

Aid to Agencies Program Evaluation

MARCH 30, 2021 STUDY SESSION

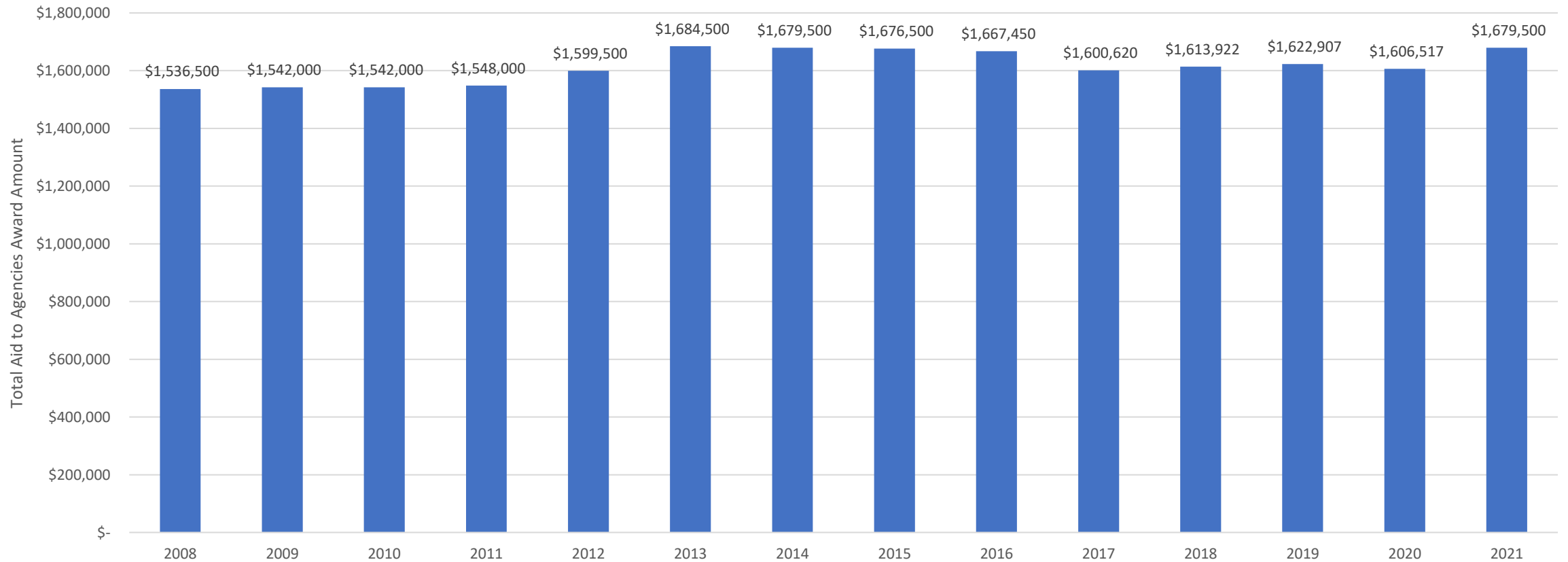
Purpose

- With no new significant revenue expected in the near term, the Board will need to make decisions to create a sustainable budget for the next 5-7 years.
- As part of that decision-making process, Arapahoe County is evaluating all programs and services - including Aid to Agencies - to implement fiscal belt-tightening in the years ahead.
- A staff team comprised of Directors from Human Services, Community Resources, and the Commissioners' Office as well as the Aid to Agencies review team identified key areas of concern, reviewed similar programs conducted by other agencies, surveyed agency recipients to solicit feedback, and identified potential options to better align the program with the Board's new strategic plan.

Program Overview

- Current Aid to Agencies process takes 9-10 months, start to finish
- Timeline
 - Application is posted in April with a deadline in June
 - Review team reviews applications from June through August
 - Review team meets in August to discuss scores and funding amounts
 - Funding recommendations are presented to the Board at a study session in September
 - Board approves the budget in December
 - Funds are sent out in late January/early February

Funding History

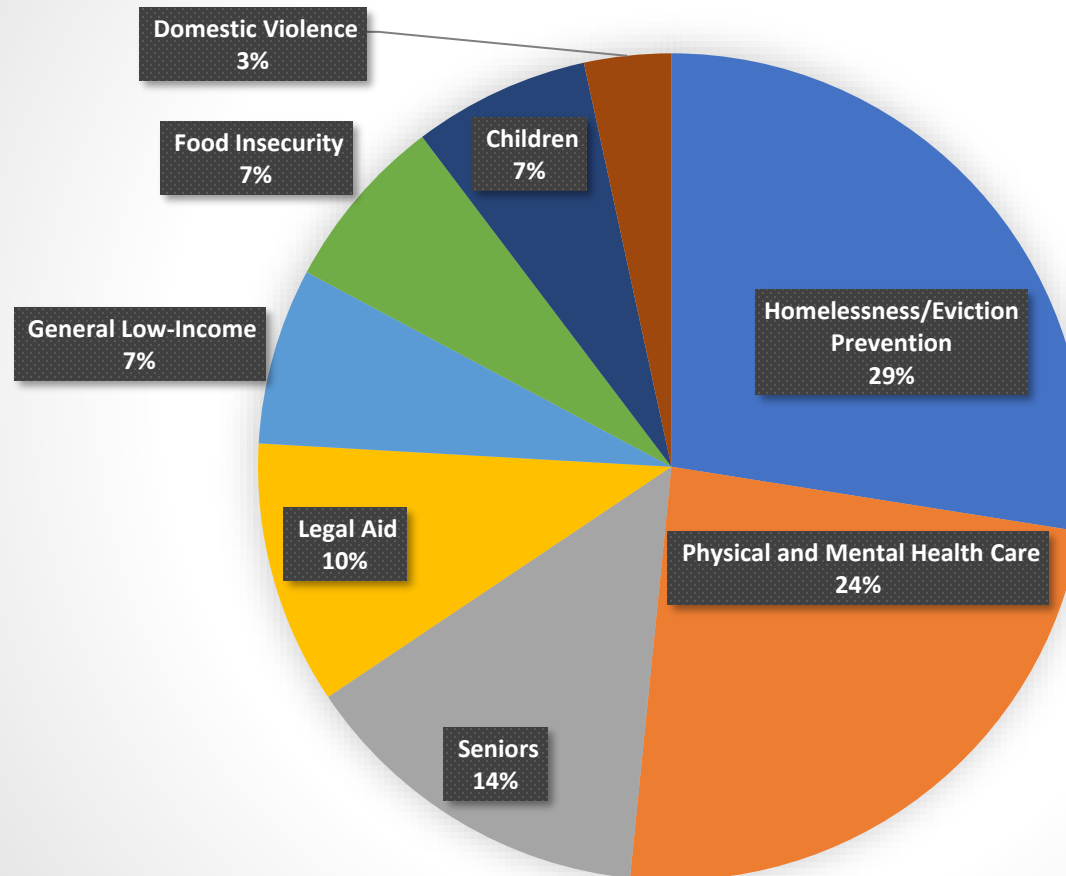


Historical Awards

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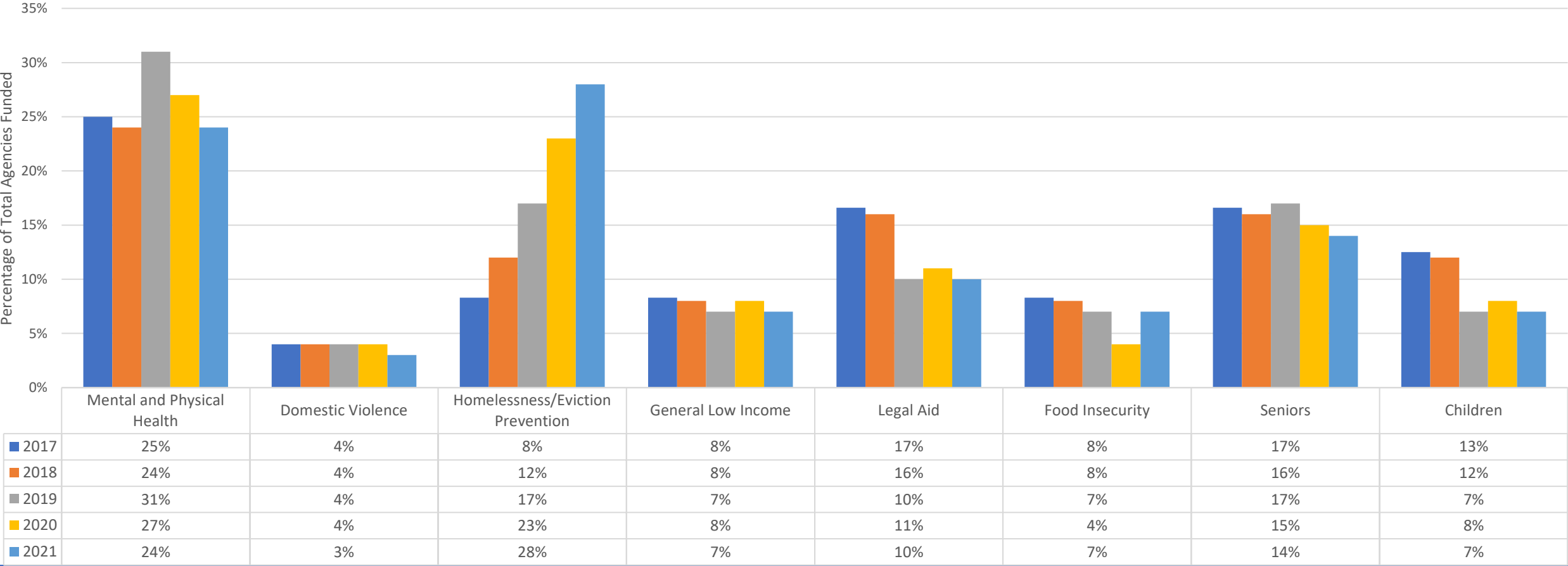
Breakdown of Service Areas

2021 Aid to Agencies Primary Service Areas



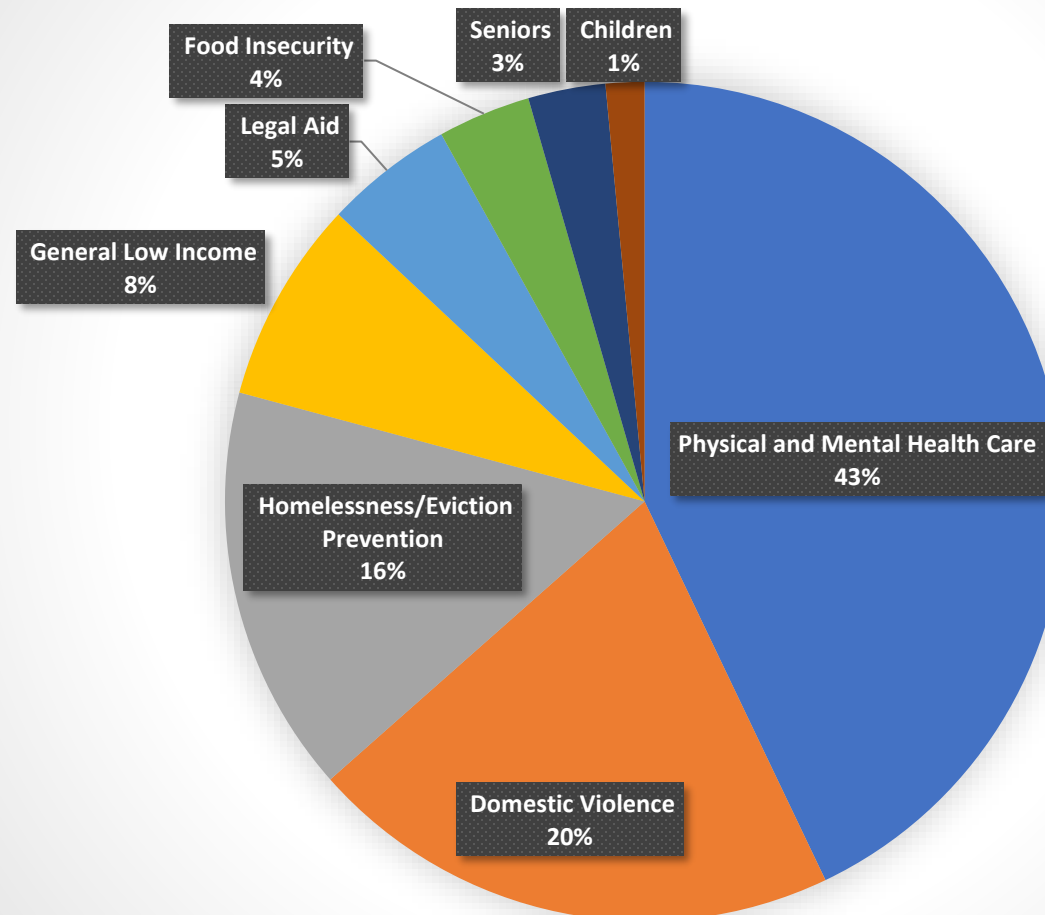
Service Area Trends

2017-2021 Aid to Agencies Primary Service Areas



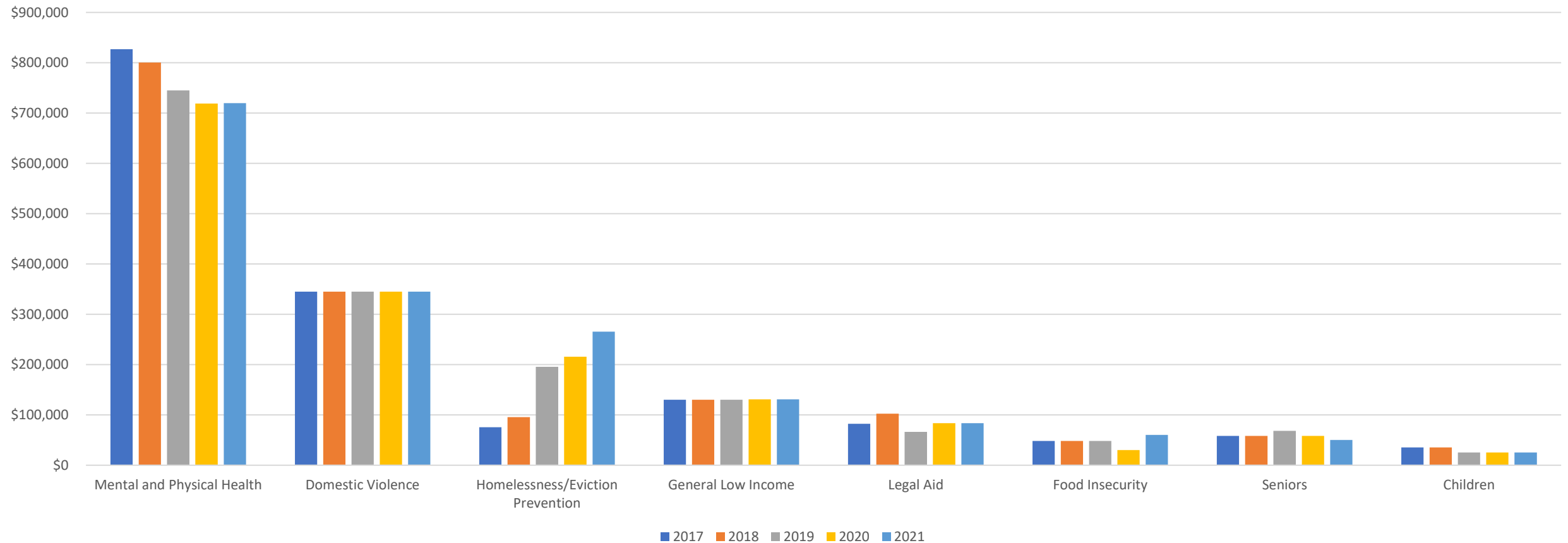
Breakdown of Funding Amounts

2021 Aid to Agencies Funding Amounts by Service Category



Funding Amount Trends

2017-2021 Funding Amounts



Stakeholder Feedback

- Met with both internal and external stakeholders to find out what could be improved
- Sent a survey to agencies asking for their feedback on the program
- Received 21 total responses
 - 90.5% strongly agree the purpose and expectations of the program are well-defined
 - 90.5% strongly agree getting answers to questions about applications or funding is easy
 - 85.7% are very satisfied with the program and strongly agree the application process is straightforward
 - 81% strongly agree the timeline for the process is clear
 - 66.7% of respondents said they would be willing to submit regular reports on how funding is being used; 23.8% responded “Maybe” and 9.5% responded “No”

Current Issues

- Some applicants receive funds each year which has led to a perception of it being a “guaranteed funding source”
- Agencies lack a contingency plan if funding were eliminated
- Funding amounts vary widely between agencies
- Process takes 9-10 months start to finish which is significantly longer than other programs
- Lack of reporting as to how the funds are being spent

Programmatic Considerations

- Clarify what types of services funding should be used for and what types of organizations are eligible
 - “Vulnerable populations” is very vague
- Minimize the perception that funding is guaranteed
- Improve communication with agencies to have a better idea of what work is being done with funds
 - Stricter reporting requirements
- Leverage software tools for application and review process (Award Force)

Questions for Consideration

- Are we still funding the right gaps?
- Is it really a grant program? If not, what do we want it to be?
- Which agencies must be funded?
- Should the amount of funds awarded be standardized?
- Does the review process need to change? If so, how?

Comparative Programs

- Adams County:
 - Use general fund dollars to support grants through the Adams County Foundation
- Douglas County:
 - Phillip S. Miller grant program
- City and County of Broomfield:
 - All agencies must provide a mid-year and year-end report through Google Docs
 - Applications must specify how funds will be used specifically for Broomfield residents (not schools, community, etc.)
- Loudoun County, Virginia:
 - Host a webinar where potential applicants can ask questions
- Lorain County, Ohio:
 - Grants are split up into different categories (Arts and Culture, Education and Youth, Health and Human Services, Strengthening Lorain County)
- Onslow County, North Carolina:
 - Agencies have an opportunity to give a five-minute brief to the Budget Team and BOCC

Stakeholder Survey Responses

- Multiple responses were submitted to the question of how the program could be improved:
 - Add a question to the application related to the ability of an agency to provide culturally responsive care and address the needs of diverse populations
 - There is a missed opportunity to provide media coverage of how grant funds are used to help the community
 - Rather than submitting regular reports, each agency should present at Board meetings to provide real life examples of the impact of this funding
 - Make funding decisions earlier because announcing in December impacts the ability to create an accurate budget for the new fiscal year
 - Shorten the length of time from when award decisions are announced to the time funds are received

Possible Options

- Set a cap on the amount of funding an agency can receive (Recommendation is \$100,000)
- Set a time limit of how many years an agency can apply for funding and how many years they cannot (Recommendation is three (3) years on, three (3) years off)
- Require reporting of how funds are being used that can be shared with the Board and the review team (Recommended frequency is quarterly)
- Create a list of three or four priority areas each year that we're soliciting applications for (gap areas)
- If there are agencies that receive funding no matter what, take them off the top and make the rest competitive

Alignment with Strategic Plan

- Fiscal Sustainability
 - Need to ensure the Aid to Agencies budget is structurally balanced
 - Delivery of funds needs to be as efficient as possible
- Provide essential and mandated services
 - What agencies are required?
- Be community focused
 - Many agencies support opportunities for physical and mental health
 - Many agencies focus on supporting individuals experiencing homelessness, domestic violence, or other situations to improve their quality of life

Alignment with Strategic Plan (continued)

- Accountability

- Want clear standards, processes, and procedures

- Accessibility

- Want to be timely in response

- Inclusivity

- How can we make inclusivity a bigger part of this program?

- Integrity

- Want to be as responsive as possible to both agencies and individuals served

Questions/Next Steps

- Tentative hold on April 20 for a follow-up study session