



**COLORADO**  
Department of Human Services

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## Innovations in child welfare saves \$2.8M, strengthen family dynamic

DENVER (Dec. 4, 2015) -- The Colorado Department of Human Services, with the cooperation of counties statewide, has safely reduced the number of children in out-of-home care by 2.8 percent since the advent of the Title IV-E waiver, resulting in a \$2.8 million savings in Fiscal Year 2015.

Reducing the use of congregate care, a subpopulation of out-of-home care, has been identified as a major challenge and goal within the state's "Keeping Kids Safe and Families Healthy" initiative.

The Title IV-E Waiver was a change of rules, fully implemented in July 2013, which allowed states flexibility in how they utilized child-welfare funding. The purpose of the waiver was to improve child well-being and permanency by unifying various reform efforts in Colorado's child welfare system.

The state's substantial savings stemmed from judiciously and safely reducing the use of facilities such as group homes or residential treatment centers. The state increased the number of children placed into family foster care, kinship care or by keeping them in a safe home environment.

"All children deserve to grow up in families and not institutions," CDHS Executive Director Reggie Bicha said. "And, as our current data shows, we are making inroads in this area."

In FY2015, the total number of paid bed days dropped by 65,304.

In order to implement such a plan, it was necessary to increase recruitment and retention of safe homes, including kinship homes, which were qualified to serve children who might otherwise be placed in congregate care. The effort also included activities to increase family engagement, in-case planning and services.

CDHS and a number of Colorado counties worked with the Annie E. Casey Foundation, given that congregate care had become the default location for older youth in too many areas of the state. In addition, the Casey Family Foundation set up micro-grants aimed at removing children from congregate care.



The \$2.8 million savings will be equally split between the state and county human-services departments, dozens of which started implementing Title IV-E waiver changes with interventions that included more family engagement, kinship supports, permanency roundtables, trauma-informed screenings, and trauma-informed assessments.

The savings will be reinvested for more foster-care support, child-welfare services or more Title IV-E interventions.

“The greatest impact can be seen when local agencies, including judicial and service providers, work together with county DHS to reduce congregate care,” said Robert Werthwein, Director of the Office of Children, Youth and Families.

“Approaches statewide may vary in the implementation of the Title IV-E Waiver, but the overall success of these interventions is reflected in the positive outcomes for those removed from group or residential homes.”

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