Forest, Oneida, and Vilas Counties
Feasibility Study
Governance & Management Structures
for Human and Social Services

March 2024

Developed by
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Patrick Cork Counseling & Consulting LLC

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Acronyms

DCP: Department of Community Programs (statutorily defined in WI SS Chapter 51)
DSS: Department of Social Services (statutorily defined in WI SS Chapter 46)
FOV: Forest, Oneida, Vilas Counties
HSC: The Human Service Center (the DCP agency serving the FOV Counties)
HSD: Human Service Department (statutorily defined in WI SS Chapter 46)

Introduction

Human and social services in Forest, Oneida, and Vilas Counties are provided through a mix of service organizations including public and private agencies. This report focuses on the role of public agencies. These agencies receive designated public funds from the state of Wisconsin and local funds from the Counties which administer programs. Grant and third-party payer funds are accessed specifically to assigned programs.

This report will use references to human and social services. For clarity, human services include mental health, substance use, and services to children with disabilities (Children's Long Term Support Waiver, Birth to Three programming), these services are provided by a Department of Community Programs (DCP). The DCP agency serving Forest, Oneida, and Vilas (FOV) Counties is the Human Service Center (HSC). Social services include programs to address child and family welfare, child and adult protective services, income maintenance, and juvenile justice populations. In some cases, social services may incorporate programs to support aging populations. These services are provided by Departments of Social Services (DSS) in the FOV Counties.

The provision of public human and social services are defined in Wisconsin State Statute. This includes definitions of agencies mandated to provide services and descriptions of services to be offered. The allowable governance structures for public human and social services agencies are also addressed in State Statute. Counties can choose a governance structure based on local needs. The chosen governance structure influences the administrative design and management of the agencies.

In the autumn of 2023, the Forest, Oneida, and Vilas County Boards passed resolutions to terminate the contract which supports the existing multi-county Department of Community Programs (aka The Human Service Center for Forest, Oneida, and Vilas Counties). The decision to terminate the contract serves notice to each county and the HSC of the potential for the counties to modify how they govern and administer public human and social services.

Oneida County, on behalf of the FOV Counites, issued a Request for Qualifications in October 2023 to secure a consulting agency to complete a Feasibility Study focused on governance and management structures for county based human and social services. This report summarizes the Feasibility Study and offers recommendation(s) for governance structures. The decision to change the governance structure of a county-based organization is the responsibility of the local County Board. As such the information in this report offers background for County Board deliberations and action as considered appropriate.

Executive Summary

The Feasibility Study outlined in this report occurred over a four-month period. Planning for the Study began in November of 2023. The Study was designed to gather information from identified Stakeholder Groups about the provision of human and social services in their current

form and the potential to modify governance and management of these services. Stakeholder Groups were identified based on their interaction with human and social services in the FOV Counties. The consulting agency scheduled, coordinated, and attended each Stakeholder Group serving as the sponsor of the meeting. A meeting agenda was created which was used for all Stakeholder Groups (there were minor revisions to the agenda for one meeting). Two handouts were offered to meeting participants. One outlined the history of the development of human and social services in Wisconsin and offered a summary of allowable governance structures for public agencies. The remaining handout provided "Talking Points" about the Feasibility Study. This document offered information to describe the Study, a general email address was provided for people to submit comments and questions about the process. The Stakeholder meeting agendas and handouts referenced are offered in the Appendices section of this report.

Sixteen interviews were conducted with identified Stakeholder Groups. Feedback and recommendations were collected and classified. Stakeholder Groups were formed to include small groups of people with similar interests in human/social services. Stakeholders participating in interviews include representatives from the following groups:

- County Board Officials from FOV Counties (Board Chairpersons, First Chairs, Chairpersons of Social Service Committees, and others)
- Forest County Potawatomi Tribal Nation
- Lac du Flambeau Tribal Nation
- Sokaogon (Mole Lake) Tribal Nation
- Consumers, Family Members, People with Lived Experience
- Human Service Center Board members and staff
- Representatives from FOV Corporation Counsel's offices
- Directors from FOV County Departments of Social Services
- Management representatives from Aging, Health, and DSS agencies in the FOV Counties
- Representatives from FOV Law Enforcement Agencies (invited participants include Sheriff Departments and police departments)
- Behavioral Health Provider Agencies serving the FOV Counties
- Representatives from FOV School Districts
- Representatives from the Wisconsin Department of Health Services, Area Administration, Rhinelander, WI

This report reviews information about existing governance structures for human and social services and the potential to modify these structures. Information from interviews with Stakeholder Groups is provided with common concerns, themes, and preferences noted.

Recommendations for how FOV Counties may proceed in establishing governance structures are offered. Additional recommendations gathered from Stakeholders regarding the process of change and opportunities to engage Stakeholders are included.

FOV Counties: Background on Existing Governance Structures

The FOV agencies which provide human and social services include three single-county Departments of Social Services (one in each County) and one multi-county Department of Community Programs (The Human Service Center for Forest, Oneida, and Vilas Counties). The HSC was created when the FOV Counties agreed to contract with each other to support the multi-county DCP. The resolutions creating the multi-county DCP were written in the 1970s.

County Departments of Social Services (DSS) are identified in State Statute (SS Chapter 46) as a governmental agency. They are supervised by County Board Officials. Counties with Executive or Administrator positions may serve to supervise DSS agencies, but they do so at the direction of the County Board. Typically, County Boards develop Social Service Board Committees, these are Board members who serve to monitor DSS programming and communicate information to the full County Board.

Counties who join with other counties to develop a multi-county DCP agency are creating what has been referenced as a quasi-governmental organization. These DCP agencies receive public funding but do not report directly to the County Board(s) which created them. Instead, these agencies develop a Board of Directors defined in State Statute (SS Chapter 51). The DCP Board consists of County Board members from affiliated counties and citizen members (selected residents of the counties served). State Statute requires DCP Boards to include representatives who are (or were) consumers (and/or family members) of DCP services.

Single and multi-county DCP organizations were developed in response to mandated services targeted to address mental health and the de-institutionalization of individuals with serious and persistent mental health concerns. Many rural counties in WI formed multi-county DCP agencies to share resources and costs to support programming directed at mental health consumers. Over time, substance use services were added to the responsibilities of DCP organizations. Programming to support individuals with intellectual or developmental disabilities was also once the responsibility of DCP agencies. These services, for adults, were "carved out" of DCP organizations when Wisconsin created the Family Care program. A significant portion of DCP budgets were devoted to adult disability programming. This funding shifted to Family Care managed care organizations which now serve eligible elders and adults with disabilities. In many counties (including FOV Counites) DCP agencies continue to provide programming for children with physical, developmental, or emotional disabilities.

The design noted above with separate county DSS and DCP agencies was commonplace in Wisconsin for many years. Examples of single county DSS agencies and single or multi-county DCP agencies existed across the state. Beginning in the 1990s, and the decades to follow, counties began developing Human Service Departments (HSD). Counties influenced legislation to create State Statue defining Human Service Departments (SS Chapter 46). HSDs combine services provided by DSS and DCP organizations into one agency. HSD agencies can also include other county-based services such as aging, health, and veterans' services. The combination of services incorporated into an HSD is at the county's discretion.

Allowable Governance Structures

Information in this section of the report offers potential governance structures for human and social services in the FOV Counties. The options illustrated below are described in detail.

Options: Governance Structures for Human & Social Services

1.	2.	3.	4.
Maintain Existing Single County DSS & Multi County DCP Structure, Re-Write HSC Contract with Performance Objectives	Maintain Existing Single County DSS & Multi County DCP Structure, Re-Write HSC Contract with an FOV Executive Committee	Develop Single Human Service Department Governance Structures for each FOV County	Develop Regional Human Service Department Governance Structure for all FOV Counties

Less Change ←-------------------------------------**County Governance Structure**--→ More Change

Options 1 and 2 maintain the existing single county DSS agencies and multi-county DCP governance structure by developing a new contract with the Human Service Center. These options are offered as requiring less change to county government, they do not create new agencies or governance structures. It is noted here, the Counties can contract with any willing provider for DCP services. However, there is no agency other than the HSC that is available, qualified, and staffed to provide these services in the FOV Counties. Recruiting a provider other than the HSC is not deemed feasible in the timeframe allowed (the existing County contracts with the HSC ends in December 2024).

Option 1 creates a new contract with the HSC. Such a contract could be negotiated in the calendar year 2024. The HSC and the FOV Counties can insert language about expectations for performance and agency relations. The FOV Counties could specify performance-related objectives (i.e. services be provided in-person at designated locations in each county). The HSC could specify the identified process for contract oversight and conflict resolution.

Option 2 is offered which maintains the existing governance structures including the multi-county DCP. This option involves developing a new contract with the HSC. This contract would include language creating an Executive Committee consisting of appointed members from each of the FOV Counties. Examples of appointed members to the Executive Committee may include the County Board Chairperson, a County Administrator (where one exists), the County Finance Director, a DSS Director or another individual of the County's choosing. The contract could be written such that the HSC Director reports to the Executive Committee. Fiscal decisions could be under the authority of the Executive Committee. This option creates a more direct level of oversight for DCP performance and fiscal management. This model was adopted by an existing multi-county DCP in Wisconsin. If this option is chosen, the HSC and the FOV Counties would need to address the role of the HSC Board of Directors. This Board could continue functions with policy development and oversight of operations but would not have direct authority for the DCP Director and budget decisions.

Options 3 and 4 require the FOV Counties to change governance structures for human and social service agencies by developing Human Service Department(s). This entails combining the services offered by DSS agencies with the multi-county DCP agency. Option 3 creates a single county HSD organization in each FOV County. Option 4 describes a regional HSD serving the three-county area.

Option 3 has each FOV County creating a Human Service Department which would function to manage human and social services in the respective County. To date, 63 of Wisconsin's 72 counties have transitioned to an HSD structure. The writer reviewed several Feasibility Studies and Implementation Plans completed by Wisconsin counties who have transitioned to an HSD structure. The development of an HSD is noted to:

- Improve access to services for clients/consumers.
- Improve coordination of services for individuals/families involved in county based human and social service programming.
- Creates a governance design where both human and social services report to a County Executive, Administrator, or Board Committee (HSD agencies do not function with a self-governing Board of Directors as DCP agencies do). This structural design has been noted to increase fiscal and programmatic accountability to the County Board, Board Committees, and taxpayers.
- Reduces the number of county governmental (and quasi-governmental) agencies by combining human and social services into one organization. Realizes available efficiencies where possible.

The FOV Counties have a history of supporting one another via the multi-county DCP contract. This history does not require the Counties to maintain the multi-county DCP structure indefinitely. Any one of the three Counties can decide to develop a single county HSD. Creating an HSD requires action and approval by the County Board. If one County creates an HSD, the remaining two Counties have options to consider. This may include developing a single county HSD structure, developing a two-county DCP structure, or researching the potential to join other surrounding county structures for the provision of human and social services. The potential configurations are varied and depend on the FOV Counties decisions. Not all potential configurations can be addressed in this report.

As noted above, there are many examples of counties with small, medium, and large populations developing HSD structures. To date, no Wisconsin County has developed an HSD structure and subsequently changed that structure to an alternate option (although this is allowable). HSD structures require the development of a public HSD Board. The HSD Board composition is addressed in State Statute.

Counties who transition to an HSD structure do not typically realize significant savings in agency budgets. The largest expense in county budgets are personnel (staffing/benefits) and program operations, these budget allocations are not known to change based on transitions to an HSD structure. Counties who transition to HSD structures maintain existing services and often

supplement services focused on areas of need. Prevention services to reduce alternate care for children and/or inpatient hospital stays for juveniles and adults are typically recognized as areas of need.

Option 4 creates a regional HSD structure. This is an allowable structure in Wisconsin State Statutes. A regional HSD governance structure for the FOV Counties would combine the three Counties' DSS and DCP services into one regional organization. The HSD Board would consist of representatives from all three of the FOV Counties. Although this is an allowable structure, there are no existing groups of counties using this model. Such a governance structure could create conflict between member counties about authority for fiscal and programmatic decisions. This model may also impact the practice of affiliated partner agencies such as law enforcement. For example, it may be challenging to create uniform policy and practice about how social and human services interact with law enforcement agencies across three counties (the FOV Counties contain more than ten law enforcement organizations).

Stakeholder Groups Advice

Information in this section reviews information and recommendations from Stakeholder meetings. This report was not designed to identify problems and provide recommendations for improvements in direct human/social services. Comments from Stakeholder groups highlight themes noted across meetings:

- Most of the Stakeholder groups expressed concern with the practice of replacing in-person contact with telephone or virtual contact for clients receiving human services. This was noted for crisis assessments and case management services following an individual who experiences an inpatient hospital stay.
- Stakeholders in Forest and Vilas Counties do not recognize human services being accessible in their Counties. They suggest there is a lack of in-person contact in the Counties and residents and service agencies are not aware of the human services offered. The HSC indicates services to individuals and families are confidential, and as a result are "unseen" but operational.
- The existing governance structures with separate DSS and DCP agencies were noted by Stakeholder groups as contributing to the shifting of responsibility for problem solving. Since human and social services are managed by separate agencies, these organizations can label problems as another agency's concern. Collaborative problem solving between agencies is noted as challenging.
- Representatives from both FOV Counties and the HSC suggest efforts have been made to address concerns and improve services. Some efforts are considered successful, maintenance of improvements has been difficult.
- There are three Tribal Nations in the FOV Counties' service area. These are the Forest County Potawatomi, the Sokaogon Chippewa, and the Lac du Flambeau Chippewa Nations. Each of these Tribal Nations offers human and social services to tribal and non-tribal populations. These Nations express concern over a lack of human services available to tribal members. They express a willingness to work with the FOV Counties

to expand services from tribal agencies to wider populations. They ask to be engaged in discussions about county governance structures.

- Representatives from FOV School Districts expressed concern about a lack of human services being available in the schools. In response, Districts have developed internal services and suggest they are reaching a limit on capacity to offer human services. Districts request the opportunity to engage with FOV Counties in a needs assessment to identify what services are available for students and families and where service gaps exist.
- Input from consumers, family members, and people with lived experience were gathered in group and individual meetings. These Stakeholders are invested in recognizing improvements in human and social services in the FOV Counties. They expressed concern about the potential for service interruptions during changes to governance structures. They voiced a request to be involved in potential changes to county agencies through advisory committees or increased opportunities for public input.

Stakeholders' comments and/or recommendations about the potential to modify existing governance and management structures of county agencies may be classified into the following categories:

- Many Stakeholders recommend the FOV Counties develop HSD structures. This was most evident in discussions with representatives from Oneida and Forest Counties, the Sokaogon Tribal Nation, and the FOV DSS agencies.
- Some Stakeholders suggest the relationships between the FOV Counties and HSC may be beyond repair. These Stakeholders suggest re-writing a multi-county DCP contract with the HSC is not a viable option.
- HSC Stakeholders advocate for maintaining the existing governance structure and developing quality improvements in relationships between agencies.
- Stakeholders expressed interest in maintaining the existing tri-county model for the provision of human services regardless of governance structures chosen.
- Some Stakeholders are less interested in county governance structures and more interested in recognizing improvements in human and social services. This group believes any governance structure can work if organizations and staff are invested in quality improvements.

Recommendations

This section of the report offers recommendations to the FOV Counties on how they may proceed with potential changes to governance structures for human and social services. Four options have been identified for governance and management structures. The FOV Counties can be successful in implementing any of these options. Based on feedback from FOV Stakeholder groups and research on other counties' governance structures, Option 3; FOV Counties develop single county HSD structures, is considered the most viable. This option is considered the most efficient structural design and offers the greatest potential to resolve identified issues with human and social services. This option aligns with practice across the State of Wisconsin, as such there are resources available to guide the FOV Counties in implementing this transition.

Creating an HSD requires the FOV Counties to combine human and social services into a single agency within each respective County. Each County needs to develop an HSD implementation plan which outlines how they intend to merge human and social services. The Counties need to identify how to combine human services which are now provided to the three-county region with social services provided by each County individually. This task needs to be completed by each County while preserving the human and social services currently offered.

The FOV Counties should consider a collective approach for planning how to maintain human services in each County. A planning committee can be developed with representation from affiliated agencies and/or stakeholders. The Counties can identify mandated (and desired) human services and how these services will be provided in each County. It is important to assure the existing human services continue in each County. Ideally, changes to governance and management structures should be invisible to consumers and family members served. No existing human service should be terminated or interrupted.

One approach to maintain existing human services in the Counties would have one County assume responsibility for the provision of human services at a regional level. This approach requires one of the FOV Counties to merge the existing human services (provided by HSC) with the chosen County's social services. The County in the best position to develop this structure is Oneida County. This is based on the following considerations:

- Oneida County provides the largest share of local and state funding to the existing DCP (the WI Dept. of Health Services Basic County Allocation to the HSC is based on the following contribution formula; Oneida 47.92%, Vilas 30.20%, Forest 21.88%). Oneida County's larger share of funding is considered essential to maintain the existing DCP services through the transition to HSD structures.
- The largest percentage of clients served by the HSC live in Oneida County.
- Most of the existing DCP infrastructure (HSC offices, staff, equipment) is based in Oneida County.
- Oneida County's salary and benefits are more likely to align with the salary and benefits of the HSC.

- Oneida County has resources available to support the transition of existing HSC personnel, many of whom are now headquartered in Oneida County, to an HSD structure. This involves administrative functions supporting fiscal management such as budgeting and third-party billing practices.

The approach described would have Oneida County assume responsibility for existing DCP services while the Counties transition to HSD structures. Oneida County could provide human services on a contractual basis to Forest and Vilas Counties for a period deemed appropriate by the Counties.

Many Stakeholders voiced support for maintaining a regional service delivery model for the three County area. There are also financial incentives for counties to regionalize certain programs. The described design would allow the regional service model to continue as directed by the FOV Counties. If the Counties are interested in this approach, the County Corporation Counsel's offices can develop contractual agreements to support the model. This may take the form of an annual contract agreement, a multi-year contract for the provision of human services, or an intergovernmental contract agreement (WI State Statute 66.03.01). The FOV Counties can create an executive and/or advisory committee to oversee operations of the regional service model. Such a committee would include representatives from each of the FOV Counties. The FOV Corporation Counsel's Offices can address the authorities of such a group.

If the FOV Counties create single county HSD structures, a reconciliation process will need to occur identifying the assets maintained by HSC. The Counties will need to agree on a disbursement plan for these assets. The process will be influenced by the approach to maintaining human services in the Counties. This is a task for the respective Corporation Counsel's offices. Not all potential scenarios can be addressed in this report.

Other financial considerations involve assessment of the existing HSC budget. The state and local funds contributed to the HSC would be expected to continue at existing funding amounts. Specialized grants and third party-payer funds accessed by the HSC need to be reviewed for viability in the future. In principle, the public funding available for human services should be expected to continue at current levels.

If the FOV Counties implement HSD structures as recommended, the following challenges are noted:

- The FOV Counties will need to develop personnel classifications and position descriptions for an HSD structure. This would include DCP functions. The HSC would have documents to offer as models.
- The Counties need to address differences in work week, merit issues, and operational policies among the DSS and DCP organizations. The number of locations and office buildings need to be assessed.
- Each FOV County will need to address culture and philosophy differences, driven historically by statutory differences among DSS and DCP organizations.

- Each FOV County will need to manage organizational change and support staff and clients impacted by the process. Communication strategies need to be developed to assure regular and meaningful communication occurs for Stakeholders.
- The FOV Counties should develop a risk management plan to identify and mitigate risks as organizational change proceeds.
- Each FOV County will have to develop a new process of budget development for an HSD structure.
- Each FOV County will need to invest management resources to fully execute the HSD structure development.

These challenges are expected in the process of organizational change. The challenges can be proactively addressed and are not considered prohibitive to the proposed recommendations.

Conclusion

This report offers background and recommendations for Forest, Oneida, and Vilas Counties as they consider modifications to governance and management structures for public human and social services. The report offers a continuum of options for governance models. As indicated, the Counties can be successful implementing any of the proposed models. The recommendation for the development of single county human service department structures is offered as the most viable model. This model offers the three Counties greater autonomy in decision making about services provided to residents. This model offers options for service delivery to occur in a regional format, at an individual county level, or a combination of these approaches. The Counties are encouraged to assess the effectiveness of options chosen over time and implement quality improvements during the process.

Appendices

Notice to Stakeholders of Feasibility Study (Similar Notice was sent to all Stakeholder Groups)

ONEIDA COUNTY

DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES

Professional Services ~ Positive Outcomes

November 21, 2023

Forest County Stakeholders
200 E Madison Street
Crandon, WI 54520

Re: Forest/Oneida/Vilas Tri-County Human Service System Feasibility Study

Dear Interested Stakeholder:

I'm contacting you to invite you (or your designee) to participate in a Feasibility Study related to the provision of human services in the Forest/Oneida/Vilas Tri-County region. The County Boards in the region have recently passed Resolutions to withdraw from the Tri-County Human Services Board effective December 2024. As a result, a Feasibility Study is being enacted to develop recommendations for the structure of human and social services in the future.

The Feasibility Study will begin in December 2023 and is expected to conclude by the end of the first calendar quarter of 2024. The Study will produce a report with recommendations for the design and operation of human and social services for each of the three Counties. A series of small group meetings will be scheduled to engage stakeholders in discussion about county-based human/social services and options for allowable governance structures. The small group meetings will be formed to include stakeholders of similar interests/backgrounds.

One behalf of the three Counties, Oneida County has contracted with a consultant to manage the Feasibility Study process. Patrick Cork, LCSW, is the chosen consultant. Mr. Cork has a history of employment in the public sector and past service to the Tri-County region. Mr. Cork will be contacting you with an invitation to participate in a small group meeting. Mr. Cork's contact information is: phone, 608 718 7321, email, bt141055@gmail.com. Oneida County is managing the contract for consulting services on behalf of the Tri-Counties.

Thank you for your interest in human/social services in the Tri-County region.

Sincerely,

Mary Rideout, Director
Oneida County Department of Social Services

Telephone: 715-362-5695	1. S. Oneida Avenue	IM Central Consortium
Toll Free: 1-888-662-5695	P.O. Box 400	(Badger Care/Food Share)
Fax: 715-362-7910	Rhinelander, WI 54501	1-888-445-1621

oneidadss@oneidacountywi.gov

Agenda for Stakeholder Groups

**Forest/Oneida/Vilas Counties Human & Social Services
Governance and Management Structures
Feasibility Study**

Welcome & Introductions

Feasibility Study

- Purpose
- Process
- Product
- Timeline

Existing Structure for Human & Social Services in Forest/Oneida/Vilas Counties: Single County Department of Social Services, Multi-County Department of Community Programs (The Human Service Center for Forest/Oneida/Vilas Counites)

- Advantages
- Challenges

Allowable Statutory Structures for Human and Social Services in WI Counties

- Single and Multi-County Department(s) of Community Programs & Department(s) of Social Services
- Single and Multi-County Human Services Department(s)
- Statewide Trends in Structural Design

Regional Service Systems Developments

- WI Department of Health Services Regional System Designs (Income Maintenance, Aging Services, Behavioral Health Services)
- Preference for Regional Services in Forest/Oneida/Vilas

Stakeholder Feedback

Distributed to Stakeholders Groups

Wisconsin County Human & Social Service Agencies
Historical Perspectives & Allowable Structures

Today's **County Human and Social Service Agencies** developed to their current form over time. Agencies are:

- County based, emphasizing local control with County Board oversight.
- Monitored and funded by state agencies (DCF, DHS, DOC), state agencies provide some but not all funding for operations, Counites contribute significant amounts of local funds to support programming. State agencies develop policy and provide administrative oversight to Counties.
- WI State Statues (Chapters 46 and 51) identify mandated human and social services counites are required to provide, these statutory references include allowable structures for operations.
- Each County determines how to structure and provide services, most use a combination of county staff and contractor services for personnel.

Social Service Agencies

- The Great Depression led to the development of social programs such as social security and aid to families with dependent children. State and local agencies developed with a focus on serving the elderly and infirm, people with disabilities, and families with children living in poverty. These social programs led to the development of WI County Departments of Social Services (DSS).
- Today's Wisconsin Social Service agencies continue a primary focus on child/family well-being.

Mental Health Agencies

- The 1960-70s experienced a focus on mental health services with the deinstitutionalization of people with serious mental health concerns.
- This effort led to the development of County Departments of Community Programs (DCP). These agencies focus on mental health, substance use, and services to people with developmental disabilities.
- In the 1990s Wisconsin developed the Family Care program which now serves the elderly and people with disabilities including developmental disabilities.

Human Service Department Structures

- In the 1980s Counties operating separate DSS and DCP agencies influenced state legislation to allow agencies to combine DSS and DCP services. These agencies became known as Human Service Departments (HSD).

Allowable Structures for Human/Social Services

- **Single County Departments of Social Services and Departments of Community Programs**

  - DSS agencies focus on child welfare, juvenile court services, income maintenance and other economic support services (other services can be incorporated into DSS agencies).
  - DCP agencies focus on mental health, substance use, and services to children with developmental and/or intellectual disabilities.
  - This was the most common design for human and social services in Counties prior to 1990.

- **Multi County Departments of Community Programs**

  - Chapter 51 mandated mental health programming through DCP agencies. In more rural/remote parts of WI, Counties joined together to form multi-county DCP agencies. This occurred to share personnel and financial resources to achieve economies of scale.
  - Some examples of local (historical) multi-county DCP agencies are Ashland-Iron-Price DCP, Barron-Burnett-Rusk-Sawyer-Washburn DCP, Shawano-Waupaca DCP.
  - Three Multi County DCPs continue to operate in WI: Forest/Oneida/Vilas Human Service Center, Langlade/Lincoln/Marathon North Central Health Care, Grant/Iowa DCP. In addition, a small number of counties continue to operate single County DSS and DCP agencies.

- **County Human Service Departments**

  - WI State Statute Chapter 46 was modified to define a County Human Service Department (HSD)
  - HSDs are required to combine services provided in DSS and DCP agencies.
  - HSDs can also incorporate other County-based services such as Aging, Health, and Veterans services based on County discretion.
  - State Statutes define the composition of HSD Boards

- **Multi County Human and Social Service Operations/Regionalization Efforts**

  - Although allowed in statute, there are no existing examples of multi county DSS or HSD operations.
  - Some state agencies have encouraged counties to regionalize services through collaborative designs.
  - Some of these regionalization efforts are mandated by State agencies (income maintenance) some are incentivized with additional funding (mental health)

Forest/Oneida/Vilas Human/Social Services
Talking Points
December 2023

- The County Boards for Forest/Oneida/Vilas Counties recently passed resolutions which may modify the governance and management structures for the Counties' Human and Social Services.

- Human and social services provided by the Counties include behavioral health (mental health, substance use) services, developmental disability services for children, child protection and child/family welfare services, juvenile justice services, income maintenance, and in some Counties, aging services.

- The Counties remain responsible for providing public human/social services, existing services will continue to be offered as the Counties consider changes.

- The changes being considered are about how county agencies are structured and how agencies manage programs and services for county residents. These changes are not focused on individual programs.

- Any changes which may occur to management structures would take effect late in the calendar year of 2024.

- In the 1980s, WI State Statutes (Chapter 46.23) were developed to allow Counties choices in how they manage public human/social services, in particular options were created to allow governance and management structures which combine services provided by multiple agencies into unified organizations.

- Since these State Statutes were developed, 64 of the 72 counties in Wisconsin have opted to change the structures by which human/social services are provided.

- Counties that are considering changes to human/social services agency structures are required to complete a Feasibility Study which engages Stakeholders in discussions about the best way to manage services in the Counties.

- Forest/Oneida/Vilas Counties have begun a Feasibility Study, the Study is expected to be complete by the end of March 2024.

- If the Feasibility Study recommends changes to the existing governance and management of services an Implementation Plan will be created. The Implementation Plan would offer details about how County agencies would be structured and how services will be managed in the Counties.

- If an Implementation Plan is needed it would be developed after the Feasibility Study is completed (spring/summer of 2024).

- A wide group of Stakeholders is being invited to participate in the Feasibility Study. This includes County Board officials, local providers of human/social services, and individuals and families who are receiving or may have received services from the Counties.

- People interested in participating in the Feasibility Study should express their interest by sending an email to the following address: oneidadss@oneidacountywi.gov The email will be checked regularly. People who wish to submit comments or suggestions may do so through this email address. Please leave contact information including an email address or phone number if you would like a reply.

- Any changes to the structure of county agencies would be completed to strengthen and enhance the services provided to county residents today.