

## **STATE SELECTED TO RECEIVE TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE AIMED AT SUPPORTING FAMILIES WITH AT-RISK CHILDREN**

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DENVER – August 14, 2009 – The Department of Health Care Policy and Financing announced today that Colorado has been selected to receive technical assistance from Connecticut Children’s Medical Center with funding from The Commonwealth Fund for “Linking At-Risk Children to Developmental/Behavioral Programs: A National Replication of Connecticut’s Help Me Grow Program.” The project is a public/private partnership including the Colorado Department of Health Care Policy and Financing, the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment, the Colorado Department of Human Services and the Colorado Department of Education.

A team from Connecticut will provide technical assistance to Colorado to identify and assess resources and mechanisms targeted at connecting young children and their families to community services. Strategies and steps will then be identified in order to simplify and streamline the way Colorado families are connected to community resources.

Paul Dworkin, MD, physician-in-chief at Connecticut Children’s Medical Center, created the program seven years ago. According to Dr. Dworkin 12 to 16 percent of American children experience developmental, behavioral and emotional disorders. “Lack of early detection and intervention has significant implications for these children’s’ future academic and social functioning,” Dr. Dworkin said. “We have to pay special attention to our low-income populations where children living in poverty are at an increased risk for developmental and behavioral problems.”

Providers agree that early detection of developmental delays, or risk-factors for delays, offers the best hope for optimal long-term functioning. Identifying community resources and connecting families to those resources is the challenge.

“Taking notice of the development of Colorado’s children and teens is a critical first step for ensuring a stronger Colorado in the future,” said Lt. Governor Barbara O’Brien. “Children are our

next teachers, parents and community leaders. Linking families with community resources improves the success of children accessing appropriate services.”

“By assessing the current landscape and developing an action plan for improvement, we can provide coordinated community-based supports and services in a more cost-effective manner. Colorado has multiple resource and referral networks with varied purposes, funding supports, and targeted populations,” says Sandeep Wadhwa, MD, state Medicaid director “Medicaid is dedicated to improving the health and functioning of our clients. The Help Me Grow National Replication project will improve how children from birth to age eight are identified for developmental or behavioral problems and are connected to appropriate resources.”

The Connecticut Technical Assistance Team will meet with the core, interagency Colorado team in September 2009.

Founded in 1918, The Commonwealth Fund is a private foundation that aims to promote a high performing health care system that achieves better access, improved quality, and greater efficiency, particularly for society's most vulnerable, including low-income people, the uninsured, minority Americans, young children, and elderly adults. The Fund carries out this mandate by supporting independent research on health care issues and making grants to improve health care practice and policy.

The Department administers the Medicaid and Child Health Plan *Plus* programs as well as a variety of other programs for Colorado's low-income, elderly and people with disabilities. The mission of the Department is to improve access to cost-effective, quality health care services for Coloradans. For more information about the Department, visit [colorado.gov/hcpf](http://colorado.gov/hcpf).

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