STATE OF COLORADO

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Bill Ritter, Jr.
Governor

B 2010-007

EXECUTIVE ORDER

Creating the Governor's Working Group on the Structure of Colorado's Human Services System and the Centralized Call Center for Child Abuse and Neglect Referrals

Pursuant to the authority vested in the Office of the Governor of the State of Colorado, I, Bill Ritter, Jr., Governor of the State of Colorado, hereby issue this Executive Order creating the Governor's Working Group on the Structure of Colorado's Human Services System and the Centralized Call Center for Child Abuse and Neglect Referrals.

I. Background and Purpose

The Governor's Child Welfare Action Committee (the "Committee") was formed by Executive Order B 006 08 on April 16, 2008. This committee of twenty-five geographically, culturally and professionally diverse Coloradoans worked for eighteen months to study and develop thirty-five recommendations to improve the safety of vulnerable children in Colorado and to improve the State's child welfare system. This Office accepted twenty-seven of the initial twenty-nine recommendations.

Many recommendations have already been implemented, including the Child Welfare Training Academy, which began operations on January 19, 2010. The Training Academy, one of the earliest recommendations of the Committee, will ensure that new child welfare caseworkers and supervisors in county departments receive thorough and consistent training, thereby acquiring the tools and skills necessary to make appropriate decisions before they are responsible for a caseload in the field.

Other recommendations that have been implemented include: requiring that county departments respond back to mandatory reporters of abuse and neglect to communicate the status of their reports; instructing county departments to utilize judicial records in assessing reports of abuse or neglect; and mandating that domestic violence professionals be represented on collaborative management committees.

This Executive Order creates the Governor's Working Group on the Structure of Colorado's Human Services System and the Centralized Call Center for Child Abuse and Neglect Referrals (the "Working Group") in order to address two recommendations offered by the Committee: (1) Changing the structure of Colorado's human services system from a county to a regionally based system; and (2) Creating a centralized call center for child abuse and neglect referrals.

A. An organizational change from a county based service delivery system to a regionally based service delivery system of social services, including but not limited to child welfare.

In Colorado we have a public social service system that is "state supervised and county administered." This means that both the state and the county departments of human services provide vital services to children and families in need. The county departments directly provide the services that aid children and families every day. The State department provides the supervision and oversight to the counties as they administer the child welfare programs. This dual system creates challenges in assuring that there is consistency across counties in decision making, supervision, and training in human services offices. It is the same system, however, that allows each individual county to specifically tailor assistance to meet the needs of their community. A core belief of the Committee is that geography should not be the determining factor as to what services children and families receive in Colorado. All children should have access to services that implement best practice, are responsive to their needs, and provide an array of competent services to address their needs.

The "Colorado Child Welfare Organizational Structure and Capacity Analysis Project," completed in September 2009 by Policy Studies Inc. (PSI), and American Humane, recommended that "the State of Colorado adopt a state-supervised and state-administered system." Further, this independent study recommended that regionalization of functions would focus resources, meet the needs of counties to embrace best practices, engage in continuous quality improvement, and provide superior child welfare service. The Governor's Child Welfare Action Committee recommended a hybrid model approach in Colorado, which includes creating a County Regional Office of the eleven largest counties that would operate as a county department. State Regional Offices would be regional, multi-county service delivery offices across Colorado.

B. The creation of a statewide centralized call center to receive reports of suspected abuse and neglect

The Committee also recommended the implementation of a statewide centralized call center to address calls regarding vulnerable children and their families. Centralization of this function would allow for increased access, greater standardization of decision-making on referrals, more consistency in responses, and less confusion about where to

call to make a referral. The call center would accept referrals on a risk-based model and assign referrals to the appropriate county department for investigation and provision of services. A centralized call center would improve the utilization of scarce resources and assure referrals were addressed.

II. Mission and Scope

The implementation of the two recommendations discussed above would fundamentally alter the human service delivery system in the state of Colorado. As such, the Working Group shall further investigate the viability of these recommendations and submit an implementation plan to the Governor. Utilizing the work of the Governor's Child Welfare Action Committee as a foundation, the scope of the Working Group shall include, but not be limited to:

A. Investigating the current state-supervised, county-administered system of human services delivery. In support of this mission, the Working Group shall examine the efficiency of the current, comprehensive 64 county system by evaluating:

1. Administration and staffing for all social service programs;

2. Funding to include state/county cost sharing;

3. Allocation and availability of resources;

4. Utilization of technology;

5. Effectiveness of the current county system utilizing data from sources such as the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Child and Family Service Review, work participation rates, state ranking, legislative audit findings, and other statewide available data for all social service programs;

6. Client outcomes, such as out-of home-placements, recidivism, attainment of self-sufficiency, and ability to maintain independence;

7. Compliance with rules, regulations, and federal standards; and

8. Access to a continuum of services.

B. Analyzing the current system of screening, assessing, and assigning referrals of child abuse and neglect in Colorado's counties to determine the effectiveness and efficiency of a centralized call center. The Working Group shall consider the following in this process:

1. Assess the level of qualifications of and training currently received by county staff who work on the child abuse and neglect hotlines;

2. Evaluate the current protocols employed by the county departments in determining how referrals are triaged;

3. Study the consistency from county to county regarding referrals "screened out" or accepted for investigation; and

4. Research child abuse and neglect hotline models throughout the country and determine whether these models would be more consistent and thorough in assessing abuse and neglect referrals.

C. The Working Group shall prepare and submit to the Governor a final report by September 30, 2010. In its final report, the Working Group shall make its recommendations regarding the structure of Colorado's human services delivery system and the call center, including but not limited to recommendations for legislative or funding changes.

III. Membership

A. The Working Group shall consist of up to twenty-one voting members who shall be appointed by and serve at the pleasure of the Governor. The membership shall be composed of the following:

1. Seven members of the Governor's Child Welfare Action Committee. The Governor shall appoint one of these seven members to serve as Chair of the Working Group.

2. Seven county representatives, appointed by the Governor from a slate of recommendations submitted for each of the five Colorado Counties, Inc. ("CCI") regional districts, which may include county commissioners and/or county department directors, the Health and Human Services Subcommittee Chair, and a representative from the CCI Board of Directors.

3. Seven experts, advocates, and consumers from the community, who shall not be affiliated with a county department, and who shall have expertise and experience in social service programs such as Colorado Works (TANF), early childhood development and child care, adult services, and public assistance programs.

B. The Working Group may establish advisory groups, task forces, or other structures from within its membership or outside its membership as needed to address specific issues or to assist it in its work.

C. The Working Group shall meet regularly at the direction of its chair. Advisory groups, task forces or other structures established by the Working Group shall determine their own meeting schedules.

D. The Working Group shall be staffed by employees of the Department of Human Services, including the assignment of a facilitator for the meetings. Meetings shall be held at least once per month in a central location. Additional meetings to seek community input may be scheduled upon concurrence of the Working Group. All input meetings shall be completed prior to submission of the report to the Governor.

E. The Working Group is encouraged to use every effort to reach consensus on its final report. Recommendations contained in the Working Group's report shall only be adopted and submitted to the Governor for consideration upon a three-quarters vote of the total membership.

IV. Staffing and Resources

The Department of Human Services shall provide the Working Group with necessary administrative support, information, and data. Consistent with C.R.S. § 26-1-135, the Working Group may receive funds and other resources from the Child Welfare Action Committee Cash Fund. Members of the Working Group shall serve without compensation, but may, at the discretion of the Chair and upon the approval of the Office of the Governor, be reimbursed, within available funds, for any actual expenses incurred.

V. Directives

The Governor's Working Group on the Structure of Colorado's Human Services System and the Centralized Call Center for Child Abuse and Neglect Referrals is hereby created. This Executive Order modifies, but does not replace, Executive Order B 006 08.

Executive Order B 006 08 remains in full effect, and the provisions of Executive order B 006 08 are to be read in conjunction with this Executive Order.

VI. Duration

This Executive Order shall remain in force until modified or rescinded by a subsequent Executive Order.

GIVEN under my hand and the Executive Seal of the State of Colorado, this sixth day of May, 2010

Bill Ritter, Jr.
Governor