
TO: The Honorable Chairman and Members of the Board of County Commissioners

THROUGH: Robert S. LaSala 
Pinellas County Administrator

FROM: Gwendolyn C. Warren 
Bureau Director, Health and Human Services

SUBJECT: Health and Human Services Action Items

DATE: May 17, 2012

BACKGROUND

At our Department workshop in January, we prepared an overview of our Department which centered on four major initiatives: enhanced data-driven decisions through technology, integrated health care delivery system, leveraging resources to reduce the cost of care, and re-organizing the Department through strengthened community partnerships. In order to effectively implement these initiatives and to meet the Board's strategic direction, the Department had to take an inventory of its current programs and focus its resources on those that provide the most valuable service for our clients. While the Department of Health and Human Services has always served those most in need in Pinellas County, our current emphasis is to aid individuals in becoming fully self-sufficient and/or receive any state or federal benefits they may be entitled to. At the January workshop, the Board indicated tentative support for our proposed program changes, but asked that we revisit these items at a later date.

SUMMARY

In order to improve our delivery model and better align our Department with the Board's strategic focus areas, the Department of Health and Human Services reviewed its current list of services and identified a core set of programs and services that will help achieve the Department's goals of self-sufficiency and improved health outcomes for our clients. The process of restructuring the Department is crucial in being able to provide quality services to county residents. We are intently focused on increasing available resources to improve service delivery, empower staff, and eliminate costly duplication in the system.

RECOMMENDATION

Attached are program recommendations for your consideration. We selected to eliminate these programs because they do not fit the core mission of the Department. We recognize the importance of these programs, however, and have identified alternate organizations to manage the service delivery in the upcoming fiscal year. We believe that by focusing on our core services, we can maximize and improve the service delivery level of the Department and improve the efficiency of our operations.

ATTACHMENTS

- Emergency Home Energy Assistance for the Elderly Program
- Indigent Burial and Cremation Program
- Summer Food Service Program

Emergency Home Energy Assistance for the Elderly Program

The Emergency Home Energy Assistance for the Elderly Program provides financial assistance to low-income seniors experiencing a home energy emergency. Payments are for home heating or cooling and other emergency energy-related costs during the heating (October to March) and cooling (April to September) seasons. The funding for this program originates with the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, in partnership with the State of Florida Department of Elder Affairs, and administered through the Area Agency on Aging of Pasco-Pinellas, which contracts locally with Pinellas County Department of Health and Human Services to provide this service.

Community Unmet Need: Assists low-income seniors with their heating and cooling costs. Program enables low-income seniors to remain in their homes by providing assistance with their energy needs.

Target Population: Low-income seniors, age 60 and older

Services Provided:

- Heating and cooling assistance during the season
- Vouchers to purchase blankets, portable heaters and fans
- Pay for repairs to existing heating or cooling equipment or for reconnection fees

Total Program Budget Fiscal Year 2011: \$465,490

Intended Programmatic Outcomes:

- Enable low-income seniors to remain in their homes by assisting with their heating and cooling costs
- Maximize the number of low-income seniors that can be assisted with these funds

Emergency Home Energy Assistance for the Elderly Program Activity

	FY 10	FY 11
Total Number of Clients Served	1,117	933
Total Benefit Distributed	\$150,000	\$465,490
Average Benefit Amount Per Client	\$134	\$499

*Estimate: Households include duplication, as they may receive service in each season.

Recommendations: The Emergency Home Energy Assistance for the Elderly Program provides heating and cooling assistance during the winter and summer seasons including vouchers to help purchase blankets, fans, or portable heaters and payments for repairs to existing heating and cooling equipment. After reviewing the services, the Department found that the program

does not align with our target population or our strategic direction. This is currently the only program for the elderly and we believe that there are other agencies in the community who work specifically with the elderly population and who could benefit from adding this program to their repertoire of services. In January, Health and Human Services recommended to the Board that we work closely with the Area Agency on Aging of Pinellas-Pasco to identify a more appropriate agency to transfer the program to.

Status: Since January, we have been in discussions with the Area Agency on Aging of Pinellas-Pasco to transfer the program to the Pinellas Opportunity Council. The Department of Health and Human Services will operate the program through the end of the cooling season and then appropriately transition the program to the Pinellas Opportunity Council in October.

Indigent Burial and Cremation Program

The Indigent Burial and Cremation Program is a state mandated program that requires Florida counties to make appropriate arrangements for the disposition of indigent and unclaimed citizens. This service is provided through a contract with A Life Tribute Funeral Care.

Community Unmet Need: State mandate to provide disposition of remains services for indigent and unclaimed citizens.

Target Population: Indigent and unclaimed bodies

Services Provided:

- Payment for the cremation of indigent and unclaimed bodies and for the scattering of the cremated remains
- Payment for removal fees and transportation to the nearest National Cemetery for honorably discharged veterans

Total Program Budget Fiscal Year 2011: \$280,000

Intended Programmatic Outcome:

- To provide appropriate disposition of indigent and unclaimed bodies in accordance with Chapter 245 of Florida Statutes.

Indigent Burial and Cremations Program Activity

	FY 10	FY 11
Total Number of Clients Served	759	710
Total Cost of Program	280,000	\$280,000
Average Cost Per Client	\$369	\$394

Recommendation: The Indigent Burial and Cremation Program provides payment for the cremation of indigent and unclaimed bodies and the scattering of the remains. While this service is required under Florida Statute, it does not align with the Department’s strategic direction and recommended to the Board in January that the program be transferred to a more appropriate agency. At the time, we suggested that the Medical Examiner could absorb this program since they are already dealing with this population. But, the Medical Examiner has indicated that this service does not fall under the statutory mandate/authority as an independent Medical Examiner. He is not in favor of having this service reside within his office.

Status: The Department of Health and Human Services reviewed how other counties comply with the State statute and recommends that we outsource the entire program to a private organization.

Summer Food Service Program

The Summer Food Service Program is a federal nutrition program that local non-profits and schools use to make sure kids in their communities don't go hungry during the summer. It provides free, nutritionally balanced meals that meet USDA guidelines to low income children at eligible sites within Pinellas County during the summer months when school is not in session.

Community Unmet Need: Many low-income families rely on free or reduced-price lunches to feed their children during the school day. In the summer, with school out of session, there isn't an opportunity to ensure that the children are being fed and oftentimes, not enough money to provide these meals at home. In 1975, The United States Department of Agriculture created the Summer Food Service Program to ensure that these low-income children are getting the nutrition they need when school is out.

Target Population: States approve meal sites as open, enrolled, or camp sites:

- Open sites operate in low-income areas where at least half of the children come from families with incomes at or below 185 percent of the Federal poverty level, making them eligible for free and reduced-price school meals. Meals are served free to any child at the open site.
- Enrolled sites provide free meals to children enrolled in an activity program at the site where at least half of them are eligible for free and reduced-price meals.
- Camps may also participate in the program. They receive payments only for the meals served to children who are eligible for free and reduced-price meals.

Services Provided:

- Lunch and an afternoon snack are provided to each child daily at eligible sites

Intended Programmatic Outcome:

- To feed as many children at as many eligible sites in Pinellas County as possible.

Total Program Budget Fiscal Year 2011: \$500,000

- The State Department of Education reimburses providers \$2.98 per lunch for food costs and 26 cents per lunch for administrative/delivery costs, for a total reimbursement of \$3.24 per lunch.
- The Department of Education reimburses providers 69 cents per snack for food costs and 7 cents per snack administrative/delivery costs, for a total reimbursement of 76 cents per snack.
- Unspent funds are rolled over to the next fiscal year

Summer Food Service Program Activity

	FY 10	FY 11
Total Number of Children Served	107,800	101,819
Total Number of Sites	58	62
Total number of snacks served	100,005	102,055
Total number of lunches served	107,654	99,122
Total days of operation	40	40
Average cost per lunch	\$2.70	\$2.75
Average cost per snack	\$.67	\$.68

Recommendations: While this program has been run by the Department of Health and Human Services for over 20 years, we do not believe it aligns with the mission of the organization. The goals of the Summer Food Service Program, while important, do not align with the target population or strategic direction of the Department. In January, we recommended to the Board that we no longer operate the program. There is no legal mandate for Health and Human Services to operate this program – it is a state run program through the Department of Education. In order to move forward with our plans, we would need to officially notify the state Education Department that we would like to de-enroll as a sponsor.

Status: Health and Human Services has been in discussions with the state Department of Education to notify them that we would like to de-enroll as a sponsor. The Department of Education has been advised that upon Commission approval of our recommendation, summer 2012 will be the last summer the County will operate the program.