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EXECUTIVE ORDER

Creating a Multi-Department Initiative for Traumatic Brain Injury

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 a multi-department initiative to increase the collaboration and effectiveness of state services to the growing population of people living with the effects of traumatic brain injuries.

I. Background and Need

More than 100,000 Coloradans of all ages are living with long-term disabilities caused by a traumatic brain injury (TBI). Each year more than 5,000 additional Coloradans sustain traumatic brain injuries serious enough to require hospitalization. An even greater but uncalculated number of people sustain traumatic brain injuries but are never hospitalized. Nationally, traumatic brain injury has been designated an important public health problem by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Since 1981, TBI has been called “the silent epidemic” by the Brain Injury Association of America.

Colorado is home to many individuals who are currently serving or have served in the military and have sustained a traumatic brain injury in Iraq, Afghanistan, or other areas of conflict. Traumatic brain injury is known as the “signature injury” of these military conflicts. The need for continuing services and support for injured military personnel and their families requires the concerted effort of federal, State, and local governments, in cooperation with the private sector.

The CDC estimates that at least 5.3 million Americans, approximately 2% of the U.S. population, currently have a long-term or lifelong need for help to perform activities of daily living as a result of a TBI. Traumatic brain injury can cause a wide range of functional changes affecting thinking, sensation, language, and/or emotions. It can also cause epilepsy and increase the risk for conditions such as Alzheimer’s disease, Parkinson’s disease, and other brain disorders that become more prevalent with age. In addition, TBI generates direct medical costs and indirect costs related to lost productivity, learning disabilities, and increased rates of poverty, divorce, depression, and suicide.

II. Mission and Scope

A. Multi-Department Planning and Collaboration

The impact of TBI on the lives of Coloradans cuts across the responsibilities of many State agencies. Therefore, it is vital that multiple Departments join together in a coordinated and collaborative effort to share information, planning, and resources for more effective provision of services to Coloradans who have experienced the effects of TBI. I hereby direct that on or before December 31, 2008 the Executive Directors of the following departments designate a member of their professional staff to represent their agency in the development of a coordinated plan and response to address the needs of Coloradans who have experienced a traumatic brain injury:

- Department of Corrections;
- Department of Health Care Policy and Financing;
- Department of Higher Education;
- Department of Human Services;
- Department of Labor and Employment;
- Department of Military and Veteran's Affairs;
- Department of Personnel and Administration;
- Department of Public Health and Environment;
- Department of Public Safety;
- Department of Regulatory Agencies, and
- Department of Transportation.

Because of the impact of brain injuries on the learning process for children in K-12 Education, the Commissioner of Education is invited and encouraged to designate a lead staff person from the Department of Education to assist in this coordinated effort. Other Departments may be invited to participate as needed, or at the direction of their Executive Director.

The Department of Human Services shall be the lead agency and shall convene an initial organizational and planning meeting on or before February 28, 2009. Executive Directors of other departments shall provide the names and contact information of such designees to the Executive Director of the Department of Human Services.

B. Goals

The designees from the identified departments shall work together to develop a plan for addressing needs and issues identified in this Executive Order, and shall submit a report with recommendations to the Governor by October 1, 2009. The report shall also recommend ways in which the private sector and other units/levels of government might participate in this effort. Issues to be addressed by the designees shall include:

1. Identifying and coordinating the activities of the state agencies currently involved in services or other functions related to services for people with traumatic brain injuries and their families.
2. Acting as a model for the rest of the state in promoting horizontal collaborative systems that eliminate “silos” of funding and service provision among departments and divisions.
3. Developing an easily-used mechanism by which other state agencies can communicate, coordinate and take action to benefit those with traumatic brain injuries.
4. Providing accessible educational opportunities statewide, especially in rural areas of the state, to inform the general public as well as practitioners and service providers about the problem, prevention, the availability of services, and other topics relevant to persons who have TBI and their families.
5. Developing public/private partnerships to better serve the needs of people with traumatic brain injuries and their families.
6. Building a method to accurately collect data on the incidence of TBI in Colorado.
7. Identifying unmet needs for those with TBI and their families and making recommendations for how best to meet them.

C. Public and Private Coordination

The Colorado Department of Human Services, in cooperation with the designated Departments, also shall facilitate the active involvement of and partnership with the other public and private organizations and individuals who have interest and expertise in traumatic brain injury. These entities may include, but are not limited to:

1. Persons with traumatic brain injury and their families;
2. The regional offices of the United States Department of Veterans Affairs;
3. Military bases in the State and those who provide services for persons with TBI and their families at those bases;
4. The Brain Injury Association of Colorado and other related advocacy or nonprofit organizations that serve people with traumatic brain injuries;

5. Public and private health and human services providers;
6. Higher education institutions;
7. The business community;
8. The insurance industry;
9. Regional and local government entities; and
10. School districts.

III. Directives

I hereby create this multi-department initiative to increase the collaboration and effectiveness of state services to the growing population of people living with the effects of traumatic brain injuries. Furthermore, I reaffirm the designation of the Colorado Department of Human Services as the lead agency in this effort, as established under Executive Order D 003 00.

IV. Duration

This Executive Order shall remain in effect until modified or rescinded by future Executive Order of the Governor.

GIVEN under my hand and
the Executive Seal of the
State of Colorado, this 17th
day of October, 2008.

Bill Ritter, Jr.
Governor