

Agenda Item Number 16. C.

Senior & Disabled Services to Shorten Service Hours to the Public in its Offices, County-wide

Presenter: Ted Stevens

Actions Recommended: None. Information Only.

Issue Summary:

- Due to program reductions relating to the State's continuing budget problems, last June S&DS was facing a **\$1.8 million shortfall in its 2003-2004 operating budget**.
- In response, **S&DS closed its Springfield office and reduced its staff complement by 26% (30 positions)**.
- **When S&DS reduced its workforce, it did not lose 26% of the work** its staff are required to perform on behalf of clients in Oregon's assistance programs for senior citizens and people with disabilities. In fact, **the agency lost approximately 10% of its clients, with the result that all remaining staff are carrying heavier burdens**.
- **Staff are having a hard time staying current**; most are not able to do so.
- Recognizing this problem, the S&DS Management Team proposed the following solution to the agency's Senior Services and Disability Services Advisory Councils: **reduce the agency's public access hours from eight to six hours per day**; specifically, limit public access hours to 9:00 AM to 12:00 Noon in the morning, and 1:00 PM to 4:00 PM in the afternoon.
- **The goal of this proposal is to give staff two hours of protected time each day** to perform a variety of tasks, such as, input data to the computer, write case narratives and reports, complete forms and other

required paperwork, return phone calls, go to internal meetings, and keep abreast of policy and procedure changes. During these protected hours, staff will not respond to in-coming calls and visitors, except in cases of emergencies.

- **This proposal was presented to S&DS' two advisory councils. Both approved it**, with the following understandings: (1) that S&DS will restore public access hours when sufficient funds are available to return to staff workloads comparable to those in place at the end of June 2003; (2) that S&DS publicize the change in hours in an effort to minimize any inconvenience on customers and community partners; (3) that S&DS set up a mechanism to receive and respond to emergency situations (including protective services reports) which occur between 8:00- 9:00 AM and 4:00-5:00 PM; and (4) that S&DS ask the Councils' Long Term Care Committee to evaluate the impact of this change on a sample of customers and partners after it has been operational for approximately three months.
- This proposal was also discussed with officials at Oregon's Dept. of Human Services. DHS was sympathetic and supportive of its implementation.

Questions regarding this change in public access to the offices of Senior & Disabled Services may be posed to staff at the September LCOG Board meeting.