Connecticut Department of Social Services

Making a Difference

Testimony before the Appropriations and Human Services Committees
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Deputy Commissioner for Programs
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Good afternoon, Senators Harp and Musto, and Representatives, Walker and Tercyak, and members of the Human Services and Appropriations Committees. My name is Claudette Beaulieu and I am the Deputy Commissioner for programs at the Department of Social Services (DSS). I am here before you to seek your approval of the Governor's allocation plan for the Social Services Block Grant (SSBG) program and the Community Services Block Grant (CSBG) program.

Social Services Block Grant

The FFY 2012 SSBG Allocation Plan provides funding for services in 11 of 29 federally defined service categories, including case management, counseling, family planning services, home-based services, independent and transitional living services, legal services, protective services for adults, special services for persons with developmental disabilities, persons with visual or auditory impairments, substance abuse and transportation.

For FFY 2011, the SSBG was funded at a national level of $1.7 billion. Connecticut's available SSBG dollars included the block grant award of $19,466,287. In May 2011, Connecticut's allocation was reduced by $93,041 for a total grant to the state of $19,373,246. Historically, the state's SSBG allocation has been reduced due to population changes. We anticipate receiving a reduction in federal funds for FFY 2012, as well.

Although Congress has not yet approved the SSBG allocation for FFY 2012, the proposed plan before you is based on an estimated federal funding allocation of $18,404,584. The federal funding available for the SSBG program has decreased substantially over the years. In 1998, Connecticut received $28,494,775 in SSBG funding. Each year since then, funding has been reduced. Last year, Connecticut received approximately 32% less in SSBG funding than what was received in 1998.

In terms of funding for the FFY 2012 SSBG Allocation Plan, we are in the same situation as last year. However, in view of the reduction to our SSBG program in May 2011, and our projected estimated reduction of five percent in the federal budget, we have prepared our plan based upon a funding level of $18,404,584. The Department does not anticipate having any carry-forward funds in FFY 2012.

We have taken this conservative approach so that our contractors are able to plan for a full year of funding without concerns of being reduced during program operation. FFY 2011 was the first time in several years that the department did not have to reduce the SSBG contractors mid-program year due to our allocation planning based on an anticipated lower level of funding. We were able to pay our SSBG contractors up to our available allocations during a time of federal continuing resolutions.

As many of you know, federal funding levels are rarely settled prior to the beginning of the federal fiscal year. In fact, the final FFY 2011 SSBG allocation was not known until February. We remain hopeful that Congress will provide level funding for this important block grant. In the event that the anticipated dollars are less than our SSBG allocation plan, allocations will be adjusted proportionately. If additional funds become available, they will be carried over into FFY 2013 in order to mitigate any future federal reductions in FFY 2013 and ensure ongoing programmatic coverage.

The SSBG plan also includes $26,678,810 that will be transferred from the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) Block Grant. The transfer of TANF funds to the SSBG is reflected in the department's budget, as approved by the General Assembly. These funds must be appropriated to grantees that operate programs providing services to children and their families. The bulk of these funds provide services for child care, children's residential services, housing services, independent and transitional living, emergency shelters and the human services infrastructure. A list of the specific programs, amounts transferred from TANF for those programs and the appropriate SSBG service category are included in the plan on page 8.

The Department anticipates that on or about December 1, 2011, the Department will competitively procure the following service categories:

1. Case Management
2. Counseling Services
3. Family Planning
4. Legal Services
5. Protective Services for Adults

In accordance with P.A. 07-195, the Department will seek to competitively procure the above referenced human services. Under this act, the Secretary of OPM has established uniform policies and procedures for obtaining, managing and evaluating the quality and cost-effectiveness of direct health and human services purchased, and requires that all state human services agencies which purchase direct health and human services to comply with such policies and procedures. DSS will begin to competitively procure for the five services on or about December 1, 2011. We anticipate that the competitive procurement of these services will result in efficiency and cost-effectiveness to the state.

The estimated available allocation for these services is $3,714,270. Through the Department's competitive procurement process, five catchment areas for the provision of

the above core service categories will be identified. It should be noted that the current system does not include specific catchment areas. However, through regionalization of service delivery, the various services and applicable allocations will be provided proportionately to the area population and it is anticipated will result in fewer contractors than at the present time. Currently, there are 43 organizations with which the Department contracts for the above service categories. It is unknown at this time exactly how many contracts will result from this procurement, but it is the intent of the department to solicit proposals from contractors interested in providing a broad range of services in these areas. We expect that by reducing the number of contractors, we will reduce administrative costs and use more of our dollars for direct services.

The Department also allocates SSBG funds for the above-referenced services to other state agencies, such as Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services, Department of Developmental Disabilities, Office of Protection and Advocacy, Board of Education and Services for the Blind (BESB) and the Commission on Deaf and Hearing Impaired (CDHI) (due to state agency consolidations, BESB and CDHI are now consolidated within the Bureau of Rehabilitative Services (BRS)). These state agency consolidations do not affect the allocations to those agencies. SSBG funds are utilized by other state agencies for various social services programs. These services are subject to the procurement process within the respective state agency under their procurement plan established with OPM and in accordance with P.A. 07-195.

The last page of my testimony includes a list of several technical corrections to the SSBG plan that we intend to make to the plan prior to submitting to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

Community Services Block Grant

Although the federal budget has not been finalized, we anticipate that CSBG program funds will be subject to a Continuing Resolution for the foreseeable future. Based on that, we have prepared this year's allocation plan based on level funding in the amount of $8,160,904.

CSBG is the core funding source for the state's community action network. Community Action Agencies (CAAs) help low-income people to become self sufficient. The community action network improves living conditions and helps people have a stake in their community. Working in partnership with other service providers, businesses, the faith-based and the advocacy community, CAAs strengthen families and their environments, which help people living in and near poverty to lead more secure lives.

CSBG funds support a wide range of services and activities having a measurable impact on the causes of poverty in areas of the community where poverty is a particularly acute problem. Funds can be used for:

- addressing the needs of youth in low-income communities

- securing and retaining meaningful employment
- attaining an adequate education
- making better use of available income
- obtaining and maintaining adequate housing and a suitable living environment
- administrative and support costs that are not covered by other funds.

The state's twelve Community Action Agencies operate vital programs such as energy assistance, eviction prevention, weatherization and child day care. As reported in the 2010 CSBG-IS Report, last year the CAAs provided services to 373,886 Connecticut residents. Those services include:

- Employment and Training, assisted 5,261 unemployed individuals obtain employment. 1,677 employed individuals obtained an increase in employment and benefits.
- Financial Literacy and Asset Development, where 2,927 individuals demonstrated an increased knowledge of skills to manage income and increase savings through various asset-development programs
- Early Childhood Programs, where 6,437 children aged 0 to 5 attended quality programs that developed school readiness skills
- Housing and Shelter Services, where 4,364 households/families obtained and/or maintained safe and affordable housing. 4,023 households/families received either emergency shelter or emergency rental/mortgage payments.
- Energy and Weatherization Assistance, helping 104,161 households avoid heat or utility termination, or other fuel crisis through fuel or utility payment
- Nutrition Services, providing emergency or supplemental food to 26,683 households
- Elderly Support, assisting 18,902 seniors maintain active, independent living through specific services such as senior centers, home delivered meals, or home care
- Youth development and After School Services, helping 692 youth improved their social/emotional development. A total of 1,625 youth increased academic, athletic and social skills through participating in before or after school activities.
- Health Services, to include Health Access Services, Counseling, as well as AIDS

Prevention and Counseling, insuring that 7,974 individuals obtain access to needed healthcare.

- Family Strengthening & Fatherhood Programs- Over 5,000 parents and other adults learned and exhibited improved family functioning skills.

This year's plan allocates 92% of the 2012 federal block grant to the state's twelve CAAs and the Connecticut Association for Community Action (CAFCA). States are allowed, per federal CSBG regulations, to use up to 5% of the annual CSBG award to cover administrative costs, this year we will use 3% (which typically includes salaries, fringes and overhead as well as other expenses supporting the state's administrative, oversight and monitoring role), with another 5% for discretionary purposes, to include training and technical assistance and other innovative programming. This department anticipates using discretionary funds for training, technical assistance and initiative building for eligible entities, and compliance monitoring.

We continue to work closely with the CAAs to blend the federal CSBG and state Human Services Infrastructure (HSI) funding to maximize CAA resources in these challenging fiscal times. This unique partnership represents a real commitment to improve Connecticut's human service delivery system and ensure a more consistent experience for providers and clients. The framework of this system is a "one-stop" human service delivery model. This human service infrastructure system (HSI) enables the Community Action Agencies to work as a single services network, and to report on the outcomes of services and document the progress of low-income people towards self-sufficiency.

This year's plan continues to address contingencies if level funding is not received. In the event that anticipated funding is either increased or reduced, federal law, as noted above, specifies the proportion of funds allocated to Community Action Agencies, Discretionary Programs and Administration.

Thank you, my staff and I are available should you have any questions.

Technical Corrections to SSBG Plan

Errata
Pg. 8: last line FY2012-2012 is corrected to "FY 2012-2013"

Pg.16: Objective box for service code 17 – corrected to "Information and referral services are those services or activities designed to provide information and referral to various community providers. It also may include a brief assessment of he client needs (but not diagnosis and evaluation)"

Pg. 17: Grantor Agency Activity box for service code 25 is corrected to "developmental or physical disabilities"

Pg. 18: Objective box for service code 29 corrected to "Other services are services that do not fall within the above definitions but meet the purposes of the Social Services Block Grant"

Pg. 21: Family of 6, 150% column corrected to read "$44,985"