

Update on Child Welfare Issues
Presentation to the Douglas County Partnership in Governments
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- ◆ In April, the Governor appointed 21 members to a Select Committee to review and make recommendations pertaining to two controversial recommendations made by the original Governor's Child Welfare Action Committee.
- ◆ The two recommendations are: 1) to change the current county administered/state supervised system to a regional state run system with some flexibility for larger counties to operate as their own region and 2) a statewide, centralized child abuse hotline that would accept all child abuse reports and assign them to counties or regions for assessment or investigation.
- ◆ Seven of the Select Committee members are County Commissioners; seven are former members of the Governor's Child Welfare Action Committee and seven are advocates or other community members associated with Child Welfare.
- ◆ The Select Committee was given until September 30, 2010 to complete their review and make recommendations to the Governor.
- ◆ Counties are in unanimous support of locally delivered human services including strengthening both state and local elements of the current structure which allows counties to respond to the unique attributes of their county while providing mandated benefits and services under state guidelines.
- ◆ Given the short time frame for producing recommendations regarding what would be a massive change in organizational structure and financing, the Governor agreed with the Commissioner's recommendation to remove Organizational Restructuring from the charge of the Committee and have them focus on the Centralized Call Center recommendation.
- ◆ During the 2010 legislative session a bill passed into law establishing a Child Protection Ombudsman. Commissioner Jack Hilbert is a member of the Ombudsman Advisory Committee that is developing the role and qualifications for the Ombudsman.

- ◆ There is also a new law requiring that specific feedback be given to mandatory reporters of child abuse and neglect as to the county's response to reports. The law specifies which mandatory reporters must receive follow up information.
- ◆ Under one of the original recommendations of the Child Welfare Action Committee, a Child Welfare Training Academy was created. Child Welfare staff is required to complete specific types of training at the academy before being able to work in the field. Douglas County has had several staff members go through various training programs at the Academy.
- ◆ Douglas County is entering its second year as a Collaborative Management County for youth and families being served by multiple agencies in our community. The Collaborative set up under HB1451 has secured grant funding for a coordinator; is staffing and providing collaborative services to multi-system served youth; is tracking outcomes in juvenile justice, human services, education and mental health domains and is fine tuning family engagement strategies to involve families and youth, as well as, to reduce fragmentation and improve outcomes of service interventions.
- ◆ Douglas County Human Services is a partner in several statewide child welfare initiatives aimed at bringing services to Douglas County to meet with unique needs of our citizens.
- ◆ Douglas County is working with other counties through the Health and Human Services Subcommittee of CCI to support locally delivered human services including child protection and youth services through the use of reliable data about these services and strategies to enhance and improve service delivery at the local level.
- ◆ Douglas County Human Services has played a key role in the reshaping of the County Social Services Directors Association which operates in close coordination with CCI. Under a new structure the Association is setting the standard for child welfare practice in our state and developing useful information about child welfare and other human service programs that is based on validated data and comparisons to other states. A set of child welfare fact sheets addressing common myths and comparing state versus county run systems is one example of a recent Director's Association output.