

**Human Services Department Report to County Board  
November 2016**

**ADMINISTRATION**

Office Moves

Work on the remodeling and addition to the Health & Human Services (HHS) Building is nearing completion. A few staff have moved to their permanent locations in the existing remodeled building. Staff office moves into the new addition are anticipated to begin in early November with all moves completed for HHS by mid-December. We look forward to this change and expanded space and sincerely appreciate the support of this project.

**ECONOMIC SUPPORT**

Consortium Turnover

A previous study showed the statewide turnover rate for Economic Support Specialists at 29%. Western Region for Economic Assistance (WREA) continues to experience a high turnover rate. Given the lengthy certification training that new employees must complete before they can be on the job, WREA has been down up to 16 positions throughout 2016. A joint meeting of Consortia Leads and Department of Health Services (DHS) staff continues, to both explore ways to increase staff retention and adjust training and operations to what the state refers to as the 'new normal'. DHS will be developing a video that can be posted on county websites to provide a more accurate and realistic picture of what an Economic Support Specialist position involves. The position has changed significantly, with 75% - 80% of an Economic Support Specialist's time spent providing services by phone. DHS will also be changing the certification training requirements for Income Maintenance. Instead of requiring new employees to be trained on all public assistance programs, there's a plan to only require completion of training on programs the employee will administer. The planning group continues to explore other ideas, as does WREA's Board of Directors.

MyWICChildCare Pilot Update

As part of the MyWICChildCare Electronic Benefit (EBT) initiative, all licensed or certified daycare providers must sign a contract with the state's EBT vendor to continue participating in the Wisconsin Shares Child Care subsidy program after October 1, 2016. WREA staff are responsible for providing outreach to providers to offer assistance with signing the contract online. WREA staff are also busy converting all Child Care subsidy cases from the current system to the new EBT Child Care Statewide Administration on Web (CSAW) system, which must be complete by September 15, 2016. Once implemented, MyWICChildCare will transition provider payments from being issued directly to the provider to participants receiving the subsidy payments on an EBT card and being responsible for managing and paying their daycare provider directly. Since subsidy payments will be issued at the beginning of the month, before care is provided, the policies around authorizing child care are also changing.

**INTEGRATED SUPPORT & RECOVERY SERVICES (ISRS)**

Suicide Prevention Summit

Wisconsin's suicide rate is higher than the national average, and our region's suicide rate is higher than the state average. La Crosse County was one of the agencies that helped sponsor the September 21<sup>st</sup> Suicide Prevention Summit in La Crosse. Over 200 individuals from across the region/state gathered to enhance skills and strategies to decrease the number of individuals who end their lives via suicide.

**AGING & DISABILITY RESOURCE CENTER (ADRC)**

Funding

The primary funder for the Aging services, Greater Wisconsin Area Agency on Aging (GWAAR), is providing training on a national model/trend that is encouraged to be utilized in Wisconsin. This business acumen concept encourages Aging Units to begin contracting to provide services beyond the typical/historic scope (but within the current service array) of the program to new payer sources in order to generate additional revenue that can be used to enhance/maintain the Older American's Act programs that are offered locally. We are providing initial discussions to our committees as we learn more about how this could impact our services/work.

## Funding

On Wednesday, September 28, Congress passed a short-term (10 week) funding bill to keep the federal government funded through December 9, 2016. The end of the federal fiscal year was September 30, 2016, so this short term “continuing resolution” was needed to allow federally funded programs, such as our Older Americans Act (OAA) funded services, to continue functioning/receiving funding until a final FY 2017 budget is completed. This continuing resolution funds our OAA services and other aging programs at FY 2016 levels minus 0.5% in order to keep the funding below the budget cap established for FY 2017 in last year’s bipartisan Budget Agreement. After the November election, the House and Senate are expected to restart talks on a final FY 2017 federal budget.

## Planning

Our regional Aging and Disability Resource Center (ADRC) of Western Wisconsin serves Jackson, La Crosse, Monroe and Vernon Counties. As each county is exploring its current and preferred options for ADRC/Aging service integration we are, as a group, meeting frequently to understand the impact and planning needs for our ADRC region. The aging-related changes, coupled with significant changes in ADRC contract requirements, have caused us to reassess the costs and benefits to La Crosse County of both delivering these services regionally and our existing regional model.

Currently, the ADRC is under one contract, held by La Crosse, to provide ADRC services to the four county area in a consistent manner as outlined in the contract. Aging services are funded by contracts between Greater Wisconsin Agency on Aging Resources (GWAAR) and each individual county. Each of our four counties has its own Aging Unit, which functions based on their county’s service needs, whether they choose to directly provide services versus contracting for services, methods of marketing, etc. When an Aging Unit and ADRC integrate, they take the name “Aging and Disability Resource Center” and are required to use a unified marketing approach, location, website, etc.

The need to be planful as we make key decisions about the future of services and partnerships in this area is important as it affects greatly how the public accesses/finds services and needed assistance. There are upcoming meetings with the Directors from our partner counties (mid-month and end of month) where these issues will be discussed. We will keep the Health & Human Services Board up to date as discussions continue.

## **FAMILY & CHILDREN’S**

### PS Program On-Site Review

The Post-reunification Services (PS) program through the Department of Children & Families (DCF) continues to provide the necessary resources to enable families to successfully reunify. Between June 1, 2016 and August 31, 2016 we successfully reunified 20 children and youth that were all eligible and enrolled in the PS program. During that period we had 70 children/youth that were eligible to be enrolled in the program; however, for 50 of those children reunification was not possible due to unresolved safety and treatment issues for their parents.

In September, we participated in a site visit and evaluation of the PS program. A principal researcher from The Children and Family Research Center with the School of Social Work at the University of Illinois and a Federal program monitor conducted focus groups and feedback sessions with Family and Children’s Section leadership and staff. This is the second site visit we were selected to participate in during the past four years of PS program participation. The researcher appreciated our participation and indicated they gathered valuable information that may help shape the remaining two years of the program here in Wisconsin.

### Foster Care Recruitment

On September 29, 2016 the Permanency Resource Unit participated in the Oktoberfest Torch Light Parade as a recruitment effort. The theme of our entry in the parade was “La Crosse County Foster Care; Become an Everyday Hero!” Invitations to participate in the parade were sent out to current foster parents, youth, and county workers and together approximately 30 people walked in the parade. A bright banner was held that stated “La Crosse County Foster Care” followed by a brightly lit van and many children and adults dressed in glow sticks handing out candy. It was an exciting night and 500 cards were distributed among the crowd encouraging people to consider becoming foster parents for La Crosse County.

## **JUSTICE SUPPORT SERVICES (JSS)**

### CORE Academy

Community Option for Re-Engagement (CORE) Academy is currently at capacity with 8 youth placed in the program. Four of these clients are La Crosse County residents and four are out-of-county residents. This not only brings in revenue for out of county placements, but also a cost savings from high cost placement for our La Crosse clients. David Steinberg recently marketed the program at the Wisconsin Juvenile Court Intake Association (WJCIA) Conference and has had numerous inquiries from other counties in potential placements, resulting in a potential wait list for the program.

### Evidence Based Decision Making Initiative

Wisconsin was once again chosen to enter Phase VI of the Evidence Based Decision Making (EBDM) initiative through the National Institute of Corrections (NIC). La Crosse is one of eight sites that will benefit from this continued technical assistance from NIC.