



Legislative Council Staff

Nonpartisan Services for Colorado's Legislature

Memorandum

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TO: Interested Persons

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SUBJECT: Colorado's Human Services Delivery Structure

Summary

This memorandum provides a brief overview of the human services delivery structure in Colorado, which is primarily state-supervised and county-delivered. This includes an overview of the Department of Human Services (CDHS); the offices, divisions, and boards within CDHS; and a brief description of the services delivered through Colorado's 64 county departments of human or social services.

For information about recent legislation regarding human services, see Legislative Council Staff's [Summary of Major Legislation: Human Services](#).

Department Overview

CDHS is the state agency that administers and supervises all non-medical public assistance and welfare programs in the state that improve the safety, independence, and well-being of Coloradans. The programs and services directly support children, families, veterans, older adults, persons with disabilities, and persons with mental and behavioral health needs. Major services include child welfare, economic and food assistance, and support for older adults and people with disabilities. CDHS delivers these programs through state-run facilities, as well as locally in collaboration with counties across the state.

CDHS has an approximate \$2.6 billion [annual budget](#)¹ and receives a combination of federal, state, and local funds. CDHS receives \$1.3 billion in state General Fund appropriations and \$655 million in federal funds to administer federal programs, such as the Supplemental Nutrition

¹ FY 2025-26 Long Bill ([Senate Bill 25-206](#)), CDHS Operating Agency Budget.



Assistance Program, the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families Program, and child welfare services. It also receives local matching funds for some programs.

CDHS employs approximately 5,500 people and has 330 buildings that include central offices, regional centers, and direct care facilities. The department is led by an Executive Director and is comprised of offices and divisions that manage service delivery, policy implementation, and financial management, which are described in detail below.

Service Delivery Units Within the Department of Human Services

CDHS is overseen by a [leadership and management team](#) that includes the Executive Director's Office, the Operations and Strategy Team, the Financial Services team, the Health Facilities team, and the Community Partnerships team. CDHS is further divided into four service delivery units, including:

- the Office of Adult, Aging, and Disability Services (OAADS);
- the Office of Civil and Forensic Mental Health (OCFMH);
- the Office of Children, Youth, and Families (OCYF); and
- the Office of Economic Security (OES).

Prior to 2022, early childhood and behavioral health service delivery were also within CDHS' purview, but became separate entities through legislation passed that year – [House Bill 22-1295](#) created the Department of Early Childhood and [House Bill 22-1278](#) created the Behavioral Health Administration (BHA). However, while the BHA operates independently, it is currently housed within CDHS for administrative and budgetary purposes.

Generally, each office provides services to specific populations. In some cases, services may overlap with other offices within CDHS. The following sections provide additional detail on the four offices in CDHS and the major programs and divisions within each office.

Office of Adult, Aging, and Disability Services

The Office of Adult, Aging, and Disability Services provides services to individuals with disabilities, veterans, and seniors. The office also runs full-time residential care facilities for veterans and individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities throughout the state.



Aging and Adult Protective Services Division

The Aging and Adult Protective Services Division oversees and supports county-administered programs for at-risk adults. These programs include services to allow seniors to remain in their homes, as well as protection services, such as Adult Protective Services, that investigate and respond to allegations of mistreatment.² The division also houses the State Unit on Aging, which provides resources to older adults, including nutrition services, legal assistance, employment services, and caregiver support.

Disability Determination Services

Disability Determination Services determines eligibility for federal Social Security disability benefit claims made by Colorado residents. The federal government funds this office.

Division for Regional Center Operations

The Division for Regional Center Operations operates the three state-owned regional centers-located in Grand Junction, Pueblo, and Wheat Ridge. Regional centers provide 24-hour residential, medical, habilitation, and behavioral support for adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities who require specialized or intensive levels of service. The centers are considered the provider of last resort for these adults. There are three types of treatment models provided by state's regional centers: short-term treatment and stabilization, intensive treatment, and long-term habitation.

- **Short-term treatment and stabilization.** Individuals are admitted for short-term services when they have acute needs that cannot be met in the community. Individuals in this program are stabilized and transitioned to a less restrictive environment within the community once they meet transition criteria.
- **Intensive treatment.** This program provides treatment and support to individuals demonstrating problematic behaviors who have not responded to treatment in the community. Individuals in the intensive treatment program receive treatment and then transition back into the community once transition criteria is met.

² For more information, see Legislative Council Staff's [issue brief on Adult Protective Services](#).



- **Long-term habilitation.** This program provides long-term housing and services in an institutional setting to persons with disabilities. As individuals are stabilized, they are transitioned to a less restrictive environment in the community. Regional centers have individuals in the long-term habilitation model, however, this program no longer accepts new admissions.

Veterans Community Living Centers

Veterans Community Living Centers are long-term care and supportive living environments that provide long-term nursing home care, short-term rehabilitation, assisted living, memory care, respite care, and hospice services to honorably discharged veterans, their spouses, and Gold Star parents. Each center is licensed by the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment and certified by the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs. The state oversees five centers, with four operated by the state in Aurora, Florence, Monte Vista, and Rifle, and one operated by a local hospital district in Walsenberg.

Colorado Commission for the Deaf, Hard of Hearing, and DeafBlind.

The Commission supports individuals who are blind, print-disabled, deaf, hard of hearing, or deafblind. It operates nine programs, including free telecommunications equipment for eligible recipients; sign language interpreting and translation services for court proceedings; support services that allow individuals to live independently in their communities; early hearing intervention for young children; and free statewide outreach and training. In 2025, the Commission and its programs were modified by [House Bill 25-1154](#), which created the Communication Services for People with Disabilities Enterprise as a new state-run business within the CDHS, relocated the Commission's programs and services to the enterprise, and consolidated existing telephone relay services and related telephone fees under the enterprise.

Office of Civil and Forensic Mental Health

The Office of Civil and Forensic Mental Health oversees two state-operated mental health hospitals, the Forensic Services Division, and the Division of Mental Health Transitional Living. The services provided by the office support **civil patients** (individuals involved in civil cases related to a serious or persistent mental health condition) and **forensic patients** (individuals charged with a crime who have a mental health condition that prevents them from understanding court proceedings or those charged with a crime but found not guilty by reason of insanity).



State-operated Mental Health Hospitals

The office oversees the two state-operated mental health institutions that provide inpatient behavioral health services for adults, adolescents, and geriatric patients with pending criminal charges who require evaluations of competency, who have been found by a court to be incompetent to proceed, or who have been found not guilty by reason of insanity. The [Colorado Mental Health Hospital at Fort Logan](#) is a 116-bed civil and forensic hospital and the [Colorado Mental Health Hospital at Pueblo](#) is a 516-bed civil and forensic hospital.

Division of Mental Health Living

The Division of Mental Health Living operates the Mental Health Transitional Living Home Program, which provides individuals with mental health conditions who are leaving inpatient hospitalization with full supervised support in a residential setting to help them eventually transition back into the community successfully.

Forensic Service Division

The Forensic Service Division runs five programs to manage court orders for forensic services and provide related forensic services. The programs provide court-ordered evaluations around mental conditions, manage community transitions from hospitals for people found not guilty by reason of insanity, provide jail-based competency restoration services, and provide case management and assistance for individuals involved in the forensic mental health system.

Office of Children, Youth, and Families

The Office of Children, Youth, and Families coordinates services for vulnerable youth and families. The office oversees the Division of Child Welfare, Division of Community Programs, and the Division of Youth Services, as well as the Medical Team.

Division of Child Welfare

The Division of Child Welfare trains and oversees county departments of child protection services, which provide support, maltreatment prevention, and intervention services for families and youth experiencing or at-risk of child abuse or neglect, as well as child placement services when children must be removed from their homes. The division passes through state and federal funding that comprises 80 percent of child welfare funding, with counties providing the remaining 20 percent.



The division also operates the Child Abuse and Neglect hotline, which provides a central number for people to call when they suspect child abuse and neglect. The division also licenses and monitors all 24-hour child care providers, including foster homes, qualified residential treatment programs, and psychiatric residential treatment facilities.

Division of Youth Services

The Division of Youth Services operates the statewide juvenile justice system for juveniles aged 10 through 21. Its detention facilities are used to house youth who are suspected of committing a crime but who have not been adjudicated by a court, while its commitment facilities house youth who have been adjudicated as delinquent by a court. The state owns and operates 14 facilities. Each facility is equipped with a medical unit and provides health and educational services to youth. The division also administers juvenile parole services and oversees the Colorado Youth Detention Continuum (CYDC), which allocates funding and provides guidance to local jurisdictions to ensure youth involved in the juvenile justice system are appropriately placed and supervised.

Division of Community Programs

The Division of Community Programs runs the Collaborative Management Program, Colorado Sexual Health Initiative, Domestic Violence Program, Juvenile Parole Board, MINDSOURCE Brain Injury Network, and the Tony Grampsas Youth Services Program.

- [Collaborative Management Program](#). The program helps counties and state agencies develop collaborative management structures to improve social delivery systems in the state for youth and their families.
- [Colorado Sexual Health Initiative](#). The Colorado Sexual Health Initiative distributes federal grants to county-administered youth education programs that teach abstinence and contraception to prevent pregnancies and sexually transmitted infections. Federal guidelines require the funds to be targeted at young people who are homeless, in foster care, live in rural areas, live in areas with high teen birth rates, or come from racial or ethnic minority groups.
- [Domestic Violence Program](#). The Domestic Violence Program contracts with community-based advocacy organizations throughout the state in order to promote the safety and well-being of domestic abuse survivors and to prevent future domestic abuse.



- [Juvenile Parole Board](#). The Juvenile Parole Board determines when youth committed to the custody of the DYS are released on parole, monitors youth compliance with parole requirements, and helps support successful community reintegration for these youth.
- [MINDSOURCE – Brain Injury Network](#). MINDSOURCE funds direct services, research, and education for individuals living with brain injuries, while raising statewide awareness of brain injuries.
- [Tony Gramscas Youth Services Program](#). The Tony Gramscas Youth Services Program provides funding to local organizations for prevention and intervention programs for youth and their families that prevent crime, substance use, child abuse and neglect, and school dropouts.

Medical Team

The Medical Team oversees the psychiatric and medical care of youth involved in the child welfare and juvenile justice systems.

Office of Economic Security

The Office of Economic Security provides economic support to those in need, including help with employment, income, nutrition, and other services. The office consists of four divisions: the Division of Child Support, the Division of Economic and Workforce Support, the Division of Food and Energy Assistance, and the Staff Development Division.

Division of Child Support

The Division of Child Support establishes paternity, locates absent parents, enforces child support orders, and tracks child support payments. The Division also connects parents with resources to help them overcome barriers that are impeding their ability to pay child support.

Division of Economic and Workforce Support

The Division of Economic and Workforce Support administers several programs that connect adults to cash assistance, employment, and services that reduce poverty and increase stability, including the Aid to the Needy Disabled program, Burial Assistance Program, Colorado Works (Colorado's Temporary Assistance for Needy Families Program, TANF), Colorado Works Subsidized Training and Employment Program, Employment First, the Diaper Distribution Program, the Old Age Pension Program, Home Care Allowance, and ReHire Colorado.



Division of Food and Energy Assistance

The Division of Food and Energy Assistance manages the federally funded Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), or “food stamp” program, and other federal food distribution programs, as well as the Low-Income Energy Assistance Program (LEAP), which provides heating assistance and energy improvements to low-income households. The Division also operates a state-owned warehouse to administer the National School Lunch Program’s Commodities Food Program, where commodities are received, stored, and delivered statewide.

Staff Development Division

The Staff Development Division develops and delivers training for eligibility specialists working in counties and at Medical Assistance Sites who support families seeking public assistance, including Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), Medical Assistance, Long-Term Care, and Colorado Works. It is a matrixed organization, comprised of funds and staff from both CDHS and the Department of Health Care Policy and Financing (HCPF).

County Departments of Human Services

County departments of human services are governed by their county board of human services, which is usually comprised of the county’s commissioners. There are also two tribal social services offices. If approved by CDHS, two or more counties may form a district department of human services. CDHS provides general oversight for county departments, but has no role in hiring directors or in supervising county department staff. Duties of the county departments and boards are established according to federal and state laws, as well as rules and regulations adopted by the State Board of Human Services. County departments are the main providers of direct services in their communities. The CDHS website has information on [how to contact each county department](#) in the state.

The primary human services programs supervised by the state and administered by county departments of human services include:

- adult protective services;
- Aid to the Needy Disabled Program;
- child support enforcement;
- child welfare services;
- Colorado Works (TANF);
- food assistance;



- the Low-Income Energy Assistance Program; and
- the Old Age Pension Program.

Boards Within the Department of Human Services

CDHS oversees several types of boards and commissions, including the State Board of Human Services, statutory boards, and non-statutory internal boards.

State Board of Human Services

The [State Board of Human Services](#) is a rulemaking body that holds hearings and adopts rules related to the formulation and revision of the policies of CDHS. While the State Board of Human Services is housed within and administratively supported by the CDHS, the board performs its functions independently from the department's executive leadership as a Type 1 agency under Colorado law.

The board consists of nine members serving four-year terms who are appointed by the Governor and confirmed by the Senate. State law requires three board members to be acting county commissioners and at least one board member to be a person with a disability, a family member of a person with a disability, or a member of an advocacy group for persons with disabilities. No board member may be a recipient of Old Age Pension funds. A county commissioner is prohibited from voting on any matter before the board that affects the county in which he or she is serving as commissioner in a manner different from other counties.

Board members serve without compensation, with the exception of necessary and actual traveling expenses. The board must act only by resolution adopted at a duly called board meeting, and no individual member of the board can exercise administrative authority with respect to CDHS. All meetings of the State Board of Human Services are broadcast online and accept remote testimony.

The board's rulemaking duties include:

- program scope and content;
- requirements, obligations and rights of clients;
- adopting rules concerning vendors, providers, and other CDHS acts that are not under the purview of the CDHS executive director;
- adjusting the award amounts for the Old Age Pension; and



- any other specific statutory provisions granting rulemaking authority in relation to specific programs.

Statutory Boards in CDHS

Statutory boards and commissions are created by state law. Some of these boards are also federally required. Most of the members of these boards are appointed by the Governor or by leadership of the General Assembly. Table 1 lists all CDHS boards and commissions that are established in state law.

Table 1
Statutory Boards in the Department of Human Services

Body	C.R.S.	Office	Charge
Colorado Commission on Aging	26-11-101	OAADS	The commission studies, coordinates, and promotes issues related to older people living in the state.
Colorado Commission for the Deaf, Hard of Hearing, and DeafBlind	26-21-101	OAADS	The commission serves as a liaison, resource, and referral agency between public and private agencies and citizens who are deaf, hard-of-hearing, or deafblind. A Grant Program Committee and a Citizens Council are established within the commission.
Colorado Developmental Disabilities Council	27-10.5-201	OAADS	The council develops and monitors a state plan for developmental disabilities, as required under federal law, and reviews and advises on providing services and support to persons with developmental disabilities.
Board of Commissioners of Veterans Community Living Centers	26-12-401	OAADS	The board advises the administrators of Veterans Community Living Centers. Each center is also required under state law to have a local advisory board.
Adoption Intermediary Commission	19-5-303	OCYF	The commission creates training standards for individuals involved with child placement; monitors training programs; and maintains a training completion list for the Judicial Department.
Child Fatality Review Team	26-1-139	OCYF	The team reviews cases of egregious abuse or neglect against a child, near fatalities, and child fatalities and reports annually on its findings.
Child Welfare Allocations Committee	26-5-103.5	OCYF	The committee makes recommendations to CDHS on how child welfare funding should be allocated to counties.



Body	C.R.S.	Office	Charge
Foster Youth Successful Transition to Adulthood Grant Program Advisory Board	19-7-314	OCYF	The advisory board reviews program guidelines and provides recommendation for the state grant program.
Juvenile Parole Board	19-2.5-1201	OCYF	The board reviews parole cases for juveniles in the DYS. Counties are also permitted to create Juvenile Community Review Boards to approve residential community placements and Local Juvenile Services Planning Committees to plan for the allocation of juvenile services resources within a judicial district.
Colorado Brain Injury Trust Fund Board (MINDSOURCE)	26-1-302	OCYF	The board makes determinations on annual spending for service coordination and skills training for persons with brain injuries.
Tony Grampsas Youth Services Board	26-6.8-101	OCYF	The board establishes guidelines for the program and makes grant funding recommendations which are sent to the Governor for final approval.
Youth Seclusion Working Group	26-20-110	OCYF	The group advises DYS on policies, procedures, and best practices related to youth seclusion and alternatives.
Working Group for Criteria for Placement of Juvenile Offenders	19-2-212; 24-60-702	OCYF	The working group, or the Colorado Youth Detention Continuum Advisory Board, must establish a set of criteria for both detention and commitment for the purposes of determining which juvenile offenders are appropriate for placement in the physical or legal custody of the CDHS. The group also services as the Council for Interstate Juvenile Supervision.
Child Support Commission	14-10-115 (16)	OES	The commission, required under the federal Social Security Act, reviews child support guidelines and reports every four years to the Governor and the General Assembly on its review and any recommended changes.
Colorado Works Allocation Committee	26-2-714 (6)(c)(IV)	OES	The committee provides input to CDHS about the allocation of TANF grants to counties and determines the priority criteria and the amount of transfers to counties of available TANF funds.

Source: Prepared by Legislative Council Staff



Internal Boards and Commissions

CDHS has also created non-statutory internal boards, commissions, and other bodies to advise the department on programs, policies, priorities, and other issues as defined by their respective enabling documents. Members are usually appointed by the Executive Director, but can also be appointed by office directors, counties, and other entities. The recommendations and findings of these boards and commissions may be sent by the CHDS to the Governor and General Assembly. Each board listed below contains a link to the related CDHS website. Some task forces and working groups have been omitted because they fall under a larger group or are time-limited.

- [24 Hour Appeal Panel](#)
- [Aging Policy Advisory Committee](#)
- [Chafee Funding Methodology Work Group](#)
- [Child Welfare Prevention Task Group](#)
- [Children's Justice Act Task Force](#)
- [Collaborative Management Program Steering Committee](#)
- [Core Services Coordinators](#)
- [CFSR Round 4 Implementation Team](#)
- [Family Voice Council](#)
- [Former Foster Care Youth Steering Committee](#)
- [Human Trafficking Task Group](#)
- [Institutional Assessment Review Team](#)
- [Policy Advisory Committee](#)
- [Trails User Group](#)
- [Training Steering Committee](#)