self-neglect, one was for allegations of sexual abuse, and one for exploitation.

## CHILD SUPPORT

### **Child Support Services**

CSS Training 4<sup>th</sup> Quarter: Electronic Benefit Transfer, Contempt, Professional License Suspension, Driver's License Suspension, Office of Child Support Enforcement, Domestic Violence, Quarterly Regional Meeting, Math4Law, Active Shooter, IRS Safeguarding Information, Electronic Messaging, Child Support Services Basics, Liaison Meeting, Financial/Ledger, Credit Reporting and Financial Institution Match.

Child Support Services Rule Change Overview for 2023:

- Replacement of gendered language with gender-neutral language throughout Volume 6.
- Removal of language referring to the Child Care Assistance program.
- Changes to Income Withholding Order noticing.
- Addition of exemption reason for Financial Institution Data Match (FIDM).
- Removal of the requirement to provide notice or obtain a waiver prior to accessing a credit report.
- Clarification that APA orders may be signed electronically by the parties.
- Clarification of timeframes related to disbursement on hold.
- Clarification of the circumstance which require the enforcement and collection of spousal maintenance.
- Clarification that counties may compromise assigned arrears, as authorized under federal policy guidance.
- Change to commencement date time frame to be from the date the order is submitted to the court as this is within county control.
- Addition of a requirement to consider circumstances to ensure retroactive support amount is appropriate and reasonable.

Court Cases this quarter: 12

The CSS Unit passed two state audits this quarter with 100% accuracy.

OCT: \$69,322.13

NOV: \$56,112.20

DEC: \$59,056.11

Total: \$184,490.44

## **Other News**

ACDHS did spend this quarter in their new building at 550 Hot Springs Boulevard. Staff have voiced that they feel much safer in the new environment. All visitors are escorted by a staff member when they are in the ACDHS building. There is not access to the public without a key card used by staff. There are 9 panic buttons throughout the building that notify authorities.

During this quarter, ACDHS assisted the Sheriff's Department in the recruit for Shop with a Cop. Staff also volunteered their time to assist deputies with families on the day of the event. Toys for Tots contacted ACDHS to assist with a toy drive during the holidays. Over 51 children were served during this toy drive.

Staff attended an Active Shooter training during this quarter through Human Resources. It gave staff the opportunity to discuss safety and steps if there was an emergency within the department.

Human Services Director, Isabel Vita, completed the Child Welfare Academy during this quarter, along with the Adult Protective Services Academy. Although she has many years working in both of these fields, the State requires completion of both academy's if it has been five years without recertification. Obtaining certification in each academy provides ACDHS leverage when there are staffing shortages.

ACDHS continues to work with Dolores, La Plata, and San Juan County through a Behavioral Health Grant. Vouchers are available at all Human Service locations. Consumers can receive 8 free therapeutic sessions with their therapist of choice, as long as their therapist is willing to participate. There is no eligibility requirement to receive a voucher.

The Low Energy Assistance Program (LEAP) was underway during this quarter. There were 176 applications received for Archuleta County and \$54,197.25 issued to consumers. Last year at this time there were 173 applications and \$50,636.12 issued to consumers. The Department continues to provide community outreach for the LEAP program.

During this quarter, the Child Care Assistant Program hired a new technician. There are currently 9 open childcare cases and ACDHS only received 2 applications in December, 2022. It has always been mandatory for all childcare recipients to be referred to Child Support Services. The mandatory referral is scheduled to be removed from rule as of July 1<sup>st</sup>, 2023. ACDHS anticipates more families applying for the program.