

Human Services Director's Report
To the Health & Human Services Board
August 2021

Activity	Program/ Section	Brief Description	Contact Person	Attach- ment
Office Supervisor Renee Weston Transferring to Health Department	Administration	Effective Monday August 9, Renee Weston has transferred from her Office Supervisor position in the Human Services Department to a parallel position in the Health Department. This is a move that provides new opportunities for Renee as well as collaboration opportunities between our two departments. During her 19 years with Human Services, Renee's role expanded from providing support for the Director's Office to overseeing front-end reception, clerical and file room operations. She did an outstanding job with all of her responsibilities! We congratulate Renee on her new role and thank her for her years of service to our Department!	Director Jason Witt 785-6095 jwitt@lacrossecounty.org	No
Disability Awareness 	Aging & Disability Resource Center (ADRC)	In partnership with the Disability Action Network (DAN) and the Accessible Icon Project, the accessible parking signs in front of the Health & Human Services building have been updated. The original International Symbol of Access, designed in the 1960s, portrays the wheelchair user as passive, stationary. The updated icon, first introduced in 2011 in Boston, portrays the person in forward motion—a "driver" in charge of his/her own fate. People all over the US and the world have used the updated icon for a variety of events—bringing groups together to repaint or replace signs. DAN, as part of No Limits Ability Awareness Week, partnered with local businesses, like Health & Human Services, to take action and update.	ADRC Manager Carissa Pagel-Smith 785-6172 cpagel@lacrossecounty.org	No
Falls Prevention	Aging & Disability Resource Center (ADRC)	The La Crosse County Falls Prevention Coalition is hosting an afternoon at the movies on Tuesday, August 24! The movie, Strangers in Good Company, will begin at 2:30 PM; doors open at 2:00 PM. FREE falls prevention information and resources will be available. FREE admission on first come, first serve basis provided by the ADRC. To reserve your seat, call the ADRC at 608-785-5700.	ADRC Manager Carissa Pagel-Smith 785-6172 cpagel@lacrossecounty.org	No
Health Promotion	Aging & Disability Resource Center (ADRC)	A new evidence-based program, Physical Activity for Lifelong Success (PALS), will soon be offered in our community! PALS has been proven to help people who are not currently active (or active less than 60 minutes/week) improve their ability to perform activities of daily living. To learn more and/or determine if you are eligible to participate, call the ADRC at 608-785-5700. Class begins October 7.	ADRC Manager Carissa Pagel-Smith 785-6172 cpagel@lacrossecounty.org	No
Temporary COVID-Related Policy Waivers Scaling Back	Economic Support (ES)	A number of temporary public assistance program policy waivers were implemented in 2020 in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. The waivers were intended to ensure access to program benefits for individuals and families struggling financially because of the pandemic. While some of the policy waivers will remain in effect for the duration of the federal public health emergency, others will be incrementally rolled back throughout the rest of 2021. Annual Food Share renewal and verification requirements, both waived	ES Manager Lorie Graff 738-2410 lgraff@lacrossecounty.org	No

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		since March 2020, transitioned back to regular policy in July 2021. Beginning in July, households that receive Food Share will again be required to complete an annual re-eligibility review. Since March 2020, individuals applying or receiving Food Share or Medicaid were not required to provide written verification to support information they provided that was used to determine their eligibility for program benefits. Effective July 19, providing written documentation is again a required part of the eligibility determination process.		
Food Share Annual Management Evaluation Review (MER)	Economic Support (ES)	Food and Nutrition Services (FNS), the federal agency that oversees the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)/Food Share, requires an annual administrative review of all agencies that directly administer the program. This review is called the Food Share Management Evaluation Review (MER). Each year FNS designates target areas for review. For Federal Fiscal Year 2020, those areas included program access and customer service, Food Share accuracy, and compliance with training requirements. The Wisconsin Department of Health Services (DHS) reviews consortia error rates, reviews case files, conducts customer call reviews, reviews Food Share emergency card issuance and staff training logs, observes agency lobby operations, and conducts surveys of customers, advocates and consortium staff. WREA's 2020 MER was excellent. The Western Region for Economic Assistance's (WREA) Food Share accuracy rate for 2020 was at 5.54%, below the national standard of 6%. Results of the customer and advocate surveys conducted for WREA were exceptional. For example, 97% of customers surveyed indicated that WREA staff treat them with respect and were helpful. DHS commended WREA for the important services they provided throughout the pandemic.	ES Manager Lorie Graff 738-2410 lgraff@lacrossecounty.org	No
Wisconsin Home Energy Assistance Program (WHEAP) – Additional Funding Provided	Economic Support (ES)	La Crosse County administers the Wisconsin Home Energy Assistance Program (WHEAP). Financial challenges because of the COVID-19 pandemic have resulted in a significant increase in households struggling to afford their heating and electric costs. Federal and State WHEAP crisis benefit dollars are available to households experiencing an energy crisis. This includes a household that has no heat, has received a disconnect notice from their vendor, or is nearly out of fuel and is unable to purchase more. WHEAP agencies also receive administrative funding to support operational expenses incurred in determining eligibility for crisis benefits. The Wisconsin Department of Administration (DOA) has provided La Crosse County an additional \$260,000 in benefit dollars in Federal Fiscal Year to assist families facing an energy crisis. La Crosse County also received an additional \$105,000 to support operational costs incurred in determining eligibility for the increased applications. La Crosse County has been able to assist 630 households with \$374,713 in WHEAP Crisis benefits so far in 2021.	ES Manager Lorie Graff 738-2410 lgraff@lacrossecounty.org	No

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Foster Care Events & Programming	Family & Children's (FC)	<p>La Crosse County foster and relative care providers had a busy July as we started the month off at a Loggers game July 1 for Foster Care Day at the park, went for a night at the Interstate Race Way on July 10, and ended up at the Onalaska pool for the annual foster care pool party July 25! Everyone had a great time and were able to once again connect and network with other providers.</p> <p>We are gearing up for a Family Fun Day and back to school supply pick up at the Bethany Evangelical Free Church on August 21. Each youth in foster care will receive a backpack full of school supplies to start the year out in style while enjoying some food and fun activities.</p> <p>Our foster care mentoring program continues to be active as we connect experienced foster parents with new foster parents when they become licensed and check in with them with every placement to see how things are going. This additional support makes a big difference and offers providers another avenue to seek help when they have questions. Our Permanency Resource Unit social workers offer monthly training, support and guidance to the foster care mentors.</p>	FC Supervisor Lila Barlow 792-0630 lbarlow@lacssecounty.org	No
Co-Responder Pilot Program – Crisis Unit	Integrated Support & Recovery Services (ISRS)	<p>The ISRS Crisis Unit and La Crosse Police Department have begun to pilot a Co-Responder program, recognizing a need in the community to help further access and early intervention/prevention to those who struggle with mental health symptoms. Attached are a few links to press coverage on this new pilot program.</p> <p>Watch now: La Crosse police introduce co-responder program for mental health calls State and Regional News madison.com</p> <p>La Crosse Police Department, county create mental health crisis response program (news8000.com)</p> <p>Newsmakers, July 30, 2021 Wisconsin Public Radio (wpr.org)</p>	ISRS Manager Christin Skolnik 785-6019 cskolnik@lacssecounty.org	No
Comprehensive Community Services (CCS)/ Justice Support Services (JSS) Social Worker Position	Integrated Support & Recovery Services (ISRS)	<p>Recognizing the need for Collaboration between ISRS/Comprehensive Community Services (CCS) and Justice Support Services (JSS), a trained CCS Social Worker has been embedded within the JSS section. The goal with this position is to provide short-term case management alongside the Fresh Start grant (currently held within JSS) for individuals connected to the jail/treatment courts while accessing and offering CCS services to aid in recovery of mental health and/or substance abuse.</p>	ISRS Manager Christin Skolnik 785-6019 cskolnik@lacssecounty.org	No

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Mental Health Specialist Positions – Crisis Unit	Integrated Support & Recovery Services (ISRS)	<p>Positions funded within the 2021 budget were featured in the La Crosse Tribune recently. These 3.5 Mental Health Specialist positions were created with specific intentions of partnering in community response to crisis, early intervention/preventative response, and filling in gaps of service to individuals, children, youth, and families.</p> <p>https://lacrossetribune.com/news/local/county-connection-there-s-always-somebody-here-to-help/article_96aa3217-9870-51e6-972a-2b56d1cd1065.html?utm_medium=social&utm_source=email&utm_campaign=user-share</p>	<p>ISRS Manager Christin Skolnik 785-6019 cskolnik@lacrossecounty.org</p>	No
Coordinated Service Teams (CST) / La Crosse Area Family Collaborative (LAFC)/ CCS Social Worker Position	Integrated Support & Recovery Services (ISRS)	<p>Collaboration between La Crosse Area Family Collaborative (LAFC) and Comprehensive Community Services (CCS), along with funding through a State grant (CST) has allowed for a new community social worker position who is working with you involved in multiple systems of care. In recognizing the need for wrap around services for youth and families struggling with mental health and/or substance abuse, the goal of the partnership is to help create stronger coordination and collaboration between LAFC and CCS, providing early intervention and prevention services to youth and families.</p>	<p>ISRS Manager Christin Skolnik 785-6019 cskolnik@lacrossecounty.org</p>	No
New Hire	Justice Support Services (JSS)	<p>Tonya Van Tol was named the new Justice Support Services Manager. Tonya started in this role as of July 26. Tonya comes to us from Western, where she has been a long-standing partner and advocate of those JSS serves through her deep connection as developer and manager of Project Proven. In this capacity and others (including manager of outreach and hospitality and as an instructor) Tonya has been employed at Western for 8 years. Her background also includes coordinating criminal justice related programs focusing on domestic violence and substance abuse. Tonya is a licensed graduate social worker with a PhD in social work. This move brings Tonya “full circle” in that she began her career as an intern with La Crosse County JSS!</p>	<p>JSS Manager Tonya Van Tol 785-5815 tvantol@lacrossecounty.org</p>	No