



UNIVERSITY *of* DENVER

COLORADO EVALUATION AND ACTION LAB

Colorado Lab Newsletter

May 2020

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Fostering Opportunities: Stories of Success



As the nation celebrates the class of 2020 and the resilience of graduates during a worldwide pandemic, it can be easy to forget that some students face huge challenges to high school graduation even in “normal” times. Living in foster care can make school feel like a perpetual marathon. In Jefferson County, a program called *Fostering Opportunities* helps them cross the finish line.

Fostering Opportunities is an innovative student engagement program for middle school and high school students who have experienced foster care. Its goal is to help youth who have experienced foster care to be successful in school and ultimately earn a high school credential.

Fostering Opportunities addresses the reality of life in foster care, including fluidity in living situations, changing caregivers, and unstable eligibility for services. The program aligns child welfare and educational systems and aligns data to track students across placements and schools. Most importantly, it assigns a “Specialist” to work with each student and serve as an advocate, mentor, and supporter.

Jeffco Schools and Human Services are thrilled with the success they're seeing in the Fostering Opportunities program. They have created a [Selection of Happy Stories](#) to celebrate and share the difference that the program is making in the lives of students. One example:

Damian began participating in the Fostering Opportunities program when he was in 8th grade. One of the first things he shared with the Specialist was that his goal was to play football in high school. The Specialist could tell this was important to him. The Specialist helped Damian understand that his grades and attendance matter in high school sports and that to play, he will have to maintain both. Damian and the Specialist practiced setting attainable academic goals all year so he could earn some of the gear he would need to be ready for football season. It would be his first time on a sports team so he was motivated to do his best.

The Specialist helped Damian connect with the coaches so he could try out for the team and ensure the school waived his participation fees. Damian worked hard in tryouts and earned a spot on the freshman football team. Damian could always count on the Specialist cheering loudly on the sidelines at each of his home games.

The Colorado Evaluation and Action Lab supports Fostering Opportunities as it works to achieve its goals. First, the Colorado Lab partnered with Jeffco to develop a [Program Manual](#) that helps practitioners implement the program with fidelity. The Colorado Lab also serves as the lead evaluator of the Fostering Opportunities program in Jeffco Schools.

[Read the Blog Post and More Happy Stories](#)

Increasing the Understanding of Food Insecurity by Medical Providers and Educators

A [Colorado Lab-funded research partnership](#) has drawn the attention of Western Slope media, given the deep impact of the Coronavirus pandemic on food insecurity. Dr. Anne Nederveld is a professor of family medicine with the University of Colorado's Anschutz Medical campus. She lives and works in Grand Junction, where she has created a research project to study what prevents people from enrolling to receive SNAP benefits (formerly known as food stamps).

KKCO 11 News featured a video and article on the project (below).

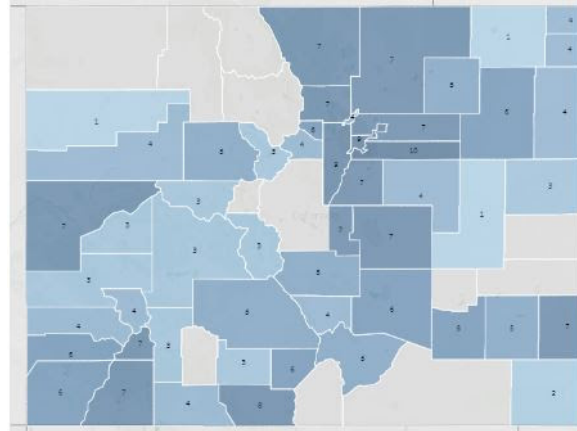


Building Capacity to Implement the Family First Prevention Services Act

Family First Prevention Services Act is sweeping child welfare legislation aimed at keeping families together with a focus on preventative services. The Colorado Lab is supporting the state in developing and implementing the evaluation components of the Family First Prevention Services Plan as described [here](#).

Prevention Services Map

The Lab has published an interactive dashboard of where twelve services and programs rated by the Title IV-E Clearinghouse are available in Colorado counties. All 64 counties in Colorado were surveyed by CDHS. This map is updated as more information comes in.



Click the image to view the map!

Technical Reviews

States can conduct their own technical reviews of the evidence for programs not yet rated by the Title IV-E Clearinghouse and request reimbursement for them under Family First. The Colorado Lab partnered with the Family First Implementation Team to take advantage of this "Transitional Payment" opportunity.

Two reviews have been completed. Click the links below to read them.

[Colorado Community Response Technical Review](#)

[High Fidelity Wraparound Technical Review](#)

Three more reviews are planned: Differential Response (DR), Child First, and Fostering Healthy Futures

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