

**Building Caring and Livable Communities:
The Boulder County Human Services Strategic Plan –
Process and Highlights To Date**

Background

For several years, human service funders including Boulder County, several municipalities, and major community funders have been discussing ways to better plan and coordinate funding and grant application/outcomes measurements for human service organizations. Nonprofit service providers have also grappled with the need for comprehensive program planning, addressing resource challenges created by the need for applying for grants from funders who ask for program, financial, and client data in all different ways, as well as being able to communicate to the public that funds are effectively and efficiently used and that services are not duplicated.

The idea of countywide comprehensive human services planning is not new, in fact many folks in our sector would say this conversation began 15 years ago, with the formation of the Human Services Coordinating Council.

Many nonprofit executive directors met with the Commissioners two years ago, expressing support of this effort and various conversations have been held since about the desire to have this happen. At the request of the Commissioners, the members of the Human Services Coordinating Council (nonprofits are represented at this Council by the chairs of the Human Services Alliance and the St. Vrain Community Council), chaired by Commissioner Tom Mayer, agreed that the time for this planning effort was now and that the County would invest in hiring a consultant to support the process. The City of Longmont, Boulder, and Lafayette were also interested in supporting the effort, along with Foothills United Way and the Community Foundation Serving Boulder County. Leadership from Centro AMISTAD and the INN Between joining our efforts to ensure Latino service providers were included in the decision-making.

Purpose

Using an inclusive and broad collaborative process, our purpose is to develop a plan that will result in a dynamic, accessible, coordinated, community-wide human service delivery system. The strategic plan will include:

- A shared vision and principles for a comprehensive human services system;
- An integrated and coordinated funding and delivery model that uses evidence based service and funding approaches with improved efficiencies;
- A safety net of services for Boulder County's most vulnerable residents;
- A comprehensive overview of needs and financial map of the major sources of support for human services by type of service;
- A unified application process for all funders to use with service providers;
- A plan for a unified performance measurement system;
- Maximum public benefit from all planning efforts;
- Flexibility to address emerging needs over time; and
- A collaborative governance model to manage the new system.

Guiding Principles

The following principles guide the implementation of the strategic plan and coordinated human services system:

- Our human services system maintains a safety net of services for Boulder County's most vulnerable residents, while remaining flexible enough to identify and respond to emerging needs
- Our human services system honors and respects the rich diversity within Boulder County and, with the involvement of the various communities, strives to make all our services accessible, timely, and culturally relevant.
- Our human services system recognizes, respects, and builds on the strengths of individuals, families, and communities.
- Our human services system values moving people along the continuum toward self-sufficiency or stability, while providing ongoing support to those who need it in a manner that promotes maximum independence.
- Our human services system is responsive and accountable to the public for the best use of available resources in providing quality services.
- Our human services system values and promotes collaboration and coordination on every level including among local governments, private funders, non-profit community organizations, and our residents and consumers.

Planning Process Overview

In December of 2006, the Human Services Coordinating Council¹ appointed an initial steering committee to oversee the process of creating a countywide human services strategic plan. The steering committee included City of Longmont, Boulder, Foothills United Way, Community Foundation (Civic Forum), City of Lafayette, Boulder County Commissioners Office, Boulder County Community Services.

Action Steps Taken:

- Request for Qualifications (RFQ) written by steering committee and released with Boulder County serving as fiscal agent
- Two responses received, one applicant brought forward for interviews
- Colorado Foundation for Families and Children selected as consultant in January, 07
- Additional steering committee members added to ensure diverse representation (AMISTAD & Inn Between)
- CFFC prepares community planning process after meeting with H.S.A. in February, 07 and conducting two public meetings in Boulder and Longmont in March
- Future Search Conference is convened in April, 2007 after receiving recommendations for diverse representative participation from nonprofits, clients, educators, businesses, elected officials, Latinos, and funders

¹ The Human Services Coordinating Council's current membership is comprised of a Boulder County Commissioner, and the directors/leadership of the following entities: City of Longmont, Boulder, Social Services, Public Health, Mental Health, Community Services, 20th Judicial District, BVSD, SVVSD, H.S.A., St. Vrain Community Council and Foothills United Way.

- Broad goal areas are agreed upon at FS and action planning groups met 4-6 times May-June, 2007 to create logic models (needs, capacities, strategies, benchmarks, outcomes) addressing each broad goal area: coordinated human service delivery; coordinated funding; self-sufficiency; advocacy; education; and inclusion. The membership of the action planning groups include FS participants and new members from nonprofit and government agencies (line staff and leadership staff)
- Funders and nonprofits meet for half-day in June, 2007 to discuss funding issues – the challenges of applying for and determining funding priorities
- Action planning group strategies are reviewed by H.S.A., SVCC, Boulder County Grantmakers, and in two public meetings in Longmont and Lafayette, June-July, 2007
- Additional input is received by members of H.S.A. in August, 2007
- Draft *systems plan* completed by consultants, utilizing work by action planning group
- Steering Committee meets with Boulder County Commissioners to review progress to date, September, 2007
- Subgroup of steering committee (Barbara Pingrey, Foothills United Way; Karen Rahn, City of Boulder HHS; Robin Bohannon, Boulder County Community Services; and Holly Cahill, HHS Planner, City of Boulder) meet to provide broad template of goals and strategies for *services planning*, September – present.

Action Steps Remaining

- Completion of draft services plan - by subgroup
- Compilation of final draft including services, system plan and attachments – by subgroup
- Presentation of final draft to Steering Committee – December, 07
- Presentation of final draft for feedback and input by planning participants, funders, and nonprofit service agencies – January-February, 08
- Adoption of final plan by policymakers, funders, H.S.A., and SVCC – February, 08