

OVERVIEW OF ECONOMIC SUPPORT PROGRAMS

Beginning with 2006, we became a subcontractor for a portion of the W-2 program. Arbor E & T was awarded the contract to be the administrative agency for 2006-2007 and they contracted with us to administer the child day care program. The program remained relatively stable compared to 2005 going from an average monthly caseload of 212 per month to 219 in 2006. There will be significant changes to the program in 2007 because statewide it is running a \$46 million deficit in the first year of the 2 year contract. The first changes that we will see are an 8% increase in the parent co-payments and payment reductions to providers for under utilization. Under utilization is a big problem in the program and occurs when children do not attend day care as scheduled. The centers prefer to be paid a weekly rate whether a child attends all day every day or does not. So, we authorize the enrollment for the weekly rate but later the child only goes 2 days a week because maybe a relative wants to care for the child a few days a week. In the past, the provider was still entitled to the weekly rate. Under the changed rule, the provider will only be paid for the hours that the child is actually at the center. Since these changes will negatively impact both the parents and the providers, we expect to field many complaint calls.

The Medicaid Program continued its growth throughout 2006 closing out the year at 3,833 recipients compared to 3,727 at the end of 2005. The current caseload is more than double the size it was at the end of 2000 and nearly triple the case count at the end of 1998. In the last year, all of the growth has occurred in the family-type cases, not the elderly and disabled.

The FoodShare Program (formerly Food Stamps) also increased in 2006. The average monthly caseload was 632 in 2005 and increased to 718 in 2006. New cases open and some cases close so that during the year, we served 1142 separate households, up from 1022 in 2005. Total benefits increased \$219,756 from \$1,128,744 to \$1,348,500.

In the spring of 2006, we implemented a new system called the Electronic Case File. Historically, we maintained an extensive paper case record system. With ECF, we electronically scan and index documents that we previously copied and placed in our case files. Scanned documents are transmitted via the Internet to central storage on the state's mainframe in Madison. We are scanning all new cases and converting existing open cases. For currently open cases, we scan only the last 14 months of activity so we still need to retain the paper record for all activity older than 14 months. We made excellent progress during 2006 scanning about half of our cases. ECF has given the State the advantage of having easy access to case records so that the number of cases being reviewed by Quality Assurance and several special project teams has increased dramatically. We find ourselves spending much more time answering their questions and disputing error findings by State staff.

In February of 2006, we added the newly created position of Economic Support Intake Specialist to our unit. After watching our caseloads double and then triple over the years without adding staff, this new position was greatly welcomed and has made a very positive, significant impact on managing the workload in the Economic Support Unit. We are now processing the first step of the application process through one central location and phone number which benefits applicants and referral agencies.