



Archuleta County Department of Human Services

2nd Quarter Report 2023

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.

Archuleta County Department of Human services (ACDHS) had a very busy second quarter. What most community members do not see is what happens behind the scenes at Human Services. The work and dedication of the staff is extraordinary. The department has spent the last year in a half restructuring all programs. Hiring competent staff and promoting retention has been a big part of the focus for ACDHS.

Community partners and relationships were also highlighted this quarter. ACDHS staff attended several community meetings, attended fundraisers, outreach events, and provided community training.

ACDHS was part of a Behavioral Health Grant this quarter and provided 663 mental health vouchers to community members. Each voucher was worth \$120.00 and they could receive up to 8 vouchers per person. In addition to the vouchers, \$3,461.18 was utilized to offer family incentives. There was \$24,858.16 provided for supportive services for items such as rental assistance, auto repairs, utilities, and travel. Training was also approved in the amount of \$3,122.91 for ACDHS child welfare caseworkers and supervisors.

During this quarter, Director Vita was appointed to the Board of Health (BOH). BOH members play a vital role in the public health system by providing oversight, recommending budgets, and developing policies to keep the public safe and healthy.

All in all, this quarter was very busy and productive. ACDHS continues to stay focused on internal and external customer service.

Resource Programs:

The Public Health Emergency officially ended for Medical Services in 05-11-2023 at the federal level. This resulted in many clients coming off of medical benefits on 05-31-2023. Colorado will take 12 months (14 months, including noticing) to renew members based on their annual renewal date.

The food banks in Archuleta County are reporting a great increase in the utilization of their facilities. Several staff visits have been made to local food banks to help understand the process and the amenities available. There are currently 6 food banks in Archuleta County and there is at least one food bank opened Monday through Saturday.

The Resource Manager participated in a focus/work group at the state level regarding the time lines of the necessary training for the Eligibility Unit. It was revealed the training was longer than it could be as some topics were covered more than one time. The time was reduced by 20%. This will make for more efficiency with the unit when additional staff needs to be trained. ACDHS currently has all technicians 100% trained and carrying a full caseload in all programs.

The Resource Manager, along with the Director attended a meeting with the newly formed Health Department Board. An interactive discussion occurred where important logistic

information was shared. Currently ACDHS works closely with San Juan Basin Health. A process will be identified in order to provide and receive referrals from the new Public Health Department opening January 1st, 2024.

The Resource Manager participated in a state level meeting which will be ongoing to address the paperless scanning system currently utilized. A new system is being created and the state is getting feedback prior to the creation to ensure the needs of workers are addressed. For starters, the State requested a linear measurement of all physical files that needed to be scanned in Archuleta County. The total scanning estimate was \$13, 690.46.

The Long-Term Case worker and Resource Manager hosted a meeting with the Pagosa Springs Medical Center Oncology Department integrated behavior health specialist to educate on the process of applying for Long Term Care and the necessary steps to assess eligibility. The hospital requested the training to better help patients that are referred for cancer treatment. It was shared that some patients do not receive all the resources for their after-cancer diagnosis. Some patients need to be referred to hospice for their level of pain and pass away before Long Term Medicaid can be approved. ACDHS is hopeful to assist patients in these type of situations in a much more streamlined process.

The Long-Term Care worker attended the monthly Adult Protection Team (APT) meeting where many community resources were introduced. The APT reviews processes used to report and investigate mistreatment and self-neglect of at-risk adults. They staff particular cases or possible cases with team members to identify solutions and community resources. It was a great learning opportunity.

The Eligibility Unit participated in a training to increase the understanding of Human Trafficking and how to better serve this population. The training helped identify human trafficking situations and potential victims and how Archuleta County and communities across Colorado are responding to human trafficking. Many local and statewide anti-trafficking and victim support resources were shared.

The Resource Manager completed the Case Management training series for the Colorado Works Program. The training focused on two-generational approaches across a variety of human services programs. There were seven workshops that included:

- Case Management Coaching Workshop
- Case Management Advocacy & Resources
- Case Management Multi-Generational Approach
- Case Management Documentation
- Case Management Assessment
- Case Management Plan Development & Monitoring
- Case Management Training Assessment

Applications processed during this quarter:

	Adult Financial	Colorado Works	Expedited SNAP	SNAP	Medicaid
April	5	3	20	54	42
May	5	12	22	60	29
June	9	3	17	47	42

Redeterminations process during this quarter:

	Adult Financial	Colorado Works		SNAP	Medicaid
April	2	0		59	427
May	0	3		38	362
June	0	2		39	327

Fraud:

The fraud position has been filled. There are three pending investigations that will be worked as soon as the new worker is fully trained which will be completed by the first week of September. In the meantime, the Resource Manager is responsible for new fraud referrals and internal auditing.

Review of the Child Support Program:

Child support refers to payments made by the noncustodial parent to the custodial parent or a legal guardian to help with the costs of raising the child. Child support also includes other services — for example, help with obtaining health insurance — to ensure a child’s wellbeing.

ACDHS currently has two legal technicians that complete generalist tasks for all child support cases. They assess and review all of the financial situations of clients, making sure children are being provided for as stipulated in a legal settlement. They analyze financial statements, interview clients, attend court, manage reports, and perform some functions similar to that of a paralegal.

Although the majority of custodial parents are mothers, anyone with custody of a child can sign up for child support services (e.g., mother, father, grandparents, or legal guardian). A parent whose child does not live with them (or does not live with them the majority of the time) can apply for child support services to establish legal parentage.

People receiving assistance under the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program, Medicaid, and federally assisted foster care programs may be referred to the child support program for services. Any child support collected will be used to help support children, either going directly to the custodial parent, or to repay the state for your assistance grant.

If a parent who is required to cooperate with the state or local child support office because they receive public benefits, and they are afraid that cooperating with them may put them or their children at risk of physical or emotional harm from the other parent or party to the case, it's important to voice concern to their legal technician. Cooperation will not be required when a parent has good cause. The Director for DHS makes the final decision whether or not to grant good cause.

The child support office can help find the other parent to establish or enforce a child support obligation if they get enough information to work on the case effectively. The child support office doesn't routinely share contact information but may contact employers, courts, or other parties to locate the other parent.

Parentage and Paternity work hand in hand. In addition to providing a basis for child support payments, establishing parentage can provide important emotional and social ties between the other parent and their child.

When a child support order is finally established, the technicians have prepared what is fair by statute to both parents. All states have child support guidelines, a calculation of how much a parent should contribute to the child's financial support. States must use guidelines unless it's determined that doing so is not in the best interest of the child. The guidelines consider the child, other dependents, and the ability of the parents to pay.

TRAINING:

ACDHS legal technicians are required to attend ongoing training to enhance their ability to assist families working with child support services. Trainings attended in the second quarter of 2023 included:

Human Trafficking: discussed how to identify and resources available

Fire extinguisher training: learned different extinguishers and when to use, acronym PASS (pull, aim, spray, sweep) for putting out household fires

Document Generation work group: The automated child support documents are being updated to meet new Federal Statutes. Meet twice monthly to discuss and provide input to the changes necessary.

Community Partners meeting: CSS gave a presentation to other agencies giving the full procedure from of the beginning of a child support case to the child support court order including the child support guideline presentation.

Rise Above Violence: CSS is continually attending these meetings to receive the needed education to help our clients.

IV-D Regional Meeting was held in Alamosa County with 9 counties and the state office attending. Expired judgments, new medical calendar reviews, interstate procedures and erroneous tax offset were discussed.

CIS Summit: met with representatives from New Mexico, Arizona, Wyoming, Utah and various Colorado counties to discuss how best to handle interstate packets, establishments, modifications, payment processing and case closures.

CSS had 30 court actions before the court in the second quarter of 2023.

CSS collected \$65,281.30 for April 2023

CSS collected \$87,795.43 for May 2023

CSS collected \$61,368.57 for June 2023

Low-income Energy Assistance Program (LEAP):

The Colorado Low-income Energy Assistance Program (LEAP) is a federally funded program that helps eligible hard-working Colorado families, seniors and individuals pay a portion of their winter home heating costs. Our goal is to help bring warmth, comfort and safety to your home and family by assisting with heating costs.

Archuleta County received 152 applications January 1st- May 31st. There were 91 applications approved and 61 denied. From November 1st- May 31st, the Archuleta County LEAP program received 425 applications with 113 applications denied and 312 applications approved. The length of the LEAP season is November 1st through April 30th each year. There was an extension in 2023 and LEAP season ended May 31st, 2023.

Colorado Child Care Assistance Program (CCCAP):

There were 8 applications received for CCCAP this quarter. The new CCCAP technician has opened up great communication with local providers and started outreach to Quality Exempt providers. The goal is to create more communication throughout the community so families know more about CCCAP. One provider has been actively sending clients to apply for CCCAP. As of July 1st, 2023 CCCAP will no longer require referrals to Child Support enforcement which will allow more families to apply and possibly qualify for CCCAP. This program is drastically changing to meet the needs of families and children in Archuleta County.

During this quarter, ACDHS participated in a CCCAP County Monitoring Review. The purpose of the review was to ensure compliance with applicable federal laws, state statues, and Colorado Department of Early Childhood (CDEC) regulations for the Colorado Child Care Assistance Program, and to provide counties with the guidance, support, training, and tools needed to administer CCCAP at the county level.

During the review, it was recognized Archuleta County has experienced several staffing challenges, included vacancies in key positions and currently. During the review it was noted

that ACDHS had no back up eligibility staff member. The Director has completed the CCCAP training and is able to provide backup if needed. State CCCAP staff identified several areas of concern in processing PEAK applications, inconsistent application of CCCAP regulations, and inaccurate eligibility determinations that occurred prior to the current staff. ACDHS has new management and new staff that have started to initiate processes for case management, case data entry, and documentation. A formal process will be put in place to share information across programs or research shared information for other programs (CBMS access).

Child Welfare:

During this quarter, the Colorado Human Services Director's Association adopted a vision statement and a set of values to advance race equity in Child Welfare.

CHSDA Vision Statement to Advance Race Equity in Child Welfare:

Colorado families have equal opportunity to access services, resources, and supports to ensure they are thriving and safe within their communities. A family's cultural beliefs, traditions, or customs are strengths. The child welfare system will support those families in need of child welfare intervention. Race, ethnicity, and poverty have no adverse impact on any family becoming engaged with, nor their experience within, the child welfare system.

CHSDA Values to advance Race Equity in Child Welfare:

Courage: We acknowledge the high-stakes/high-impact nature of our work with families. We have the courage to name and address inequities, shift the power balance, and drive system-wide change.

Relationships: We prioritize people and connections. We lead with grace, vulnerability, acceptance, openness and kindness. We choose to be person-centered and family-focused.

Commitment: We commit to bringing hope, meaning and purpose in working with families and communities.

Inclusion: We strive to cultivate belonging, growth, and opportunities for meaningful engagement that reflect the diversity of our communities. We commit to intentional engagement that honors the dignity of families and communities.

Service: We believe families deserve the least intrusive interventions. We commit to intentional, kind, quality support delivered with consistency and respect.

Accountability: We value integrity, shared responsibility and accountability for achieving equitable impact for communities most harmed by Child Welfare system involvement. We believe in truth-telling, reconciliation, and repairing trust.

Resources: We believe, collectively, there should be enough opportunity, resources, knowledge, and support for all families as we work together to shift power and resources across all communities to achieve system-wide change.

Families: We value the experience and perspectives of families and communities. We acknowledge the profound impact that involvement in the system has on individuals, families, and communities.

Child Welfare Assessments:

DHS received 53 reports of abuse and neglect and for the 2st quarter:

- 21 reports received in April
- 19 reports received in May
- 13 reports received in June as of 06/27/2023
- 27 reports were screened in for assessment/investigation. Approximately 30 children involved.

Dependency and Neglect Cases

There were 5 active dependency and neglect cases open in the 2nd quarter.

Non-court involved cases

The department has 9 voluntary cases open that provide families with a range of services. The department continues to work proactively to prevent child maltreatment by providing services early and to remove barriers and stressors to decrease the likelihood of abuse or neglect.

Child Welfare News:

During this quarter, child welfare staff paid special attention to trainings describing substance exposed newborns and children exposed to fentanyl in the home. Preliminary data and anecdotal information indicate that substance use is a complicating factor for children and families in the Colorado Child Welfare system. However, the prevalence and impact of substance use in child welfare cases and outcomes for families is not well understood. ACDHS child welfare caseworkers are part of a workgroup started this quarter to better understand the impact of substance use on child welfare outcomes for children, youth and families in Colorado including examination of possible racial and ethnic disproportionality.

Colorado Regulations related to referrals from the child welfare program to the child support program changed this quarter. Child Welfare will no longer be required to refer families to child support services. They will have the option to do this in cases in which it makes sense financially. Child Support Services will no longer have to spend time working cases that are likely non-successful in outcome. Families will be more likely to reach permanency using the resources they have in order to reunify with their children. County Child welfare professionals will experience an increase in time spent reviewing cases to determine if a referral is appropriate. County child support professionals will experience a reduction in time spent trying to enforce foster care child support orders. This will allow more time to be invested in providing referrals to community resources and enforcing orders in which the obligor has the ability to pay.

An Example of Hard Work and Challenges in Child Welfare:

ACDHS child welfare staff worked with a family over the last several months and ran into several obstacles.

There was a youth who had been suffering from mental health symptoms for several years. Many situations occurred that placed the youth at risk as well as the siblings in the home. Parents opened a voluntary child welfare case to receive assistance with the process of helping their child

seek appropriate mental health treatment. The process was a bit difficult to navigate because the child was not in ACDHS's custody; the youth was still in parent's custody.

The Colorado Department of Child Welfare has heavily requested that County Human Services Departments use the least restrictive placement for children at risk of out of home placement. In this case, ACDHS staff worked closely with the parents to work through the process of finding a clinical service provider that could assist the youth with a nurturing approach. Since the child was not in ACDHS custody, Health First Colorado (Medicaid) was the first option to request payment for care needed. The first step was to request a meeting with our Regional Accountable Entity (RAE) and an ombudsman. The RAE is responsible for coordinating members' care, ensuring they are connecting with primary and behavioral health care, and developing regional strategies to serve Medicaid Members. The Ombudsman is independent from the state and county agencies and works on behalf of children and families to resolve health care access and coverage issues.

An evaluation was completed for the youth and it was determined that the youth met the criteria for a higher level of care; a treatment facility was found in another State. There was absolutely nothing available in Colorado. In the meantime, the child was placed in-patient at Children's Hospital in Denver, Colorado due a psychiatric episode.

Once ACDHS and the family met with the RAE and reviewed the evaluation conducted by a professional with the state of Colorado, Medicaid determined that they were going to deny the request and stated that the youth did not meet the criteria for a higher level of care, despite the fact that the child had been placed in-patient at Children's Hospital in Denver just weeks prior. The RAE would not accept the independent evaluation by a licensed clinical social worker/therapist with a PhD. This meant there was no funding to ensure the youth had the appropriate level of care.

Archuleta County held several meetings with the RAE and the ombudsman in an attempt to gather all the documentation that they were requesting for an appeal. The parents of the child filed two appeals and they were denied twice. The case is waiting to be reviewed by an Administrative Law Judge.

When ACDHS questioned the RAE regarding medical necessity, they indicated residential treatment could have been paid for through child welfare if ACDHS would have taken custody instead of Medicaid; the independent evaluation would have been accepted at that time. This contradicts everything counties are told in regards to not taking custody when it is not warranted and work with parents to find a least restrictive placement.

It is clear that work needs to be done in order to align Department of Child Welfare medical necessity and Health First Colorado Medical necessity.

It is hard to accept that the system is so hard to navigate when a child/youth needs mental health care. If a child/youth is taken into the emergency room and diagnosed with cancer, the care is immediately addressed based on the need. The same is not true on the mental health side. Our state is seeing very young suicidal and homicidal children, which is unthinkable. They are very hard to place into any treatment facility, yet do not belong in foster care through child welfare. Some counties are forced to keep these children in their offices due to the lack of treatment facilities. Caseworkers around the state are paid to provide 24-hour supervision at DHS buildings

for these children or stay in a hotel with them. ACDHS staff will continue to participate in workgroups that address the needs for high acuity youth (children/youth without placement).

Adult Protective Services

ACDHS received 18 Adult Protective Service (APS) referrals for the 2nd quarter. Of those 18 referrals 6 referrals were screened in and opened for services. There are five cases that carried over from the previous quarter for a total of 11 open cases in the 2nd quarter. One case was closed during the 2nd quarter. Of the 10 current open cases, one resulted in ACDHS taking guardianship and conservatorship of an at-risk elder due to the severity of the mistreatment.

Adult Protective Services does not receive a large allocation. It has been difficult in the past to cross-train child welfare workers with APS due to limitations with funding. However, this quarter ACDHS was able to charge training costs to a small grant. There are now three child welfare caseworkers crossed trained in Adult Protective Services, along with three certified supervisors. Last year at this time there was only one APS supervisor and one newly trained APS caseworker.