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**Sponsor:** Social Services

**Meeting Date:** 3/18/2025

**Title:** Personnel Complement Increase in the Social Services Department.

**File Number:** 2025-052

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**Background and Rationale:**

The Aging and Disability Services | MnCHOICES division (ADS-MnCHOICES) of the Social Services Department provides programs designed to support the elderly and people with disabilities to live in the community as independently as possible. The ADS-MnCHOICES Division provides MnCHOICES assessments, which determine eligibility for services for people who need home and community-based services, including the Alternative Care Program, Elderly Waiver, Brain Injury Waiver, Community Alternative Care Waiver, Community Access for Disability Inclusion Waiver, Developmental Disability Waiver, and Community First Services and Supports (previously known as personal care assistance (PCA) and Consumer Support Grant). The division also provides case management services for seniors and people with disabilities.

Lead agencies are required to provide MnCHOICES assessments by Minnesota Statute 256B.0911. These services must be available to any person regardless of public program eligibility and statute also requires that an individual “must be visited by a long-term consultation team within 20 working days after the date on which an assessment was requested or recommended.” Annual MnCHOICES reassessments and case management services are also required.

Community need for both MnCHOICES assessments and case management have increased significantly in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic. In addition, new unfunded mandates by the Minnesota Department of Human Services (DHS) have further increased workloads. This means that current resident need far exceeds current staffing capacity. This has resulted in long wait times for residents who need a MnCHOICES assessment, case management, and waiver services.

The ADS-MnCHOICES division has worked diligently to find workflow efficiencies and to move existing positions to areas of the division that have the greatest need. These changes are not sufficient to meet current community need. DHS recently rolled out a new MnCHOICES tool that is expected to be more efficient and therefore has allowed for more assessments to be assigned to each assessor. However, this is not sufficient to meet the needs of the community or address the backlog. Some additional stressors for the division include DHS discontinuing the ability for a case manager to complete an annual reassessment via paper (rather than an assessor completing in the MnCHOICES tool). This change took effect as of October 1st, 2024. This DHS change resulted in additional assessments that must be completed by certified assessors in the MnCHOICES tool. This increased the assessment workload by approximately 1,000 assessments annually. Additionally, post Covid (between 2021 and 2023) there has been an increase in requests for MnCHOICES assessment of about 5% each year. Another recent change affecting workload is the DHS roll out of Community First Services and Supports, which converts Consumer Support Grant and PCA into Community First Services and Supports. This new change has no additional funding to support it and yet adds additional administrative burden on counties. Previously, Consumer Support Grant allowed counties to bill a 5% administration fee per case. There is no administration fee for Community First Services and Supports. Finally, since 2017 total assessments has increased by 40%.

Budget shortfalls have caused an elimination of 28 Full Time Equivalent (FTE) in ADS-MnCHOICES since 2018, while other neighboring counties have continued to hire in this area. Anoka County has increased their FTE by 19 since 2021, Dakota County has increased their MnCHOICES area by 29 FTE for 2025, Hennepin County also increased their FTE by a total of 70 in 2023 and 2024. To serve Ramsey County residents and meet statutory requirements, the Social Services Department is requesting 80 new FTE. This will allow us to address the current crisis and ensure that ADS-MnCHOICES staff can serve Ramsey County residents in a timely manner and in compliance with state statute. Our current data indicates we will be able to resolve the current backlogs across the division by mid-2026. Backlogs include new referrals (for an initial assessment), current backlog of initial assessments, backlog of annual reassessments, backlog of case management assignment (due to a shortage of case managers), and backlog of service agreements.

The additional positions will be funded primarily with random moments revenue from the state and federal government. Random moments are a revenue source for counties via the State of Minnesota’s Social Services Time Study. ADS-MnCHOICES Division participates in the Social Service Time Study and employees are sent a “random moment” and respond to it by selecting a code that matches the work they were doing at the time the random moment was received. Counties are then reimbursed quarterly by the State of Minnesota based on these time study responses.

**Recommendation:**

The Ramsey County Board of Commissioners resolved to:

Approve an increase in the personnel complement of the Aging & Disability Services and MnCHOICES Division, within the Social Services Department, by 80.0 Full Time Equivalent

A motion to approve was made by Commissioner Jebens-Singh, seconded by Commissioner Xiong. Motion passed.

Aye: - 7: Jebens-Singh, McGuire, McMurtrey, Miller, Moran, Ortega, and Xiong

By:   
Jason Yang, Interim Chief Clerk - County Board