



MONTANA LEGISLATIVE BRANCH

Legislative Fiscal Division

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Director
AMY CARLSON

DATE: March 6, 2012

TO: Legislative Finance Committee

FROM: Marilyn Daumiller, Senior Fiscal Analyst

RE: Update – SJ26 - Impact of the recession and the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act (ACA) on the Offices of Public Assistance (OPAs) and the clients served.

The Legislative Finance Committee (LFC) decided to review caseloads and workloads of the OPA staff related to eligibility services and the major support programs, the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP/food stamps), Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), and Medicaid as included in Senate Joint Resolution 26 (SJ26).

The focus of this update is to provide an introduction to the OPAs and updates for TANF and SNAP. The Medicaid program is discussed in the memo from Lois Steinbeck and Quinn Holzer: "SJ26 Impact of Medicaid Eligibility Expansion and Healthy Montana Kids Monitoring."

OFFICES OF PUBLIC ASSISTANCE

There are presently 38 OPAs throughout the state with offices in Fallon, Fergus, Lewis and Clark, Sheridan, and Valley counties that serve multiple counties.

There are 397.31 FTE including:

- 16 OPA County/Area Directors
- 40 Social Service Supervisors
- 285.81 Social Service Specialists
- 55.5 Eligibility Assistants

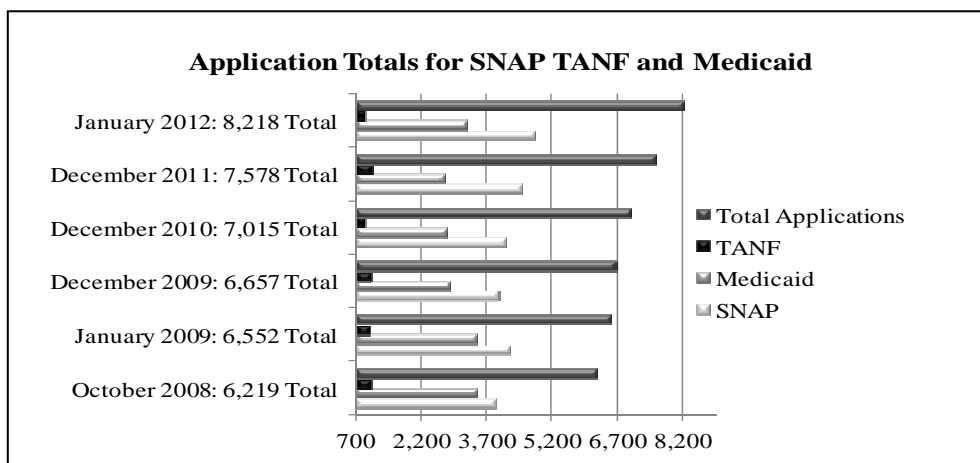
According to the department, open positions are immediately advertised and no positions are held open to achieve vacancy savings. There were 17 vacant positions listed in the Statewide Budget and Accounting System (SABHRS) as of February 16, 2012. The positions are throughout the state with opening dates from August 27, 2011 through February 11, 2012.

OPA staffs receive applications for public assistance programs and work with clients who are found eligible for the duration of their enrollment. Throughout the economic downturn, total applications have grown from 6,219 in October of 2008 to 8,218 in January of 2012. The

average number of applications for calendar year 2011 was 7,631. While most all offices received increases in clients, the two OPAs with the highest growth in applications from October of 2008 to January 2012 are:

- Yellowstone County: from 733 to 1,171
- Missoula County: from 757 to 999

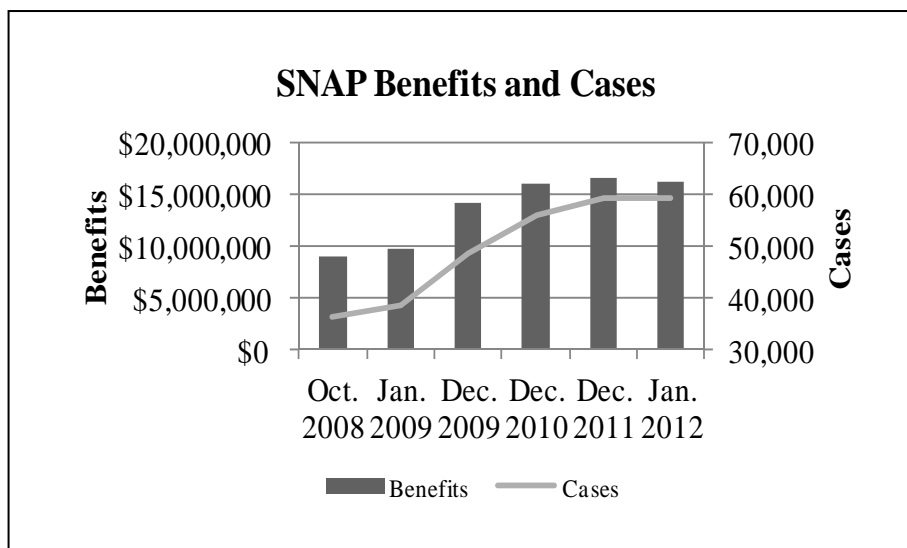
The following chart shows the growth in applications for selected months from October of 2008 through January of 2012. Data provided by DPHHS.



The application data reflects only part of a caseworker's duties. They also establish eligibility of applicants, work with participants on an on-going basis, recertify those in a program, and, in accordance with federal and state regulations, the on-going management of verification documents.

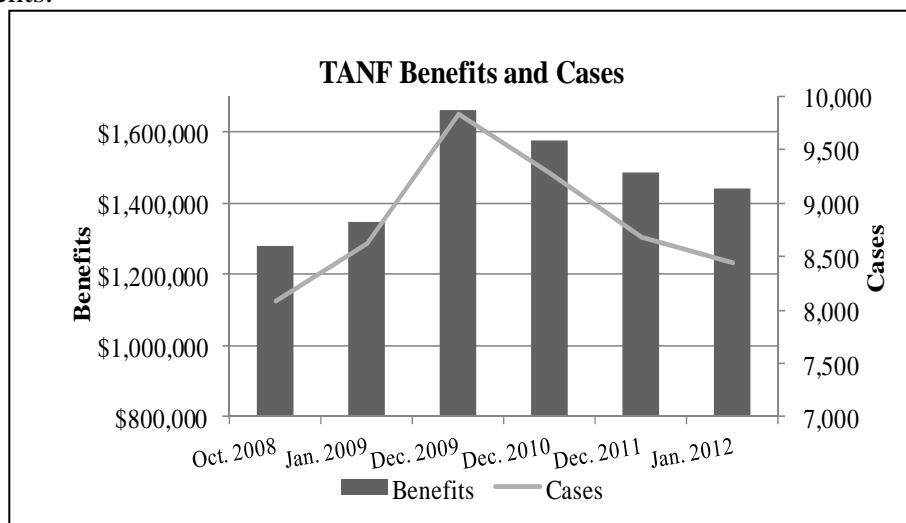
Benefits and Recipients for SNAP and TANF

Once eligible, clients begin receiving benefits. The following charts show SNAP and TANF benefit expenditures and number of recipients over the same months in the application chart.



In general, SNAP benefit expenditures are up slightly, with total expenditures for FY 2011 at over \$191.7 million and a monthly average of 56,077 recipients. Benefits were \$114.7 million as of January of FY 2012 for a monthly average of 58,742 recipients.

TANF cash benefits are down slightly at over \$18.1 million for FY 2011 with a monthly average of 8,878 recipients and just over \$10.0 million through January of 2012 for a monthly average of 8,387 recipients.



Pressure Points

As discussed at the last LFC meeting, the pressure points at the OPAs are primarily due to increased caseload concurrent with the implementation of new systems, both of which impacted staff workload.

System items previously discussed at LFC are training and staff support in general, dual entry on TEAMS TANF / SNAP and CHIMES Medicaid systems, and an insufficient number of scanners for the Document Management System (DMS):

- The TEAMS TANF / SNAP and CHIMES Medicaid is scheduled to become a combined system, CHIMES-EA, this October
- Implementation of the DMS has been aided with the acquisition of more scanners and increased efficiency in the new process

In response to these IT system concerns, DPHHS is working with the OPA managers to put plans in place to address the concerns of OPA staff related to issues including training, business processes, communication, and staff meetings.

The LFC also asked about low staff morale and staff turnover due to retirements or departure to other jobs. The department presently notes that there are not enough seasoned workers in the busier offices to efficiently move cases forward and that seasoned staff members face caseload increases while new hires learn the system.

DPHHS also acknowledges public/client concerns that primarily focus on customer service, and that in the larger, busier offices web-based applications and telephone interviews help, but:

- It can be difficult to quickly get through to caseworkers and, due to large caseloads, appointments are scheduled out several weeks
- First time clients, who do not have access to computers and come to the busier OPAs to make an appointment, are not told what to bring in (birth certificates, bank statements, social security numbers, etc.) when they make a first appointment, which leads to more waiting and appointments
- Phone calls are not returned and clients can only leave messages

In response to concerns at the OPAs, DPHHS has authorized that all vacant OPA positions are to be advertised immediately as opposed to leaving them open to generate vacancy savings. As of January, 12 short-term workers had been hired. DPHHS central office staffs have been in some of the busiest offices offering assistance. Several rural offices have developed specialties, such as SSI Medicaid or Nursing Home applications, and have taken this work from the busiest counties, thereby freeing up “front line” staff.

Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act of 2010 (ACA).

As ACA is presently written, Medicaid eligibility will expand beginning January 1, 2014. Montana will join the Federal Exchange and DPHHS has received permission from the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) to fund (90% federal / 10% state funds) the architecture components of CHIMES-EA, since those components will provide the interoperability need to interface with the insurance exchange. In addition, ACA requirements will require changes to the DPHHS eligibility process and the business rules used to determine eligibility. For example, the eligibility function of the exchange would verify the client’s information and send designated information to DPHHS for eligibility determination for Medicaid, TANF, SNAP, and HMK.

The challenge is that the federal timeline requires substantial system capabilities be developed by October 1, 2013. DPHHS is presently reviewing ACA and any other federal requirements to assess the impact on Montana. The impact on OPA staff is unknown at this time.

Options

Caseload management, while being addressed by the department, is an on-going process. In addition to updates on any of the above items, the LFC may want to receive information over the next few months related to the busier offices, such as Cascade, Missoula, Lewis and Clark, and Yellowstone counties. Examples could be:

- How many applicants were found ineligible in total applications for December of 2011 through March 2012?
- In the busiest offices - what is the highest caseload for a caseworker as well as the average caseloads per caseworker and related increases/decreases?
- How long are clients waiting for appointments each month?

Potential options for LFC consideration at this meeting are:

1. Decide whether to continue to review any or all of the caseloads, workloads, and pressure points
2. Change or add components of the review
3. Take no action

SNAP, Medicaid, TANF Application Data Comparison

Total Applications for Each Month by Category

Category	October 2008	January 2009	December 2009	December 2010	December 2011	January 2012
SNAP	3,910	4,197	3,963	4,088	4,463	4,777
Medicaid	3,469	3,471	2,827	2,740	2,711	3,225
TANF	1,050	1,001	1,053	891	1,060	910
Total Applications	6,219	6,552	6,657	7,015	7,578	8,218

Not all applicants are eligible for all categories and some receive multiple services. Total applications will not "add up" to the categories.

Data by county. Shaded Counties show the greatest activity.

County	October 2008	January 2009	December 2009	December 2010	December 2011	January 2012	
Beaverhead / Madison	47	69	61	56	68	75	OPA
Big Horn	316	292	195	161	210	261	OPA
Blaine:	49	61	69	65	64	94	OPA
Carbon	28	31	27	36	27	56	OPA
Carter	1	0	3	3	0	1	With Fallon
Cascade:	610	670	634	616	597	737	OPA
Chouteau	63	18	21	42	40	46	OPA
Custer:	60	64	57	58	54	57	OPA
Dawson/ Wibaux	76	117	48	42	37	61	OPA
Daniels	0	0	0	2	4	3	With Sheridan
Deer Lodge / Granite	76	96	57	85	78	79	OPA
Fallon	7	19	5	5	1	7	OPA
Fergus:	88	113	83	83	96	86	OPA
Flathead:	600	637	646	623	682	620	OPA
Gallatin / Madison	320	328	520	640	825	419	OPA
Garfield	2	1	3	3	3	0	With Fallon
Glacier	308	321	198	234	233	241	OPA
Golden Valley	0	0	1	2	3	2	With Fergus
Hill / Liberty	118	147	194	203	147	200	OPA
Judith Basin:			3	5	7	11	With Fergus
Lake	278	279	242	268	286	352	OPA
Lewis and Clark / Broadwater / Jefferson (North)	386	215	363	340	492	531	OPA
Lincoln	167	202	151	169	194	275	OPA
Meagher	9	9	6	5	25	21	With Lewis & Clark
Mineral	38	33	42	51	38	36	OPA
Missoula:	757	868	911	934	943	999	OPA
Musselshell	28	16	33	42	38	35	OPA
Park	100	92	141	149	212	174	OPA
Petroleum	0	0	1	0	1	4	With Fergus
Phillips:	10	12	9	8	8	16	With Valley
Pondera:	15	10	22	24	17	28	OPA
Powder River:	3	0	1	2	0	0	With Fallon
Powell:	37	39	32	51	29	35	OPA
Prairie / McCone	0	0	25	20	22	0	OPA
Ravalli:	255	268	253	249	264	291	OPA
Richland:	0	0	37	44	29	62	OPA
Roosevelt:	157	143	182	220	196	257	OPA
Rosebud / Treasure	0	0	155	141	119	113	OPA
Sanders:	63	95	85	88	89	114	OPA
Sheridan:	11	19	19	12	31	39	OPA
Silver Bow / Jefferson (South)	270	276	251	297	306	384	OPA
Stillwater	35	36	39	31	51	49	OPA
Sweet Grass:	17	18	12	12	36	44	OPA
Teton:	18	21	24	21	26	27	OPA
Toole:	30	38	28	22	20	27	OPA
Valley:	31	49	55	59	57	69	OPA
Wheatland	0	0	14	3	13	9	With Fergus
Yellowstone:	733	830	699	789	860	1171	OPA