
Department of Human Services

Licensing Division: Support to Counties

Project Description

July 2023

BACKGROUND

The Department of Human Services (DHS) Licensing Division, housed in DHS's Office of the Inspector General, employs roughly 170 staff. The division oversees licensing and ongoing monitoring for approximately 23,000 service providers in nearly a dozen program areas. Licensing Division staff conduct licensing activities for many programs but delegate these activities to counties for certain programs: (1) family child care, (2) adult and child foster care, and (3) community residential settings with home- and community-based services licenses.

County licensors receive support from DHS's Licensing Division in a variety of ways. For example, the division provides (1) trainings and virtual monthly meetings; (2) resources, such as electronic checklist tools to be used during inspections of service providers; and (3) responses to county-licensor questions about program requirements.

Some individuals have expressed concerns about poor communication and the timeliness of the support that the DHS Licensing Division provides to county licensors.

EVALUATION ISSUES

1. To what extent has DHS communicated effectively with county partners about licensing requirements?
2. How well has DHS collaborated with counties in carrying out licensing requirements?
3. How can DHS ensure a strong state-county partnership?

DISCUSSION

We will focus our evaluation on DHS's support to county staff who perform licensing duties for foster care providers, family child care providers, and community residential settings. We will survey relevant county licensing supervisors and DHS staff to learn about their respective views about their roles and the support DHS provides. We will also conduct focus groups of county licensing staff to better understand their opinions about DHS's collaboration with counties.

To help evaluate the effectiveness of DHS's communication with county staff, we will review Licensing Division training materials, archived communications, and other relevant documents, including documentation of the division's responses to counties' requests for assistance. We will also search for academic literature or documentation of best practices for county-state partnerships. Should we find useful suggestions or models, we will compare DHS's practices to these models.

We will inform our research with analysis of licensing data, including data related to license suspensions, revocations, and other licensing actions.

This evaluation will focus on the relationship between DHS's Licensing Division and county licensors. We will not review DHS's or counties' compliance with licensing laws, nor do we intend to evaluate DHS's background studies of service providers.

This evaluation is scheduled to be completed in early 2024. For additional information, contact Sarah Delacueva, evaluation manager, at 651-296-1226 or sarah.delacueva@state.mn.us.