YOUR PERSPECTIVES

I really enjoyed the content and the appearance. **Sheila A. Smith** LISW, CYFD, In-Home Services Supervisor for Curry and Roosevelt County

The art draws me into the newsletter until the very end. Thank you for an amazing publication. **Jean E. Taylor**, CYFD, the Foster Care and Adoptions Bureau

I particularly liked the quote on disequilibrium and the article on courageous conversations. I agree with the essence of these two articles, that without taking risks, little growth can occur. I hope that I will always have the strength to be courageous. **Jackie J. Hiatt**, CYFD, PS, Fiscal/ Budget Manager

It is beautiful and the content relevant. **Deborah M. Reed**, LCSW, Center for Improvement of Child and Family Services, Portland State University, OR

WELCOME

It’s been gratifying to hear from our CYFD workforce and those working in the Child Welfare arena in other states. Our goal is to provide you with a way to communicate with the PS workforce and share lessons learned nationally, so please consider sharing your news, insights and ideas for new articles, interviewees, and photography. All the best – **The Piñon Perspectives Team**

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

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 distinctive images from around the state. ©Armando de Aguero. You may view his portfolio here: www.yomando.zenfolio.com
PART 1

Q&A:
Marianne Hernandez-Jimenez, LMSW

In-Home Services Supervisor
Las Cruces
Can you describe your job and what you enjoy about it?

I supervise a unit of five practitioners in Dona Ana County. We are a very busy county and work with a diverse population of families. I most enjoy my coworkers and the families that we work with. Workers within Protective Services are the most hard working and dedicated professionals and I feel privileged to work alongside these individuals. I really enjoy being out in the field visiting with families and seeing their resiliency, as it maintains my passion for working in In-Home Services.

What is your biggest challenge in your work?

The biggest challenge in my work is meeting all of the competing demands of supervision. It is important to me that I am available to my workers and support them with what they need, so that they can provide quality and efficient services to the families that we work with.

What are the biggest successes in In-Home Services?

I strongly believe that In-Home Services prevents removal of children and reduces maltreatment. We are fortunate to have the opportunity to work with families in their natural environments, observe their strengths and help them so that they can provide a safe environment for their children. It is truly a success when we are able to keep families together and parents have enhanced the family’s capacity to provide for their children’s needs in a safe environment.

What has been your experience of the Piñon Project thus far?

I began attending meetings in mid-2010, at the near onset of the project. I had the opportunity to be part of the initial meetings and workgroups and contributed to developing the mission, vision and values. It is now great to see the Piñon Project unfold statewide. Many individuals have worked very hard to make Protective Services a great place to work. I particularly like that front line staff and supervisors are being heard and that we are part of the decision-making process.

Employee morale can ebb and flow in the high pressure field of child welfare. What are your thoughts about self-care?

Self-care in child welfare is critical. It is important to take care of yourself and have a life outside of work. It is also important to be consistent in self-care so that we are best able to recognize and deal with our biases, stay compassionate with our families and one another, and have the physical and emotional energy to do this demanding work.

What are some of the challenges that In-Home Services is facing right now? How do you see addressing into those challenges?

In-Home Services Practitioners throughout the state have high caseloads. Some of these families present with complex issues. We definitely need more Practitioners. It is important that we utilize our community partners and informal support systems to assist in supporting the family and providing relevant services.

If you could have a one on one conversation with every employee in Protective Services, what would you tell them about In-Home Services?

I would tell the employee that In-Home Services can be an effective method of intervention to help parents or caregivers enhance their protective capacities and be able to safely parent their children. For the most part, parents have the ability and willingness to make changes and In-Home Services can serve as a catalyst for change utilizing a strengths based perspective.

What innovation would you like to bring to NM in the area of In-Home services?

There is currently a lot of research and emphasis on the importance of the parent-young child relationship. There have been several Circle of Security Trainings offered in PS and I encourage workers to attend this training to learn about assessing and enhancing the parent-young child relationship.

Thank you for your time and Insights.
PART 2

THE BIG PICTURE

How Do We Take Care of Ourselves in the High Stakes and High Pressure Arena Of Child Welfare?

Lessons from the Adaptive Leadership Training

Continues on next page
**An Ongoing Process**

The Piñon Project focuses on the entire workforce, with the goal of empowering staff in order to improve all PS services. One aspect of the empowerment comes in the form of Adaptive Leadership Training.

We are sharing a small excerpt from one of the readings from the Adaptive Leadership training to highlight the importance of taking care of oneself—a vital component of working in the high stress arena of child welfare.

The following is an excerpt from: *Leadership in a (Permanent) Crisis* by Ronald Heifetz, Alexander Grashow, and Marty Linsky, Harvard Business Review • July–August 2009

**Taking Care of Yourself**

Taking care of yourself both physically and emotionally will be crucial to your success. You can achieve none of your leadership aims if you sacrifice yourself to the cause.

**First, give yourself permission to be both optimistic and realistic.**

This will create a healthy tension that keeps optimism from turning into denial and realism from devolving into cynicism.

**Second, find sanctuaries where you can reflect on events and regain perspective.**

A sanctuary may be a place or an activity that allows you to step away and recalibrate your internal responses. For example, if you tend to demand too much from your organization, you might use the time to ask yourself, “Am I pushing too hard? Am I at risk of grinding people into the ground, including myself? Do I fully appreciate the sacrifices I’m asking people to make?”

**Third, reach out to confidants with whom you can debrief your workdays and articulate your reasons for taking certain actions.**

Ideally, a confidant is not a current ally within your organization—who may someday end up on the opposite side of an issue—but someone external to it. The most important criterion is that your confidant care more about you than about the issues at stake.

**Fourth, bring more of your emotional self to the workplace.**

Appropriate displays of emotion can be an effective tool for change, especially when balanced with poise. Maintaining this balance lets people know that although the situation is fraught with feelings, it is containable. This is a tricky tightrope to walk, especially for women, who may worry about being dismissed as too emotional.

**Finally, don’t lose yourself in your role.**

Defining your life through a single endeavor, no matter how important your work is to you and to others, makes you vulnerable when the environment shifts. It also denies you other opportunities for fulfillment.

Achieving your highest and most noble aspirations for your organization may take more than a lifetime. Your efforts may only begin this work. But you can accomplish something worthwhile every day in the interactions you have with the people at work, with your family, and with those you encounter by chance. Adaptive leadership is a daily opportunity to mobilize the resources of people to thrive in a changing and challenging world.

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**A Work in Progress**

The CYFD Piñon Project is a work in progress and continues to evolve, with participation from every level of Protective Services. To keep up to date on the Piñon Project, including Adaptive Leadership, visit: [www.cyfd.org/pinonproject](http://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.*
Study nature, love nature, stay close to nature. It will never fail you.
Frank Lloyd Wright

Quotable & Shareable Quotes: Read, cut out, share, and delight a workmate, family member, or friend. Make the day a good one.

As you grow older, you will discover that you have two hands, one for helping yourself, the other for helping others. —Audrey Hepburn

Image ©Armando de Aguero.
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. Courageous conversations support a Piñon Value: **Organizational Competence.** The following describes an actual courageous conversation from the workplace:

“I was feeling very frustrated with my job. While I wanted to contribute and felt I had a lot to give, I also felt that the particular work environment I was in was the wrong fit. I had a lot of informal conversations with work colleagues, asking what they thought of my work situation and what to do about it. I wanted to get as much feedback as I could in order to take action steps. I was strongly encouraged to talk with management about my situation. I felt unsure about having such a conversation. It felt like a big risk but I had heard that courageous conversations were part of the work culture and were encouraged. I spoke quite candidly to management about my situation and felt heard. I also felt empowered to explore other options and eventually found myself in a new role—one that was the perfect fit for my skill sets.”

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