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YOUR PERSPECTIVES

I think this magazine is beautiful and wonderfully designed. I want to thank you for this – loved the photos. Made me proud to live in NM. Very interesting content too.
Laura Sullivan, LISW
CYFD Foster Care/Adoption Specialist

Awesome. Saludos Cordiales, J. Martín Rodríguez
Cultural & Linguistic Competence
New Mexico Systems of Care, Behavioral Health

The magazine looks great.
Alexandria Taylor, Director,
Valencia Domestic Violence Program and Shelter

WELCOME

It is with much thanks that we welcome you back to PIÑON PERSPECTIVES. Our newly redesigned e-magazine, designed by the PS Research, Assessment and Data Bureau, was greeted with high praise by our readers—both internal and external partners. Our goal is to provide you with a way to communicate with the PS workforce through our e-magazine so please consider sharing your news, insights, observations and ideas for new articles.

Contact us at pinon.project@state.nm.us.

All the best – The Piñon Perspectives Team

THE ART OF PIÑON

About the Photography: New Mexico’s rich history and vibrant landscapes inspire photographer Armando de Aguero. In this issue we share de Aguero’s “Junkyard Series.” ©Armando de Aguero.
You may view his portfolio here:
www.yomando.zenfolio.com
Q&A:
Milissa Soto

Protective Services Division Policy and Procedure Coordinator, Central Office, Santa Fe

What are the biggest challenges you face in your job?

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The bulk of my job entails updating and maintaining PS policies and procedures and assisting in federal reporting.

The biggest challenge I face in my job is figuring out how to convey practice into writing (into policy and procedure).

Trying to find a middle ground that makes sense to our workers, for example you want to have guidelines that are useful to workers when making crucial decisions, but you don’t want to “box in” any practices that are helpful to the clients we serve.

What are the services that parents and guardians within the PS systems need? How to do we empower local government to play an active role in supporting families that may be struggling and children that may be at risk?

In my opinion parents and guardians need support more than anything, and that support cannot be sole responsibility of PS workers.

I would like to see local government and community members play a more active role in education of preventing child abuse and neglect, and providing added support to the families and children that come to PS’s attention.

PS is a very complex area where people specialize — and those of us working in it often only experience a small part of the overall system. How can the workforce better understand the “Big Picture” and learn about all the services PS provides?

If you as a worker in any position within PS have the opportunity, take part in a workgroup.

In my experience, participating in a workgroup has allowed me to get a “big picture” view of how the different aspects of our division come together.

What are success stories you hear out in the field?

I think just the fact that they are individuals dedicated to ensuring the safety and well being of children in New Mexico is a success story within itself.

How can central office and county office staff work to create work environments that foster courageous conversations—addressing work problems and conflict?

I think that first rule of participating in a courageous conversation is to understand that it is not a means to criticize, cut down or berate someone.

Courageous conversations occur when there is a widely recognized problem, but not all the players involved agree on how to rectify the problem or may not be ready to even accept there is a problem.

How does our collection of data inform practice? How can we all learn from the assessment, research and evaluation process?

Data provides the “true story” of an organization. Collecting data through assessment, then through evaluation an organization can make decisions regarding new promising practices or systemic problems.

Working in the arena of child welfare can be very stressful. In addition to self-care, what can be done to create work environments that promote flexibility, creativity and mutual support?

Working in the arena of child welfare is a tough job. We as PS employees need to be more supportive to our fellow co-workers. Customer service should not only be extended to our external stakeholders, but to our fellow co-workers as well.

Thank you for your time and insights, Milissa.

If there are people you would enjoy seeing interviewed and particular questions asked, please contact us. pinon.project@state.nm.us.
PART 2

PIÑON’S BIG PICTURE

Introducing New Employees and Seasoned Ones to our Ever-evolving New Mexico Piñon Project.

The purpose of the Piñon Project is to define a framework of how our agency engages and works together with children, youth, families, and stakeholders to create an environment that focuses on the safety, permanency, and well-being of children and their families.

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The Piñon project has been underway since November 2009 and it involves the entire Protective Services leadership team along with regional and field staff, foster parents, parents, children, youth, tribes, courts, providers and other stakeholders.

Why are we doing this?

Protective Services has a history of improvement initiatives. We are constantly focused on changes to improve practice and respond to new state and federal requirements and, may be suffering from “change fatigue.” Our efforts were often fragmented; they were not organized in terms of an overall approach to implement a clearly articulated and coherent practice model and framework; and we sometimes don’t seem to stop long enough to examine if our efforts are working. This is complicated by the fact that, although administration of the child welfare program is centralized, direct services are offered through county offices.

The population and resources in the counties vary significantly, and often approaches to practice vary as well. We needed an approach to sustain systemic and organizational change. This initiative is directed to the development of such a coherent framework.

The practice model and framework has several outcomes. It:

- Articulates vision, mission, values, and operating principles in a manner that inspires, empowers, and engages staff and partners; creates commitment, and provides clarity and direction to our work
- Improves our organizational culture and climate, policies, structure, and practices
- Promotes achievement of safety, permanence, and well-being outcomes
- Engages all stakeholders: staff, children and youth, families, foster parents and adoptive parents, behavioral and physical health and other partners, the legal community, child advocates, and others
- Employs a strengths-based approach in developing the model, building on what is working
- Incorporates the principles and practices of System of Care: child-focused, family-centered, trauma informed, strengths-based, community based, and culturally-competent array of services and supports
- Creates a strategy for change management that is data-driven and data-tracked, allowing for ongoing evaluation of the change process as well as tracking of targeted outcomes.

How can I learn more about the Piñon Project?

To keep up to date on the Piñon Project visit: www.cyfd.org/pinonproject

If there are particular questions you have about the Piñon Project and your role in it, please contact us. pinon.project@state.nm.us

STATS

In State Fiscal Year 2012 New Mexico CYFD Protective Services had:

Substantiated investigations: 4,133
Unsubstantiated investigations: 12,515

Of the substantiated investigations statewide there were:

Substantiated physical abuse allegations: 1,536
Substantiated sexual abuse allegations: 180
Substantiated physical neglect allegations: 4,392

If there are particular questions you have about PS data and how it informs our practice and our external partners’ understanding of child abuse and neglect, please contact the PS Research, Assessment and Data Bureau through pinon.project@state.nm.us.
PART 3

COURAGEOUS CONVERSATIONS

Courageous conversations are those workplace talks we have, whether with peers, those in positions of power, or those we supervise that constructively address workplace problems. All of us have different comfort levels when it comes to sharing workplace concerns. What might seem like an everyday workplace talk to some may sound like a very brave, bold and courageous conversation to others. Courageous conversations support a Piñon Value: Organizational Competence.

The following describes an actual courageous conversation from the workplace:

My supervisor assigned me some work that was going to be time-sensitive and it was something I had not done before. Because of other pending work assignments, I felt overwhelmed and did not know how I was going to be able to complete all of my tasks on time. There was a time when I would have just done the work—somehow—putting in extra hours and feeling very frustrated and overworked.

As a result of learning more about the Piñon Process, I felt empowered to ask my supervisor for assistance in addressing the situation. My supervisor listened to my concerns and was very supportive. She offered some solutions that made me feel respected and valued.

We hope to hear and share on-going examples of courageous conversation in the workplace. Please send yours, anonymously if you wish, in 150 words or less to Piñon Editor at Piñon.project@state.nm.us