



Office of Community Involvement



Department of County Human Services CBAC

TO: Chair Jessica Vega Pederson and Board of County Commissioners 3 pages

FROM: Department of County Human Services Community Budget Advisory Committee (CBAC)

DATE: March 14, 2025

SUBJECT: Department of County Human Services Community Budget Advisory Committee Report & Recommendations

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This letter represents the Department of County Human Services (DCHS or the Department) Community Budget Advisory Committee's (CBAC or the Committee) recommendations regarding the FY 2025-2026 budget.

We understand that the Office of Community Involvement is working to clarify the role of the CBAC. Members of the DCHS CBAC have considered ourselves to be the voice of the community in our budget discussions. We strive to bring a community focused and independent perspective.

Given the number of programs administered by the Department, as well as the limited time available for our review, we focused our attention on the impact of the reduction packages and the one-time-only funding requests.

As we considered current community needs, the reduced county budget dollars available, and the uncertainty of federal funding, we followed the guiding principles noted below:

- Impact on vulnerable populations
- Access to services by marginalized communities
- Protection of program services not provided elsewhere
- Past success of the program to meet current needs of the community
- Preservation of matching dollars

Department of County Human Services CBAC

PROCESS

The DCHS CBAC met monthly throughout the year and our five members have each served through at least one prior budget cycle.

During our meetings we heard updates from DCHS leadership and various program directors. We listened to the annual economic forecast by Jeff Renfro and also heard updates and provided input on changes proposed to the CBAC process. We had regular updates on the FY 2025 financial reports and reviewed any available audit reports from the County Auditor. In addition, two members of CBAC visited one of the DCHS programs.

The DCHS CBAC dedicated significant time and benefited from a continuity of members with previous CBAC experience. However, we still believe we were unable to gain an in-depth understanding of the numerous programs DCHS provides. We hope that additional volunteers will be assigned to our CBAC in the future to allow us to form informal subcommittees. These informal subcommittees would allow for a focus on specific divisions within DCHS, as opposed to each CBAC member trying to understand all divisions and programs.

Additionally, we appreciate the opportunity to provide our recommendations earlier in the budget process. However, this shortened our budget review and discussion timeline such that we had only one two-hour meeting to review over 50 program offers requesting County general funds. We continue to look for ways to provide more meaningful input to the DCHS annual budget.

EMERGING THEMES/TRENDS

The following issues emerged in discussions throughout the year:

- Budget reductions
- Lack of discussion and review of program impacts to understand what outcomes have been achieved
- Need for increased external communication of long-term benefits of DCHS program offers and their impacts
- Service coordination with other departments and community partners
- Need to focus on most successful and impactful programs

BUDGET/PROGRAM OFFERS FEEDBACK

We have the following feedback related to the budget process:

- Significant issues require consistent, reliable funding to establish infrastructure and sustain a long-term strategy. Prevention of houselessness is an example of such an issue.

Members: Ray Anderson, Illyse Ball, April Ybarra Black, Becky Graham, Barb Sorg

Staff: Mohammad Bader, Rachel Pearl, Robert Stoll, Tahira Rivera, Dr. Richard

Department of County Human Services CBAC

- Encourage DCHS to continue partnering with others in the community to ensure there are no gaps in services, eliminate duplication of efforts, and allow each entity to focus on what they do best.
- Support continued emphasis on funding upstream solutions to address the root cause of the problem at hand.
- Encourage efforts to coordinate and gather data consistent with other departments/partners to allow for cross-comparison and enhanced metrics.
- Support setting appropriate performance measures and reporting on them consistently.

DEPARTMENT BUDGET/PROGRAM OFFER RECOMMENDATIONS

DCHS staff presented their FY 2026 Budget Submission to the CBAC at our March meeting. CBAC members had an opportunity to ask questions and gain additional insight into how DCHS staff had set budget priorities. Based on discussions at this two-hour meeting on March 4, 2025, we concluded that DCHS staff had factored in the following to General Fund reductions, the priority of those reductions, and one-time-only requests:

- Availability (or lack thereof) of program services elsewhere
- Focus on preventative measures to avoid larger, more costly issues in the future
- Focus on most vulnerable community members and the long-term impacts on them (e.g. children)
- Work towards the best access point to services with staff who fully understand the needs of the population being served and how to connect them to the appropriate services. A more informed connection provides the individual with more timely and appropriate services and is more cost-effective in the long-term.
- DCHS Equity Manager was involved throughout the budget process.

After reviewing all reductions and one-time-only requests, the Committee supports the requests and priorities of the DCHS staff as listed.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Committee understands that this is a particularly difficult and complex budget year. We realize that the work associated with budget reductions of this magnitude is very difficult. We appreciate the hard work necessary to complete this budget and recommend such significant reductions to or, at times, eliminations of certain programs. We would like to give special thanks to the DCHS staff who provided their time and information to us to better understand the programs in their department.

Members: Ray Anderson, Illyse Ball, April Ybarra Black, Becky Graham, Barb Sorg
Staff: Mohammad Bader, Rachel Pearl, Robert Stoll, Tahira Rivera, Dr. Richard