



COUNTY OF HUMBOLDT

For the meeting of: 12/3/2024

File #: 24-1527

To: Board of Supervisors

From: DHHS: Administration

Agenda Section: Consent

Vote Requirement: Majority

SUBJECT:

Request to Add Fourteen Classifications to the Hiring Freeze Exemption List for the Department of Health & Human Services

RECOMMENDATION(S):

That the Board of Supervisors:

1. Approve the addition of the positions of Program Coordinator (class 1425, salary range 451), Vocational Assistant/Trainee (class 0742/0742T, salary range 348/338), Eligibility Specialist III (class 1731C, salary range 424), Eligibility Supervisor (class 1729, salary range 454), Community Health Outreach Worker I/II (class 0511A/B, salary range 366/394), Employment & Training Program Coordinator (class 0765, salary range 459), Supervising Behavioral Health Clinician (class 0916, salary range 514), Social Worker I/II/III (class 0727A/0727B/0727C, salary range 414/434/454), and Office Assistant I/II (class 0179A/0179B, salary range 338/348) to the list of approved exemptions to the hiring freeze instituted on June 4, 2024.

STRATEGIC PLAN:

This action supports the following areas of your Board's Strategic Plan.

Area of Focus: Core Services/Other

Strategic Plan Category: 9999 - Core Services/Other

DISCUSSION:

On June 4, 2024, your Board approved a hiring freeze for positions allocated under a fund with a negative fund balance, including Social Services 1160 and Behavioral Health 1170. On June 25, 2024, as part of adopting the budget for Fiscal Year (FY) 2024-25, your Board approved certain classifications, primarily frontline direct service classifications, to be exempt from the freeze due to criticality of services. Since June 25, 2024, the Department of Health & Human Services (DHHS) has identified 15 additional positions that warrant placement on the requested exemption list.

Program Coordinator and Community Health Outreach Worker I/II are positions utilized in the Housing, Outreach and Mobile Engagement (HOME) Program. Services provided by these classifications are fully reimbursable through the Social Services claim when services provided to clients of the Housing and Disability Advocacy Program (HDAP), Housing Support Program (HSP) and Bringing Families Home (BFH). Not filling these positions increases the possibility of clients who are homeless or at risk of homelessness not being provided assistance. The HDAP, HSP and BFH funding allocations from the California Department of Social Services are only claimable for those specific programs, and without positions remaining filled, the funds, all without the need for a county match, are not claimable.

Supervising Behavioral Health Clinician is a position that, in addition to positions already granted an exemption, are required to meet the basic mandates of the Mental Health Plan agreement that the county has with the Department of Health Care Services.

Vocational Assistant/Trainee is a classification utilized in Child Welfare Services and Eligibility that is an entry level position and therefore has a high turnover rate. Vocational Assistants are critical for day-to-day program functioning, for example, client transport, which is a non-optional mandated element of Child Welfare Services.

Employment & Training Program Coordinator is a position required to supervise work crew participants in the Helping Humboldt program; General Relief participants who are employable and obligated to participate in work crew are unable to work off General Relief lien obligations and be prepared for future employment without the work crew.

Eligibility Supervisors and Eligibility Specialist IIIs provide required supervision, direction, training, support and guidance to eligibility staff who provide direct mandated CalWORKs, Medi-Cal and CalFresh services. The intention had been to request that the eligibility series be exempted, and it was administrative error that led to the omission of the Eligibility Supervisor and Eligibility Specialist III classification.

Social Worker I/II/III and Office Assistant I/II are positions utilized within In Home Supportive Services (IHSS) and Adult Protective Services (APS) that support crucial programs to protect vulnerable populations in the community, including adults at risk due to age or disability and their dependents who need assistance connecting to services and benefits they deserve. Elderly persons and people with disabilities are growing demographics as the law lowered the minimum age for APS intervention from 65 to 60 years and older in 2022 as well as broadened the definition of neglect. Since implementation began in May 2022, there has been a noticeable increase in IHSS recipients applying for services due to the reduced age threshold. Filling these positions is crucial in supporting those eligible within the community reach the services and benefits they are entitled to.

With most classifications, DHHS plans to either leave vacated positions vacant, or, on a case-by-case basis, come before the Board with a specific request and reasoning for one-time exemptions. DHHS is tracking all salary savings and other steps it is taking to address the fund balance deficits. DHHS asks for the addition of these specific positions to prevent the administrative workload of numerous individual Board agenda items for positions essential to meeting basic mandates, and positions that generate revenue; many are claiming at a 100% with no match required (Medi-Cal, BFH, HDAP and HSP).

Therefore, DHHS recommends that your Board add the positions of Program Coordinator, Vocational Assistant/Trainee, Eligibility Specialist III, Eligibility Supervisor, Community Health Outreach Worker I/II, Employment & Training Program Coordinator, Supervising Behavioral Health Clinician, Social Worker I/II/III, and Office Assistant I/II to the hiring freeze exemption list.

SOURCE OF FUNDING:

Mental Health Fund 1170-424, revenue lines 640000, 515000, 515001/507085, 515120, 707254
 Social Services Fund 1160-511, revenue lines 590072, 590076, 507000, 526000
 Employment & Training Division Fund 1190-597, revenue line 4803

FINANCIAL IMPACT:

<i>Expenditures (Fund, Budget Unit)</i>	FY24-25	FY25-26 Projected*	FY26-27 Projected*
Budgeted Expenses	\$1,258,482	<u>\$1,384,330</u>	<u>\$1,522,763</u>
Additional Appropriation Requested	<u>\$0</u>	<u>\$0</u>	<u>\$0</u>
Total Expenditures	<u>\$1,258,482</u>	<u>\$1,384,330</u>	<u>\$1,522,763</u>

*Projected amounts are estimates and are subject to change.

<i>Funding Sources (Fund, Budget Unit)</i>	FY24-25	FY25-26 Projected*	FY26-27 Projected*
General Fund			
State/Federal Funds	<u>\$1,258,482</u>	<u>\$1,384,330</u>	<u>\$1,522,763</u>
Total Funding Sources	<u>\$1,258,482</u>	<u>\$1,384,330</u>	<u>\$1,522,763</u>

*Projected amounts are estimates and are subject to change.

Narrative Explanation of Financial Impact:

The Supervising Behavioral Health Clinician allocation in Fund 1170, Budget Unit 424, is supported through Federal and State reimbursements for Specialty Mental Health Services, Behavioral Health Realignment, Grants, and Mental Health Service Act (MHSA) funding; 61%, 15%, 12% and 12% respectively. This position allocation and associated revenue and expenditures are included in the approved FY 2024-25 budget at \$141,319.

The Program Coordinator positions reside in Fund 1170 and 1160, Budget Unit 424 and 520, Behavioral Health and Social Services Housing Outreach and Mobile Engagement (HOME) budget units and is supported through MHSA and Grant funds. The Program Coordinator position was included in the approved FY 2024-25 budget at \$108,943.

The Community Outreach Worker position resides in Fund 1160, Budget Unit 520, Housing Outreach and Mobile Engagement (HOME) and is supported through several grant funds and allocations directly related to serving homeless and housing people. This position will be 100% grant funded. The Community Outreach Worker position was included in the approved FY 2024-25 budget at \$78,645.

The positions of Vocational Assistant/Trainee, Eligibility Supervisor, and Eligibility Specialist III reside in Fund 1160, Budget Unit 511, Social Services budget unit and is supported through Federal and State reimbursements through Medi-Cal and CalFresh billing. The Vocational Assistant/Trainee position was included in the approved FY 2024-25 budget at \$73,715. The Eligibility Supervisor position was included in the approved FY 2024-25 budget at \$110,272. The Eligibility Specialist III position was included in the approved FY 2024-25 budget at \$97,902.

The position of Employment & Training Coordinator position resides in Fund 1190, Budget Unit 597, Employment and Training Division and is supported through Federal and State reimbursements through CalWORKs and CalFresh billing. The Employment & Training Coordinator position was included in the approved FY 2024-25 budget at \$108,943.

The positions of Social Worker I/II/III and Office Assistant I/II resides in Fund 1160, Budget Unit 511 and is supported through Federal and State reimbursements through Medi-Cal billing. The Social Worker I and Office Assistant I positions were included in the approved FY 2024-25 budget at \$94,167 and \$71,535 respectively.

In the financial impact chart, the figures are based on 1.0 FTE of each classification for which the exemption is requested.

There is no change to the FY 2024-25 approved budget as the positions that DHHS is requesting be on the exemption list are already budgeted for. The focus will be ensuring any staff hired as exemptions to the hiring freeze would be performing mandated services and claiming to 100% sources with no required county match as much as is possible while meeting mandates. DHHS has already taken steps to freeze hiring, make budget reductions, and reorganize the department's interdepartmental cost structures. Early indications point to these budget reduction strategies reducing the fund balance deficits in the current fiscal year and eliminating them entirely in coming fiscal years.

STAFFING IMPACT:

Only vacated positions already budgeted in the adopted FY 24-25 budget would be considered for filling, and only after ensuring the position would be utilized to meet mandates and generate revenue.

OTHER AGENCY INVOLVEMENT:

None.

ALTERNATIVES TO STAFF RECOMMENDATIONS:

Your Board could choose not to add Program Coordinator, Substance Abuse Counselor I/II, Senior Substance Abuse Counselor, Vocational Assistant/Trainee, Eligibility Specialist III, Eligibility Supervisor, Community Health Outreach Worker I/II, Employment & Training Program Coordinator, Social Worker I/II/III, and Office Assistant I/II to the hiring freeze exemption list. This is not recommended, and leaving these positions unfilled could lead to lack of compliance with state mandates and a loss of federal and state funds.

ATTACHMENTS:

1. Hiring Freeze Exemption Additions memo

File #: 24-1527

PREVIOUS ACTION/REFERRAL:

Meeting of: June 10, 2024; June 25, 2024

File No.: 24-956, 24-1012