

# **Colorado Statewide Assessment of Non-Certified Kinship Care**

## **Executive Summary**

**Colorado Department of Human Services  
Division of Child Welfare Services**

**July, 2010**

## Executive Summary

A statewide kinship assessment was conducted in 32 counties to identify the services that are available to non-certified kinship caregivers, the self-identified needs of the kinship caregivers and those who work to support them, and to identify useful and effective programs and practices in county departments that are replicable in order to improve the consistency of service delivery statewide.

The statewide assessment is a combined report about kinship practices and the needs, challenges, and services available to kinship caregivers in 32 counties:

- The primary report provides an overview of 27 county departments that were interviewed by staff from the Division of Child Welfare Services, along with a staff member from the National Resource Center for Organizational Improvement (NRCOI), and
- The addendum is a detailed report about five (5) additional county departments that was conducted by the Cutler Institute for Health and Social Policy, Muskie School of Public Service, University of Southern Maine.

The combined 32 counties includes: Ten large, 13 mid-size, and nine small and were conducted with approximately 491 individuals:

- 261 county department staff (four TANF staff), and of these:
  - 108 were administrators/supervisors, and
  - 153 were caseworkers.
- 21 staff from 18 community agencies,
- Three young adults who were raised in kinship care, and
- 206 kinship caregivers (individually and in 22 support groups).

The most common challenges noted were the lack of preparedness to care for the children/youth, family dynamics, financial issues, and delays in permanency.

The benefits of kinship care noted include children/youth experiencing fewer placement disruptions, maintaining cultural ties and family traditions, and were more comfortable with family.

The services most commonly used include Child-Only TANF, Medicaid, Colorado Child Care Assistance Program (CCCAP), Child Welfare Child Care, Special Economic Assistance (SEA), Promoting Safe and Stable Families (PSSF), Core services, and kinship support groups.

The major identified needs emerging from the assessment include immediate financial assistance to meet the child/youth's initial needs, access to quality low cost child care, emotional support, respite care, and affordable legal services.

Replicable practices include:

- Creative use of Core services
- Creative use of TANF funds for specialized kinship programs
- Intensive therapy team
- Specific kinship staff within child welfare
- Liaison between child welfare and TANF
- Navigation services
- Legal Clinics
- Community based services such as support groups, parenting classes, and family activities

Recommendations:

- Develop an interface between Trails and CBMS to allow seamless transition from Child Welfare Medicaid (county has custody), to regular Medicaid (kin has custody of child/youth),
- Develop a policy requiring counties to track non-certified kinship caregivers in Trails,
- Create a streamlined application process for Child-Only TANF through kinship specific technicians and a condensed Child-Only TANF application,
- Create a statewide staff training about kinship issues,
- Create training specific to kinship caregivers,
- Create support networks for children/youth in kinship care,
- Increase communication and collaboration between child welfare and TANF through a child welfare/TANF liaison,
- Increase respite care opportunities for kinship caregivers,
- Increase access to quality, affordable child care, and
- Increase legal support for kinship caregivers.

