Department of Social Services

FY 2023 Operating/Program Review Responses Summary

STAFFING

- The Department continues to experience employee retention and recruitment challenges. The Department identifies "*the non-competitiveness of salaries compared to the rest of the metropolitan region, limitations on the ability to offer remote work options for many of our positions, and the large number of limited-term grant-funded positions that do not offer fringe benefit packages that make positions enticing*." As of November 2022, the was able to reduce the number of vacancies from 130 in FY 2022 to 72. Based on November 2022 data, the Department's overall vacancy rate is 28.1%.

- The Department reports that employee salaries are not competitive with the local market when taking into account set skills and experience, and County's employees generally get paid 30% less than their counterparts in other jurisdictions. The Department has implemented a range of initiatives seeking to increase the parity without altering compensation scale.

- The Department hired a human resources manager and a human resources assistant manager to aid the Department with employee hiring, recruitment, and retention.

WORKLOAD DEMANDS & PROGRAM MANAGEMENT

- The American Rescue Plan (ARP) Act spending recommendations (adopted CR-067-2021) for the Department of Social Services in FY 2022 was $3.0 million and another $5.0 million in FY 2023 for the homeless shelter/warm nights program. The ARP funds were dedicated to the acquisition/development and operations of a permanent facility for the Warm Nights program, which was set to return to the pre-COVID-19 capacity as the COVID-19 Non-Congregate Shelter is phased out.

  - The Department reports that based on the market cost analysis by the Office of Central Services, the Department requested and received approval to reallocate the $3.0 million from shelter operations to acquisition/development of a permanent facility.

  - The Department closed its COVID-19 isolation/quarantine shelter response on June 30, 2022 and began efforts to reduce the non-congregate sheltering (NCS) of persons experiencing homelessness.

  - To date, the Department was able to reduce the notal number of the NCS operations from 149 rooms to approximately 63 rooms. The onset of winter and anticipated increases in "new arrivals" may challenge the Department's ability to continue decreasing the NCS.

  - The Department was anticipating having recommendations for a permanent facility for the permanent Warm Nights facility by mid-November 2022.

  - The proposed capacity is 65-75 beds, which would restore the Warm Nights program to the pre-COVID level. Additional beds to address the need for shelter beds are a consideration in the site selection process.

- In response to explain "*how the need for shelter beds is being met while the COVID-19 Non-Congregate Shelter program ended and the permanent facility for the warm nights program is not up and running yet*", the Department noted that it was able "*to use a one-time allocation of emergency housing vouchers to help support the transition of 139 homeless households into permanent subsidized housing in partnership with the Housing Authority*". The remaining households have significant barriers to housing (no and extremely low income, lack of documentation, extremely poor credit histories, history of multiple evictions, severe behavioral and somatic health needs).

- Overall, the Department anticipates the number of households and individuals in demand for shelter to increase. Pre-COVID shelter turn away rate was 40%, and with lack of appropriate care beds, increased court processing of evictions, drastically rising market rent rates and the onset of the hypothermic season, the demand for shelter will increase.

- The Department anticipates completing the development of a new Strategic Plan to Prevent and End Homelessness (an update to the Ten-year Plan to Prevent and End Homelessness in Prince George's County 2012-2021) by June, 2023. The Department has outlined several critical elements of the strategic planning process, which includes:

    - A regional racial equity analysis in partnership with the Washington Metropolitan Council of Governments, C4 Innovations and nine area jurisdictions;

    - Establishment of a workgroup composed of residents with lived experience and expertise to assess policies, procedures and programs and make recommendations;

    - A community planning process to develop goals and objectives specifically targeting the reduction of unsheltered homelessness among residents with severe service needs;

    - An analysis of existing health and behavioral health systems and identification of opportunities to improve access by the homeless; and

    - Provider and consumer focus groups targeting underserved sub-populations including the Latino/a community to understand barriers to access.

    The Department is also working to secure a federal technical assistance partner to lead the larger community engagement and strategic planning process.

- It has been previously reported that foster youth with behavioral health concerns have experienced "hospital overstays" due to the challenges in finding appropriate placement options. The Department reports that this issue remains because "*there are no residential treatment facilities and/or crisis beds for youth in the County and many youth have been rejected from every group home available in the State due to the complexities of their service needs. Out of state placements are limited, costly, and our youth remain on waiting lists for extended periods of time due to lack of vacancies*".

- As a part of the Crisis Intervention Public Schools program, the Department provides crisis intervention and case management in 20 middle schools. Each school is assigned one advocate from the Department. There are currently 15 advocates, five (5) vacant positions, and three (3) supervisors.

Community Programs Division

Community Programs Division: Homeless Services

- "***An emergency shelter*** *is any facility with overnight sleeping accommodations, the primary purpose of which is to provide **temporary** shelter for the homeless in general or for specific populations of the homeless*." The Department reports that there are currently five (5) facilities, excluding the COVID NCS temporary shelter, operating 191 emergency beds for individuals, youth and families. There are additional 43 emergency beds for persons fleeing domestic violence and at imminent risk of harm. According to the Department, last year the Homeless Hotline received 15,837 calls for shelter, the daily emergency bed capacity was 191 beds, and a total of 1,342 homeless residents were served.

- "***Rapid rehousing*** *is a form of permanent housing that is short-term (up to three months) and/or medium term (for three to twelve months) tenant-based rental assistance as necessary to help a homeless individual or family move as quickly as possible into permanent housing and achieve stability in that housing*." The Department reports that there are currently two (2) HUD programs providing rapid re-housing in the County. Last year these programs served 257 people (or 19.1% of 1,342 residents in the shelter system).

- "***Permanent supportive housing*** *is community-based housing for persons experiencing homelessness with severe service needs and has no designated length of stay*." The Department reports that there are currently 14 permanent supportive housing programs in the County, operating a total of 319 beds. In FY 2022, the Department provided permanent supportive housing for 232 households (382 individuals). The Department further reports that "*the County currently has more than 200 households that meet the eligibility criteria for permanent supportive housing (PSH) and cannot be served with the existing housing inventory. This does not take into account the 60% turn away rate which, if using a "served" population service rate proxy, could account for an additional 300+ homeless households that are eligible for and need PSH at any given time*".

Community Programs Division: Crisis Assistance Services

- In response to the request to "*provide workload indicators and performance metrics for FY 2022 for the Department's **crisis assistance utilities program**. Please include the number of applicants, the number of qualifying applicants (who actually received assistance), the level/amount of the provided assistance*" the following information was obtained:

  - the number of applicants: 10,109 in FY 2022

  - the number of qualifying applicants (who actually received assistance): no data

  - the level/amount of the provided assistance: no data

- In response to the request to "*provide workload indicators and performance metrics for FY 2022 for the Department's **crisis assistance food services**. Please include the number of applicants, the number of qualifying applicants (who actually received assistance), the level/amount of the provided assistance*" the following information was obtained:

  - the number of applicants: no data

  - the number of qualifying applicants (who actually received assistance): 1,935 households received food assistance

–   the level/amount of the provided assistance: 77,463 pounds of food distributed in FY 2022

Community Programs Division: Maryland Market Money

▪   The total number of transactions eligible for Maryland Market Money at eight (8) participating County markers was reported to be 4,772 for FY 2022. The value of Maryland Market Money funds distributed in FY 2022 was $61,669, of which $51,848 has been redeemed.

Community Programs Division: Special initiatives

▪   All six (6) housing projects under the Department's Youth Homelessness Demonstration Program (YHDP) were launched in FY 2022 and are fully operational. No new YHDP are planned for FY 2023.

▪   The Department's Pay for Success Demonstration Program has been suspended as the funding from the DOJ/HUD is not available.

▪   The Department's Low Income Household Water Assistance Program has been fully executed: all available funds have been expended, application intake was suspended in July of 2022, and in November of 2022 the Department has submitted a request for additional funds as the State is expected to reallocate funds from under-performing jurisdictions.

Child, Adult and Family Services Division

Child, Adult and Family Services Division: Adult Protective Services

▪   A total of 859 adult protective service allegations have been investigated by the Department in FY 2022. 93% of the cases have been reviewed within 60 days. Information on investigation findings was not provided.

Child, Adult and Family Services Division: Child Protective Services

▪   A total of 3,450 child abuse and neglect allegations have been screened in the Department in FY 2022 for Child Protective Services (CPS) response. 99% of the cases have been reviewed within 60 days. Information on investigation findings was not reported.

Child, Adult and Family Services Division: Family Preservation Services

▪   In-Home Family Preservation services have been provided, on average, to 81 families on a monthly basis in FY 2022.

Child, Adult and Family Services Division: Foster Care

▪   In FY 2022, the Department had 485 children committed to its care.

▪   In FY 2022, the Department had 120 licensed resource homes, and 36 new homes were licensed in FY 2022.

▪   In FY 2022, 37 youth (7% of all youth in care) aged out/emancipated out of care.

▪   Fourteen adoptions were finalized in FY 2022.

▪   95.9% of children were visited monthly in FY 2022.

▪   Not all youth in Department's care are appropriate for traditional foster care. The Department reported that "*The majority of youth who need placement are youth 13 years and older and some have a criminal history… Many of these older youth present with needs that Department resource*

parents are not able to address, and they are then placed with treatment foster care agencies. In 2021, more than 50% of children entering care were placed in higher level placements".

Child, Adult and Family Services Division: Policy, Practice and Ready by 21

▪ Performance metrics submitted were identical to the foster care statistics presented above.

Family Investment Administration Division

Family Investment Administration Division:

▪ In response to the FY 2023 Operating/Program Review Question Number 17, the Department provided indicators for: the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program; the Temporary Cash Assistance; the Temporary Disability Assistance Program; the Medicaid, or Medical Assistance, Program; the Public Assistance to Adults Program; and the Emergency Assistance to Families with Children Program.

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

▪ The Department has hired a new information technology manager and has been able to realize a range of IT improvements.

▪ The Department reported that the State-wide MD THINK platform has "*significant Statewide challenges that are currently driving a large increase in customer complaints that are very concerning to the Department*". Most complaints are driven by the errors in the Eligibility and Enrollment component of the MD THINK, which "*causes delays and incorrect automated case decisions*".