

COVID RESPONSE

Dane
County
Department of
Human
Services



CONTEXT

- New leadership team (7 of 10 new in their roles since April 2019).
- Values=transparency, empowerment, equity and inclusion.
- Major focus on building infrastructure, modernizing systems and making data and evidence-based decisions.
- Programmatically, the work we do is based on relationships and engagement across the board.

ADULT COMMUNITY SERVICES (ACS)

- Behavioral Health
 - Telehealth
- Senior Services
 - Transitioning to home-delivered meals
 - Mobilizing transportation providers to deliver groceries
- ADRC Operations
 - Remote and online
- Crisis Services
 - Bolstering Resource Bridge
- Adult Protective Services
 - Remote and online

BADGER PRAIRIE HEALTHCARE CENTER (BPHCC)

- Ceased all community recreational activities.
- Ceased all outside activities planned within the facility.
- Stopped all visits, except at end-of-life.
- Health screening and temperature checks for all staff and vendors upon every shift or trip to facility.
- Deeper procedures and protocols for equipment, cleaning and preparedness.
- Limited scheduling of staff who work at other locations beyond Badger Prairie.
- Planning for multiple scenarios of positive cases (shelter-in-place, dedicated stand-alone space, or repurposing of a full wing).
- All facility testing on Tuesday, May 26th.

CHILDREN, YOUTH, AND FAMILIES (CYF)

- Myriad of changes to judicial procedures to limit contact in youth justice (drug testing, electronic monitoring).
- Challenge of response complicated by “closing” of Lincoln Hills and Copper Lake, many more orders to return to community which escalated need for staff monitoring.
- Development of protocols with schools to watch for signs of abuse or neglect through online platforms.
- All routine check in’s, permanency planning and other touchpoints done virtually, or literally outdoors using social distancing.
- Still have averaged about 50 client contacts per week throughout the pandemic, responding to emergencies or needing to get kids to safe placements.

PREVENTION AND EARLY INTERVENTION (PEI)

- JFF tracking increased community calls or help and escalating them.
- Although offices closed, services still being done virtually.
- Development and implementation of protocols for foster parents including access to nursing services for kids who might be symptomatic.
- Readying access, staffing and procedures for alternate locations for foster care placements needed in the event of an emergency.
- Huge increase in need expressed for immigrant community, lots of coordination and collaboration with Centro Hispano.
- Delivery of Community Restorative Court and Americorps services virtually.

ECONOMIC ASSISTANCE AND WORK SERVICES (EAWS)

- Relocation of income maintenance call center to virtual (more than 2,000 phone calls/day).
- Early tripling of applications for Foodshare.
- Management of the job center closure amidst community angst about unemployment insurance status questions.
- Continued service delivery for W-2 and Emergency Assistance applications, in-person.
- Continued services for homeless mail, including working with Focus Counseling to bring mail to hotels that are sheltering those experiencing homelessness.
- Coordination of the child care grants program with 4C's.

FISCAL AND MANAGEMENT SERVICES (FMS)

- IT mobilization to allow *hundreds* of DCDHS staff to work remotely, almost literally overnight.
- Full scale up of teleconferencing capabilities for online virtual work.
- Electronic contract routing process (400 contracts/year).
- Online process developed and implemented for all time-keeping for DCDHS staff.
- Support for all on-going and new COVID budgeting and county resolution processing while simultaneously launching the 2021 budget process internally.

HOUSING ACCESS AND AFFORDABILITY (HAA)

- Full effort to achieve social distancing for our citizens experiencing homelessness.
- Development and implementation of all necessary supports for basic needs (food, security, case management).
- Conception and execution of Buy Dane Local initiative.
- Basic sanitation needs responses throughout the City.
- Planning and coordination with the City of Madison and other partners on all approaches and solutions.
- Day to day maintenance of all other housing and economic development efforts.
- Creation of eviction prevention strategy as well as efforts to ramp up housing efforts of those sheltering in hotels.

WHAT HAS WORKED

- Telehealth, critical gap filler and service strategy to reduce stigma.
- Work from home solution for DCDHS staff—beyond expectations.
- Achieving social distancing among homeless (limited positive cases and no shelter outbreaks).
- Early, quick and decisive decisions at Badger Prairie.
- Letting the experts adjust; groundswell of solutions from those doing the work.
- Using technology to improve engagement.
- Support from Public Health across the board.
- POS and community partners. Nothing short of amazing.

WHAT LIES AHEAD

- Reconstitution and balancing needs of the public for service and the safety of the community overall, including staff.
- The reality of the economic impact and knowing basic needs will be near crisis long after the pandemic abates. This is likely to make income and racial disparities even worse in our community.
- Simultaneously ramping up services in the short-term while planning for service cuts as early as 2021.
- Returning to deliberation and non-emergent planning, slowing down decision making.
- “Emergency fatigue”—how to help staff mentally heal from the trauma of what we’re experiencing.