



## Workshop Summary

**Event:** Integration of Case Management for Multiple Services in El Paso County, Colorado

**Date:** September 27-29, 1999

**Location:** El Paso County, Colorado

### I. Overview

The Welfare Peer Technical Assistance Network, funded by the Administration for Children and Families (ACF), Office of Family Assistance (OFA), within the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) coordinated this workshop in conjunction with the El Paso County Department of Human Services (DHS). Ms. Barbara Drake, Deputy Director, El Paso County DHS, led the planning and carrying out of this site visit. It was intended for site visitors to gain an understanding of El Paso County's uniquely holistic approach to integrating intake and case management activities for multiple programs including TANF, child welfare, child care, domestic violence, mental health, and substance abuse. The site visit afforded participants an opportunity to gain information on specific areas including statutory requirements and/or waivers by which El Paso County operates this approach, data systems and how to improve shared data between TANF and other social service programs, staff training, as well as overall integration and culture change strategies. This summary offers three perspectives: The first from a site visitor who discusses the site visit itself and what was of unique interest to her; an outsider's professional observations on El Paso County's program. The second is from a site visitor who reflects on what was learned from the site visit and possible applications; an outsider's view comparing and contrasting his County's programs to those of El Paso County. The third perspective is an excerpt taken from an article written by David Berns, Director, El Paso County DHS and Barbara Drake, Deputy Director, El Paso County DHS; it offers an insider's view of the program directly from its chief operators. The article itself was featured in magazines such as *Children's Voice* (a Child Welfare League of America Publication, fall 1999 issue) and *Policy and Practice- of Public Human Services* (the Journal of the American Public Human Services Association, March 1999 issue).

### II. Participants

Participants on the site visit included several representatives from the Placer County, California Department of Health and Human Services and a representative from the New Mexico Department of Human Services.

## **I. Session Summary**

### **A. Professional observations from an outsider's perspective**

*Ms. Corinne Jameson, Training Director, New Mexico Department of Human Services*

My primary interest in the El Paso County program was from a cultural change perspective. From observation, the county has a top-down approach to organizational welfare change with highly effective leadership to facilitate the transformation.

On the first day, we (five individuals from Placer County, California, and myself) were welcomed to El Paso County DHS and given an overview of the department's welfare reform program. The well-integrated holistic approach to welfare was very impressive; intuitively the program suggests an eventual outcome for successful client self-sufficiency. Clients are treated with respect and dignity and given the opportunity to make their own decisions. Client choice was terminology frequently cited throughout the visit.

Like new employees, we were provided with a copy of the agency's mission and guiding principles as well as the "7 Ps" (Protection System: Prevention, Preservation, Placement, Permanency, Partnerships, and Proficiency-see Attachment 1). The clearly defined and focused mission and guiding principles set the tone for service delivery. The vision, to Eliminate Poverty in El Paso County, reinforces the holistic approach to welfare reform and confirms a positive approach to self-sufficiency as opposed to caseload reduction.

The number of partnerships and linkages and emphasis on prevention is notable. The formality of those linkages and partnerships was especially impressive and each seems necessary for the operation of the program. Some of the linkages and partnerships include:

- Child Care Coordination
- Kinship Services
- Prevention Services
- Teen Services
- Employment Services
- Faith-Based Mentoring

The afternoon was spent learning more about programs and staff development as well as the intense case management, job development, and employment services of the primary contractor: Goodwill Industries.

It is important to note the cost of the cultural change effort in El Paso County from a staff development and management perspective. According to the TANF Training Unit Supervisor, turnover of the original worker staff may be as high as 75%. They hoped to change the culture within 18-24 months. Since empirically, organizational change takes from 5-7 years, the rapid change may account for the heavy turnover of caseworkers. Two strong training efforts appear to be effective: training new TANF workers who are then supervised by the trainer for approximately six months; and upgrading the skills of existing caseworkers through a case management focus group. TANF training consists of approximately 6 months of classroom,

hands-on, experiential and on-the-job training. The five components include an orientation and introduction to the Family Independence Program, the El Paso County Plan, the vision, mission, philosophy and guiding principles; the TANF Eligibility and Ongoing Caseload Processing, Case Management; Medicaid, Food Stamp, and Day Care; and On-the-Job training.

The Case Management Focus Group meets weekly for 2 hours. TANF supervisors, TANF staff, agency staff, community partners and others facilitate sessions as appropriate. Topics include case presentations and team staffing, ethics, making referrals, substance abuse, working with challenging and resistant clients, the Individual Responsibility Plan, assessment skills, domestic violence, and mental health issues.

Also of note is that El Paso County has a staff of highly specialized caseworkers with an average TANF caseload of 80-100 cases per worker. Approximately half of the County TANF caseload is case managed by Goodwill Industries. Food Stamp caseworkers carry approximately 400 cases.

The following day, all site visitors observed an assessment by members of the Empowerment Team, and a working luncheon was provided. Ken Sanders, Coordinator for the Center on Fathering, described his program. Ken's program provides training to fathers and peer support, as well as providing a place for fathers to come with their children for various activities. Office staff and community partners spoke about grandparents as child custodians, teen services, welfare diversion, sanction prevention, and faith mentoring. These discussions were followed by a visit to the Center on Fathering and to the Family Visitation Center.

Some of the significant innovations from El Paso County include:

- TANF is prevention and early intervention
- Units such as Community Prevention Programs have been created and paid for with TANF money
- Number of FTEs have been increased so that employees can handle cases differently
- Case management with multiple worker involvement
- Family Empowerment Services Unit – this unit connects TANF and Child Welfare and provides clients with voluntary social work services outside of the child welfare system. Services target teens, teen parents, and relative caretakers raising children (often grandparents). Services include casework services, home visits, transportation, mentors for teen crisis intervention, and community partners. El Paso County has three grandparent support groups and has worked with probate court to obtain guardianship for grandparents. The unit consists of four caseworkers and three TANF technicians and the unit handles approximately 874 child-only cases and 30 teen parent cases. These cases are generally 3-6 months in duration.
- Parent Opportunity Program – provides services through a community partnership including DHS, Center on Fathering, Goodwill Industries, MAXIMUS, and Women's Resource Agency. The program emphasizes early intervention in child support and paternity actions. Each program participant has a case manager who coordinates all services and referrals to community resources. A caseload of 60 non-custodial parents is

managed by one case manager. Program sustainability will be achieved with TANF and Welfare to Work funds.

- Empowerment/Assessment Team – interviews everyone who comes in to apply for TANF. Employees were hand-selected for this team. This unit has undergone the greatest amount of training. In addition to in-house training, subject matter experts are brought in. Unit members are responsible for TANF and diversions. Team does approximately 500 assessments per month with about 130 diversions.
- Colorado Child Care Assistance Program (CCCAP) – four low-income eligibility workers handle 1600 cases with an average caseload of 410.
- Transitional Unit – case management for Food Stamps or Medicaid-only cases
- Sanction Prevention Team – consists of 1 intake worker, 2 TANF workers, and 1 Supervisor. El Paso County has had only 1 sanction. Every effort possible must be made to prevent a sanctions.
- On-Site Community Partners – include Pikes Peak Mental Health, One-Stop Career Center, Welfare to Work, EPSDT, Child Care Connections, Goodwill Industries, MAXIMUS, Center for Prevention of Domestic Violence, Colorado Vocational Rehabilitation, and Faith Partners.

In summary, the site visit was very successful in giving an intense overview of a highly successful model of welfare reform. Although the model is county-run and highly dependent on community partnerships, New Mexico can still borrow from the El Paso County successes and learn from its pitfalls. The strength of El Paso County’s case management system, which involves multiple agencies, is certainly a positive aspect that can be utilized. The holistic and well-integrated approach with emphasis on prevention is another positive element that we can draw on. Their training model is also worth assessing. Our challenge is to now look at ways of implementing pieces that will work for our own communities and agencies.

## **B. Comparative summary from an outside perspective**

*Mr. Bud Bautista, Client Services Director, Children’s System of Care, Placer County  
Department of Health and Human Services*

Throughout the three days of the site visit, the El Paso and Placer County staff discussed the issues relative to difficulties and challenges in shifting the culture of our organizations. Some of the specific issues we discussed included:

- The pros and cons of losing long term staff and gaining new staff
- The importance of staff training in the department’s vision
- The importance of family-centered and strength-based approaches
- The importance of developing community partners to be successful
- The benefit of providing early services to keep families out of deep end services
- The importance of engaging line-staff in development of programs

### ***Comparison to Placer County***

1. Colorado TANF has more financial flexibility compared to California's Cal Works program. Although the Performance Incentive funding will have great flexibility for creative service strategies.
2. Placer's Health and Human Services Department is far broader in its service scope than El Paso's Human Services Department. Therefore, Placer's potential to integrate and develop cross-system service strategies is much greater
3. El Paso utilizes co-location and cross-staff assignments rather than integration and restructuring of Division approaches.
4. Both Counties value the importance of providing greater access to services and early intervention services. Placer's Children's System of Care accomplished this by allowing more children and families to penetrate the system via voluntary family maintenance strategies. El Paso accomplished this by expanding the scope of early services in the TANF program.
5. Placer's visit to El Paso was overall a very successful technical assistance strategy. Placer staff was impressed by several new program concepts and will implement many of these program strategies in our Cal Works and Child Welfare Services programs.

### **C. Program summary from an inside perspective**

*David Berns, Director, and Barbara Drake, Deputy Director, El Paso County Department of Human Services*

#### **Uniting Child Welfare and Welfare Reform By David Berns and Barbara Drake**

We hear the lament that virtually all of the money and resources in child welfare are used for expensive deep end services such as institutionalization or other forms of out of home care. Some argue that if we gave more attention to prevention and early intervention, we could obtain better outcomes and save money in the long run. We agree with this concept. In order to gain a better understanding of what was needed for prevention, we posed the question to child welfare professionals and advocates. The responses were always similar. We need to address poverty, employment, housing, nutrition, medical care, substance abuse, education and training. Resources need to be devoted to child care, transportation and domestic violence.

On a local level, the authors of this paper administer both child welfare and the assistance payments programs created by welfare reform. In El Paso County, Colorado, we invest about \$34 million in child welfare services such as foster care, adoption, protective services and in-home services. We invest or authorize more than \$60 million in payments or services for TANF, Food Stamps, Medicaid and other forms of medical and financial assistance. In other words, we invest nearly twice as much on programs and services that could be classified as prevention than we invest on traditional child welfare.

### **Opportunities to Unite Child Welfare and Welfare Reform**

When TANF was signed into law in 1996, only a few of us predicted the massive drop in caseloads and Federal expenditures. Indeed, most of the discussion focused on the crisis that

would result from inadequate funding for TANF. Many predicted that children would migrate to the Child Welfare system because TANF funds would no longer meet family needs. Nationally and statistically these predictions have not materialized – at least not yet. In fact, not only have TANF caseloads dropped, but in some instances so have child welfare caseloads. But we know that our communities and families still have many needs. The low paying jobs many former recipients obtained may be more money than their TANF payment but still not sufficient to move them out of poverty. More needs to be done to support their self-sufficiency goals and to develop long-term skills that move them into better paying jobs.

We have come to the conclusion that TANF must be the primary prevention program for child welfare and that child welfare must become an antipoverty program. To accomplish these goals, we need strategies that unite, combine and restructure both programs into a common system. In El Paso County we have designed both Child Welfare and TANF programs using a common philosophy and system of care. Our mission for all our programs is to strengthen families, to assure safety, to promote self-sufficiency, to eliminate poverty and to improve the quality of life in our community. We measure our success in all of our program initiatives by how well and how much they contribute to this mission. It is not our goal to cut welfare but rather to eliminate poverty.

Fiscally, this approach gives us up to \$6.5 million in TANF funds to invest in prevention services. More importantly, the entire TANF, Food Stamps, Medicaid, Child Care and related programs are being redefined as supports to strengthen families.

We began the process of unifying our programs by accepting a set of guiding principles for our system of care in both TANF and Child Welfare. These operating principles are described in many of our program descriptions, grants and policies. We share them with staff and community on a continual basis.

Vision: To eliminate poverty and family violence in El Paso County.

Mission: To strengthen families, assure safety, promote self-sufficiency, eliminate poverty, and improve the quality of life in our community.

Guiding Principles:

- System of care must:
  - √ be family-driven
  - √ protect the rights of families
  - √ allow smooth transitions between programs
  - √ build community capacity to serve families
  - √ emphasize prevention and early intervention
  - √ be effectively integrated and coordinated across systems

- Services must:
  - √ be culturally respectful
  - √ be evaluated for outcomes
  - √ be delivered by competent staff
  - √ be accessible, accountable, and comprehensive

- √ be individualized to meet the needs of families
- √ be strength-based and delivered in the least intrusive manner

The following is a brief description of a few of our programs that have been designed and implemented between the TANF and Child Welfare Systems.

1. Kinship Services: Partnering with Grandparents and other Kin

Through the TANF program, our Department provides kinship services to grandparents raising their grandchildren. This assistance is provided in the form of both increased financial assistance and support services aimed at keeping the extended kinship family intact. Kinship families who are eligible for these “child only” TANF grants make up 30% of the welfare caseload in our county. Similar caseloads appear in welfare caseloads throughout the country. Our experiences show that many of these families are identical to families who enter the Child Welfare system, except that relatives, typically Grandparents, have stepped in to help the family before the call to Child Welfare occurred. Providing strength-based support to families decreases the need for them to become more deeply involved in the system. Services are provided based on what the family determines is needed to maintain the child (ren) in their home.

Advancing this effort required specific organizational changes. At the implementation of Colorado’s Welfare Reform law in July 1997, we transferred several of our best child welfare staff to TANF, matching them with talented TANF technicians to create a team specially designed to serve grandparents and other relative caretakers. The entire team is funded by TANF. Workers in this unit have established Grandparent Support Groups; they connect families with community resources and help to establish guardianships. Legal Guardianship allows grandparents to approve medical treatments or enrollment in school or other special activities. Staff has access to flexible funding to assist families – akin to wrap-around services in child welfare – but with a TANF funding base.

The program is an alternative to child welfare. TANF funds support preventive service options for children at low to moderate levels of risk, intervening before escalating crises require intensive services.

We are expanding this approach to provide these types of supports to relatives connected with ongoing child welfare cases. Grandparents caring for children in the context of child welfare frequently have been treated as unimportant. Rather than being viewed for their strengths and through what they offer to enhance a child’s future stability, grandparents are often judged harshly. A pattern of bias against grandparents can squander one of the best resources available for troubled families. Our approach asks the question: “What would it take for these relatives to be able to care for their relative children in a safe and family empowering environment?” Our service delivery system is defined by the answers to this question.

We recently implemented a subsidized permanent custody program for grandparents who have had grandchildren for an extended period of time and are currently receiving foster care

payments. Under this model, there is a subsidized custody agreement with the Human Services Department and an offer of voluntary services designed to deliver just what the family feels they need. The policies are similar to those developed under various Title IVE waivers, but the funding stream is through TANF.

## 2. Domestic Violence Coordination

In a survey completed by the initial group of recipients (2,300) receiving welfare on July 1, 1997, approximately one-third responded affirmatively to the question, "Have you ever been a victim of domestic violence?" In response to this information, our Department contracted with our local Center for the Prevention of Domestic Violence to co-locate staff in our Family Independence Center to provide client services and staff training. This domestic violence professional also serves as a resource to staff on individual cases. Funded as part of our welfare reform initiatives, this contract assists in the development of additional domestic violence related community resources such as emergency housing and treatment/support groups. Services provide a culturally relevant emphasis and include Spanish-speaking and Asian-Pacific focused services. Skilled services from domestic violence professionals help to bridge the gap between child protection, protection of the adult victim and opportunities to help the family to become economically independent.

## 3. Child Care Coordination

The Alliance for Kids is a broad-based community group with significant consumer leadership. In part, based on the impetus of this group, our agency has implemented specific strategies. These include:

- Increasing provider reimbursement rates for child care services to child welfare families and low-income families.
- On-site enrollment for low income child care programs in child care centers and homes where parents drop off and pick up their children.
- Development of a child care resource and referral database available at our office for all agency-served families, including those receiving child welfare services. A family's child care needs can be specifically matched with available resources.
- Writing grants and serving as the fiscal agent based on priorities identified by Alliance for Kids: we help the community to apply for child care grants focused on improving quality and building capacity for low-income children.
- Increased payments for guaranteed child care slots and full day/full year child care so parents can choose quality care and move more effectively from welfare to work. This care is provided in partnership with the local Headstart, child care providers and School District Pre-school programs.

Just as TANF dollars are funding prevention, child care dollars are funding availability, quality and prevention in a bundle tied with welfare reform dollars at the local level. Child care has been expanded and enhanced in a manner that allows these services to become a vital element in our prevention and early intervention approaches to child welfare.

#### 4. Teen Parent Support

In El Paso County in 1997, 319 girls age 10-17 delivered babies (12% of total births in El Paso County). The pregnant and parenting teen faces numerous risks: insufficient education, poor job skills, poverty, homelessness, and dependence on welfare, domestic violence and future unplanned pregnancies. Teen parents are a major concern for our agency due to the high risk to the teen's child for neglect and abuse, abandonment, poor parenting, unstable home life, poverty, lack of stimulation and education, poor nutrition and development, and the absence of a stable father figure.

Teen parents, either heads of household or household members in TANF eligible families, are served by a team of eligibility technicians, social caseworkers and community partners working together under the funding and program auspices of TANF.

The initial target group consists of pregnant and parenting teens on TANF. Plans are underway to include all pregnant and parenting teens that come to the attention of our agency. Goals and outcomes are integrated into the program by measuring educational achievement, individual and family functioning, and self-sufficiency. Through the Teen TANF Program team, teen parent families receive assessments and case management services, home visits, crisis intervention, nurse visitation, parenting instruction, continuing education, job training, and mentoring. Providing these services to teen parents is in sync with the Department's prevention agenda.

#### 5. Employment Support

El Paso County is developing an employment support program to serve children aging out of foster care and those growing out of welfare dependence. The program collaborates with employment programs typically thought of as connected to welfare reform only. It will coordinate with the Department's teen parent program described above around independence issues. While these support services will address two different populations, both will focus on asset building, goal setting, educational achievements and self-sufficiency strategies leading to employment. Foster care children currently being served in the agency's Independent Living program will be served in this model by social caseworkers and employment counselors working in concert.

#### 6. Joint Family Preservation/TANF Services Planning

Our agency has set a goal to combine family preservation and foster care placement prevention services with "prevention" focused TANF (welfare) services. Our approach is designed to provide families entering the "system" from either the welfare or child welfare side with comprehensive, strength-based services with the lowest level of intrusion into the family. This speaks to the expressed concerns about the impact of welfare reform on the Child Welfare system particularly as people use up their welfare time clocks. Further, in El Paso County's approach TANF dollars are used to support casework plans providing, for example domestic violence services or drug and alcohol treatment. Service coordination is achieved by including

such therapeutic services in not only the child welfare treatment plan, but the TANF individual responsibility or employability plan as well.

## 7. Joint Training

In collaboration with the University of Utah School of Social Work, four states, and several Universities, our office is implementing cross systems training, assessment, and services. This effort includes child welfare and TANF, but also incorporates substance abuse, domestic violence and the mental health system. The project, funded by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services is training recipients of these services in leadership skills, systems change and training strategies. Members of the design team, especially consumers, serve as the co-trainers for our staff. This methodology lays the foundation for training competent staff who can successfully implement integrated, cross-system services in a partnership with families.

## 8. Facilitating Community Partnerships

It doesn't have to cost much to significantly expand services through community partnerships. Flexible use of TANF funds have afforded us the opportunity to do this. Partnership examples include: Republican Women's bi-annual haircut, clothing and support event, community-wide Faith-based Mentoring, Vocational Rehabilitation coordinated services for eligible TANF families, Goodwill Industries and One-Stop career Centers up-to-date employment services.

## **Conclusion**

TANF and welfare reform are neither inherently good nor evil. Outcomes depend on how they are implemented. If we let the systems drift or develop in a punitive manner, people will be hurt. If we use our new flexibility and available resources wisely, we can promote safe and stable families.

Policy makers and agencies are the architects, engineers and builders of our system of services. It is up to us to design, consolidate and build a system that meets the needs of our children and families.

## **Final Remarks**

For further and/or other welfare-related information, or to learn more about the Welfare Peer Technical Assistance Network, visit our Web site at <http://www.calib.com/peerta>. To apply for technical assistance contact Paul Purnell or Blake Austensen at (301) 270-0841.

**Attachment 1**  
**EL PASO COUNTY’S “7 Ps” PROTECTION SYSTEM**

<b>PREVENTION</b>	<b>PRESERVATION</b>	<b>PLACEMENT</b>	<b>PERMANENCY</b>
<p>TANF Family Support</p> <p>MEDICAID Maternal &amp; Infant Support Services Food Stamps</p> <p>School Attendance Projects</p> <p>Flexible Payments</p> <p>Minor Parent Services Grandparent Support</p> <p>Employment Services</p> <p>Day Care Child Support</p> <p>Housing Assistance Employment Services Child Death Review Panels</p> <p>Transportation</p>	<p>Forensic Interviewing</p> <p>Risk Assessment</p> <p>Community Protection System</p> <p>Wrap Around</p> <p>Kinship</p> <p>Intensive Family Preservation Services</p> <p>Strength based assessments</p> <p>Life Skills Training Economic Assistance Day Treatment</p>	<p>Structured Risk Assessments</p> <p>Solution Based Model</p> <p>Standardized Payments to Foster Homes</p> <p>Managed Care for Behavioral Health</p> <p>Flexibility in Service &amp; Placement options</p> <p>Expanded Role of Private Agencies</p> <p>Coordinated Medical Care for Child and Family</p>	<p>Foster Care Supportive Services</p> <p>Reunification Services</p> <p>Expedited Permanency Planning</p> <p>Adoptive Placement</p> <p>Post Adoption Service</p> <p>Funded Guardianships</p>
<b><u>PARTNERSHIPS</u></b>			
Schools – Consumers - Substance Abuse Treatment – Sexual Abuse Services - Respite Care – Domestic Violence Intervention - Extended Family – Mental Health			
<b><u>PROFICIENCY</u></b>			
TRAINING – AUTOMATION – STAFFING			
PERFORMANCE MONITORING/OUTCOME BASED – LEGAL REPRESENTATION			
CONFIDENTIALITY/PUBLIC RIGHT TO KNOW – CULTURAL COMPETENCE - QUALITY ENHANCEMENT			