Minnesota Association of County Social Service Administrators

2011 Legislative Initiatives

Minnesota counties recognize the budgetary challenges that face our State Legislature in the coming 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 dramatically improve efficiency and effectiveness. It is a critical component to creating a more sustainable human services system. MACSSA recommends:

- Authorizing statewide expansion of the successful Hennepin County pilot allowing Medical Assistance, Minnesota Supplemental Aid, Food Support, and Group Residential Housing recipients to complete a 1-page annual renewal form in lieu of the extensive renewal documentation currently required. Requiring comprehensive renewal forms is inefficient when recipients of these programs are unlikely to experience changes in their physical or income circumstances. In addition, the initiative must be expanded to include other populations who share these characteristics.
- Streamlining income and asset guidelines and budget process across health care and economic assistance programs to reduce complexity for state and county staff and provide a more transparent system for clients.
- Aligning overpayment determinations for the General Assistance, Minnesota Supplemental Aid and Food Support programs with the Minnesota Family Investment program 1 year look back period to simplify program administration and prevent error.
- Providing automatic eligibility for Medical Assistance once Minnesota Family Investment Program or Diversionary Work Program Eligibility is established. Requiring an additional application is duplicative where clients who meet the income and asset guidelines for these programs will qualify for Medical Assistance.
- Clarifying the eligibility status and temporary absence provisions for Medical Assistance clients who live outside the state or country. Substantial amounts of state revenue that is currently utilized by clients who reside out of the state for long periods of time could be redirected to provide for citizens who primarily reside in Minnesota.
- Enabling counties and health plans to present information about managed care enrollment to MN Health Care Program recipients in alternative formats to reduce costs and client confusion.
- 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.
- Assuring counties maintain the ability to establish contracts with the private sector to broker transportation services.

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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:

- Designating the Children & Community Services Act block grant to provide state financial support to county adult and child protection programs. Designated funding will promote accountability and transparency and identify these services as a core state-county function.

- 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.

- Authorizing medical in-reach care coordination as a medical service reimbursable by MinnesotaCare, Medical Assistance, and private insurance.

- Providing counties an equivalent level of tort protection to that of the state for child care licensing functions.

- Assuring the Commissioner of Human Services has equal opportunity at debt recovery based on a first claimed/first paid basis.

- Establishing pilot projects to align the resources and services of the Diversionary Work Program (DWP) more closely with the Unemployment Insurance (UI) program rather than the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program.

Investments in Technology

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

- Reprogramming PRISM and MAXIS to automatically apply child support payments to a case.

- Reprogramming the Social Services Information System (SSIS) to directly interface with managed care electronic billing systems.

- Facilitating implementation of electronic verification for county and state staff determining and reviewing eligibility for health care, economic assistance, food support, child support, and child care programs.

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

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