



*Our Community ~ Our Priority*

## News Release

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### **New position at DHS developed to increase line of communication between the agency and those who report child abuse.**

#### **Community outreach and education to be top priority for Child Welfare Community Liaison.**

Mesa County, CO --- The Department of Human Services recently hired Erica Anderson to fill the newly created Community Liaison position within the Child Welfare division. Anderson has a Master's Degree in the social work field and has been with the Department for four years, most recently as a Senior Case Manager for the Adolescent Intake unit. Anderson's primary focus as Community Liaison will be answering the Child Protection Hotline at the Department.

According to Treva Houck, Child Welfare Division Director, Anderson's time will be split approximately 70-30 between the Hotline and doing direct community outreach with professional agencies that are required to report child abuse. "Agencies such as Law Enforcement, School District 51 and the medical community are mandated by law to report suspected child abuse and neglect", said Houck. Anderson hopes to develop and implement a comprehensive communication plan to create a better link between mandatory reporters, community organizations and the Department. This new position is intended to encourage a more transparent way of doing business. Houck explained, "We envision this (new position) as an opportunity for people in the community to provide feedback and ask questions on the child welfare process".

By creating continuity throughout the child welfare unit and the Child Protection Hotline, the Department expects to better connect with the community in a positive way. "This agency is looking to the future and focusing on how we can better serve our clients and get people in our community connected to the services they need", explained Len Stewart, Executive Director for the Department. "This is about developing and fostering relationships with agency partners and the individuals we serve in this community", Stewart said.

Anyone who suspects child abuse or neglect is encouraged to call the Child Protection Hotline at 242-1211. This line is staffed 24/7 and callers can remain anonymous. For general child welfare questions or folks wanting more information on the referral process are encouraged to contact Erica Anderson at 256-2476.

***"Mesa County Department of Human Services—Helping individuals and families achieve safety, independence and self-sufficiency in a collaborative, fiscally responsible and customer service oriented environment."***