

Family Services

INFORMATION AND REFERRALS



FAMILY SERVICES NEWS

WINTER 2006

IMAGINE!'S AUTISM SPECTRUM DISORDER PROGRAM HELPS OVERCOME SERVICES GAP

In an era where funding for social services continues to be in jeopardy, organizations that provide services for people with cognitive disabilities often face "gaps," where certain population groups may not qualify for services they desperately need. Imagine!'s Family Services department has worked hard to find creative ways to fill service gaps to ensure that it can support as many people as possible. One example of a creative solution to a service gap is Imagine!'s Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) program.

The ASD program was created in 2004 in response to an unmet need – families in Boulder County who had children who were diagnosed with an Autism Spectrum Disorder but were not eligible for services from Imagine! because they did not meet the official Colorado state definition of having a

developmental disability.

Working closely with the Autism Society of Boulder County, Imagine! created a unique program designed to offer flexible and responsive services to improve the living situation of local citizens who have an Autism Spectrum Disorder. The program is simple. Qualifying families receive an annual allocation of funds for three years. These funds are directed toward focused services designed to treat specific areas of need, providing a pathway to improved social and emotional skills and an enhanced ability to participate fully in the community.

Creating a program to target an unmet need caused by a service gap requires strong attention to the bottom line, and the ASD program is extremely cost-effective. Online registration and web-based service management significantly reduce

administrative costs. The program is also designed to best meet families' needs, operating on a self-determination model that puts families in charge of determining what resources they use.

Now entering its third year, the ASD program has proven to be a huge success. Currently more than 50 families in Boulder County are enrolled in the program, and the feedback has been very positive. For example, Katherine Weadley, whose son Conor is enrolled in the program, said, "This has been so important to the development of our son as his school becomes harder and his social life becomes more complicated."

In order to qualify for Imagine!'s ASD program, families must have children who: are diagnosed with an Autism Spectrum

Disorder, are between three and 22 years of age, live at home with their parents or guardians, are not eligible for any other services through Imagine! and are residents of Boulder County. For more information on Imagine!'s ASD program, please contact Michelle Conkey at (303) 926-6444.



Imagine!'s Autism Spectrum Disorder Program has helped kids like Conor Weadley, above, improve social and emotional skills and participate more fully in their communities.

NEW FACES AT FAMILY SERVICES

Family Services continues to grow as we work to assist families who provide at home care to family members who have a developmental disability. Here are some of our newest team members:



Joan Holtz has joined Family Services as the new Early Intervention Program Manager. Joan will be budgeting, monitoring and coordinating the overall early intervention services for more than 400 children, aged birth to three, and their families living in Boulder and Broomfield counties. Her duties will include overseeing Part C responsibilities such as federal assurances, accountability issues and public awareness campaigns.



Jeff Johnson has joined Family Services as the new Family Support Case Manager. Jeff will be working to help families find resources and guiding them as they navigate the human services system.



Gail Scott has joined Family Services as the new Family Services Data Specialist. Gail will manage the data system for the Family Support Services Program, document and report eligibility and enrollment, process grant applications and manage all demographic data for eligible consumers.

NEW WAIVER OFFERS FUNDS FOR CHILDREN WITH AUTISM

THE WAIVER IS DESIGNED TO PROVIDE FUNDING FOR BEHAVIOR THERAPIES AND FOR TRAINING AND MODELING FOR PARENTS SO THERAPIES MAY BE CONTINUED IN THE HOME.

Thanks to recent legislation, there are now additional funds available for children with autism. The Home and Community Based Services – Children with Autism Waiver (HCBS-CWA) is designed to provide funding for behavior therapies (including individual and group therapy) and for training and modeling for parents so that the therapies may be continued in the home. Case management for the waiver will be provided by Imagine!.

HCBS-CWA funds are limited to 75 children and families statewide, and include a maximum of three years in the program and a maximum of \$25,000 annually per qualified client. To qualify for HCBS-CWA, the child must be aged birth to six years and have a medical diagnosis of autism. The county eligibility technician will determine financial eligibility.

For more information on HCBS-CWA and eligibility requirements, please contact Sandy Crowell at (720) 274-2248.



NEWS FROM EXCEPTIONAL FAMILIES

From Anna Stewart, Exceptional Families Newsletter Editor:

Little did I know that the newsletter I mailed out in July was my last issue and the last issue of Exceptional Families Connector. Due to the changing flow in funding streams, we will no longer be producing our own Exceptional Families newsletter six times a year. Instead, we have made a commitment with Imagine! and Boulder Public Health to combine our resources, and we will now have a presence in the quarterly Imagine! Family Services newsletter. Exceptional Families is still here. We have our board of directors, our social events, Spanish group, neonatal intensive care unit (NICU) support, and are always available to talk and meet with families, especially those new to the world of disabilities.

Though change is often messy and uncomfortable, the fact that we still have one another, parent-to-parent, will keep us centered, supported and connected. I also want to offer myself as a resource to those of you in BVSD. As the Parent Liaison for Special Education, it is my job to offer support, information and resources. It is a natural extension of my involvement in EF. I will continue to provide content to Imagine! regarding EF, so please contact me if you have questions, concerns or suggestions: **(303) 441-1555, x92243.**

"Exceptional Families is not only a group for parents to receive support, but it is a way for parents who have gone through exceptional situations to PROVIDE support. I became involved with EF after reading an ad in the newsletter for a volunteer needed to provide support to parents with children in the NICU in the Longmont area. I was treated so well and felt so supported while my son Connor was in the NICU at Longmont United and The Children's Hospital that I felt this was my way to give back or 'pay it forward.' I have since become the Coordinator of EF and have met many amazing families and have been touched personally by their stories of success due in part to the support they received from Exceptional Families. There is a special connection between parents that cannot be replicated through any other means."

- Kim Taylor, Exceptional Families Coordinator



Maria Arredondo and her son Alejandro Vargas Arredondo, one of the many families supported by Exceptional Families.

Photo by Kerry Lewis

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Familias Excepcionales en Español

Nos reunimos de nuevo

Tú puedes acompañarnos, tenemos cuidado de niños y pasamos un rato agradable.

Ponte en contacto con familias que tienen la misma necesidad que tú.

Para más información llama a Rocio Alvarado 720-276-4142.

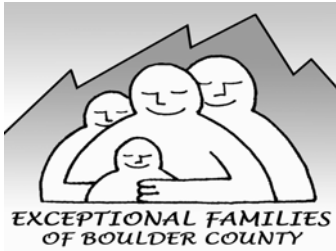
Moms Night Out

If you would love to go out with other moms from Exceptional Families, then join to connect, laugh, talk and share over a meal.

Friday, January 12th starting at 7 P.M.

Call Emmy for location at 303-664-1295 or email her at emmyconroy@earthlink.net

EXCEPTIONAL FAMILIES SUPPORT SERVICES



Parent-to-Parent Support

Perhaps the most significant contribution that Exceptional Families has to offer is providing support to parents to help them as they support their children who have disabilities so they can learn and grow as valued members of the community. Through our outreach, we believe that parents will be more informed, less isolated and better able to advocate for their children. EF is not only a parent voice, it is unique because it provides information and opportunities for interaction between new parents and parents of older kids.

"NICU liaisons are an important addition to all NICUs and one of the services provided by Exceptional Families. As a peer, with my own personal experience dealing with problems associated with premature birth and developmental problems, Exceptional Families enables me to provide information a parent may need regarding support groups and local agencies. Parent-to-parent contact is the most successful way to deal with problems associated with prematurity.

My personal experience began with the birth of my second son at Boulder Community Hospital. I was invited down the hall for a coffee and to receive information. My first response was not to attend until I heard there was another mother attending from Exceptional Families who already experienced a baby with special needs. I felt I could relate to her and had many questions regarding my first child, who was also premature. I vowed then that this was something I wanted to do in the future to help and support other mothers so no parents are left without the information and support they may need.

Nothing, not handouts or representatives of government agencies, can replace another parent's care, support, concern and being available over the next few years with good advice." - Kerry Lewis, Exceptional Families NICU coordinator

Exceptional Families Board of Directors

Kim Taylor, Coordinator

Mary Joe Weston, Treasurer

Kerry Lewis, NICU Coordinator

Anna Stewart, Newsletter Editor

Emmy Conroy, Moms Night Out Coordinator

Donna Wilson, Spanish-Speakers Liaison

Heather Forsyth, Outreach Coordinator

Email: exceptionalfamilies@yahoo.com

Phone: (303) 441-1555, x92243

NICU

EF has successful relationships with the NICUs of local hospitals, notably Foothills Boulder Community Hospital, which has a Level 2 NICU. Boulder's NICU parent group, headed by Kerry Lewis and developed by Karen Leh, consists of monthly coffees where parents who have infants in the NICU can come and get support, information and resources.

Social Events

Our social events are by far our most requested services. Currently we do monthly Moms (and Dads) Night Out, a mid-winter bowling party and our annual summer picnic. It is so important for families who are raising children with special needs to feel they have a place where they can come together, share a meal and have their children be accepted and understood. For many parents, it is the only time they feel a true sense of belonging.

"EF social events are fantastic family outings. My kids have a great time with other families who have kids with differences. Tolerance, acceptance and lots of fun are the purpose of the picnic and the bowling party. Thank you EF!!" - Mary Joe Weston, EF Treasurer

"The EF annual summer picnic is a wonderful opportunity for families to relax and meet with other families of children with special needs of all ages, share a meal and play in a relaxed environment. The winter bowling party provided ramps for bowlers of all abilities and accessibility for those family members using wheelchairs. Next year, we plan to add a fall event so it's not so long between events." - Heather Forsyth, EF Outreach Coordinator

FAMILY SERVICES NEWS BRIEFS

GRANT UPDATE

Family Services provides funds to help pay for the extraordinary costs of caring for a family member who has a developmental disability. Funds may be used to help pay for respite care, professional services, medical and dental expenses, transportation, assistive technology, home modification and parent and sibling support.

We have been able to offer grants to many of our families so far this fiscal year. Due to the increasing number of families enrolled in Family Support Services, we have had to slightly reduce the amount offered to our families. We are doing our best to serve as many families as possible this year.

TRAUMATIC BRAIN INJURY RESOURCES AVAILABLE

Family Services' Traumatic Brain Injury Program (TBI) provides care coordination for eligible children and their families. Two members of the Family Services team, Mikii Schoech and Sandy Crowell, recently attended the TBI Conference in Vail, Colorado. Presenters included persons with TBI and other experts in the field. Mikii and Sandy brought back many resources regarding TBI services in our community and statewide. If you have questions about or are looking for TBI resources, please contact Mikii at (303) 926-6475 or Sandy at (720) 274-2248.

IMAGINE! HOSTING PROVIDER FAIR

Early next year, Imagine! will be hosting a provider fair that will bring service providers and families together for an opportunity to share information about service options available to families.

The fair will target families with dependents (ages three years through adulthood) who live at home and adult consumers (and their families) who live in the community and receive Supported Living Services. These Supported Living Services are designed to assist persons with developmental disabilities who do not live in host homes, licensed group homes or other congregate settings.

We will be sure to keep you informed as the details of the fair are finalized. If you would like more information or would like to sign up to attend the fair, please contact Michelle Conkey at (303) 926-6444.

Family Services News
is the newsletter of Imagine!'s

Family Services Department

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Jan Rasmussen, Family Services Director

**THE MISSION OF IMAGINE! IS TO CREATE
AND OFFER INNOVATIVE SUPPORTS TO
PEOPLE OF ALL AGES WITH COGNITIVE,
DEVELOPMENTAL, PHYSICAL AND HEALTH
RELATED NEEDS SO THEY MAY LIVE
FULFILLING LIVES OF INDEPENDENCE AND
QUALITY IN THEIR HOMES AND
COMMUNITIES.**

Imagine!
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New Waiver Offers
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With Autism.

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