



Legislative Council Staff

Nonpartisan Services for Colorado's Legislature

Room 029 State Capitol, Denver, CO 80203-1784
Phone: (303) 866-3521 • Fax: (303) 866-3855
lcs.ga@state.co.us • leg.colorado.gov/lcs

Memorandum

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TO: Interested Persons

FROM: Aaron Carpenter, Fiscal Analyst, 303-866-4918
Erin Reynolds, Principal Fiscal Analyst, 303-866-4146

SUBJECT: Colorado's Human Services Delivery Structure

Summary

This memorandum provides a brief overview of the human services delivery structure in Colorado, which is primarily state-supervised and county-delivered. This includes an overview of the offices, divisions, and boards within the Colorado Department of Human Services (DHS) and a brief description of the services delivered through Colorado's 64 county departments of human or social services.

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For a guide to Colorado's public assistance and service programs, please see Legislative Council Staff's [Public Benefits and Services Resource Manual](#).¹ For information about recent legislation regarding human services, see Legislative Council Staff's [Summary of Major Legislation: Human Services](#).²

Offices Within the Department of Human Services

The DHS is divided into six primary offices:

- **the Office of Administrative Solutions**, which provides DHS-wide administrative support;
- **the Office of Behavioral Health**, which provides behavioral health services to individuals who do not qualify for Medicaid;
- **the Office of Children, Youth, and Families**, which provides services for families and youth;
- **the Office of Community Access and Independence**, which provides services for at-risk adults and individuals with disabilities;
- **the Office of Early Childhood**, which provides services for children or families with children under the age of eight; and
- **the Office of Economic Security**, which provides services for individuals experiencing economic hardship.

¹https://leg.colorado.gov/sites/default/files/human_services_book_updated.pdf.

²[https://leg.colorado.gov/publication-search?field_subjects\[0\]=57&field_publication_type\[0\]=2131&field_agency\[0\]=15](https://leg.colorado.gov/publication-search?field_subjects[0]=57&field_publication_type[0]=2131&field_agency[0]=15).

Generally, each office provides services to specific populations. In some cases, services may overlap with other offices within the DHS. For example, the Office of Economic Security oversees the Aid-to-the-Needy Disabled program, but determination of program eligibility falls under the Office of Community Access and Independence. The following sections provide additional detail on the six offices in the DHS and the major programs and divisions within each office.

Office of Administrative Solutions (OAS)

The Office of Administrative Solutions supports the department's \$2.2 billion budget, 5,700 employees, and 330 buildings with a variety of services. These services include accounting; central communication; contracting and procurement; human resources; information technology oversight; legal; maintenance; payroll; and risk management.

Office of Behavioral Health (OBH)

The Office of Behavioral Health oversees the state's public behavioral health system. The office contracts with community mental health centers and operates two mental health institutions. It is also responsible for policy development, program evaluation, and executing the state's federal responsibilities as the State Mental Health Authority and the State Substance Abuse Authority for the purposes of administering federal mental health and substance abuse block grant funds.

Division of Community Behavioral Health. The Division of Community Behavioral Health contracts with community-based mental health and substance use programs to provide behavioral health services to Colorado's non-Medicaid eligible population. Currently, the division contracts with 17 community mental health centers across the state. Each community mental health center serves a specific geographic region of the state.

Mental Health Institutes Division. The Mental Health Institutes Division oversees the two state-operated mental health institutions. The Colorado Mental Health Institute at Fort Logan is a 94-bed hospital providing inpatient behavioral health treatment services to adults. The Colorado Mental Health Institute at Pueblo is a 455-bed civil and forensic hospital that also provides inpatient behavioral health services for adults, adolescents, and geriatric patients with pending criminal charges who require evaluations of competency, who have been found by a court to be incompetent to proceed, and who have been found not guilty by reason of insanity.

Office of Children, Youth, and Families (OCYF)

The Office of Children, Youth, and Families coordinates services for vulnerable youth and families. The office oversees the Division of Child Welfare and the Division of Youth Services, as well as the Domestic Violence Program and the Colorado Sexual Health Initiative.

Division of Child Welfare. The Division of Child Welfare trains and oversees county departments of child protection services, which provide support, prevention, and intervention services for families experiencing or at-risk of child abuse or neglect, as well as child placement services when children must be removed from their homes. The division passes through state and federal funding that

comprises 80 percent of child welfare funding, with counties providing the remaining 20 percent. The division also operates the Child Abuse and Neglect hotline, which provides a central number for people to call when they suspect child abuse and neglect.³

Division of Youth Services. The Division of Youth Services operates the statewide juvenile justice system for juveniles aged 10 through 21. Its detention facilities are used to house youth who are suspected of committing a crime but who have not been adjudicated by a court, while its commitment facilities house youth who have been adjudicated as delinquent by a court. The state owns and operates ten facilities. Each facility is equipped with a medical unit and also provides educational services to youth.

Domestic Violence Program. The Domestic Violence Program contracts with community-based advocacy organizations throughout the state in order to promote the safety and well-being of domestic abuse survivors and to prevent future domestic abuse.

Colorado Sexual Health Initiative. The Colorado Sexual Health Initiative (CoSHI) administers federal grants to county-administered youth education programs that teach abstinence and contraception to prevent pregnancies and sexually transmitted infections. Federal guidelines require the funds to be targeted at young people who are homeless, in foster care, live in rural areas, live in areas with high teen birth rates, or come from racial or ethnic minority groups.

Office of Community Access and Independence (OCAI)

The Office of Community Access and Independence provides services to individuals with disabilities, veterans, and seniors in order to allow them to live in their homes for as long as possible. The office also runs 24/7 residential care facilities for veterans and individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities throughout the state.

Aging and Adult Services. Aging and Adult Services provides oversight and support to county-administered protection programs for at-risk adults. These programs include support programs to allow seniors to remain in their homes and protection services, such as Adult Protective Services,⁴ that investigate allegations of mistreatment and work to prevent further mistreatment.

Disability Determination Services. Disability Determination Services determines eligibility for federal Social Security disability benefit claims made by Colorado residents. The federal government funds this office.

³For more information on Colorado's child welfare system, see Legislative Council Staff's issue brief on the topic: http://leg.colorado.gov/sites/default/files/update_issue_brief_on_child_welfare_8212018.pdf.

⁴For more information on APS, see Legislative Council Staff's issue brief on the topic: https://leg.colorado.gov/sites/default/files/adult_protective_services_ib_2016.pdf.

Division for Regional Center Operations. The Division for Regional Center Operations oversees the three state-owned and-operated regional centers in the state—located in Grand Junction,⁵ Pueblo, and Wheat Ridge. Regional centers serve individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities who require specialized and/or intensive levels of service. There have historically been three types of admission levels to the state's regional centers: short-term treatment and stabilization; intensive treatment program; and long-term habitation.

- *Short-term treatment and stabilization.* Individuals are admitted for short-term services and have acute needs that cannot be met in the community. Individuals in this program are stabilized within 120 days of admission and transitioned to a less restrictive environment within the community.
- *Intensive treatment program.* This program provides treatment for individuals who demonstrate problematic sexual behavior who have not responded to supervision and treatment in the community within two to three years.
- *Long-term habilitation.* This program provides long-term housing and services in an institutional setting to persons with disabilities. New admissions are no longer accepted into this program. As individuals are stabilized, they are transitioned to a less restrictive environment in the community.

Veterans Community Living Centers. Veterans Community Living Centers are nursing facilities that offer long-term nursing home care, short-term rehabilitation, assisted living, memory care, respite care, and hospice services to honorably discharged veterans, their spouses, and Gold Star parents. Each center is licensed by the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment and certified by the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs. The state oversees five hospitals, with four operated by the state and one operated by a local hospital.

Office of Early Childhood

The Office of Early Childhood provides services to families from pregnancy until children are eight years old through two divisions.

Division of Early Care and Learning. The Division of Early Care and Learning licenses and regulates child care centers, works to improve the quality of child care, and provides assistance to families who cannot access child care. The division also provides grant funding to Early Childhood Councils, which are local bodies that work to increase the number of quality early childhood services based on local needs.

Division of Community and Family Support. The Division of Community and Family Support provides resources to young children and their families to support healthy development. These programs serve families with children who are two years old or younger and who have developmental needs. Services include mental health support, home visits to families, maltreatment prevention, and prevention and education programs that work with child abuse and neglect cases.

⁵For more information on recent issues related to the Grand Junction Regional Center, see Legislative Council Staff's report to the Capital Development Committee on the topic: https://leg.colorado.gov/sites/default/files/images/19cdc_r19-39_background_on_sale_of_grand_junction_regional_center_campus.pdf.

Office of Economic Security (OES)

The Office of Economic Security provides economic support to those in need, including help with employment, income, nutrition, and other services. The office is divided into three divisions: the Division of Child Support, the Division of Employment and Benefits, and the Division of Food and Energy Assistance. The office also provides resources to the state's refugee community through the Colorado Refugee Services Program.

The Division of Child Support. The Division of Child Support establishes paternity, locates absent parents, enforces child support orders, and tracks child support payments.

The Division of Employment and Benefits. The Division of Employment and Benefits administers several adult assistance programs, including the Aid to the Blind program, the Aid to the Needy Disabled program, Colorado Works (Colorado's Temporary Assistance for Needy Families program, TANF),⁶ Employment First, the Old Age Pension program, ReHire Colorado, and the Supplemental Security Income program.

The Division of Food and Energy Assistance. The Division of Food and Energy Assistance manages the federally funded Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), or “food stamp” program, and other federal food disbursement programs, as well as the Low-Income Energy Assistance Program (LEAP), which provides heating assistance and energy improvements to low-income households.

County Departments of Human Services

County departments of human services are governed by their county board of human services, which is usually comprised of the county's commissioners. There are also two tribal social services offices. If approved by the DHS, two or more counties may form a district department of human services. The DHS provides general oversight for county departments, but has no role in hiring directors or in supervising county department staff. Duties of the county departments and boards are established according to federal and state laws, as well as rules and regulations adopted by the State Board of Human Services. County departments are the main providers of direct services in their communities. To contact a county department of human services, visit the [DHS website](#).⁷

Primary human services programs supervised by the state and administered by county departments of human services include:

- Adult Protective Services;
- Aid to the Needy Disabled/Blind;
- child support enforcement;
- child welfare services;
- Colorado Works (TANF);

⁶For more information on TANF, see the Legislative Council Staff issue brief on the topic: https://leg.colorado.gov/sites/default/files/state_aid_for_low_income_families_10122017.pdf.

⁷<https://www.colorado.gov/pacific/cdhs/contact-your-county>.

- food assistance;
- the Low-Income Energy Assistance Program; and
- the Old Age Pension (OAP).

Boards Within the Department of Human Services

State Board of Human Services

The State Board of Human Services is a rulemaking body that holds hearings related to the formulation and revision of the policies of DHS.⁸ It is a Type 1 agency, which means that it is administered by DHS, but exercises its functions independently. The board consists of nine members serving four-year terms who are appointed by the Governor and confirmed by the Senate. State law requires three board members to be acting county commissioners and at least one board member to be a person with a disability, a family member of a person with a disability, or a member of an advocacy group for persons with disabilities. No board member may be a recipient of Old Age Pension funds. A county commissioner is prohibited from voting on any matter before the board that affects the county in which he or she is serving as commissioner in a manner different from other counties. Board members serve without compensation, with the exception of necessary and actual traveling expenses. The board must act only by resolution adopted at a duly called board meeting, and no individual member of the board can exercise administrative authority with respect to the DHS. All meetings of the State Board of Human Services are [broadcast online](#) and accept remote testimony.

The board's rulemaking duties include:

- program scope and content;
- requirements, obligations and rights of clients;
- adopting rules concerning vendors, providers, and other DHS acts that are not under the purview of the DHS executive director;
- adjusting the award amounts for the Old Age Pension; and
- any other specific statutory provisions granting rulemaking authority in relation to specific programs.

Statutory Boards in the Department of Human Services

Table 1 lists all DHS boards and commissions that are established in state law. Most of these members are Governor-appointed and/or appointed by General Assembly leadership.

⁸Section 26-1-107, C.R.S.

**Table 1
Statutory Boards in the Department of Human Services**

Body	C.R.S.	Office	Charge
Colorado Interagency Coordinating Council	27-10.5-703 (19)	OBH	The council advises and assists with state implementation of Part C of the federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Act to coordinate payment for early intervention services for infants and toddlers.
Mental Health Advisory Board for Service Standards and Regulations	27-65-131	OBH	The board recommends standards and rules related to the care and treatment of persons with mental illness.
Colorado Advisory Council for Persons with Disabilities	26-24-101	OCAI	The advisory council provides recommendations, reviews, research, information, and collaboration related to accessibility, services and supports, and other issues concerning the disability community.
Colorado Commission on the Aging	26-11-101	OCAI	The commission studies, coordinates, and promotes issues related to older people living in the state.
Colorado Commission for the Deaf, Hard of Hearing, and DeafBlind	26-21-101	OCAI	The commission serves as a liaison, resource, and referral agency between public and private agencies and citizens who are deaf, hard-of-hearing, or deafblind. A Grant Program Committee and a Citizens Council are established within the commission.
Colorado Developmental Disabilities Council	27-10.5-201	OCAI	The council develops and monitors a state plan for developmental disabilities, as required under federal law, and reviews and advises on providing services and support to persons with developmental disabilities
Colorado Brain Injury Trust Fund Board (MINDSOURCE)	26-1-302	OCAI	The board makes determinations on annual spending for service coordination and skills training for persons with brain injuries.
Board of Commissioners of Veterans Community Living Centers	26-12-402	OCAI	The board advises the administrators of Veterans Community Living Centers. Each center is also required under state law to have a local advisory board.
Adoption Intermediary Commission	19-5-303	OCYF	The commission creates training standards for individuals involved with child placement; monitors training programs; and maintains a training completion list for the Judicial Department.
Child Fatality Review Team	26-1-139	OCYF	The team reviews cases of egregious abuse or neglect against a child, near fatalities, and child fatalities and reports annually on its findings.
Child Welfare Allocations Committee	26-5-103.5	OCYF	The committee makes recommendations to DHS on how child welfare funding should be allocated to counties.
Delivery of Child Welfare Services Task Force	26-5-105.8	OCYF	The task force analyzes laws and rules related to child welfare service delivery to ensure the alignment with the federal Family First Prevention Services Act of 2018 and provides quarterly updates to the legislature.

**Table 1 (Cont.)
Statutory Boards in the Department of Human Services**

Body	C.R.S.	Office	Charge
Division of Youth Services Community Boards	19-2-203.5	OCYF	Four regional DYS community boards promote transparency and community involvement, provide mentor opportunities to youth, and promote youth involvement in the community.
Juvenile Parole Board	19-2-206	OCYF	The board meets monthly to review parole cases for juveniles in the Division of Youth Services. State law also permits counties to create Juvenile Community Review Boards to approve residential community placements and Local Juvenile Services Planning Committees to plan for the allocation of local juvenile services resources within a judicial district.
Tony Grampas Youth Services Board	26-6.8-101	OCYF	The board establishes guidelines for the program and makes grant funding recommendations which are sent to the Governor for final approval.
Youth Seclusion Working Group	26-20-110	OCYF	The group advises DYS on policies, procedures, and best practices related to youth seclusion and alternatives.
Working Group for Criteria for Placement of Juvenile Offenders	19-2-212; 24-60-702	OCYF	The working group must establish a set of criteria for both detention and commitment for the purposes of determining which juvenile offenders are appropriate for placement in the physical or legal custody of the DHS. The group also services as the Council for Interstate Juvenile Supervision.
Advisory Committee on Licensing of Child Care Facilities	26-6-109	OEC	The advisory committee supports the DHS with the administration and enforcement of the Child Care Licensing Act.
Colorado Children's Trust Fund Board	19-3.5-101	OEC	The board administers the Colorado Children's Trust Fund and allocates funding to child abuse and neglect prevention programs.
Early Childhood Leadership Commission	26-6.2-101	OEC	The commission ensures and advances a comprehensive service delivery system for pregnant women and children from birth to eight years.
Child Support Commission	14-10-115 (16)	OES	The commission, required under the federal Social Security Act, reviews child support guidelines and reports every four years to the Governor and the General Assembly on its review and any recommended changes.
Colorado Works Allocation Committee	26-2-714 (6)(c)(IV)	OES	The committee provides input to DHS about the allocation of TANF grants to counties and determines the priority criteria and the amount of transfers to counties of unspent TANF reserves
Legislative Commission on Low-Income Energy Assistance	40-8.5-103.5	OES	The commission coordinates and makes recommendations for the state's low-income energy assistance services.

Prepared by Legislative Council Staff.

Other Boards in the Department of Human Services

DHS has also created internal boards, commissions, and other bodies to advise the department on programs, policies, priorities, and other issues as defined by their respective enabling documents. Each board listed below contains a link to the related DHS website. Some task forces and working groups have been omitted because they fall under a larger group or are time-limited.

- 24 Hour Appeal Panel
- Behavioral Health Planning and Advisory Council
- Behavioral Health Task Force
- Chafee Modernization Task Group
- Child Welfare Executive Leadership Council
- Child Welfare Sub Policy Advisory Committee
- Child and Youth Mental Health Services Standards
- Children's Justice Act Task Force
- Collaborative Management Program
- Colorado Commission for the Deaf, Hard of Hearing, and DeafBlind Legal Auxiliary Services
- Colorado Family First Prevention Services Act Implementation Team
- Colorado Improving Outcomes for Youth Task Force
- Colorado State Epidemiological Outcomes Workgroup
- Crisis System Executive Steering Committee
- Domestic Violence Program Advisory Committee and Domestic Violence Program Funding Recommendation Committee
- Family Engagement Meeting Lead Measure Task Group
- Family Voice Council
- Food Distribution Advisory Committee
- Former Foster Care Youth Steering Committee
- Grand Junction Regional Center Campus Advisory Group
- Human Trafficking Task Group
- Institutional Abuse Review Team
- Less than 24-Hour Appeals and Waiver Review Panel
- Older Youth Case Closure and Re-entry Workgroup
- Policy Advisory Committee
- Program Improvement Plan Implementation Team
- Public Awareness Committee for the Colorado Child Abuse and Neglect Public Awareness Campaign
- Sustained Permanency Project Exploratory Committee
- Title IV-E Waiver Steering Committee
- Training Steering Committee for the Division of Child Welfare Training System Academy