

# Position Statement

2021

## MnCHOICES: County Cost Share Shift and Process Efficiencies

### Proposal

#### Issue:

In 2017, the Minnesota Legislature approved a savings to the Department of Human Services (DHS) of \$19.3 million in FY '18-'19 and \$22.3 million in FY '20-'21 through a cost shift to Counties for the administrative cost of MnCHOICES. As a result, counties were paying 15.7% of the non-federal share of MnCHOICES costs which increased to 18.1% in July 2019. It was intended that the implementation of MnCHOICES 2.0 was to create efficiencies that would offset overall cost increases by reducing staff time needed to complete the assessments. This unplanned fiscal shift and tax burden of counties has caused considerable hardship for many counties as the implementation of MnCHOICES 2.0 was scheduled to launch in July 2019. DHS then delayed MnCHOICES 2.0 by two years in the Spring of 2019. Counties have had to identify ways of providing access statutorily required by MnCHOICES assessments without additional staffing due to the new financial burden of the County Cost Share. At this point, there has been no new timeline for MnCHOICES 2.0 and in 2019; the Minnesota Legislature authorized DHS to move forward with Waiver Reimagine. Waiver Reimagine is to provide equal access to services through simplification and system-level improvements. The county is looking for reassurance that implementation of Waiver Reimagine will not place further financial burden on the county with savings to be realized through the simplification and improvements to the programs.

#### Implementation Strategy:

Association will seek legislative action that will require DHS to;

1. Require the Commissioner to:
  - Identify the redesign of MnCHOICES 2.0 timeline so people needing services can better served. The current tool is too lengthy and does not create efficiencies or equal access to service as it has already been addressed in the initial redesign of 2.0.
  - Adhere to the timelines established for Waiver Reimagine which will serve individuals better. The planned transition is to be completed by 2023.
  - \*Increase efficiencies and improved the experience for the person being assessed as well as the assessor.
  - Ensure commitment to the simplification of waiver services.
2. Develop a reassessment administrative option for Lead Agencies to validate ongoing eligibility for current Home and Community Based (HCBS) by review of case management documents and allow a virtual visit (phone or tele-health) when there is no change in service need for the person.
3. Look to savings with the implementation process of MNnCHOICES 2.0 and Waiver Reimagine and to not pass on the financial burden of increased costs to the county through a county cost share.

\* Reference: DHS Legislative Report MnCHOICES Random Moment Time Study Evaluation; DHS-7816A, 01-19, I. Executive Summary Conclusions.

## Systemic Priority Alignment (check all that apply and explain why)

Equity       Service Integration       Fiscal Framework

### Comments:

**Fiscal Framework**—MnCHOICES implementation plans have been based upon the State fully sharing costs of this administrative function with the Federal government. The 2017 legislative action for a County cost share occurred during projected State surplus. If not addressed in legislative session, any other shifts in the State’s fiscal well-being may otherwise see further cost shares in MnCHOICES. The DHS Legislative Report MnCHOICES Random Moment Time Study Evaluation; DHS-7816A, 01-19, Executive Summary identified multiple programmatic inefficiencies, the need to improve the experience thus resulting in administrative cost shifts to the Counties. With the higher usage of the system and the longer we delay creating efficiencies and implementing changes to MnCHOICES, the larger Fiscal responsibility it places on the counties, which in turn, place more risk and cost to the state, counties, and people served.

## Operational Priority Alignment (check all that apply and explain why)

Behavioral Health       Case Management       Child Well Being       Community Based Settings & Services  
 Health Care       Housing & Transportation       Modernization       Self Sufficiency

### Comments:

### Rationale/Background:

Counties have been invested in identifying sustainable methodologies for providing state mandated services through the local entity. Legislative funding changes have created barriers to creating and maintaining appropriate staffing complements to fully implement the MnCHOICES assessment and reassessment process that is sustainable at a local level going forward.

It had been anticipated that “efficiencies” identified in the MnCHOICES 2.0 operational process would allow for the accommodation of the county cost share for this service. This appears to be unlikely due to the funding methodology needed to maintain current staff complement to meet current assessment/reassessment demands. MnCHOICES 2.0 has been delayed with no known timeline identified.

State and Counties have been actively involved in identifying ways to address the efficiency issue but it is anticipated by counties that significant changes in the MnCHOICES process, eligible populations or no additional responsibilities to the counties for cost share will need to occur to make the service sustainable for a majority of counties. Barring the State taking responsibility for their system by being responsible for its costs, the concern remains that efficiencies found will either not be sufficient or will not be acceptable to DHS to control costs, and there will be future attempts to shift more costs to the lead agencies as they continue to increase.

### Additional Information:



Submitted by: Original position: 09/2018 Jerry Pederson and Deb Sjostrom.  
Updated 12/2019 – LTSS Committee Leads- Jackie Och, Barb Dietz and Paul Bukovich.  
Updated 09/2020 Adult Services Committee- Jackie Och and Barb Dietz.  
Approved on: