



Please vote YES on HB15-1358

Continuation of the Differential Response Program

Sponsor: Rep. Singer / Sens. Lundberg and Kefalas

Background:

Differential response is an evidence-based alternative approach to the traditional investigation in child welfare for accepted reports of abuse or neglect for families that enter the child welfare system. In traditional child protective services systems, without differential response, there is only one response to any type of report. Differential response allows for a less-invasive approach to substantiated reports of low to moderate levels of child maltreatment. Many communities are using differential response as a way to enhance their child welfare system to avoid creating adversarial relationships with families and increase their voluntary engagement in services.

Why support HB15-1358?

- Recommended through the Governor's Child Welfare Action Committee in 2007, differential response was authorized as a pilot program through HB10 – 1226 (Rep. Kefalas and Sen. Spence). The pilot program was federally funded and included five counties.
- In 2012, the legislature authorized the expansion of the program to additional counties through SB12- 011 (Rep. Summers and Sen. Spence).
- According to the 2014 CSU pilot program evaluation report and the CDHS report to the legislature, the pilot and expansion have provided improved outcomes and cost-neutral implementation, with the potential for cost-savings in the long-run. Family engagement has improved, recurrence of system involvement has reduced, and child welfare staff morale has improved.
- The practice requires statutory authority in 19-3-308.3.
- Because the program was originally a pilot, the language authorizing the practice is scheduled to repeal on July 1, 2015. **This bill removes the repeal language and the pilot language.** It makes no substantive changes to child welfare practice. It merely allows this important practice to continue in Colorado.
- While Arapahoe, Fremont, Garfield, Jefferson and Larimer were the first counties to pilot the program, there are now eight counties practicing differential response and 14 other counties are currently completing training . Another 11 counties have expressed an interest in beginning the training in 2015.
- These counties intend to continue the practice of differential response, and have committed to significant system-change and invested their child welfare funding to establish the dual-track system that differential response requires.
- The Federal investment in the pilot program was \$1.8 million, and this funding has provided all the tools necessary to expand the program to other counties. There is no additional cost to implementation.
- The bill removes the reporting requirements for the pilot to the Department and the Legislature because the practice would no longer be in the pilot stage, but differential response counties will still be evaluated through the CSTAT measures and the CDHS Administrative Review Division to ensure fidelity to the practice and child safety.

Colorado Counties Inc. and Colorado Human Services Directors Association request your support for the HB 15-1358, the Continuation of the Differential Response Program.

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