# Core Services Program Evaluation Annual Report

## State Fiscal Year 2010-2011
## July 1, 2010-June 30, 2011

**Colorado Department of Human Services**
**Office of Children, Youth and Family Services**
**Division of Child Welfare Services**

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**TriWest**
Health + Human Service Evaluation + Consulting

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**TriWest**
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**Colorado Department of Human Services**

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John W. Hickenlooper
Governor

Reggie Bicha
Executive Director

September 23, 2011

The Honorable John W. Hickenlooper
Governor of Colorado
136 State Capitol
Denver, Colorado 80203

Dear Governor Hickenlooper:

This letter is sent as a cover to the Core Services Program Evaluation Annual Report being submitted according to the requirements of C.R.S. 26-5.5-104 (6) that are as follows:

> "On or after July 1, 1994, the Executive Director of the State Department shall annually evaluate the statewide Family Preservation Program (Program) and shall determine the overall effectiveness and cost-efficiency of the Program. On or before the first day of October of each year, the Executive Director of the State Department shall report such findings and shall make recommended changes, including budgetary changes, to the Program to the General Assembly, the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court, and the Governor. In evaluating the Program, the Executive Director of the State Department shall consider any recommendations made by the interagency Family Preservation Commission in accordance with section 26-5.5-106. To the extent changes to the Program may be made without requiring statutory amendment, the Executive Director may implement such changes, including the changes recommended by the commission acting in accordance with subsection (7) of this section."

The following are the background and findings of program effectiveness, cost efficiencies, and recommended changes for the State Fiscal Year 2010-2011 (SFY 2011) Core Services Program evaluation:

**Background:**

The Core Services Program was established within the Colorado Department of Human Services in 1994 and is statutorily mandated to provide strength-based resources and support to families when children/youth are at imminent risk of out-of-home placement and/or are in need of services to maintain a least restrictive setting. The Core Services Program (formerly known as Family Preservation) has been in operation for seventeen (17) years.

**Program Changes During SFY 2011**

Two important modifications were made to the Core Services Program this year. The first was the rollout of significant enhancements to the Trails data system. Trails is the primary data management system that allows monitoring of Core Services implementation and outcomes. Changes to Trails allow for easier, more accurate tracking of the children/youth and adults receiving services. Another important change to the Trails data system implemented this year was the addition of improved outcome tracking. These changes are the result of a collaborative effort between the Core Services Coordinators, program staff and Trails team. In addition to the changes to Trails, the Core Services Program modified the level of documentation and monitoring required of counties when using fixed rate contracts.

**Program Effectiveness**

**Children/Youth and Adult Caregivers Served** – Children and youth eligible to receive Core Services are at imminent risk of being placed outside the home and/or are in need of services to maintain them in the least restrictive setting. This refers to children/youth who, without immediate intervention, services, and support would very likely be removed from the home and placed under county or tribal custody. Adult caregivers of these children/youth are also eligible recipients of Core Services. This year, following significant changes to the Trails data system, we are able to present numbers of children and youth served separate from adult caregivers. A total of 24,122 (up from 15,266 the previous year) children/youth and adult caregivers (unduplicated count) were identified in the Trails data system as having received at least one Core Service during SFY 2011. Of these, 13,200 were children/youth and 10,922 were adults. These citizens of Colorado were served through 39,400 service authorizations entered into Trails data system.

**Program Outcomes** – In addition to the Division of Child Welfare requirements and desires to evaluate program effectiveness, the federal standards defined through the Adoption and Safe Families Act of 1997 (ASFA) and measured in the Colorado Child and Family Services Review (CFSR) help to shape the specific evaluation goals, as outcome data are used for both state and federal oversight. Within these two sets of criteria, the ultimate assessment of the effectiveness of the Core Services Program will be the degree to which these services aid the Division of Child Welfare in meeting its mission to "ensure that Colorado's children live in a safe, healthy, and stable environment."

**Successfully Maintaining Children/Youth in the Home** - A central goal of the Core Services program is to keep children/youth and families together, by keeping children and youth in their homes, whenever appropriate and possible. On this measure, the Core Services Program is successful. For children/youth whose original Core Service goal was to remain in the home, 90 percent were maintained in their homes. For those children/youth who did have to be placed out of the home for safety reasons, 67 percent returned home or were placed with relatives at the time their service ended, and 16 percent were in foster care placement. In addition, children/youth who received Core Services were less likely to experience an out-of-home placement during the 12 months following discharge from services.

**Safely Maintaining Children/Youth in the Home** – One of the most obvious, and critical, indicators of effectiveness relates to keeping children/youth safe. For children/youth participating in the Core Services program in 2010, the proportion of substantiated cases of child abuse dropped significantly from 41 percent in the 12 months prior to Core Services to 3.2 percent in the 12 months following Core Services. This pattern generally held true for all counties.

**Costs of the Core Services Program** – In SFY 2011, a total of $44,576,054 was allocated to the 64 counties and expended through the Core Services Program. An additional $25,000 was allocated to the Southern Ute Indian Tribe. The overall Core allocation is two percent less than the previous fiscal year. As reported in this year's Family Preservation/Core Services Commission Report, insufficient funding remains a challenge in providing adequate Core Services programs in order to prevent out-of-home placements. Each year, many counties and tribes use additional funding sources to support Core Services in their communities.

**Family Voice** – This year, a case study project examined 18 families and their experiences with the county departments. The case study results will be reported in a companion report, but several themes have begun to emerge that may shed light on underlying processes that impact program success and ultimate child/youth and family outcomes. These themes include the importance of parent engagement, the relationship between the case workers and service providers and proximity of case workers and service providers.

### Recommended Changes

Overall, I am pleased with the progress of the state, counties, and participating tribe in the delivery of the Core Services Program to the children, youth, and families of Colorado. The current report represents continued forward progress in realizing a comprehensive, outcomes-driven evaluation of the Core Services Program. This report fulfills the legislative mandate and serves as a foundation for future evaluation and reporting that will further explore the impacts and processes of the Core Services Program. In addition, the report happily points to successful Core Services Program operations and impacts for Colorado's children/youth and families.

The Division of Child Welfare Services and the County and Tribal Family Preservation/Core Services Commissions have undertaken a comprehensive effort to improve services for children/youth and families. These efforts have brought significant attention and improvements to the overall array of services across the state.
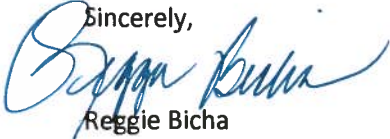
Department recommendations for SFY 2011 are:
- Prioritize efforts to support the inclusion of child/youth and family voice and choice across the system,
- Continue promoting collaborative efforts at the state, regional and local level,
- Continue supporting evidence-based services and promising practices that are proven to be effective,
- Continued collaboration with Health Care Policy and Financing (HCPF), along with enhanced communication and collaboration at the local level between Core Services, Medicaid managed care organizations, local Medicaid providers, and potential Medicaid providers are critical elements in maximizing the service array for children, youth and families,
- Continued efforts to expand collaboration between child welfare and judicial systems are important to support enhanced communication and understanding of the mandate, functions and restrictions on each system,
- Utilize lessons learned from Colorado's Practice Model and Differential Response pilot in preparing for implementation of increased flexibility in funding services for families (HB 11-1196),
- Maximize enhanced Trails functionality by providing training and technical assistance around data entry as well as data tracking, analysis and reporting,
- Maintain efforts to standardize data entry policies to assure complete data is available to adequately assess program effectiveness and understand costs and savings of the Core Services Program,
- Continue current efforts to further integrate a comprehensive risk and needs assessment in case planning for all children/youth served by the Core Services Program,
- Integrate evaluation and research efforts within and outside the Core Services Program to leverage existing resources in order to promote meaningful, high-quality data to support system wide efforts to use data to support decision making, reporting and quality improvement.

In closing, the Department recognizes the staff of each county department for their willingness to continue to provide valuable input to data enhancements for the Child Welfare Core Services Program in Trails. Without their time and patience, the Core Services Program would not be able to extrapolate accurate reporting data, monitor contract spending, measure program success and outcomes, nor ensure a high level of program accountability.

If you need more information, please contact Melinda S. Cox, Core Services Program Administrator, at 303-866-5962.

Sincerely,

Reggie Bicha
Executive Director

Enclosures

cc: Roxanne White, Chief of Staff

# Core Services Program Evaluation Annual Report

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# Core Services Program Evaluation Annual Report

Submitted to:

Colorado Department of Human Services
Office of Children, Youth and Family Services
Division of Child Welfare Services

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September 2011

**TriWest**
Health + Human Service Evaluation + Consulting

# Contents

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# Acknowledgements

This report reflects the effort of many people. TriWest Group and the Division of Child Welfare Services worked closely together and received input and data all counties and the Southern Ute Indian Tribe. In particular, we would like to thank the following County Directors, Core Services Coordinators and Trails Team for their efforts to enhance the Core Services Program and for their contributions to this report.

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Rick Agan | Betty Donovan | Jody Kern | **Tammie Raatz*** |
| Frank Alexander | Barbara Drake | Kathe Kearney | Kathy Reano |
| Sherri Almond | Kim Hilderbrand Dubois* | Stacie Kwitek-Russell | Ginny Riley |
| Miroslava Apodaca | Mary Susan Eldredge | Jeri M. Lee | **Erin Rinaldo** |
| Lisa Ault | Linda Elliott | Chuck Lemoine | Catherine Robinson |
| Colette Barksdale | Lue Ann Everett | Laura Lockhart | Adam Rodriguez* |
| Mary Baydarian | Linda Fairbairn | **Sharon Longhurst-Pritt** | Donna Rohde |
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| Susan Blaine | Allan Gerstle | Kathleen Maybury | **Christine Scheberle** |
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| Kathy Chase | Sheila Hudson | Jonna Parker* | Jamie Viefhaus - Zak |
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| Steven A. Clifton | **Martha Johnson** | Dennis Pearson | Eileen Wasserbach |
| Matthew Cox | Susie Jordan | Marie Peer | Barb Weinstein |
| Frederick Crawford | Kristen Kadlecek | Patricia Phillips | Catherine Weaver |
| Deborah Crook | Holly Kasper | **Judy Pocius** | Patricia Wilson-Phaenious |
| Cindy Dicken | | | |

* - indicates participation on the Core Services Evaluation Advisory Group

**Bold text** – indicates participation in the Case Study Project

# Executive Summary

The Core Services Program was established within the Department of Human Services in 1994 and is statutorily mandated to provide strength-based resources and support to families when children/youth are at imminent risk of out-of-home placement and/or in need of services to maintain a placement in the least restrictive setting possible. The Core Services Program is built upon four goals (see text box).

The Division of Child Welfare Services requires this annual evaluation report to examine and report the effectiveness of the Core Services Program with a primary focus on outcomes for Colorado's children/youth. This year's report is the first to incorporate new functionality in Trails that represents an improvement in how individual services are tracked and outcomes monitored. These changes to Trails, and the analyses that result, are described throughout this report.

> **Core Services Program Goals**
> 1. *Focus on family strengths by directing intensive services that support and strengthen the family and protect the child/youth;*
> 2. *Prevent out-of-home placement;*
> 3. *Return children/youth in placement to their own home, or unite children with their permanent families;*
> 4. *Provide services that protect the child/youth.*

This year's report has five objectives:

- To describe the implementation of the Core Services Program. This includes a description of the children, youth, and families serviced by the program as well as a detailed account of the services provided.

- To report on new outcome measures being recorded in Trails beginning in SFY 2010-2011.

- To summarize child/youth safety and permanency outcomes. These outcomes include: maintaining child/youth safety (as measured by substantiated child abuse), maintaining children/youth in the home whenever possible, and minimizing re-engagement with Core Services or the need for Child Welfare.

- To describe county-specific implementation opportunities and challenges in order to 1) provide context for the quantitative descriptions of children/youth served and services provided, and 2) to highlight specific positive county experiences and suggest ways to address challenges experienced by local communities.

- To discuss future changes in federal and state law, as well as other statewide programs and initiatives likely to impact the Core Services Program.

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## Data Sources

Data for this report comes from three primary sources:

1. Colorado Trails Automated Case Management System[1] (commonly referred to as Trails) – Extracts from Trails are the primary source of data for this report. These extracts include information regarding the children/youth served, the types and lengths of services provided, service outcomes, child/youth placement history, and reports of child abuse and neglect. Trails is a dynamic case management system in which users can update, add, and maintain records on an ongoing basis as new information becomes available or as errors are discovered and corrected. The SFY 2011 data for this report reflects what was in the Trails system as of July 25, 2011. Historical data for this report is taken from previous years' extracts rather than new data extracts in order to ensure consistency across the reporting period.

2. Family Preservation/Core Services Commission Reports – Each county is required by state statute to complete a Family Preservation/Core Services Commission Report. The Commission report allows counties to supplement data from Trails with qualitative information that helps tell the story behind the numbers. Individual county reports are available from the Division of Child Welfare Services.

3. Colorado Financial Management System (CFMS) – CFMS provides the total actual expenditures for the Core Services Program, for the entire state and for individual counties.

## Types of Core Services

There are ten designated Core Service types. A detailed description of each service type is included as Appendix B.

1. Home Based Intervention
2. Intensive Family Therapy
3. Life Skills
4. Day Treatment
5. Sexual Abuse Treatment
6. Mental Health Services
7. Substance Use Disorder Services
8. Aftercare
9. Special Economic Assistance
10. County Designed Services (Optional)

### Program Changes During SFY 2011

Two important modifications were made to the Core Services Program this year. The first was the rollout of significant enhancements to the Trails data system. These changes, described in more detail in the Implementation of the Core Services Program Section (page 16), allow for easier, more accurate tracking of the children/youth and adults receiving services. Another important change to the Trails data system implemented this year was the

> *Significant program modifications for SFY 2011 include important Trails enhancements and changes to the way fixed rate contracts are tracked.*

addition of improved outcome tracking. These changes are the result of a collaborative effort between the Core Services Coordinators program staff and Trails team. The second modification to the Core Services Program was a change to the level of documentation and monitoring required of counties when using fixed rate contracts.

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[1] Known nationally as the State Automated Child Welfare Information System (SACWIS).

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## Implementing the Core Services Program

The Core Services Program is implemented with a great deal of flexibility at the local level, while maintaining fair and equitable access to services statewide. While the state oversees funding allocations and sets policies and procedures for the program, each county operates their Core Services Program to meet the unique needs of their families and communities. The Trails data system is the primary source of data regarding children/youth served and the types and number of services delivered. Differences across counties in the use of the Trails system (in terms of non-mandatory data fields and the differences in how fixed rate contract and county-provided services are entered) limit some data elements presented in this report. Data must be interpreted with caution; reminders of specific limitations are discussed in the Program Costs and Effectiveness Section of this report.

### Core Service Allocations

The total allocation for all counties is $44,576,054 which is very close to the amount allocated last year. In addition, $25,000 is allocated to the Southern Ute Tribe. Some counties receive additional Core Services funding specifically targeted to provide evidence-based services to adolescents in home and community-based settings. In SFY 2011, a total of $4,006,949 was allocated for evidence-based services to adolescents and their families. Evidence-based services are programs that have been proven effective in reducing the need for higher cost residential services. These programs help counties avoid or reduce the length of costly out-of-home placement.

### Children/Youth Served and Types of Services

The total count of children/youth and other family members served each year beginning in SFY 2006 is depicted in the table below.  As stated previously, in past reports the term "total number of children/youth served" included caregivers receiving services on behalf of the child. New Trails functionality allows for more accurate recording of children/youth and youth served as well as other family members, resulting in a more accurate count than has been available in past.

| Total Number of Individuals Served: Core Services Program | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | SFY 2006 | SFY 2007 | SFY 2008 | SFY 2009 | SFY 2010 | SFY 2011 |
| Total Unduplicated Count | 19,006[2] | 19,152[3] | 17,793 | 16,066 | 15,226 | 24,122 |

A total of 24,122 individuals receiving services was recorded in Trails for SFY 2011. This includes children and youth receiving services (13,200) and adult caregivers receiving services on behalf of the child (10,922).

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[2] This number is taken from the SFY 2006 County Commission Report.
[3] This number is taken from the SFY 2007 County Commission Report.

The table below shows the number of service authorizations (as entered into Trails) for this SFY 2011.

| Number of Service Authorizations Entered into Trails (duplicated count of services) | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | **SFY 2009** | **SFY 2010** | **SFY 2011** |
| Total Duplicated Count | 47,587 | 46, 197 | 39,400 |

Core Services Coordinators point to three factors in explaining the decrease in the number of service authorizations. The primary reason cited is the change made to Trails that now allows multiple children/youth and families to be designated as "receiving services," on a single service authorization. This appears to have actually supported an increase in the numbers of individuals served, but a decrease in service authorizations recorded. Other factors that may have contributed to decreasing numbers of service authorizations include county efforts to be more targeted and considered in planning services for families and the increased use of wraparound services.

**Types of Core Services Provided** - The figure below depicts the distribution of service authorizations for each service type.[4]
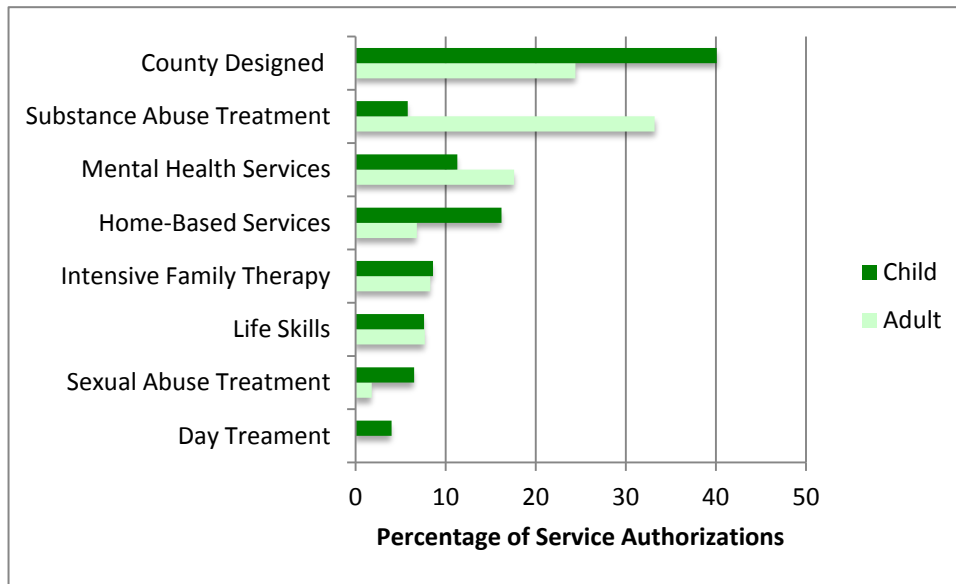


County Designed Services account for 30 percent of all service authorizations, the most of any individual Core Service type. County Designed Services play an important role in local flexibility within the Core Services Program and represent an important vehicle for making evidence-based services available to children, youth and families.

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[4] Aftercare services, a designated Core Service type are not recorded in Trails as discrete service authorizations and are therefore not included in service type analyses.

**Barriers to Accessing Services -** Across Colorado, as across the nation, significant barriers exist to provision and access of family preservation services. Each year, counties are asked to identify significant barriers to service access for families. This year, all but three counties identified multiple barriers. Consistent with last year's report, the two most common barriers identified were the distance families must travel to access services and a corresponding lack of transportation. Distance to services was identified as a primary barrier by 17 of 64 counties.

## Program Costs and Effectiveness

In interpreting the data and results presented in this report, it is useful to understand that the available data and analytical methods limit our ability to make definitive determinations of causality. That is, while the strong positive and consistent outcomes reported here support the effectiveness of the Core Services Program, we are not able to determine the extent to which these positive outcomes are due to program services without conducting a large-scale experimental design with greater controls on sampling and data tracking. Of course, this approach is not feasible and the breadth of data, along with consistency across counties and across years, supports positive statements regarding the Program.

**Child, Youth and Family Goals -** In more than half (53%) of individual service authorizations, the case goal was for the child/youth to remain home. In the majority of other cases, the goal was to return home following a removal (37%). The following table shows the case goal for each individual service authorization.

| Case Goal: All Individual Service Authorizations | | |
|---|---|---|
| **Case Goal** | **Duplicated Count of Services Delivered to Individuals** | **Percent** |
| Remain Home | 32,557 | 53.3% |
| Return Home | 22,877 | 37.4% |
| Other | 2,650 | 6.0% |
| Permanent Placement – Relative | 1,844 | 3.0% |
| Missing Data | 1,205 | 2.0% |
| **Total Individual Authorizations** | **61,133** | **100%** |

## Service Outcomes

During SFY 2011, 44,740 service authorizations were closed in Trails, and 16,448 unique individuals received services. Outcome at service closure is a new measure being recorded for all service authorizations under the new Trails functionality. Caseworkers determine the degree to which the case was successfully closed and core goals achieved. While this outcome is somewhat subjective in nature, it marks a significant improvement in the ability to better understand the effects of the Core Services Program, as well as promote consistent practice.

| Outcomes at Service Closure | | |
|---|---|---|
| **Service Outcome** | **Duplicated Count of Closures** | **Percent** |
| Successful | 16,862 | 52.4% |
| Service Complete (not all goals met) | 6,169 | 19.2% |
| Partially Successful | 3,716 | 11.5% |
| Not Engaged | 3,120 | 9.7% |
| No Treatment Progress | 2,247 | 7.0% |
| Service Not Completed | 91 | <1% |

Nearly two-thirds of the service authorizations were closed with a "successful" (52%) or "partially successful" outcome designation (note that each individual can have multiple service authorizations, so this is not equivalent to the percent of individuals who reached their service goal).

**Maintaining Children/youth in their Home or Least Restrictive Setting**

Children/youth receiving services made up 23,573 discharges representing 9,063 unique children/youth. A central goal of the Core Services Program is to keep these children/youth and their families together or, in cases where children/youth must be removed due to safety concerns, to return them home as quickly as possible or place them in the least restrictive setting as possible.

| Placement at End of Core Services | | |
|---|---|---|
| **Placement** | **Number of Children/youth** | **Percent** |
| Parents (Home) | 13,544 | 65.8% |
| Relative | 3,110 | 15.1% |
| Foster Care | 1,452 | 7.1% |
| Group Home | 1,030 | 5.0% |
| Residential Placement (non-DYC) | 496 | 2.4% |
| Adoption | 421 | 2.0% |
| Runaway | 191 | .9% |
| DYC (Detention or Commitment) | 158 | .8% |
| Emancipated | 135 | .7% |
| Hospitalization | 43 | .2% |
| Independent Living Arrangement | 9 | .0% |
| Deceased | 3 | .0% |
| **Total** | **20,592** | **100%** |

As shown in the table above, 81 percent of youth were with a family member at the time their Core Service ended (66 percent with their parents and 15 percent with another relative). For youth whose original Core Services goal was to remain home, nearly all were maintained in the home.

> *81% remained or were placed with a family member at the end of Core Services.*

### Child/Youth Safety

One of the most obvious, and critical, indicators of effectiveness relates to keeping children/youth safe. For children/youth participating in the Core Services Program, the proportion of substantiated cases of child abuse dropped significantly from 41 percent in the 12 months prior to Core Service engagement to 3.2 percent in the 12 months following Core Services. This pattern generally held true for all counties.

## Observations

**The Core Services Program appears to be Functioning as Intended** – Data analyzed and presented in this report supports the Core Services Program model as an effective approach to strengthening Colorado families and keeping children and youth with their families and in their communities, while also maintaining child/youth safety. Based on the range of information available to this evaluation, the Core Services Program appears to be functioning as intended, serving the children/youth and families targeted by the authorizing legislation and providing appropriate services and support.

> *Available data continues to support the Core Services family preservation approach to safely maintaining children/youth in the home with services. This is also better for families and less costly than out-of-home placement.*

**Core Services Cost Less** - Overall costs per day for out-of-home placements are significantly higher than costs per day for children/youth being served in Core Services. Safely maintaining children/youth in their homes not only costs the state less than an out-of-home placement, but most often this course of action also represents what is in the best interest of the child/youth and the family.

**Core Service Types Appear to Demonstrate Positive Outcomes** – While drawing conclusions regarding the effectiveness of Core Services requires careful consideration due to the limitations of the data and analytical methods available to this report, available data is very encouraging and support that the Core Services Program is an important component of Colorado's child welfare system. Moreover, the approaches and services of the Core Services Program are in keeping with the current research base underscoring the effectiveness of family-driven, Home Based services in maintaining child/youth safety and permanency.

**Integration of Risk and Needs Assessment with Case Planning** - The Core Services Program serves children/youth who have complex and often multiple risk factors for out-of-home placement. Currently, the North Carolina Family Assessment Scale (NCFAS) is used at case opening, at reunification, and at closure of child welfare cases in Colorado. Effective tools, like the North Carolina Family Assessment Scale (NCFAS) or Child and Adolescent Strengths and Needs (CANS) can gauge not only the child/youth's level of risk, but also the specific areas where services are needed to mitigate that risk and support safety and stability. The Core Services Program emphasizes matching services to child/youth and family risks and needs. Continued and expanded emphasis on the consistent use of a comprehensive,

empirically validated risk and needs assessment tool to guide placement and case planning decisions for all children/youth will strengthen the case planning process and make it more consistent across the state.

Children, youth and their families typically receive multiple types of Core Services during their service episode. The research base is clear that the effectiveness of a service will be dependent to a large degree on whether it meets the needs of the families. The Core Services Program model aligns with the research base by emphasizing matching children/youth and families with services that address their types and levels of risks and needs. Continued and expanded emphasis on the Program-wide use of a standardized, validated risk and needs assessment will support consistent matching of services to child/youth and family needs. Careful matching of services to identified needs will help ensure that children, youth and families receive the most appropriate services possible.

**Enhanced Trails Functionality** - New functionality in Trails has substantially changed the way that Core Services are recorded and outcomes tracked. Changes to the Trails system now allow a richer and more accurate understanding of who is participating in services related to a given child/youth as well as better tracking of goals, outcomes and placements associated with each authorization. In addition, Core Services staff report improved efficiency in data entry as a result of the changes.

This enhanced data set will support more detailed understanding of the processes and outcomes of the Core Services Program in coming years, as well as facilitate quality improvement efforts such as improving the match between child, youth and family risks and needs with treatment and placement options.

# Recommendations

**Family Involvement** - The critical role of families in driving effective care is clear – we recommend prioritizing efforts to support the inclusion of child/youth and family voice and choice across the system. We are encouraged by the emphases of Colorado's Practice Model and foresee positive impacts on family involvement through this initiative.

**State and Local Partnership** - Based on our interactions with Core Services Coordinators, County Commissions and state leadership, we recommend continued attention and promotion of collaborative efforts. Similarly, state leadership and technical assistance is important to sustain quality of services and commitment among local and state leadership. Colorado's Practice Model will facilitate and strengthen state and local partnership while enhancing practice.

**Expand Access to Evidence-Based Services –** In the context of case planning that is informed by assessment and matched to child, youth and family needs, evidence-based services represent the most likely avenue to successful child, youth and family outcomes. We recommend continued attention and efforts to expand the service array to support improved access to the highest quality, proven set of services possible.

**Enhanced Utilization of Medicaid to Support Services -** Continued collaboration with Health Care Policy and Financing (HCPF), along with enhanced communication and collaboration at the local level between Core Services, Medicaid managed care organizations, local Medicaid providers and potential Medicaid providers are critical elements in maximizing the service array for children, youth and families.

**Collaboration between the Child Welfare and Judicial Systems –** Continued efforts to expand collaboration between child welfare and judicial systems is important to support enhanced communication and understanding of the mandate, functions and restrictions on each system. These efforts will help ensure appropriate use of placement, support family preservation, and avoid use of placements as sanctions.

**HB 11-1196, Colorado's Practice Model and Differential Response –** Lessons being learned from the Differential Response project and Colorado's Practice Model regarding prevention and early intervention with at-risk families represent important resources to the Core Services Program. As the Division of Child Welfare Services moves toward implementation of HB 11-1196 (Increase Flexibility in Funding Services for Families) and once the impact, if any, on the Core Services Program is understood, it will be important to examine the current menu of Core Services and Program practices relative to the research on evidence-based practices for implementation of prevention and early intervention services.

**Maximize Enhanced Trails Functionality –** Enhancements to the Trails data system afford new opportunities for quality improvement and evaluation. We recommend that local and state leaders make the most of this opportunity through concerted attention to training and technical assistance around data entry as well as data tracking, analysis and reporting.

**Data Entry Practices** - TriWest Group continues to recommend that the State Division of Child Welfare Services maintain efforts to standardize data entry policies to assure complete data is available to adequately assess program effectiveness and understand costs and savings of the Core Services Program.  Significant efforts have gone into enhancing the Trails data system but these efforts will yield actionable information only to the extent that data is being entered consistently and fully across the

state. Similarly, we recommend continued close collaboration with Trails data experts to investigate potential data system and data entry improvements to increase consistency of data entry without increasing workload of county staff.

**Integrated Risk Assessment and Case Planning** - Family preservation services are an important component of an effective continuum of child welfare services. These services are most effective when they are targeted to appropriate children/youth and families and tailored to their specific needs, challenges and strengths. For this reason, we carry forward our recommendation that Core Services Program Coordinators and leadership continue to build on current Core Services Program practice by expanding the integration of empirically validated risk and needs assessment in case planning decisions. Tools like the Family Assessment Scale (currently used in Colorado in at the beginning and end of each child welfare case) or the Child and Adolescent Needs and Strengths assessment (CANS) support responsive case planning that matches service intensity and restrictiveness to child/youth and family risk levels while also matching specific service types to the identified needs of children/youth and their families. This evidence-based, empirically anchored approach uses risk and needs assessment to support consistency in matching services to child/youth and family needs. In addition, comprehensive and consistent application of risk and needs assessment can provide actionable data for program monitoring and improvement as well as evaluation and reporting.

**Integrating Evaluation and Research Efforts** – To the extent possible, we recommend enhancing interaction between independent evaluation efforts, like the current annual report, with other research and evaluation activities being conducted by, and on behalf of, the Division of Child Welfare Services. This would leverage existing resources to promote meaningful, high-quality data to support system wide efforts to use data to support decision making, reporting and quality improvement.

# Background and Introduction

This year marks a time of transition and opportunity for the Core Services Program. Federal health care reform, new state laws and Child Welfare programs, along with a greater capacity to track data related to Core Service delivery and outcomes, bring important changes to the existing program structure.

This year's evaluation report reflects the current transition being experienced by the Core Services Program. As in past evaluation reports, trends are compared across years to the degree possible, with the evolution of the Trails data system and programmatic changes contributing to some limitations in making comparisons. Ultimately, however, this year's annual report must stand on its own; building on past evaluation efforts while looking toward the future of the Core Services Program.

The Core Services Program was established within the Department of Human Services in 1994 and is statutorily mandated to provide strength-based resources and support to families when children/youth are at imminent risk of out-of-home placement and/or in need of services to maintain a placement in the least restrictive setting possible.

The Colorado Revised Statute (C.R.S) section authorizing the Core Services Program also mandates that the Department annually provide " . . . an evaluation of the overall effectiveness and cost-efficiency of the program and any recommended changes to such program." This report responds to this mandate and is designed to provide meaningful decision support for the Division of Child Welfare Services and county Core Services Programs.

> *The Core Services Program provides strength-based resources and support to families to support children and youth in their home or least restrictive setting possible.*

Because of the significant number of changes occurring within the program in this fiscal year and the near future, this report focuses on change. New outcome measures are the focus of the analysis of costs and effectiveness, and future opportunities arising at the federal, state and local level are discussed.

**Strong Core Foundation with Local Flexibility**

The statewide Core Services Program is built upon four main goals:

1. Focus on family strengths by directing intensive services that support and strengthen the family and protect the child/youth;
2. Prevent out-of-home placement;
3. Return children/youth in placement to their own home, or unite children/youth with their permanent families;
4. Provide services that protect the child/youth.

From this foundation, each of the 64 counties and one Colorado tribal nation (the Southern Ute Indian Tribe) annually develop locally meaningful guiding principles and service opportunities.  Each jurisdiction designs a unique set of required and tailored services resulting in a multifaceted pattern of services, opportunities and implementation challenges across the state. In addition, policies guiding documentation and tracking of services and expenditures differ from county to county. However, each county and tribe share a common mission to support the children/youth and families of their

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communities and have the desire and obligation to deliver services that are meaningful to the families that receive them while remaining accountable to all citizens in the community. To support accountability and ultimately enhance the Core Services Program, this evaluation embraces the diversity of Core Services implementation across the state. This diversity presents opportunities to find commonalities across effective strategies, share information about successes and how cost efficiencies can be achieved, and use local experiences to strengthen the overall state program.

### Focus on Outcomes

The Division of Child Welfare Services intends to examine and report the effectiveness of the Core Services Program with a primary focus on outcomes for Colorado's children/youth. This year's report is the first to incorporate new functionality in Trails that represents an improvement in how individual services are tracked and outcomes monitored. These changes to Trails, and the analyses that result, are described throughout this report. This evaluation report, as a result of these changes, looks somewhat different from previous years. As counties move towards greater consistency in the use of these new features, the evaluation will continue to improve and evolve in its ability to compare outcomes and costs efficiency.

## Context of the Current Report

### Commissions and County Commission Reports

Family Preservation Commissions, also known as Core Services Commissions, are mandated oversight groups in each county. These commissions are local interdisciplinary, multi-agency committees responsible for evaluating the family preservation program and making recommendations for change at the local level and at the state level through an annual report. These commissions were established in statute during the 1993-1994 legislative session. C.R.S. 26-5.5-106 sets forth the composition and duties of the commissions, as follows:

> *New functionality in Trails enhances how individual services are tracked and outcomes are monitored. This year's report is the first to explore this expanded Trails capacity.*

1. "The governing body of each county or city and county shall establish a family preservation commission for the county or city and county to carry out the duties described in subsection (2) of this section. The commission shall be interdisciplinary and multi-agency in composition, except that such commission shall include at least two members from the public at-large. The governing body may designate an existing board or group to act as the commission. A group of counties may agree to designate a regional commission to act collectively as the commission for all such counties.

2. It shall be the duty of each commission established or designated pursuant to subsection (1) of this section to hold periodic meetings and evaluate the family preservation program within the county or city and county, and to identify any recommended changes to such program. On or after July 1, 1994, the commission shall submit an annual report to the executive director of the state department. The report shall consist of an evaluation of the overall effectiveness and cost-efficiency of the program and any recommended changes to such program. The report shall be submitted on or before the first day of September of each year."

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**Background and Introduction**

All 64 counties and the Southern Ute Indian Tribe submitted annual reports directly to TriWest Group (the contracted program evaluator). Data from those reports is incorporated into analyses and reporting to provide a county-specific context to the quantitative findings. Copies of each county or tribal report are available by request from the Division of Child Welfare Services.  The Family Preservation/Core Services Report template is provided as Appendix A.

## Family Preservation

The Core Services Program is based on a solid foundation of research and practice in family preservation. Family preservation services are generally short-term, family-based services designed to support families in crisis by improving parenting and family functioning while keeping children/youth safe. These services developed, in part, as a response to a federal requirement to demonstrate reasonable efforts to prevent removal of children from their homes.  Family preservation services grew out of the recognition that children/youth need a safe and stable family and that separating children/youth from their families and communities removes them from natural supports and often causes trauma, leaving lasting negative effects.

The Core Services Program builds upon the family preservation research base and is anchored in the conviction that many children/youth can be safely protected and treated within their own homes when parents are provided with services and support and empowered to change their lives. Several studies have found that these services are effective in reducing placement, especially when used as early intervention (Nelson, 2000). Adolescents in families that participated in preservation services are placed out-of-home less often than children/youth in matched control families.

> *Core Services Program Goals*
> 1. *Focus on family strengths by directing intensive services that support and strengthen the family and protect the child/youth;*
> 2. *Prevent out-of-home placement;*
> 3. *Return children/youth in placement to their own home, or unite children with their permanent families;*
> 4. *Provide services that protect the child/youth.*

In Colorado, a subsection of the legislation mandating the Family Preservation Commissions defines "family preservation services" as assistance that focuses on a family's strengths and empowers a family by providing alternative problem-solving techniques and child-rearing practices, as well as promoting effective responses to stressful living situations for the family. This assistance includes resources that are available to supplement existing informal support systems for the family. There are ten designated types of "family preservation services" and this array of services constitutes the Core Services Program.  A list of services with descriptions of each is provided as Appendix B.

Historically, the annual report has been submitted by the Division of Child Welfare Services, in compliance with the above statute, and has represented a compilation of the individual county Core Services/Family Preservation Commission reports submitted each year to the Division. The evaluation approach and report content has changed in recent years, with increased emphasis on evidence-based services and promising practices within the state and child welfare services, and as the statewide Colorado Trails Case Management System (Trails) has provided access to more systematic and detailed quantitative data regarding children/youth and families served by the Core Services Program.

## Scope of the Current Report

This report marks the fourth year of a multi-phased evaluation approach developed by TriWest Group in partnership with the Division of Child Welfare Services and informed by the state and local leadership of the Core Services Program. It utilizes new functionality in Trails that has substantially changed the way that Core Services are recorded and outcomes tracked. As a result, this report diverges substantially from previous years reports in some areas, but continues to focus on providing the Division, the Governor, the General Assembly, and other important stakeholders with concrete and actionable knowledge regarding program implementation, costs and outcomes.

As the evaluation continues to evolve and additional data in Trails becomes available or is identified for use in these analyses, we expect that this report will continue to change from year to year. We will continue to identify trends and patterns where comparisons are appropriate, but it is important to note that changes in data availability, while greatly improving the accuracy of data reporting, does make year to year comparisons somewhat difficult.

As part of the evolutionary process for the Core Services evaluation, this year's report has five objectives:

- To describe the implementation of the Core Services Program. This includes a description of the children, youth, and families serviced by the program, as well as a detailed account of the services provided.

> *The ultimate purpose of this evaluation is to provide information that can be used to improve the Core Services Program.*

- To report on new outcome measures being recorded in Trails beginning in SFY 2010-2011.

- To summarize child/youth safety and permanency outcomes. These outcomes include: maintaining child/youth safety (as measured by substantiated child abuse), maintaining children/youth in the home whenever possible, and minimizing re-engagement with Core Services or the need for Child Welfare.

- To describe county-specific implementation opportunities and challenges in order to 1) provide context for the quantitative descriptions of children/youth served and services provided, 2) highlight specific positive county experiences and 3) suggest ways to address challenges experienced by local communities.

- To discuss future changes in federal and state law, as well as other statewide programs and initiatives likely to impact the Core Services Program.

## Structure of the Current Report

Following the **Background and Introduction**, the **Evaluation Methods** section provides a brief discussion of the methods used in developing and presenting this report. Methods include data sources and dates of collection, as well as the general assumptions and parameters for analysis, organized by each subsequent section of the report.

The next section of the report is a **Program Overview** providing details about the structure of the program itself.  Descriptions of specific types of services included in the Core Services Program, county allocations of Core Services funds, and additional Evidence-Based Services for Adolescent awards are included in this section.

The next section of the report is **Implementation of the Core Services Program**. This section describes the outputs and activities of the Core Services Program, including services used by counties and specific gaps and barriers to accessing services. The section provides a general overview of the distribution of services across the state. This description includes an overall view of the Core Services Program as well as county-level data. Also included in this section is a discussion of new functionality in Trails and its impact on data reporting.

The next section of the report discusses the **Program Costs and Effectiveness**.  Program effectiveness is explored using new outcome measures being tracked by Trails as well as 12-month outcomes for children/youth and families who ended Core Services episodes last fiscal year. Total costs and average costs per person are presented based on type of service for fee-for-service contracts.

The next section of the report, **Looking Ahead,** briefly discusses five factors expected to influence the Core Services Program including:  Colorado's Practice Model, implementation of the Differential Response model, House Bill 11-1196, Medicaid and health care reform.

The final section of the report presents a brief discussion of **Observations and Recommendations** from this year's report.

# Evaluation Methods

## Data Sources

Data for this report comes from three primary sources:

1. Colorado Trails Automated Case Management System[5] (commonly referred to as Trails) – Extracts from Trails are the primary source of data for this report. These extracts include information regarding the children/youth served, the types and lengths of services provided, service outcomes, child/youth placement history, and reports of child abuse and neglect. Trails is a dynamic case management system in which users can update, add, and maintain records on an ongoing basis as new information becomes available or as errors are discovered and corrected. The SFY 2011 data for this report reflects what was in the Trails system as of July 25, 2011. Historical data for this report is taken from previous years' extracts rather than new data extracts in order to ensure consistency across the reporting period.

   The Division of Child Welfare Services continues to enhance Trails in order to provide the most accurate information possible. For example, the addition of a service outcome field allows users to capture more detail regarding the disposition of a child/youth's case at the time a specific treatment episode ends, as well as where that child/youth is placed at the end of the service. In addition, users can now add all family members (both children/youth and adults receiving services on behalf of the child/youth) to a single service authorization, rather than needing to enter multiple authorizations, which decreases the amount of time needed to enter data and helps to ensure more accurate data entry. These enhancements continue to make a much larger and more comprehensive data set available for analysis and reporting.

   Colorado has a state supervised, county administered Child Welfare system. Statewide policy and training dictate that every child/youth receiving a Child Welfare service must be entered into Trails. Due to differences in county policies, it has been reported that not every child/youth who benefits from services is entered. The number of children/youth entered into Trails is lower than the actual number of children/youth served because of differences in data entry practices across counties. For example, when using a fixed rate contract only one service authorization during the month needs to be entered into Trails in order to process payment (regardless of the number of children/youth served in that month). This results in consistently under counting the number of services provided and the number of individuals being served. Data entry practices are improving with the new Trails functionality and it is anticipated that improvement will continue as counties learn to use the new features. However, there are some remaining undercounts of service that must be taken into account when interpreting data, including some fixed rate contract and county provided services not being entered into Trails. This is discussed later in this section and again in the Costs and Outcomes section of this report.

2. Family Preservation/Core Services Commission Reports – Each county is required by state statute to complete a Family Preservation/Core Services Commission Report. For the past three years, counties have sent these reports directly to TriWest Group (the contracted program

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[5] Known nationally as the State Automated Child Welfare Information System (SACWIS).

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evaluator) for analysis and inclusion in the annual program evaluation report (please see Appendix A for a template of the county report). Family Preservation/Core Services Commissions and Tribal leaders were asked to respond to specific questions regarding the services available in their communities, program successes and challenges, recommendations for changes to the Core Services Program, and additional funding sources. The Commission report allows counties to supplement data from Trails with qualitative information that helps tell the story behind the numbers. Individual county reports are available from the Division of Child Welfare Services.

3.  Colorado Financial Management System (CFMS) – CFMS provides the total actual expenditures for the Core Services Program, for the entire state and for individual counties.

## Describing Children/Youth Served and Types of Services

The Trails system is the primary source of data regarding children/youth served and the types and number of services delivered. Differences across counties in the use of the Trails system (in terms of non-mandatory data fields and the differences in how fixed rate contract and county-provided services are entered) limit some data elements presented in this report. Data must be interpreted with caution; reminders of specific limitations are discussed in the Program Costs and Effectiveness Section of this report.

Numbers of children/youth and families served and types of services provided by each county are derived from service authorizations entered into Trails and represent an unduplicated count of children, youth and adults (receiving services on behalf of the child/youth) served in each county; each individual is counted one time, regardless of how many different services were received. Every person receiving *any* core service in SFY 2011 (July 1, 2010 through June 30, 2011) is included in this count.

Unduplicated counts of services are based on service authorizations entered into Trails. There remains some difference in whether counties enter each individual authorization for a fixed-rate contract or county-provided service. The implications of this are discussed as data analyses are presented in this report.

### Time Periods for Involvement

Children/youth are divided into three main cohorts/groups based on the time of their involvement in Core Services, as follows:

1.  **Service Closures Cohort** – this is a duplicated count of children/youth and adults for whom any service authorization was closed during the SFY 2011 – this is the primary cohort analyzed in this report, and includes the new services outcome measures that are available.
2.  **SFY 2011 Individuals Served** – this includes all children, youth and adults (receiving services on behalf of the child/youth) who began their service episode prior to June 30, 2011 (end of SFY 2011). The ability to distinguish children/youth from adults is a new feature in this year's report, due to improvements in the Trails data system.
3.  **SFY 2010 Discharge Cohort** – this includes children/youth who ended a distinct service episode during SFY 2010 and who did not return to service within two months (62 days).

**Evaluation Methods**

**Discharge Cohorts**

Each discharge cohort of children/youth from the previous state fiscal year is used in this report to examine 12-month outcomes for children/youth served by Core Services.

## Describing Core Services Implementation

The number of actual service units delivered reflects a duplicated count of individuals. In other words, a single child/youth (or adult) may be counted multiple times, once for each service received. All services authorized in Trails in SFY 2011 are included in this count. In addition, duplicated counts of services are included for this fiscal year. These counts represent the total number of authorizations, with a single child, youth or adult often receiving more than one authorization, and with a single authorization potentially capturing multiple individuals served. Frequency distributions and means (averages) are used to describe child/youth and adults served characteristics and service units.

Information from county and tribal Core Services Commission Reports is used throughout this report. For example, types of services used in each county are summarized in the Program Overview Section and frequency of service availability is included in the Implementation of Core Services Program Section. These Commission Reports also provide contextual data for the Outcomes Section and additional details regarding how counties acquire supplemental funds to meet the needs of their communities. In addition, information is collected on specific program accomplishments, county collaborative efforts, evidence-based practices, and recommendations for changes to the Core Services Program. Commission reports comment on local factors driving higher costs of services and other factors that promote cost efficiencies or cost savings. Most of the data presented from counties is qualitative and summarized in narrative form. Where possible and appropriate, frequency distributions are used to describe county implementation efforts. Please see Appendix A for the template for this year's Family Preservation/Core Services Commission Reports.

> *County Family Preservation/Core Services Commission Reports provide much of the information used to describe services to children, youth and families across the state.*

## Describing Program Effectiveness: Core Services Outcomes

This year's annual evaluation report concentrates heavily on the new outcome measures that are recorded in Trails for every service authorization. These include the Core Services goal (remain or return home, adoption, etc.), the overall outcome of the service (successful, not engaged, etc.), and where the child/youth was placed at the time the service ended.

In addition, 12-month outcomes of children/youth receiving Core Services in past fiscal years is reported in the form of child abuse and neglect substantiated reports.

### Maintaining Children/Youth in the Home

For this report, maintaining children/youth in the home is defined as the avoidance of an out-of-home placement during the Core Services episode. Proportions of children/youth maintained in the home are derived from identifying children/youth who do not experience an out-of-home placement during their Core Services start and end dates.

**Evaluation Methods**

## Describing Costs of the Core Services Program

As noted above, county practices vary in the ways in which data is entered into Trails. This most likely produces an unknown undercount of services provided and makes cost estimates per child/youth and per service difficult. Services delivered by the Core Services Program can be paid for in three different ways: 1) "fee-for-service" contract with a private provider, 2) "fixed rate contract" with a private provider, or 3) provided directly by the county. In some cases, counties may set up a fee-for-service or fixed rate contract in order to pay for services provided by another county.

When there is a fee-for-service contract in place, the provider is paid for each individual service provided to a specific child/youth (or family, on behalf of the child/youth). In order to process payment, each service must be entered into Trails. Costs for fee-for-service units are recorded in Trails by individual child/youth. Therefore, an actual cost per child/youth can be calculated under the fee-for-service payment structure.

As more counties use the new Trails functionality to allow them to more consistently enter all individuals served under fixed rate contracts and with county provided services, this report will include costs for those services as well. However, the current report is able to report costs for fee-for-services contracts only.

# Program Overview

## Purpose of the Core Services Program

 The primary purpose of the Core Services Program is to protect the well-being of Colorado's children/youth by supporting stable families and prevent out-of-home placement for children/youth.  When an out-of-home placement is determined to be the best option for a child/youth, the Core Services Program supports efforts to return the child/youth home as quickly as possible or to facilitate a stable, least restrictive, long-term alternate placement.

The Core Services Program is administered by the Colorado Department of Human Services, Division of Child Welfare Services and is implemented at the county level.  The Division of Child Welfare Services sets policies and rules and each of the 64 counties determine the details of program implementation for their communities.  In addition to the 64 counties, two Indian tribes are eligible for Core Services funding.

> ### Core Services Program Goals
>
> 1. Focus on family strengths by directing intensive services that support and strengthen the family and protect the child/youth;
> 2. Prevent out-of-home placement;
> 3. Return children/youth in placement to their own home, or unite children/youth with their permanent families;
> 4. Provide services that protect the child/youth.

## Types of Core Services

There are ten designated Core Service types.  A detailed description of each service type is included as Appendix B.

1. Home Based Intervention
2. Intensive Family Therapy
3. Life Skills
4. Day Treatment
5. Sexual Abuse Treatment
6. Mental Health Services
7. Substance Use Disorder Services
8. Aftercare
9. Special Economic Assistance
10. County Designed Services (Optional)

Counties are required by statute to provide access to all of the core service types except County Designed services (which are optional).  County Designed services are unique to each county.  Each year, counties submit an Annual Plan detailing how they intend to utilize their Core Services funding.  Counties have the opportunity to request in their Annual Plans the addition of County Designed services.  Counties must describe the additional service and define how the service will meet the needs of families and impact the goals of the Core Services Program.  In addition, counties must track services, expenditures, and outcomes to allow the state to monitor each County Designed service.

> *County designed services bring evidence-based services to Colorado communities where they might not be otherwise available.*

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The option of County Designed services allows county departments an important opportunity to meet the unique needs of families and to fill gaps in their service array.  Further, many counties are able to implement well established, evidence-based practices and programs through the flexibility offered by the County Designed option.  This brings state-of-the-art approaches in supporting child/youth safety and well-being to many Colorado communities where they might not otherwise be available. This year, 46 counties are providing approved County Designed services.

Examples of evidence-based County Designed programs include Multisystemic Therapy, Functional Family Therapy, Family Team Decision Making, and Mentoring.  A complete list of County Designed services being offered this year is included in Appendix C.

## Program Changes During SFY 2011

Two important modifications were made to the Core Services Program this year.  The first was the roll-out of significant enhancements to the Trails data system.  The most significant of these changes in terms of reporting program effectiveness, described in more detail in the Implementation of the Core Services Program Section (page 16), allows for easier, more accurate tracking of the children/youth and adults receiving

> *Significant program modifications for SFY 2011 include important Trails enhancements and changes to the way fixed rate contracts are tracked.*

services.  This change contributes significantly to the way the Core Services implementation and outcomes can be described in future reports. The impact of the Trails enhancements is reflected in two ways in this year's report. First, there is a significant increase in the number of people reported as receiving Core Services (24,112 compared to last year's total of 15,226).  This increase, as discussed throughout the report, is due in large part to having more complete data.  Secondly, this report includes for the first time, a separate count of children/youth receiving services and adults receiving services on their behalf.  Previously, it was impossible to accurately breakdown these numbers.

Another important change to the Trails data system implemented this year was the addition of improved outcome tracking.  These changes are the result of a collaborative effort between the Core Services Coordinators program staff and Trails team. With this addition, each service authorization is required to have an associated case goal, outcome of the service (e.g. successful/unsuccessful), and the child/youth's placement at the time of discharge. This represents a significant improvement in the way service authorizations are documented in Trails. This change, combined with the ability to enter all children/youth and families receiving services within a single authorization will significantly enhance the outcome data available to the Core Services Program.

The second modification to the Core Services Program was a change to the level of documentation and monitoring required of counties when using fixed rate contracts.   Under these contracts, only one service authorization during the month needs to be entered into Trails in order to process payment (regardless of the number of children/youth served in that month).  This results in consistently under counting the number of services provided and the number of individuals being served.  Counties are now required to document the reason a fixed rate contract is being used (instead of a fee-for-service contract) and to more carefully monitor and document the number and types of services being offered under each fixed rate contract.  Fixed rate contracts can be beneficial in certain circumstances.  For example, in a small community the Core Services Program may need mental health services for an average of 20 family members over the course of a year, but that need may fluctuate from a low of one or two families in some months to seven or eight families in others.  For the small local provider to

assure access to services during the months when there is an increased need, they require a steady income to cover those months when there are fewer family members engaged in services. In this situation, a fixed rate contract can be beneficial to both the Core Services Program and the local provider. Fixed rate contracts, managed appropriately, can be adjusted year to year based on actual utilization.

## Core Services Allocations

Table 1 shows Core Services allocations for SFY 2011. The total allocation for all counties is $44,576,054 which is very close to the amount allocated last year. This total allocation is inclusive of $4,006,949 for evidence based services awards to counties as explained on the next page.

| Table 1: SFY 2011 Core Services Program Allocations | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| **County Name** | **Allocation** | **County** | **Allocation** |
| **Statewide** | **$44,576,054.00** | | |
| Adams | $4,519,343.86 | Kiowa | $52,999.35 |
| Alamosa | $660,471.78 | Kit Carson | $125,753.23 |
| Arapahoe | $4,172,081.23 | Lake | $135,968.59 |
| Archuleta | $176,265.58 | La Plata/San Juan/Southern Ute[6] | $1,023,006.17 |
| Baca | $42,619.85 | Larimer | $1,652,500.34 |
| Bent | $29,100.67 | Las Animas | $280,303.46 |
| Boulder | $2,394,947.10 | Lincoln | $355,299.30 |
| Broomfield | $318,577.65 | Logan | $358,535.30 |
| Chaffee | $287,273.39 | Mesa | $1,192,671.94 |
| Cheyenne | $38,526.96 | Moffat | $465,480.64 |
| Clear Creek | $119,445.40 | Montezuma | $301,874.20 |
| Conejos | $124,348.90 | Montrose | $459,832.72 |
| Costilla | $79,179.04 | Morgan | $665,155.84 |
| Crowley | $85,101.38 | Otero | $446,457.64 |
| Custer | $26,135.66 | Ouray/San Miguel | $254,080.45 |
| Delta | $377,692.92 | Park | $167,631.23 |
| Denver | $7,310,552.72 | Phillips | $38,752.86 |
| Dolores | $29,599.07 | Pitkin | $33,908.48 |

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[6] The Southern Ute Indian Tribe receives $25,000 of Core Services funding administered by La Plata and not included in these totals.

| Table 1: SFY 2011 Core Services Program Allocations | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| **County Name** | **Allocation** | **County** | **Allocation** |
| Douglas | $211,546.19 | Prowers | $323,644.28 |
| Eagle | $120,587.32 | Pueblo | $1,263,561.85 |
| Elbert | $298,845.24 | Rio Blanco | $116,290.90 |
| El Paso | $4,954,618.65 | Rio Grande/Mineral | $73,405.55 |
| Fremont | $764,203.30 | Routt | $308,861.32 |
| Garfield | $454,682.08 | Saguache | $90,952.68 |
| Gilpin | $84,627.45 | Sedgwick | $31,800.06 |
| Grand | $168,754.30 | Summit | $197,321.56 |
| Gunnison/Hinsdale | $81,770.76 | Teller | $511,205.82 |
| Huerfano | $134,920.71 | Washington | $102,759.78 |
| Jackson | $26,442.17 | Weld | $1,393,579.93 |
| Jefferson | $3,818,811.76 | Yuma | $241,384.44 |

## Evidence-Based Services for Adolescents Awards

Some counties receive additional Core Services funding specifically targeted to provide evidence-based services to adolescents in home and community-based settings. In SFY 2011, a total of $4,006,949 was allocated for evidence-based services to adolescents and their families. Evidence-based services are programs that have been proven effective in reducing the need for higher cost residential services. These programs help counties avoid or reduce the length of costly out-of-home placement.

These funds are allocated to counties through a Request for Proposals (RFP) process and are reflected in the overall Total Core Services Allocations report (see Table 2). The services provided through these funds are a strong asset to the Core Services Program, allowing Colorado families to receive evidence-based and promising practices that might not otherwise be available.

Each county receiving an evidence-based services award submits a complete program needs assessment, service description, and projected outcomes. They must also document historical outcomes demonstrating how the specific services reduce the need for higher cost, more restrictive settings or residential services[7]. The Division of Child Welfare Services collaborates with each Core Services Program Coordinator to ensure outcome data is compiled and progress toward the goal of each program is monitored.

> *Evidence-based service awards represent a strong asset to the Core Services Program, providing Colorado families with proven approaches to supporting youth in the community.*

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[7]The additional evidence-based programs for adolescents are considered County Designed Core Services. All County Designed data pulled from Trails includes these evidence-based programs.

The SFY 2011 Evidence-Based Services to Adolescents Awards are shown in Table 2, organized by county, amount of approved award, and the approved evidence-based service program(s). Twenty-six counties received awards ranging from $11,699 to $559,918. The number of counties receiving awards, and the amounts of each award, are determined by available funds and a competitive application process.

| Table 2: Evidence-Based Services to Adolescents Awards | | |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **County Name** | **Award Amount** | **Evidence-Based Service Program** |
| **Statewide** | **$4,006,949** | |
| Adams | $287,039 | Youth Intervention Program |
| Alamosa | $62,560 | Intensive Mentoring Project |
| Arapahoe | $559,918 | Multisystemic Therapy – Synergy<br>Direct Link/Multisystemic Therapy – Savio |
| Boulder | $20,005 | Multisystemic Therapy |
| Broomfield | $55,573 | Multisystemic Therapy |
| Chafee | $96,184 | Mentoring |
| Conejos | $61,187 | Intensive Mentoring |
| Costilla | $38,724 | Intensive Mentoring Project |
| Denver | $221,649 | Multisystemic Therapy |
| Eagle | $10,860 | Family Centered Meeting Coordination |
| Elbert | $163,894 | Multisystemic Therapy<br>Family Coaching/Youth Mentoring<br>Parenting with Love and Limits |
| El Paso | $243,666 | Functional Family Therapy<br>Multisystemic Therapy |
| Fremont | $91,131 | Functional Family Therapy |
| Garfield | $38,178 | Adolescent Mediation Services<br>Multisystemic Therapy |
| Gunnison/Hinsdale | $38,402 | Therapeutic Mentoring |
| Huerfano | $11,699 | Reconnecting Youth |
| Jefferson | $416,305 | Multisystemic Therapy<br>Team Decision Making |
| Kit Carson | $19,237 | Functional Family Therapy |
| La Plata/San Juan/ Montezuma, Dolores/ Archuleta | $307,949 | Adolescent Dialectical Behavioral Therapy<br>Multisystemic Therapy |

| Table 2: Evidence-Based Services to Adolescents Awards | | |
|---|---|---|
| **County Name** | **Award Amount** | **Evidence-Based Service Program** |
| Larimer | $214,497 | PCC Mediation<br>Functional Family Therapy<br>NYPUM National Youth Program Using Mini-Bikes |
| Mesa | $284,712 | Rapid Response<br>Day Treatment to Adolescents |
| Montrose | $63,695 | Promoting Healthy Adolescent Trends (PHAT) |
| Morgan | $25,000 | Parenting with Love and Limits |
| Pueblo | $178,953 | For Keeps Program |
| Teller | $112,856 | Multisystemic Therapy |
| Weld | $383,076 | Teamwork, Innovation, Growth, Hope and Training (TIGHT)<br>Multisystemic Therapy |

# Implementation of the Core Services Program

The Core Services Program is implemented with a great deal of flexibility at the local level, while maintaining fair and equitable access to services statewide. While the state oversees funding allocations and sets policies and procedures for the program, each county operates their Core Services Program to meet the unique needs of families and communities. Because of this, documenting services consistently across the state has been an ongoing challenge for the Colorado Division of Human Services (CDHS).

Since the beginning of the current TriWest evaluation effort in SFY 2007-2008, the Division of Child Welfare Services (DCWS) Core Services staff, County Coordinators and the Trails team have worked together to develop policies and procedures, as well as make technical changes to the Trails system, that support more accurate tracking of services delivered and service outcomes. These efforts have led to enhanced functionality in Trails that began this fiscal year (SFY 2011).

> *Changes in Trails functionality and the efforts of Core Coordinators to examine data entry practices have led to significant improvements to data quality and completeness.*

Before these enhancements, workload was described as a barrier that prohibited some counties from entering data on all those receiving services and those participating as a child/youth. This led to an under representation of the number of people receiving services through Core Services funding. Counties had the option of recording each family member who participated in each service authorization, but the data entry process was time consuming and not required to activate payment, so many counties did not enter all family members served. Core Services Coordinators report that this year's Trail's enhancements have significantly reduced the time required to enter complete data.

The new functionality allows users to associate multiple family members with a single service authorization. Correspondingly, Trails more accurately captures both the services actually being purchased or delivered by the county, as well as the children/youth and adults benefitting from services. While this improvement does not eliminate problems stemming from disparate data entry practices[8], it has made significant improvements to data quality.

Another improvement to the Trails data system allows data on children and youth served to be separated from data describing adult caregivers receiving services on behalf of a child/youth. Previously, all services needed to be associated with a child or youth, even if the person participating in services was a parent, both parents, or the entire family. In

> *For the first time, numbers of individuals served through Core Services can be represented as individual adults and children/youth.*

previous reports, the term "children/youth served" encompassed the designated child/youth, siblings also receiving services and adult caregivers receiving services on the child/youth's behalf. In this report, for the first time, numbers served can be separated into adults and children/youth.

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[8] Discussed in detail on page 16.

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## Variations in County Use of the Trails Data System

Over the past several years, the Core Services Annual Evaluation Report has emphasized challenges in using Trails data to accurately describe services provided and their impact on children/youth and families. These challenges stemmed from variations in data entry across counties, incomplete data entry and limitations in some Trails data fields. Last year's report examined data entry practices in each county, describing many limitations and inaccuracies of Trails data due to inconsistent and incomplete data entry. In many areas the report was limited to analyses using data from a subset of counties for which Core Services funding utilization was more accurately represented in Trails.

This year, the data entry practices survey revealed that many counties have improved data entry practices and are using the new functionality in Trails to better capture services. Survey results also revealed that counties are still in the process of making necessary adjustments to their policies and procedures to make best use of the improvements to the Trails data system and that inconsistencies remain across counties. This year represents a time of transition; data quality and completeness is improving but some caution about using and interpreting data remains. The methodology section more thoroughly explores the current status of Trails data.

> *While data entry practices have improved over previous years, inconsistency across counties still limits the data set available for analysis.*

## Service Delivery in State Fiscal Year 2011

Table 3, below, lists each county's Core Services allocation, actual expenditures and the number of service authorizations entered into Trails.

| Table 3: SFY 2011 Core Services Allocations, Expenditures and Service Authorizations | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| **County Name** | **Allocation** | **Expenditures[9]** | **Service Authorizations Entered into Trails** |
| **Statewide** | **$44,576,054.00** | **$46,417,447.89** | **39,400** |
| Adams | $4,519,343.86 | $4,891,551.88 | 2,995 |
| Alamosa | $660,471.78 | $673,501.41 | 397 |
| Arapahoe | $4,172,081.23 | $4,528,436.64 | 3,604 |
| Archuleta | $176,265.58 | $162,203.30 | 74 |
| Baca | $42,619.85 | $6,960.38 | 2 |
| Bent | $29,100.67 | $31,770.91 | 66 |
| Boulder | $2,394,947.10 | $2,511,556.01 | 920 |
| Broomfield | $318,577.65 | $242,287.53 | 217 |

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[9] Expenditures are based on SFY 2011 Core Services Close-Out.

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| Table 3: SFY 2011 Core Services Allocations, Expenditures and Service Authorizations | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| **County Name** | **Allocation** | **Expenditures[9]** | **Service Authorizations Entered into Trails** |
| Chaffee | $287,273.39 | $156,739.01 | 37 |
| Cheyenne | $38,526.96 | $10,774.22 | 23 |
| Clear Creek | $119,445.40 | $144,467.33 | 30 |
| Conejos | $124,348.90 | $166,490.83 | 146 |
| Costilla | $79,179.04 | $13,952.78 | 19 |
| Crowley | $85,101.38 | $92,069.69 | 31 |
| Custer | $26,135.66 | $50.00 | 2 |
| Delta | $377,692.92 | $326,843.57 | 232 |
| Denver | $7,310,552.72 | $7,605,958.50 | 5,770 |
| Dolores | $29,599.07 | $18,126.18 | 24 |
| Douglas | $211,546.19 | $406,342.75 | 245 |
| Eagle | $120,587.32 | $96,067.75 | 168 |
| Elbert | $298,845.24 | $281,356.55 | 90 |
| El Paso | $4,954,618.65 | $5,961,697.15 | 7,384 |
| Fremont | $764,203.30 | $697,188.95 | 1,419 |
| Garfield | $454,682.08 | $353,437.13 | 375 |
| Gilpin | $84,627.45 | $51,010.32 | 60 |
| Grand | $168,754.30 | $118,620.38 | 82 |
| Gunnison/Hinsdale | $81,770.76 | $97,310.08 | 30 |
| Huerfano | $134,920.71 | $134,954.12 | 59 |
| Jackson | $26,442.17 | $9,431.00 | 8 |
| Jefferson | $3,818,811.76 | $3,273,158.04 | 3,655 |
| Kiowa | $52,999.35 | $54,554.71 | 0 |
| Kit Carson | $125,753.23 | $134,484.47 | 84 |
| Lake | $135,968.59 | $102,972.69 | 137 |
| La Plata/San Juan | $1,023,006.17 | $1,116,975.38 | 569 |
| Larimer | $1,652,500.34 | $1,976,643.67 | 3,914 |
| Las Animas | $280,303.46 | $279,953.81 | 85 |
| Lincoln | $355,299.30 | $277,374.84 | 135 |

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| Table 3: SFY 2011 Core Services Allocations, Expenditures and Service Authorizations | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| **County Name** | **Allocation** | **Expenditures[9]** | **Service Authorizations Entered into Trails** |
| Logan | $358,535.30 | $528,595.41 | 298 |
| Mesa | $1,192,671.94 | $1,255,096.68 | 916 |
| Moffat | $465,480.64 | $370,211.83 | 231 |
| Montezuma | $301,874.20 | $350,527.39 | 135 |
| Montrose | $459,832.72 | $448,046.42 | 306 |
| Morgan | $665,155.84 | $661,576.17 | 468 |
| Otero | $446,457.64 | $318,725.99 | 117 |
| Ouray/San Miguel | $254,080.45 | $241,127.73 | 33 |
| Park | $167,631.23 | $108,022.11 | 72 |
| Phillips | $38,752.86 | $36,153.63 | 19 |
| Pitkin | $33,908.48 | $15,263.85 | 40 |
| Prowers | $323,644.28 | $281,438.96 | 123 |
| Pueblo | $1,263,561.85 | $1,327,046.51 | 1,586 |
| Rio Blanco | $116,290.90 | $47,805.92 | 93 |
| Rio Grande/Mineral | $73,405.55 | $126,599.91 | 79 |
| Routt | $308,861.32 | $233,519.89 | 84 |
| Saguache | $90,952.68 | $109,646.46 | 38 |
| Sedgwick | $31,800.06 | $32,044.42 | 11 |
| Summit | $197,321.56 | $177,385.49 | 78 |
| Teller | $511,205.82 | $465,032.21 | 202 |
| Washington | $102,759.78 | $122,730.92 | 50 |
| Weld | $1,393,579.93 | $1,954,463.05 | 1,229 |
| Yuma | $241,384.44 | $199,112.98 | 104 |

The number of total service authorizations represents an unduplicated count of how many services were provided to children/youth and families. This number is higher than the total number served because a single individual may receive more than one type of Core Service.

As shown in Table 3, some counties appear to under spend their allocation while others appear to over spend. At the end of the fiscal year, small and medium counties under-spending their Core allocation have their remaining allocation aggregated to create a surplus pool. That pool is then applied to deficits

generated in other counties. If the surplus pool is insufficient to cover all deficits, the surplus distribution formula is applied to apportion the surplus funds. The formula determines the amount of surplus available to each deficit county based on the relative size of the county's allocation and the size of each county's deficit in relation to its allocation.

Once all small and medium counties have been fully covered through surplus distribution, any remaining surplus allocation is included in the surplus distribution process for the ten large counties. Surplus distribution for the ten large counties is processed in the same manner as for the small and medium counties. After the surplus pool has been fully allocated, any remaining county deficits are covered by approved funding source transfers as appropriate.

## Children/Youth and Families Served During SFY 2011

The total count of children/youth and other family members served each year beginning in SFY 2006 is depicted in Table 4. As stated previously, in past reports the term "total number of children/youth served" included caregivers receiving services on behalf of the child/youth. New Trails functionality allows for more accurate recording of children and youth served as well as other family members, resulting in a more accurate count than has been available in past.

| Table 4: Total Number of Individuals Served: Core Services Program | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | **SFY 2006** | **SFY 2007** | **SFY 2008** | **SFY 2009** | **SFY 2010** | **SFY 2011** |
| Total Unduplicated Count | 19,006[10] | 19,152[11] | 17,793 | 16,066 | 15,226 | 24,122 |

A total of 24,122 individuals receiving services were recorded in Trails for SFY 2011. This includes children and youth receiving services (13,200) and adult caregivers receiving services on behalf of the child/youth (10,922). These services provided to adults include intensive family therapy, multi-systemic therapy and home-based services, where the entire family receives services. In addition, services to adults often specifically target parental deficits, such as evaluations of parental capacity to care for children and keep them safe, life skills, household management and parenting. While these services are delivered to adults, they benefit the children of Colorado by allowing them to not only remain in their homes, but to benefit from an improved home environment.

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[10] This number is taken from the SFY 2006 County Commission Report.
[11] This number is taken from the SFY 2007 County Commission Report.

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**Figure 1: Individuals Served SFY 2011**
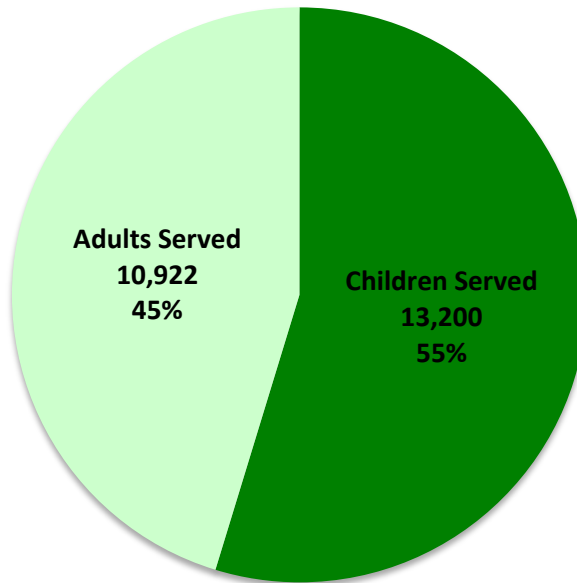


Tables 5 and 6 show race/ethnicity[12] and gender of children/youth and caregivers served. The largest group served by the Core Services Program was White, non-Hispanic (58%) or Hispanic (29%). There was a fairly even distribution of females (52%) and males (48%) served. The average age of children/youth served by Core Services was 8.7 years with a range from newborn to 18 years old.[13]

| Table 5: Gender of Individuals Served | | |
|---|---|---|
| **Gender** | **Core Services Numbers Served** | |
| | **Number** | **Percentage** |
| Female | 12,553 | 52.0% |
| Male | 11,569 | 48.0% |
| **TOTAL** | **24,122** | **100%** |

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[12] Race/ethnicity categories are based on options included in the Trails data system.
[13] Core services may be provided until the child/youth turns 21. However, all children/youth began services before the age of 18.

**Implementation of the Core Services Program**

| Table 6: Race/Ethnicity of Individuals Served | | |
|---|---|---|
| **Race / Ethnicity** | **Core Services Numbers Served** | |
| American Indian or Alaskan Native | 143 | <1% |
| Asian | 117 | <1% |
| Black or African American | 1,986 | 8.2% |
| Hispanic | 7,100 | 29.4% |
| Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander | -- | 0.0% |
| White (Caucasian) | 11,792 | 57.7% |
| Multiple Races | 857 | 3.6% |
| **Missing Data or Unable to Determine** | **2,127** | **8.8%** |
| **TOTAL** | **24,122** | **100%** |

Table 7 shows the distribution of children/youth served across counties.

| County Name | SFY 2008 Children/youth Served | | SFY 2009 Children/youth Served | | SFY 2010 Children/youth Served | | SFY 2011 Children/youth Served | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Number | Percent of State Total | Number | Percent of State Total | Number | Percent of State Total | Number | Percent of State Total |
| **State Total** | **17,793** | **100%** | **16,066** | **100%** | **15,226** | **100%** | **24,112** | **100%** |
| Adams | 1,123 | 6.3% | 929 | 5.7% | 1,181 | 7.7% | 2,550 | 10.5% |
| Alamosa | 211 | 1.2% | 186 | 1.2% | 198 | 1.3% | 244 | 1.0% |
| Arapahoe | 2,008 | 11.3% | 1,397 | 8.6% | 1,579 | 10.3% | 2,010 | 8.3% |
| Archuleta | 78 | 0.4% | 85 | 0.5% | 68 | 0.4% | 58 | 0.2% |
| Baca | 6 | 0.0% | 1 | 0.% | 1 | 0.0% | 2 | 0.0% |
| Bent | 26 | 0.1% | 29 | 0.2% | 26 | 0.2% | 45 | 0.2% |
| Boulder | 719 | 4.0% | 733 | 4.5% | 554 | 3.6% | 690 | 2.9% |
| Broomfield | 88 | 0.5% | 101 | 0.6% | 83 | 0.5% | 88 | 0.4% |

Table 7: SFY 2010 Unduplicated Individuals Served[14] by County

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[14]Children are unduplicated *within* each county. However, some children were served by multiple counties. These children are counted multiple times, one time for each county. The number of children unduplicated by count for SFY 2011 adds to 24,407.

| Table 7: SFY 2010 Unduplicated Individuals Served[14] by County | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| County Name | SFY 2008 Children/youth Served | | SFY 2009 Children/youth Served | | SFY 2010 Children/youth Served | | SFY 2011 Children/youth Served | |
| | Number | Percent of State Total | Number | Percent of State Total | Number | Percent of State Total | Number | Percent of State Total |
| Chaffee | 35 | 0.2% | 33 | 0.2% | 19 | 0.1% | 38 | 0.2% |
| Cheyenne | 4 | 0.0% | 2 | 0.% | 2 | 0.0% | 13 | 0.1% |
| Clear Creek | 36 | 0.2% | 44 | 0.3% | 32 | 0.2% | 30 | 0.1% |
| Conejos | 59 | 0.3% | 61 | 0.4% | 58 | 0.4% | 102 | 0.4% |
| Costilla | 8 | 0.0% | 9 | 0.1% | 9 | 0.1% | 5 | 0.0% |
| Crowley | 13 | 0.1% | 22 | 0.1% | 23 | 0.2% | 21 | 0.1% |
| Custer | 6 | 0.0% | 5 | 0.% | 6 | 0.0% | 2 | 0.0% |
| Delta | 156 | 0.9% | 107 | 0.7% | 119 | 0.8% | 153 | 0.6% |
| Denver | 3,299 | 18.5% | 2,808 | 17.4% | 2,195 | 14.4% | 3,343 | 13.8% |
| Dolores | 16 | 0.1% | 10 | 0.1% | 9 | 0.1% | 11 | 0.0% |
| Douglas | 97 | 0.5% | 96 | 0.6% | 97 | 0.6% | 175 | 0.7% |
| Eagle | 112 | 0.6% | 62 | 0.4% | 23 | 0.2% | 131 | 0.5% |
| Elbert | 80 | 0.4% | 66 | 0.4% | 51 | 0.3% | 106 | 0.4% |
| El Paso | 1,612 | 9.1% | 1,654 | 10.2% | 1,582 | 10.4% | 3,350 | 13.8% |
| Fremont | 294 | 1.7% | 244 | 1.5% | 272 | 1.8% | 569 | 2.4% |
| Garfield | 180 | 1.0% | 145 | 0.9% | 117 | 0.8% | 219 | 0.9% |
| Gilpin | 32 | 0.2% | 28 | 0.2% | 36 | 0.2% | 44 | 0.2% |
| Grand | 52 | 0.3% | 42 | 0.3% | 54 | 0.4% | 69 | 0.3% |
| Gunnison/Hinsdale | 46 | 0.3% | 33 | 0.2% | 31 | 0.2% | 42 | 0.2% |
| Huerfano | 91 | 0.5% | 74 | 0.5% | 36 | 0.5% | 31 | 0.1% |
| Jackson | 8 | 0.0% | 7 | 0.% | 4 | 0.0% | 8 | 0.0% |
| Jefferson | 1,721 | 9.7% | 1,558 | 9.6% | 1,430 | 9.6% | 1,948 | 8.0% |
| Kit Carson | 34 | 0.2% | 26 | 0.2% | 24 | 0.2% | 40 | 0.2% |
| Lake | 38 | 1.2% | 53 | 0.3% | 49 | 0.3% | 89 | 0.4% |
| La Plata/San Juan | 220 | 0.2% | 211 | 1.3% | 247 | 1.6% | 242 | 1.0% |
| Larimer | 1,868 | 10.5% | 1,926 | 11.9% | 1,865 | 12.2% | 3,192 | 13.2% |
| Las Animas | 51 | 0.3% | 55 | 0.3% | 60 | 0.4% | 57 | 0.2% |
| Lincoln | 41 | 0.2% | 41 | 0.3% | 40 | 0.3% | 68 | 0.3% |

| Table 7: SFY 2010 Unduplicated Individuals Served[14] by County | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **County Name** | SFY 2008 Children/youth Served | | SFY 2009 Children/youth Served | | SFY 2010 Children/youth Served | | SFY 2011 Children/youth Served | |
| | Number | Percent of State Total | Number | Percent of State Total | Number | Percent of State Total | Number | Percent of State Total |
| Logan | 93 | 0.5% | 83 | 0.5% | 131 | 0.9% | 150 | 0.6% |
| Mesa | 387 | 2.2% | 386 | 2.4% | 385 | 2.5% | 448 | 1.9% |
| Moffat | 157 | 0.9% | 142 | 0.9% | 124 | 0.8% | 147 | 0.6% |
| Montezuma | 112 | 0.6% | 126 | 0.8% | 107 | 0.7% | 86 | 0.4% |
| Montrose | 162 | 0.9% | 150 | 0.9% | 126 | 0.8% | 208 | 0.9% |
| Morgan | 213 | 1.2% | 196 | 1.2% | 169 | 1.1% | 273 | 1.1% |
| Otero | 64 | 0.4% | 49 | 0.3% | 77 | 0.5% | 79 | 0.3% |
| Ouray/San Miguel | 20 | 0.1% | 23 | 0.1% | 30 | 0.2% | 31 | 0.1% |
| Park | 63 | 0.4% | 52 | 0.3% | 31 | 0.2% | 82 | 0.3% |
| Phillips | 15 | 0.1% | 12 | 0.1% | 15 | 0.1% | 18 | 0.1% |
| Pitkin | 12 | 0.1% | 17 | 0.1% | 8 | 0.1% | 58 | 0.2% |
| Prowers | 87 | 0.5% | 84 | 0.5% | 66 | 0.4% | 83 | 0.3% |
| Pueblo | 835 | 4.7% | 788 | 4.9% | 704 | 4.6% | 1,106 | 4.6% |
| Rio Blanco | 47 | 0.3% | 48 | 0.3% | 34 | 0.2% | 121 | 0.5% |
| Rio Grande/Mineral | 64 | 0.4% | 65 | 0.4% | 43 | 0.3% | 68 | 0.3% |
| Routt | 54 | 0.3% | 36 | 0.2% | 28 | 0.2% | 67 | 0.3% |
| Saguache | 28 | 0.2% | 38 | 0.2% | 27 | 0.2% | 36 | 0.1% |
| Sedgwick | 7 | 0.0% | 6 | 0.% | 4 | 0.0% | 10 | 0.0% |
| Summit | 52 | 0.3% | 43 | 0.3% | 29 | 0.2% | 64 | 0.3% |
| Teller | 123 | 0.7% | 147 | 0.9% | 120 | 0.8% | 125 | 0.5% |
| Washington | 11 | 0.1% | 28 | 0.2% | 33 | 0.2% | 75 | 0.3% |
| Weld | 664 | 3.7% | 720 | 4.5% | 743 | 4.9% | 1,003 | 4.1% |
| Yuma | 51 | 0.3% | 36 | 0.2% | 46 | 0.3% | 84 | 0.3% |

## Services Provided (Statewide and by County): All Children/Youth Served

Table 8, below, shows the number of service authorizations (as entered into Trails) for this SFY 2011.

| Table 8: Number of Service Authorizations Entered into Trails (duplicated count of services) | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | **SFY 2009** | **SFY 2010** | **SFY 2011** |
| Total Duplicated Count | 47,587 | 46, 197 | 39,400 |

Core Services Coordinators point to three factors in explaining the decrease in the number of service authorizations. The primary reason cited is the change made to Trails that now allows multiple children/youth and families to be designated as "receiving services" on a single service authorization. Counties that had previously been recording all individuals served by entering a separate authorization for each family member can now more accurately the service delivery by entering a single authorization with multiple individuals receiving services (see page 16 for the explanation of changes to the Trails data system). This appears to have actually supported an increase in the numbers of individuals served, but a decrease in service authorizations recorded. Other factors that may have contributed to decreasing numbers of service authorizations include county efforts to be more targeted and considered in planning services for families and the increased use of wraparound services.

> *The number of individuals served through Core Services (and entered into Trails) may have actually increased.*

Some Core Services Coordinators indicated decreases in specific types of Core Services in their county due to effects of the Differential Response pilot program (see page 49 in the Looking Ahead section for further discussion). In addition, there were reports of decreases in services such as mental health services and substance use disorder treatment paid for by Core Services funding because of increased efforts on the part of counties and providers to utilize Medicaid funding for these services (when possible) and an overall increase in the number of families eligible for Medicaid.

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## Types of Core Services Provided

The figure below depicts the distribution of service authorizations for each service type.[15]
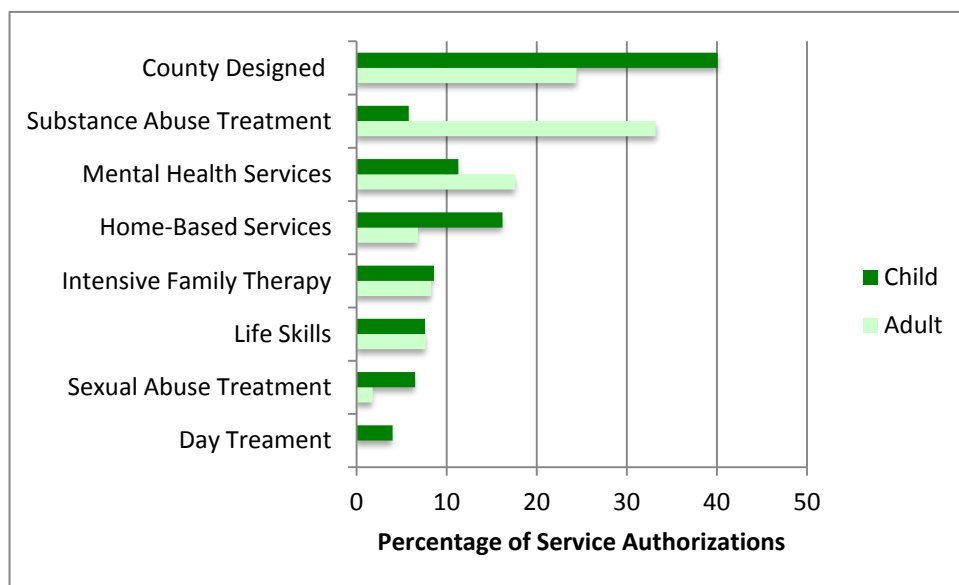


## Behavioral Health Services

The term "behavioral health services" is often used as shorthand to refer to mental health services and substance use disorder treatment together. When considered together, they are the second most frequently provided Core Service to adults on behalf of children/youth, making up half (50.8%) of all of the service authorizations for adults. These services include diagnostic and/or therapeutic services to assist in the development of the family services plan; to assess and/or improve family communication, functioning and relationships; and to prevent further abuse of drugs or alcohol. While behavioral health service authorizations decreased along with the total decrease in service authorizations, they continue to be the most commonly accessed services for maintaining children/youth in a safe home environment. Factors that may contribute to the decrease in behavioral health services authorizations include the overall decrease in duplicative authorizations entered into Trails as a result of the new functionality (see page 16 in the Implementation of the Core Services Program Section for details), and the county-reported increase in families who are eligible for and accessing Medicaid, and therefore receiving services through that more appropriate funding source.

Beyond the designated mental health services and substance use disorder treatment, other Core Service types incorporate significant mental health components. These include another standard Core Service, Intensive Family Therapy, as well as County Designed services such as Multisystemic Therapy (MST) and Functional Family Therapy (FFT). When other services with a mental health component are considered, 49 percent of all service authorizations address the mental health and substance use disorder treatment needs of children/youth and/or their adult caregivers.

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[15] Aftercare services, a designated Core Service type are not recorded in Trails as discrete service authorizations and are therefore not included in service type analyses.

The table below explores the range of service authorizations that include a mental health service or substance use disorder treatment component.

| Table 9: Behavioral Health Services (Mental Health and Substance Use Disorder Treatment) | | |
|---|---|---|
| **Service Type** | **Core Services Numbers Served** | |
| | **Number** | **Percentage of Total Service Authorizations** |
| Mental Health Services | 5,282 | 15.3% |
| **Other Services with Mental Health Component** | | |
| Intensive Family Therapy | 2,893 | 8.4% |
| Other Family Therapy (FFT and MST) | 620 | 2.0% |
| Individual and Group Therapy/Counseling | 266 | <1% |
| **Total Mental Health** | **9,061** | **26%** |
| Substance Use Disorders | 8,048 | 23.3% |
| **Total Behavioral Health (MH & SUD)** | **17,109** | **49.3%** |

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**County Designed Services**

County Designed services account for 31 percent of all service authorizations, the most of any individual Core Service type.  County Designed play an important role in local flexibility within the Core Services program. Most County Designed services can be categorized into seven program types with a small number falling outside these categories.  The table below shows the number of service authorizations for each of these categories.   A complete list of County Designed programs is included in Appendix C.

| Table 10: County Designed Services | | |
|---|---|---|
| Service Type | Core Services Numbers Served | |
| | Number | Percentage of All Core Service Authorizations |
| Family/Team Decision Making and Family Empowerment | 2,810 | 8% |
| Special Economic Assistance | 2,407 | 7% |
| County Designed Services with Mental Health Component (Family/Individual/Group Therapy) | 833 | 2% |
| Supervised Visitations/Structured Parenting | 1,218 | 4% |
| Family or Foster Care Support Services | 592 | 2% |
| Skill Building (including Parenting and Life Skills) | 261 | 1% |
| County Designed Services with Mental Health Component (Family/Individual/Group Therapy) | 1,677 | 5% |
| All other County Designed | 551 | 2% |
| **Total County Designed** | **10,349** | **31%** |

## County Reports of Service Availability and Access

According to statute, all counties must ensure that nine[16] of the designated Core Service types are available to families. The tenth designated service type, County Designed services, is optional. In some counties, all services are available and capacity is sufficient to meet the needs.  In others, services are available but capacity is not sufficient, or services are available but must be accessed in other counties. In some smaller counties, services are available but not needed during some years, due to low demand.

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[16] The enabling legislation also requires "Aftercare" services be made available but all of the Core Services can be used as aftercare services, so it is not listed as a separate service type.

**Barriers to Accessing Services**

Across Colorado, as across the nation, critical barriers exist to the provision and access of family preservation services. Each year, counties are asked to identify significant barriers to service access for families. This year, all but three counties identified multiple barriers.

Consistent with last year's report, the two most common barriers identified were the distance families must travel to access services and a corresponding lack of transportation. Distance to services was identified as a primary barrier by 17 of 64 counties. The following anecdote provides an illustration of this barrier. A parent from a large, rural county commutes 45 minutes each day to an hourly job in the tourism industry in the county's largest town. Part of the family service plan is to attend family therapy for one hour each week, a service that is only offered in the largest town. The parent must leave work, travel 45 minutes home to pick up their child/youth, drive 45 minutes back, attend the one hour session and then drive the 45 minutes back home. This leads to employment stress related to ongoing requests for leave, significant lost wages associated with time away from work, and significant costs for fuel. This vignette highlights common challenges for families as well as Core Services staff trying to help families maintain motivation and engagement when services are not available near the family's home.

Lack of transportation has been consistently identified as a primary barrier to accessing services, a trend that continues this year with 45 of 64 counties identifying this barrier. The higher cost of fuel exacerbated this challenge this year. One solution to the transportation challenge seems to be expanding in-home services. One county opted to contract with a private mental health therapist to provide services in the home for families without reliable transportation. Another rural county requires out-of-county providers to travel to their community at least once a week in an attempt to limit transportation challenges for families.

Many counties (24 of 64) specifically cited barriers or concerns related to the mental health services and substance use disorder treatment they access on behalf of families. Some of the most common barriers and concerns mentioned include accessing timely, quality services; limited hours of availability; difficulties navigating the Medicaid system; and a limited array of services offered.

Concerns regarding mental health services and substance use disorder treatment are not new. However, new efforts have been initiated to create solutions to some of the major concerns. For example, discussions are now taking place between the Core Services Program and the Department of Health Care Policy and Financing (HCPF) to address ongoing barriers stemming from a lack of clear information, education and support for local Core Services Coordinators about the opportunities and limitations of Colorado's Medicaid program. To begin addressing the need for more information, new conversations are occurring between the Core Services and HCPF at the state level. In addition, representatives from HCPF have committed to participate in quarterly meetings with Core Services Coordinators to educate Coordinators on details of Medicaid and to learn more about the Core Services Program.

> *Distance and transportation again represent the leading barriers to accessing appropriate services.*

Other solutions are being explored and implemented at the local level. A few counties noted specific efforts to improve relationships with their mental health and substance use disorder treatment providers, as well as specific negotiations related to improving accountability and family engagement in

therapy. Others reported contracting with private providers as a way to increase access to the types of services they need for Core Services' families. For example, one county began contracting with a private mental health therapist who agreed to provide in-home services, an option that was not available through the community mental health services provider.

## Addressing Barriers to Access – Regional Solutions

The barriers Colorado families face in accessing services has been mostly consistent over the past several years, yet several innovative solutions to these barriers were highlighted in this year's County Commission Reports. There are several examples of regional collaborations that appear to benefit participating Core Services Programs:

*Counties are joining together to address barriers to access and lack of resources through collaboration.*

- Ten counties in the Northwest and North Central parts of the state meet quarterly in a learning community to discuss business practices, share challenges, and offer solutions.
- In the Denver Metro area, two large counties have created a shared foster family program that has increased available resources and improved efficiencies for both.
- Two rural counties have recently joined efforts in an attempt to increase availability and support for foster families in their region.
- The Southern Ute Indian Tribe collaborates with five neighboring counties to share one Multisystemic Therapy provider where no one entity could afford to maintain that provider on their own.
- Six counties in the San Luis Valley meet regularly to discuss how to best meet the needs of Core Services' families given their limited resources.

Many examples of positive regional efforts were mentioned and likely many more exist that were not revealed in this year's commission reports. Specific quantitative outcomes related to these collaborative efforts are not tracked, but when asked to comment on the impact of collaborative efforts (regional and local), a long list of benefits was cited. Among the most frequently cited benefits were expanded resources, increased ability to attract funding, improved services, resource and cost sharing, and more appropriate use of resources.

## Relationships with the Courts

The annual County Commission Reports include questions regarding the impact of collaborations the Core Services Program is involved with and about factors effecting increases or decreases in the number of out-of-home placements and the lengths of stay in out-of home placements, and how the involvement of Core Services impacted those outcomes. This

*Specialty problem-solving courts were cited as important drivers for reducing out-of-home placement.*

year, more than twice as many counties (25 counties in SFY 2011 and ten in SFY 2010) specifically mentioned their relationship with the courts in response to these questions. Comments could be divided into two categories. The first related to the benefits of specialty problem-solving courts and the second related to conflicts between child welfare programs and the courts.

Specialty problem-solving courts generally include a team of professionals who meet regularly to review and plan cases, regular court appearances for the families or juveniles, and an integrated treatment component. Across Colorado, the number of problem solving courts has risen considerably in recent years. In December of 2007, there were 29 problem solving courts in Colorado and currently there are a total of 65 courts operating or planned. This is an increase of 53 percent.

Both juvenile and family drug treatment courts were identified in the County Commission Reports as a factor that drove decreases in the number of and length of stay in out-of-home placements. One county commented on the cost avoidance realized through their family drug treatment court.

> *"Family DrugTreatment Court has been implemented for three years now. During that time, the program has saved $353,006.00 in out-of-home placement costs. That only includes the potential costs for the duration of the program; it does not include the savings from potential subsidized adoptions." (County Commission Report)*

Conversely, other counties cited poor relationships with the courts as driving increases in the frequency and length of stay in out-of-home placements. Some counties believe judges and probation officers feel child welfare placements are appropriate sanctions for youth who are not meeting demands of probation. Other counties mentioned challenges in meeting their timelines for reunification due to repeated and seemingly unnecessary delays and continuances granted by the judge.

A common training component of many successful problem-solving courts involves cross-system education that includes courts, child welfare staff, and treatment providers all learning more about the mandates, timelines and limitations associated with each system. This type of education might benefit communities regardless of the presence of a problem-solving court.

## Efforts to Increase Prevention and Early Intervention Services

There appears to be a convergence of efforts to reduce out-of-home placements by providing services to families earlier. County Commission reports include examples of prevention and early intervention efforts. A statewide pilot project initiated this past year includes five (5) counties who are implementing a model known as Differential Response which focuses on early intervention and changing the way families are engaged in services. In addition, new legislation (House Bill 11-1196) was passed that increases flexibility in funding services for families that may include the opportunity to provide services focused on preventing continued involvement with the child welfare system.

Fifteen (15) counties specifically mentioned preventative services and/or early intervention with families as factors in decreasing out-of-home placements. One rural county, for example, recently began offering parenting classes and other preventative services, including crisis management for new parents who, as children/youth, received child welfare services. These parents are contacted and offered these classes prior to any known crises in the family. Based on experience, this county believes these early intervention efforts will help prevent these young families from following in the footsteps of their parents who ended up heavily involved with the child welfare system. Other counties mentioned efforts to contact families and offer voluntary services in cases where the level of risk doesn't constitute a formal open child welfare case but is high enough to warrant early intervention services.

> *New, early intervention approaches represent cutting-edge efforts to support children and youth safely at home.*

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This prevention/early intervention theme parallels the broader, statewide effort to implement Differential Response (DR). Five (5) counties across the state joined in this effort, which encourages and allows case workers to engage families on a voluntary basis early in the child welfare process. The intent is to reduce out-of-home placements by providing needed services sooner and to improve family engagement by changing the way families are initially approached by case workers. Experience from this statewide effort will likely help guide the Core Services Program as future modifications are considered.

During the most recent legislative session, the Colorado General Assembly passed House Bill 11-1196, titled Increase Flexibility in Funding Services for Families, which is due to be enacted in September, 2011. This bill redefines an "at-risk family" to include those who risk continued involvement with the child welfare system, expands the use of Family Preservation Services to families that are "at risk of being involved in the child welfare system, allows counties to provide families with access to alternative services to prevent continued involvement with the child welfare system and provides incentives for preventative family preservation services. Rules and specific implementation guidelines are currently being developed and it is not yet known what changes, if any, will be made to the Core Services Program. The impact of this legislation will be monitored and included in next year's report.

# Program Costs and Effectiveness

The primary purpose of the Core Services Program is to protect the well-being of Colorado's children/youth by supporting stable families and prevent out-of-home placement for children/youth.

To achieve this purpose, the Core Services Program provides direct services to children/youth, their parents and caregivers to:

- Safely maintain children/youth at home,
- Support a successful transition back into the home after removal (reunification),
- Stabilize and maintain out-of-home placements, including foster and adoptive homes, and
- Support transitions to and maintenance of out-of-home placements in the least restrictive setting.

In addition to the enhanced Trails functionality that allows for more accurate data entry around family members receiving services, the Core Coordinators, program staff, and Trails team have worked together to more consistently link outcome indicators to services. With this addition, each service authorization is required to have an associated case goal, outcome of the service (e.g. successful/unsuccessful), and the child/youth's placement at the time of discharge. This represents a significant improvement in the way service authorizations are documented in Trails. This change, combined with the ability to enter multiple people receiving services within a single authorization, will significantly enhance the outcome data available to the Core Services Program.

This year has been a transition year for the Core Services Program. Coordinators, caseworkers and staff are learning the new data entry system and additional business rule clarification around using the new functions will most likely be required. This year's report should be considered a preliminary exploration of the new functionality in Trails. It

> *This year's report represents a preliminary exploration of the enhanced data available through Trails.*

is the intent of this report to inform the current discussion around how to use these new functions by exploring the potential to provide actionable program information. Because we know that there is still a great deal of inconsistency in the use of Trails, and as this is the first year that this data has been analyzed, it is important to interpret the following findings with careful consideration.

Similarly, in interpreting the data and results presented in this report, it is useful to understand that the available data and analytical methods limit our ability to make definitive determinations of causality. That is, while the strong positive and consistent outcomes reported here support statements regarding the effectiveness of the Core Services Program, we are not able to be sure of the extent to which these positive outcomes are due to Program services without conducting a large-scale experimental design with greater controls on sampling and data tracking. Of course, this approach is not feasible and the breadth of data, along with consistency across counties and across years, support positive statements regarding the Core Services Program.

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## Goals of the Core Services Program

Ultimately, the goal of the Core Services Program is to safely maintain children/youth in the home. In cases where safety concerns prompt a need to remove a child/youth from the home, services aimed at returning that child/youth back home in a safe and timely manner. In cases where safety requires the child/youth to remain out of the home, services focus on stabilizing and maintaining least restrictive out-of-home placements (including adoptive and foster homes). Each time a service is entered in Trails, a case goal must be indicated as a required field for all new authorizations. For SFY 2011, there were 61,133 individual service authorization records, meaning there were 61,133 services delivered to unique individuals. Under the new Trails system, one service can be delivered to multiple individuals. For example, Intensive Family Therapy is one service authorization, but when two parents and two children/youth participate in therapy, then four individuals are served, meaning that authorization is counted four times. Every individual indicated as receiving a service is considered "participating as a child (PAC)," and included in the family services plan. Tables 11 and 12 reflect the resulting duplicated count.

In more than half (53%) of individual service authorizations, the case goal was for the child/youth to remain home. In the majority of other cases, the goal was to return home following a removal (37%). The following table shows the case goal for each individual service authorization.

| Table 11: Case Goal: All Individual Service Authorizations | | |
|---|---|---|
| **Case Goal** | **Duplicated Count of Services Delivered to Individuals** | **Percent** |
| Remain Home | 32,557 | 53.3% |
| Return Home | 22,877 | 37.4% |
| Other | 2,650 | 6.0% |
| Permanent Placement – Relative | 1,844 | 3.0% |
| Missing Data | 1,205 | 2.0% |
| **Total Individual Authorizations** | **61,133** | **100%** |

## Service Outcomes

During SFY 2011, 44,740 service authorizations were closed in Trails, and 16,448 unique individuals received services. Outcome at service closure is a new measure being recorded for all service authorizations under the new Trails functionality. Caseworkers determine the degree to which the case was successfully closed and core goals achieved. While this outcome is somewhat subjective in nature, it marks a significant improvement in the ability to better understand the effects of the Core Services Program, as well as promote consistent practice.

While the new outcome measure is a required field for all services authorizations, the requirement only applies to those service authorizations beginning this fiscal year. If a service authorization was opened last year but closed this year, the outcome fields were available to the user but not required, leading to the potential for missing data. Despite this, however, data is only missing for 15 percent of the closed authorizations. The outcome for each service is shown below. Beginning May 31, 2011 (end of Core Services contract year), all service authorizations were closed in Trails and then reopened as a new service authorization so that all enhanced data fields were mandatory beginning June 1, 2011.

| Table 12: Outcomes at Service Closure | | |
|---|---|---|
| **Service Outcome** | **Duplicated Count of Closures** | **Percent** |
| Successful | 16,862 | 52.4% |
| Service Complete (not all goals met) | 6,169 | 19.2% |
| Partially Successful | 3,716 | 11.5% |
| Not Engaged | 3,120 | 9.7% |
| No Treatment Progress | 2,247 | 7.0% |
| Service Not Completed | 91 | <1% |

Table 12, above, shows that nearly two-thirds of the service authorizations were closed with a "successful" (52%) or "partially successful" outcome designation. It is important to note that each individual can have multiple service authorizations, so this is not equivalent to the percent of individuals who reached their service goal.

The table below shows the proportion of cases closed with either a successful or partially successful designation by service type.

| Table 13: Services Closed With Successful Or Partially Successful Outcome, by Service Type | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Type of Service** | **Total Services Closed** | **Partially Successful** | **Successful** | **Combined** |
| Sexual Abuse Treatment | 640 | 13.8% | 69.7% | **83.5%** |
| Home Based Services | 3,619 | 17.6% | 64.0% | **81.6%** |
| Intensive Family Therapy | 2,624 | 21.8% | 59.5% | **81.3%** |
| Life Skills | 2,671 | 16.8% | 57.7% | **74.5%** |
| Mental Health Services | 3,130 | 18.2% | 54.9% | **73.1%** |
| Substance Use Disorder Treatment | 4,154 | 12.5% | 51.9% | **64.4%** |
| Day Treatment | 299 | 25.4% | 36.1% | **61.5%** |
| County Designed Services | 15,068 | 5.3% | 46.5% | **51.8%** |

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Sexual abuse treatment services had the highest proportion of cases closed with a "successful" designation (84%), followed by Home Based Services (82%) and Intensive Family Therapy (81%).

The table below lists the proportion of services closed with either a "partially successful" or "successful" designation, by county. These numbers are based on individual service outcomes and may not reflect the overall success of the case.

| Table 14: Services Closed With Successful Or Partially Successful Outcome, by County | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| County | Total Services Closed | Partially Successful | Successful | Combined |
| Adams | 1,831 | 19.0% | 41.6% | **60.6%** |
| Alamosa | 202 | 14.9% | 42.6% | **57.5%** |
| Arapahoe | 2,589 | 16.4% | 56.1% | **72.5%** |
| Archuleta | 45 | 20.0% | 66.7% | **86.7%** |
| Bent | 74 | 2.7% | 32.4% | **35.1%** |
| Boulder | 395 | 11.1% | 40.0% | **51.1%** |
| Broomfield | 93 | 22.6% | 52.7% | **75.3%** |
| Chaffee | 35 | 0.0% | 31.4% | **31.4%** |
| Cheyenne | 2 | 0.0% | 50.0% | **50.0%** |
| Clear Creek | 14 | 21.4% | 14.3% | **35.7%** |
| Conejos | 96 | 29.2% | 26.0% | **55.2%** |
| Costilla | 8 | 0.0% | 0.0% | **0.0%** |
| Crowley | 11 | 0.0% | 45.5% | **45.5%** |
| Custer | 1 | 0.0% | 100.0% | **100.0%** |
| Delta | 91 | 18.7% | 69.2% | **87.9%** |
| Denver | 4,025 | 12.2% | 30.6% | **42.8%** |
| Dolores | 7 | 14.3% | 28.6% | **42.9%** |
| Douglas | 102 | 11.8% | 56.9% | **68.7%** |
| Eagle | 184 | 15.8% | 77.7% | **93.5%** |
| El Paso | 4,205 | 9.2% | 55.5% | **64.7%** |
| Elbert | 52 | 17.3% | 76.9% | **94.2%** |
| Fremont | 1,845 | 7.9% | 29.0% | **36.9%** |
| Garfield | 267 | 31.1% | 19.1% | **50.2%** |

**Program Costs and Effectiveness**

| County | Total Services Closed | Partially Successful | Successful | Combined |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Table 14: Services Closed With Successful Or Partially Successful Outcome, by County** | | | | |
| Gilpin | 38 | 18.4% | 78.9% | **97.3%** |
| Grand | 86 | 3.5% | 73.3% | **76.8%** |
| Gunnison | 39 | 15.4% | 82.1% | **97.5%** |
| Huerfano | 5 | 20.0% | 60.0% | **80.0%** |
| Jackson | 4 | 0.0% | 100.0% | **100.0%** |
| Jefferson | 2,894 | 15.7% | 47.0% | **62.7%** |
| Kit Carson | 45 | 0.0% | 40.0% | **40.0%** |
| La Plata | 314 | 18.5% | 34.4% | **52.9%** |
| Lake | 103 | 19.4% | 67.0% | **86.4%** |
| Larimer | 6,498 | 5.5% | 83.2% | **88.7%** |
| Las Animas | 32 | 12.5% | 12.5% | **25.0%** |
| Lincoln | 39 | 17.9% | 48.7% | **66.6%** |
| Logan | 100 | 29.0% | 62.0% | **91.0%** |
| Mesa | 483 | 16.8% | 55.5% | **72.3%** |
| Moffat | 366 | 24.9% | 19.4% | **44.3%** |
| Montezuma | 80 | 2.5% | 71.3% | **73.8%** |
| Montrose | 72 | 22.2% | 33.3% | **55.5%** |
| Morgan | 416 | 24.8% | 50.5% | **75.3%** |
| Otero | 48 | 37.5% | 37.5% | **75.0%** |
| Ouray | 21 | 76.2% | 9.5% | **85.7%** |
| Park | 108 | 27.8% | 53.7% | **81.5%** |
| Phillips | 11 | 9.1% | 36.4% | **45.5%** |
| Pitkin | 63 | 0.0% | 81.0% | **81.0%** |
| Prowers | 148 | 6.8% | 70.9% | **77.7%** |
| Pueblo | 2,676 | 8.4% | 43.1% | **51.5%** |
| Rio Blanco | 120 | 15.8% | 55.8% | **71.6%** |
| Rio Grande | 33 | 12.1% | 39.4% | **51.5%** |
| Routt | 22 | 0.0% | 36.4% | **36.4%** |

| Table 14: Services Closed With Successful Or Partially Successful Outcome, by County | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **County** | **Total Services Closed** | **Partially Successful** | **Successful** | **Combined** |
| Saguache | 21 | 61.9% | 19.0% | **80.9%** |
| Sedgwick | 7 | 0.0% | 57.1% | **57.1%** |
| Summit | 26 | 19.2% | 69.2% | **88.4%** |
| Teller | 91 | 9.9% | 47.3% | **57.2%** |
| Washington | 92 | 3.3% | 2.2% | **5.5%** |
| Weld | 820 | 4.4% | 50.1% | **54.5%** |
| Yuma | 110 | 23.6% | 24.5% | **48.1%** |
| **Total** | **32,205** | **11.5%** | **52.4%** | **63.9%** |

## Maintaining Children/Youth in their Home or Least Restrictive Setting

Children/youth receiving services made up 20,592 discharges, representing 9,063 unique children/youth. The Core Services Program aims to keep these children/youth and their families together or, in cases where children/youth must be removed due to safety concerns, to return them home as quickly as possible or place them in the least restrictive setting as possible. The following table presents the children/youth's placement at the time their Core Services ended.

| Table 15: Placement at End of Core Services | | |
|---|---|---|
| **Placement** | **Number of Children/youth** | **Percent** |
| Parents (Home) | 13,544 | 65.8% |
| Relative | 3,110 | 15.1% |
| Foster Care | 1,452 | 7.1% |
| Group Home | 1,030 | 5.0% |
| Residential Placement (non-DYC) | 496 | 2.4% |
| Adoption | 421 | 2.0% |
| Runaway | 191 | .9% |
| DYC (Detention or Commitment) | 158 | .8% |
| Emancipated | 135 | .7% |
| Hospitalization | 43 | .2% |
| Independent Living Arrangement | 9 | .0% |
| Deceased | 3 | .0% |
| **Total** | **20,592** | **100%** |

As shown in Table 15, 81 percent of youth were with a family member at the time their Core Service ended (66 percent with their parents and 15 percent with another relative). For youth whose original Core Services goal was to remain home, nearly all were maintained in the home, as shown in the table below.

*81% remained or were placed with a family member at the end of Core Services.*

| Table 16: Children/Youth with the Goal to Remain Home -- Placement at End of Core Services | | |
|---|---|---|
| **Placement** | **Number of Children/youth** | **Percent** |
| Parents (Home) | 11,374 | 89.2% |
| Relative | 718 | 5.6% |
| Other Placement | 802 | 6.2% |
| **Total** | **12,894** | **100%** |

For children/youth whose original Core Service goal was to remain in the home, 89 percent of them were maintained in their homes.

*89% of children/youth whose goal was to remain home were maintained at home.*

For each type of service, the following table shows the proportion of children/youth, regardless of core service goal, who were placed in their homes at the time the service was closed.

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| Table 17: Children Placed at Home at End of Core Service | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Service Type | All Services Closed (Number of Children) | Number of Children Placed at Home at time Service Closed | Percent of Children at Home at Time Service Closed |
| County Designed Services | 10,481 | 7,504 | 71.6% |
| Home Based Services | 2,762 | 1,820 | 65.9% |
| Sexual Abuse Treatment | 705 | 458 | 65.0% |
| Intensive Family Therapy | 1,822 | 1,164 | 63.9% |
| Substance Use Disorder Treatment | 861 | 519 | 60.3% |
| Mental Health Services | 1,933 | 1,086 | 56.2% |
| Day Treatment | 275 | 142 | 51.6% |
| Life Skills | 1,753 | 848 | 48.4% |
| **Total** | **20,592** | **13,550** | **65.8%** |

It is important to use caution when comparing outcomes (either "successful" closures or placement when services end) across the different service types. It may not be accurate, for example, to simply associate a higher percentage of children/youth at home at the time of service closure with effectiveness. There are many complex, interrelated factors related to the ultimate disposition of services, and children/youth and their families enter services with a wide range of risk and protective factors before a case plan is even started. It is difficult to interpret whether some types of services are associated with greater risk for out-of-home placement than others, leading to lower rates of children/youth being able to remain in or return to the home.

For each county, the following table shows the proportion of children and youth, regardless of core service goal, who were placed in their homes at the time each service authorization was closed.

| Table 18: By County Children Placed at Home at End of Core Service | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| County | All Services Closed (Number of Children) | Number of Children Placed at Home at Time Service Closed | Percent of Children at Home at Time Service Closed |
| Adams | 1,707 | 922 | 54.0% |
| Alamosa | 140 | 83 | 59.3% |
| Arapahoe | 1,974 | 1,230 | 62.3% |
| Archuleta | 35 | 26 | 74.3% |
| Bent | 40 | 22 | 55.0% |
| Boulder | 490 | 349 | 71.2% |
| Broomfield | 48 | 30 | 62.5% |
| Chaffee | 19 | 16 | 84.2% |
| Cheyenne | 2 | 1 | 50.0% |
| Clear Creek | 14 | 13 | 92.9% |
| Conejos | 54 | 39 | 72.2% |
| Costilla | 8 | 2 | 25.0% |
| Crowley | 10 | 7 | 70.0% |
| Custer | 1 | 0 | 0.0% |
| Delta | 46 | 32 | 69.6% |
| Denver | 2,594 | 1,707 | 65.8% |
| Dolores | 6 | 3 | 50.0% |
| Douglas | 71 | 42 | 59.2% |
| Eagle | 108 | 99 | 91.7% |
| El Paso | 2,283 | 1,751 | 76.7% |
| Elbert | 32 | 15 | 46.9% |
| Fremont | 1,214 | 872 | 71.8% |
| Garfield | 193 | 153 | 79.3% |
| Gilpin | 44 | 37 | 84.1% |
| Grand | 53 | 49 | 92.5% |
| Gunnison | 18 | 18 | 100.0% |
| Huerfano | 3 | 2 | 66.7% |
| Jackson | 3 | 3 | 100.0% |
| Jefferson | 1,521 | 809 | 53.2% |
| Kit Carson | 23 | 23 | 100.0% |
| La Plata | 236 | 183 | 77.5% |
| Lake | 59 | 49 | 83.1% |

| Table 18: By County<br>Children Placed at Home at End of Core Service | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| **County** | **All Services Closed (Number of Children)** | **Number of Children Placed at Home at Time Service Closed** | **Percent of Children at Home at Time Service Closed** |
| Larimer | 3,798 | 2,678 | 70.5% |
| Las Animas | 14 | 7 | 50.0% |
| Lincoln | 24 | 16 | 66.7% |
| Logan | 64 | 35 | 54.7% |
| Mesa | 394 | 214 | 54.3% |
| Moffat | 287 | 63 | 22.0% |
| Montezuma | 44 | 33 | 75.0% |
| Montrose | 55 | 32 | 58.2% |
| Morgan | 293 | 224 | 76.5% |
| Otero | 29 | 18 | 62.1% |
| Ouray | 14 | 14 | 100.0% |
| Park | 58 | 54 | 93.1% |
| Phillips | 6 | 3 | 50.0% |
| Pitkin | 36 | 35 | 97.2% |
| Prowers | 98 | 93 | 94.9% |
| Pueblo | 1,419 | 902 | 63.6% |
| Rio Blanco | 49 | 45 | 91.8% |
| Rio Grande | 21 | 9 | 42.9% |
| Routt | 15 | 15 | 100.0% |
| Saguache | 17 | 7 | 41.2% |
| Sedgwick | 6 | 6 | 100.0% |
| Summit | 15 | 14 | 93.3% |
| Teller | 43 | 18 | 41.9% |
| Washington | 52 | 39 | 75.0% |
| Weld | 614 | 321 | 52.3% |
| Yuma | 78 | 62 | 79.5% |
| **Total** | **20,592** | **13,550** | **65.8%** |

## Child/Youth Safety

An important goal of the Core Services Program is to not only keep families together, but to do so while protecting the child/youth. As can be seen in the table below, while close to half of all of the children/youth served had a substantiated report of child abuse or neglect in the 12 months prior to engagement with Core Services, only 3.2 percent had a substantiated report in the 12 months directly following Core Services.

| Table 19: SFY 2010 Substantiated Child Abuse Before, During, and After Last Core Service Authorization | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| County Name | Number of Children (Unduplicated) | Percent with Substantiated Abuse Case 12 months Before Core Services | Percent with Substantiated Abuse Case During Core Services | Percent with Substantiated Abuse Case 12 months After Core Services |
| **Statewide** | **12,978** | **41.2%** | **3.5%** | **3.2%** |
| Adams | 871 | 63.4% | 3.9% | 3.5% |
| Alamosa | 141 | 48.4% | 5.6% | 4.8% |
| Arapahoe | 1,226 | 45.2% | 3.0% | 2.5% |
| Archuleta | 64 | 17.1% | 0.0% | 2.9% |
| Baca | 1 | 0.0% | 0.0% | 0.0% |
| Bent | 17 | 33.3% | 5.6% | 0.0% |
| Boulder | 468 | 35.3% | 6.8% | 4.1% |
| Broomfield | 66 | 31.7% | 9.5% | 3.2% |
| Chaffee | 12 | 50.0% | 0.0% | 0.0% |
| Cheyenne | 1 | 0.0% | 0.0% | 0.0% |
| Clear Creek | 27 | 60.0% | 4.0% | 4.0% |
| Conejos | 45 | 31.6% | 2.6% | 7.9% |
| Costilla | 6 | 16.7% | 0.0% | 0.0% |
| Crowley | 17 | 44.4% | 5.6% | 5.6% |
| Custer | 3 | 0.0% | 0.0% | 0.0% |
| Delta | 89 | 27.1% | 1.4% | 1.4% |
| Denver | 1,972 | 37.9% | 2.2% | 3.6% |
| Dolores | 6 | 0.0% | 0.0% | 0.0% |
| Douglas | 80 | 42.1% | 0.0% | 10.5% |
| Eagle | 20 | 50.0% | 11.1% | 5.6% |
| Elbert | 35 | 38.5% | 1.7% | 2.7% |
| El Paso | 1,501 | 40.0% | 8.6% | 2.9% |
| Fremont | 240 | 20.5% | 1.0% | 2.4% |

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| County Name | Number of Children (Unduplicated) | Percent with Substantiated Abuse Case 12 months Before Core Services | Percent with Substantiated Abuse Case During Core Services | Percent with Substantiated Abuse Case 12 months After Core Services |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Garfield | 110 | 41.8% | 2.0% | 8.2% |
| Gilpin | 22 | 35.0% | 5.0% | 5.0% |
| Grand | 42 | 35.1% | 0.0% | 0.0% |
| Gunnison | 21 | 57.1% | 0.0% | 4.8% |
| Hinsdale | 4 | 75.0% | 0.0% | 0.0% |
| Huerfano | 19 | 21.1% | 0.0% | 0.0% |
| Jackson | 2 | 0.0% | 0.0% | 0.0% |
| Jefferson | 1,246 | 48.6% | 9.3% | 4.6% |
| Kit Carson | 18 | 18.8% | 12.5% | 0.0% |
| Lake | 45 | 44.4% | 13.5% | 12.0% |
| La Plata | 173 | 51.4% | 2.9% | 2.9% |
| Larimer | 1,789 | 26.7% | 1.8% | 2.0% |
| Las Animas | 49 | 22.2% | 0.0% | 6.7% |
| Lincoln | 34 | 51.6% | 0.0% | 6.5% |
| Logan | 9 | 35.5% | 1.3% | 7.9% |
| Mesa | 341 | 52.0% | 1.1% | 4.0% |
| Moffat | 119 | 22.0% | 3.3% | 5.5% |
| Montezuma | 68 | 25.0% | 3.3% | 8.3% |
| Montrose | 82 | 29.7% | 0.0% | 2.7% |
| Morgan | 134 | 71.0% | 3.8% | 2.3% |
| Otero | 62 | 36.7% | 5.0% | 0.0% |
| Ouray/San Miguel | 23 | 5.6% | 5.6% | 0.0% |
| Park | 26 | 46.2% | 11.5% | 3.8% |
| Phillips | 11 | 40.0% | 10.0% | 10.0% |
| Pitkin | 7 | 33.3% | 0.0% | 0.0% |
| Prowers | 53 | 42.9% | 6.1% | 0.0% |
| Pueblo | 585 | 51.0% | 2.0% | 0.2% |
| Rio Blanco | 30 | 46.2% | 7.7% | 7.7% |
| Rio Grande/Mineral | 30 | 28.0% | 4.0% | 0.0% |
| Routt | 21 | 33.3% | 11.1% | 0.0% |
| Saguache | 19 | 47.1% | 11.8% | 0.0% |
| San Juan | 3 | 100.0% | 0.0% | 0.0% |

**Table 19: SFY 2010 Substantiated Child Abuse Before, During, and After Last Core Service Authorization**

**Program Costs and Effectiveness**

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| County Name | Number of Children (Unduplicated) | Percent with Substantiated Abuse Case 12 months Before Core Services | Percent with Substantiated Abuse Case During Core Services | Percent with Substantiated Abuse Case 12 months After Core Services |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Sedgwick | 4 | 0.0% | 0.0% | 0.0% |
| Summit | 25 | 58.3% | 4.2% | 4.2% |
| Teller | 105 | 58.1% | 3.8% | 2.9% |
| Washington | 28 | 24.0% | 0.0% | 4.0% |
| Weld | 605 | 52.2% | 2.2% | 0.9% |
| Yuma | 36 | 60.7% | 7.1% | 3.6% |

Table 19: SFY 2010 Substantiated Child Abuse Before, During, and After Last Core Service Authorization

## Case Studies: Emerging Themes regarding Core Outcomes

This year, 18 families' experiences with Core Services were examined in a case study project. The case study approach is described in the Evaluation Methods section and results will be presented in a separate companion report. Several themes have emerged regarding factors underlying case outcomes. The predominant theme was the issue of engaging parents in services. The adult's willingness to participate in services is an important factor influencing a successful case outcome. Not surprisingly, this seems to be particularly important when parental substance use disorder and mental health issues were the primary risk factors for children/youth to be placed out of the home. In the cases studied, parents who received services in the home, and were included in the service planning process were generally more engaged in services than those who attended outpatient mental health services and were not included in the planning process.

Another emerging theme observed in the case studies is the importance of the relationships between caseworkers and service providers. In successful cases, the primary caseworker described a very collaborative, interactive relationship with service providers, including the ease of referral and the amount of communication regarding family progress in treatment objectives. In a few of the cases, where service providers were slow to respond to referrals, had waiting lists, or failed to adequately communicate with the caseworker, adults were less likely to initially engage in services and have successful outcomes.

Proximity appears to also play a role in fostering these positive relationships. In cases where providers and caseworkers described positive relationships, these relationships were most often facilitated by close proximity, with the services being provided by county staff in nearby offices, or with contracted providers housed in the same building.

Case studies provide a new opportunity to explore the impact of Core Services and to learn directly from family experiences. If resources allow, additional case studies will be conducted and explored in next year's report.

## Costs of the Core Services Program

As noted earlier, incomplete service data for services provided under fixed rate contracts and those provided directly by the county makes some analyses difficult to conduct. Particularly, calculating actual costs for these services is not possible. Rather than trying to estimate costs for these services, this report outlines service costs for those services provided under a fee-for-service contract only. As data collection becomes more consistent throughout the state, it is anticipated future reports will include costs for all services.

Overall, the average actual fee-for-service cost was $560 annually per person[17] benefitting from services.[18] However, there was a significant range across individuals, with some utilizing as much as $7,000 in services. It is important to note that these figures only include services provided under fee-for-service contracts. Actual costs per individual served are higher than what is reflected here because fixed rate contracts and county provided services are not included. The table below shows average costs per individual benefitting from service, by type of service.

| Table 20: Service Type | Annual Average Cost per Person |
|---|---|
| Home Based Services | $1,276 |
| Sexual Abuse Treatment | $697 |
| County Designed Services | $513 |
| Mental Health Services | $402 |
| Day Treatment | $382 |
| Substance Use Disorder Treatment | $296 |
| Intensive Family Therapy | $190 |
| Life Skills | $100 |

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[17] Average individual costs reflect an aggregation of actual fee for service costs recorded in Trails, by individual benefitting from services. These totals are then averaged by adding up the individual costs and dividing by the number of individuals served.

[18] Costs were calculated for SFY2011.

# Looking Ahead

# Looking Ahead – Factors Influencing the Future of the Core Services Program

## Colorado's Practice Model

Colorado's Practice Model began working with 14 counties[19] and the Southern Ute Indian Tribe during SFY 2011.  The purpose of this effort, guided by the Division of Child Welfare Services, is to promote child/youth safety and well being by ensuring that consistent, high quality child welfare services are available across the state. Part of this effort includes working closely with the involved counties to examine their current practices, identify practices that can be improved, and highlight exemplary models that can benefit other counties as well.  As the process moves forward, each of the initial 14 counties and one tribe will be paired with other counties to provide guidance as new counties begin to examine their current practices.  The project aims to work individually with each county over the next four years.

Colorado's Practice Model has already carefully examined the child welfare practice process, divided it into discrete elements, and defined key components for success in each.  Promising practices from the initial 14 counties and one tribe have also been identified and described in detail with the expectation that other counties can duplicate the practice.  With Core Services being a service-focused program, the benefits of Colorado's Practice Model could be significant.  As each county learns from others how to examine their practices and find promising practices that have worked in similar counties, the level of quality and consistency in the services being provided to children, youth and families should increase.

## Differential Response

Another child welfare practice effort that could benefit Core Services in the near future is the Differential Response Model.  Currently five (5) counties[20] are participating in this effort, which includes a significant and formal research component. Under the Differential Response Model, families can be assigned to one of two tracks - investigation response (IR) or family assessment response (FAR).  Services are offered to FAR families on a voluntary basis, meaning they can accept or refuse the offered services without consequence, unless child/youth safety is a concern; as long as the child/youth remains safe, the case worker can continue to provide services on a voluntary basis for a limited period of time. Results from this project could be helpful in informing counties as they explore options for implementing practice changes allowed by the increased flexibility in funding (described below) and the resulting opportunity to provide services to families earlier in the child welfare process.  Initial reactions from case workers and families indicate improved family satisfaction and engagement in services for families in the FAR track.

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[19] The 14 Colorado's Practice Model counties include Adams, Boulder, Chaffee, Denver, Elbert, El Paso, La Plata (including the Southern Ute Indian Tribe), Lincoln, Mesa, Morgan, Otero, Pueblo, Routt and San Juan.
[20] The five Differential Response counties include Arapahoe, Fremont, Garfield, Jefferson and Larimer.

## Increased Flexibility in Funding Services for Families

During the most recent legislative session, the Colorado General Assembly passed House Bill 11-1196, titled Increase Flexibility in Funding Services for Families, which is due to be enacted in September, 2011. This bill redefines an "at-risk family" to include those who risk continued involvement with the child welfare system, expands the use of Family Preservation Services to families that are "at risk of being involved in the child welfare system, allows counties to provide families with access to alternative services to prevent continued involvement with the child welfare system and provides incentives for preventative family preservation services. Rules and specific implementation guidelines are currently being developed and it is not yet known what changes, if any, will be made to the Core Services Program. The impact of this legislation will be monitored and reported in next year's report.

## Core Services and Medicaid

Many of the services currently provided through Core Services funding are similar to outpatient health services that can be covered under Medicaid and other types of insurance for children/youth and families that have such coverage. There has been an increased effort at the state level to improve the partnership between Core Services and HCPF ( the state Medicaid agency) in order to support optimal utilization of Medicaid funding. Core Services funding comes entirely from the state general fund and is considered a "payer of last resort," meaning all other funding sources (e.g. private insurance, Medicaid) should be exhausted before using Core Services funding. Medicaid funding leverages federal dollars – approximately half of every state dollar spent can be drawn down as a federal match for most Medicaid services.[21] The Core Services program and the State of Colorado would likely benefit financially from a closer look at local and state practices around both policy and actual decision making related to maximizing use of Medicaid services and other insurance prior to accessing Core Services funding. Mental health and substance use disorder treatment services are among the service types most likely to qualify for Medicaid coverage, and specific efforts to enhance Medicaid utilization for these services could be promising. This is significant given that substance use disorder treatment is consistently one of the most frequently accessed types of Core Services.

State representatives from Core Services and HCPF are currently meeting to discuss program details, funding and overlap of services. A second step has also been accomplished through the participation of a representative from HCPF in the quarterly Core Services Coordinator's meetings for purposes of educating local Coordinators about the details of Medicaid benefits and how to access appropriate services.

These efforts face challenges. Coordinators have expressed concerns with agency-level Medicaid providers of substance use disorder services and Behavioral Health Organizations (BHOs)[22] that manage Medicaid mental health benefits, including limited availability and capacity of services, inconsistent

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[21] Under the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA), Colorado's 50% federal Medicaid match was increased to over 60%. However, with the expiration of ARRA funding in SFY 2011, the match rate returns to 50%. In addition, some specific types of Medicaid services can qualify for enhanced match, including services under specific provisions of the Patient Protection and Accountable Care Act (PPACA).

[22] Behavioral Healthcare Organizations (BHO) are the state designated managed care organizations for Medicaid mental health services.

quality of services and lack of providers among which to choose. In addition, in TriWest's experience in other states where efforts to better align Medicaid and child welfare services funding have been undertaken, there are also often barriers on the part of child welfare workers in accessing Medicaid benefits, as there is generally more hassle and time involved in accessing externally-funded medical services than services funded directly by the child welfare agency. There is additional work to be done in the coming months to address local Coordinators' concerns and needs for additional information, but efforts are underway and steady progress is expected over the coming months and years. Given the continuing fiscal challenges facing the state and all counties, efforts to better understand and make use of medical services funded by Medicaid and other sources will be critical. The importance of the timing of these efforts is underscored by the timing of health care reform as described below.

## Health Care Reform and Core Services

As with many other programs in Colorado, the Core Services Program anticipates significant impacts from health care reform under the future provisions of the 2009 Colorado Health Care Affordability Act (CHCAA) and the 2010 federal Patient Protection and Accountable Care Act (PPACA). Estimates provided by the Governor's Office are that 800,000 people in Colorado are currently uninsured and that the combined effects of state and federal health care reform will lead to about 500,000 of those individuals becoming insured, many of them through Medicaid and subsidized care through health insurance exchanges. This highlights the need for the Core Services Program to collaborate with HCPF with regard to Medicaid and to work more closely with local Medicaid providers and managed care organizations.

The second impact is the anticipated increase in demand for services and resulting need for increased capacity. Counties report current challenges with Medicaid that include access, eligibility, service capacity, and limited numbers of Medicaid providers. Each of these challenges will be compounded by the systemic changes associated with health care reform. The effort to work more closely with HCPF (described above) will help in preparing the Core Services Program for the changes that will come with health care reform. More details related to health care reform implementation in Colorado will emerge over the coming months and will be monitored for anticipated effects on the Core Services Program.

# Observations and Recommendations

This final section presents a brief discussion of some observations and recommendations emerging from this report.

## Observations

**The Core Services Program appears to be Functioning as Intended** – Data analyzed and presented in this report supports the Core Services Program model as an effective approach to strengthening Colorado families and keeping children and youth with their families and in their communities, while also maintaining child/youth safety. Based on the range of information available to this evaluation, the Core Services Program appears to be functioning as intended, serving the children/youth and families targeted by the authorizing legislation and providing appropriate services and support.

> *Available data continue to support the Core Services family preservation approach to safely maintaining children and youth in the home with services. This is better for families and less costly than out-of-home placement.*

**Core Services Cost Less** - Overall costs per day for out-of-home placements are significantly higher than costs per day for children/youth being served in Core Services. Safely maintaining children/youth in their homes not only costs the state less than an out-of-home placement, but most often this course of action also represents what is in the best interest of the child/youth and the family.

**Core Service Types Appear to Demonstrate Positive Outcomes** – While drawing conclusions regarding the effectiveness of Core Services requires careful consideration due to the limitations of the data and analytical methods available to this report, available data are very encouraging and support the Core Services Program as an important component of Colorado's child welfare system. Moreover, the approaches and services of the Core Services Program are in keeping with the current research base underscoring the effectiveness of family-driven, home based services in maintaining child/youth safety and permanency.

**Integration of Risk and Needs Assessment with Case Planning** - The Core Services Program serves children/youth who have complex and often multiple risk factors for out-of-home placement. Currently, the North Carolina Family Assessment Scale (NCFAS) is used at case opening, at reunification, and at closure of child welfare cases in Colorado. Effective tools, like the North Carolina Family Assessment Scale (NCFAS) or Child and Adolescent Strengths and Needs (CANS) can gauge not only the child/youth's level of risk, but also the specific areas where services are needed to mitigate that risk and support safety and stability. The Core Services Program emphasizes matching services to child/youth and family risks and needs. Continued and expanded emphasis on the consistent use of a comprehensive, empirically validated risk and needs assessment tool to guide placement and case planning decisions for all children/youth will strengthen the case planning process and make it more consistent across the state.

Children, youth and their families typically receive multiple types of Core Services during their service episode. The research base is clear that the effectiveness of a service will be dependent to a large degree on whether it meets the needs of the families. The Core Services Program model aligns with the research base by emphasizing matching children/youth and families with services that address their

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types and levels of risks and needs. Continued and expanded emphasis on the Program-wide use of a standardized, validated risk and needs assessment will support consistent matching of services to child/youth and family needs.  Careful matching of services to identified needs will help ensure that children, youth and families receive the most appropriate services possible.

**Enhanced Trails Functionality** - New functionality in Trails has substantially changed the way that Core Services are recorded and outcomes tracked. Changes to the Trails system now allow a richer and more accurate understanding of who is participating in services related to a given child/youth, as well as better tracking of goals, outcomes, and placements associated with each authorization. In addition, Core Services staff report improved efficiency in data entry as a result of the changes.

This enhanced data set will support more detailed understanding of the processes and outcomes of the Core Services Program in coming years, as well as facilitate quality improvement efforts such as improving the match between child, youth and family risks and needs with treatment and placement options.

## Recommendations

**Family Involvement** - The critical role of families in driving effective care is clear – we recommend prioritizing efforts to support the inclusion of child/youth and family voice and choice across the system. We are encouraged by the emphases of Colorado's Practice Model and foresee positive impacts on family involvement through this initiative.

**State and Local Partnership** - Based on our interactions with Core Services Coordinators, County Commissions and state leadership, we recommend continued attention and promotion of collaborative efforts. Similarly, state leadership and technical assistance is important to sustain quality of services and commitment among local and state leadership. Colorado's Practice Model will facilitate and strengthen state and local partnership while enhancing practice.

**Expand Access to Evidence-Based Services –** In the context of case planning that is informed by assessment and matched to child, youth and family needs, evidence-based services represent the most likely avenue to successful child, youth and family outcomes. We recommend continued attention and efforts to expanding the service array to support improved access to the highest quality, proven set of services possible.

**Enhanced Utilization of Medicaid to Support Services -** Continued collaboration with HCPF, along with enhanced communication and collaboration at the local level between Core Services, Medicaid managed care organizations, local Medicaid providers and potential Medicaid providers are critical elements in maximizing the service array for children, youth and families.

**Collaboration between the Child Welfare and Judicial Systems –** Continued efforts to expand collaboration between child welfare and judicial systems is important to support enhanced communication and understanding of the mandate, functions and restrictions on each system. These efforts will help ensure appropriate use of placement, support family preservation, and avoid use of placements as sanctions.

**HB 11-1196, Colorado's Practice Model and Differential Response –** Lessons being learned from the Differential Response project and Colorado's Practice Model regarding prevention and early

intervention with at risk families represent important resources to the Core Services Program. As the Program moves toward implementation of HB 11-1196, it will be important to examine the current menu of Core Services and Program practices relative to the research on evidence-based practices for implementation of prevention and early intervention services.

**Maximize Enhanced Trails Functionality –** Enhancements to the Trails data system afford new opportunities for quality improvement and evaluation. We recommend that local and state leaders make the most of this opportunity through concerted attention to training and technical assistance around data entry as well as data tracking, analysis and reporting.

**Data Entry Practices** - TriWest Group continues to recommend that the State Division of Child Welfare Services maintain efforts to standardize data entry policies to assure complete data is available to adequately assess program effectiveness and understand costs and savings of the Core Services Program.  Significant efforts have gone into enhancing the Trails data system but these efforts will yield actionable information only to the extent that data is being entered consistently and fully across the state. Similarly, we recommend continued close collaboration with Trails data experts to investigate potential data system and data entry improvements to increase consistency of data entry without increasing workload of county staff.

**Integrated Risk Assessment and Case Planning** - Family preservation services are an important component of an effective continuum of child welfare services. These services are most effective when they are targeted to appropriate children/youth and families and tailored to their specific needs, challenges and strengths. For this reason, we carry forward our recommendation that Core Services Program Coordinators and leadership continue to build on current Core Services Program practice by expanding the integration of empirically validated risk and needs assessment in case planning decisions. Tools like the North Carolina Family Assessment Scale (currently used when opening and closing a child welfare case in Colorado) or the Child and Adolescent Needs and Strengths assessment (CANS) support responsive case planning that matches service intensity and restrictiveness to child/youth and family risk levels while also matching specific service types to the identified needs of children/youth and their families. This evidence-based, empirically anchored approach uses risk and needs assessment to support consistency in matching services to child/youth and family needs. In addition, comprehensive and consistent application of risk and needs assessment can provide actionable data for program monitoring and improvement as well as evaluation and reporting.

**Integrating Evaluation and Research Efforts**  – To the extent possible, we recommend enhancing interaction between independent evaluation efforts, like the current annual report, with other research and evaluation activities being conducted by, and on behalf of, the Division of Child Welfare Services. This would leverage existing resources to promote meaningful, high-quality data to support system wide efforts to use data to support decision making, reporting and quality improvement.

# References

Nelson, K. (2000). What Works in Family Preservation Services.  In: Kluger, M.P. Alexander, G. Curtis, P.A. (Editors). What Works in Child Welfare. Child Welfare League of America, Inc., Annapolis Junction, MD. pp 11-21.

# County Commission Report Template

## Family Preservation/Core Services Commission Report
### Fiscal Year 2010-2011

| | |
|---|---|
| **Colorado County/Tribe name:** | |

**Contact Person for Questions about the Commission Report:**

| | |
|---|---|
| **Name:** | |
| | |
| **Phone:** | |
| **E-mail:** | |

TriWest Group is a Colorado-based evaluation company selected to work with The Colorado Department of Human Services to conduct the evaluation of the Family Preservation/Core Services Program and prepare the Department's annual Family Preservation Commission Report.

Each year, local Family Preservation Commissions are required to complete a report on the status of Core Services and the programs available in each County or Tribe. The information you provide through the attached report template will be combined with other sources of information including the Colorado Trails data system to form the content for the required annual report. Input from local Family Preservation Commissions provides a context for the quantitative data elements and represents an opportunity for your County or Tribe to tell the story behind the numbers.

## INSTRUCTIONS

- Please return completed report by **June 30**.
- Please be sure to include complete contact information above in case we have any questions or there are problems with the transmission of the report to us.
- If possible, please complete the report electronically using MS Word and email completed reports to **Erin Hall** at ehall@triwestgroup.net
- Please mail the membership list and signature page in the envelope provided.
- If e-mail submission of the report is not convenient for you, please fax the report to 970-672-4944 or mail to 3021 Lucinda Ct., Fort Collins, CO 80526
- Please call Erin at **303-544-0509, extension 7** with any questions about the report.

# Capacity and Array of Services

The Trails data system tracks Core Services <u>delivered</u> by each county.  Please complete the following questions about the <u>availability</u> of services (including those services that may not have been utilized during this fiscal year) in your county or tribe.

1. If County Designed Services were available, please describe the types of services:

2. Please place a check mark next to the phrase that best describes current service capacity and access. (Check all that apply)

____The menu of Core Services available in our county (tribal area) is adequate to address the needs of children/youth at imminent risk of placement.

____There are services needed in our area that are not currently available.

____Needed services are available, but not at adequate capacity (there are waiting lists).

____Needed services are available, but there are significant barriers to families accessing services.

____Other (please describe):

In the list below, please check any Core Services that are <u>NOT</u> available in your County.

| | |
|---|---|
| ____Home Based Intervention | ____Mental Health Treatment |
| ____Intensive Family Therapy | ____Substance Abuse Treatment Services |
| ____Day Treatment | ____Aftercare Services |
| ____Life Skills | ____County Designed Services |
| ____Sexual Abuse Treatment | Other (please describe): |

Please describe any services for which there are waiting lists and steps taken/being taken to resolve this:

Please describe the primary barriers to service access for the families you serve:

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# Overall Effectiveness of Core Services

3.  Please describe your perspective regarding the overall effectiveness of Core Services:

4.  Please describe the policy and program issues in your county (tribe) that affect **out-of-home placements**? Are these issues driving increases or reductions in placements? (feel free to add more than three issues)

    Issue #1: _____is driving

    _____increases _____reductions in placements?

    Please describe:

    Issue #2: _____is driving

    _____increases _____reductions in placements?

    Please describe:

5.  Please describe the policy and program issues in your county (tribe) that affect the length **of stay for children/youth placed out-of home**.  Are these issues driving increases or reductions in length of stay? (feel free to add more than three issues)

    Issue #1: _____is driving

    _____increases _____reductions in placements?

    Please describe:

    Issue #2: _____is driving

    _____increases _____reductions in placements?

    Please describe:

6. Has the Core Services funding affected your county's Performance Improvement Plan (PIP) scores for stability in placement?

   Yes _____ No _____ (If yes, please describe).

# Collaboration

7. Please check the following collaborative efforts in which your county/tribe participates? (check all that apply)

   ____Family to Family

   ____Promoting Safe and Stable Families

   ____HB1451

   ____Collaborative efforts incorporating Family to Family principles (but not a formal site)

   ____Other collaborative efforts (please describe):

8. Please describe how your collaboration efforts have impacted the overall effectiveness of your Core Services Program.

9. Please describe how your collaboration efforts have impacted the cost-efficiency (either cost-avoidance or cost-savings) of your Core Services delivery.

10. If your county (tribe) could change and/or modify the Core Services Program, what would you recommend?

11. Does your county's (tribe's) Family Preservation/Core Services Commission have any recommended changes to the annual Commission Report?

    Yes ___ No ___ (If yes, please describe).

12. Are there services in your county (tribe) that are supplemented with funds from outside sources? _____ Yes _____ No

    If yes, please indicate those services in the table below and the source of supplemental funds. If you are not sure of the actual dollar amount, please estimate the percentage of the Core Services that were funded from that source.
    If no, please leave table blank.

| **Core Service Programs** | Supplemented Services with Outside Funds? | Source of Funding and Amount |
|---|---|---|
| Home Based Intervention | Yes ___ No ___ | |
| Intensive Family Therapy | Yes ___ No ___ | |
| Life Skills | Yes ___ No ___ | |
| Day Treatment | Yes ___ No ___ | |
| Sexual Abuse Treatment | Yes ___ No ___ | |
| Mental Health Services | Yes ___ No ___ | |
| Substance Abuse Treatment Services | Yes ___ No ___ | |
| Aftercare Services | Yes ___ No ___ | |
| County Designed Services | Yes ___ No ___ | |

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## Membership List and Signature Page

*Please mail this page only to Erin Hall in the envelope provided, (3021 Lucinda Ct. Fort Collins, CO 80526)*

*Also, please e-mail entire report to Erin Hall at* *ehall@triwestgroup.net*

Please list all members of your local Family Preservation Commission.  Add additional space as needed.

**County Name: _____**

**Family Preservation Commission Members (add space as needed)**

**_____**
**Name of Commission Chair**

**_____**
**Signature of the Commission Chair**

# Core Services Types

## Descriptions of Service Types

**Each of the ten designated Core Service types are listed below with definitions from Child Welfare Services, Staff Manual Volume 7.**

<u>Home Based Intervention</u>: services provided primarily in the home of the client and include a variety of services, which can include therapeutic services, concrete services, collateral services and crisis intervention directed to meet the needs of the child and family. See Section 7.303.14 for service elements of therapeutic, concrete, collateral, and crisis intervention.

<u>Intensive Family Therapy</u>: therapeutic intervention typically with all family members to improve family communication, functioning, and relationships.

<u>Life Skills</u>: services provided primarily in the home that teach household management, effectively accessing community resources, parenting techniques, and family conflict management.

<u>Day Treatment</u>: comprehensive, highly structured services that provide education to children and therapy to children and their families.

<u>Sexual Abuse Treatment</u>: therapeutic intervention designed to address issues and behaviors related to sexual abuse victimization, sexual dysfunction, sexual abuse perpetration, and to prevent further sexual abuse and victimization.

<u>Special Economic Assistance</u>: emergency financial assistance of not more than $400 per family per year in the form of cash and/or vendor payment to purchase hard services. See Section 7.303.14 for service elements of hard services.

<u>Mental Health Services</u>: diagnostic and/or therapeutic services to assist in the development of the family services plan, to assess and/or improve family communication, functioning, and relationships.

<u>Substance Abuse Treatment Services</u>: diagnostic and/or therapeutic services to assist in the development of the family service plan, to assess and/or improve family communication, functioning and relationships, and to prevent further abuse of drugs or alcohol.

<u>Aftercare Services</u>: any of the Core services provided to prepare a child for reunification with his/her family or other permanent placement and to prevent future out-of-home placement of the child.

<u>County Designed Services</u>: an optional service tailored by the specific county in meeting the needs of families and children in the community in order to prevent the out-of-home placement of children or facilitate reunification or another form of permanence.

# County Designed Services

| County | County Designed Services as Indicated on County Commission Reports |
|---|---|
| Adams | Supervised Therapeutic Visitation Service<br>Youth Intervention Program<br>Child Mentoring and Family Support<br>Family Group Decision Making |
| Alamosa | Discovery Groups<br>Family Decision Making/Conferences<br>Intensive Mentoring Program |
| Arapahoe | Multisystemic Therapy- Synergy<br>Multisystemic Therapy - Savio Direct Link Program<br>Family Engagement Team |
| Archuleta | Intermediate/Middle School/High School Responsibility/Mentoring |
| Baca | None |
| Bent | None |
| Boulder | Multisystemic Therapy<br>Community Evaluation Team (CET)<br>Family Group Decision Making<br>Community Infant Program |
| Broomfield | Day Treatment Alternative<br>Multisystemic Therapy/Functional Family Therapy |
| Chaffee | Chaffee County Mentoring<br>Youth at Crossroads<br>Nurturing Parenting Program |
| Cheyenne | None |
| Clear Creek | None |
| Conejos | Nurturing Parenting Program<br>Intensive Mentoring |
| Costilla | Intensive Mentoring Program |
| Crowley | None |
| Custer | None |
| Delta | Mentoring<br>Multisystemic Therapy – Local modification called Family Intervention Team<br>Day Treatment Alternative<br>Substance Abuse Intervention Team (SAIT) |

| County | County Designed Services as Indicated on County Commission Reports |
|---|---|
| Denver | Multisystemic Therapy<br>Savio Direct Link Program<br>Domestic Violence Services<br>Team Decision Making<br>Supervised Visitation<br>Mental Health Assessments and System Navigation |
| Dolores | Day Treatment Alternative |
| Douglas | None |
| Eagle | Family Centered Meetings |
| Elbert | Multisystemic Therapy<br>Family Coaching<br>Youth Mentoring |
| El Paso | Nat'l Youth Project Using Mini-Bikes (NYPUM)<br>Supervised Visitation<br>Mediation Services<br>Nurturing Program<br>Day Treatment Alternative<br>Domestic Violence Intervention Services<br>Functional Family Therapy<br>Multisystemic Therapy<br>Community Based Family Support Services (Wraparound) |
| Fremont | Day Treatment Alternative<br>Adolescent Support Group<br>Functional Family Therapy<br>Parenting Skills<br>Supervised Visitation<br>Family Treatment Drug Court<br>Responsible Fatherhood Program<br>Collaborative Family Services/Team Decision Making |
| Garfield | Adolescent Mediation<br>Multisystemic Therapy |
| Gilpin | None |
| Grand | Day Treatment Alternative<br>Team Decision Making<br>Visitation/Parenting Time |
| Gunnison | Therapeutic Mentoring |
| Hinsdale | Therapeutic Mentoring |
| Huerfano | Reconnecting Youth |
| Jackson | Mentoring |
| Jefferson | Multisystemic Therapy<br>Team Decision Making |

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| County | County Designed Services as Indicated on County Commission Reports |
|---|---|
| Kiowa | None |
| Kit Carson | Functional Family Therapy |
| Lake | Intensive Family/School Partnership<br>High Fidelity Wraparound |
| La Plata | Play Therapy<br>Multisystemic Therapy<br>Adolescent Dialectical Behavioral Treatment (DBT) |
| Larimer | Multisystemic Therapy<br>Nat'l Youth Project Using Mini-Bikes (NYPUM)<br>Functional Family Therapy (FFT)<br>Parent Child Conflict Mediation<br>Family Options 1 – Family Safety and Resource Team<br>Family Options 2 – Family Unity Meetings<br>Family Options 3 – Family Group Conferencing<br>Nurturing Program - Life Nurse Visiting Program<br>Community Based Family Support Services<br>Child Mentoring and Family Support |
| Las Animas | None |
| Lincoln | Family Group Conference<br>Foster Care\Adoption Support Program |
| Logan | Play Therapy<br>Parenting with Love and Limits |
| Mesa | Rapid Response<br>Day Treatment Alternative<br>Structured/Supervised Parenting Time |
| Mineral | None |
| Moffat | Day Treatment Alternative |
| Montezuma | None |
| Montrose | Promoting Healthy Adolescents Trends PHAT/Team Decision Making<br>Domestic Violence Services |
| Morgan | Structured Parenting Time<br>Day Treatment Alternative<br>Family Group Decision Making<br>Parenting with Love and Limits |
| Otero | Play Therapy |
| Ouray/San Miguel | Day Treatment Alternative |
| Park | Family to Family Mentoring |
| Phillips | None |

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| County | County Designed Services as Indicated on County Commission Reports |
|---|---|
| Pitkin | None |
| Prowers | None |
| Pueblo | Visitation Center<br>For Keeps Program |
| Rio Blanco | None |
| Rio Grande/Mineral | None |
| Routt | Day Treatment Alternative |
| Saguache | None |
| San Juan | Multisystemic Therapy<br>Adolescent Dialectical Behavioral Treatment (DBT) |
| Sedgwick | None |
| Southern Ute Indian Tribe | Multisystemic Therapy |
| Summit | Day Treatment Alternative<br>Multisystemic Therapy<br>Team Decision Making |
| Teller | Multisystemic Therapy<br>Wraparound |
| Washington | Foster Care/Adoption Intervention |
| Weld | Teamwork, Innovation, Growth, Hope and Training (TIGHT)<br>Multisystemic Therapy<br>Foster Parent Consultation<br>Functional Family Therapy |
| Yuma | Parenting with Love and Limits |

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