

# STATE OF COLORADO



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Bill Ritter, Jr.  
Governor

Karen L. Beye  
Executive Director

June 15, 2010

To the Interested Parties of the Child Welfare Action Committee:

I met with Governor Bill Ritter, Jr. on Wednesday, June 9, 2010 to present him with the Final Report of the Governor's Child Welfare Action Committee (Committee). The report contained the six recommendations from the Co-Occurring Issues Subcommittee.

The Governor accepted all six recommendations and has asked the Department of Human Services to finalize implementation plans for the recommendations. He also expressed his appreciation to the Committee for their desire to look at the intersections of behavioral health, mental health, substance abuse, and domestic violence as they relate to children and families.

I am very proud of the work of the Governor's Child Welfare Action Committee. The three reports produced by the Committee are the culmination of many hours of research and often times difficult discussions. The 35 recommendations approved by the Committee outline the immense dedication the Governor's Child Welfare Action Committee had to improving the level of child protective services offered to children and families in the state of Colorado.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Karen L. Beye". The signature is written in a cursive style.

Karen L. Beye  
Executive Director

# **Final Report of the Governor's Child Welfare Action Committee**

**Presented to:  
Governor Bill Ritter, Jr.  
June 9, 2010**



**Colorado Department of Human Services**  
*people who help people*

**Prepared By:  
The Colorado Department  
of Human Services**

**Karen L. Beye  
Executive Director**

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## Executive Summary

Since July 2008, the Governor's Child Welfare Action Committee has been working on formulating recommendations for the Governor's consideration to improve the permanency, safety and well-being for children and their families. Thirteen of those recommendations were presented to Governor Bill Ritter, Jr. on October 31, 2008. The recommendations presented to him were:

- **Mandatory Reporters of Child Maltreatment**  
The Colorado Department of Human Services (Department) shall amend rules that specify how and when county departments and the State provide case progress information to mandatory reporters of specific referrals of child abuse and neglect.
- **Quality Assurance and State Leadership on Cultural Diversity Issues**  
The Department will develop and implement a program to work with counties, other agencies and communities on issues related to culture and diversity.
- **Pre-Service Training for Child Welfare Caseworkers, Supervisors and Case Aides**  
The Department will create and provide pre-service training for new child welfare caseworkers, new or promoted child welfare supervisors and new child welfare case services aides.
- **Pre-Service Training for Child Abuse/Neglect Hotline Staff**  
The Department will create and provide pre-service training for newly hired hotline staff.
- **Expansion of the Child Welfare Educational Stipend Program**  
The Department will work with institutions of higher education, which have an accredited school of social work, to expand, develop and implement an educational stipend program for 150 social work students.
- **Evaluation of Training Effectiveness**  
The Department will expand the training evaluation process to assure that the training objectives are congruent with practice standards and guidelines.
- **Domestic Violence Representation in Collaborative Management Programs**  
Require that all Collaborative Management Programs created under HB04-1451 include a domestic violence representative on the Interagency Oversight Group.
- **Assessing Domestic Violence in Child Abuse and Neglect Reports**  
Child welfare staff will collaborate and coordinate with the Colorado Works programs regarding the use of the domestic violence assessment tool available in the Family Violence Option Waiver to support victims of domestic violence in their efforts to become self-sufficient.

- **Utilizing Judicial Records**  
County staff will be required to access judicial records through existing available data systems such as LexisNexis.
- **Utilize Temporary Assistance for Needy Families Reserves to Support Domestic Violence Intervention and Prevention**  
The Department shall apply for a grant from the Strategic Use Fund. The Department will work with the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment to implement a public education program regarding domestic violence.
- **Child Welfare Organizational Study and Workload Analysis**  
The Department will request legislation and funding strategies in order to conduct a workload analysis and codify the workload standards identified in the completed workload analysis.
- **Child Welfare Division Research and Performance Improvement Team**  
The Department will develop a decision item to add staffing and funding for a Research and Performance Improvement Team to the Division of Child Welfare.
- **Foster Care and Permanence Task Force Recommendations**  
Four of the recommendations from the Foster Care and Permanence Task Force have been integrated into the subcommittee work of the Governor's Child Welfare Action Committee: Oversight of counties compliance and workload study, youth will be adequately prepared for emancipation, provide increased support and services to kinship caregivers and children in out-of-home placements and develop a funding strategy to support casework staff training on the Colorado Safety Assessment Instrument.

Sixteen additional recommendations are presented to the Governor for consideration on September 28, 2009. The following recommendations represent increasing transparency and accountability for both the State and county departments, providing consistency in child maltreatment investigations and improving public access to services and resources in the child welfare system:

- **Centralized Call Center**  
To develop a centralized call center to receive all incoming child abuse/neglect calls for the State of Colorado on a 24/7 basis.
- **Access to Services**  
The Department shall establish protocols whereby both the county departments and the State assume accountability to ensure children and families are receiving consistent child welfare services.

- **Child Welfare System of Care**  
Colorado should create a child welfare system that incorporates and implements the following principles: Family preservation and strength; child safety; least restrictive and most appropriate service provision; accurate child service assessments; accurate identification for early intervention; single, collaborative, community-based service provision; new services are created when unmet needs of children and families are identified; ensure flexibility and require accountability at the local level; encourage public and private partnerships; and, increase interagency collaboration and family involvement.
- **Feedback to Mandatory Reporters of Child Abuse/Neglect**  
County departments who receive a referral would provide specific feedback to certain mandatory reporters within a prescribed timeframe.

The following six recommendations represent expanding evidence-based practice standards and improving resources and services for children and families in the child welfare system:

- **Differential Response**  
The Department will create and develop a differential response pilot program in no fewer than six counties. After two years, the pilot program will be subject to an independent evaluation to determine the effectiveness of the program.
- **In-Service Training for Child Welfare Caseworkers, Supervisors, Case Aides and Child Abuse/Neglect Hotline Staff**  
The Department will expand, create and provide ongoing in-service training for child welfare caseworkers, supervisors, case aides and child abuse/neglect hotline staff. The training will be provided annually on a statewide basis.
- **Use of a Family Centered Engagement Method**  
Involve the child's family in decision-making processes using a method that: Provides facilitated family meetings; documents the involvement of the family in the process; is used at various times throughout the life of a case; addresses placement options; and, addresses the cultural needs of the family.
- **Establish a Statewide Training Program to Address Concerns Around Cultural Competency**  
The Department will ensure that all child welfare training curricula addresses cultural competency issues and will evaluate the training for effectiveness.
- **Increase the Number of Kinship Care Homes and Culturally Appropriate Foster Homes**  
Recruit and train culturally appropriate foster homes.

- **Recruitment of Faith Based Resource Families**

The Department will promote partnerships with local communities of faith in order to increase foster and adoptive care recruitment and retention.

Recommendations made to increase accountability and monitor evaluation of practice as well as address issues raised by state audits include:

- **Accountability Mechanisms (Office of Child Advocate)**

An Office of Child Advocate shall be established and the Governor shall make a decision as to where to place this Office. The development of a standard grievance policy utilized consistently statewide. The existing accountability mechanisms should be reviewed with the purpose of evaluating their effectiveness.

- **Improve Child Welfare Data Quality and Evaluate Practice**

The Department will evaluate expansion of the current statewide automated reporting system capacity and related data collection policies to gather additional information to identify the race and ethnicity of Colorado children and families.

- **Corrective Action Plans and Sanctions**

The State Board of Human Services will promulgate provisions for a Corrective Action Process. The Performance Improvement Process related to federal standards will be tied to the Corrective Action Plan Process.

- **Change of Venue**

Amend Colorado Revised Statutes to set forth a specific time (30 days) by which all documents and reports must be sent to the receiving court and a specific time by which a status conference/review hearing must be held (15 days after receipt of documents by the court) when venue has transferred from one jurisdiction to another.

- **Child Welfare Quality Assurance Program**

The Department will establish an Office of Quality Improvement and Assurance within the Department of Human Services to oversee data analysis, improve transparency, determine outcome and performance measures and develop a random sampling of performance audits for county departments.

- **Organizational Structure for Delivering Child Welfare and Other Human Services in Colorado**

The State of Colorado shall adopt a state-supervised, regionally directed and regionally and locally implemented system for the delivery of social services.

The final six recommendations are presented to the Governor for consideration on June 8, 2010. The following recommendations represent co-occurring issues of domestic violence, substance abuse and mental health.

- **Develop Training on the Issue of Co-Occurrence of Domestic Violence, Substance Abuse and Mental Health**  
The Department will develop a training curriculum to be implemented by the Child Welfare Training Academy on the issues of co-occurrence of domestic violence, substance abuse and mental health.
- **Representation on Collaborative Teams**  
The Department will encourage participation of representatives from domestic violence victim services and domestic violence offender treatment providers in community collaboratives on existing collaborative teams (1451's).
- **Joint Analysis of Behavioral Health Organizations**  
The Department will request that the Behavioral Health Cabinet conduct an analysis of Behavioral Health Organizations in order to enhance mental health and substance use services provided to children and families.
- **Development of a Statutes Review Group**  
The Department will request the Colorado Commission on Adult and Juvenile Justice review Colorado Revised Statutes, Title 18 and Title 19 regarding child abuse and reporting and provide recommendations for improvement.
- **Domestic Violence Intervention Approach**  
The Department will develop standardized principles, protocols and practices to be used by child protection workers in county departments working on child protection cases involving domestic violence.
- **Standardized Co-Occurrence Screening**  
The Department will request the Behavioral Health Cabinet include domestic violence in the standardized screening and risk assessment tool being developed.



## Subcommittees of the Governor's Child Welfare Action Committee

The Committee convened five subcommittees to address the scope of work outlined in the Executive Order. The five subcommittees providing recommendations to the Committee included:

- **Administrative Structure:** This subcommittee will evaluate the workforce needs of the state and counties; study the strengths and challenges of the state/county system; identify possible alternative structures; make recommendations regarding improving the current system or creating a new system; and develop a statewide workload analysis. Ms. Jenise May, Deputy Executive Director of Employment and Regulatory Affairs, is the State Lead and Commissioner Kathay Rennels, Larimer County, is the Co-Chair on this subcommittee.
- **Child and Family Outcomes:** This subcommittee will develop core outcome/performance indicators; establish an analytical framework for public child welfare; identify basic practice domains and service arrays necessary to meet the needs of children and families served by public child welfare; consider progressive incentives and sanctions based on performance, and define accountability mechanisms for consumers. Mr. Lloyd Malone, Director of Child Welfare, is the State Lead and Ms. Patricia Schene, American Human Association, is the Co-Chair on this subcommittee.
- **Cultural Competency:** This subcommittee will identify the underlying issues of disproportionate representation and disparate outcomes for children of color in the public child welfare system; identify strategies for improving outcomes for children of color, and enhance the cultural competency of caseworkers, supervisors, providers and the courts. Ms. Sharen Ford, Manager of the Permanency Unit, is the State Lead and Mr. Jose Mondragon, Director of Pueblo County Department of Social Services, is the Co-Chair on this subcommittee.
- **Training:** This subcommittee will identify core and advanced training curricula for caseworkers and casework supervisors; identify a process to recruit, train and retain a competent, credentialed workforce; and consider a Training Academy for these purposes that joins the efforts of public child welfare, public institutions of higher education, and experts in the field. Mr. Art Atwell, Director of Workforce Development Services, and Ms. Deborah Valentine, Colorado State University School of Social Work, is the Co-Chair on this subcommittee.
- **Co-Occurring Issues:** This subcommittee will identify effective existing policy and practice as well as gaps necessary to meet the needs of children and families served by the public child welfare system who are also experiencing the co-occurring issues of domestic violence, substance abuse and mental health. The subcommittee will make recommendations regarding the enhancement of existing policy and practice and the development of new and innovative policy and practice to ensure children and families receive the best possible interventions when intersecting with the child welfare system. Ms. Ruth M.

Glenn, Director of the Domestic Violence Program, is the State Lead and Ms. Debbie Stafford, is the Co-Chair of the subcommittee.

## Recommendations

The Committee heard and discussed several recommendations presented by the Co-Occurring Issues Subcommittee. The final six recommendations represent a culmination of many hours of research and discussions of the issues faced by this Subcommittee. The recommendations in this final report are presented in no specific order of priority:

### **30. Develop Training on the Issue of the Co-Occurrence of Domestic Violence, Substance Abuse and Mental Health**

**Background Information:** The co-occurrence of child maltreatment and domestic violence, substance abuse and mental health are often discovered in the examination of child protection cases. According to the Child Maltreatment Fatality Report 2007 (April 2008), these issues were discovered to varying degrees in all of the reviewed cases. These issues are complex by nature and require knowledge and skill that can only be obtained with specific training and skills development. Currently, child protection professionals are not receiving the level of training and skills development necessary to deliver comprehensive child protection services.

**Purpose:** To increase the knowledge and skills of child protection professionals regarding co-occurrence issues in order to establish a level of competency, which will enable professionals to provide quality services to children and their families.

**Recommendation:** To develop or enhance training and skills development on the issues of co-occurrence of domestic violence, substance abuse and mental health as a major component of the child welfare training curriculum and build on previously submitted training recommendations of the Committee. Training should include:

- Interviewing skills training on specific populations for newly hired child protection professionals. The skills training will include components that expressly develop skills in the areas of interviewing such populations as victims, persons with mental health issues, persons with disabilities and other specific populations. This component of training shall be offered as part of the Child Welfare Training Academy.
- Specific co-occurrence training for newly hired child protection professionals, including caseworkers, case aides and employees promoted to supervisory positions. The training will consist of specialized components that will assist child protection professionals in further understanding, identifying and providing appropriate interventions. This component of training shall be offered as part of the Child Welfare Training Academy and build on competencies provided by computer-based training. Newly hired caseworkers, case aides and promoted supervisors shall receive 20 hours of training during the last 6 months of the 1<sup>st</sup> year of hire (post Academy) or promotion.
- In-service co-occurrence issues training for caseworkers, supervisors and case aides. This training shall also be offered to community and child partners on child protection process and practice. Training shall include

advanced and emerging issues, rely on subject matter expert delivery and shall establish a range of learning opportunities which address specific community needs and individual professional duties. Examples include Mental Health First Aide for case aides and a domestic violence and child protection services intensive.

**Expected Outcomes:**

- Increase the training provided to child protection professionals facing co-occurrence issues.
- Enhance the services provided to children and families experiencing the co-occurrence of child maltreatment and domestic violence, substance abuse and mental health.

**Information Used to Reach This Recommendation:** The Committee consulted with various experts from the Colorado Department of Human Services, county department of human services and the judicial department. The Committee also reviewed the Child Maltreatment Fatality Report 2007 and the Interim Report of the Governor's Child Welfare Action Committee dated October 31, 2008.

**Legislation/Rule/Budget Decision Item:** A training plan will be developed in 2010 and will be delivered after funding becomes available. A budget decision item is required to secure funding to support the training plan.

### **31. Representation on Collaborative Teams**

**Background Information:** Many public and private child protection systems have roles in providing prevention, intervention or services in child protection cases. Communication between the systems is often limited or non-existent due to barriers such as geography, incentives, accessibility or lack of knowledge, coordination and cooperation. This often results in duplication of services, missed opportunities to provide information and limits access to areas of expertise, which ultimately inhibit the ability to provide a collaborative response in child protection cases.

**Purpose:** To facilitate the accessibility and cross-system collaboration between providers in child protection cases with co-occurring issues. Collaboration will result from the sharing of information and provide knowledge of roles and responsibilities. This will prevent duplication of services, enable more concentrated efforts in meeting the needs of child and families, provide cross training and awareness, particularly addressing the co-occurrence of domestic violence, substance abuse and mental health.

**Recommendation:** To identify existing collaborative teams such as 1451's, child and adult protective teams and others within county departments and encourage inclusion of representatives from domestic violence victim services and domestic violence offender treatment providers in community collaboratives such as law enforcement, community substance abuse providers, community mental health providers, community child welfare service providers as well as supporting the inclusion of family and family advocacy organizations.

These groups shall be tasked with developing joint training to include, but not be limited to investigative roles and responsibilities (for example: law enforcement and child protection) and domestic violence offender treatment. Interagency agreements shall be developed to include, but not be limited to how co-occurring issues are addressed throughout the life of the case. The Department shall encourage the involvement of all county departments and encourage community partners to participate and monitor implementation.

#### **Expected Outcomes:**

- Prevent duplication of services from multiple providers working on a child protection case.
- Provide improved services and care to families involved with child protection and co-occurring issues.

**Information Used to Reach This Recommendation:** The Committee consulted with various experts from the Colorado Department of Human Services, the Collaborative Management Program and the Domestic Violence/Child Protective Services Coordinating Council. Data from the current system, other state systems, practitioners in the field, child protection teams, collaborative management teams and other local and state collaboratives were reviewed.

**Legislation/Rule/Budget Decision Item:** The Department will promulgate rules to encourage county departments to identify collaborative teams and develop joint training.

### **32. Joint Analysis of Behavioral Health Organizations**

**Background Information:** Over the last twenty years the service delivery system for serving children with emotional and mental disorders has undergone radical change. In 1988, there were psychiatric and substance abuse units within 42 general hospitals in the state serving Medicaid patients. With the onset of mental health capitation, over 700 psychiatric beds serving children and adolescents in the state of Colorado have closed. Currently, there are only 133 psychiatric hospital beds available in 9 facilities for children and adolescents statewide. On average, less than twenty youth per day funded by Medicaid utilize the available beds.

While psychiatric hospital beds were being eliminated, residential treatment beds have been declining, there has been an increase in youth corrections spending from \$23 million annually to \$139.1 million last fiscal year. Today there are 1,400 committed youth, almost 400 youth in detention and over 200 juveniles are prosecuted as adults annually. It is estimated that over 40% of Division of Youth Corrections commitments experience moderate to severe mental health issues and 80% were formally in the custody of child welfare.

**Purpose:** To promote local information sharing in order to provide mental and substance abuse services for children and families involved in the child welfare system.

**Recommendation:** To request that the Behavioral Health Cabinet conduct an analysis involving the Division of Child Welfare, Health Care Policy and Financing and the Alcohol and Drug Abuse Division. The analysis shall include input from county departments, Behavioral Health Organizations, Child Health Plan Plus contractors, Community Mental Health Centers, Substance Abuse Management Service Organizations, providers and representative from juvenile justice, early care and education regarding mental health and substance use services for children and families in the child welfare system.

**Expected Outcomes:**

- Enhance mental health and substance use services provided to children and families involved in the child welfare system.

**Information Used to Reach This Recommendation:** The Committee consulted with representatives from the Colorado Department of Human Services Divisions of Child Welfare and Behavioral Health, Colorado Behavioral Health Care and Community Mental Health Centers.

**Legislation/Rule/Budget Decision Item:** Not applicable.

### **33. Development of a Statutes Review Group**

**Background Information:** Colorado Revised Statutes (C.R.S.) as they relate to child protection is often a source of confusion in child protection cases. The need for greater clarity, more clear language, definitions and updating is evident in the efforts of providing quality service for children and families. In the case of co-occurring issues (domestic violence, substance abuse and mental health), the statutes do not give enough clarity on providing appropriate interventions, particularly for community service providers and law enforcement. This often leads to adverse effects on collaborative efforts as well as inconsistent responses to children and their families.

**Purpose:** To review and provide recommendations for clarification, revision or language changes to both Title 18 and Title 19 of the Colorado Revised Statutes.

**Recommendation:** Request the Colorado Commission on Adult and Juvenile Justice (Justice Commission) review C.R.S. Title 18 and Title 19 regarding child abuse and reporting and provide recommendations for improvement. The Committee suggests the Justice Commission include representatives from the Colorado Department of Human Services Divisions of Child Welfare and Behavioral Health, judicial (judge or magistrate), county departments, Office of Child Representative, law enforcement, community child welfare professionals and other similar providers. The Department, on behalf of the Committee, will request a response from the Justice Commission by September 2010. Following is a list of areas of concern:

- Review definitions for child abuse as it relates to domestic violence issues in both C.R.S. Title 18 and Title 19. Charges can be placed against a perpetrator when a child is present; however, there is a need for clarity regarding the definition of “child is present”.
- Currently, Title 18 defines serious bodily injury as a substantial risk of death, permanent disfigurement, risk of protracted loss or impairment of the function of any part or organ of the body, breaks, fractures or burns of the second or third degree at either the time of actual injury or at a later time. When a child has an injury that does not meet the above criteria, the offender can only be charged with a misdemeanor. Consideration needs to be given to charging the offender with a felony when the injury of a child is involved.
- Review C.R.S. 18-6-401 regarding what constitutes a repeat offender, what injuries qualify to increase the charge against the offender and the enforcement practices.
- Review and expand on who is required to report child abuse (mandatory reporters), including family members.



**Expected Outcomes:**

- Changes made to C.R.S. Title 18 and Title 19 will provide for greater clarity and will facilitate a standard interpretation of the laws for child protection professionals.

**Information Used to Reach This Recommendation:** The Committee reviewed survey results from the Domestic Violence/Child Protective Services Coordinating Council, the Child Maltreatment Fatality Report 2007 and Title 18 and 19 of the Colorado Revised Statutes. The Committee also consulted with representatives from county departments, law enforcement and medical staff from Denver Health Medical Center.

**Legislation/Rule/Budget Decision Item:** Legislation is necessary to adopt any suggested changes to C.R.S. Title 18 and Title 19.

### **34. Domestic Violence Intervention Approach**

**Background Information:** The Child Maltreatment Fatality Report 2007 (April 2008) reported Domestic Violence as a co-occurring issue in 30-40% of all cases. While a child's non-offending (domestic violence) parent, legal guardian or caregiver may separate from the offender, without carefully planned interventions for offender and victims, the risk to children may increase post-separation stemming from the offenders newly unmonitored parenting and from the retaliatory tendencies of many offenders. At the same time, not all domestic violence offenders are equally dangerous and some children show better outcomes when they can have safe, continued contact with the offender, making careful ongoing risk assessment centrally important in effective case planning including future partners of either parent.

Nationally recognized organizations including the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services have issued reports calling for offender accountability and partnership with the non-offending adult victim as cornerstones for effective child protection involvement in co-occurring child abuse and domestic violence cases. Most offenders will have continued contact with children, which requires structuring principled, protocols and practices to guide and support child protection workers.

**Purpose:** To develop standardized principles, protocols and practices to be used by child protection workers in county departments working on child protection cases involving domestic violence.

**Recommendation:** The Department shall develop a consistent approach by employing principle, protocol and practice to assist state and county department staff in understanding, identifying and providing appropriate interventions in child protection cases that involve domestic violence.

The Department shall develop protocols for child protection cases by identifying and assessing domestic violence at all stages during child protective service involvement. These protocols shall include a guiding principle which emphasizes that safety and well-being is most achievable and effective through enhanced offender accountability and adult victim (non-offending parent) empowerment.

The Department shall develop effective practices in co-occurring domestic violence and child abuse cases. These practices shall be supported by developing a pilot program which co-locates domestic violence advocates in child protective service offices in county departments for a two-year period. The domestic violence advocates shall provide ongoing domestic violence expertise, cross training, case consultation and will work with county staff to identify and implement practice changes.

#### **Expected Outcomes:**

- Early identification of domestic violence and intervention resulting in preventing child abuse and strengthening family capacity.

- Reduce the occurrence of domestic violence, child abuse and neglect.
- Reduce the rates of recidivism in the child welfare system through improved, consistent casework that ensures appropriate assessment and services are provided to families with co-occurring domestic violence and child abuse issues.
- Reduce the rates of out-of-home placements through better screening and new strategies for supporting non-offending adult victims to retain care and custody of children.
- Increase reports of satisfaction by families and community stakeholders in services provided and received.
- Develop and implement evidenced based practices in the provision of domestic violence services.
- Improve child protective services integration with community programs.
- Improve child protective services collaboration and service delivery.

**Information Used to Reach This Recommendation:** The Committee reviewed the Child Maltreatment Fatality Report 2007, the Connecticut Department of Children and Domestic Violence Consultant Initiative: A State Child Welfare Agency Response to Domestic Violence 2008, federal and local Green Book reports, and Child and Family Service Review (CFSR) Outcomes, Strategies to Improve Domestic Violence Response in CFSR Program Improvement Plans. The Committee heard presentation regarding the survey results of the Domestic Violence/Child Protective Services Coordinating Council, DVOMB and the foundation for the forthcoming revised offender treatment standards, Collaborative Management Program, promoting fatherhood initiative and confidentiality mandates of domestic violence victim services programs.

**Legislation/Rule/Budget Decision Item:** A budget decision item is required to secure funding to support the pilot program.

The Department shall promulgate rules to implement the protocols and practices for child protection cases that involve domestic violence.

### **35. Standardized Co-Occurrence Screening**

**Background Information:** There are many different tools and methods employed by child protection professionals and those who provide supportive and co-occurring issues (domestic violence, substance abuse and mental health) services. This can lead to duplication of services, language and interpretation conflicts, delay of services and other issues that prevent children and their families from receiving quality and effective services.

**Purpose:** To develop a comprehensive screening and risk assessment tool to better determine the needs and services for those children and families involved with child protection and co-occurring issues.

**Recommendation:** Request the Behavioral Health Cabinet (BH Cabinet) include domestic violence in the standardized screening and risk assessment tool being developed. The Department, on behalf of the Committee, will request a response to this request from the BH Cabinet by September 2010.

**Expected Outcomes:**

- A standardized screening and assessment tool will advance the identification of co-occurring issues and facilitate the development of evidence based support services.

**Information Used to Reach This Recommendation:** The Committee reviewed the Division of Child Welfare Safety Assessment, Screening, Brief Intervention, Referral to Treatment (SBIRT) and Access to Recovery (ATR) documents. The Committee also consulted with representatives from county departments, law enforcement and medical staff from Denver Health Medical Center.

**Legislation/Rule/Budget Decision Item:** The Department shall promulgate rules requiring county departments to utilize the standardized screening and risk assessment tool after its development.

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**Bill Ritter, Jr.**  
Governor

**B 006 08**

## **EXECUTIVE ORDER**

### **Creating the Governor's Child Welfare Action Committee**

Pursuant to the authority vested in the Office of the Governor of the State of Colorado, I, Bill Ritter, Jr., Governor of the State of Colorado, hereby issue this Executive Order creating the Governor's Child Welfare Action Committee ("Committee").

#### **I. Background and Purpose**

The protection of children from abuse and neglect must be one of Colorado's highest public policy priorities. It is our responsibility to assure that Colorado's youngest citizens have the opportunity to be safe and nurtured and to achieve their full potential. If even one child dies due to neglect or abuse it is one too many. We must commit ourselves to continually improving our child welfare system, assuring that efforts are made to better assess and serve this at risk population of children and their families.

To put our care of vulnerable children in context, it is important to look at the numbers of families that are currently involved in the child welfare system:

- In 2007 the child welfare system received 70,216 referrals for abuse and neglect;
- Of those, 57,545 cases were opened for assessment; and
- Of those assessed, 41,536 cases were opened by the county departments for full review.

A spike in the number of child fatalities statewide led to the Colorado Department of Human Services' recent review of child fatalities due to child abuse or neglect. This review identified several ways in which Colorado's child welfare system can be improved. My administration is taking steps to immediately implement many of these necessary improvements. This review also identified issues that will involve longer term planning and solutions.

The protection of children in Colorado is the responsibility of many parties including parents, relatives, neighbors, foster parents, schools, law enforcement, courts, providers,

guardians *ad litem*, and many other organizations within each of Colorado's communities. In Colorado we have a public social service system that is "state supervised and county administered." This means that both the state and county departments of human services provide vital services to children and families in need. The county departments directly provide the services that aid children and families everyday. The State department provides the supervision and oversight to the counties as they administer the child welfare programs. This dual system creates challenges in assuring that there is consistency across counties in decision making, supervision, and training in human service offices. It is this same system, however, that allows each individual county to specifically tailor assistance to meet the needs of their community.

It is urgent that we examine the State's child welfare system so that we can better protect children from abuse and neglect. We also need to enhance the public confidence in the child welfare system. The system must be more transparent in order to provide assurance to the public that when they have concerns about a child's well being and they report these concerns to authorities that the situation will be responded to in a timely manner by highly trained professionals.

## II. Mission and Scope

The mission of the Governor's Child Welfare Action Committee shall be to provide recommendations to the Governor on how to improve the Colorado Child Welfare System. The Committee must be guided by data and must rely upon evidence of best practices when available. The ultimate goal will be to reduce the neglect, injury, and fatality rates for Colorado's children. I am establishing this Committee for eighteen months. It is expected that the committee will make policy, budgetary, and legislative recommendations.

The Committee's work shall include, but not be limited to:

- A. Analyzing state-county organizational capacity and structure to determine whether this system is the most effective option for protecting children:
  1. Define the role of the Colorado Department of Human Services in monitoring, oversight, consultation, and technical assistance with child welfare staff in county departments of social/human services;
  2. Consider an array of progressive incentives and sanctions to be utilized with county departments and providers to assure they are in compliance with legal rules and regulations;
  3. Assess county workload, caseload and staffing levels to determine what level of resources are required to ensure the safety of children; and

4. Investigate child welfare models throughout the country and whether there are other organizational structures that would better ensure the safety of Colorado's children.
- B. Examining the quality and quantity of training that child care professionals should receive when working in the child protection field:**
1. Define basic qualifications and training requirements for staff and supervisors who are part of the state-county funded child welfare system:
  2. Consider the benefits of a worker certification program for child welfare workers and supervisors; and
  3. Consider the efficacy, cost and benefits of a State Training Academy for Child Protection.
- C. Evaluating public access to state-county human services departments:**
1. Assess how human services agencies can be more accessible and responsive to community members who want to report child maltreatment; and
  2. Make recommendations for systems, protocols, and programming that allow the public to make reports more easily and to develop a tracking system in which citizens can be assured that their concerns will be followed up in a responsible and timely manner.
- D. Exploring the role that independent oversight committees can play in ensuring that human service agencies are held accountable for actions that might negatively impact families, children, and the community at large:**
1. Evaluate the effectiveness of agencies like the Child Ombudsman Office in which an independent body is authorized to intervene when an agency's action or inaction may be placing a child at risk;
- E. Developing recommendations as to how public/private partnerships can improve the services and care provided to children who reside within the welfare system:**
1. Develop forums that encourage state agencies and divisions to collaborate across systems to improve child welfare resources and practice. These departments should include but be not limited to the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment and

the Colorado Department of Health Care Policy and Financing, as well as the Judicial Branch; and

2. Include business partners from the private sector who serve families in a wide array of programs. These individuals should bring expertise on how to change and improve business practices by incorporating effective management skills and efficiency methodologies.
- F. Reviewing evidence-based best practice standards to the extent practicable when recommending changes to the child welfare system.

**III. Membership**

The Committee shall be composed, as follows:

- A. The Committee shall consist of up to twenty-five (25) voting members who shall be appointed by and serve at the pleasure of the Governor.
- B. The following individuals shall serve as members of the Committee:
  1. The Executive Director of the Department of Human Services, who shall serve as chair of the Committee;
  2. The Executive Director of the Department of Public Health and Environment, or his designee; and
  3. The Executive Director of the Department of Health Care Policy and Financing, or her designee;
- C. Other members of the Committee shall include:
  1. County commissioners and county social services representatives;
  2. Individuals with judicial experience;
  3. Individuals with experience in early childhood development and/or K-12 educational representatives;
  4. Children's representatives serving in a private or non-profit entity dedicated to the protection of children;
  5. Families or children who are current and or former recipients of child welfare services in Colorado; and



6. **Members from the business community who bring management and business planning experience.**
- D. **The Committee shall be appointed to assure broad-based regional, ethnic, and professional distribution of membership.**
- E. **The Committee shall meet regularly at the direction and discretion of the chair.**
- F. **The Committee may establish working groups or subcommittees from within its membership or outside its membership to assist it in its work or to address specific issues.**

#### **IV. Directives**

The Governor's Child Welfare Action Committee is hereby created. The Committee shall prepare and submit to the Governor an interim and a final report. The interim report shall be submitted by October 31, 2008, and a final report shall be submitted by December 31, 2009. In its interim report, the Committee shall report on its progress and, to the extent that any recommendations are finalized, make its recommendations regarding any policy changes, including but not limited to recommendations for legislative changes. In its final report, the Committee shall make its final recommendations regarding any policy changes, including but not limited to recommendations for legislative changes. The Committee shall make every effort to reach consensus on its interim and final reports. Recommendations contained in the Committee's reports shall only be adopted upon a two-thirds vote of the Committee members.

#### **V. Staffing and Resources**

The Committee shall have the power to accept money and in-kind contributions from public and private entities, but only to the extent such donations are necessary to cover its expenses. These donated funds may be used for the purpose of providing administrative support for the Committee, which may include retaining a consultant to assist with the Committee's work, as well as paying for the Committee's actual expenses. Any money contributed to the Committee shall be directed to the Office of the Governor and deposited with the Treasurer of the State of Colorado in an account within the Office of the Governor's budget. Members of the Committee shall serve without compensation, but may, at the discretion of the co-chairs and upon the approval of the Office of the Governor, be reimbursed for any actual expenses incurred.

VI. Duration

This Executive Order shall remain in force until December 31, 2009, at which time the Committee shall be dissolved.



GIVEN under my hand and the  
Executive Seal of the State of  
Colorado this sixteenth day of  
April, 2008.

  
Bill Ritter, Jr.  
Governor



Attachment B

**Child Welfare Action Committee  
Recommendations Matrix**

	<b>Recommendation Title</b>	<b>Legislation</b>	<b>Fiscal Note</b>	<b>Rule</b>	<b>Budget Decision Item</b>	<b>Status</b>	<b>Due Date</b>
1.	<b>Mandatory Reporters of Child Maltreatment:</b> To allow professionals to receive status of the investigation unless waived.			X		Completed.	10/2008
2.	<b>Quality Assurance and State Leadership on Cultural and Diversity Issues:</b> To address disparities and reduce disproportional representation of minority children in the system.			X	X	Launched in May 2009, Colorado Disparity Resource Center (CDRC) in partnership with American Humane Association; CDRC Coordinator position hired October 2009.	Ongoing
3.	<b>Pre-Service Training for Child Welfare Caseworkers, Supervisors and Case Aides:</b> To ensure that staff have required competencies before they take a case.	X	X	X	X	Completed. Child Welfare Training Academy opened 1/2010.	Ongoing
4.	<b>Pre-Service Training for Child Abuse/Neglect Hotline Staff:</b> To ensure that staff have required competencies before they take a case.	X	X	X	X	Needs a budget decision item before the pre-service training can begin.	09/2011
5.	<b>Expansion of the Child Welfare Educational Stipend Program:</b> To provide incentives for highly educated professionals to enter the child welfare workforce.	X	X	X	X	Needs a budget decision item before the expansion of the educational stipend program can begin.	09/2011
6.	<b>Evaluation of Training Effectiveness:</b> To ensure that the Academy curriculum is congruent with current policy and practice standards.			X	X	Completed. This has been incorporated into the operation of the ongoing training program. Expansion of what is being done would need a budget decision item.	Ongoing 09/2011 for DI

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	Recommendation Title	Legislation	Fiscal Note	Rule	Budget Decision Item	Status	Due Date
7.	Domestic Violence Representation in Collaborative Management Programs: To enable case planning and service delivery to be more collaborative across systems.	X	X			Completed. Legislation was passed in the 2009 GA and signed by the Governor.	Completed
8.	Assessing Domestic Violence in Child Abuse and Neglect Reports: To address the co-occurrence of child maltreatment and domestic violence to ensure proper coordination of services.	X	X	X		The Co-Occurring Issues Subcommittee has completed its recommendations.	Completed
9.	Utilizing Judicial Records: To give county investigators information about existing criminal records to improve their assessments and safety of children.			X		Completed.	Completed
10.	Utilize Temporary Assistance for Needy Families Reserves to Support Domestic Violence Intervention and Prevention: To provide additional resources for the prevention of domestic violence.			X		The Domestic Violence Program sought and received Statewide Strategic Use Funds (SSUF) to implement the Ending Domestic Violence and Prevention Project (EDVAPP). Funding was provided to the Domestic Violence Program to provide children services and a co-location project was implemented in 6 sites statewide.	Completed
11.	Child Welfare Organizational Study and Workload Analysis: To understand the best organizational design and staffing resources needed for an ideal system.	X	X		X	The Organizational Study was completed 9/24/09. The Workload Analysis has not been completed.	09/2011 for the DI

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	Recommendation Title	Legislation	Fiscal Note	Rule	Budget Decision Item	Status	Due Date
12.	Child Welfare Division Research and Performance Improvement Team: To make sure that program decisions and services are based on good research, analysis, and evaluation.				X	The new Child Welfare Division organizational model is in place. Funding has been provided and hiring is underway.	06/2010 to complete hiring
13. A.	Task Force Recommendation # 5: Oversight of Counties Compliance and Workload Study: To ensure that an analysis of county-state relationship and workload study of CDHS, county departments of human/social services is completed. To create administrative rules and progressive disciplinary process, and to establish consistency throughout the state in the provision of child welfare services.				X	Workload Analysis has not been completed. Additional resources are needed.	09/2011 for the Workload DI
13. B.	Task Force Recommendation # 11: Youth Will Be Adequately Prepared for Emancipation: To improve permanency outcomes for youth, ensure that youth have access to their vital records, access to Medicaid benefits when emancipating from foster care and have sibling visitation.			X		Completed.	Completed
13. C.	Task Force Recommendation # 13: Provide Increased Support and Services to Kinship Caregivers for Children in Out-of-Home Placements		X	X	X	Contact made with the National Resource Center for Organizational Improvement (NRCOI) for technical assistance.	06/2009

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	Recommendation Title	Legislation	Fiscal Note	Rule	Budget Decision Item	Status	Due Date
						Conducting public forums to outline the development of a non-certified Kinship Program with necessary supports. Completed.	07/2010
13. D.	Task Force Recommendation # 15: Develop a Funding Strategy to Support Casework Staff Training on the Colorado Safety Assessment Instrument: To ensure that casework staff understands, utilizes and implements the Colorado Safety Assessment Instrument.				X	Completed.	Completed
14.	Centralized Call Center: To provide citizens one central place to call to report allegations of child abuse or neglect.	Optional		X	X	Being vetted for one year.	01/2011
15.	Accountability Mechanisms (Office of Child Advocate): To provide an independent, impartial place to voice concerns regarding the response of the system to protect children.	X	X	X	X	Governor's legislative agenda. SB10-171 has been introduced and passed 1 <sup>st</sup> reading.	07/2010
16.	Improve Child Welfare Data Quality and Evaluate Practice: To collect and report consistent information related to client demographics to address issues of disparity and disproportionality.			X	X	Completed. The new Child Welfare Division organizational model is in place. Funding has been provided and hiring is underway. Mountain and Plains Child Welfare Implementation project is underway.	Ongoing
17.	Differential Response: To engage families in an alternative approach to traditional investigations that keeps children safer and families stronger.	X		X		The Department has received a Federal Grant to implement a 5-County Pilot. Legislation HB 10-1226 has been introduced to enable the	Ongoing

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	Recommendation Title	Legislation	Fiscal Note	Rule	Budget Decision Item	Status	Due Date
						Pilot.	
18.	In-Service Training for Child Welfare Caseworkers, Supervisors, Case Aides and Child Abuse/Neglect Hotline Staff: To ensure that key child welfare staff has core competencies before they begin their new jobs.	X		X	X	In-service training for child welfare caseworkers and supervisors is in the development state. A statewide training needs assessment was completed 10/2009. Rules are in process and should be effective 3/2010. The target date for beginning is 7/2010. For case aides and hotline staff, a budget decision item is needed to begin training.	Rules 3/2010 Training 7/2010
19.	Use of a Family Centered Engagement Method: To promote family leadership in culturally appropriate case planning and services delivery.	X	X	X	X	MPCWIC and CFSR PIP planning include family engagement strategies.	06/2010
20.	Access to Services: To promote the consistent delivery of high quality services throughout all of Colorado.	X	X	X	X	The Child Welfare Division reorganization includes a comprehensive QA/QI approach. It will be included in MPCWIC implementation.	06/2010
21.	Establish a Statewide Training Program to Address Concerns Around Cultural Competency: To promote and advance culturally competent child welfare practices.	X	X	X	X	No action taken as legislation and additional resources are needed to advance this recommendation.	07/2011
22.	Child Welfare System of Care: To provide a practice model that ensures			X	X	The Child Welfare Division reorganization includes a	06/2010

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	Recommendation Title	Legislation	Fiscal Note	Rule	Budget Decision Item	Status	Due Date
	quality, consistency, and accountability for a full comprehensive service system.					comprehensive QA/QI approach. It will be included in MPCWIC implementation.	
23.	Increase the Number of Kinship Care Homes and Culturally Appropriate Foster Homes: To give placement staff more culturally appropriate options for children who must be placed outside their own homes.			X	X	Contact made with Casey Family Programs to enhance development of kinship care homes. Developing a Kinship Guardianship Program. Conducting public forums to outline the development of a non-certified kinship program.	06/2010 Ongoing 07/2010
24.	Feedback to Mandatory Reporters of Child Abuse/Neglect: To provide needed information to professionals who report abuse and maintain an ongoing role with the child.	X		X		SB 10-152 has been introduced to require the recommended feedback.	In Committee
25.	Corrective Action Plans and Sanctions: To develop progressive steps to bring counties into compliance with basic requirements of rules and regulations.			X		Draft process was presented to Sub-Pac in December 2009. Documents in development will be going to the State Board of Human Services in April 2010.	10/2010
26.	Change of Venue: To ensure that children whose case is moving from one county to another county have continuity of care and oversight.	X		X	X	HB 10-1359 has been introduced in the House	07/2010
27.	Recruitment of Faith Based Resource Families: To utilize faith communities to recruit, train, and retain foster and adoptive parents.				X	Colorado's Faith Based Community Collaborative meets quarterly to discuss recruitment strategies. A statewide recruitment plan for the	Ongoing



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	Recommendation Title	Legislation	Fiscal Note	Rule	Budget Decision Item	Status	Due Date
28.	Child Welfare Quality Assurance Program: To develop a system of continuous quality improvement based on the highest standards of child welfare practice.			X	X	CFSR/PIP is under development and includes outreach to communities of faith. The Child Welfare Division reorganization includes a comprehensive QA/QI approach. It will be included in MPCWIC implementation.	06/2010
29.	Organizational Structure for Delivering Child Welfare and Other Human Services in Colorado: To determine the most effective organizational design and capacity to protect and serve Colorado's children.	X	X			Being vetted for one year.	01/2011
30.	Develop Training on the Issue of the Co-Occurrence of Domestic Violence, Substance Abuse and Mental Health: To establish a level of competence for child protection professionals handling co-occurrence issues.						
31.	Representative on Collaborative Teams: To facilitate cross-system collaboration between providers in child protection cases involved with co-occurring issues.		X				
32.	Joint Analysis of Behavioral Health Organizations: To promote local information sharing in order to provide mental and substance abuse services for children and families involved in						

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	Recommendation Title	Legislation	Fiscal Note	Rule	Budget Decision Item	Status	Due Date
	the child welfare system.						
33.	Development of a Statutes Review Group: To improve the clarity of the Colorado Revised Statutes as they relate to child protection cases.	X					
34.	Domestic Violence Intervention Approach: To develop standardized principles, protocols and practices to be used by child protection workers working on child protection cases involving domestic violence.			X	X		
35.	Standardized Co-Occurrence Screening: To develop a comprehensive screening and risk assessment tool to better determine the needs and services for children and families involved with child protection.			X			