

Press Release

GOV. RITTER CREATES CHILD WELFARE TRAINING ACADEMY

Denver - Tuesday, May 19, 2009 - Gov. Bill Ritter today established Colorado's first Child Welfare Training Academy, which will provide approximately 400 new caseworkers and their supervisors with the training, skills and knowledge to better protect the state's most vulnerable children from abuse and neglect.

The Academy will be run by the Colorado Department of Human Services and is established by Senate Bill 164, signed into law by Gov. Ritter during a morning news conference and signing ceremony. State Sen. Linda Newell and Rep. Joe Miklosi sponsored SB 164.

"In a tough economic time like this, we should all be extremely proud of this legislation and the new Training Academy," Gov. Ritter said. "This will save lives. The academy will give child-welfare caseworkers the tools they need to protect kids and keep them safe."

"The training academy created by Senate Bill 164 is the result of the hard work of the Governor's Child Welfare Action Committee," said Karen Beye, executive director of the Colorado Department of Human Services. "The committee's goal is to make sure all children in the public welfare system have access to quality services and to professionals with the knowledge, skills and abilities to make decisions that will help keep them safe and secure."

The state's child-welfare system cares for children from about 14,000 families a year. Following a spate of deaths of children who had come into contact with the system, Gov. Ritter last year created a Child Welfare Action Committee, which, along with an executive order issued by the Governor, produced SB 164 and the Training Academy.

"We cannot allow one more fatality in our child protective services," Sen. Newell said. "These deaths are unacceptable and unconscionable, but thanks to Senate Bill 164, we will soon be making headway to keep children safe. This bill creates the Child Welfare Training Academy and establishes statewide standards for competency, assessment, and training of child welfare workers and their supervisors. Thanks to SB 164 each of these children will be better cared for and protected."

"Anything that the state of Colorado can do to reduce children's deaths in the child welfare system is incredibly important, and is absolutely worth the effort," Rep. Miklosi said. "SB 164 will create a child welfare staff academy to train social workers and other staffers with the skills and the best practices they will need to deal with difficult and complex family situations."

The legislation and academy will mandate and standardize training across the state, and help counties recruit and retain qualified child protection workers. It will put Colorado in league with nearly 20 other states that have pre-service training academies. Those states have seen an improvement in their child protection programs.