



County Letter of Support: FY23 R-03 County Trails Refresh and Support

February 3, 2022

Dear Members of the Joint Budget Committee,

Colorado Counties, Inc. (CCI) and the Colorado Human Services Directors Association (CHSDA) strongly support the Colorado Department of Human Services (CDHS) funding request for county computer refreshes and support, and to right size the funding distribution in the Colorado Trails line item (FY23 R-03 County Trails Refresh and Support). Separating county computer expenses into a new funded line item, while correcting the Trails line-item splits, will greatly improve service delivery for children and families in Colorado, improve system stability, and support the ongoing development of new, high-value features in Modernized Trails.

With over 5,400 users statewide, Counties and the CDHS Division of Youth Services (DYS) rely on Trails to serve some of our most vulnerable, abused, neglected and at-risk children, youth, and families across the state. Trails is utilized to capture the first report of abuse or neglect, important historical and family composition data, assessment, case planning and contact notes, and financial payments through permanency for children. The current Trails application is over 20 years old and is built using antiquated technology that makes completing routine tasks cumbersome and time-consuming.

In 2016, a project was initiated to modernize the Trails user-interface and implement new features to make the system more intuitive and easier to use. The Trails modernization project was awarded to a third-party vendor and several modules, such as the child welfare hotline and referral tracking, provider management, and the full DYS case-management functionality, have been implemented. However, funding for the project was exhausted before the key remaining child welfare modules of assessment, case, and fiscal could be implemented. As a result, child welfare caseworkers have been required to manage their work in two different systems for over 3 years. The system is not only inefficient, but also creates more risk for inaccuracies in data collection and reporting. The Trails OIT team has assumed full responsibility of managing both legacy Trails and modernized Trails after the vendor was removed from the project last year. However, a lack of resources has limited their ability to both maintain the existing system and move forward with completing the remaining unfinished modules in modernized Trails. This additional funding will provide the Trails OIT team with the critical resources needed to complete the modernization efforts and get all child welfare and DYS users working in a single, more user-friendly system.

Counties strongly support this funding request, and because we recognize that this shift will not fully fund the necessary changes to the system, commit to continued collaboration with the Colorado Department of Human Services to identify future funding needs and improve the operation of our systems.

Felix Lopez
Las Animas County Commissioner
CCI Board President

Mary Berg
Executive Director, Jefferson County Human Services
CHSDA President
Member of Trails Executive Committee

CC: Michelle Barnes, Executive Director, Colorado Department of Human Services
Kevin Niemond, Director of Policy & Legislative Affairs, Colorado Department of Human Services
Kristin Stephens, Larimer County Commissioner & Member of Trails Executive Committee
Emily Hansen, Child Welfare Joint Budget Analyst