

Enacted 2012-13 Budget Fact Sheet: County Human Services Pilot Program

Governor Tom Corbett proposed combining the line items of seven county human services into a single block grant, called the Human Services Development Block Grant, beginning in July 2012. The programs include the Behavioral Health Services Initiative, Mental Health Services, drug and alcohol services previously included in Medical Assistance – Outpatient, Intellectual Disability Community Base funding, special county grants included in Child Welfare, and the Human Services Development Fund.

The block grant was not adopted and funding lines were restored in the budget, although overall funding was reduced from \$842 million in 2011-12 to \$758 million in 2012-13, with each program sustaining a 10% reduction.

Instead, the Welfare Code bill (House Bill 1261, Act 80 of 2012) creates a Human Services Block Grant Pilot Program. It also creates a new requirement that counties submit a consolidated human services plan. Details are listed below.

The Pilot Program

- Up to 20 counties each fiscal year may participate in the block grant program.
- Counties will receive the same share of total state dollars allocated to these programs as was appropriated in 2011-12.
- Counties must submit an initial block grant proposal to the Department of Public Welfare (DPW). However, the criteria with which DPW will review the proposals have yet to be determined. After approval, counties must submit annual pilot plans detailing how they intend to deliver services and ensure services are delivered in the least restrictive environment.
- Two public hearings must be held on county block grant plans prior to the submission to DPW.
- The block grant has a five-year phase in, although counties may request a waiver from this provision. The share of county human services funding that is allowed to be reallocated grows each year: 20% in 2012-13, 25% in 2013-14, 50% in 2014-15, 75% in 2015-16 and 100% in 2016-17.
- Counties may reallocate block grant funds to “county human services programs,” which are defined as aging services, services for dependent or delinquent children, or services to low-income individuals — as well as the services included in the block grant program. Counties would be permitted to use Intellectual Disabilities funding for child welfare services, for example.

- Counties may not eliminate any of the services (intellectual disabilities, mental health, homelessness, or drug and alcohol services) but may increase funds for one service and reduce funding for another.
- DPW retains the power to approve all plans, reallocate federal funds to assure compliance with federal law, audit counties and private contractors, and inspect financial records.
- Counties are still bound by federal and state requirements, and DPW will continue to monitor and enforce statutory requirements.
- DPW must submit a report on the block grant program by January 2014, then annually each February, to the Senate Health and Welfare Committee, House Human Services and House Health committees and the House and Senate Appropriations committees.

The County Consolidated Human Services Plan

- DPW is authorized to establish a new uniform and consolidated process for counties to submit plans and reports on human services programs in the seven program areas subject to the block grant.
- The report includes information on the delivery of services by client population served, use and distribution of funds, and expenditures for each program, including block grant expenditures for counties participating in the pilot program.
- Prior to submitting a report, counties must hold at least two public hearings where individuals and families who receive services may testify about the plan.

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