



RHODE ISLAND DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES

TITLE XX/SOCIAL SERVICES BLOCK GRANT INTENDED USE PLAN

OCTOBER 1, 2022–SEPTEMBER 30, 2023

**STATE OF RHODE ISLAND
DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES**

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Introduction

Title XX of the Social Security Act provides states with federal funds for social services. In 1981, Congress amended Title XX, making it a Social Services Block Grant (SSBG), thereby giving states considerable flexibility in the use of the federal dollars. Under the Act, states are required to make an annual report to the Secretary, Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS), on the intended use of Title XX funds. The Intended Use Plan must satisfy the statutory requirements of the Act by relating:

- a. The intended use of Title XX funds;
- b. Information on the types of activities to be supported; and
- c. Information on the categories or characteristics of persons to be served.

The Intended Use Plan fulfills the statutory requirements of Title XX of the Social Security Act and regulatory requirements at 45 CFR Section 96.10 (1981).

Services will be offered to help clients reach one or more of the five federal goals which have been identified by Congress for Title XX:

1. Achieving or maintaining economic self-support to prevent, reduce, or eliminate dependency.
2. Achieving or maintaining self-sufficiency, including reduction or prevention of dependency.
3. Preventing or remedying neglect, abuse or exploitation of children and adults unable to protect their own interests, or preserving, rehabilitating, or reuniting families.
4. Preventing or reducing inappropriate institutional care by providing for community-based care, home-based care, or other forms of less intensive care.
5. Securing referral or admission for institutional care when other forms of care are not appropriate or providing services to individuals in institutions.

I. State/Federal Fiscal Year

This Intended Use Plan covers the Federal Fiscal Year 2023, with a start date of October 1, 2022 and ending on September 30, 2023.

II. Administrative Operations

1. State Administrative Agency

The Rhode Island Department of Human Services (DHS) has been designated by the Governor as the agency responsible for the planning and administration of the Social Services Block Grant.

2. Location of the Agency

The Rhode Island Department of Human Services, 25 Howard Avenue, Cranston, RI 02920.

3. Mission and Goals of the Agency

a. Mission

The Rhode Island Department of Human Services (DHS) is charged by state law “to provide public assistance to residents of the state who are in need and who meet the eligibility requirements of the various programs, which constitute public assistance.”

The programs which DHS administers are:

- RIWorks (TANF)
- Child Care Assistance Program
- Supplemental Nutrition Assistance (SNAP)
- Long-Term Support Services
- General Public Assistance
- State Supplemental Payment
- Low-Income Home Energy Assistance
- Low-Income Household Water Assistance Program
- Weatherization Assistance Program
- Eligibility for Medicaid
- Administration of Targeted Federal Grants: Community Service Block Grant, Social Services Block Grant, Family Violence Prevention Services Grant; Refugee Resettlement Grants, Emergency Food Assistance Program grants, state Domestic Violence grants.

Additionally, the department administers programs and services for specific populations and needs through its:

- Office of Healthy Aging
- Office of Veterans Affairs
- Office of Child Support Services
- Office of Rehabilitation Services.

The department's support service units are:

- Financial Management
- Program Integrity
- Information Technology
- Staff Development

The Department of Human Services administers a broad range of financial aid, medical assistance and social services programs under several funding sources. The Director is appointed by the Governor with the advice and consent of the Senate (Title 40 of the General Laws of Rhode Island). The Director provides leadership in planning and directing all activities and functions of the department; serves as liaison with all other state agencies and federal agencies; coordinates department activities in respect to state and federal legislation; and responds to inquiries and requests regarding departmental activities from individuals and organizations outside of the department. The Director is assisted by Deputy Directors in the discharge of her responsibility, and by Associate Directors and Administrators who head the divisions within the Department: (1) Division of Community Partnerships, (2) Division of Policy and Operations Services, (3) Office of Healthy Aging, (4) Office of Veterans Affairs (5) Office of Child Support Services, (6) Office of Rehabilitation Services, (7) Division of Financial Management. They are responsible for establishing priorities, program standards and policies, ensuring provision for training of staff within their programs and providing general assistance to staff in program areas under their supervision. Within the divisions, specific programs are headed by an Administrator (or equivalent title) that has day to day responsibility for program operation.

The Division of Community Partnerships has overall responsibility for the operation of Grants and Contract Management including administration of the Social Service Block Grant.

b. Goals and Objectives

The complete goals and objectives of the Rhode Island Department of Human Service are quite extensive given the range of programs and services for which the department is responsible. Below are the goals of the department from the current Strategic Plan and strategic objectives for the unit within the Division of Community Partnerships that is responsible for the administration of the Social Services Block Grant. The strategic objectives have, in turn, Action Steps leading to the accomplishment of those objectives.

Goals

Goal 1: Improve Timeliness and Accuracy of Benefits

Goal 2: Ensure the Highest Quality of Customer Experience

Goal 3: Improve Longer-Range Outcomes for RIDHS Customers

Strategic Objectives: Grants and Contract Management

Objective 1: Prepare Drafts of Contracts Three Months in Advance of Performance Period Start Date

Objective 2: Submit applications and state plans as required to obtain federal funds

Objective 3: Expend federal dollars within prescribed time period

Objective 4: Submit federal reports as required

Objective 5: Integrate Active Contract Management Principles in RIDHS contracts

4. Financial Operations Systems

Social Services Block Grant (SSBG) funds are appropriated by the Rhode Island General Assembly to the Department of Human Services as a component of the total budget of the Department for the range of services it provides. When expenditures are made for social service activities, federal and state resources are distributed concurrently. Federal funds received by the state are deposited in the General Fund. The estimate of the amount of federal reimbursement is considered one of the revenue sources when the State Budget is developed and is considered by the Legislature when appropriations are made.

RI DHS uses the Direct Allocation method to assign contract and sub-recipient costs. Sub-recipients submit monthly invoices with documentation for all expenditures. The invoices and documentation are reviewed and approved by a program manager and a financial management staff person. Budgets and expenditures are tracked in the state accounting system and in separate records kept by RIDHS Financial Management.

For salary and fringe benefits of program staff, RI DHS uses the time study methodology of cost allocation. The purpose of the time studies is to determine the amount of time that specific groups of employees spend in administering to the different benefit programs functioning within the Department of Human Services so that the costs may be properly allocated among the appropriate agencies.

The Office of the Auditor General (OAG) is the State of Rhode Island's legislative audit agency. They conduct financial and performance audits to provide independent and reliable information to the General Assembly on a variety of topics including the State's financial condition, its use of federal funds in compliance with federal law and regulations, and whether programs are operating efficiently and effectively. The Office of the Auditor General completed its single audit report for the year ending June 30, 2021. The auditor performed a statewide audit of the financial statements and a single audit of federal grants including the Social Services Block Grant. Copies of the entire audit and of these particular findings are available at: www.oag.ri.gov/reports/SA_RI_2021.pdf or upon request from the RI Department of Human Services.

III. Program Planning

1. Planning for Distribution and Use of Funds

In allocating funds to various programs, DHS considers funds available through SSBG, TANF transfer and other state and federal sources. These funds are allocated within federal regulations to reflect the needs of Rhode Islanders and the geography of the state.

Allocation of SSBG funds to State entities is guided by aligning unmet needs in the missions of the various state departments with the overall goals of the Social Services Block Grant program and the categories of services allowed. The use of SSBG funds for activities by State entities is also informed by determining the greater impact that might be gained from leveraging SSBG funds with other sources of funding to benefit particular populations or program goals.

For example, SSBG funds are allocated to the Office of Housing and Community Development within the Rhode Island Executive Office of Commerce in order to be pooled with federal Emergency Services Grant funds directed to principal municipalities and the State of Rhode Island, and state funds budgeted to the RI Housing Resources Commission. These funds create a Consolidated Homeless Fund which allows the state to streamline a Request for Proposals process while allowing service agencies to submit comprehensive proposals. Funding streams are tracked separately so that the particular goals and restrictions of the grants can be respected, and accurate reporting obtained.

Once allocations for State entities are decided, for the balance of the SSBG funding that would be earmarked for private organizations the Director of the RI Department of Human Services seeks the advice of the Associate Directors of the various units and divisions within the department. Two principal criteria are used in planning the use and distribution of SSBG funds: assessing what needs of low-income Rhode Islanders surface as prominent in the daily work of the department, and how the funds can best advance the mission and goals of the department in conjunction with the goals of the Social Services Block Grant program.

Agencies that enter into a contract with the Department of Human Services (or have subcontracts under Title XX) may not charge a fee for Title XX services, except in

connection with an approved co-payment system. An agency may charge for other services not funded by DHS.

All providers agree to meet the requirements of all applicable State and Federal law including Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1965 and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as well as the longstanding policies of nondiscrimination in all DHS programs and the Drug Free Workplace Regulations. All providers agree to comply with the requirements of the Governor's Executive Order No. 05-01 and the Federal Anti-Drug Abuse Act of 1988.

All providers report to DHS and submit fiscal and program reports to fulfill the requirements of the SSBG program.

2. Characteristics of Individuals to be Served

Services are available in every community in the State of Rhode Island. All persons in the State may apply for social services. There are no requirements related to duration of residence.

a) Definitions

- **Child:** "Child" is defined as a person under the age of eighteen (18)
- **Adult:** "Adult" is defined as a person eighteen (18) years of age and older
- **Family:** "Family" is defined as two or more people who are related by blood, marriage, guardianship, adoption, foster care, or kinship caretaking.

b) Eligibility Criteria

Although an individual or family may be eligible for most Block Grant Social Services, this does not mean that entitlement for a specific service exists. Additional eligibility requirements may be prescribed by the governing contracts and/or DHS Policy Manual. For example, transportation is only provided for the elderly or individuals with disabilities, and documentation of the disability is required. Provision of services depends not only upon the need of the individual or family, but also upon the availability of funding and the capacity of the provider agency. Waiting lists may be established when a provider is at the limit of its capacity to respond.

The State provides a system and procedure for fair hearings under which applicants or recipients may appeal denial, reduction or termination of services or failure to act upon a request for service within a reasonable time.

3. Service Categories and Goals

Services are provided within the RI Department of Human Services and through Service Agreements and Contracts negotiated with other State entities and a number of community agencies and organizations for the provision of specific services that include:

- Statewide, immediate shelter and related supportive services to adult and youth victims of family violence, domestic violence, dating violence, victims of violent crimes and their dependents;
- A crisis hotline that will receive and respond to calls for assistance in domestic violence situations;

- Individual and group counseling, peer support groups, and referral to community-based services to assist family violence, domestic violence, dating violence victims, other violent crimes and their dependents, in recovering from the effects of the violence;
- Case Management Services, and information and referral services, concerning issues related to family violence, domestic violence, or dating violence intervention and prevention;
- Case Management Services for asylum-seekers, and people enrolled in a pilot Guaranteed Income Project;
- Case Management, Housing, and Information and Referral services for clients coming into the RIDHS field offices;
- Education Services for refugee youth;
- Prevention services, including outreach to underserved populations;
- 365/24/7 statewide information and referral services that are linguistically and culturally appropriate using telephone and online tools that would direct clients to appropriate social services that include programs and services administered by the Rhode Island Department of Human Services;
- Transportation services are provided to populations for non-emergency purposes;
- Support of Integrated Health Home, Health Home and Assertive Community Services to individuals with mental health and/or substance abuse issues to avoid acute or institutional care;
- Supportive and Protective Services for the homeless.
- Strengthening emergency food distribution capability

4. Partnering State Agencies

i. Department of Human Services

Services provided directly by the Department of Human Services consist primarily of casework counseling and case management and include the cost of planning and administration of all SSBG activities and some staff training. They also include the referral to and authorization of contracted services.

Health services assist people to attain and maintain better physical and mental health by helping them to identify and understand their health needs and resources available to them including the Rhode Island Medical Assistance Program and Residential Services. Housing services help people to obtain and retain adequate housing in the community, avert heating and utility shutoffs, mediate landlord/tenant problems, and address emergency shelter needs.

The Department's social workers play a key role in the area of Information and Referral Services linking people with appropriate community resources. Crisis intervention and follow-up activities are included in this component.

Specialized services are provided to individuals with physical or mental disabilities including individuals who are blind or visually impaired.

ii. Executive Office of Health and Human Services

Transportation services are provided to elderly and disabled populations for non-emergency purposes: doctors' appointments, therapy, medical tests, adult day care, and congregate meal sites for lunches.

iii. Office of Housing and Community Development

The Office of Housing and Community Development within the Rhode Island Executive Office of Commerce leverages funding to provide for the establishment and operation of shelters and supportive services for the homeless.

iv. Department of Behavioral Health, Developmental Disabilities, and Hospitals

This department provides access to services and supports for Rhode Islanders with developmental disabilities, mental health and substance abuse issues, and chronic long term medical and psychiatric conditions. Funding is used for Integrated Health Home, Health Home and Assertive Community Services to individuals with mental health and/or substance abuse issues to avoid acute or institutional care.