

2011 Accomplishments in Child Welfare

Since the Hickenlooper Administration took office slightly more than 12 months ago, numerous advances to Colorado's child welfare system have been implemented.

A team of dedicated professionals and caring child advocates from across the state have collaborated to ensure the safety and well-being of Colorado's children.

Ensuring Safety

- The Differential Response pilot was fully implemented in five counties. Differential Response espouses a change in philosophy and practice in frontline casework practice. Early results from the process evaluation shows a positive impact for families, an increase in the the skills of workers, and greater alignment between the expressed values of child welfare practitioners and actual practice.
- Collaboratively working with counties and advocates to lay the foundation for statewide implementation of Differential Response. Senate Bill 12 – 011 has been proposed by the counties, with the support of the state, to allow for additional counties to implement Differential Response prior to the completion of the formal pilot. This proposed legislation is currently in the Senate.
- The newly developed Colorado Practice Model – a common practice approach for Colorado – has been implemented in 17 counties and many more counties will implement the model in 2012.
- State and county staff are collaboratively developing new safety and risk assessment tools that build on a family's strengths and abilities.
- On-site training was provided to 22 county departments on Risk and Safety Assessment tools to improve consistency in practice, bringing the total to 47 counties that have been trained. Training will be held in the remaining 17 counties in 2012.



- Working with counties and other advocates to collaboratively create legislation to expand the current fatality review system to include near fatalities and egregious incidents of abuse and neglect. The proposed legislation has currently passed the Senate and moved to the House.
- Increased stakeholder involvement including a survey that was completed by all county staff to define improvements to the Training Academy to support a skilled and competent work force.

Establishing Permanency

- Developed relationships with significant, nationally renowned foundation resources to review Colorado's child welfare rules, programs and policies for keeping older youth safe, and moving them to safe, permanent living environments more quickly. These organizations include Casey Family Services, Annie E. Casey, the National Governor's Association and Georgetown University.
 - Casey Family Services piloted their new permanency framework for older youth in Colorado, including the "No Time to Lose" practice framework. This framework identifies core strategies to assure that all youth touched by the foster care system will have permanent families and permanent connections as they leave foster care.
 - Annie E. Casey is working with Colorado to increase recruitment and retention of foster parents so that children and youth can grow up in the least restrictive, family-like setting possible.
 - The National Governor's Association hosted a Permanency by Design Summit that worked with 11 counties to create plans to increase permanency options for youth ages 13 – 21.
 - Georgetown University has been working with Denver County in the cross-over youth projects which serve youth in foster care that are also in the juvenile justice system.
- Proposed Legislation that allows kin and relatives to take guardianship of children to keep children from growing up in foster care. SB12-066 has cleared the Senate and was introduced in the House on February 13 by Representative Gardner.

Reducing Red Tape:

- The collaboration with counties resulted in 100 rules being repealed or revised in child welfare alone. More than 800 rules are being revised or repealed across the Department. The reduction of rules and regulations will help CDHS to provide services more efficiently, and will allow county workers to reduce processes, and focus their efforts on increasing safety for children and families.
- Increased collaboration has developed between the counties and CDHS and through that collaboration, counties are able to re-design rules or policies that the Department develops to be more efficient at their level.
- CDHS has collaborated with CDPHE and HCPF to reduce duplicate rules, regulations, policies, procedures and contracts that existed between the three agencies, and will increase the efficiency of the delivery of services.

Increasing Accountability:

- Increased usage of timely data and performance measurements to improve practices.
- The approval of The Federal Program Improvement Plan was which has resulted in performance improvements including:
 - Risk assessment and safety management for children in foster care improving from 68% to 97%.
 - Risk assessment and safety management for children served in their own homes improved from 68% to 91%.
 - Providing the needed services to children, parents and foster parents in out of home placement improved from 51% to 82%.
 - Engaging families and their children in foster care in case planning has improved from 62% to nearly 91%.
- CDHS and the counties have collaborated to develop a county scorecard, which reports county performance quarterly in 22 outcomes.

- A Child Protection Ombudsman program was implemented in July of 2011. This program facilitates an independent and impartial review of family and community concerns; makes recommendations to improve the child welfare system; and supports better safety outcomes for children and families.
- Another accountability mechanism is the Child Fatality Review process that was codified in statute last year. This process seeks to determine what can be learned to prevent future fatalities and prescribes reporting timeframes and public accountability through posting fatality information on the Department's website.

Reforming Funding:

- Collaborating with county departments to hire an expert consultant in federal funding to assess the State's revenue generation practices. A State/County workgroup has identified and prioritized changes to increase federal funds coming to Colorado.
- Is requesting a federal waiver to allow counties to serve families before they are in a crisis in which the children must be put into foster care for safety.
- Working with counties to implement the 2011 Flexible Funding bill that allows services for families to keep them safe and together and out of foster care.

