

FY 2021-22 Budget Board of Supervisor Inquiry Form

Deadline: April 30, 2021

Please email: CAO-Budget@sonoma-county.org

Board Member	
Gorin	
Rabbitt	
Coursey	
Gore	
Hopkins	X

Department: Human Services

Date: 5/3/21

Inquiry Number: BIR-42

Request/Question:

Unmet needs: *What are the service areas where HSD could use additional resources to address unmet needs in the community (i.e., a gap analysis)?*

Response:

The HSD Mission is to protect vulnerable children and adults and promote maximum independence and well-being for individuals and families. HSD strives to meet the needs of our community and empower clients through accessible and responsive services.

Every day, HSD's four service divisions help more than 100,000 adults, youth, children, seniors and their caregivers, people with disabilities, veterans and job seekers.

- Adult and Aging Services helps ensure the safety, independence and well-being of older adults, persons with disabilities and military veterans and their families at home and in the community.
- Economic Assistance helps low-income and other individuals and families get medical insurance benefits, food purchasing assistance, financial help and other services to meet basic needs.
- Employment and Training helps individuals and families with job search, employment and training services and financial assistance. It helps employers find qualified workers and supports workforce development through community partnerships.
- Family, Youth and Children's Services helps ensure the safety and well-being of children and teens who experience abuse, neglect or abandonment. It provides prevention programs, temporary foster care with a family or in our 24-hour emergency shelter and adoption services.

As the County of Sonoma's largest department, HSD, has over 935 employees and a \$367 million 2021-22 Fiscal Year budget. Its leadership is comprised of a director, two assistant directors and five division directors. In-person services are available in seven Sonoma County locations. Through leadership, collaboration, staffing and community outreach, HSD supports community-wide, prevention-focused initiatives including Upstream Investments and Results Based Accountability data measurement. These initiatives promote equity and increase opportunities for quality education and health in response to the changing needs of County residents.

Since 2009 when the “Great Recession” hit, the Sonoma Community, along with the nation, has experienced a pattern of challenges and emergencies which have served to remind us of the need for human service programs to support communities. These challenges culminated in the last few years with multiple fire disasters and the COVID pandemic and have truly re-shaped our strategy for serving the community. HSD’s core commitment is to innovation and program improvement through a lens of equity and defines optimal services to mean “an immediate response to clients (no waiting list) for all who need or are eligible for services, and the ability to meet established program performance standards.” It also includes designing innovative services that represent the voices of the community. The focus on unmet needs is an effort to find better ways to streamline our services through strategic partnerships within the County and with our community-based partners, incorporate client voice into the improvement of service delivery and use data to tell stories of success and areas of challenge with a focus on equity.

Despite HSD’s commitment to innovation and community responsiveness, there are areas where improvement remains such as wait times for services, gaps in available community resources, ongoing challenges with food insecurity, affordable housing, livable wages, access to affordable child care and school readiness. HSD unmet service needs are heavily influenced by State requirements for most of its programs. These requirements are frequently revised, which impacts staff and contractor workloads. State requirements can come in the form of new mandated program components, regulation changes, new interpretations of existing regulation, or as a result of statewide court cases. The Department receives (on average) requirement changes once per business day. To this end, the following are HSD’s recommendations for additional resources to address these unmet community needs:

Additional positions across all Divisions, Adult and Aging Services, Economic Assistance, Employment and Training and Family, Youth and Children’s Services would ensure that HSD teams are able to engage in service delivery that is responsive to the individual needs of our customers and the communities they live in. Upcoming changes in legislation that underpin HSD service delivery are anticipated to shift mandates across of these programs that will lead to increased caseload sizes, lengths of interventions and the addition of new practices and programs on top of current caseloads. In most program areas it is expected that partnerships with Community Based Organizations will increase to provide supportive service to clients. However, permanent staffing will be needed to ensure that County mandated service delivery is provided at the HSD level.

Adult and Aging Services:

Adult Protective Services – Since 2014, APS reports have increased from an average of 245 reports a month to an average of 277 reports per month in 2019. 65% of reports received a home visit from a social worker. Effective January, 2022 the Welfare and Institutions code will expand the definition of a qualified senior from anyone age 65 and older, to anyone age 60 and older. It is projected that this change in target population will lead to an approximate increase of 1500 reports per year bringing the average reports received per month to 402. In addition, the Welfare and Institutions code will also be updated to require case management services beyond the current 30-day investigation period. This new mandate will require social workers to keep cases longer increasing their number of active cases. Additional state funding will be coming for this expansion, but it is anticipated to not cover the costs of the increased demand.

Adult Case Management – The three adult case management programs are at capacity and all have long waiting lists for adults who need care management services due to community need and lack of adequate care management resources in the community.

Economic Assistance: While there are no upcoming legislative changes for FFY 21/22 that will impact the CalFresh workload in the last three months, June-August 2021, this program has seen a 40% increase in the average number of applications submitted per month compared to the previous three month period, March-May 2021. It is also anticipated that new applications from households who've lost income as a result of the recent termination of unemployment benefits earlier this month. Due to the continued increase in CalFresh applications, Economic Assistance programs are scheduling outside of state and federal timeframes, which as of 9/13/21 has resulted in an increased backlog of 2838 pending applications.

Additionally, there are approximately 68k households active Medi-Cal in Sonoma County. Per Executive Order due to the COVID pandemic, in addition to other work, the programs are not processing incoming renewals, and all renewals will be moved to 2022. It is anticipated that the Executive Order will end 12/31/21, therefore beginning January the program will resume processing those annual Medi-Cal renewals. At our current auto-renewal rate of 33%, this equates to about 3000 renewals we must process each month to stay timely. Once the Executive Order against negative actions ends (anticipated 12/31/21), we will resume discontinuing clients, which creates churn and will impact timeliness:

The program is maximizing current staff capacity to increase the volume of applications processed weekly, but the current need far outpaces the capacity of the experienced staff we have in position to support the ongoing application volume. Community based organizations are currently providing valuable support in the following areas: providing application assistance to increase complete application submittals which can reduce processing delays and improve approval rates, helping recipients to keep their benefits by aiding with submitting timely and complete periodic reports, working to help maximize recipient benefit usage through education and outreach around benefit matching programs like Market Match or with additional food support programs like Pandemic EBT MediCal.

Additional legislative changes anticipated to impact workload and staffing include:

- Effective 5/1/22 Older Adult Expansion: Clients 50 years of age or older will receive full scope Medi-Cal regardless of immigration status. This will change benefits for approximately 1400 of our clients
- Effective 4/1/22 Postpartum extension: postpartum care period will extend from 60 days to 12 months, and broaden the scope of coverage to full-scope benefits during both the pregnancy and postpartum periods.

Employment and Training: The 21-22 CA budget proposed one-time and ongoing investments totaling \$353 million to support California's workers as they adapt to changes in the economy brought about by COVID-19. These investments lift up proven workforce development strategies like apprenticeship and High-Road Training Partnerships and encourage greater collaboration and coordination among California's institutions of higher learning and local workforce partners. Demand-driven workforce programs can help California train the workforce of the future in key sectors including health care and

technology. It is anticipated that partnerships across the Sonoma County Workforce Board and Community Based Organizations will ensure that this funding is used to build regional partnerships among workers, employers and community-based organizations to expand access to high-quality jobs in targeted industries in Sonoma County. This work will focus on growing sectors of the economy that support the state's equitable economic recovery and climate goals, including construction, forestry and agriculture, healthcare, trade and logistics, and information technology with a focus on improving employment outcomes for disadvantaged workers, with a focus on immigrant communities, homeless individuals, and workers displaced by the COVID-19 Pandemic.

Family, Youth and Children's Services: As part of the Continuum of Care Reform (CCR), FYC has an increased focus on placing children with a relative or extended family member wherever possible upon removal from a caregiver is in the best interests of the child. When this placement occurs, there are immediate tasks such as completing background and safety checks and home inspections to ensure that the emergency home provides a safe environment for a child are completed. At this time, there is no long-term Emergency Relative Placement support for Emergency Response Social Workers, which means that these social workers do their best to explore relatives and non-relatives but this is in addition to the separation process, children may be placed into emergency foster homes or Valley of the Moon who could be placed with relatives. Additional social work positions would ensure that children entering the foster care system have every relative and non-relative placement option explored at their point of entry, rather than several weeks later. Having this placement support will increase family connections, reduce child trauma, assist with long-term placement stability, and indirectly provide support to the family reunification process.

Additionally, the Families First Prevention Act (FFPA) is a major Federal revamp to child welfare funding and prioritizes services that focus on prevention. Enacted in February 2018 with implementation beginning in California in October 2021, it allows states and tribes, tribal organizations or consortiums who operate Title IV-E programs the option to use new open-ended Title IV-E funds to provide prevention services. It also provides potential new revenue for specific preventative services as well as services to relatives caring for children. While it is anticipated that partnerships with Community Based Organizations will ensure that service mandates are met, additional staffing to ensure compliance and to implement the programs is needed.

Respite child care and transportation are commonly the first barriers that potential caregivers cite and limits their ability to care for a child, especially for relative caregivers who the best placement options for a child. Supplemental funding for child care and school transportation which falls outside of program limitations would ensure these resources are available to potential families. When resource families, including relative caregivers, take children into their homes there are new challenges that they must address to continue to meet their family's daily needs and integrate the needs of the children coming into their care. Frequently, being able to address these needs impacts a family's ability to say yes to caring for a child or a child's ability to stay with someone they know such as a relative or extended family member. The inability to meet these needs can cause disruption of placement which is both traumatizing for the child and more expensive for the department to identify and move the child to a new home.

Increasing positions in these targeted areas would allow HSD to continue to build and enhance partnerships with community-based providers, support the timely response of our programs to requests for services and would allow each program to focus on developing programs which prevent

the conditions which bring customers to our systems of care. Positions dedicated to collecting and analyzing data would allow for improvement of services with a key focus on addressing race and equity issues through increased program oversight and program evaluation. HSD will continue to work with the CAO to evaluate staffing needs and funding capacity.

Location-based services: With the exception of social workers being in the community to meet with clients, the majority of HSD services are based in Santa Rosa. In 2014 with the opening of the South County Service Center in Petaluma, the office serves approximately 1400 customers per month across all HSD programs. While this traffic reduced during the COVID pandemic, it is back on an upward trend. There is also a need to provide greater services to the outlying areas of the County, in alignment with the Portrait of Sonoma County and the County Five Year Strategic Plan. In order to address this need, Employment and Training Job Link navigation staff will be assigned to outlying geographic areas within Sonoma County. Navigators will provide basic employment services to job seekers with staff co-located in community-based organizations and libraries in Sonoma, Guerneville, and Healdsburg. The purpose of Job Link navigation services is to assist job seekers with accessing existing state and federally funded employment services including job search, resumes and interviewing, financial assistance with training, job placement, and paid on-the-job training opportunities. Additionally, HSD continues to explore ways to expand services to remote communities through the American Rescue Plan (ARPA) proposal of a mobile unit.

Information Technology: With an increased emphasis to gather data to show program outcomes and with a focus on gathering data to support equity efforts, additional tools are needed to track and analyze data. Additionally, the technology landscape has shifted with a need to focus on cybersecurity.

Planning, Research and Community Engagement: Due to significant increases in the number of requests from community groups and other County-led initiatives to convene and provide technical support, HSD has identified a critical need for staff to deliver timely and appropriate resource connections and services. HSD's Planning Research Evaluation and Engagement Division (PREE) is engaged in County-sponsored community initiatives and is leading the implementation of Results Based Accountability (RBA). There is a backlog of unfulfilled requests for HSD support in the area of individual and stakeholder engagement, department-wide marketing, outreach and contracts that reflect a focus on equity and continuous improvement. Across the HSD, analysts are needed for assessment and improvement for data analysis, implementation, performance management and evaluation for the purposes of: assessing availability and quality of data required to identify disproportionality and disparity in outcomes for families of color or other marginalized groups; evaluating outcomes for all program areas; working with supervisors and line staff to identify inequity in their work through the use of data specific to their programs; forming recommendations for improvement or specific training needs based on analysis and meeting the requirements for evaluation; and fidelity monitoring required as part of the implementation of FFPSA funded programs.

Fiscal: Continued adoption and adaptation of existing technology will assist with fiscal processing, claiming, and leveraging of funds. An example is building the RBA model into contracts with Community Based Organizations and using this data to determine the impact on service delivery. For FY 21-22, 19 contracts will incorporate the RBA framework to track performance and outcome measures, and the Department will finalize the automation of

data collected from contracts to upload into a public facing online dashboard.

Emergency Response: As the lead agency, in partnership with the Department of Emergency Management (DEM), HSD is responsible for the Care and Shelter Branch of the Emergency Operations Center (EOC) during emergency situations. These responsibilities include managing this branch during activation in partnership with local jurisdictions and opening, operating and demobilizing emergency shelters across the County. As the frequency and intensity of these devastating events have increased over the last five years, HSD has moved into the role of ongoing, planning and practicing emergency response. There is an unmet need for positions dedicated to this specialized area and a need for a budget to support the resource requests needed to ensure a safe and comfortable evacuation experience for community members.