



Kelly Andrisano, J.D., *Executive Director*
PACHSA
17 North Front Street
Harrisburg, PA 17101
Kandrisano@pacounties.org
(717) 232-7554 x 3132

HSDF: A COUNTY HUMAN SERVICES SAFETY NET

The Human Services Development Fund (HSDF) is one of the counties' most important human services funding sources as it allows counties flexibility in addressing human services needs. While HSDF is an extremely small line item in the Department of Public Welfare's budget, the funding is crucial, as it allows counties to use the funds not only where they are most needed, but where they can best reduce costs to human service programs in the long run.

First allocated in FY1984-1985 in the amount of \$4 million, HSDF was subsequently established under statute by the passage of Act 1994-78 on October 5, 1994, with the purpose of "encouraging county governments to provide locally identified services that will meet the human services needs of citizens in their counties." Funding for HSDF continued to grow from 1994-2002, when it was allocated at \$41 million. Unfortunately, after gradual reductions each year since FY 2002-2003, funding for HSDF was tragically eliminated from Governor Corbett's FY 2011-2012 budget. This elimination of funding has resulted in a collective loss of \$23 million in funds to the counties statewide that will be felt in local programming, as it is not just the elimination of a fund, it is the elimination of a source of flexibility in the counties' already strained human services systems. While the loss certainly impacts counties, interestingly HSDF equals less than one percent of the Department of Welfare's total current proposed budget.

Overall, HSDF is often thought of as an "adult services" fund, providing services for low income adults not covered by any other source. However, HSDF is much more flexible than that and actually allows counties to use the funds not only where they are most needed, but where they can best reduce costs to human service programs in the long run. Often these programs are preventative in nature and help citizens maintain and reach self-sufficiency, providing in-home care services as opposed to forcing individuals to turn to long-term care or institutionalization. HSDF also can be used to fund coordination of county human services programs, which prevents overlap and assists with a more efficient management.

Specific programs funded by HSDF vary from county to county, as one of the benefits of HSDF is allowing counties to use the money where it is most needed locally and with a wide variety of uses across the commonwealth. However, some of the programs funded by HSDF include: chore services for disabled adults, case management for homeless individuals and families, case management for those recently released from prison, sexual assault counseling for children, kidney dialysis transportation, "meals on wheels" programs, and after school safe haven programs for at risk teens.

These programs all make up the foundation of the human services “safety net,” providing thousands of individuals with a small amount of assistance that keeps them in their homes, helps them obtain employment as they become productive members of our communities. In one county, for example, HSDF funds a program that provides weekly meals to 29 individuals who are disabled, homebound, and have no other support system for obtaining access to food. It also helps provide personal care services to 22 disabled individuals to assist them with maintaining their health, hygiene and a clean home environment thus preventing eviction or institutionalization. While only \$274,698 of HSDF funds were used last year to help maintain these two programs, providing the same number of individuals with home and community based services through Medicaid could cost anywhere between \$630,870 and \$1,690,752, depending on the level of care needed and whether they are developmentally disabled or elderly. When these programs are looked at more closely, it is easy to see that without the necessary HSDF funding, the costs associated with other human service programs will increase dramatically.

Without HSDF, many local home and community based programs designed to prevent the need for long term care will be eliminated, money that pays for coordination and integration between categorical human service programs to eliminate overlap will not be funded, and prevention oriented programs that reduce the need for additional services will no longer exist. HSDF is a necessary fund, and its importance becomes even more evident when trying to identify cost savings within human services. It is vital that the fund be restored to continue the provision of necessary human services within our counties and to avoid unnecessary expenses in the long run.