

“Keeping Kids Safe and Families Healthy” Accomplishments from 2012 Plan

In February 2012 Governor Hickenlooper announced his new Child Welfare Plan – “Keeping Kids Safe and Families Healthy,” which consists of five key strategies – a common practice approach, performance management, work force development, funding, and transparency and public engagement.

The plan was developed with the assistance of county partners, child advocates and stakeholders from across the state and is working to ensure the safety and well-being of Colorado’s children. The information below outlines some of the accomplishments achieved in the first year of implementation of the plan.

A Common Practice Approach for Colorado

- Last summer, CDHS announced the second cohort of counties to join the Colorado Practice Model. The addition of 18 new counties brought the total number of Colorado counties participating in the Practice Model to 35. These 35 counties represent more than 90% of the state’s total child welfare caseload.
- With legislation passed in 2012 (Senate Bill 12-011), and preliminary data showing positive outcomes for children and families, in January, the State Board of Human Services passed rules to expand the use of Differential Response across the state. The Department is currently working with counties to determine the first cohort of expansion.
- A Trauma Informed System of Care Grant for \$1 million per year for four years was secured and is being operationalized in eight Communities of Excellence (Arapahoe, Chaffee, Eagle, El Paso, Larimer, Montrose, and Weld counties).

A Psychotropics Medication Steering Committee has been convened to examine policy and practice regarding prescribing psychotropic medications to children in foster care.

Performance Management

- C-Stat is now driving accountability through 12 unique measures, which are reviewed monthly. Two areas of focus have been timely assessment closures, and the placement of legally freed children in permanent homes. County collaboration has occurred in both of these measurements to identify more effective practices and potential barriers.
 - Timely assessment closures, which measures the amount of time it takes a caseworker to close an assessment of abuse and neglect, have improved from 50% timely to 76% timely in the past year.
 - Legally free children are those whose parental rights have been terminated and they are legally free for adoption or kin guardianship. The Department is working

to ensure that these young adults do not emancipate out of the system, but, rather that they achieve permanency through placement with kin, guardianship or adoption.

- The Department secured an interoperability grant for \$1.1 million dollars that will support the sharing of data across the state's various computer systems.

Work Force Development

- Through the Training Academy Advisory Council the Department has issued an RFP (Request for Proposal) to begin the process of selecting a new vendor for the Academy. The RFP calls for the new vendor to provide training that is current, topical and accessible to the child welfare professional community.
- Nine days of initial caseworker training, and 12 days of continuing education training is now available online through the Training Academy. Online access to these courses allows county staff to remain in their own communities while receiving several elements of required training.

Funding

- The Department has secured a federal Title IV-E waiver that will bring \$8 million annually for the next five years to the state of Colorado. Funding available through the waiver will allow counties more flexibility in providing services that will keep children safely in their own homes, instead of having them placed in the foster care system.

Transparency and Public Engagement

- In partnership with the General Assembly through SB12-033, near fatalities and egregious incidents were added to the Child Fatality Review Team process and reporting, along with a tightened timeframe for the review process.
- A new fatality review format is being used for reporting outcomes from the Child Fatality Review Team process. Staffing of the Team and the corresponding reporting function has been moved to the Administrative Review Division within CDHS to ensure a greater separation between program and quality assurance.