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**Governor's Office of  
Information Technology**

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## **Colorado Child Abuse & Neglect Hotline**

<b>Nomination Category</b>	Digital Government: Government to Citizen (G to C)
<b>State</b>	Colorado
<b>Project Initiation Date</b>	November 2013
<b>Project Completion Date</b>	January 1, 2015

## I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In May 2013, Colorado Governor John Hickenlooper signed House Bill 13-1271, requiring the Colorado Department of Human Services (CDHS) to develop a statewide child abuse reporting system. In addition to creating one phone number with a new telecommunication system to route calls to the appropriate county, the law required that there be standards for screening, assessing and making determinations on reports to the hotline.

CDHS, in partnership with the Governor's Office of Information Technology (OIT) and the state's main telecommunications partner CenturyLink, established a new statewide hotline number (1-844-CO4-KIDS) for the public to report, anonymously if desired, suspected or known child abuse and neglect. The statewide system, launched in January 2015, is able to route calls 24 hours per day, seven days per week, necessitating counties to have practices in place to accept calls outside of normal business hours (Colorado has a state-supervised, county-administered human services system, meaning that the state's Division of Child Welfare within CDHS oversees programs and services that are administered at the local county level).

In addition to the hotline, a new web-based tool was developed to assist state, county and hotline staff with documenting reports of abuse and neglect, as well as capturing general inquires that come in to the hotline number. The new hotline web application feeds information to Colorado's State Automated Child Welfare Information System (SACWIS), also known as Trails. Also as part of the project, a website at [co4kids.org](http://co4kids.org) was created with additional information for the public on reporting suspected child abuse.



## II. PROJECT NARRATIVE

### a. Concept

In 2012, Governor Hickenlooper announced a new child welfare plan (“Keeping Kids Safe and Families Healthy”) that detailed a common practice approach for Colorado’s 64 counties and two tribal nations designed to strengthen the state’s child welfare system. The second phase of that plan included the development of a statewide hotline providing one number to report suspected child abuse or neglect, and a corresponding public awareness and prevention campaign.

House Bill 13-1271 was signed into law in May 2013, authorizing the creation of a steering committee tasked with developing:

- A recommendation and implementation plan for a statewide hotline reporting system
- A recommendation for a corresponding public awareness campaign
- Recommendations for rules relating to the operation of the system and consistent practices for responding to reports and inquiries

Committee members engaged in a process to develop a child abuse and neglect hotline reporting system in which every caller’s concern is documented, and no child “falls through the cracks.”

The Colorado Child Abuse and Neglect Hotline, 1-844-CO-4-KIDS (1-844-264-5437), went live on Jan. 1, 2015. The hotline is designed to provide one easy-to-remember, toll-free phone number for individuals to use statewide to report suspected child abuse and neglect. The hotline serves as a direct, immediate and efficient route to the counties that are responsible for accepting and responding to child abuse and neglect inquiries and reports. All hotline calls are routed to the county where a child resides.

Callers who are not sure of the county, speak a language other than English or Spanish, or are deaf or hard of hearing will be directed to a Hotline County Connection Center representative who will assist them with the reporting process. The Hotline County Connection Center is located in Prowers County, in southeast Colorado, and is staffed 24x7, 365 days a year by trained call-takers, certified annually through the Colorado Child Welfare Training System.

All callers are connected with a call-taker who is trained and certified to use a screening guide designed to drive a structured process for interviewing callers who are reporting concerns of child abuse and neglect. All callers may remain anonymous and reports confidential.



## **b. Significance**

The significance of this hotline is huge for the state, both in confronting abuse better and reporting on the efforts already in place.

One example is how the counties still maintain their current practices of receiving reports of abuse and neglect with the new hotline. To ensure proper routing, each county must have a dedicated line for child abuse and neglect reporting, however calls made directly to a county's dedicated line will also be routed through the hotline system for data collection purposes. This process is automated and seamless and does not require putting a caller on hold or cause any delay in answering calls.

Another significant piece of this effort is the statewide public awareness campaign launched in April 2015, in alignment with National Child Abuse Prevention Month to educate and encourage the public to report suspected child abuse and neglect through the statewide hotline.

On top of it all, this project fits directly into Governor John W. Hickenlooper's gubernatorial priorities of efficiency, effectiveness and elegance by elevating the quality of service for Coloradans. A direct result of his new child welfare plan, the hotline is a huge step in strengthening the state's child welfare system.

## **c. Impact**

The hotline system has enabled and led to substantial change, making the State of Colorado better for citizens. It enables CDHS to capture critical information that it has not previously been able to track on a statewide basis, such as:

- Number of calls received
- Call volume
- Call duration
- Speed of answer
- Wait time
- Call transfers
- Abandonment rate

This information is critical to ensuring that calls across the state are handled quickly and appropriately; and is now being used to improve operational call flows and forecast future needs.

Since the hotline has gone live:

- The Hotline County Connection Center (HCCC) was staffed in Prowers County with 15 trained and qualified personnel that help route calls to counties and even take reports when necessary (they have more than 720 hours of training)



- There were 208,999 calls routed during 2015
- More than 27,071 calls were routed through the new statewide number
- More than 20,611 calls were handled by HCCC
- In addition, the HCCC took more than 744 reports
- The statewide average for answering calls is just 26 seconds
- A new training and certification curriculum was developed that includes hotline and team training
- An enhanced screening guide was developed to provide call takers with a consistent and structured process for interviewing reporters

