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Casey Family Programs to Help Colorado Foster Youth Improve Educational Outcomes

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

(Denver, CO) – The Colorado Department of Human Services (CDHS), in collaboration with national foundation partner Casey Family Programs, is beginning three pilot programs intended to improve educational outcomes for youth involved in Colorado’s child welfare system. The pilot programs will take place in Jefferson, Larimer, and Douglas counties. They will be in partnership with the local human services agencies, school districts and judicial districts.

In another effort, one with a statewide reach, CDHS is collaborating with a multi-disciplinary steering committee of professionals from school districts, higher education, and numerous state agencies and community members to identify the current educational outcomes of youth in Colorado’s child welfare system,

determine key factors that affect these outcomes and create a “Colorado Blueprint for Success” outlining system-level reform.

According to a recent five-year trend study by the University of Northern Colorado College of Education and Behavior, Colorado students who were in foster care showed poor graduation and dropout rates.

“Colorado is among the first states to engage in the process of bringing the educational outcomes of youth in foster care into plain sight. These students have been described as a population with an ‘invisible achievement gap ,’ said Reggie Bicha, executive director of the Colorado Department of Human Services. “Armed with the insights from this ground-breaking study and the ability to measure graduation, completion and dropout rates annually, and support from Casey Family Programs, Colorado can now make more data-driven decisions and develop best practices to meet the educational needs of youth involved with child welfare system.”

“Colorado has taken an important step to study and quantify the challenge of youth in foster care struggling with educational attainment,” said Eric Fenner, managing director, Casey Family Programs. “The state is making a commitment to explore innovative and collaborative ways to help these young people succeed in school, which in turn will lead to brighter futures.”

Casey Family Programs is the nation's largest operating foundation focused on safely reducing the need for foster care and building Communities of Hope for children and families across America. Founded in 1966, Casey Family Programs works in all 50 states, the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico to influence long-lasting improvements to the safety and success of children, families and the communities where they live.

“Education is the foundation for success for all young people. Students in care can

and do succeed when they have the right support,” said Robert Werthwein, director, CDHS Office of Children, Youth and Families. “No matter how you look at the data we have a long way to go to ensure educational success for every child, every time. This funding will help develop better strategies for collaboration across systems to improve these educational outcomes.”

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