



LIFTING FAMILIES OUT OF ECONOMIC HARDSHIP WITH ONE STOP SHOP FOR SUPPORT SERVICES: AN EMERGING MODEL FOR INTEGRATED SUPPORT SERVICES

Cheryl Ternes, Arapahoe County Department of Human Services

According to the National Center for Children in Poverty at Columbia University, 190,000 young Coloradans lived in poverty in 2015. That is 16 percent of children for whom the effects of poverty impacted school performance and mental and physical health. As director of Arapahoe County's Department of Human Services, I know that impoverished young people are more likely to experience cognitive delays and developmental disorders. I see cases of child abuse and neglect and am often reminded of the intergenerational nature of abuse and poverty more generally.

Without intervention, poor children face a number of barriers to transcending disadvantages and are more likely to continue cycles of poverty and neglect into adulthood and for future generations. But we can and must do more. We can intervene by employing a 2Gen approach to solutions to address environmental factors, advocate for prioritization of child poverty and its effects, and develop new initiatives to address these issues directly. And the "we" in this case must be all of us. To lift 190,000 children and their families out of poverty, agencies, organizations, business and faith-based communities, and more need to lean in across sectors and work past any differences.

We have started to move in several of these areas at Arapahoe County Department of Human Services. To employ a 2Gen approach more intentionally across the department, we have provided training to all of our staff. And in 2019, we will offer 2Gen training to other departments and community-based organizations throughout the county.

To demonstrate our commitment to stakeholders and the community at large, we made 2Gen solutions to eradicating child poverty the theme of our [2017 annual report](#). We will also launch the **Generational Opportunities to Achieve Long-Term Success (GOALS)** program in early 2019 to bolster our portfolio of direct-service initiatives. Developed in partnership with Family Tree, a nonprofit human services agency, GOALS' mission is to move families from poverty and homelessness to economic security and stable, permanent housing. The program provides a host of services including bridge housing and wraparound supportive services like early

childhood education to address issues that may have contributed to past episodes of unemployment and housing instability.

True to the 2Gen model, the family voice was central in identifying the portfolio of services provided by the GOALS program. A focus group was held with 20 TANF participants who would qualify for the type of housing program being designed. Gap analysis was completed using the information voiced by these families in developing the GOALS program services and will continue to play an integral part of our program.

Committed partners in the program include more than 21 local agencies that are all willing to provide either on- or off-site support to the families in the GOALS program. These agencies include early childhood education, child care, mental health, substance abuse, workforce programs, public schools and higher education, health care entities, and housing and human services programs. Using a streamline application and intake process, this collaboration will help reduce fragmentation and duplication of efforts; this collaboration will help establish a foundation for shared responsibility for ensuring the education and economic success for families.

SERVICES OFFERED ON-SITE THROUGH FAMILY TREE WILL INCLUDE:

- Safe and secure housing that includes no-cost access to meals, laundry facilities, personal care items, etc.;
- A dedicated case manager to work one-on-one with client households (adults and children) and provide intensive, holistic case management and support toward the development and



GOALS
Family Tree | Arapahoe County
A two-generational approach to help families experiencing homelessness achieve success



Generational Opportunities to Achieve Long-term Success

Our Vision

We will move families from poverty and homelessness, to economic security and stable permanent housing using an integrated two-generational (2-Gen) approach.

Objective

To provide a 2-Gen bridge housing program for families who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless.

Using a 2-Gen strategy, which addresses the needs of vulnerable children and their parents together, the program will focus on providing stable housing, early childhood education, social capital, health and well-being and economic assets.

The targeted length of participation is four to nine months, with a year of follow-up and support after exiting the housing portion of the program.



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accomplishment of a self-sufficiency plan, including professional assistance in locating and applying for various housing programs;

- Child care offering non-traditional hours of operations, in partnership with Head Start and other early childhood programs;
- Postsecondary adult education or other pathways to employment such as GED and ESL classes;
- Integrated employment program including comprehensive services (soft-skills training, computer training, career preparation, access to professional clothing, and post-employment support) to help sustain long-term employment;
- Assistance in developing personal financial and budgeting skills, including asset building;
- Access to quality primary healthcare with referrals for off-site specialty care, including dental, mental health, and substance abuse treatment;
- Recreation, fitness, and wellness space (outdoor playground and work-out facility) for children and adults; and
- Flexible office/meeting space for use by multiple partner entities, such as legal services, nurse support services, child/youth mentoring services, etc.

Other efforts to implement the 2Gen approach include ArapaSOURCE, a new web application that compiles and provides information on resources available to families by proximity and relevancy through GPS navigation.

Arapahoe County has also recently recruited eight Colorado counties to share in our document imaging and electronic workflow system called **HSConnects**. Once connected, it will allow pertinent information on children, families, and individuals to be shared across county lines and provide workers with the data needed to process applications, enforce child support, and help determine program eligibility.

Finally, we have launched a department-wide shadowing program to increase visibility and awareness of the various work, help break down silos within our own organization, and elevate our collective work to the broader department level.

Data sharing, visibility across interventions, and interoperability are critical to holistically assessing families' needs, coordinating and aligning services to meet them, and holding stakeholders accountable for achieving desired outcomes.

We at Arapahoe County Department of Human Services — and partners in this work across Colorado — believe that solutions that target children and their parents together, prioritization of these issues and segments of our population, and cohesion across community resources and providers can lift families out of poverty and break cycles of intergenerational poverty and abuse for those in need. Those of us with the privilege of working on behalf of children and families in Colorado must intervene to help the 190,000 children and their families living in poverty across our state as they navigate their situations and achieve economic security, educational success, and health and well-being.



▶ AN IMAGING, ELECTRONIC WORKFLOW AND INTEROPERABILITY PROGRAM.



▶ ENSURING THAT EACH DOCUMENT WOULD BE DELIVERED TO THE CORRECT WORKER ACCURATELY AND IN A TIMELY FASHION.



▶ PROVES TO IMPROVE BOTH THE TIMELINESS AND THE EFFICIENCY OF PROCESSING PAPERWORK.

HSCConnects

TECHNOLOGY THAT DELIVERS BETTER SERVICE TO FAMILIES AND INDIVIDUALS IN ARAPAHOE COUNTY HUMAN SERVICES. In front (left to right), Ascend Fellows Lindsay Chase Lansdale, Mia Birdsong, and Henry Wilde

HSC is an imaging, electronic workflow and interoperability program that is designed to ingest documents and data, read state systems for case information/requirements and deliver prioritized documents and tasks to the correct worker at the correct time.

How does HSC work?

HSC stores all images and tasks in a central queue, reads the appropriate state system of record to determine which person or team should be assigned the task and when a case needs to be completed. HSC auto-prioritizes the work to ensure the proper case is processed at the proper time by the proper worker.

HSC allows customers to email, mail, fax or bring documents to their local human services office. Mail is scanned into the system, faxes are kept digital and ingested and customer-delivered documents are scanned immediately with a receipt provided to ensure there is accountability for both the agency and the customer.



Addressing automation and data needs

Automated intelligence was created to ensure that no matter the program, the worker, or the issue, each document would be delivered to the correct worker accurately and in a timely fashion. HSC enables the packaging of paperwork for a single case thereby eliminating multiple staff working a case at the same time due to citizens delivering needed documents separately. By packaging paperwork, all documents delivered by a citizen can be bundled together so only one staff member, the correct staff member for the correct program, can work in the case with a single touch.

Interoperability becoming a reality

HSC is currently operational in all eligibilty programs in Arapahoe, El Paso, Pitkin and Eagle Counties. Agreements have been signed and the implementation process with five additional county offices is slated to be completed by November 30, 2018. In the very near future, functionality for all Human Services programs will be added. Once the entire platform is completed, a more holistic approach to service delivery will be put into place through the sharing of data and documents within Arapahoe County and between all counties on the system (allowed by rule and security requirements). Through the application of the broad array of services, we will be able to meet the needs of each parent and child simultaneously. By understanding the barriers the entire family faces and being able to utilize these solutions across divisional boundaries, we will have a fully operational 2Gen approach designed to tackle the issues causing poverty.

HSC Benefits

In addition to the obvious functional advantages of packaging documentation regarding a case, prioritizing it and delivering it in a timely fashion to the proper staff member, HSC has significantly improved both the timeliness and the efficiency of processing paperwork associated with cases in each of the counties using the software. Further, the loss of documentation has been eliminated, thereby improving citizen service.



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Cheryl Ternes is the director of the Department of Human Services in Arapahoe County, Colorado, the state's third largest county, with a population of approximately 643,000. The Department provides child protection, foster care, adoption, adult protection, child support, and public assistance services.

"The Fellowship has had a profoundly positive impact on me personally and professionally. A supportive and open environment was provided that enabled me to learn and grow as a professional through sharing experiences and self-reflection. The relationships that were established will be life-long and sustain the test of time. The sense of community and shared responsibility will serve to strengthen the personal and professional lives of each of the fellows. The knowledge and experience that I gained in the Fellowship directly contributed to some significant accomplishments in the work to end the cycle of poverty in Arapahoe County. That work is highlighted in the full report. I am very grateful to have had the opportunity to be a part of the Colorado Ascend at the Aspen Institute Fellowship."