



*The* LEWIN GROUP

# **Family and Preventative Services in Colorado**

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## Family and Preventative Services in Colorado

### HIGHLIGHTS

The 1996 Personal Responsibility and Work Reconciliation Act (PRWORA) dramatically changed the nature of cash assistance, replacing the Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) program with Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF). While TANF's goal of promoting work has received considerable attention, the program's goals also address family stability and the prevention of welfare dependency. Within Colorado, county human service and social service departments provide a range of programs for adults, youth, and relative caretakers to help stabilize families, increase self-sufficiency, and prevent the intergenerational transmission of welfare dependency.

This section summarizes observations from the field. It includes a *Table of Contents* of selected programs described in the body of the report.

***Counties use family and preventative service programs both to help families exit welfare and to prevent families from entering the TANF program or other systems.*** Many issues affect a family's ability to become (or remain) self-sufficient. While employment directly affects a family's monetary resources, other factors, such as parenting skills, access to community resources, and opportunities for youth development may affect a family's overall well-being. Services provided through these programs are part of the holistic approach counties take towards helping families achieve long-term self-sufficiency and preventing welfare dependency in future generations.

- **Operational implications and considerations.** Counties provide services that go beyond the traditional scope of welfare programs—that is, eligibility determination and work-related activities. These include family stability services, parenting programs, fatherhood programs, and education and employment services for youth. While the outcomes of these programs are not explicitly tracked through Colorado Works performance measures, they can affect caseloads in a positive way, by helping families to exit welfare, reducing recidivism, and preventing initial entry into the welfare system.

***Family and preventative services reach diverse populations beyond the traditional TANF family unit.*** Many county programs serve people related to the TANF recipient, including non-custodial parents and relative caretakers. Programs that are preventive in nature target the broadest population—children, youth, and adults who may be at risk of entering Colorado Works or another system (e.g., child welfare, criminal justice). Although these individuals are not eligible for TANF themselves, they often provide financial and other forms of support to TANF families. Thus, promoting their financial and personal well-being can help TANF children and adults.

- **Operational implications and considerations.** County Colorado Works programs provide a range of services—either in-house or through collaboration—that can help the broader community avoid involvement in the welfare system. These include employment and training services, educational programs, case management services, and short-term cash assistance to non-TANF families.

***Family services can help prevent out-of-home placements.*** Colorado Works and child welfare are natural partners. Nationally, as well as in Colorado, the caseloads of these two programs overlap significantly. For example, one national study found that between 70 and 90 percent of families receiving in-home services from the child welfare agency also receive TANF. Additionally, both programs have similar goals of family stabilization and well-being; when a family is unable to meet basic needs, such as food or housing, the risk for both child welfare involvement and the need for cash assistance increase. Finally, PRWORA emphasizes keeping children in the care of their biological family members.

- **Operational implications and considerations.** Counties use a variety of approaches to prevent out-of-home placements. Some counties have created multi-disciplinary teams or a designated staff position to serve joint TANF/child welfare cases. Cross-agency teams help both programs improve efficiency, share information, streamline service provision, and reduce duplication of services. Other counties expanded the funds and services available to the relative caretakers in child-only cases to avoid the need for foster care placements. Finally, a number of counties aim to prevent child welfare involvement by providing a number of short-term “crisis” services, such as home visits, to a broader population that would not be financially eligible for most Colorado Works programs.

***Family and preventative services can help increase parental involvement and child well-being.*** Parents play a crucial role in helping children succeed in school and beyond. Employment-related services are one area in which county Colorado Works programs can help parents contribute to their families’ well-being. Programs also support custodial and non-custodial parents through parenting education, providing access to quality child care, and other support services.

- **Operational implications and considerations.** Counties operate a variety of programs that aim to improve child well-being through services to parents. These include family formation programs (e.g., marriage education), parenting and early childhood development education (often provided in the home), and services targeted toward non-resident parents to help increase their financial and non-financial contributions (e.g., fatherhood programs). Additionally, some counties emphasize child well-being out of the home by improving child care quality through technical assistance to providers.

***Preventative services targeting youth can prevent “disconnection.”*** Research indicates that a sizable portion of youth have difficulty transitioning to adulthood and spend long periods of time “disconnected” from mainstream institutions—that is, they are not in school and not working. Programs for youth aim to break the cycle of poverty and welfare dependency.

- **Operational implications and considerations.** Counties provide an array of programs for youth. These include employment and training programs, programs that focus on postponing sexual activity, and programs that promote youth development by encouraging strong relationships with other youth or mentors and engaging young people in self-esteem building activities. Often these programs reach beyond the TANF family unit and target a broad population of at-risk youth. Programs are also provided in collaboration with other organizations, such as Workforce Centers.

*Provision of family and preventative services generally involves collaboration with other entities.* Family and preventative programs encompass a broad range of services. Colorado Works programs often do not have the resources or staff expertise to provide family and preventative services in-house. Many other organizations specialize in areas such as substance abuse treatment, mental health services, and parenting education. Thus, most counties provide the services described above through partnerships with community organizations and other governmental agencies (e.g., child welfare and child support enforcement). Through collaboration, Colorado Works programs also tap into additional funding streams.

- **Operational implications and considerations.** Many counties partner with service providers (nonprofit, for-profit, and government) with specialized staff and organizational capacity to design and provide services to TANF and other low-income families. For example, some counties use Family Resource Centers to provide parenting education, home visits, and GED instruction to their clients. In other counties, Colorado Works and the Workforce Center collaborate to fund and provide youth employment and training opportunities. Some counties share funds between Colorado Works and child welfare, which allows more flexibility to keep contracts active during budget shortfalls to either program, while recognizing that a large amount of overlap exists between families within each program.

## **Selected Examples of Family and Prevention Oriented Programs**

### Services to Prevent Out-of-Home Placement

#### *Broad-based prevention programs:*

- Home visits, counseling, referrals, and resource provision: Early Intervention and Prevention Program (Adams), the Multidisciplinary Youth Assessment Team (Weld), and the Family to Family Initiative (Denver) (p.19)

#### *Collaboration with child welfare to serve jointly involved families*

- Multidisciplinary teams: Families dealing with substance abuse issues are served by the Direct Link Program (El Paso); the TANF/Child Welfare Integration Team serves jointly involved families (Denver) (p.12)
- Designated position for jointly involved/at-risk families: TANF Social Caseworker (Boulder); Specialized Services workers (Mesa); Life Skills Workers (Garfield County) (p. 13).

#### *Services for relative caretakers*

- Additional funding, support services, workshops, and case management: Grandparent Kind Program (Denver), Relative Caretaker Program (Pueblo) and TANF Kinship and Family Support Team (El Paso) (p. 15)

### Parenting Programs

#### *Early childhood development programs*

- In-home parenting education programs: Families First (Mesa), First Steps (Fremont) (p. 18).
- Support groups and mentoring for young fathers: Center on Fathering (El Paso) (p. 19).

#### *Services to improve child care quality*

- Technical assistance to providers: Rio Grande (p. 22)

#### *Services for non-custodial parents*

- Fatherhood programs: Parent Opportunity Program (El Paso); Fatherhood Initiative (Pueblo); Personal Responsibility Employment Program (Mesa) (p. 21).

### Youth Services

#### *Youth employment and training programs*

- School-based training and goal development: Youth Opportunity Services (Adams) (p.26)
- Summer employment and training programs: Operation Occupation (Larimer) (p.30)
- Teen Resource Centers (El Paso) (p.26)

#### *Teen pregnancy prevention*

- Abstinence education provided within broader youth development program: Get Real (Mesa); Friends First (Adams); WAIT and Sexual Cessation (Weld) (p. 28-29)

#### *Youth development*

- Mentoring, community service, and sports and leadership activities: Tu Casa and Casa Start (Rio Grande); Rare Breed (Pueblo); TIGHT (Weld) (p.30)

## I. INTRODUCTION

County social service and human service departments throughout Colorado provide a range of services to adults, youth, and caretakers in child-only cases that aim to stabilize families, increase self-sufficiency, and prevent intergenerational welfare dependency.

The Colorado Department of Human Services (CDHS) has funded The Lewin Group and its partners—the University of Colorado’s Health Sciences Center (UCHSC), the Johns Hopkins University’s Institute for Policy Studies (JHU), and Capital Research Corporation (CRC)—to perform an in-depth study of the Colorado Works program. The study will provide administrators with information about program strategies and approaches being used in various counties that others might find useful for improving program implementation, performance, and outcomes. The study’s design was developed by the Lewin team in active consultation with DHS officials and an Advisory Committee that includes representatives of the counties and Colorado’s advocacy community.

As part of the study, the Advisory Committee chose topics for in-depth examination. The research team is producing reports on each topic. In addition to *family and preventative services*, the topics are:

- *Strategies for assisting the hardest-to-serve clients* who face barriers to employment, such as lack of education, disabilities, or who are otherwise in need of special services or professional resources.
- *Coordination and collaboration* between county Colorado Works programs and other human services programs and partners.
- *Employment Services* used by counties, particularly with regard to relationships with employers and industries that Colorado Works programs have developed.

### A. Background on PRWORA

The 1996 Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act (PRWORA) dramatically changed the nature of cash assistance, replacing the Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) and Job Opportunities and Basic Skills Training (JOBS) programs with the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) block grant. PRWORA placed time limits on lifetime cash assistance provided with federal funds and imposed stricter work participation requirements on states. PRWORA also increased state flexibility in designing TANF programs. The four purposes of TANF, which promote work and family well-being, allow for a variety of services to be offered to families and low-income individuals.

Colorado’s TANF program, Colorado Works, is administered by the Colorado Works Division, Office of Self-Sufficiency, within the Colorado Department of Human Services (CDHS). The state has a long tradition of local control of programs and, as a result, the state’s 64 counties have considerable autonomy in the design and implementation of their Colorado Works programs. This level of county control is due, in large part, to the diversity within the state and ensures that local policies reflect the specific needs of residents.

## B. Data Sources

The topic reports draw on research conducted since the evaluation's start in January 2005. Key data sources include a survey of counties, site visits to selected counties, and analyses of administrative data.

The survey, administered in summer 2005, asked county directors about their agency's activities and operations and their county's policies.<sup>1</sup> Follow-up phone interviews, conducted with nearly all county directors,<sup>2</sup> provided a more in-depth understanding of topics covered by the survey, and gave directors an opportunity to discuss interesting policies and practices. Through the survey and the follow-up interviews, the research team documented the diversity of practices used by human services/social services agencies across the state in administering the Colorado Works program.<sup>3</sup>

The research team conducted site visits in 18 counties between September 2005 and January 2006. The counties were selected in consultation with CDHS and the Advisory Committee. Counties were chosen based on their innovative, unique, or interesting service delivery strategies and initiatives, as well as to represent the range of economic and geographic conditions within the state. (See **Box 1** for a list of the counties selected.) During the site visits, field teams conducted interviews with Colorado Works administrators and program staff, and with representatives of other governmental agencies and community-based organizations that serve Colorado Works participants or collaborate with the program. In some counties, the researchers conducted focus groups with program participants. Topics covered in the fieldwork included program structure, case processing and client flow, assessments, work participation activities, education and training programs, post-employment programs, supportive services, partnerships, special initiatives, and particular challenges, as well as a range of county- and program-specific topics. Finally, the topic reports also incorporate analyses of CACTIS data for June 2004.

### Box 1: Counties Where Site Visits Were Conducted

- Adams
- Arapahoe
- Bent
- Boulder
- Denver
- El Paso
- Fremont
- Garfield
- Huerfano
- Jefferson
- La Plata
- Larimer
- Mesa
- Pueblo
- Rio Grande
- Saguache
- Weld
- Yuma

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<sup>1</sup> The survey had a response rate of 97 percent with 62 of the 64 counties completing it.

<sup>2</sup> Fifty-seven follow-up interviews were conducted.

<sup>3</sup> Findings from the survey and follow-up call were presented in a report prepared for CDHS. See Elkin, Farrell, Gardiner, and Turner, *Colorado Works Program Evaluation: Findings from County Survey*, October 20, 2005.



## II. OVERVIEW

Consistent with the goals of welfare reform (see *Box 2*), the Colorado Works program provides a variety of services to eligible families that go beyond employment and training services for household heads. These family and preventative services include programs to help stabilize families, reduce the intergenerational transmission of poverty, and increase parental and other caretaker investment in children. As such, many counties in Colorado provide services to non-custodial parents, youth (who may or may not be part of Colorado Works families) and the broader low-income population, including families earning up to \$75,000 in a year. While these individuals and families would not be eligible for TANF under the traditional eligibility requirements, counties that increased eligibility limits described Colorado Works as a program that, in addition to providing assistance to families in need, helps prevent future welfare receipt among families at risk.

### **Box 2: The Four Purposes of TANF**

Adopted in 1996, the Personal Responsibility and Work Reconciliation Act (PRWORA) established four purposes of the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program:

1. To provide assistance to needy families so that children may be cared for in their own homes or in the homes of relatives;
2. To end the dependence of needy parents on government benefits by promoting job preparation, work, and marriage;
3. To prevent and reduce the incidence of out-of-wedlock pregnancies and establish annual numerical goals for preventing and reducing the incidence of these pregnancies; and
4. To encourage the formation and maintenance of two-parent families.

### **A. Importance of Family and Preventative Services**

Following the passage of PRWORA, much of the attention of state and county welfare programs has focused on the extent to which these programs increased employment and welfare exits. Less attention has been paid to the other goals of TANF. This is due in part to the fact that PRWORA included numerical targets that states needed to meet with respect to work participation rates. In contrast, outcomes associated with family and preventive services have not been systematically documented.

There are, however, good reasons to focus on the non-work goals of TANF. The legislation aimed to “end welfare as we know it,” in part by stopping the intergenerational transfer of poverty and welfare dependency. Thus, county programs go beyond offering employment- and training-related services to adult heads and provide services to youth, some of whom are not in the TANF system; to non-custodial parents, so that they can better support their children emotionally and financially; and to non-parent caretakers, so that children can be cared for in a home and avoid the child welfare system. Some counties aim to improve child well-being by offering parenting and child development education and quality child care. County programs also

address the causes of welfare dependency, including teen pregnancy and failure to finish high school.

Examples of the types of family and preventative services discussed in this report include:

***Helping families prevent out-of-home placements.*** Colorado Works and child welfare are natural partners. Evidence suggests that there is considerable overlap between the two programs' caseloads. Nationally, more than half of all foster care children were removed from TANF-eligible families. Of families receiving in-home services from the child welfare agency, between 70 and 90 percent also receive TANF (Geen et al., 2001). Counties take a variety of approaches to preventing out-of-home placements. Some work on the “front end” to prevent families from entering the child welfare system. Some developed models for working with families jointly enrolled in Colorado Works and child welfare.

Still other counties provide support to relative caregivers. Child-only TANF families are becoming a larger part of the national caseload. Between 1996 and 2002, the proportion of the caseload composed of child-only cases increased from 21.5 percent to 37 percent (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2004).<sup>4</sup> In 2005, Colorado's child-only caseload made up over a third of all Colorado Works cases.<sup>5</sup>

***Improving child well-being through parental involvement and quality child care.*** Parents play a crucial role in helping children succeed in school and beyond. For instance, how a parent responds to the needs of a young child—by providing structure and routines, warmth, talking about feelings, and helping them problem-solve—can build a foundation for future success (Knitzer and Lefkowitz, 2005). However, parenting is not easy. It requires constant decision making. Stress due to poverty, meeting public assistance requirements, loneliness, or health problems make parenting difficult. Parent education programs can help parents develop skills to improve child well-being. These programs often are provided in the home and have an early childhood education component.

Programs targeting non-custodial parents represent another contribution Colorado Works programs make to the well-being of low-income families. These services focus on increasing the financial and non-financial contributions of non-resident parents, usually fathers. Approximately 12 million families nationwide with a child under age 18 are headed by a single-parent. Most (about 85 percent) are headed by single mothers (Green Book, 2004). About 40 percent of single mothers do not have a child support award in place. And single mothers on TANF are less likely to have a child support order. Child support payments represent an additional source of income that can help increase the resources available to low-income, single-parent families, and in some cases, prevent the need for cash assistance. One study found that among poor women who receive child support, almost one-quarter were brought out of poverty by child support payments alone (Meyer and Hu, 1999). However, a large portion of nonresident fathers nationwide are limited in their ability to pay child support due to low education, skills, and many of the other

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<sup>4</sup> Over a third of child-only cases (38.5 percent) resulted from a child living with a parent/guardian of unknown citizenship, 44 percent from a parent/guardian receiving SSI, and for the remaining 18 percent of child-only cases, the reason for this status was unknown.

<sup>5</sup> According to ACF's annual information on state caseloads. Available at: <http://www.acf.dhhs.gov/programs/ofa/caseload/caseloadindex.htm>.

barriers to employment that low-income single mothers have been found to face (Sorensen, 2001).

Finally, for many Colorado Works recipients, access to quality child care is a concern. Research shows that single mothers are more likely find employment and comply with program requirements when they are satisfied with the quality of their child care (Meyers, 1993). For welfare leaves, access to child care remains an issue, as the cost can be prohibitive. In particular, Colorado Works recipients cite the lack of affordable child care as a major difficulty they faced in retaining employment.

***Preventing future welfare involvement.*** Programs can help break the cycle of poverty and welfare dependency by providing youth with mentoring, employment and training, pregnancy prevention services, and other activities. Research indicates that a sizable portion of youth have difficulty transitioning to adulthood and spend long periods of time “disconnected” from mainstream institutions—school, work, military service, or marriage. These are youth, as one study reported, “who find themselves well off the course to independence and self-sufficiency for extended periods in their late teens and early twenties” (Brown and Emig, 1999). This study analyzed the National Longitudinal Survey of Youth and found that over a third of the individuals aged 16 to 23 were disconnected for at least half of the year. Almost one in six were disconnected for three or more 26-week periods. Disconnection carries personal costs as well as societal ones—welfare dependency, criminal activity, and poverty, to name a few.

This report highlights innovative county approaches to providing family and preventive services. It focuses on strategies that study counties use to (1) prevent out-of-home placements through collaborations with child welfare agencies and other organizations; (2) to improve child well-being through parenting and child development education, fatherhood programs, and quality child care; and (3) break the cycle of poverty and future welfare receipt through services to youth.

## **B. An Overview of Services Offered in Colorado**

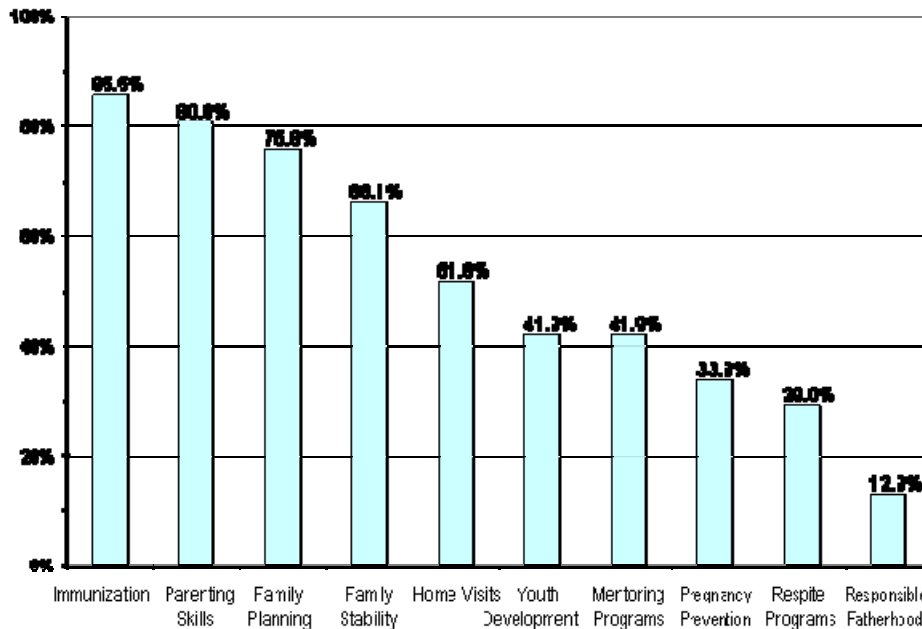
The survey of county directors asked about 10 specific family and preventative services (see **Box 3**).

### **Box 3: Family and Preventive Services Discussed**

- Home visits
- Family stability services
- Responsible fatherhood programs
- Assessments or referrals to immunization
- Offer or referrals to family planning
- Out-of-wedlock pregnancy prevention
- Parenting skills
- Youth development
- Respite programs for parents of disabled or special needs children
- Mentoring programs for fragile families

The percentage of counties offering family and preventative services varies by type of service. As *Chart 1* illustrates, almost all counties provide one of these services and, on average, counties provide five. The most common services—offered by at least three-fourths of counties—are immunizations, parenting skills, and family planning. The least common services are respite services and responsible fatherhood programs (offered by less than one-third of counties).

**Chart 1: Percentage of Counties offering Family Service**



The survey also explored services for child-only cases, or Colorado Works cases in which no adult recipient is included in the cash grant. Anecdotally, it appears that the majority of Colorado’s child-only cases involve a relative caretaker, where a child or children are living with a relative who does not have financial responsibility under the law to support the child. In other cases, the child might be living with the parent, but the parent is receiving Supplemental Security Income (SSI) or is ineligible for Colorado Works due to the parent’s alien status. Child-only cases do not always receive the traditional case management, employment services, and supportive funding that other TANF families receive. However, over half of Colorado counties supplement the basic cash grant with additional services to the families of child-only cases. Of these, two-thirds offer additional financial support, from supplemental cash payments to supportive service payments for items such as clothing, back-to-school supplies, and holiday presents. Forty percent offer non-financial support services to these families, such as day care, advocacy services, grandparent/caretaker support groups, and workshops on parenting. Twenty percent offer both financial and non-financial support services.

These survey results offer an overview of the types of family and preventive services counties offer. As described below, site visits to 18 counties provided additional insight into the types of services available and counties’ rationale for providing them.

## II. SITE VISIT FINDINGS

Site visits focused on a variety of topics, including staffing and client flow, relationships with employers and community organizations, and staff perceptions of promising practices. As the county survey findings show, the majority of counties devote resources to some type of family services.

County respondents described different reasons for offering family and prevention services. Some see these programs as one aspect of a holistic approach towards helping families achieve long-term self-sufficiency, while others describe such services as a way to prevent families from needing cash assistance, thus reducing future caseloads. Finally, many focus on preventing families from entering the child welfare system.

*Note: This section highlights examples of innovative programs described by staff during the site visits to 18 counties. It does not provide an exhaustive list of all family and preventative programs in the study counties. It should be noted that the programs described appear to be promising practices. However, they have not been systematically evaluated.*

Counties use a number of strategies to implement family- and prevention-oriented programs. Many collaborate with stakeholders from other county programs (e.g., child welfare and child support enforcement) and community partners. Counties leverage funding from a variety of sources, often blending TANF funds with those from other programs to either provide a broader range of services than would be available through Colorado Works alone or to reach a larger population (e.g., families earning up to \$75,000). This latter example illustrates how many counties' philosophies encompass a commitment to not only help families currently receiving Colorado Works, but to prevent families from entering the system.

From the site visit findings, three broad areas of innovate family-related and prevention services emerged:

- Collaborations with child welfare agencies and other efforts to prevent out-of-home placements.
- Programs designed to increase child well-being through parental involvement (e.g., parenting education, fatherhood programs, and family formation initiatives) and access to quality child care.
- A broad array of youth programs including non-marital pregnancy prevention programs, summer employment and training initiatives, and in-school services for high-risk youth.

Each is described below.

### A. Collaboration with Child Welfare and Prevention of Out-of-Home Placement

As noted above, the first of four TANF goals is “to provide assistance to needy families so that children may be cared for in their own homes or in the homes of relatives.” Many counties have developed programs to reduce the risk of child welfare involvement and prevent the need for out-of-home placement (i.e., the removal of children from their biological families and placement into foster care). Such programs fall into three broad categories:

- “Front end” prevention services to families at risk of needing child welfare services. Often these efforts target a broader population.
- New staffing paradigms, such as creation of an integrated Colorado Works/child welfare team or a designated liaison to work with child welfare.
- Services for relative caretakers in child-only Colorado Works cases.

### **1. Preventing Child Welfare Involvement**

A variety of factors can place families at risk for child welfare involvement. When a family is unable to meet basic needs, such as food, housing, or clothing, this risk increases. A study by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) found that children living in families with annual incomes less than \$15,000 were 22 times more likely to be abused or neglected than children living in families earning \$30,000 or more (DHHS, 1996). This is not to say that low-income parents are more likely to abuse or neglect their children, but that factors contributing to poverty are also related to an increased risk for child maltreatment.

In Colorado, the percentage of children in poverty (i.e., family income of less than 100 percent of the Federal Poverty Level) increased from 10 percent in 2000 to 15 percent in 2004. The percentage of children living in extreme poverty (i.e., family income less than 50 percent of the FPL) also increased over this time period, from 3 to 7 percent.<sup>6</sup>

Counties have implemented a variety of prevention programs with the goal of improving family well-being. These initiatives generally target a broader population than families within the Colorado Works program, with some providing services to families earning up to \$75,000 per year. Through home visits and other approaches, the prevention programs described below attempt to help families avoid the child welfare system altogether. Although not covered in this report, county diversion programs may also provide a grant to help families overcome a short-term need.

Counties described a number of models for preventing child welfare involvement. Adams County contracts with a nonprofit organization that sends therapists on home visits to vulnerable families. These therapists offer a range of services, including counseling and referrals. Weld County focuses on family services and risk prevention through counseling, mediation, and parent training. **Box 4** describes these programs in more detail.

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<sup>6</sup> In 2004, national data show that 18 percent of all children lived in families below the poverty level and 8 percent lived in extreme poverty. From data compiled by Kids Count, <http://www.aecf.org/kidscount>, from the following sources: Population Reference Bureau, analysis of data from the U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2000 Supplementary Survey, 2001 Supplementary Survey, 2002 through 2004 American Community Survey.

#### **Box 4: Programs that Aim to Prevent Child Welfare Involvement**

##### **Adams County, Early Intervention and Prevention Program (EIPP)**

The Colorado Works program contracts with Family Tree to run the EIPP. Through in-home counseling by therapists, the EIPP aims to increase family stability and reduce out-of-home placements. Families are also referred to community service providers for transportation needs, child care, and mental health services. Participating families are served for three months by therapists, with an option of further services, if needed. The neediest families are visited weekly, but all families are visited at least twice a month. Approximately 50 families receive ongoing services at a given time, with 300 families being served in a year. Participating families are also eligible for monetary incentives – a gift card for making the first appointment, assistance with bills if needed, and \$100 for attending the six-month follow-up visit.

##### **Weld County, Multidisciplinary Youth Assessment Team (MYAT)**

MYAT focuses on family services and risk prevention through counseling, mediation, and parent training. The MYAT team is composed of representatives from child welfare, mental health, public health, public schools, employment services, a drug and alcohol treatment center, and nonprofit faith-based organizations. Each partner organization has two MYAT staff that will assess the family, create a goal statement and plan, and provide/refer to counseling and other services. The majority of families served by the program are TANF cases. Services are provided for three to six months, depending on a family's needs and goals.

Denver County's **Family to Family Initiative** targets seven neighborhoods identified as high risk (i.e., those with high rates of poverty, child abuse, and out-of-home placements). The program awarded grants to community groups in each neighborhood to provide preventative services, including case management, parenting advice, resource delivery, access to medical care, GED classes, and job training. While some of these services overlap with Colorado Works services, the county's philosophy is that to reduce future involvement in welfare and child welfare, services need to be provided before the need becomes acute.

Prevention focused programs may also involve child welfare representatives. For example, Larimer County's **Family Resource Program** (see **Box 5**) provides a variety of services (e.g., home visits, case management) to reduce the risk of child welfare involvement.

### **Box 5: Family Resource Program**

#### **Larimer County**

The Larimer County Family Resource Program works to improve the quality of life for children and families by identifying family strengths, service needs, and promoting community collaboration to prevent child abuse and neglect. The short-term (less than 90 days) program includes a “resource center” for families as well as a range of services – risk assessment, information and referrals, advocacy services, home-based parenting education, crisis counseling, and psycho-educational groups. Parents receive short-term case management and supportive services (e.g., rent school fees). Eligible families must have a child under age 12 and be facing an emergency requiring public assistance or child welfare services. The client first meets with a family resource coordinator and develops a family service plan. The expected outcome is that the family will overcome the short-term hurdle and avoid the child welfare system. This program serves approximately 100 families in a year.

## **2. Working with Child Welfare to Serve Jointly Involved Families**

The majority of Colorado Works programs described some level of collaboration with their child welfare counterparts. Almost all (97 percent) of the counties responding to the survey indicated that referrals were made between Colorado Works and child welfare. The majority of counties (73 percent) also reported co-locating or cross-training with the child welfare division. Formal and informal agreements were less common—only 7 percent of counties reported having a financial contract with child welfare, while 21 percent had a memorandum of understanding. All of the 18 counties that were visited reported some degree of coordination with child welfare.

Evidence suggests that there is considerable overlap between the two programs’ caseloads, emphasizing the need for coordination between these two programs. Nationally, more than half of all foster care children were removed from TANF-eligible families. Research also shows that families involved in both the child welfare and TANF systems may have difficulty meeting reunification case plans and may choose to voluntarily give up their children to protective custody (Geen, 2002).

Due to the complicated and, often conflicting requirements placed on families involved in both the TANF and child welfare systems, many families struggle to remain in compliance with both programs. For instance, the child welfare treatment plan may require a number of activities designed to improve parenting (e.g., classes or counseling), while the Colorado Works Individual Responsibility Contract (IRC) may require 30 or more hours of work-related activities.

Additionally, child welfare and Colorado Works programs may provide duplicate services. A staff person in one county noted that prior to the establishment of a more comprehensive approach to joint Colorado Works/child welfare cases, families in both systems received two assessments by the same mental health provider.

PRWORA allows for more collaboration between TANF and child welfare, especially through the combination of several programs into the Social Services Block Grant (SSBG). States can use SSBG funds for a number of child welfare-related activities, including programs offering preventative, protective, foster care, and adoption services. Colorado counties use this flexibility



to fund programs serving families jointly involved in the Colorado Works/child welfare systems. For example, child welfare staff in Fremont County refer participants to Colorado Works after an assessment or ongoing case management reveals income, transportation, or child care issues. The Colorado Works program can provide services and financial assistance that is not available through child welfare. The programs and initiatives summarized below go beyond cross-referrals; they aim to create a holistic approach to preventing Colorado Works families' future involvement in the child welfare system and to coordinating services for TANF families already involved in child welfare so as to prevent non-compliance with an IRC or out-of-home placement.

Physical proximity is one method of increasing communication and collaboration between Colorado Works and child welfare. In many counties, the Department of Social Services (DSS)/Department of Human Services (DHS) program is physically located in a building or series of buildings within a DSS/DHS campus. While, traditionally, Colorado Works and child welfare employees may have been located on separate floors within a building or even in separate buildings, some counties intermingle staff from both agencies. For example, Denver County created a joint TANF/child welfare team, placing Colorado Works staff members in the child welfare area. In addition to facilitating regular meetings, this arrangement has also increased informal communication. Colorado Works staff are able to gain first-hand experience with the needs of child welfare clients. Through this arrangement, child welfare staff can recommend TANF as an option for child welfare families struggling to make ends meet and be able to easily refer eligible families or quickly get answers about services and eligibility requirements.

Some of the study counties addressed the potential overlap in Colorado Works and child welfare caseloads by developing integrated staffing teams with representatives from Colorado Works, child welfare, and, in some cases, community organizations. They were created with the intention of aligning a customer's child welfare treatment plan and IRC, coordinating services and facilitate information sharing between agencies. Both Denver and El Paso Counties have developed integrated teams to deal with joint clients (**Box 6**).

### **Box 6: Integrated Teams Serving Joint Clients**

#### **El Paso County, Direct Link Program**

The Direct Link Program, established in 2001, is the original TANF/child welfare collaboration model. Direct Link's multi-disciplinary team serves jointly involved parents with substance abuse issues. The team consists of Colorado Works, child welfare, a child and family treatment center, a drug and alcohol treatment facility, and Juvenile Court. Each organization plays a different role in serving families; child welfare conducts the initial investigation and assesses the family, the child and family treatment center performs home visits to assess ongoing needs and monitor a family's progress, and Colorado Works helps families receive assistance and support services.

Parents are also treated and monitored by the substance abuse facility. Families that are already involved with the courts must attend weekly hearings at the Family Treatment Drug Court to monitor progress and compliance. Thus, Direct Link participants receive services to help gain self-sufficiency and keep their children, while undergoing regular and fairly intensive monitoring to ensure the protection of their children.

#### **Denver County, TANF/Child Welfare Integration Team**

Denver County recently implemented a TANF/Child Welfare Integration Team, modeled after El Paso County's program. Denver's team is composed of two program case managers (Colorado Works employees who handle case management and ongoing eligibility), two family and children social workers (child welfare), and a Colorado Works supervisor. The Colorado Works program case managers are co-located with child welfare and not with other Colorado Works staff (although they are in the same building). The primary goals of the team include preventing children from being removed from the home and providing referrals. The Colorado Works case manager and the social worker from child welfare work hand-in-hand to develop a Colorado Works IRC and child welfare treatment plan and child safety plan. Colorado Works team members also participate in the team decision-making process. In addition, Colorado Works case managers work with families after the child welfare case closes. The county is currently collecting data on the outcomes of joint clients. Colorado Works case managers also turn in a monthly report on the services provided, the type of cases they are dealing with, and a log of child welfare interaction.

In addition to the programs described above, Colorado Works staff may also be involved in child welfare's **Team Decision Making (TDM)** process for a joint client. TDM staffings bring together all organizations and agencies with services available to families involved in the child welfare system. In addition to child welfare, organizations represented may include legal services, mental health, law enforcement, Colorado Works, and community-based organizations. Family members are also included in the meeting. The result of the TDM process is a coordinated plan for the family to gain self-sufficiency and exit the child welfare system.

Smaller counties, or those with limited resources, may not be able to or need to devote an entire team to work with joint TANF/child welfare cases. A different staffing approach is creation of a designated position within the Colorado Works program to serve as a liaison with the child welfare agency. This position may also work with child-only cases, coordinate with other community service providers, or help at-risk clients.

One example is Boulder County’s **TANF Social Caseworker** who, in addition to coordinating cases with child welfare, is responsible for establishing and maintaining relationships with a variety of community organizations—from safe house and domestic violence shelters to victims, to housing and emergency assistance providers. Such coordination can help connect families identified as being at risk of adverse outcomes with available community resources. **Box 7** details the responsibilities of the TANF Social Caseworker.

<b>Box 7: TANF Social Caseworker</b>
<b>Boulder County</b>
Responsibilities include:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Work with TANF families at home and in the community to assess needs, support strengths, and refer to local agencies.</li><li>• Review TANF/child welfare cases to identify and implement any needed staffings with collaborating agencies and/or make referrals.</li><li>• Work with child-only TANF families to assess needs and refer to community agencies.</li><li>• Serve as community resource agent for TANF families, eligibility technicians, case managers, social workers, community partners, and Boulder DSS.</li><li>• Provide support and administrative services for clients reaching the 60 month limit.</li><li>• Identify community partners and build strong working relationships to deliver improved supportive services to TANF clients.</li></ul>

Mesa County has designated two **Specialized Services Workers** to serve jointly involved clients, as well as Colorado Works clients with a variety of other risk factors (i.e., those nearing the end of the 60-month limit, those at risk for sanction). The client retains his/her original case manager, while the Specialized Services staff member provides intensive case management, such as home visits and frequent meetings. Garfield County has a similar program within child welfare, in which two **Life Skills Workers** conduct home visits to clients at risk for or involved with child welfare. Referrals are made from the Colorado Works program and child welfare.

Regardless of the staffing model, county staff noted that it can be difficult to identify joint Colorado Works/child welfare families. Prior to adoption of CBMS, the Legacy System contained an interface between Colorado Works and child welfare’s system. However, it is not yet possible to identify joint cases through CBMS or through the current child welfare system. Co-locating staff may facilitate identification of joint cases. Additionally, Denver County has developed a system for checking new child welfare cases against CBMS records to identify jointly involved families.

### **3. Working with Relative Caretakers**

Following the enactment of PRWORA, welfare caseloads declined dramatically across the nation. However, this reduction masked a different trend, as the proportion of the national caseload composed of child-only cases (those where no adult is part of the assistance unit) increased significantly (DHHS, 2004). Between 1996 and 2002, the proportion of the national TANF caseload made up of child-only cases increased 70 percent, from 22 percent of all cases to almost 37 percent.

In Colorado, the number of child-only cases increased 13 percent, from an average monthly caseload of 4,492 in Federal Fiscal Year 2000 to 5,063 in FFY 2005 (ACF, 2000 and 2004). Although these cases increased in absolute numbers, the proportion of child-only cases within the state's entire caseload declined from 40 percent to 33 percent, because Colorado's total caseload increased over the same time period.

**Table 2: Average Monthly Colorado Works Caseloads, 2000 to 2005**

FFY	Average Child-Only Cases	Average Basic Cash Assistance Cases	Child-Only as % of BCA Cases
2000	4,492	11,154	40.27%
2001	4,519	10,639	42.48%
2002	4,579	12,086	37.89%
2003	5,166	13,534	38.17%
2004	5,039	14,623	34.46%
2005**	5,063	15,268	33.16%

Note: \*\*Only October 2004 through February 2005 are available for FFY2005.

Source: Data reported to ACF, see <http://www.acf.dhhs.gov/programs/ofa/caseload/caseloadindex.htm>

Farrell et al. (2000) examined the child-only caseload in three states, estimating that two-thirds of the cases were headed by non-parent caregivers, generally related to the child(ren) on the case. Findings from a study of New Jersey's child-only caseload (Wood and Strong, 2002) show that over 70 percent of adults heading relative caretaker cases are the grandparents of the TANF children. In Colorado, anecdotal evidence shows that a large proportion of child-only cases resulted from the child(ren) living with a relative caretaker. In one large, urban county, program staff estimated that over three-quarters of children in child-only cases were living with a relative caretaker.<sup>7</sup> Despite the smaller benefit, a grandparent or relative may choose to remain a Colorado Works child-only case over entering the foster care system because of the stringent requirements child welfare places on families.

Often these families have many needs. The majority have incomes below 200 percent of the FPL. Some counties have developed grandparent/relative support groups to help these caretakers deal with the demands of child-rearing. Other counties offer supportive services, such as funds for clothing, school supplies, and furniture (most often beds) to help ease the costs associated with child-rearing.

The Colorado Works program only requires counties to provide a small grant<sup>8</sup> with no related support services or requirements to child-only cases. However, a number of the study counties

<sup>7</sup> We choose to focus this section on services offered to relative caretakers within child-only cases, rather than services offered to all types of child-only cases (i.e., children of SSI recipients and children of undocumented immigrants) because many counties view children in these families as being the most at-risk for entering the child welfare system.

<sup>8</sup> Currently, TANF child-only cases are eligible for the following grant amount per individuals on the case: 1 = \$99; 2 = \$207; 3 = \$311; 4 = \$415; 5 = \$497; 6 = \$574; 7 = \$640; 8 = \$703; 9 = \$766; 10 = \$820; each additional child = additional \$56.

reported approaches to serving child-only cases that went beyond providing the minimum cash grant. Some (e.g., Pueblo County, El Paso County) provide educational and case management services to caretakers. Others (e.g., Denver County) provide incentive payments for cooperating with other programs or additional funds for supportive services. **Box 8** describes these programs.

**Box 8: Examples of Programs for Caretakers on Child-Only Cases**

**Denver County, Grandparent Kin Program**

In response to an increased number of relatives caring for child-only cases, Denver County developed the Grandparent Kin Program. This program provides additional funds, or “incentive payments,” to relative caretakers if they turn in a Monthly Status Report (MSR) and comply with child support enforcement to establish support orders from both biological parents.<sup>9</sup> The additional funds, although smaller than in past years, increase in basic cash grant from \$99 to \$280 for relatives caring for one child, to \$369 for relatives caring for two children, with families with additional children eligible for similar increases in funding. Other supportive service funds are also available for transportation and clothes for children in school, family counseling, and referrals to support groups for caretaker relatives. Four staff members within the Colorado Works program work with Kin Program families.

**Pueblo County, Relative Caretaker Program**

Pueblo County formerly provided the Relative Caretaker Program.<sup>10</sup> Two specialists facilitated monthly support groups, where relative caretakers would learn about nutrition, custody, and parenting. Sometimes the specialists would attend court cases and perform home visits. The workshops were not mandatory, but caretakers who attended were eligible for generous additional assistance—up to \$250 for the first child and smaller amounts for additional children.

**El Paso County, TANF Kinship and Family Support Team**

The TANF Kinship and Family Support Team, created to defer children from foster care placement, provides voluntary support services to grandparents and other caretakers raising relative children. The Team evaluates, trains, and supports relatives who are caring for a relative’s children. Relative caretakers also receive Medicaid and supportive services and grandparents are able to participate in support groups. The TANF Block Grant funds two child welfare staff that are part of the kinship unit within child welfare. El Paso has also created a grandparent advocate position to do public speaking on child-rearing.

**B. Parent-related Programs**

The intergenerational transmission of welfare dependency is a concern for policy makers and program administrators alike. Research suggests that children who grow up in families receiving welfare are more likely to become welfare recipients as adults. For instance, Page (2002) reported that women who grew up in families receiving welfare were almost three times as likely to receive welfare as adults than women whose parents were not welfare recipients. Similarities in income and family structure across generations may influence this correlation. The constraints

<sup>9</sup> If the Child Support payment is greater than the basic TANF grant (\$99 for one child, etc.) not including incentive payments, the family will not receive TANF.

<sup>10</sup> The program was terminated due to CBMS implementation and county budget cuts. Around 50 percent of the county’s caseload consists of child-only cases.

that poverty and other factors associated with welfare place on parents' ability to contribute time, money, and intangible forms of emotional support may also influence the intergenerational welfare dependency.

Parents play a key role in helping children become successful youth and adults. In addition to financial support, mothers and fathers nurture and provide emotional support to children. Research finds that children are better off when their fathers are involved both financially and emotionally (Amato and Gilbreth, 1999). For instance, one study found that even if they do not live with their children, when fathers provide economically for their children and are emotionally connected to them children have fewer behavioral problems (Bernard, 1998).

Family formation is included in three of the four TANF goals. Some Colorado counties provide programs to encourage two-parent households. El Paso County, for example, operates a community-wide **Healthy Marriage Initiative** through Faith Partners. Faith Partners organizes marriage educator workshops to inform the public about the effect of healthy marriages on children and the factors that can support marriages.

Beyond the promotion of two-parent households, counties operate a variety of programs that help parents to contribute to their children's well-being. Results from the county survey show that the majority of Colorado counties offer support services to parents, such as parenting skills education (81 percent) and programs designed to increase family stability (66 percent). Over half (52 percent) have home visiting programs. Thirteen percent have responsible fatherhood initiatives. Finally, some counties have developed innovative methods to assist TANF recipients in finding and retaining quality child care.<sup>11</sup>

This section examines parenting services intended to increase child well-being and outcomes. Programs fall into three categories:

- Educational and early childhood development services, designed to increase parenting skills and other attributes affecting child well-being, often provided in a home-based setting for young or first-time parents.
- Services for non-custodial parents to increase both child support payments and involvement, often consisting of a combination of education, employment, and other support services.
- Innovative methods to improve quality child care and connect parents with child care.

### **1. Parent Education and Early Childhood Development**

Many counties provide services to help parents navigate parenthood (e.g., learning about child development). Some programs include parenting instruction in job readiness components, or sponsor parenting classes and support groups, and several contract with community agencies for special activities. As **Box 9** shows, parent education classes generally cover topics beyond those directly related to child development, recognizing that skills that can improve parents' economic

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<sup>11</sup> TANF-funded child care may be provided in-house (over 90 percent of the counties surveyed reported that this was the case), or through interagency agreement or a formal contract (5 percent and 11 percent of counties surveyed, respectively). These percentages will not sum to 100 percent, as counties could indicate providing services through a variety of categories.

circumstances and family structure can also affect the resources that a parent is able to devote to his/her children.

- Box 9: Parent Education Topics Covered in Site Visit Counties**
- Baby care
  - Budgeting
  - Child development
  - Child safety and health
  - Crisis management
  - Legal issues
  - Self-esteem
  - Stress management
  - Birth control and pregnancy prevention
  - Employment readiness
  - Child discipline
  - Communication skills
  - Job and interview skills
  - Nutritional information
  - Self sufficiency skills
  - Vocational training

Parenting programs are provided by a range of organizations. Programs run by partner organizations have the advantage of offering services separate from the Colorado Works and child welfare systems, which are sometimes viewed cautiously by families. These organizations also leverage professionals or volunteers who are connected with other community resources. Thus, even though Colorado Works funding supports these programs, providers are able to reach families who may be resistant to becoming involved in a government program. Counties may offer parenting services solely to Colorado Works families, or to the broad low-income population, targeting parents with certain characteristics (e.g., first-time parents, those with risk factors).

Parenting programs occur in a variety of settings. Some counties provide instruction through home visits (e.g., Fremont County). Home visit-based programs can benefit parents and families in a variety of ways. They reach parents that have limited mobility and access to transportation, parents may feel more comfortable (and thus be more receptive to information) within their own homes, and the provider/education is able to personally observe parents' interaction with their children. Other programs (e.g., Mesa County) run parenting support groups. **Box 10** provides examples of two parenting programs.

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### Box 10: Parenting Programs

#### Mesa County, Families First

Mesa County Colorado Works partially funds Families First, a program for parents with young children with the goal of enhancing parent/child relationships. The program consists of a menu of services which includes case management, a home-based curriculum, and weekly support groups for mothers and fathers, respectively. Parenting instruction is provided by a trained parent educator using an in-home curriculum based on the *Growing Great Kids* program,<sup>12</sup> which covers self-care, basic care for children, nutritional information, and children’s physical development. Participating families are visited for an hour on a weekly basis in the first six months after a child is born, and biweekly for the next three years.

- The mother’s support group targets young and first time mothers and focuses on self-sufficiency. Topics include child development, child discipline, birth control and pregnancy prevention, self-sufficiency skills, problem solving, budgeting, communication skills, stress management, self-esteem, relationships, dating and marriage, and legal issues. Participants also receive help with vocational training and other education as well as assistance in gaining employment.
- The weekly support group for fathers focuses on a father’s role as a parent; most participants are non-custodial parents. Topics include those discussed in the mother’s group as well as legal issues, and child support enforcement. The program also includes a “training camp” for new fathers – a three-hour workshop covering baby care, fatherhood, and family issues, such as caring for new mothers.

Not all participants are TANF recipients, but though a Memorandum of Understanding between DHS and Hilltop Community Resources (the provider), TANF families and parents under 18 are given priority.<sup>13</sup>

#### Fremont County, Family Center

Fremont County’s Family Center offers a home-visit program, partially funded by Colorado Works. In the “First Steps” parenting program, five home visitors use the *Parents as Teachers* curriculum<sup>14</sup> in monthly visits to 120 families. Educational activities conducted by the visitors include both the parents and children in age-appropriate activities, with visits occurring monthly for children who are three and younger, and quarterly until children turn five. For example, the monthly lesson plan for 16-month old children focuses on understanding temper tantrums, child stress, and socio-emotional development. At the conclusion of the visit, the home visitor makes observations about the child’s development, notes the parents’ strengths, and discusses the parent’s follow-up activities. For families involved in Colorado Works, the home visitor will make a report to the Colorado Works case worker as well

Home visitors are also able to take advantage of their first-hand observation of the home environment and make referrals to appropriate services, including domestic violence services providers, screenings for learning disabilities, and to Colorado Works for families that could benefit from cash assistance.

Not all families belong to Colorado Works, although TANF families are referred to the program, and there are no income guidelines for participation.

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<sup>12</sup> See <http://www.greatkidsinc.org/growinggreatkids.htm> for the Growing Great Kids site.

<sup>13</sup> The MOU requires Hilltop to serve 20 TANF participants and 15 Spanish-speaking participants.

<sup>14</sup> See <http://www.parentsasteachers.org/> for the Parents as Teachers site.



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Many of these education programs focus on a sub-group of parents. For instance, Yuma County DSS contracts with **Baby Bear Hugs**, a nonprofit, to provide support, education, and resource referrals to expecting parents or those with young children (newborns to three years old). Both of the parenting groups offered in Mesa County target young and first-time parents.

While some programs focus on teaching specific skills, others provide crisis intervention or ongoing support. **La Gente**, a nonprofit in Alamosa County, serves Colorado Works and other families in the seven San Luis Valley counties, including two which were visited, Saguache and Rio Grande. La Gente serves families in crisis as well as those with regular needs through monthly classes, home visits, and necessary items (clothing, baby kits, food boxes, etc.) After a family resolves a crisis, it may not have regular contact with La Gente, but the family can renew the relationship, if needed.

Denver County’s Colorado Works program helps support a program for Colorado Works clients who have children with developmental disabilities. **JFK Partnerships**, in coordination with the Mayor’s Office of Economic Development, Denver County Department of Human Services, and a service provider for families facing developmental disability-related issues, funds two staff members to work with Colorado Works case managers to make sure parents are equipped to deal with issues they may face. The two workers help parents navigate the disability service system and connect them with doctors and other professionals, while conducting home visits and attending staffings. Around 50 families a year are served by the JFK workers.

Finally, a few of the study counties had developed parenting or family services centers, such as El Paso’s **Center on Fathering**. *Box 11* provides further detail on the programs provided.

**Box 11: Services Offered by the Center on Fathering**

**El Paso County**

- Weekly support groups for fathers.
- 15-week “Fathering” course which emphasizes fathers’ role in their children’s development.
- 10-week “Conflict Resolution for Dads” program.
- A workshop for new fathers, “Fathers: Now What?” through collaboration with a local hospital.
- The “Father to Father” mentoring program, offered through collaboration with the Teen Self-Sufficiency Program, targeting young fathers.

**2. Fatherhood Programs and Other Services for Non-custodial Parents**

There is no one-size-fits all “fatherhood” program. Such programs vary considerably in content and mission. Some focus on fathers’ economic prospects by helping them attain skills, a job, or a better job. Some provide parenting instruction (see above). Others work with fathers to establish paternity and child support orders for their children. Still others help non-custodial fathers with access and visitation issues. Some programs provide support groups where fathers can learn from each other.

Research on fatherhood programs has found mixed results. An evaluation of the Parents’ Fair Share demonstration—a fatherhood program that focused on establishing and stabilizing employment, increasing child support payments, and strengthening a father’s connection to his

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child(ren)—found that the program increased employment rates and earnings for the most disadvantaged men (i.e., those without high school diplomas and/or recent work experience) (Miller and Knox, 2001). The same study found that the program showed some success in increasing the proportion of fathers who paid child support. However, there was no effect on parental visitation. Another study found that fathers who pay child support are more likely to visit their children (Koball and Principe, 2002).

In Colorado, 26 percent of children live in a single-parent household; most of these households are headed by a single mother.<sup>15</sup> However, only 40 percent of female-headed families in Colorado received child support in 2004.<sup>16</sup> To address this, many counties have focused attention on helping fathers support their children through the establishment and enforcement of child support orders. Federal legislation passed in 1998 tied federal incentive payments to state child support enforcement agencies to establishment and collection functions, which likely increased attention in these areas. However, even fatherhood programs that have a child support focus often include a fuller menu of services.

Most counties reported some collaboration between Colorado Works and child support enforcement. This generally involves working with the custodial parent to identify the absent parent and obtain information necessary to establish and/or enforce a child support order. During intake, Colorado Works applicants are required to identify the absent parent and pursue child support collections, with a few mitigating circumstances.<sup>17</sup> Some counties include a presentation on child support requirements during the Colorado Works intake, and some have a representative from child support speak with the new clients. According to the county survey, almost all (97 percent) of the counties refer or receive referrals from child support enforcement. In addition to referrals, most counties (65 percent) reported either co-locating or cross-training staff. Approximately 10 percent of counties reported having a financial contract with child support and 19 percent had an informal memorandum of understanding.

Services for fathers, generally the absent parents, are less common. The county survey found that approximately 13 percent of all counties have developed a responsible fatherhood program, although some counties are still in the initial stages of implementation. The field work provided additional insight. Many counties provide or fund programs designed to increase fathers' involvement in the lives of their children. All of the programs discussed during site visits were holistic in their aim, emphasizing both the need for father-child relationships and financial support. Programs include parenting education classes designed to improve the father-child relationship; education, job readiness, job placement, and employment services, designed to help

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<sup>15</sup> This estimate is comparable the national average of 31 percent of all families headed by a single parent. From data compiled by Kids Count, <http://www.aecf.org/kidscount>, from the following source: Population Reference Bureau, analysis of data from the U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2000 Supplementary Survey, 2001 Supplementary Survey, 2002 through 2004 American Community Survey.

<sup>16</sup> This estimate is comparable the national average of 35 percent of all female headed families receiving child support payments in 2004. From data compiled by Kids Count, <http://www.aecf.org/kidscount>, from the following source: Population Reference Bureau, analysis of data from the U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey (March supplement), 1990 through 2004.

<sup>17</sup> Colorado requires the assignment of child support rights as a condition of eligibility. Failure to cooperate with child support enforcement results in sanctions in a minimum of 25% of the grant up to the entirety of the grant as outlined in the county plan. Clients may be granted waivers from child support cooperation if domestic violence is involved.

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fathers improve their economic outlooks and ultimately improve financial contributions to their children; and resource centers offering a combination of these services. Some programs also included legal services. **Box 12** describes two programs for non-custodial fathers, El Paso County's Parent Opportunity Program and Pueblo County's Fatherhood Initiative.

**Box 12: Examples of Programs Targeting Non-custodial Parents**

**El Paso County, Parent Opportunity Program (POP)**

POP, implemented in 1998 as a part of El Paso's Welfare Reform Plan, helps non-custodial parents improve their relationships with their children, overcome barriers to employment, and meet child support obligations. POP is operated by Policy Studies Inc. (PSI) through a partnership with El Paso DHS, the Center on Fathering, Goodwill Industries, child support, TESSA (a domestic violence resource provider), Colorado Legal Services, and the Office of Alternative Dispute Resolution. As an incentive to participants, child support arrears do not accrue while the father is participating. Fathers are offered a variety of services: case management and referrals to community resources; employment/training assistance; peer support; classes on fathering, co-parenting, and conflict resolution; mediation services; mental health and substance abuse referrals; and, legal referrals and guidance.

Non-custodial parents who are residents of El Paso or Teller Counties with incomes up to 185 percent of the Federal Poverty Level are eligible for the program. PSI reported that in the third quarter of 2005, 221 individuals were referred to the program; 149 ultimately enrolled. Additionally, PSI tracks a variety of participant characteristics and outcomes and reported that in the same quarter, program graduates paid 60 percent of the monthly support order, on average, while program dropouts paid an average of 15 percent.

**Pueblo County, Fatherhood Initiative**

The Fatherhood Initiative aimed to increase non-custodial parents' child support payments and encourage fathers' emotional involvement with their children. Participation was voluntary and most referrals originated within the child support agency. The initiative provided a full range of services, including education, a weekly support group, mentoring, workshops, job readiness, job placement, employment services, and child support guidance. A community service component was added in 2003; fathers were expected to complete at least 80 hours per year. The program could waive a portion of arrears for fathers who participated. The Fatherhood Initiative also began the Court Mandate program in 2003. This program focused on providing fathers with employment services, establishing parenting time, and preventing incarceration for non-compliance with child support orders. The Fatherhood Initiative operated from 1999 to 2004 but was discontinued due to budget issues.

County staff reported that recruitment of fathers can be difficult, because participation is voluntary. The Mesa County (Grand Junction) Workforce Center, in collaboration with Colorado Works and child support enforcement, runs a program for non-custodial fathers, the **Personal Responsibility Employment Program**, or PREP. PREP was originally funded by Welfare to Work program (through the Department of Labor). Currently, the program is funded by DHS and run by Hilltop Community Resources. The program provides employment and training services to non-custodial fathers to help them meet child support obligations and build a positive relationship with children. Arrears are reduced for fathers who successfully complete the program. Participants attend employment and training sessions, receive job search help through

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the Workforce Center Job Services, are eligible for free alcohol and drug treatment, credit counseling, and incentives (such as gas vouchers and rental assistance). According to staff members, the program has had difficulty recruiting and retaining participants in recent years. There were six PREP participants at the time of the interview.

Counties providing fatherhood programs may develop a system of incentives to help recruit non-custodial parents. One strategy is to suspend (as in El Paso County’s Parent Opportunity Program) or reduce (as in Pueblo County’s former Fatherhood Initiative and Mesa County’s PREP program) arrearages from accruing when the parent is participating in the program. National evidence shows that child support agencies can be an effective source of recruitment, but that it is also important to target a broad population of fathers with a program (Pearson et al, 2000).

### **3. Services to Improve Child Care Quality**

All counties provide child care to Colorado Works recipients. While families of all incomes are concerned about quality child care, low-income parents are particularly constrained as their choices are limited to providers that Colorado Works subsidizes. Some counties help participants secure child care by reserving slots with local providers. Others work with resource and referral agencies. For example, many of the larger Denver-area counties reported having a contract with Aspen Family Services to coordinate child care referrals and provider payments. One advantage to this arrangement is that Aspen will continue to coordinate low-income child care for Colorado Works recipients after they have left TANF.

Going beyond referrals, some counties focus on improving the quality of child care providers. For instance, Garfield County contracts with the City of Aspen to provide consultation and technical assistance to child care providers, and referrals and consumer information to parents. To enhance the quality of child care services within the county, Rio Grande has a consultation agreement with the county public health department to provide technical assistance. **Box 13** details the services provided through this agreement.

**Box 13: Services Offered through Rio Grande Department of Social Services  
Child Care Health Consultation Agreement**

- Public health nurses provide workshops and training for staff at the 14 county child care providers to help centers meet licensing requirements and staff receive certification of skills in particular areas, such as CPR or administering medications.
- The Public Health Department serves as a clearinghouse of information to providers and parents. The department provides written materials to providers and parents on topics ranging from parenting skills, how to discipline children, emotional health, and safety. Additionally, child care providers or parents can call the department with specific questions.

During focus groups, current and former Colorado Works recipients voiced concerns that the cost of child care becomes prohibitive after leaving welfare and negates earnings gains from employment. The increase in child care costs is especially steep, as the income limits for low-income child care are low. One recipient reported that after leaving Colorado Works for a job, she had to quit because she did not qualify for subsidized child care and could not afford the

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payments. Along these lines, another recipient reported that a mother leaving welfare would have to make between \$10.50 and \$11.00 per hour to break even, and this increase in costs associated with work “sets you up to fail.”

Counties are required to subsidize services for families below 130 percent of the poverty level and a few have chosen to serve families above this limit.<sup>18</sup> Some counties go beyond this threshold to ensure all low-income families have access to child care. For example, Mesa County provides child care to families earning up to 225 percent of the FPL, in line with the program’s philosophy that child care is necessary to prevent dependency. Although recent increases in the county’s caseloads have caused budget shortfalls, the county has continued to subsidize child care for these families.

### **C. Youth Services**

The TANF program can work with youth in a variety of ways. It can target youth who reside in TANF families (i.e., live with an adult head or receive benefits themselves as a teen parent). Or, given the broad nature of the goals of TANF, programs can serve teens in the larger community through efforts to reduce out-of-wedlock pregnancies and prevent future welfare dependency. Indeed, one of the factors that fueled welfare reform was the concern that the welfare system was trapping families begun by teenagers in a lifetime of poverty. The birth rate for unmarried teenagers grew throughout the 1970s and 1980s, peaking at 45.8 births per 1,000 unmarried 15- to 19-year olds in 1994. The rate has since declined to 34.8 in 2003 (National Center for Health Statistics, 2005). As noted earlier, families started by teenagers accounted for the majority of families on welfare in the 1980s.

In addition to increased risk for welfare receipt, there are other reasons to be concerned about teen parenthood. For example, only a third of teen mothers graduate high school on time. Teen fathers have lower educational levels and lower long-term labor market activity than other teen males. Studies also suggest that teen fathers are more likely to be from families that experienced teen childbearing and welfare receipt (Coley and Chase-Lansdale, 1998). And the children of teen parents also are affected. Poor children experience school failure, early parenthood, delinquency, and joblessness at rates significantly higher than that of their more advantaged peers. Research finds that regardless of poverty and educational achievement, children born to teens suffer these problems to a greater extent, on average, than children born to older mothers (Hardy et. al, 1997).

Beyond parenthood, there are other risk factors for teens that can affect the transition to adulthood and long-term self-sufficiency. These include dropping out of school and being unemployed.

In Colorado, about 14 percent of individuals in TANF cases were youth between the ages of 13 and 17 in June 2004. Among counties visited, the proportion ranges from 9 to 20 percent.

As Tables 3 and 4 indicate, many trends in Colorado are moving in a positive direction. Some of the factors associated with youthful “disconnection”—including births, dropping out, and general idleness—are decreasing. For instance, the teen birth rate declined 10 percent between 1997 and 2003. The decrease was more pronounced among younger teens.

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<sup>18</sup> see <http://www.cdhs.state.co.us/childcare/cccap.htm>

**Table 3: Teen Birth Rate per 1,000 Females in Age Group, State of Colorado, 1997-2003**

	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	% Change
15-17 year olds	31	30	30	30	26	26	25	-19%
18 and 19 year olds	78	80	80	84	80	79	73	-6%
Total, 15 to 19	49	50	50	51	47	47	44	-10%

**Notes:** Rate is per 1000 females in each age group

**Source:** From data compiled by Kids County, <http://www.aecf.org/kidscount>, from the following sources: 1990-2003 Natality Data Set CD Series 21, numbers 2-9, 11-12, 14-16, 16H National Center for Health Statistics.

In addition, the high school dropout rate among teens ages 16 to 19 declined by 27 percent between 2000 and 2004.<sup>19</sup> The proportion of teens that are “idle”—that is, not in school and not working—decreased slightly, as well.<sup>20</sup>

**Table 4: Youth Risk Factors, State of Colorado, 2000-2004**

	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	% Change
Teen high school dropouts <sup>1</sup>	11%	14%	11%	7%	8%	-27%
Idle teens <sup>2</sup>	10%	10%	9%	9%	--	-10%

**Notes:** 1. Rate among youth age 16 to 19. 2. Youth age 16 to 19 not in school and not working

**Sources:** From data compiled by Kids Count, <http://www.aecf.org/kidscount>, from the following sources: 1. Population Reference Bureau, analysis of data from the U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2000 Supplementary Survey, 2001 Supplementary Survey, 2002 through 2004 American Community Survey; 2. Population Reference Bureau, analysis of data from the U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2000 Supplementary Survey, 2001 Supplementary Survey, 2002 through 2004 American Community Survey.

Despite these positive trends, there are reasons to remain concerned. In 2003, about 1 in 10 Colorado youth were idle (i.e., not working and not in school). Among the site visit counties, this figure ranged from 2.5 percent to almost 17 percent.

Many Colorado counties operate programs for youth. The county survey found that about 42 percent provide some type of youth development program and a similar proportion offer mentoring services for youth. Although the motivation behind providing youth-related programs varies by county, each ultimately aims to prevent youth from becoming disconnected from schools and the labor force, thus fostering self-sufficiency and preventing future entry into the welfare or other public systems (e.g., child welfare, criminal justice). Some provide training and employment opportunities to youth, often during the summer, a time when they are least likely to be supervised. Others focus on reducing risky behaviors, such as promoting abstinence from alcohol, drugs, and sexual activity. Still others seek to foster healthy relationships. Some programs target youth involved in Colorado Works families while others provide services to a broader population. Most programs are voluntary.

<sup>19</sup> Colorado’s rate is comparable to the national dropout rate, which was 8 percent in 2004.

<sup>20</sup> Colorado’s rate is comparable to the national average of 9 percent of all youth 16 to 19 considered idle in 2004.

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In some instances, youth programs are funded by Colorado Works. In others, they are provided by the Workforce Center, often in collaboration with Colorado Works.

This section focuses on three types of youth programs:

- Employment and training programs;
- Programs that focus on postponing sexual involvement;
- Programs that promote youth development more generally, such as encouraging strong relationships with other youth or mentors, or engaging young people in self-esteem building activities.

### **1. Employment and Training Programs**

Employment and training activities are a key component of services to adult TANF recipients. Many counties have extended these services to low-income teenagers in TANF families or in the broader community. These programs are operated in a variety of settings by different organizations, including the Colorado Works program, the local Workforce Center, and community-based organizations.

Some counties provide services to youth in a school setting. For example, Adams County, through a contract with Goodwill Industries, targets TANF eligible, high-risk<sup>21</sup> high school students in two high schools and two middle schools. The program attempts to prevent the need for assistance later in life through early intervention. The **Youth Opportunity Services** program includes a curriculum (developed by Goodwill) that helps students develop goals, communication skills, career options, and basic living skills (e.g., budgeting). **Box 14** provides additional detail on the program. Classes are part of a student's regular schedule (electives). Each student works with a case manager to develop a plan for high school completion, post-secondary education, or employment. Supportive services include mental health services, transportation assistance, clothing and equipment for employment, and child care. Many supportive services are also available to students' families.

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<sup>21</sup> Teen parents, students struggling academically, students who have dropped out or have been expelled, students with absentee problems, and difficult family situations are all targeted in referrals.

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#### Box 14: Youth Opportunity Services

##### Adams County

This program aims to help high-risk students develop career-minded goals, graduate from high school, move into secondary education or employment, and avoid the welfare system. Goodwill developed a specific curriculum for this program that focuses on the following skills:

- Self-awareness options and decision-making.
- Setting and reaching short and long-term goals.
- Developing interpersonal skills and understanding their relevance to the workplace and life.
- Developing and using appropriate conflict resolution and communication skills.
- Basic skills necessary to be self-sufficient and live independently, such as budgeting, financial management, balancing work and education, etc.
- Exploration of employment/career options.
- Exploration of post-secondary training opportunities.

In 9<sup>th</sup> grade, each student is assigned a case manager who helps him or her develop a plan for high school, focusing on post-secondary goals and the necessary steps to reach these goals. The case manager monitors the student's progress through high school.

Goodwill also coordinates with a mental health service provider who provides short-term treatment, referrals, and psycho-educational services to students, as well as to their families. Goodwill also provides support services to students, including transportation assistance, child care while students are in school activities, clothing and equipment (for students or their parent) necessary to maintain employment, and incentives for training completion.

Students within the four schools are referred to the program by teachers and counselors. In 2004, 800 students attended classes and 2,000 students received at least one service through the program.

Another source of support for youth is community resource centers. El Paso County, for instance, operates two **Teen Resource Centers** that focus on helping teens complete their education, gain employment, and obtain tools for successful living. The centers are open to all teens and strive to help youth avoid entering the welfare system. DHS partners with 38 organizations. The centers include computer labs and information hubs that provide information about employment, education and career planning, and education completion. Partner agencies provide education and training services. Other on-site activities include life skills workshops, parenting classes (for pregnant and parenting youth), and recreational and artistic opportunities.

Additionally, a number of counties use TANF funds to operate summer employment initiatives (e.g., Fremont County, Larimer County, Weld County) for high school-aged youth. These programs provide concrete work experience and engage youth during a time when they have less supervision (e.g., not in school). Each program combines employment experience with some type of education. Students are placed at work sites to obtain hands-on experience. These vary by



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county but include community-based organizations (e.g., Catholic Charities, Goodwill), public agencies (e.g., libraries), day care centers, and for-profit businesses. In addition, participants attend classes. For instance, in Fremont and Larimer Counties, youth work four days per week and attend a class on the fifth day (financial management and life skills, respectively). In Weld County, youth work 20 hours per week; the educational component is tailored to their individual needs through a TABE test. Youth also participate in remedial activities (if they are below grade level) or enrichment ones (if they are above). In each program, youth receive financial incentives, generally wages. In Larimer and Weld Counties, they receive bonuses for completing program segments. **Box 15** provides additional information about the Larimer County program.

### **Box 15: Operation Occupation**

#### **Larimer County**

Operation Occupation is an eight-week summer program for youth ages 14 to 17 provided by the Workforce Center. Initiated in 1999, the program targets youth in both the Workforce Investment Act (WIA) program and in Colorado Works families. Between 30 and 35 youth participate in a given year and they are generally split evenly between the two programs. There are two employment coaches – one works with TANF youth and the other with WIA youth. TANF youth are recruited through letters to TANF families. In the most recent year, there was a 100 percent retention rate.

The program’s objectives are to:

- Develop and improve employability skills
- Increase awareness of drug and alcohol prevention strategies
- Enhance citizenship skills
- Explore a future career path
- Enroll in an educational component for credit
- Earn money and practice basic money management

Youth begin with one week of work readiness training and receive a work readiness credential, certificate of achievement, and a \$50 incentive payment. Youth then begin work. They spend four days per week at a job site and are paid the minimum wage. Examples of sites include community agencies such as a women’s center, farms, daycare centers, United Way, libraries, and Catholic Charities. Youth with exceptional attendance at work earn an additional \$50 incentive. On Fridays, teens receive academic enrichment. Topics include budgeting and financial management, soft skills training, and health (e.g., substance abuse prevention, sex education). Youth receive school credit for successful completion of the academic portion, as well as a \$50 incentive.

A case manager from the Workforce Center meets with participating youth prior to the start of the program to determine their job interests and skills. A TABE is administered, along with a work readiness assessment (ERS). The case manager meets with each youth once a week during the academic enrichment workshops. Youth participants are evaluated by their worksite supervisors at the beginning of the program, mid-way through the program, and at its conclusion.

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### 3. Teen Pregnancy Prevention

Some counties support or fund programs designed to prevent non-marital pregnancies among youth, often provided in conjunction with a strong abstinence message. These programs encourage youth to take steps to prevent or postpone parenthood until they are prepared emotionally and financially to have children. Thus, these programs also aim to prevent dependence on Colorado Works and other public programs. Often, pregnancy prevention is part of a larger message that focuses on youth development, such as improving communication, building self-esteem, completing education, and abstaining from other risky behaviors, such as alcohol and drug use.

Examples of pregnancy prevention initiatives are Get Real (Mesa County), Friends First (Adams County), WAIT and Sexual Cessation (Weld County). These programs target youth beyond TANF, although Colorado Works provides some funding to support them. The county TANF programs contract with outside organizations to provide classes or technical assistance to the community.

The Weld County Abstinence Education program encompasses two programs: **WAIT** (Why Am I Tempted) and **Sexual Cessation** (see *Box 16*). The Abstinence Education Program philosophy is that abstinence until marriage is the optimal lifestyle choice for all unmarried teenagers. WAIT training occurs in grades 7 to 12. The program is described as “love and relationship” education rather than sex education. The **Sexual Cessation** program involves one-on-one counseling of youth around responsible sexual decision making.

Adams County also provides abstinence education to teens through a contract with **Friends First**, a nonprofit, nonsectarian organization. The program provides services to teens through school, community and church programs. Teens participate in a mentor program called STARS (Self-control, Trust, Abstinence, Responsibility and Self-Respect), which links older teens with younger ones. The abstinence message extends beyond premarital sex to include alcohol, tobacco and other drugs.

Other programs incorporate pregnancy prevention education into a series of activities that promote responsible life choices. Mesa County, for example, provides funding for the **Get Real** program, operated by Hilltop Family Services. This pregnancy prevention program serves Medicaid-eligible youth (males and females) aged 10 to 19. The program uses a broad array of approaches to teach participants about responsible life choices, including year-round weekly after-school groups, family visits to build relationships and communication, activities to build self-esteem and reinforce decision-making skills, and one-on-one time between youth and staff. The weekly group sessions cover pregnancy prevention, domestic violence, substance abuse, and other topics. The program focuses on abstinence and emphasizes the psychological effects of sexual activity; however, information about contraception is also available.<sup>22</sup> The groups also discuss domestic violence, substance abuse, and other topics. About five percent of participants belong to TANF families. TANF families with a child in the program receive a \$50 incentive payment for three months of participation and \$100 at six months, per child.

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<sup>22</sup> The school district has an abstinence-only policy, so sessions dealing with contraception must occur after school hours.

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### Box 16: Abstinence Education Programs

#### Weld County

The Abstinence Education Program within the County Health Department operates two secular abstinence education models designed to improve personal development, positive transition to adulthood, positive interpersonal relationships, and improved knowledge about parenting:

- WAIT Training –“Why am I Tempted”—which uses a standard curriculum operating in other communities nationwide.<sup>23</sup> The program staff works with 12 County school districts to tailor the WAIT curriculum to their needs and schedule, providing lesson plans, special programs and curricula that can be integrated into regular classes (e.g., health) or operate separately. The WAIT team also does pre- and post- testing of students and makes presentations to students and teachers regularly—over 100 presentations and workshops a year ranging from 1 hour to 40 days.
- Teen Counseling Program: Sexual Cessation—using the “5 As”: ask about types of sex, assess risk, advise based on the assessment, assist in behavior change, and agree to try to abstain. Teen counselors work with unmarried teens ages 12 to 18 to counsel them to maintain healthy sexual behaviors and move away from risky sexual behaviors. Staff receives referrals of youth from schools, clinics, parents, and elsewhere, and conducts one-on-one counseling. Topics include the steps of intimacy, boundaries, refusal skills, dating, communication skills, conflict resolution, and future goals.

#### 4. Youth Development Programs

“Youth development” is a broad term that encompasses many of the programs described above. In general, youth development programs bolster the physical and emotional well-being of youth. These include helping youth build strong relationships with peers or mentors, engage in sports or leadership activities, and participate in community service. Examples of programs include Tu Casa (Rio Grande County), Rare Breed (Pueblo County), Casa Start (Rio Grande County) and TIGHT (Weld County).

**Tu Casa**, a Rio Grande nonprofit, in collaboration with the San Luis Valley Comprehensive Community Mental Health Center, runs in-school workshops that teach teens about healthy relationships. Workshops are often provided to an entire class; in some cases, high-risk students are targeted. This program, recognizing the effects that domestic violence and household conflict can have on family stability and children’s development, is aimed at breaking the cycle of domestic violence. The eight-week curriculum aims to: (1) inform young people about the elements that make up healthy relationships; (2) increase awareness and understanding about violence and abuse; and (3) motivate youth and young adults to seek relationships based on equality and mutual respect. It includes classroom discussions about healthy teen relationships, role playing, and student presentations, and uses pop culture imagery and vignettes to help participants recognize gender stereotypes and their influence on dating relationships.

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<sup>23</sup> See <http://www.waittraining.com/index.asp> for the site.

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Other counties focus on linking youth to adults. For example, **Rare Breed** was started in Pueblo County in 1999 as a sports and leadership training program that provided services to youth within TANF families to keep them in school, teach them discipline, and increase self-esteem. Started by former professional football players, the camps used the medium of sports to help youth prepare to meet the challenges of life. Before it ended in October 2005 due to budget issues, the program operated camps that served up to 60 youth who were referred by DSS. The camps were led by professional sports players and college coaches. Youth participated in a wide variety of sports (from football to skiing) and educational activities (for example, math and budgeting). Even though the contract has ended, the two coordinators of the program plan to continue the activities utilizing past participants and older youth as mentors.

Rio Grande County operates a mentoring program for middle school-aged youth considered “at risk.” **Casa Start** provides “intensive mentoring” and wraparound services. The overarching goal of the program is to change the culture of the middle school; in addition, spillover effects are expected for siblings. **Box 17** provides additional information.

**Box 17: Casa Start**

**Rio Grande County**

Casa Start provides mentoring services to at-risk youth in middle school. It is based on a national program that is already in place in other counties in the San Luis Valley. The focus is preventative-- serving “at-risk” youth rather than those already the “most troubled.” The children are selected through a collaborative process with the school, counselors, and probation officers from a list of youth who had been suspended or expelled. Most of these children are from TANF families. Funding for this program is provided through a four-year Colorado Department of Education grant. The County TANF program has made a commitment to provide future funding.

Three staff members, including a full-time counselor at the school, provide a needs assessment for each participant, one-on-one counseling and case management. Necessary referrals are made (e.g., external mental health services; if they are not covered under Medicaid, the program can fund them). Mentoring is provided using a Big Brothers/Big Sisters-like model. Volunteers have included middle school teachers, DSS caseworkers, people who found out about the program through their churches, and others. Separately, the program has a community policing aspect, where probation officers and police officers hang out with the kids to show them they can be good guys.

The after-school program meets four days a week. Students receive help with homework and are involved in activities around issues such as anger management, life skills, or drugs. The program includes incentives for not missing school and for getting good grades. These incentives are sometimes monetary, but generally an attempt is made to provide things that lead to activities the child can do with his or her family, such as bowling passes or movie tickets. The program staff checks regularly on participants’ grades, provide homework help, and remind parents about parent-teacher conferences.

Finally, the Weld County **Teamwork, Innovation, Growth, Hope, and Training Youth Corps Program** (TIGHT) program focuses on the “most troubled” youth—those who have been expelled from school or are involved in the criminal justice system, foster care, or child welfare. Participation is mandatory. Participants are involved in community services, education, and life skills development five days a week. TIGHT is funded through Youth Conservation Corps, core

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social service funds, and TANF, and is provided by Employment Services at the Workforce Center. TIGHT participants can take advantage of a number of courses and workshops— CPR certification, HIV prevention, WAIT abstinence program, drug awareness, in-home therapy, First Aid, conflict resolution and team work, and the regular GED classes held within the Workforce Center. Participants are eligible for biweekly incentive payments, up to \$220.

#### **IV. CONCLUSIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH**

Colorado counties provide a wide range of services for families that are designed to promote self-sufficiency, prevent future welfare dependency, and promote family well-being. Family and preventive services reach diverse populations beyond the traditional TANF family unit, including relative caretakers, non-resident parents, and youth not residing in TANF households.

Services target the multitude of factors that affect a family’s ability to escape poverty that go beyond the skills needed to obtain and retain a job. While employment directly affects a family’s financial resources, parenting skills, education and job opportunities for youth, and access to services from other governmental and community agencies also affect family well-being.

Site visits identified three broad areas of family- and prevention-related services:

*Collaborations with child welfare agencies and other efforts to prevent out-of-home placements.* Such programs included multi-disciplinary teams or a designated staff member serving joint TANF/child welfare cases. Some programs served a broadly defined low-income population to prevent the need for Colorado Works and child welfare involvement. Finally, some counties have expanded the funds and services available to the relative caretakers on child-only cases, to keep these children in the care of relatives and out of foster care.

*Programs designed to increase parental involvement, from education and home-based programs, to fatherhood and family formation initiatives.* Recognizing that parents play a crucial role in helping children succeed in school and beyond, these programs aim to increase child well-being and outcomes. A number of counties offer educational services, focusing on parenting skills and other attributes affecting child well-being, often provided with a home-based model. Some counties may also help parents access quality child care for their children. Another category of parenting services counties have developed are those which focus on increasing both the financial and non-financial contributions of non-resident parents, usually fathers.

*Programs for youth, including non-marital pregnancy prevention programs, summer employment and training initiatives, and in-school services.* Programs targeting at-risk youth can help break the cycle of poverty and welfare receipt by providing youth with mentoring, pregnancy prevention services, employment and training services, and other activities. Research indicates that a sizable portion of youth have difficulty transitioning to adulthood and spend long periods of time “disconnected” from mainstream institutions. Counties in Colorado aim to prevent future welfare dependency through employment and training services, programs that focus on postponing sexual involvement, and programs that promote youth development by encouraging strong relationships with other youth or mentors, or engaging young people in self-esteem building activities.

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## Windows of Opportunity

Counties have identified creative ways to provide family and preventative services. Often, programs and services are provided in collaboration with another governmental entity (e.g., the child welfare agency) or a community-based provider (e.g., the Family Support Center, nonprofit service provider). Collaborating enables Colorado Works staff to leverage expertise and additional resources. For instance, one summer youth employment program was jointly funded and operated by DHS and the local Workforce Center.

Future program evaluations would be informative. The programs described in this report are promising practices and generally accord with research findings. Some counties have included performance measures within contracts for these programs and some counties measure particular services and outcomes. However, it may be difficult for staff to track former clients who have left a program for extensive periods, as regular contact is no longer a requirement. It is also important to separate program effects from individual characteristics that may also influence particular outcomes. This report includes information on these measures and outcomes, when available. However, rigorous evaluations could provide insight into whether these programs work in the unique context of Colorado and whether they are replicable beyond the counties in which they operate. Many counties track the number of clients, families, or individuals served. Future work for this evaluation could track outcomes clients experience after receiving services or participation in a particular program and could examine how clients fare after receiving these services, providing further information on the effectiveness of such programs in preventing poverty and promoting family well-being.

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## Acronyms

A+	Advancement Plus (Goodwill Industries, Adams County)
ABE	Adult Basic Education
ADHD	Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder
AWEP	Alternative Work Experience Program
BBH	Baby Bear Hugs (Yuma)
BHO	Behavioral Health Organization
CACTIS	Colorado Automated Client Tracking Information System
CASA	Court Appointed Special Advocates
CBMS	Colorado Benefits Management System
CBT	Community Based Training (Arapahoe)
CCA	Community College of Aurora
CCD	Community College of Denver
CDHS	Colorado Department of Human Services
CHEERS	Community Household Education & Economic Resource Center (Saguache)
CHOICES	CHOICES Specialized Training Options (Community College of Aurora)
CNA	Certified Nursing Assistant
COPEs	Career Orientation Placement and Evaluation Survey
COPS	Career Occupational Preference System
CRC	Capital Research Corporation
CWEE	Center for Work Education and Employment (Denver)
CWEP	Community Work Experience Program
DBT	Dialectical Behavior Therapy
DHHS	U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
DHS	Department of Human Services
DSS	Department of Social Services
DV	Domestic Violence
DVERT	Domestic Violence Enhanced Response Team (El Paso)
DVR	Division of Vocational Rehabilitation
DWD	Division of Workforce Development (Denver)
EIPP	Early Intervention and Prevention Program (Adams)
ERS	Employment Readiness Scale

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ES	Employment Services
ESL	English as a Second Language
ESP	Essential Skills Program (Denver)
FFY	Federal Fiscal Year
FPL	Federal Poverty Level
FRCC	Front Range Community College
GATB	General Aptitude Test Battery
GED	General Educational Development (high school equivalency)
HEP	High School Equivalency Program (Buena HEP, Rio Grande)
IRC	Individual Responsibility Contract
JHU	Johns Hopkins University
JOBS	Job Opportunities and Basic Skills Training\
LCMH	Larimer County Mental Health
LD	Learning Disability
LPN	Licensed Practical Nurse
MMPI-2	Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory-2 (used in Bent County)
MOU	Memorandum of Understanding
MSR	Monthly Status Report
MYAT	Multidisciplinary Youth Assessment Team (Weld)
NJCLD	National Joint Committee on Learning Disabilities
OJC	Otero Junior College
OJT	On-the-Job Training
PCM	Primary Case Manager (Denver)
PHA	Public Housing Authority
PREP	Personal Responsibility Employment Program (Mesa)
PLATO	PLATO Simulated GED Preparation Package
POP	Parent Opportunity Program (El Paso)
PRWORA	Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act
PTSD	Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder
PW	Project Wise (Denver)
RMBH	Rocky Mountain Behavioral Health (Fremont County)
SASSI	Substance Abuse Subtle Screening Inventory
SSA	Social Security Administration

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SSBG	Social Services Block Grant
SSI/SSDI	Supplemental Security Income/Social Security Disability Insurance
SIPP	Survey of Income and Program Participation
TABE	Test of Adult Basic Education
TANF	Temporary Assistance for Needy Families
TDM	Team Decision Making (child welfare)
TEP	Transitional Employment Program (Larimer)
TESSA	Trust Education Safety Support Action (El Paso)
TIGHT	Teamwork, Innovation, Growth, Hope, and Training Youth Corps
TPG	Transitional Psychological Group (Weld)
UCHSC	University of Colorado Health Sciences Center
VESL	Vocational English as a Second Language (Community College of Denver)
VESTED	Vocational Enhancements: Services, Training & Education (La Plata)
WAIT	Why Am I Tempted? (Weld)
WE	Work Experience
WFC	Workforce Center
WIA	Workforce Investment Act
WIB	Workforce Investment Board
WOW	Work Options for Women (Denver)