COUNTY OF HUMBOLDT

For the meeting of: 1/7/2025

File #: 25-13

To: Board of Supervisors

From: DHHS: Administration

Agenda Section: Consent

Vote Requirement: Majority

SUBJECT:
Approval of an Exception to the Hiring Freeze to Hire One Full Time Equivalent (FTE) Fiscal Assistant I/II, One FTE Supervising Behavioral Health Nurse, and One Staff Services Specialist for the Social Services (SS) and Behavioral Health (BH) Branch of the Department of Health & Human Services (DHHS)

RECOMMENDATION(S):
That the Board of Supervisors:

1. Provide an exception to the hiring freeze to fill and begin recruitment for the position of Fiscal Assistant I/II (Class 0177A/B, Salary Range 338/355), Supervising Behavioral Health Nurse (Class 0920, Salary Range 551) and Staff Services Specialist (Class 0389, Salary Range 412).

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 SS 1160 and BH 1170. DHHS continues to evaluate core operations to determine if there is a better structure to provide services. The department continually reevaluates staffing models to achieve the necessary workload and provide operational savings. The department has identified three classifications in need of filling to efficiently provide services to the county.

The Fiscal Assistant I/II position is an integral position within the In-Home Support Services (IHSS) division of the Social Services branch of DHHS as this position supports many tasks which support all Humboldt County IHSS providers. The Fiscal Assistant I/II position functions as an IHSS payroll support specialist assisting approximately 1,300 care providers or applicants each month with duties such as training and troubleshooting with the Electronic Visit Verification and E-timesheet issues, research and investigation of overpayments and fraud referrals, Live Scan processing, creating and reconciling monthly reports, and more. The IHSS program has considered alternatives to filling the position of Fiscal Assistant I/II and has identified that the strain on the program and clients is too great to leave the position vacant. If left unfilled, the department struggles with managing the workload and staff start to fall behind on tasks resulting in undue stress and negative impact on the IHSS care providers.

The Supervising Behavioral Health Nurse position is crucial for providing both staff and hospitalized patients at Humboldt County's Psychiatric Health Facility, Sempervirens, professional nursing and psychiatric services as well as additional supportive services. This position supervises numerous Behavioral Health nurses by organizing day-to-day nursing and related functions including assessing

and administering treatment; organizing and evaluating the work of assigned staff; ensuring medication records are maintained and in compliance with regulations; providing professional nursing care to patients; overseeing and administering oral and hypodermis medications and providing crisis intervention services to clients in need among other duties.

The Staff Services Specialist position is a needed position supporting not only staff within the Employee Services (ES) division but all DHHS staff as well. The Staff Services Specialist position provides oversight and coordination of all DHHS recruitments and advertising. Additionally, this position will support the Workforce Development Analyst and cross-train as a custodian of records for DHHS. The ES division is already struggling to manage multiple vacancies. This position requested was recently vacated , and the division is expecting another vacancy with an anticipated retirement, leaving the ES division short staffed and unable to support recruitment efforts within all branches of DHHS.

Therefore, DHHS recommends that your Board provide an exception to the hiring freeze for one Fiscal Assistant I/II, one Supervising Behavioral Health Nurse and one Staff Services Specialist for the fiscal year (FY) 2024-25.

SOURCE OF FUNDING:
Mental Health Fund 1170-424
Social Services Fund 1160-511
Public Health Fund 1175-400

FINANCIAL IMPACT:

Expenditures (Fund, Budget Unit)	**FY24-25**	**FY25-26 Projected***	**FY26-27 Projected***
Budgeted Expenses	$120,238	$351,860	$387,046
Total Expenditures	$120,238	$351,860	$387,046

**Projected amounts are estimates and are subject to change.*

Funding Sources (Fund, Budget Unit)	**FY24-25**	**FY25-26 Projected***	**FY26-27 Projected***
State/Federal Funds	$120,238	$351,860	$387,046
Total Funding Sources	$120,238	$351,860	$387,046

**Projected amounts are estimates and are subject to change.*

Narrative Explanation of Financial Impact:
The Fiscal Assistant I/II position is requested to support IHSS which is a realigned program. Allocation for Fiscal Assistant I/II resides in fund 1160, budget unit 511 and is supported through State (27%), Federal (39%) and Realignment (34%) funding. The position allocation and associated revenues and expenditures are included in the approved FY 2024-25 budget at $76,041 for the Fiscal Assistant I/II position. This total is based on a full year of salary and benefits. As this FY is in the third quarter, and the process to fill a recruitment takes time, fiscal projections assume an anticipated start date of Feb. 16, 2025, if approved by your Board. It will be likely this current FY 2024-25 impact will be $26,457.

The Supervising Behavioral Health Nurse allocation in fund 1170, budget unit 424, is supported through Federal and State reimbursement for Specialty Mental Health Services (47%), Realignment (35%) and Mental Health Services Act (18%). The position allocation and associated revenues and expenditures are included in the approved FY 2024-25 budget at $82,827 for the Supervising Behavioral Health Nurse position. This total is based on a full year of salary and benefits budgeted at 50% for vacant positions due to this position historically taking longer to fill. This position has been exceedingly harder to recruit for with limited applicants within the community. DHHS has multiple harder-to-fill classifications budgeted at 50% and the department has not exceeded this allocation in this current FY 2024-25. As this FY is now nearing the third quarter, and the process to fill a recruitment takes time, fiscal projections assume an anticipated start date of Feb. 16, 2025, if approved by your Board. It will be likely this current FY 2024-25 impact will be $58,391.

The Staff Services Specialist position is allocated based on a pre-determined sharing ratio for DHHS Admin between SS, BH and PH. DHHS Admin expenses reside in fund 1160, budget unit 516. DHHS Admin is funded with braided revenues from SS, BH and PH. The braided funding consists of Federal (40%), State (9%), Realignment (38%), County/Realignment (9%), Mental Health Services Act

(2%) and grants (2%). On a quarterly basis the PH and BH portions are reimbursed by journal. The portion of DHHS Admin cost that remains with SS fund 1160 is covered by monthly advances and reconciled quarterly based on actual expenditures reported on the County Expense Claim. The position allocation and associated revenues and expenditures are included in the approved FY 2024-25 budget at $92,016 for the Staff Services Specialist position. This total is based on a full year of salary and benefits. As this FY is now in the third quarter, and the process to fill a recruitment takes time, fiscal projections assume an anticipated start date of Feb. 16, 2025, if approved by your Board. It will be likely this current FY 2024-25 impact will be $35,391.

In the financial impact chart, the figures are based on 1.0 FTE of Fiscal Assistant I/II classification, 1.0 FTE of Supervising Behavioral Health classification, and 1.0 FTE of Staff Services Specialist classification for which the exception is requested for an assumption of 20 weeks of service in the current FY 2024-25. This projection is based on an assumed start date of Feb. 16, 2025, if approved by your Board.

There are no budget adjustments needed to fill these positions in FY 2024-25 as the positions that DHHS is requesting to fill are already budgeted. DHHS has already taken steps to freeze hiring, make budget cuts, 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:

Narrative Explanation of Staffing Impact:
Only vacated positions already budgeted in the adopted FY 24-25 budget are being considered for filling and only after ensuring the position would be utilized to meet mandates and allow for staff to continue to generate revenue.

OTHER AGENCY INVOLVEMENT:

None

ALTERNATIVES TO STAFF RECOMMENDATIONS:

Your Board could choose not to allow recruitment for Fiscal Assistant I/II, Supervising Behavioral Health Nurse and Staff Services Specialist in the current FY, however, this is not recommended. Leaving these positions unfilled could lead to lack of compliance with state mandates, a loss of federal and state claiming and leaves DHHS vulnerable to non-compliance by not meeting internal staffing needs.

ATTACHMENTS:

N/A

PREVIOUS ACTION/REFERRAL:

Meeting of: : June 10, 2024; June 25, 2024
File No.: 24-956, 24-1012