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Arapahoe County celebrates passage of employment assistance bill *County staffer recognized for piloting parent-to-work program that led to legislation*

Littleton, Colo. —The Arapahoe County Board of County Commissioners today honored Senator Linda Newell and Child Support Enforcement Services Division Manager Chad Edinger for their important role in the passage of state legislation that will help with job training and placement for parents who are struggling to pay child support.

Senate Bill 09-100 amends the Colorado Works Program Act, which uses federal Temporary Assistance for Needy Families funds to provide public assistance to low-income families, while helping them to become self-sufficient by promoting job readiness and employment.

Historically, the Act allowed non-custodial parents to receive job counseling and training only if the child was receiving TANF. SB 100, sponsored by Senator Newell, modifies the Act to enable a non-custodial parent who is responsible for paying child support to receive employment assistance, regardless of whether his or her child is receiving public assistance under the Colorado Works program.

“Arapahoe County’s Department of Human Services, like in most counties in Colorado, is grappling with child support enforcement for unemployed and underemployed non-custodial parents, who, in many cases, are themselves in dire financial straits,” said Arapahoe County Commissioner Frank Weddig. “This legislation allows counties to support these parents with skills assessments, training and placement into a job that helps them to be self-sufficient and meet their child support obligations.”

Edinger and Cheryl Ternes, Human Services Director, worked with Colorado Counties Inc. and Senator Newell to bring the legislation to fruition.

At a public ceremony today, Commissioners Susan Beckman, Jim Dyer, Rod Bockenfeld, Pat Noonan and Frank Weddig, along with Senator Newell, presented Edinger with the pen used by Governor Bill Ritter to sign the law into effect on April 30.

Last year, Edinger spearheaded a pilot project at Arapahoe County called *Parents to Work* to study the viability of providing employment assistance through the child support enforcement system. The study will evaluate employment activity, earnings and child support payment until July 2010. However, an interim evaluation of cases entering the program between August and December 2008 has shown strong promise, with 47 percent of those receiving employment assistance making a child support payment through employment

“We are enthusiastic that this model will succeed by breaking down the barriers and helping parents become self-sufficient and meet expectations for support,” Edinger said. “Getting parents to work will have a real impact on increasing their child support payments and reducing their reliance on the State’s financial assistance programs, ultimately creating a brighter future for children.”

The Colorado Works Program operates in all 64 counties, and is delivered locally through each county's department of human or social services.

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To download photos, click on the following link:

<ftp://www.co.arapahoe.co.us/Pub/CM/SB100Celebration>

Photo Captions:

Senator Newell Speaking: Senator Linda Newell addresses the Arapahoe County Board of County Commissioners on the success of Senate Bill 100.

Pen Presentation: Senator Linda Newell (D) of Littleton presents the pen used by Governor Bill Ritter to sign SB 09-100 to Chad Edinger, Arapahoe County Child Support Enforcement Division Manager.

Group: Senator Linda Newell, sponsor of SB 100, joins Arapahoe County’s Board of County Commissioners and staff Cheryl Ternes and Chad Edinger in celebrating the passage the employment assistance bill.

(from left to right)- Commissioner Rod Bockenfeld, Commissioner Pat Noonan, Director of Human Services Cheryl Ternes, Senator Linda Newell, Commissioner Jim Dyer, Child Support Enforcement Division Manager Chad Edinger, Commissioner Susan Beckman and Commissioner Frank Weddig.

Governor’s Pen: Chad Edinger, Arapahoe County Child Support Enforcement Division Manager, holds up the Governor’s pen gifted to him by Senator Linda Newell.