



Human Services

During the 2022 legislative session, the General Assembly considered measures related to human services, including bills concerning seniors and protected persons, assistance programs, and repurposing the Ridge View campus.

Seniors and Protected Persons

House Bill 22-1035 modernizes the Older Coloradans' Act and restructures the Colorado Commission on Aging. The bill creates a Technical Advisory Committee to implement the Strategic Action Plan on Aging's recommendations and strategies. Additionally, the bill creates the Lifelong Colorado Initiative in the Department of Human Services (DHS) to develop and implement strategies that support aging and assist older Coloradans.

Senate Bill 22-185 extends the Area Agency on Aging Grant Program within DHS indefinitely and renames the program as the Strategic Investments in Aging Grant Program (program). Under the bill, additional entities may apply for the program, and the funds may be used for community assessments, data collection, and research, as well as pilot programs and demonstration projects.

As amended by the House Public and Behavioral Health and Human Services Committee, *House Bill 22-1271*, which was deemed postponed indefinitely, would have required the Public Guardianship Commission to create a workgroup to study issues and make

recommendations related to protected persons, including:

- providing notifications to a protected person's close family under certain circumstances;
- appropriate parameters for visitation of a protected person; and
- development of a care plan for protected persons.

Assistance Programs

Colorado Works is the state's implementation of the federal Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) Program. It is funded through a federal block grant, overseen by DHS, and administered by counties in Colorado. *House Bill 22-1259* makes several changes to the Colorado Works Program. The bill increases program benefits, expands eligibility for specific populations, modifies program rules and operations, and requires new public outreach, data collection, and reporting. The bill requires monthly basic cash assistance payments under Colorado Works to increase by 10 percent above the previous year's level in FY 2022-23. Starting in FY 2024-25, the basic cash assistance amount must increase by the greater of 2 percent or the three-year average of the prior year's Social Security cost of living adjustments. Additionally, HB 22-1259 increases the length of time Colorado Works participants may receive benefits. DHS is encouraged to align Colorado Works redetermination and verification timelines with

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other public assistance programs. DHS must provide comprehensive program training to county workers, and counties are encouraged to contact program participants for exit interviews and recommend to DHS any potential rule changes to enhance the client experience.

Currently, program management systems that counties use to manage certain benefits and services for programs such as the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), Medicaid, and Colorado Works are not standardized across the state. [House Bill 22-1380](#) implements a new work management system that can interface with the Colorado Benefits Management System (CBMS) and other DHS technology systems used to process, approve, and manage various benefit applications. The bill also creates the Community Food Access Program in the Colorado Department of Agriculture to improve access to and lower prices for healthy foods in low-income or underserved areas in Colorado by supporting small grocery retailers.

[Senate Bill 22-235](#) requires the development and implementation of the County Administration of Public and Medical Assistance Programs Funding Model.

To implement the model, DHS and the Department of Health Care Policy and Financing, in consultation with county departments, must contract with a third-party entity to conduct a comprehensive assessment of best practices related to the administration of public and medical assistance programs. DHS must submit an analysis of the fiscal impact of the assessment's recommendations to the Joint Budget Committee.

Based on the assessment, DHS is required to contract with an outside entity to develop a funding model to determine the amount of money necessary to fund the administration of public and medical assistance programs in each county. The bill outlines the elements the

funding model must include. DHS must report on the funding model's results and work with an outside entity to annually update and modify the model.

Repurposing Ridge View Campus

The state-owned Ridge View campus operated as a youth services center for over 20 years through a contract DHS held with a private provider, Rite of Passage. The campus has not been operational since DHS ended the contract with Rite of Passage in June 2021. [Senate Bill 22-211](#) transfers ownership of all or part of the Ridge View Campus from the DHS to the Department of Personnel and Administration (DPA) for use by the Division of Housing in the Department of Local Affairs (DOLA) as a supportive residential community for people experiencing homelessness. DOLA, in collaboration with the DHS, must develop a master plan for the redevelopment and operation of the Ridge View Campus into the Ridge View Supportive Residential Community (community). The community must provide transitional housing, a continuum of behavioral health services and treatment, medical care, vocational training, skill development, and transportation for residents and the public. The administrator of the community must also work with local providers across the state to set up a referral system for clients to live at the community. To be eligible for the community, an individual must be experiencing or at risk of experiencing homelessness; voluntarily choose to focus on recovery; and be medically able to be in transitional housing.