

WBR ARTICLE (WYOMING BUSINESS REPORT)

Healthy Families program wins award

By Staff

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CHEYENNE — Gov. Dave Freudenthal announced today that the state's "Healthy Families Succeed" program, pioneered to provide better services and reduce costs, won a national innovation award from the Council of State Governments.

Freudenthal said the award "recognizes our unique project to integrate data and use the information to design programs that help Wyoming's neediest families."

Wyoming's human services agencies -- Family Services, Health, Employment, Workforce Services and Corrections -- fully integrated their service data, and the shared information is then analyzed to identify joint opportunities for the agencies and the people they serve.

"Governor Freudenthal, in late 2003 and early 2004, brought Wyoming's human services agencies together to talk about sharing information in a way that would better allow us as agencies and as a state to identify the problems facing Wyoming citizens and develop potential solutions to those problems," said Bob Lampert, director of the Wyoming Department of Corrections.

Agency directors found that a very small number of the state's clients were consuming a disproportionate amount of assistance resources. "As a group, we identified that the people who qualified for state assistance were difficult to find, hard to serve and overlapped multiple agencies and services," said Lampert. "Less than 3 percent of those we were serving were using up 42 percent of the state assistance resources we had available to serve all of our citizens," Lampert said.

From there, discussions about how to better serve Wyoming citizens led to the Healthy Families Succeed program. More than 300 families, with over 900 household members, have enrolled in the program.

"As a return on our investment, we've seen measurable improvement in the stability, health and self-sufficiency of families, with total cost savings of nearly \$2,000 per client," Lampert said. "In addition, more than 50 clients are now enrolled in advanced education and job-certified programs," he added. Under the program, families using a high number of state services are offered health and job-focused information, education and decision support. The program provides no direct medical services, instead focusing on understanding the specific needs of families and helping them achieve their goals of improved health and better job opportunities.

The Council of State Governments established the Innovations Awards program in 1986 to bring greater visibility to exemplary state programs and practices and to facilitate the transfer of those successful experiences to other states. Hundreds of applications are submitted each year.

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