



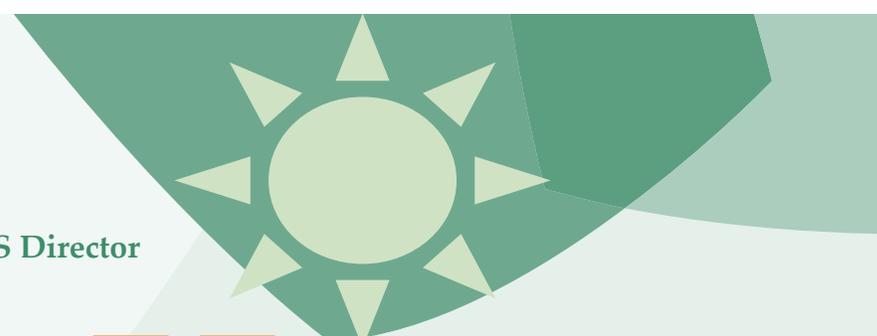
# Hope & help

Our Family-Collaborative  
Approach to Child Welfare





From the DHHS Director



# Hope & help

Dear friends,

Thus far, 2012 has been an exciting, productive, and affirming year.

From the work being done in our Family and Children Services Division, we continue to see encouraging data that indicate we are keeping children safe and at the same time strengthening families. Our family-collaborative approach to both child protection and boosting family self-sufficiency is working.

We have continued to broaden and deepen our investments in the community through all of our funding streams, including the Temporary Human Services Safety Net (TSN) passed by voters in 2010. We have strengthened our ability to meet the rapidly-rising need for food, medical, and financial assistance. We have connected dozens of at-risk families and transition-aged youth with housing through Family Unification Program (FUP) vouchers. We have begun to utilize newly-awarded Tenant-Based Rental Assistance (TBRA) vouchers, partnering with the county's school districts to provide housing and case management to families at risk of homelessness. We continue to see a safe reduction in out-of-home child placements due in large part to our ongoing commitment to family engagement. We are keeping families together by ensuring that we fully understand their needs and their challenges, and by working with them to create safe communities around them.

Much of this amazing work is the result of our increasing investment in a system of early intervention and prevention. Not only are we reaching more people with services they need much earlier in the process, but we are also saving money because we are investing in evidence-based, up-front, crisis-averting services. And we are reinvesting these savings back into our community in order to continue this momentum. From our merger in 2009 and vision of services integration to our continued focus on early intervention and prevention, our approach is improving outcomes on key indicators in safety, stability, self-sufficiency, and well-being. We are moving the system upstream, engaging people earlier to find out what they need and how they hope to receive assistance, all the while making sure they understand it's okay -and important- to ask for help.

The past few years have presented us with an enormous challenge. We have experienced an economic downturn like this country hasn't seen since the Great Depression over eighty years ago. The stressors on families have been overwhelming, and we have seen the resulting increase in need for help across the human services spectrum. At the same time, we have worked hard to rise to meet this need much earlier in the process. What we know is that people want to help themselves. Sometimes they just need a little help. So we are providing what our neighbors need most: hope for the future and help when they need it.

In this book, you'll find much of the story of the work we're doing to strengthen families and keep children safe. Thank you for your interest.

Sincerely,

Frank Alexander  
DHHS Director



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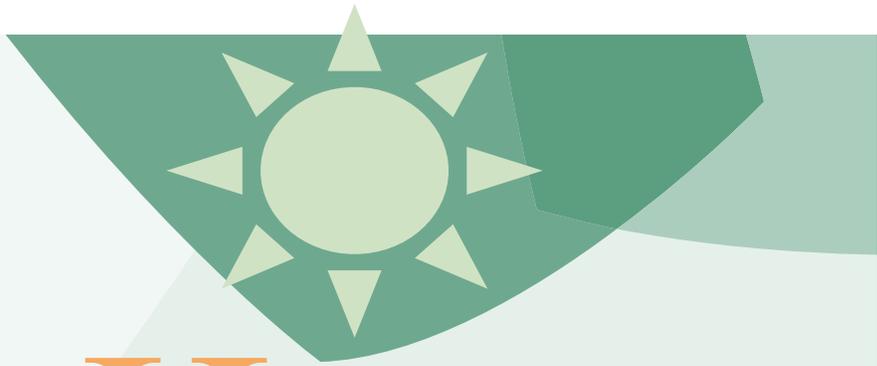
## Our Mission:

We are dedicated to supporting and sustaining healthy communities that strengthen individuals and families while promoting human dignity and hope for the future.



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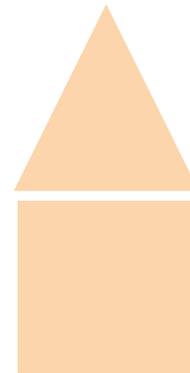


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## What We Know

Stressors on families in Boulder County and across Colorado have been increasing at an exponential rate.

These stressors can break down family structures and often begin to work together to create challenges for families from which they cannot recover on their own.



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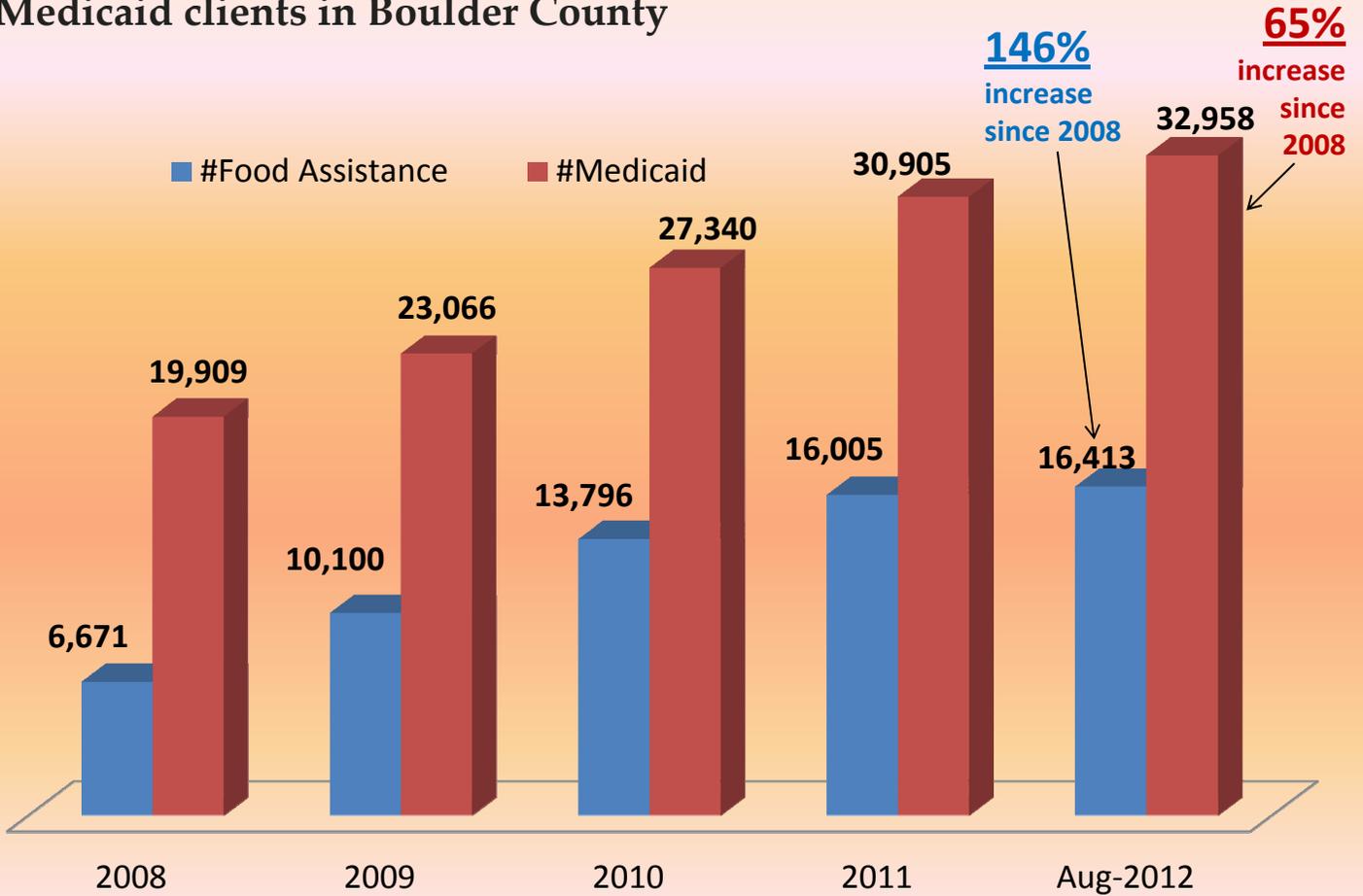
What We Know



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Record numbers of people are hungry and lack adequate health coverage

Numbers of food assistance and Medicaid clients in Boulder County

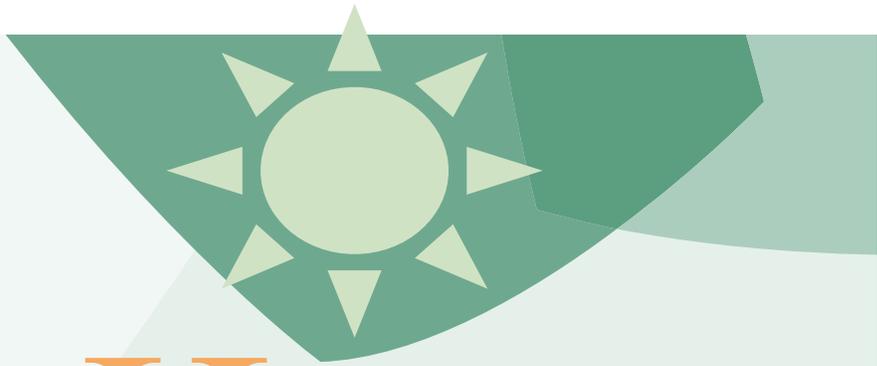


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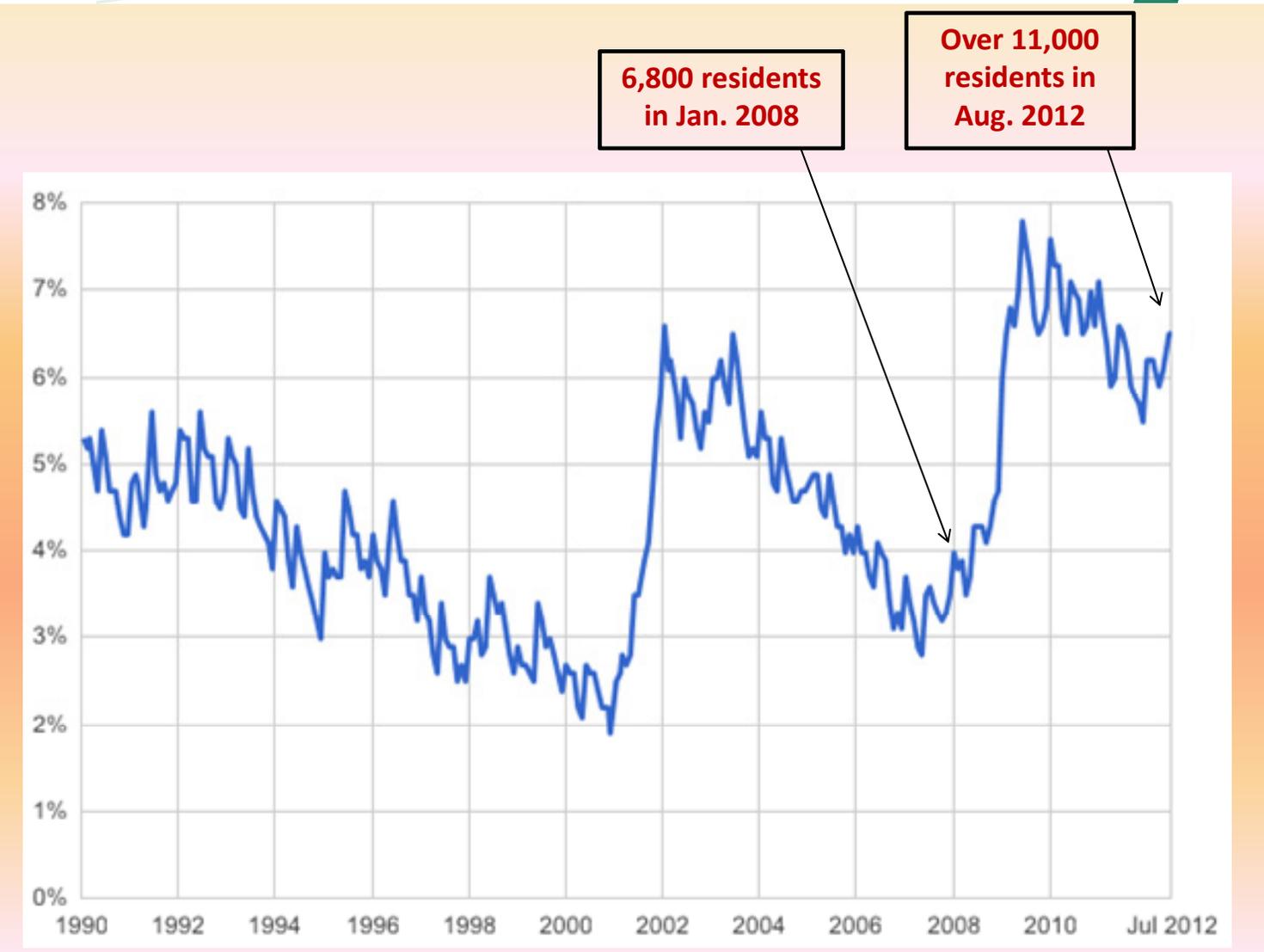


What We Know



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Unemployment in Boulder County has gone up and remains high

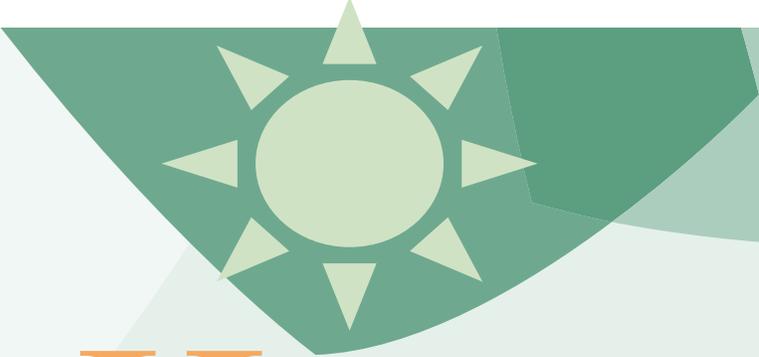


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How we're responding



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## Department Merger and Increased Emphasis on Early Intervention and Prevention

The exponential **increase in need** for services coupled with existing and looming federal and state **budget cuts** prompted us to look closely at ways to integrate our services and become more efficient and responsive to our clients.

The merger of the county's Social Services and Housing Departments into **the Department of Housing and Human Services** in 2009 has allowed us, in partnership with our community, to create a system in which our clients are at the center, guiding where and how they receive services.

We have redesigned our organizational culture toward a more front-end early intervention and prevention model of services. This action represents the **breaking down of traditional barriers** that clients have faced in the human services system. It is also **reducing the expenditures** on more intensive -and expensive- down-the-line services.

Integration of our Housing services with more traditional services like food assistance, health coverage, case management, and work supports has created easier and more efficient access for our clients and has promoted an integrated services approach to determining clients' needs for our staff.

We are in the fortunate position of **removing barriers** that prevent peoples' success, well-being, and health. It works, and it **aligns implicitly** with the values of people who have come to work in the human services system.

- Frank Alexander, DHHS director



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In our Child Welfare programs, **safety is our number one priority**. Parents have the primary responsibility for keeping their children safe, but when they cannot we intervene on behalf of the child. The removal of children from their homes is the intervention of last resort and only occurs when specific safety and risk issues present serious imminent concern. When this occurs, we work to remove barriers to reunification wherever possible.

**Families are our partners.** Their views, values, and cultural traditions are recognized; they are treated with dignity and respect and are included in all decisions that affect them and their children.

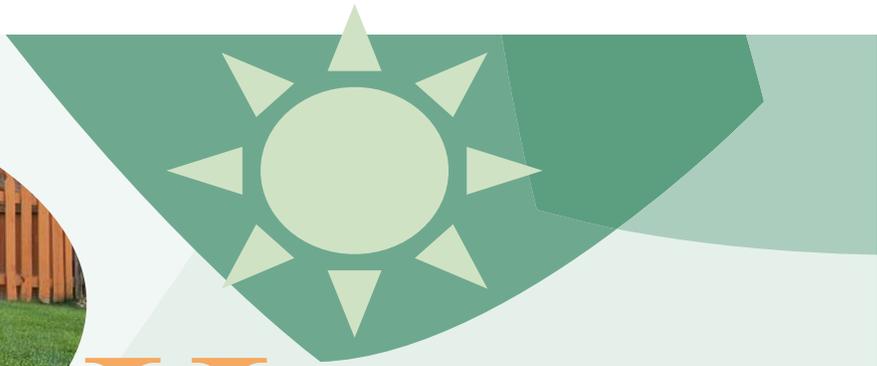
**We focus on early intervention and prevention.** We want to strengthen families and communities to provide safe and stable environments. Families receive the right services at the right time provided by the right agency. We also recognize our essential leadership role in Boulder County to empower families and promote safe, healthy, and thriving communities.

We are committed to fostering a **service delivery system that engages the community** to provide information and feedback to inform quality and system improvement.



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## Family-Collaborative Child Protection

The success of our services integration is being reflected in the work being done in our Family and Children Services Division. A deeper shift toward family-centered services includes a focus on ensuring that children have every opportunity to safely remain with their parents and siblings. We're doing this by **engaging families much earlier and more comprehensively** than in the past, connecting them with crucial services they need to help stabilize them and move them away from crisis. What we know is that children are much more likely to thrive when they are with their families than when they are removed from them.



So our primary goal is preservation of the family.

By engaging families from the start, rather than responding first with the removal of a child, parents and children feel more of a sense of partnership and collaboration with case workers. When we sit down with families at-risk, we invite their neighbors, their children's school teachers, and their extended family members to help them develop safety plans for themselves and the children. This extended community remains in place to help keep the family safely together, and to help ensure the safety of the children.

A long-term result of this strategy shift is that families are much more able to sustain their growth and success. At the same time, the deep integration of our case management across all of our services helps ensure this stabilized family is getting the help they need to get even stronger: food assistance, health coverage, rental assistance, childcare, and many other services.

"This integration of services combined with putting the family at the center of our effort is moving our community forward," says Family and Children Services Director Kit Thompson. "We have so much to celebrate in terms of our work strengthening families and keeping children safe and happy."



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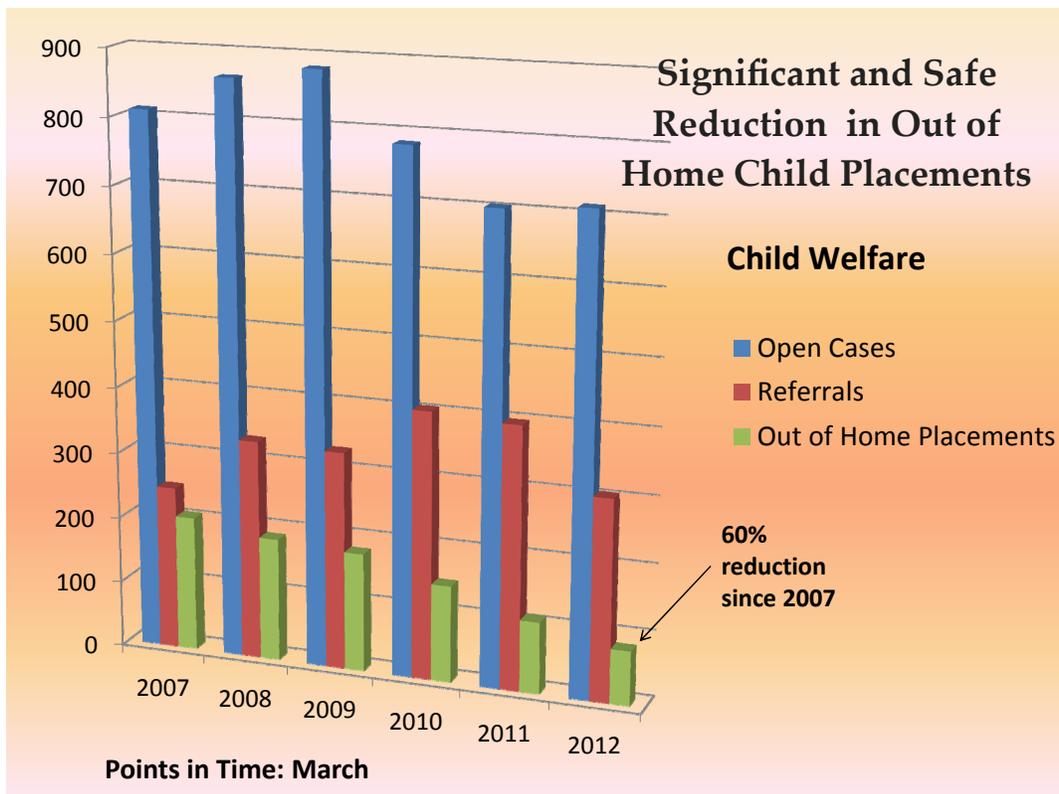


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Here is one of the ways that our family-collaborative approach to case management is succeeding. Between 2007 and 2012, we safely reduced out-of-home child placements by **60 percent**, even as caseloads remained fairly constant. This means that hundreds of Boulder County children **safely** remain with their families where they have a much better chance to thrive.

Foster care placement costs, on average, \$5,500 per month per child. Intensive family preservation services run about \$1,400 per month. With the out-of-home placement reduction of 110 children, we can estimate the savings at **about \$450,000 per month** in Boulder County.

But it's not savings just for savings sake. We are reinvesting this money back into our system of early intervention and prevention to ensure these families **continue to progress** toward safety and self-sufficiency.



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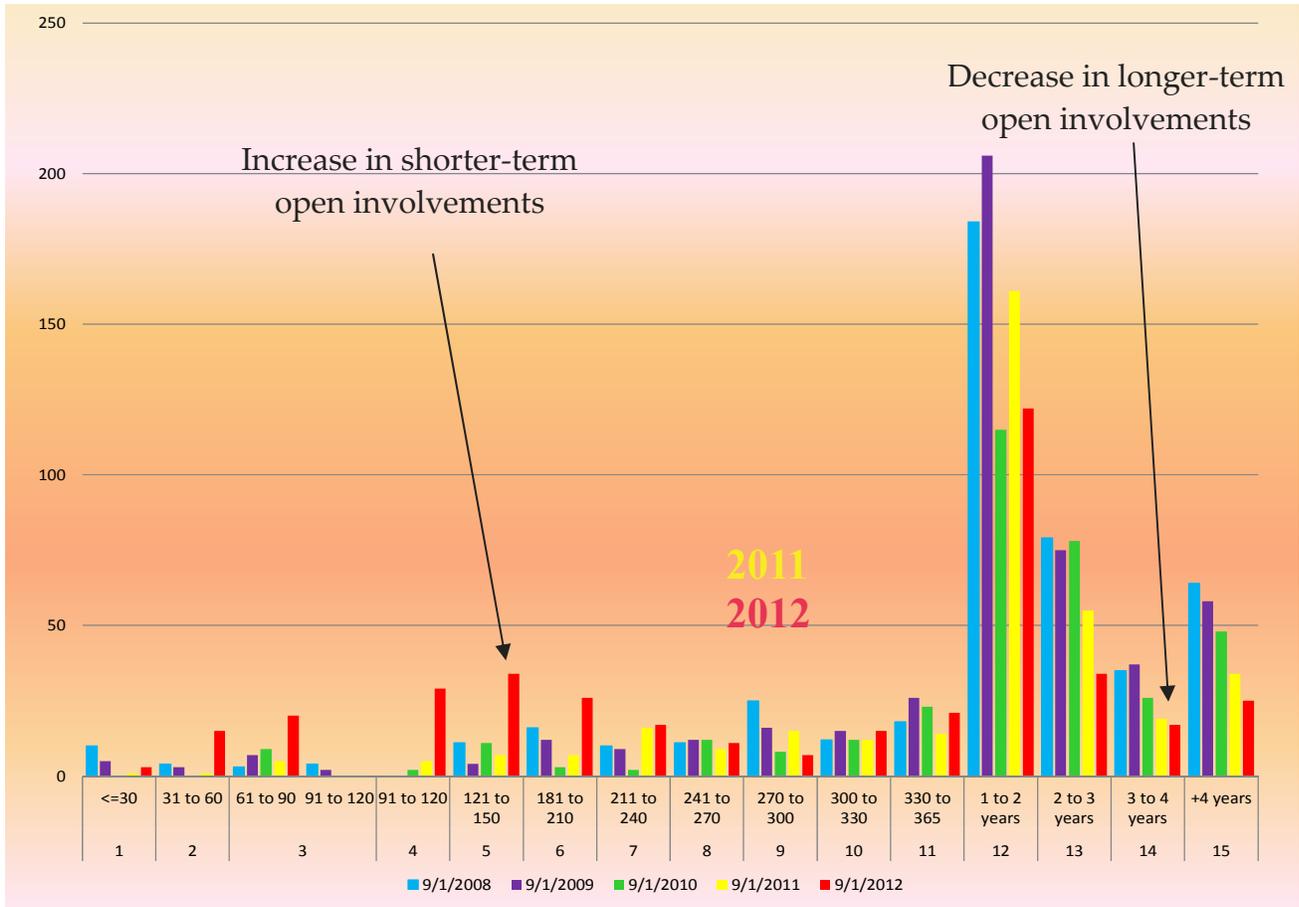
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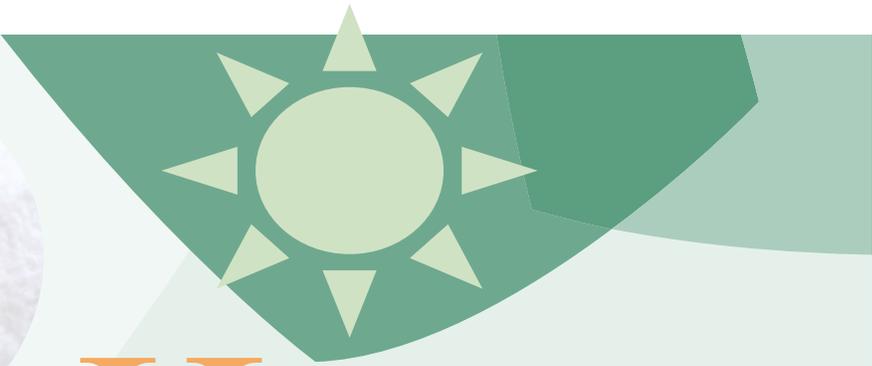


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Another result of our family-collaborative approach to case management is a reduction in the amount of time our cases are open. This reduction has been most dramatic in 2012.

We believe this is due in part to our family-centered approach to connecting our clients with services they need much earlier in the process. Among others, these services include housing counseling and rental assistance.

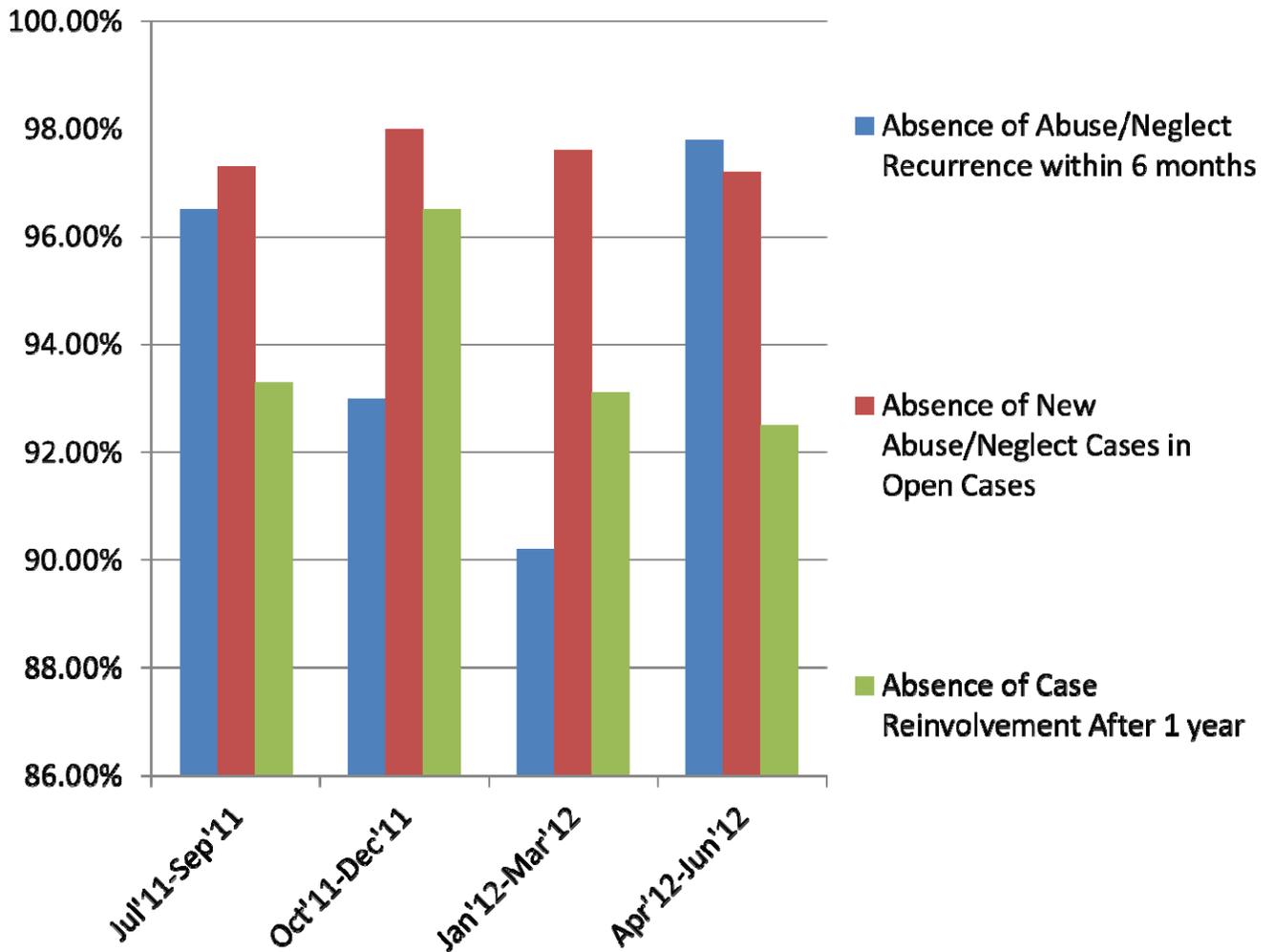




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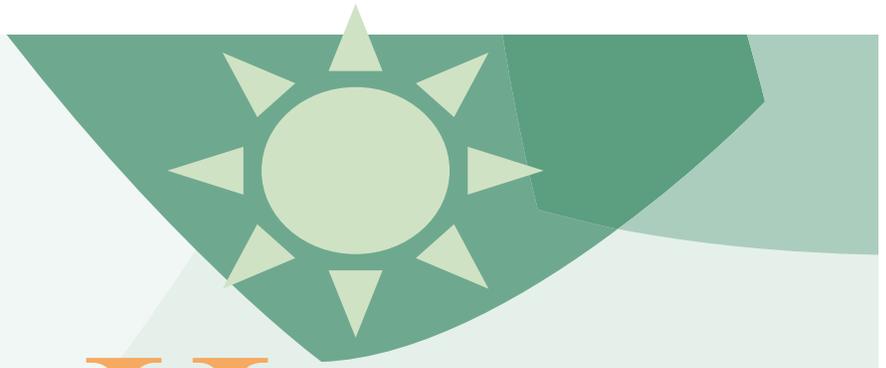
## Boulder County Child Welfare Score Card

The State of Colorado keeps close track of child welfare data in its 64 counties. One of its measurements is the quarterly Child Welfare Score Card. Our case workers have consistently been doing an excellent job helping prevent re-abuse of children.



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## A Shift Toward Permanency for Young People

When it *is* necessary to remove a child from the immediate family, we are focusing our efforts on **creating permanency** in other ways. This means helping locate extended family members or friends of the family who can commit to caring for the child or teen. Part of the process is bringing the young people together around a table with case workers, friends, and relatives to help identify and locate kin and other potential caregivers. It's a new approach known as a *Permanency Roundtable*, and it's working.



Ongoing Case Worker Jenny Zuetell [tells the story](#) of a struggling teen girl whose parents were unable to care for her. Through the Permanency Roundtable process, Jenny's team located one of the girl's grandparents. She was reunited with this relative after many years, and the moment she walked into the house, saw on a high shelf a dusty piece of art she had created when she was a child.

Jenny recalls, "she just looked up, and there were tears welling in her eyes, and she said, 'I'm home'."

This scene is being repeated across the county. Thus far, among the young people who have been involved in now-closed Permanency Roundtable cases in Boulder County, **48% of them have found legal permanency** with kin or family friends.

"It's worth it for the children," Jenny says. "It's their voice being heard and what they really want and need. So when I think of 'what do I need to do for this child?', well I need to be outside the box as much as possible. It means that much more to the young people because they know we've tried."

Boulder County's efforts are attracting attention. The Colorado Human Services Department recently recognized us as a "County of Excellence in Permanency Strategy and Practice", one of just three such counties in the state. And DHHS Director Frank Alexander received the Casey Excellence for Children Award from Casey Family Programs in January 2012. He was recognized for his excellence in leadership in advocating for programs, policies and practices that help prevent the need for foster care by strengthening families and their communities.

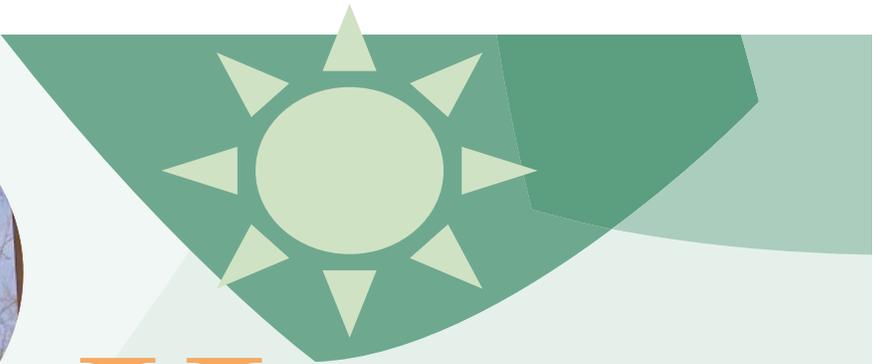


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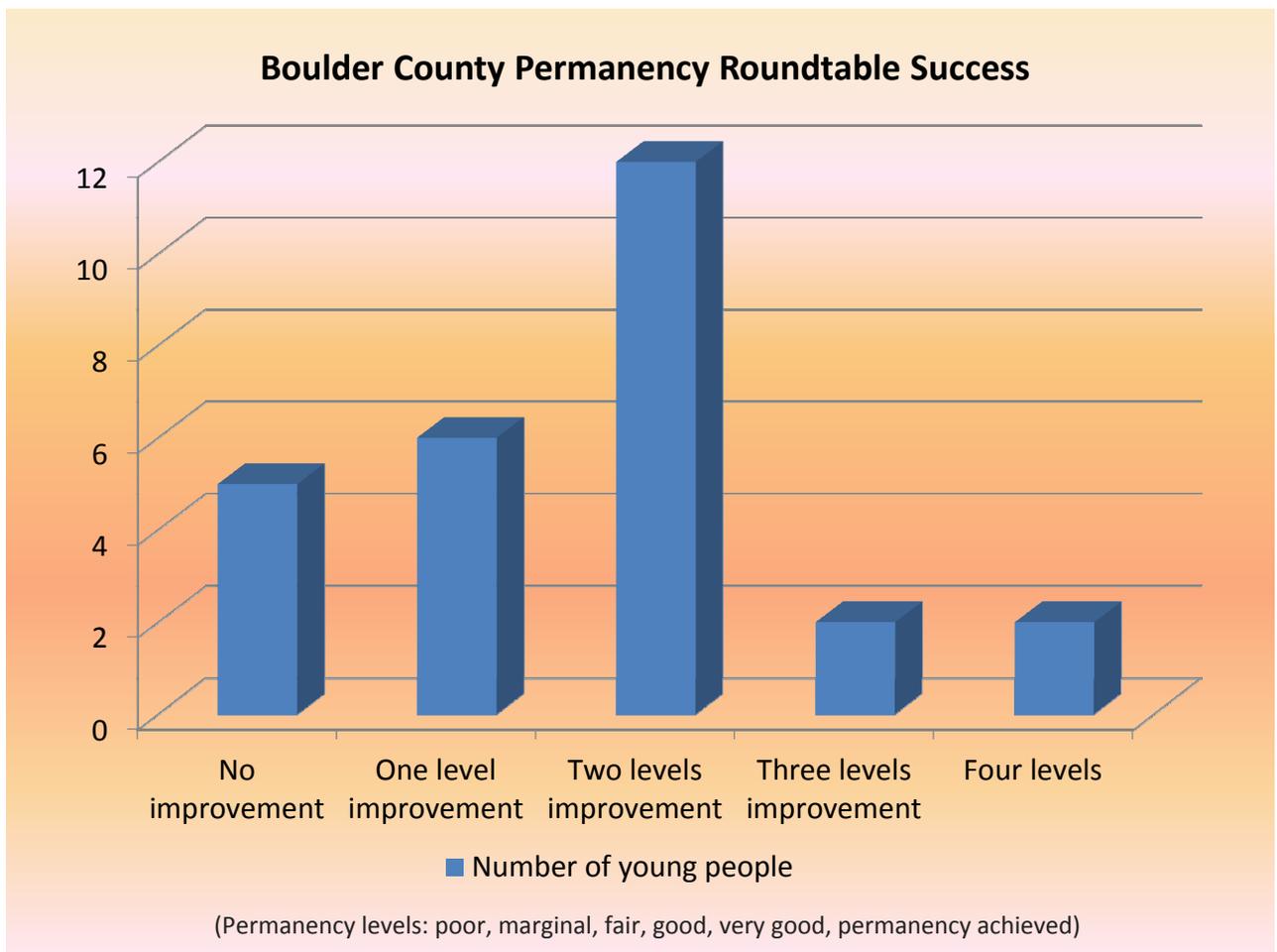
How we're responding



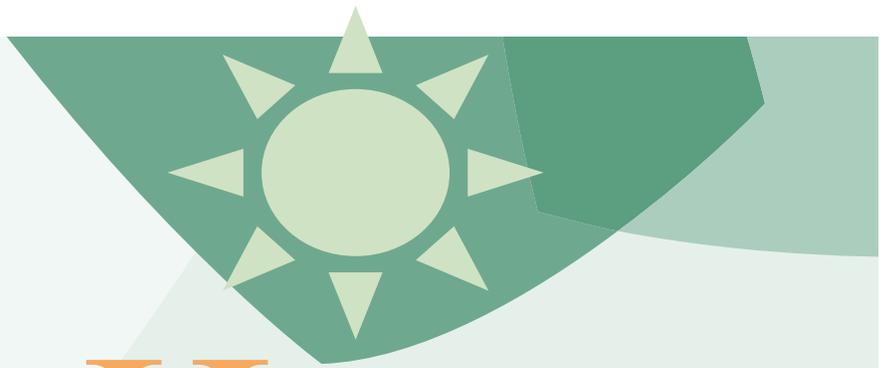
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## Permanency Success in Boulder County

As of August 2012, among the 27 Boulder County young people in the Permanency Roundtable Process, **81% of them had improved chances for permanency.** 59% had improvement of two or more permanency levels.



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## Expanding Housing Access for Families

### *Family Unification Program*

In addition to nearly 800 Section 8 housing vouchers that we administer to provide low-income families in Boulder County with rental assistance, DHHS is also overseeing several other crucial housing supports in 2012.

We have received fifty **Family Unification Program (FUP) vouchers** from the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) to help deliver affordable, decent, and safe housing and supportive case management services to parents who are separated from their children because of homelessness or inadequate housing. The vouchers are also available to young people transitioning out of the foster care system.

A major goal of this early intervention program is to stabilize the family and keep them together.



**FUP**

On average, it costs nearly \$5,500 per month for each child in foster care placement. In contrast, it costs about \$1,250 per month to house one family and provide supportive services toward their stability. In addition to the very clear benefit to reunified families, **our administration of the FUP voucher program in Boulder County represents a potential cost savings of \$212,000 per month to the community.**

But beyond the savings is this guiding philosophy:  
*every child deserves a home.*



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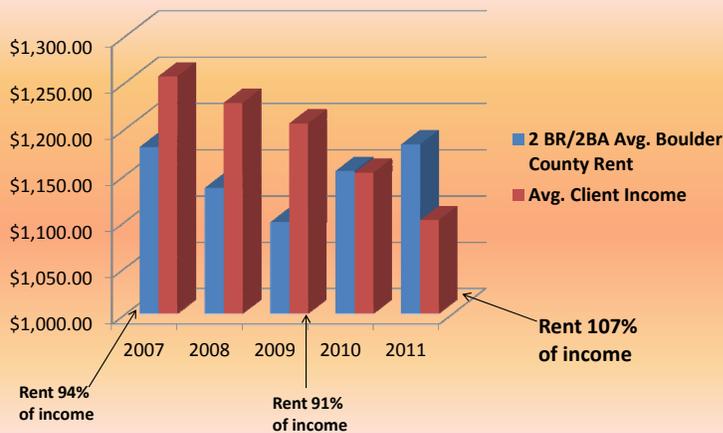
## Expanding Housing Access for Families

*Tenant-Based Rental Assistance Program*

In Boulder County, rent-as-percentage-of-income has been rising significantly since 2009. For our Housing Stabilization Program clients, in 2011 **rent averaged 107% of income**. U.S. Census data showed the number of children living in poverty in Boulder County increased by 90% between 2000 and 2010. And in early 2012, Colorado Homeless Education data indicated that there are **1,787 homeless children** attending schools in Boulder County's two districts.

In June 2012, Boulder County was awarded up to \$784,422 in rental assistance for at least thirty families at risk of homelessness who have children in the county's public schools. The assistance is taking the form of two-year vouchers, and families can choose where they want to live. To identify families to receive the vouchers, Boulder County Housing Authority is working in partnership with representatives from the schools and community organizations, as well as liaisons in the school districts.

**Monthly Rent vs. Income**  
BCDHHS Housing Stabilization Program Clients  
2007-2011

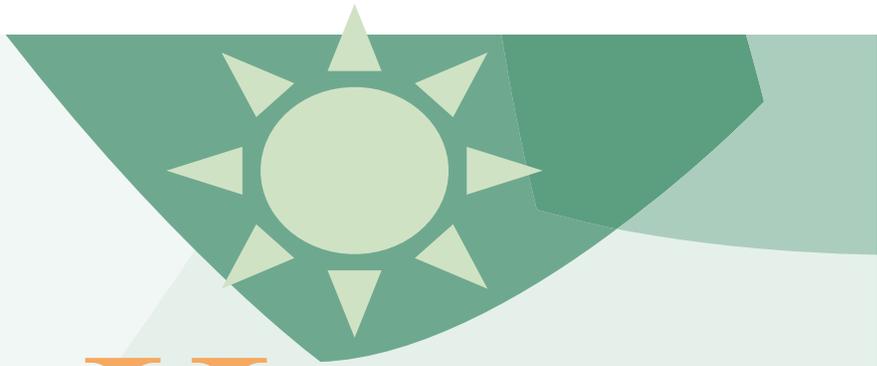


In addition to the rental assistance, DHHS case managers work in partnership with the families, meeting with them regularly to help them stabilize with other services we provide. Parental involvement in the children's education is also increasing. This is improving school attendance for the children and strengthening their ability to concentrate on their studies. And for the families, the stability and additional assistance is a major boost to their self-sufficiency.



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## Housing Stabilization

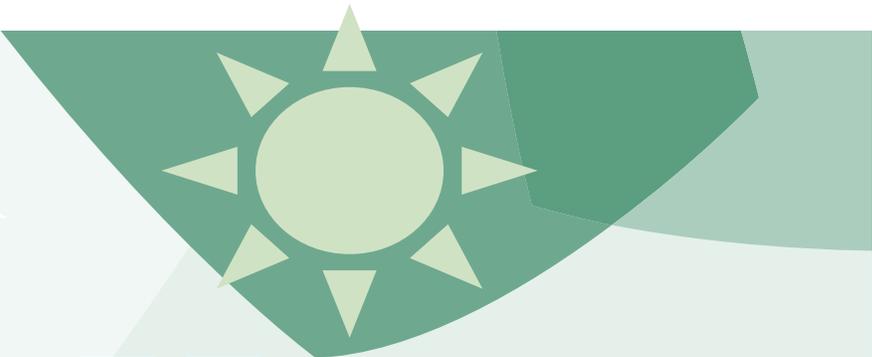
The Housing Stabilization Program (HSP), begun in 2008, is another excellent example of the success of our shift to an early intervention and prevention approach to providing services in support of families' self-sufficiency. The program was initially known as the Housing Crisis Prevention Program. Its newer name is a reflection of the fact that our services are now geared toward **stabilizing families** –reaching them earlier- not just preventing crises.

Families and individuals who need help paying their rent or making house payments are referred to the HSP by our staff and community partner non-profits. Since 2008, the HSP has served **over 1,200 households**, investing **\$3.5 million** in the community. Families have averaged \$2,876 of assistance over about 3 months.



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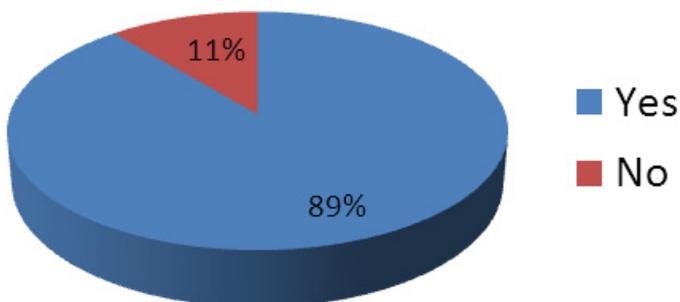


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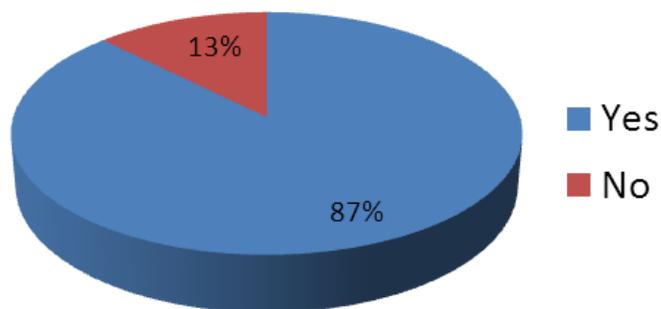
The Housing Stabilization Program also helped reduce the number of families sheltered by OUR Center in Longmont by 67% between 2009 and 2010.

And HSP clients have had an excellent track record after exiting the program.

**Currently housed  
6 months after exit**



**Current on rent  
6 months after exit**



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How we're responding

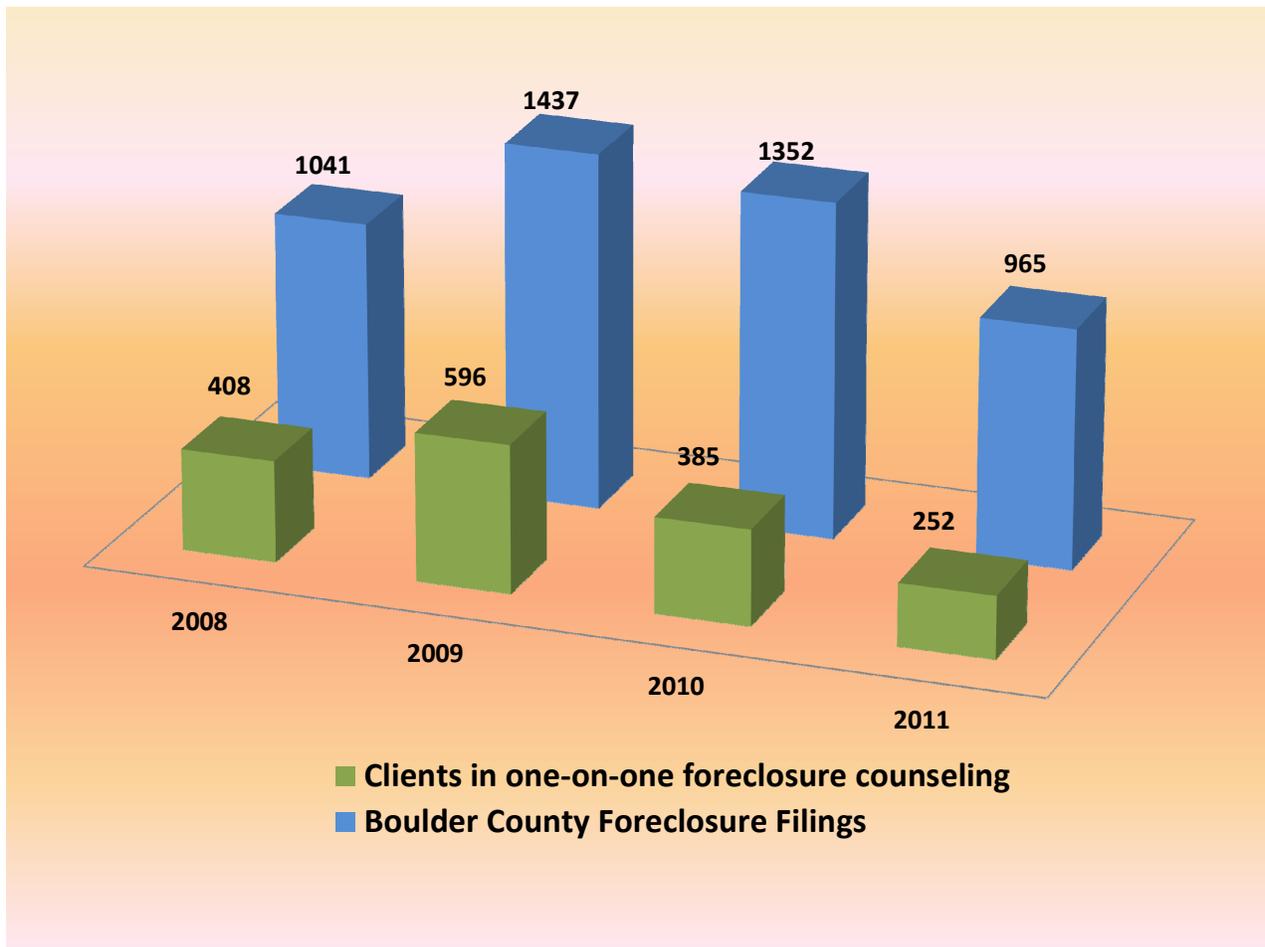


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## Housing Counseling

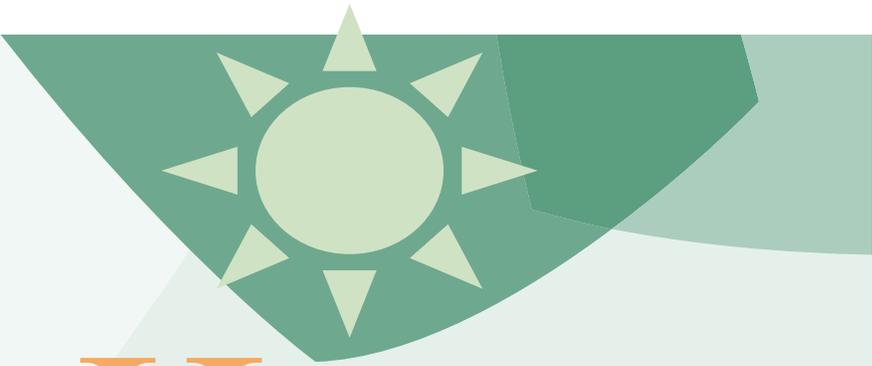
### Boulder County Foreclosure Data:

Over the past three years, the Boulder County foreclosure rate peaked and has since declined considerably. To date, over 7,000 people have received help through our Housing Counseling Program, which includes a major focus on foreclosure prevention.



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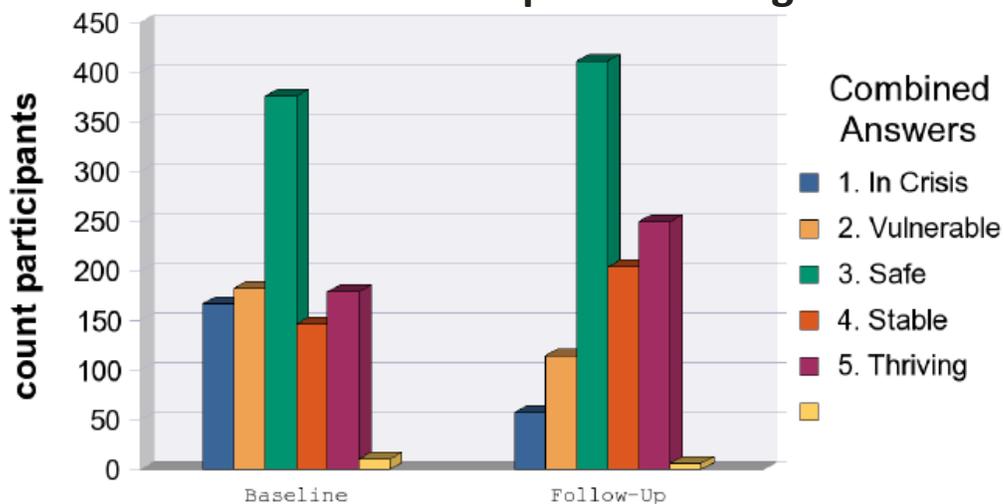
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## Housing Services: Follow-Up

Through our community partners, one of the outcomes we measure is our clients' self-sufficiency. Through what's known as a "Self-Sufficiency Matrix", our clients are assessed on a range of indicators as they are first accessing help, and then again three years later.

Over the past three years, our Housing Stabilization and Housing Counseling Programs have helped move significant numbers of people out of "In Crisis" and "Vulnerable" situations into "Safe", "Stable", or "Thriving".

**Access to Adequate Housing**



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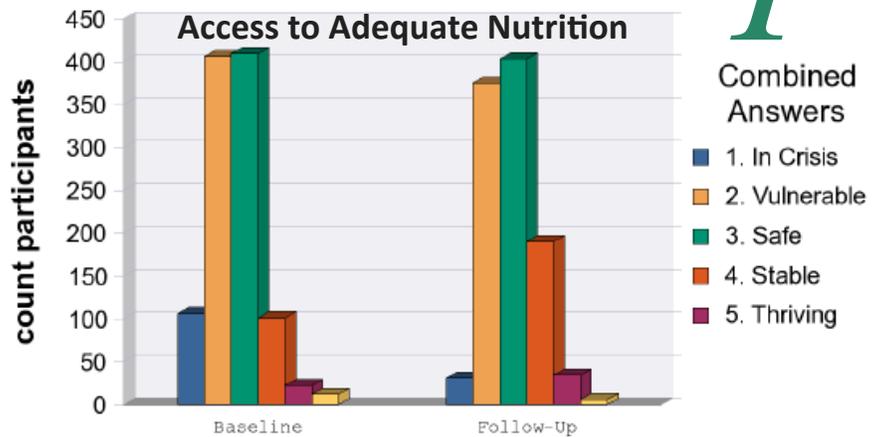
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## Our Focus is Boosting Self-Sufficiency

Our focus on early intervention and prevention also includes ensuring that families have access to things like adequate nutritious food, health coverage, and child-care. By increasing stability for those in our community, we help remove the stressors that can lead to the breakdown of the family, and potentially, abuse or neglect.



For access to adequate nutrition, our Self-Sufficiency Matrix measurements indicate 106 people moved out of “In Crisis” and “Vulnerable” classifications into “Safe”, “Stable”, or “Thriving”. This number represents about 10 percent of the total clients followed in the matrix. If we apply this ratio to the total number of clients in Boulder County receiving food assistance during this time (an average of about 16,000), **the number of people whose access to adequate nutrition has been stabilized can be estimated as at least 1,600.**



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## Our Other Housing Programs That Support Families and Children

**Family Self Sufficiency (FSS)** program helps low-income families gain job skills and education to improve their family's financial situation and move them toward self-sufficiency.

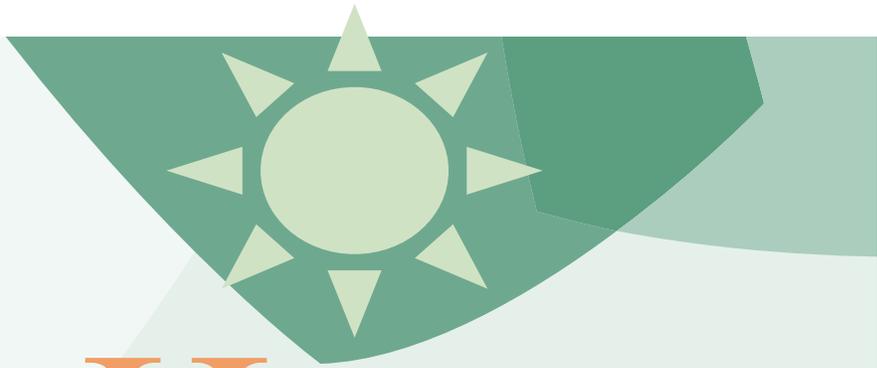
**Section 8 Housing** includes administration of 799 housing vouchers to assist low income families with rental assistance, eligibility screening, client meetings and Housing and Urban Development (HUD) required reporting. This program collaborates closely with Family Self Sufficiency (FSS) and Project Hope, elderly and frail managed aging services.

**Affordable housing** in Boulder County Housing Authority (BCHA) includes administration, management, and maintenance of low-income housing stock, leasing, property inspections, tenant rent collection, tenant re-certifications for eligibility, monthly tenant meetings and property management. There are 559 affordable units managed by BCHA.



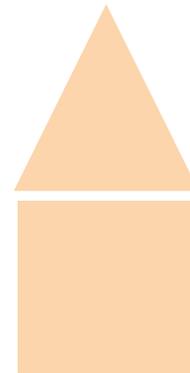
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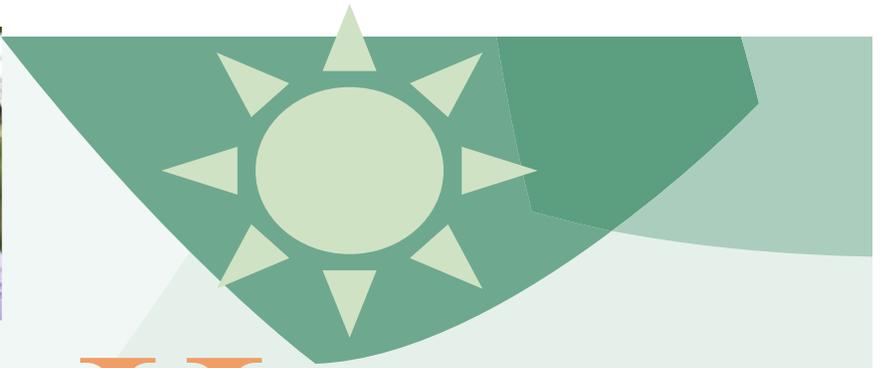
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**Community Response:  
The Temporary Human  
Services Safety Net (TSN)**



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In 2009, it was becoming clear that something needed to be done to address continuing federal and state budget cuts to human services programs. Boulder County leaders had an idea: ask the community to help backfill the budget cuts so services could be restored or continued.

By 2010, the idea had become reality: Ballot Initiative 1A, the Temporary Human Services Safety Net, was ready to go before voters in November.

## RESOLUTION NO. 2010-92

### A RESOLUTION DESCRIBING A PROPOSAL FOR AN INCREASE IN THE BOULDER COUNTY AD VALOREM PROPERTY TAX MILL LEVY TO INCREASE FUNDING FOR HUMAN SERVICES PROGRAMS

WHEREAS, Human Services in the State of Colorado are provided through a state supervised, county administered delivery system, and Boulder County is statutorily responsible for raising a portion of the funding for human services through property taxes; and

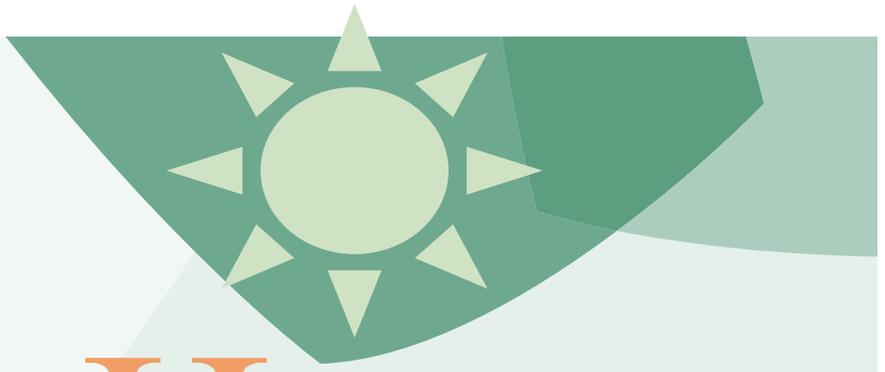
WHEREAS, unprecedented caseload growth and service demands, coupled with reduced financial support from the State, have placed significant strains on the department's, and community-based safety net human services providers', ability to effectively meet the Boulder County residents' needs within available resources; and

WHEREAS, the precarious financial position has been further exacerbated by state statutory changes made in 2008, which required the county to reduce its TANTF reserves, an account that had effectively provided the department with a safety net in times of economic downturn; and



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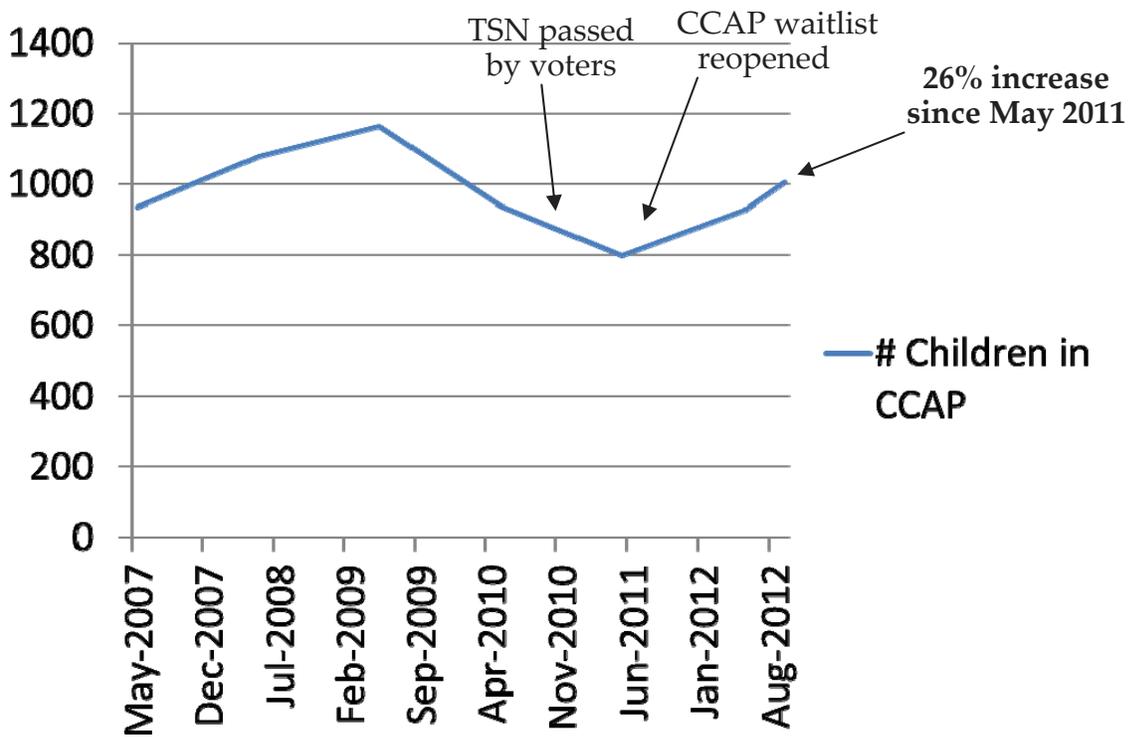
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Voters passed the TSN in November 2010.

It increased property taxes by 0.9 mills for a period of five years (through 2015). For someone owning a \$300,000 home in Boulder County, this is an increase of \$21 per year.

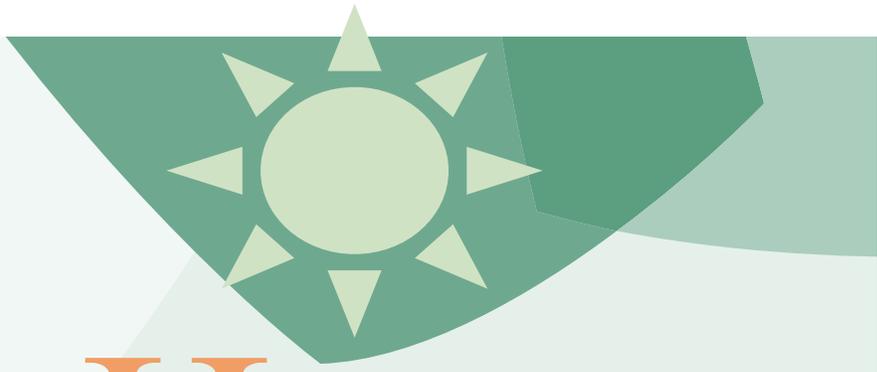
The TSN raised about \$5 million in its first year, 2011.

One immediate benefit: the waitlist for CCAP, the Child Care Assistance Program, was re-opened, and this crucial support for families was on its way back up.



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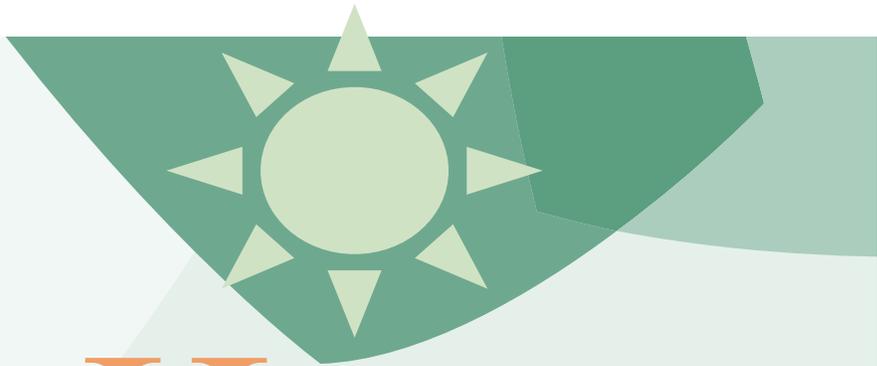
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Also in 2011, TSN funds were quickly released to nine Boulder County non-profits for emergency services to help address the skyrocketing need for assistance.

Boulder County Aids Project	\$	20,000.00
Boulder Shelter for the Homeless	\$	75,000.00
Community Food Share	\$	50,000.00
Emergency Family Assistance Association	\$	75,000.00
Outreach United Resource Center, Inc.	\$	75,000.00
Safehouse Progressive Alliance for Nonviolence	\$	71,470.00
Sister Carmen Community Center	\$	75,000.00
The Carriage House Community Table (Bridge House)	\$	30,000.00
The Inn Between of Longmont	\$	30,000.00
<b>Total Community Investment</b>	<b>\$</b>	<b>501,470.00</b>



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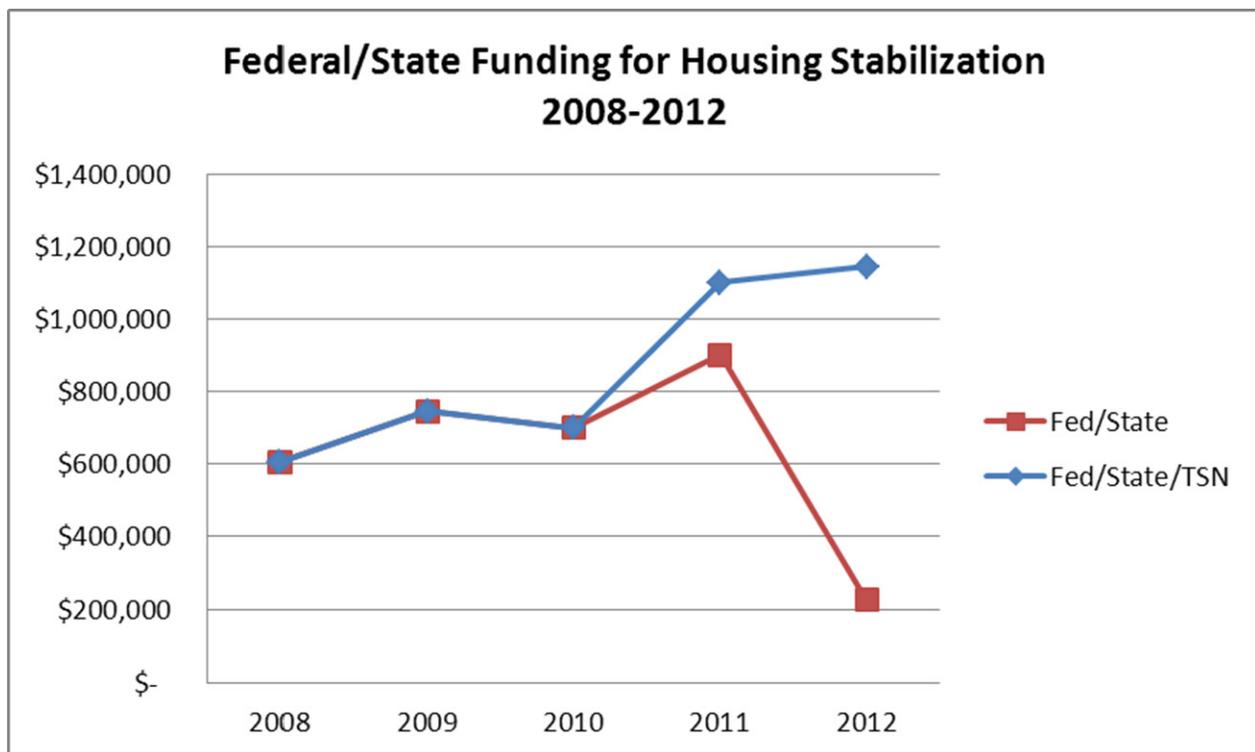


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Another immediate TSN benefit was an investment in the county's **Housing Stabilization Program (HSP)**.

HSP connects struggling families and individuals with rent assistance, intensive case management, and financial stability classes and workshops in order to help them stabilize, avoid deeper crisis, and re-establish self-sufficiency.

Federal dollars (Homeless Prevention and Rapid Rehousing Program) had been sustaining HSP, but were going away. A significant infusion into the program from TSN not only kept it going, but also boosted HSP's capacity.



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# Hope & help

We are also **collaborating with successful statewide efforts** around restructuring Colorado's child welfare and child protection systems.

This collaboration includes:

- Implementation of Governor John Hickenlooper's Child Welfare Three-Year Master Plan with a strong partnership between the state of Colorado and Colorado counties
- Development and expansion of the Colorado Practice Model, which (much as the model we have been following) focuses on engaging families, safely reducing out-of-home child placement, and investing in the development of competent, professional, responsive, and accountable staff
- Expansion of the successful Differential Response pilot that promotes a stronger family engagement and response system
- Expansion of Permanency Roundtables statewide that are supporting the permanency and well-being of children and families.
- Implementation of an integrated strategy among the Judicial, Legislative, and Executive branches through the Three Branch Institute of the National Governor's Association
- Supporting the successful pursuit of a federal IV-E Waiver from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, allowing counties to invest Child Welfare allocations in early intervention and prevention and other family-collaborative programs
- Collaborating across the state to strengthen front-end prevention services throughout the system to support families
- Building strong partnerships with local and national foundations to support the child welfare system



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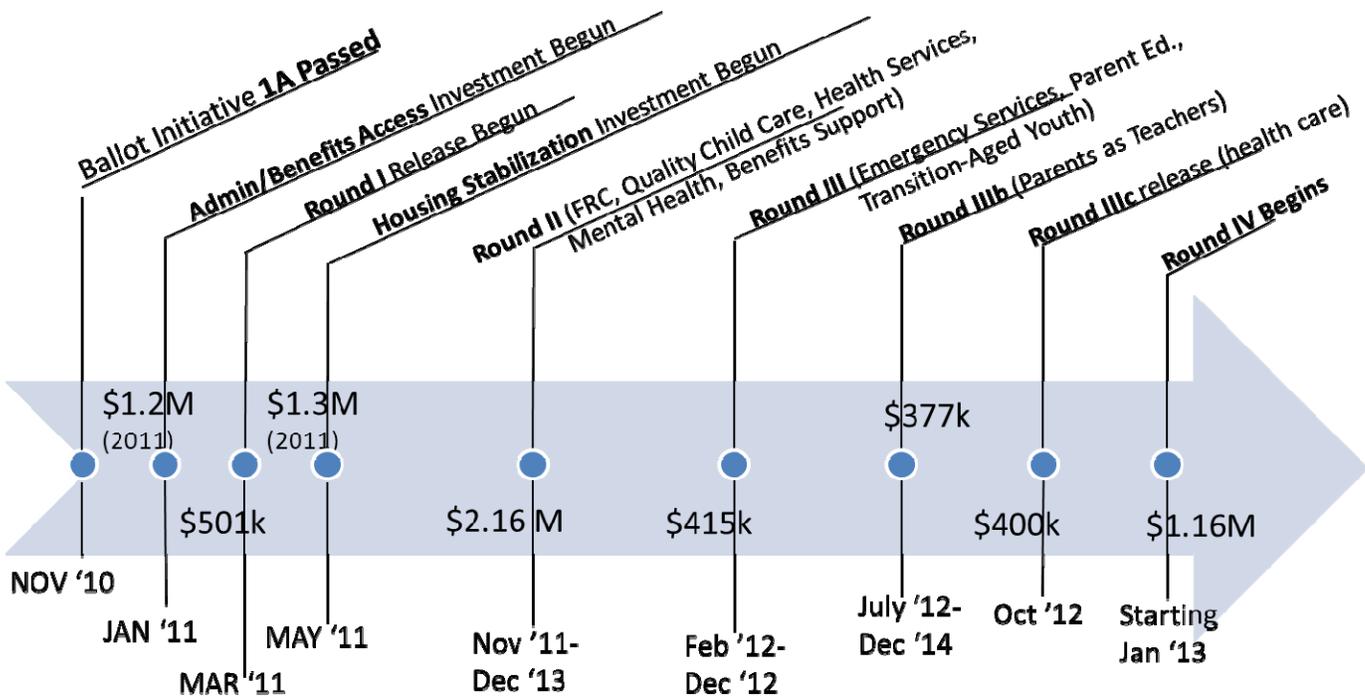
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# Hope & help

## The Temporary Human Services Safety Net (TSN)

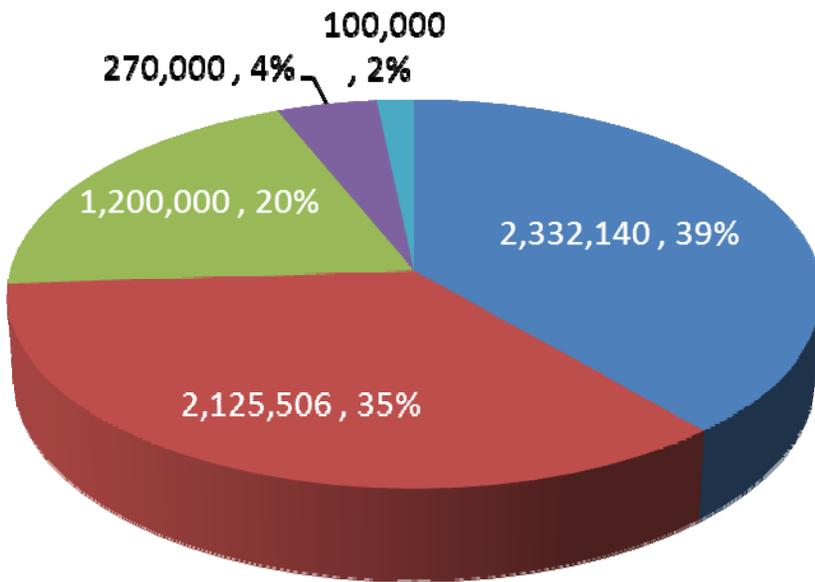
The passage of Ballot Initiative 1A by voters in November 2010 has led to tremendous support for many of the services which had seen federal and state budget cuts in recent years. In two years, we have made significant investments in the safety net through our community partner non-profits and agencies and DHHS programs.



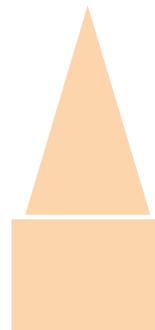
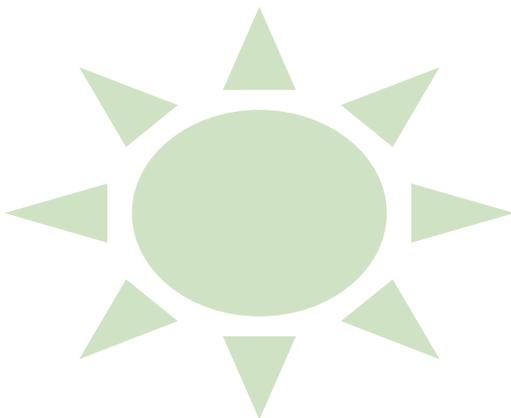
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# Temporary Human Services Safety Net (TSN) 2013 Expenditures



- Personnel
- TSN Community Partner Contracts
- Child Care
- Internal Initiatives & Programs
- TSN Administration



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# Hope & help

## The Boulder County Safety Net on Dateline NBC

*Our successes are attracting some attention*

In late June 2012, Boulder County's human services safety net and the TSN were featured in a one-hour special on Dateline NBC. The Dateline team followed three middle class Boulder County families who were seeking and accessing services for the first time: food assistance, rental assistance, health coverage, and more. The program highlighted both how difficult it is to ask for help and the successes of the collaborative efforts between the Boulder County Department of Housing and Human Services and our community partners. Sister Carmen Community Center in Lafayette was a major focus of the documentary. On the Dateline web site, the text article that accompanied the program received the most comments in the history of the site. From the article:

[Boulder County's Department of Housing and Human Services](#) has tried to reach out to struggling formerly middle class families like the Welches before they hit rock bottom. "Safety nets are historically built to try to catch people right before they hit the pavement," said HHS director Frank Alexander, "if we can get people before they fall we can serve a lot more people in a lot better way and we don't have to just clean up the mess on the street."

According to Alexander, helping a family in need with their mortgage or rent payments may cost the county in excess of \$10,000 in temporary "front end" assistance, but if that money prevents homelessness and all its associated economic and social ills it can save the county much more than that. "We know that if a senior who's trying to live independently in the community ends up in a nursing home, that that shifts cost to \$75-85,000 a year. We know that if a family's in a home and they get foreclosed upon, it costs us almost \$80,000 as a community with that home being foreclosed upon. And the interventions that we can do as a human service system with our community partners are much less costly. The time duration is much more limited. And the outcomes for the families and individuals are much better."

Boulder County has signed up non-profit organizations like the [Sister Carmen Community Center](#) to be conduits for some of its front-end services. With the center's help Joyce Welch and her family qualified for county rent assistance until August 2012, enough time, Joyce hoped, for her husband to find a job that will get the family back on their financial feet. But for now, she has begrudgingly accepted that she has become a new and different statistic of poverty in America.



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*Upstream*



# Hope & help

Our Family and Children Services Division caseworkers and managers are trailblazers.

We continue to move our system upstream to meet families' needs much earlier than in the past. As our data indicate, this is helping families stabilize **before** they're faced with a crisis, and is keeping children safe and with their families.

We are committed to continuing to invest in this upstream approach and to train caseworkers across our human services delivery system in proactively pursuing self-sufficiency with and for those who are struggling.

We are also committed to continuing to collaborate with state and county leaders from around Colorado. What we are learning here will undoubtedly be beneficial statewide, as will the successes of our partners.

**Every child deserves to live in a safe, loving, and permanent home. Every family, child, and individual has the right to live in a safe, affordable, and stable home. And all families and individuals have the right to easy access to healthcare, food, and economic security as they pursue self-sufficiency and financial stability.**

These are the certainties that drive us *forward*.



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