



**COPS**  
Community Oriented Policing Services

**DECSYS**  
Drug Endangered Children  
Tracking System

# Implementing the Drug Endangered Children Tracking System (DECSYS)



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The identification of children exposed to drug-related violence is mostly confined to drug-related arrests in which the child is present at the time of arrest. This creates a serious gap in identifying children exposed to violence who are not present at the time of arrest. Unfortunately, there is a lack of uniform data collection about drug endangered children. Colorado DEC's Drug Endangered Children Tracking System (DECSYS) offers local law enforcement and child welfare agencies a streamlined and automated process for quickly sharing information and identifying children at risk that is predictable, reliable, and measurable. Information on drug arrests is reported to child welfare regardless of whether children were present or suspected. *Implementing the Drug Endangered Children Tracking System (DECSYS)* documents the implementation and process of expanding DECSYS to new communities. Promising practices are reported for each step of the process from system design, to training and support, to recruiting new sites.

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## About Us

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**Corona Insights** is a market research and strategic consulting firm based in Denver, Colorado. Corona Insights serves as a resource for nonprofit, public, and private organizations needing to make decisions on a wide variety of topics. We help organizations uncover the right answers to the questions most important to them, then we guide them to use those answers to inform their decisions and plans. The firm's mission is to provide accurate and unbiased information and counsel to decision makers. Corona Insights was retained by the Colorado Drug Endangered Children to conduct an evaluation of their DECSYS expansion efforts, supported by an award from the COPS Office. Learn more about Corona at [www.CoronaInsights.com](http://www.CoronaInsights.com).



**The Colorado Drug Endangered Children** promotes the health, safety, and well-being of drug endangered children through statewide training, technical assistance, and advocacy. Colorado DEC has four primary goals: 1) Increase statewide recognition of the challenges facing children in substance using environments and the positive outcomes associated with collaboration; 2) Provide support to communities and organizations to increase the identification of and services to drug endangered children through collaborative community responses; 3) Develop and implement projects to collect accurate quantitative and qualitative data on the scope of DEC issues; 4) Support development and dissemination of innovative and effective practices, programs, and policies related to substance abuse and child welfare issues in Colorado.



**The National Alliance for Drug Endangered Children** works to break the cycle of abuse and neglect by empowering practitioners who work to transform the lives of children and families living in drug environments. Their work includes the following: 1) Providing national leadership, strategic planning, and technical assistance to state and tribal DEC efforts in communities across the country; 2) Developing and delivering training for practitioners across disciplines to increase their expertise and enhance their work with children and families; 3) Conducting outreach to raise public awareness about the nature of the risks faced by drug endangered children; and 4) Advocating for services and funding for drug endangered children.



**The Office of Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS Office)** is the component of the U.S. Department of Justice responsible for advancing the practice of community policing by the nation's state, local, and tribal law enforcement agencies through information and grant resources. The community policing philosophy promotes organizational strategies that support the systematic use of partnerships and problem-solving techniques to proactively address the immediate conditions that give rise to public safety issues such as crime, social disorder, and fear of crime. The COPS Office awards grants to state, local, and tribal law enforcement agencies to hire and train community policing professionals, acquire and deploy cutting-edge crime-fighting technologies, and develop and test innovative policing strategies. The COPS Office funding also provides training and technical assistance to community members and local government leaders and all levels of law enforcement. The COPS Office information products are currently available, at no cost, through its online Resource Center at [www.cops.usdoj.gov](http://www.cops.usdoj.gov).

# Contents

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<b>Acknowledgments</b> .....	<b>i</b>
<b>About Us</b> .....	<b>ii</b>
<b>Introduction</b> .....	<b>1</b>
<b>Background</b> .....	<b>2</b>
Drug Endangered Children.....	2
History of the Movement to Protect Drug Endangered Children.....	2
<b>Drug Endangered Children Tracking System (DECSYS)</b> .....	<b>5</b>
History of DECSYS.....	5
How DECSYS Works .....	6
Using DECSYS .....	7
DECSYS Pilot Results.....	8
<b>DECSYS Expansion</b> .....	<b>11</b>
Expansion Plan .....	11
Selecting Expansion Sites .....	11
Recruiting .....	12
DECSYS Training.....	14
DECSYS End User Technical Assistance.....	15
<b>Conclusion</b> .....	<b>16</b>
<b>Appendix A: Additional Resources</b> .....	<b>17</b>
<b>Appendix B: State Expansion Survey Instrument</b> .....	<b>18</b>
<b>Appendix C: List of Counties in Colorado</b> .....	<b>19</b>
<b>Appendix D: Overview of the States Selected for Expansion</b> .....	<b>20</b>
<b>Appendix E: Letter from COPS Director</b> .....	<b>21</b>
<b>Appendix F: DECSYS Flyer</b> .....	<b>22</b>

## Introduction

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Since the early 1990s, there has been a growing movement to help drug endangered children who are living in dangerous, drug-filled environments. Drug endangered children are children who are at risk of physical or emotional harm as a result of their parents' use, possession, manufacture, cultivation, or distribution of drugs. The recognition that there was a link between child abuse and parental drug use, and that living in a home where drug use takes place was itself a source of risk to children, ignited a passion to change the way communities respond to drug arrests where children are present.

The identification of children exposed to drug-related violence in their homes, schools, and communities is mostly confined to drug-related arrests in which the child is present at the time of arrest. This poses a serious gap in identifying these children who may be at school, visiting a relative, or otherwise engaged at the time of arrest. Unfortunately, there is a lack of uniform data collection about drug endangered children, which only underscores how many uncounseled at-risk drug endangered children are suffering in silence.

The Colorado Alliance for Drug Endangered Children (Colorado DEC), formed in 2003, has been instrumental in protecting drug endangered children in Colorado. Their early efforts resulted in several legislative victories aimed to protect children from the consequences of methamphetamine use. In 2006, Colorado DEC began an effort to create a system for tracking children impacted by drug arrests. The result—the Drug Endangered Children Tracking System (DECSYS)—was well-received and, with further development and pilot testing, has grown into a robust application which supports communication between law enforcement and child welfare agencies and captures statistics on impacted children. A communication accomplishment by DECSYS is that information on drug arrests is reported to child welfare—regardless of whether children were present on scene, or evidence of children was noted. This allows child welfare to cross-check individuals and locations associated with any drug arrest against their databases to identify affected children that were not apparent to law enforcement. Typically, there would be no reason for law enforcement to notify child welfare of arrests where no children are suspected or present.

DECSYS offers local law enforcement and child welfare agencies a streamlined and automated process for quickly sharing information and identifying children at risk that is predictable, reliable, and measurable. The information sharing made possible through DECSYS helps to ensure that drug-endangered children are recognized as quickly as possible, that appropriate agencies are involved, and that fewer endangered children go unnoticed. The statistics captured by DECSYS are provided to participating agencies who are encouraged to share the data through public awareness campaigns or other educational materials. The sharing of data is hoped to lead to a higher level of community awareness and engagement regarding drug endangered children, along with cultivating the “public will” needed to change policies and direct resources to this issue so that communities can better address the impacts on children of parental substance use and involvement in the illegal drug trade.

This report documents the implementation of DECSYS, and the process of expanding DECSYS to new communities. Promising practices are reported for each step of the process—from system design, to training and support, to recruiting new sites. In addition, this report provides additional background information about the National Alliance for Drug Endangered Children and the Colorado Alliance for Drug Endangered Children, and provides a detailed look at DECSYS.

It is intended for anyone interested in implementing DECSYS in their community, as well as state DEC alliances interested in attempting more widespread implementation. DECSYS helps to make communication between agencies more reliable and to standardize the sharing of information that would not typically be shared (i.e., notification of drug arrests where no children were present or suspected). In addition, participation contributes to the broader goal of developing uniform data collection for quantifying drug endangered children. For these reasons, it is a useful tool even for communities where strong communication between law enforcement and child welfare agencies already exists, as well as for smaller communities with few drug arrests.

## Background

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### Drug Endangered Children

Parents or caregivers who are involved with drugs or alcohol—whether through use, possession, dealing, or manufacture—put children at risk. A literature review of the effects of parental drug use on children by Barnard and McKeganey<sup>1</sup> summarizes the existing data. Children growing up in drug environments experience parents who are emotionally disengaged and unresponsive, denying the children necessary developmental experiences required to self-regulate, relate to others, and communicate. They experience emotional and physical neglect, daily chaos, a lack of safety, poor communication, violence,<sup>2</sup> and disorganization in their lives. They are frequently undernourished, and may suffer from poor hygiene, inadequate sleeping conditions, and a lack of immunizations, medical attention, and dental care. Most don't make it to school regularly.

According to the National Survey on Drug Use and Health,<sup>3</sup> 35.3 million people self-reported illicit drug use in 2008. This same survey reports that 2.1 million children live with a parent who is dependent on or abuses illicit drugs. A significantly larger number of drug endangered children is reported in a study by the National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse.<sup>4</sup> It estimates that 9.2 million children, nearly 13 percent of all children, live in a household where a parent or other adult uses illicit drugs. Since the early 1990s, there has been a growing movement to help drug endangered children who are living in these dangerous, drug-filled environments. These are children who are at risk of suffering physical or emotional harm as a result of illegal drug use, possession, manufacturing, cultivation, or distribution in their living environment. They may also be children whose caretaker's substance misuse interferes with the caretaker's ability to parent and provide a safe and nurturing environment.

Unfortunately, there is a lack of uniform data collection about drug endangered children, which only underscores how many uncounseled at-risk drug endangered children are suffering in silence. Although we have much to learn about the long term impact of the risks faced by drug endangered children, we do know this: children whose parents abuse alcohol or drugs are three times more likely to be verbally, physically, or sexually abused and four times more likely than other children to be neglected.<sup>5</sup>

### History of the Movement to Protect Drug Endangered Children

#### *National DEC*

The Drug Endangered Children (DEC) movement began in California as a response to the extreme danger clandestine methamphetamine labs were posing to vulnerable children. Sue Webber Brown, Butte County (California) DA Investigator, recognized a connection between the child abuse cases she was working and illicit drugs, and while collaborating with her husband on his master's thesis, coined the term "drug endangered children." Shortly thereafter (in 1993), she and her husband developed a Drug Endangered Children Program in Butte County as a new approach to rescuing children endangered by drug labs and lifestyle. The approach involved forming DEC teams comprising personnel from the District Attorney's office, child services, and law enforcement. Cooperation by DEC team members ensured a swift, comprehensive judicial response to drug cases involving children, as well as earlier intervention services for the children, including medical assistance, appropriate placements, and an opportunity to live a crime-free life. The tragic death of three small children in a methamphetamine lab explosion the day after Christmas in 1995 escalated the DEC effort in California. The successful program was modeled in several other California counties and the Butte County DEC Response Team went on to provide training and community presentations throughout California as well as in Arizona, Nevada, Utah, Washington, and Washington, D.C.

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1. Marina Barnard and Neil McKeganey, "The impact of parental problem drug use on children: what is the problem and what can be done to help?" *Addiction* 99 (2004): 552–559.
2. Ginny Sprang, Michele Staton-Tindall, and James Clark, "Trauma Exposure and the Drug Endangered Child," *Journal of Traumatic Stress* 21, no. 3 (2008): 333–339.
3. United States Department of Health and Human Services, Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, and Center for Behavioral Health Statistics and Quality, "National Survey on Drug Use and Health, 2010," ICPSR32722-v3 (Ann Arbor, MI: Inter-University Consortium for Political and Social Research [distributor], 2012). doi:10.3886/ICPSR32722.v3.
4. "Family Matters: Substance Abuse and the American Family," (New York: The National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse at Columbia University, 2005).
5. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, SAMHSA's Center for Substance Abuse Treatment, *You Can Help: A Guide for Caring Adults Working with young People Experiencing Addiction in the Family*, (PHD878, (SMA) 01-3544) (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office). Retrieved March 11, 2013 from [www.ncsacw.samhsa.gov/files/TrainingPackage/MOD6/YouCanHelp.pdf](http://www.ncsacw.samhsa.gov/files/TrainingPackage/MOD6/YouCanHelp.pdf).

The DEC programs continued to spread and state DEC alliances began to form to target specific resources within the states. As the state DEC alliances began to develop and more practitioners became engaged by the DEC efforts, there soon came the need to have a national organization to be the coordinating body. The National Alliance for Drug Endangered Children (National DEC) is a non-profit organization originally founded by law enforcement professionals, prosecutors, child protection workers, medical personnel, treatment providers, prevention specialists, and other practitioners in response to the spread of meth labs and the dangers they pose to children. Today, the mission has expanded to include a response to children who are endangered by the manufacture, distribution, and use of all illegal drugs and other substances of abuse.

National DEC's comprehensive approach is unique. It focuses on the formation of community-based partnerships that engage professionals from multiple disciplines in developing collaborative approaches to rescue, defend, shelter, and support children living in dangerous drug environments. National DEC is proud to work alongside law enforcement, prosecutors, social services, medical personnel, treatment providers, prevention experts, probation and corrections, first responders, and many more. National DEC believes that all of the professionals who have the opportunity to save a child from neglect and abuse should be trained to work collaboratively.

To support these community-based efforts, they have established a national infrastructure that includes 24 affiliated State DEC Alliances. The volunteer network consists of more than 100 DEC leaders and provides the foundation for eight practitioner working groups that identify and develop best practices. National DEC also has working partnerships with federal agencies and national organizations with aligning missions.

National DEC's work includes the following:

- Providing technical assistance to state and tribal DEC efforts in communities across the country
- Developing and delivering training for practitioners across disciplines to increase their expertise and enhance their work with children and families
- Conducting outreach to raise public awareness about the nature of the risks faced by drug endangered children

### **Colorado DEC**

In 2002, the North Metro Task Force executed a search warrant for a methamphetamine lab in Adams County, Colorado. This drug bust was unforgettable because it was the first time SWAT officers wore full, self-contained breathing apparatuses on a raid due to the identified dangers of methamphetamine in the air and on all surfaces; but also because a 14-month old boy named Brandon was found to be living in this methamphetamine lab, wearing nothing more than a wet diaper and displaying an obvious lack of bonding and attachment to caregivers (please see [www.coloradodec.org/aboutus/history.html](http://www.coloradodec.org/aboutus/history.html)). This incident motivated key leaders in Colorado to connect with the DEC movement from California to form the Colorado Alliance for Drug Endangered Children (Colorado DEC) in July 2003.

Since that time, Colorado DEC has been instrumental in helping children exposed to dangerous drug environments. This includes getting key legislation passed from 2003 to 2006, including the restriction on sales of methamphetamine precursor chemicals; the expansion of child abuse statutes to define the manufacture of a controlled substance as "child maltreatment"; and the creation of the Colorado State Methamphetamine Task Force. In 2007, Colorado DEC formally partnered with the State Methamphetamine Task Force to create the Colorado Blueprint<sup>6</sup> as a roadmap to mobilizing a comprehensive community response to protect children, families, and communities from the effects of substance abuse. Later that year, Colorado DEC hired staff and the Blueprint model was vetted through several communities and organizations across the state, referred to as "Learning Sites." Consequently, Colorado DEC has continued to serve as a centralized and valued resource for assisting drug endangered children across the state.

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6. State of Colorado Methamphetamine Task Force, *Strategic Plan*, May 2007, [www.coloradodec.org/goopages/pages\\_downloadgallery/download.php?filename=3372\\_3270150.pdf&orig\\_name=Colorado%20Blueprint.pdf](http://www.coloradodec.org/goopages/pages_downloadgallery/download.php?filename=3372_3270150.pdf&orig_name=Colorado%20Blueprint.pdf).

The Colorado DEC mission is to promote the health, safety, and well-being of drug endangered children. Colorado DEC accomplishes this mission through the following objectives:

1. **Education and awareness among community based agencies**—to increase statewide recognition of children living in substance-using environments through education, training, and technical assistance including, but not limited to, Core DEC Training, collaborative workshops, community assessment, strategic planning, and agency DEC policy development and evaluation.
2. **Identification and communication between agencies**—to increase the identification of drug endangered children and enhance communication between child welfare and law enforcement agencies through the Drug Endangered Children Tracking System (DECSYS), a unique web based tracking tool that allows for timely and appropriate discovery of drug endangered children so they may be linked with child welfare services, as needed. DECSYS also allows DEC to collect and analyze accurate data on the scope of DEC issues, which in turn guide Colorado DEC and community approaches so they are relevant to the specific needs of the community.
3. **Access to immediate and long-term support services for families in need**—to provide support to communities and organizations that increase the services for drug endangered children and their families through Colorado DEC's Family and Community Connections Program.
4. **Advocate for systemic and policy change**—to support the development and dissemination of best practices, DEC guidelines, and policy regarding child welfare issues in Colorado related to substance abuse.

# Drug Endangered Children Tracking System (DECSYS)

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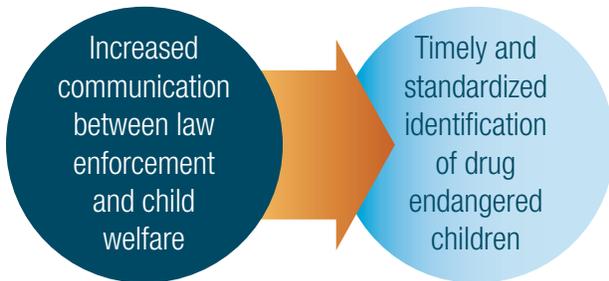
## History of DECSYS

The Drug Endangered Children Tracking System (DECSYS) is a secure web-based application developed by Colorado DEC for use by law enforcement and child welfare agencies to facilitate interagency communication and to capture statistics on impacted children. The vision for DECSYS came from the North Metro Drug Task Force in Colorado in 2005, following a string of heartbreaking cases of drug endangered children going unnoticed.

In one particularly troubling case, an eight-year-old boy was home from school when his house was raided by police for the fifth time, and it was later discovered that he had spent periods living alone in the house following previous raids that had occurred while he was at school, when his caretakers had been taken off to jail. Because the child had not been present on the scene of previous arrests, there was no notification of the raid to child welfare. In another instance, a drug raid turned up evidence of child pornography involving children in the home, and when child welfare was brought in, law enforcement discovered that child welfare had had an open investigation on the home for two years because one of the children in the home had made an outcry of sex abuse to a teacher, but they hadn't been able to gather enough evidence to open a case. If each agency had known what the other knew, they believed they would have had sufficient information to intervene sooner.

As a result of these and other cases, the North Metro Drug Task Force and the Adams County Department of Human Services decided to try to work together to determine how many children were impacted by the felony level drug arrests being made by the Task Force. (These agencies decided to focus on felony level arrests because of the large number of felony arrests in this community. Participating communities can decide independently if they want to include other law enforcement contacts in DECSYS reporting.) Initially, law enforcement filled out paper forms on each drug arrest (regardless of whether children or evidence of children were present) and sent them to child welfare for review. When this process resulted in a large count of associated children, the organizations, working with Colorado DEC, decided to automate the process to make communication timelier so that associated children could be identified and served (see Figure 1).

**Figure 1: DECSYS Theory of Change**



The vision was supported by local funding and built into a database application. The initial implementation of DECSYS was created in 2006. The first version of the system had a strong functional vision, though it possessed complicated system architecture as well as an incomplete software development process. It was pilot tested in four counties in Colorado from 2006 to 2009. Participating agencies were very positive about the DECSYS concept; however the application was difficult to navigate and posed a problem for users.

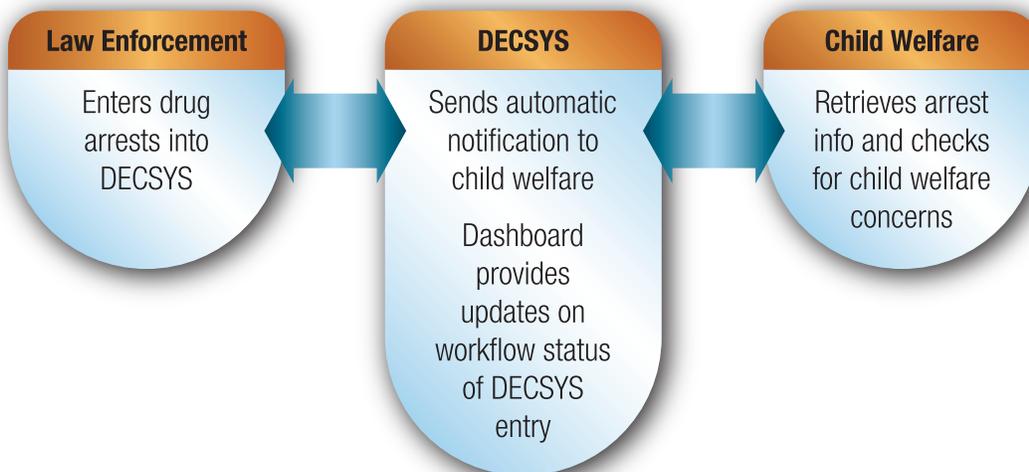
In April 2009, the system was redesigned to be more user friendly with the help of a Colorado DEC contracted software systems architect and a web application development firm. They determined the scope of the project through requirements-gathering sessions, as well as through the selection of an appropriate technical infrastructure. The newest version launched in six Colorado counties in early 2010 and contained significant improvements in usability by collecting information from law enforcement in a concise and efficient manner, by adding a workflow scheme that follows the progress of a case, and by automatically notifying the appropriate child welfare agency that a new case has been entered into the system.

### How DECSYS Works

DECSYS offers local law enforcement and child welfare agencies a streamlined and automated process for quickly sharing information and identifying children at risk that is predictable, reliable, and measurable. The information sharing made possible through DECSYS helps to ensure that drug endangered children are recognized as quickly as possible, that appropriate agencies are involved, and that fewer endangered children go unnoticed.

DECSYS employs a three-tiered web-based architecture, so an authorized user needs only a username and password to access the system on the Internet. It is very easy to use, and takes less than five minutes to enter a case. The DECSYS process is very straightforward: law enforcement enters information on drug arrests into DECSYS; DECSYS sends an automatic notification by e-mail to child welfare when the new case has been entered; child welfare then logs in to retrieve the arrest information and checks it against records for child welfare concerns and notes actions taken; the DECSYS dashboard provides updates on the workflow status of each DECSYS entry so that law enforcement can see when child welfare has processed the case. The process model is summarized in Figure 2. Additional detail about the process within each agency is provided in subsequent sections of this report.

Figure 2: DECSYS Process Model



Access to DECSYS is protected by unique usernames and passwords and agencies participating in the information sharing available through DECSYS sign a Software-as-a-Service Agreement, which contains confidentiality provisions and restricts the use of the DECSYS system. It is a closed system due to the confidential nature of its content. Information that is passed through DECSYS is strictly controlled to ensure system integrity. The information contained in DECSYS is shared only between law enforcement and child welfare agencies. Colorado DEC has only access to limited, de-identified information contained in DECSYS and only for the purposes of research, evaluation, and quantification of the issue.

With an easily accessible and automated system, collaboration between law enforcement and child welfare agencies can not only help build stronger cases, but also have the potential to save hundreds of children who would have otherwise gone unnoticed. The statistics captured by DECSYS are provided to participating agencies who are encouraged to share the data through public awareness campaigns or other educational materials. The sharing of data is hoped to lead to a higher level of community awareness and engagement regarding drug endangered children, along with cultivating the “public will” needed to change policies and direct resources to this issue so that communities can better address the impacts of parental substance use and involvement in the illegal drug trade on children.

## Using DECSYS

In June of 2012, a series of site visits were conducted by Colorado DEC staff and an independent evaluator with DECSYS users to gather information as an initial part of evaluation of the DECSYS expansion. Interviews were conducted with law enforcement officers, their administrative assistants, and child welfare managers and case workers. The interviews covered how individuals at each site are using DECSYS, their processes around using the system, how much time they spend using it, any challenges they face in using the system, and how the system has affected coordination between law enforcement and child welfare.

### *Law Enforcement*

Law enforcement users have a variety of procedures for entering data. In some agencies, officers enter arrests directly, while at other agencies information is funneled to an administrative staff member who enters all arrests for the agency. Depending on the other responsibilities of the administrative staff, at some agencies they do additional research beyond their agency to try to flesh out the arrest records where possible, for example by searching in court records for other information about the case or individuals involved. Some enthusiastic agencies also research other arrests in neighboring jurisdictions not yet participating in DECSYS, and enter cases from jail booking records. The best practice for entering data seems to be centralized entry of the reports into DECSYS by a designated person, as opposed to having individual officers responsible for entry. It does not matter whether the designated person is an administrative staff person or a supervisory officer; only that one person is responsible for making sure all reports are entered.

The DECSYS software does not limit or restrict the types of cases that can be entered by law enforcement, and participating communities are encouraged to collaboratively decide what kinds of cases to include based on the volume of cases handled by law enforcement and the capacity of child welfare to review cases. At this time, only felony-level drug arrests are required to be entered into DECSYS; while expansion is underway, the initial focus is on achieving consistent, wide-spread sharing of information on felony drug arrests. This is not intended to suggest that only felony crimes harm children, but a recognition that resource allocation has to be based on a community-level decision about what's practicable as well as desirable. In fact, some child welfare agencies have expressed an interest in receiving information about other types of cases from law enforcement, including domestic violence, information from informants, other types of felony arrests (e.g., felony weapons charges), or misdemeanor drug arrests, and communities with capacity and resources to enter and review cases of other types are encouraged to do so.

It is also important to note that as drug laws are changing, the specific crimes included in this definition may change, which may impact reporting and statistics. For example, new laws in Colorado and Washington to legalize and regulate marijuana may impact reporting. Changing definitions do not alter the impacts that parental drug involvement has on children, so communities will have to decide whether to alter their reporting criteria to continue to pick up these cases.

Depending on the volume of cases handled by an agency and its administrative capacity, some agencies enter data every day, and others enter data just once a week. In agencies with an administrative staff member who enters data, that person goes around the office gathering information from officers about closed cases, and then sits down to enter all of the data at once. Law enforcement users report spending three to five minutes per case to enter information into DECSYS. They describe it as very easy to use. As one user summarized, "it's pretty stupid-proof."

When law enforcement logs into DECSYS they begin on a dashboard screen listing the recent cases they have entered. Cases are divided into two tables based on whether child welfare personnel have initiated a review of the entries or not. This provides quick, visual feedback to law enforcement that child welfare is receiving the information. To add a new case, law enforcement users click a button on the dashboard screen that leads them through a series of four screens gathering information about the case, suspects, children, and drug information. After all of the information has been entered, it can be saved as a draft or sent to child welfare.

### *Child Welfare*

Child welfare users receive an e-mail notification when a new case has been entered by a law enforcement agency in their service area. The e-mails may be routed to an intake specialist or screener, or a selected case worker in the agency. The recipient can click a link in the e-mail to log in to DECSYS and see the new case information. Typically, multiple people in each child welfare agency, usually including a supervisor, receive the e-mail so there is back-up in case someone is out, but one person will be assigned primary responsibility for DECSYS.

For child welfare users, the DECSYS dashboard contains three sections: one listing new cases, one listing cases which are actively being reviewed by child welfare, and another listing recently completed cases. When one of the new or in progress cases is selected, child welfare can add associated children to the case listing, and indicate each child's history with child welfare and the current response (e.g., assigned to new investigation). As one user emphasized, "it's an easy system to manage."

Some child welfare users indicated that their process is to open the DECSYS entry for a new case review and cross-check the names and locations against other sources of information.

In addition to obtaining timely arrest information from DECSYS, child welfare users can also search archived records to check for information on potential placements for children.

Child welfare agencies have mentioned concerns that they may be overwhelmed by the information coming from DECSYS. However, the data from DECSYS has shown that, in fact, for a majority of children associated with DECSYS cases, child welfare was already involved with those children and families (DECSYS merely provided additional collateral information). In addition, participating agencies have found that using DECSYS requires very little time. E-mail notifications let child welfare know when new information is available in DECSYS, and agencies check DECSYS at their earliest convenience to review the cases. Child welfare users report that it typically takes five to ten minutes to process each case.

### *Impacts on Coordination between Law Enforcement and Child Welfare*

Using DECSYS as a standardized tool to ensure communication between law enforcement and child welfare agencies facilitates collaboration that is already happening, and increases the amount of information being shared between agencies. It also makes information sharing less dependent on specific personal relationships and more a part of organizational culture.

As one law enforcement user described, "DECSYS prompts communication" between their office and child welfare. If they notice that child welfare has not responded to a case, they will call over to check on it. Similarly, child welfare users attest that DECSYS ensures that mandatory reporting requirements<sup>7</sup> are being met by the law enforcement agencies and "information sharing helps coordinate efforts better."

Agencies using DECSYS express interest in even greater information sharing between agencies. Law enforcement users noted that when they are getting ready to do a warrant, they would like to receive tips from child welfare on things like drugs or weapons they may encounter in the house. For their part, child welfare agencies indicated that they would like to be able to send tips about these kinds of things to law enforcement. That functionality has not yet been implemented, but is under consideration.

### **DECSYS Pilot Results**

Colorado DEC conducted a two-year, six-county pilot test of the DECSYS system from March 2010 to March 2012. In that time, thousands of felony drug arrest cases were entered into DECSYS. During the pilot test, 67 percent of the children found using DECSYS were not present at the scene at the time of the arrest (see Table 1), meaning DECSYS is responsible for a 200 percent increase in the number of drug endangered children identified to be associated with felony drug activity and brought to the attention of child welfare. Without DECSYS, Child Protective Services would not have been notified of the drug arrests impacting those children and there would have been no determination of an appropriate service level, if it was warranted.

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7. Use of DECSYS does not alleviate law enforcement's responsibility to fulfill their mandatory reporting requirements as established by state law.

**Table 1: Children Identified Using DECSYS**

<b>DECSYS Pilot Results: Children</b>		
	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
<b>Total children identified</b>	<b>1166</b>	
<b>Children present on scene</b>	<b>383</b>	<b>33%</b>
<b>Evidence of children on scene, children identified by CW</b>	<b>79</b>	<b>7%</b>
<b>No children or evidence on scene, but children identified by CW</b>	<b>704</b>	<b>60%</b>

A majority of the children identified by DECSYS had some history of involvement with child welfare, meaning that DECSYS provided some additional information to child welfare about children they were already aware of. Nearly three-quarters of the children who were not present on the scene of the arrest had either a current involvement or prior history of involvement with child welfare, as did half of the children present on the scene of an arrest. However, on the whole, only 12 percent of the children found to be associated with drug arrests had a *current* case or investigation with child welfare—more commonly they had a *prior* history of involvement and would not have received attention from child welfare were it not for the DECSYS notification of the drug arrest (see Table 2). Further, child welfare may not have had enough information to move forward with some of the children with a current investigation status, prior to receiving the DECSYS notification of the drug arrest.

**Table 2: Identification of Children with Prior Child Welfare History**

<b>DECSYS Pilot Results: Children with Child Welfare History</b>		
	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
<b>Children present on scene</b>	<b>383</b>	
With prior history with CW	145	38%
With current history with CW	48	13%
<b>Children not present on scene, but identified by CW</b>	<b>783</b>	
With prior history with CW	477	61%
With current history with CW	95	12%

As shown in Table 3, about one-third of the felony drug cases entered into DECSYS had associated children. Of those cases with children associated, a majority did not have children present on the scene of arrest. Only 12 percent of cases had children present on scene, and an additional 20 percent of cases had associated children who were not present on scene, but were identified by child welfare.

**Table 3: Felony Drug Cases with Associated Children**

<b>DECSYS Pilot Results: Children with Child Welfare History</b>		
	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
<b>Total cases entered</b>	<b>2002</b>	
<b>Cases with children associated</b>	<b>637</b>	<b>32%</b>
Cases with children present on scene	235	12%
Cases with children not present on scene, but identified by CW	402	20%

Table 4 breaks down the child welfare actions taken for children associated with DECSYS entries. As shown below, a total of 36 percent of children associated with felony drug cases were assigned (or referred) to a new or existing child welfare case or investigation. However, this is a conservative estimate based on the fact that 24 percent were forwarded to a non-DECSYS participating child welfare agency to determine an appropriate response, therefore the response that was determined for these cases was not recorded by DECSYS.<sup>8</sup>

**Table 4: Child Welfare Actions for Associated Children<sup>9</sup>**

<b>DECSYS Pilot Results: Child Welfare Actions</b>		
<b>Action/History</b>	<b>Percentage of children</b>	<b>Percentage of actions</b>
<b>Not assigned for investigation</b>	<b>40.3%</b>	
Child welfare history		64.5%
No child welfare history		27.6%
Unknown		7.9%
<b>Assigned for investigation</b>	<b>25.8%</b>	
Child welfare history		70.0%
No child welfare history		27.9%
Unknown		2.1%
<b>Referred to current case or investigation</b>	<b>9.7%</b>	
Child welfare history		98.1%
No child welfare history		1.9%
Unknown		0.0%
<b>Forwarded to another agency</b>	<b>24.2%</b>	
Child welfare history		65.3%
No child welfare history		32.5%
Unknown		7.9%

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8. Children identified as living in a community outside the service area for the responding child welfare agency are forwarded to another agency. When children are forwarded to an agency that is not participating in DECSYS, it is unknown what action is taken by the agency they are forwarded to (i.e., assigned to investigation, or referred to a current case or investigation).

9. As with any data entry system, data entry errors occur, such as when a child is marked as referred to a current open case, and yet is also marked as having no child welfare history.

## DECSYS Expansion

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### Expansion Plan

Expansion of DECSYS is expected to significantly increase the number of drug endangered children who are identified and assisted. The impacts of DECSYS are even more far-reaching when considering the downstream impacts of children and families receiving support, such as disrupting the patterns of violence, poverty, and substance abuse that are often passed down from parent to child.<sup>10</sup>

The United States Department of Justice, Office of Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS Office) has funded Colorado DEC to expand the DECSYS Tracking System across Colorado and to five additional states. To implement a successful system expansion, Colorado DEC is first working to optimize the performance adaptability of DECSYS so that it can be utilized in different counties with varying needs. Through this project, the system will be introduced to all 64 of Colorado's counties and replicated to a minimum of five National DEC state affiliates. To add new areas to DECSYS, Colorado DEC establishes collaborative relationships with law enforcement and child welfare agencies serving the area, trains users to ensure accurate data entry, and provides ongoing support and technical assistance to these partner agencies. All activities are performed in close partnership with the contracted web application developers. As system performance is optimized and functionality increased, system expansion will continue statewide and nationwide.

As Colorado DEC works to expand DECSYS to additional communities, continuous improvements are being made to the system to increase the scope and functionality of DECSYS, based on feedback received from state stakeholders and system users. Ideas under review include a mobile interface for increased system access; functionality that will allow child welfare users to initiate tips to law enforcement from inside DECSYS and the ability for law enforcement to opt in on receiving notifications when a suspect with a home address in their jurisdiction gets arrested in another DECSYS participating region.

### Selecting Expansion Sites

#### *State Level*

For the past several years, Colorado DEC has presented on the DECSYS system at the National DEC State DEC Leaders Meeting, an annual in-person meeting of members of the state DEC alliances, building a level of familiarity with the DECSYS system within the National DEC Network. In order to select states for the initial DECSYS expansion, Colorado DEC, National DEC, and the COPS Office program manager went through a thoughtful two-tiered selection process. To begin, two informational webinars were offered for state DEC alliance leaders, and states that attended were asked to fill out a survey to ascertain the state's capacities (the survey instrument is provided in Appendix B on page 18). Fourteen states responded to the survey. To categorize the information from the surveys, Colorado DEC staff, National DEC staff, and the COPS Office program manager developed selection criteria that were related to DECSYS compatibility, available resources, and statewide reach. States were scored and ranked based on the information provided through the survey for compatibility with these criteria, as well as implementation readiness. Key considerations for the top-ranked states were their ability to implement the system statewide *and* secure resources necessary to sustain the DECSYS system past the initial grant period.

The scoring criteria were used to place states into one of three categories: Implementation Ready, Conditional, and Future Potential. States determined to be in the implementation ready category were the ones who had the highest score and ranking, meaning the state was currently prepared to have the DECSYS system implemented. States in the conditional category also had a high score and ranking but it was recognized that they had some areas of needed development in order for DECSYS to be successfully implemented. The states in the future potential category had the lowest score and ranking and had many development areas to work on before they would be ready for a DECSYS implementation. Following this process, phone interviews were held with the top ranking states. These interviews were conducted to gather

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10. Jennifer A Bailey, Karl G. Hill, Sabrina Oesterle, and J. David Hawkins, "Linking Substance Use and Problem Behavior Across Three Generations," *Journal of Abnormal Child Psychology* 34, no. 3 (2006): 273–292.

more detailed information than could be obtained from the survey and to allow the states the opportunity to ask questions. After the series of interviews was completed, Colorado DEC and National DEC selected two states as being implementation ready and six other states that had a few areas of needed development, such as securing greater commitment from child welfare, identifying a state DECSYS administrator, and developing the financial resources to continue the DECSYS system beyond the grant period. To date, the following four states have been selected for DECSYS implementation: Nevada, Wisconsin, West Virginia, and Tennessee. Descriptions of the implementation environment in each of these states can be found in Appendix D (on page 20).

With each state selected for implementation of DECSYS, Colorado DEC will make two initial visits to the state. The first meeting is for “requirements gathering,” to assess how DECSYS will work in the state and how it must be customized for implementation. The second meeting is to “train the trainer,” providing materials and training to both the piloting agencies in each state and the state DEC administrator who will be recruiting and supporting individual agencies in their state. At the second meeting, a partner agreement is signed between Colorado DEC and the organization supporting the state DECSYS administrator that allows the partner agency to promote and license DECSYS to law enforcement and child welfare agencies within their state.

#### ***Within a State***

DECSYS implementation in a community could be initiated by nearly any interested party or stakeholder, including state government representatives, county commissions, city councils, district attorneys, law enforcement, child welfare, private citizens, or other individuals or groups. Implementation throughout Colorado has predominantly focused on gaining the support of law enforcement and child welfare agencies; however, as stated previously, the process could begin with other community stakeholders.

To add new areas to DECSYS, Colorado DEC first establishes collaborative relationships with law enforcement and child welfare agencies serving the area. Each state has their own system for how law enforcement and child welfare jurisdictions are organized. In Colorado, each of the 64 counties has a child welfare agency, while law enforcement agencies serve municipalities, counties, and in some cases, regional areas. The result of this arrangement is that a single child welfare agency may be in the jurisdiction of several law enforcement agencies. For example, in Arapahoe County, Colorado, the child welfare agency is the Children, Youth, and Family Division of Arapahoe County Department of Human Services. The law enforcement agencies serving Arapahoe County during the DECSYS pilot included the Arapahoe County Sheriff’s Office, Aurora Police Department, Englewood Police Department, Greenwood Village Police Department, Littleton Police Department, Sheridan Police Department, and the South Metro Drug Task Force which serves a multi-county area.

DECSYS expansion sites in Colorado were initially selected based on community level interest in DEC work and information sharing. Communities that are most successful with DECSYS are typically those with a basic understanding of how children are impacted by substance use, the role of the various professionals in identifying and serving these children, and a desire to increase their ability to do so. Additional expansion across Colorado is currently underway, with counties that express interest being prioritized, followed by a regionalized approach to statewide DECSYS usage. A complete list of Colorado counties can be found in Appendix C (on page 19).

#### **Recruiting**

Throughout the process of expanding DECSYS across Colorado, it has become clear that every agency and community has a unique perspective and distinct priorities that they bring to DECSYS. Some communities primarily value the data collection aspect, while others appreciate it more as a tool to increase interagency collaboration, especially in times of personnel transition. In approaching each agency and community, it has been critical to ensure that DECSYS usage aligns with their priorities as well as with the purpose of the system and the vision of identifying additional drug endangered children. It varies from community to community whether it is preferable to approach law enforcement or child welfare first. Typically, the agency that has been more involved with DEC efforts, and more interested in DECSYS, is the lead agency in the community. However, agencies may be approached concurrently or sequentially and separately based on the culture of the community and the available resources.

Initial recruiting has taken a grassroots networking approach. In many cases, law enforcement officers and child welfare personnel with a specific focus on drugs have participated in state DEC meetings, so those individuals will be the first contact at new agencies. Where such an individual has been identified, the initial contact is usually made by e-mail, and a request is made of that person to make an introduction to the head of the agency. In cases where no contact person is known, an initial phone call is made to the head of the agency. In addition to these approaches, it is helpful if a reputable authority can send an independent letter or e-mail of introduction and encourage participation. For example, for Colorado's agencies, the COPS Office Director sent an e-mail to all police chiefs and sheriffs introducing DECSYS and encouraging participation. The text of this letter is provided in Appendix E (on page 21).

Typically, an in-person meeting is requested with the head of an agency. To that meeting, Colorado DEC brings flyers (provided in Appendix F on page 22) and a brief PowerPoint presentation to give an overview of DECSYS. If the first meeting is successful, the next step may be to sign an agreement and set up training, or a follow-up meeting may be scheduled with various stakeholders within the organization. Additional information about the specific approaches to law enforcement agencies and child welfare agencies is provided below.

#### ***Recruiting Law Enforcement Agencies***

In order to bring a law enforcement agency on board with using DECSYS there are usually a series of meetings involved. The initial approach varies based on the size of the agency and the types of units they have within their department. Outreach to the police chief or sheriff is a preferred approach, as well as working with the commanders of multi-jurisdictional drug task forces, where they are engaged as advocates for drug endangered children and align with the DECSYS vision. In addition to engaging law enforcement leadership in DECSYS, outreach and training must be done with the actual departments that will do entry into DECSYS, all of which can be done in one meeting or over several, based on the organization of the department and the level of commitment in the beginning of the expansion process.

When Colorado DEC did site visits with law enforcement officers, the officers provided examples of the reasons they were committed to using DECSYS, and their recommendations for how to introduce DECSYS to law enforcement audiences. They focused on personal concerns for children, positive feedback from the community, keeping children from growing up to repeat their parents' actions, and having a reliable way to notify child welfare of drug activity.

Some of their specific recommendations and motivations included:

- “Appeal to [their interest in] kids. Cops love kids.”
- “Tell them what the community thinks of them finding the kids.”
- “Preventing future clients.”
- “You feel better knowing something's going to get done.”

#### ***Recruiting Child Welfare Agencies***

When working with child welfare agencies, the approach can again be to the executive leadership, such as the agency director, or to a management level position overseeing the referral, screening, intake, and/or investigation phases of child welfare cases. Typically, child welfare agencies are eager to receive additional information on families they may be working with through DECSYS. Again, it can be as simple as one meeting with the agency or a series of meetings, based on the structure of the agency and the engagement of the leadership in DEC efforts in general.

Colorado DEC performed site visits with child welfare managers and case workers as well. During these visits, they discussed their motivations for using DECSYS. The key reasons included the value and timeliness of the information for them. Case workers explained that sometimes they have referrals or investigations on a family but not enough information to proceed and DECSYS provides the necessary piece to move forward. For example, they might have a tip from a neighbor or teacher, and then they receive a notification from DECSYS that a parent was involved in a felony drug arrest somewhere outside the home, and they can link all of the pieces together and have reason to move forward with the investigation. In

an arrest where children are not present on the scene, there is often no immediate reason to notify child welfare. Having a system in place to send timely electronic notification every time ensures that children at risk reliably get appropriate services, and get them as quickly as possible.

Child welfare staff also value that DECSYS provides them with information they wouldn't otherwise have. As one said, "DECSYS has the arrest record, so it includes people who don't end up in LexisNexis because charges were dropped or the person worked off the charge as an informant."

The information they get from DECSYS is also seen as critical for learning about potential hazards in the environment when they're going out to homes, using it to "identify occupational hazards, keep employees safe."

### ***Collaborative Meetings***

The recruiting process culminates in the signing of an agreement between the agency and Colorado DEC. Oftentimes, law enforcement and child welfare agencies like to have a joint meeting before fully committing to DECSYS. This meeting allows them to address concerns and set expectations between the two agencies. These meetings can be very valuable for future collaborative responses between the two agencies. Other concerns that have arisen during these meetings include the sharing of confidential information between agencies, retention of information, and sealing of criminal justice records. State statutes dictate the responses to each of these concerns and will vary from state to state. Therefore, a thorough understanding of state law as it relates to information sharing and retention is critical to the success of DECSYS. For example, in Colorado, the attorney general has concluded that DECSYS use does not violate state laws regarding sharing of confidential information on child abuse and neglect.

In the end, each agency signs a Software-as-a-Service Agreement with Colorado DEC regarding their use of DECSYS.

### ***Tracking Recruiting Efforts***

A state-wide DECSYS effort involves initiating, cultivating, and maintaining many relationships. Accomplishing this part of the project is usually a complicated process spread across many individuals and functions. It is a best practice to use a Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system to keep track of all of these interactions and make sure that each of them is a step forward for the project as a whole.

There are many CRM systems that can be implemented to meet the needs of the project. Two such solutions that are both open source are SugarCRM and Vtiger CRM. Both of these tools can be accessed by web-based front ends, and with the proper configuration can also be accessed from the field. Information can be organized at the county/region, account/agency, or contact/lead level in each of these tools.

Besides the obvious benefit of better managed relationships, a CRM can also help capture historical information about the project that can be used to strategize about future improvements to the DECSYS program. For example, if one's CRM keeps track of the communication method on first contact, and the time that it took from first contact to obtaining a signed agreement, then data collected about many agencies could possibly reveal a correlation between the method of first contact and the shortest time to get a signed contract. This type of process evaluation will help to make recruiting efforts more efficient.

### **DECSYS Training**

DECSYS was designed with a special focus on ease of use. It is not a complicated product and most users pick it up quickly. As one detective described it, "If you can figure out how to buy something on Amazon, then you can enter a DECSYS case." Besides learning the details of the web-based user interface, the training also consists of discussions about standardizing use to meet the needs of the agencies being trained. For example, there would be a discussion on what information will be most helpful for the child welfare agency when they research the specifics of an arrest.

A standard training for a region/county takes about four hours. It breaks out as follows: the first hour and a half is spent training law enforcement on the DECSYS user interface. A presentation discussing each field in the product is then followed by each participant getting some practical experience by entering cases into a

training system. After the law enforcement portion of the training there is a joint session with both the law enforcement trainees and the child welfare trainees. This session is free form, to encourage a more informal environment that cultivates team building, and the topic of conversation is usually the best way to make this collaboration effortless. For the final hour and a half, the child welfare trainees are trained on DECSYS with a presentation and some practical use on a training system in similar fashion to the law enforcement session.

This training requires that the location of the training have a projection system for the presentation, and computers with Internet access so that the DECSYS training system can be accessed to practice entering DECSYS cases. Before training begins, a DECSYS training environment needs to be configured with student users, test counties, and test agencies so that the trainees can practice on an environment separate from the production instance of DECSYS. It is best practice to always keep these environments separate.

### **DECSYS End User Technical Assistance**

DECSYS is supported using a DECSYS dedicated e-mail address that is tied to a service level agreement in the Software-as-a-Service Agreement (SaaS). This service level agreement states that any end user requesting help via the DECSYS e-mail address will be acknowledged within 48 hours of submitting the e-mail request. A *solution* is not promised within 48 hours, however one will receive an acknowledgement that DECSYS support is aware of the problem and a brief description of the next steps that will be taken by the support representative or a brief description of any further steps that the end user may need to take in order to supply the support representative with enough information to proceed.

State level DECSYS support will involve managing user accounts, groups, and other state DECSYS activities that impact the security model of the system. This will require support representatives to create, edit, and disable user accounts. It will also be necessary to create agency security groups and keep these agency groups up-to-date with current profile information. An example would be to make sure that notification e-mail addresses are all current for child welfare agency groups. The maintenance of these users and groups requires support representatives to make sure that contact information is stored in the CRM system for all users.

Users e-mail any bugs that they encounter while working with the system to the DECSYS e-mail address. The first level of support for these types of requests is the state support representative. It is this person's responsibility to make sure that the problem is not "user error" by reproducing the issue. Once the issue is reproduced, forwarding it on to the next level of technical assistance is the appropriate action. The state support representative will serve as the liaison between higher levels of support and the state instance end users.

### **Summary Reports**

#### ■ **DECSYS State Reporting**

It will be a requirement of all states to submit quarterly de-identified data reports to a centralized entity that rolls up all DECSYS numbers into one report. This overall report will be sent to all participating states once it has been completed. This report will sum up the child identification metrics that DECSYS compiles nationwide.

#### ■ **DECSYS Reporting**

The DECSYS administrator runs reports to evaluate usage and to enable early detection of issues that may arise in the process flow of DECSYS cases. The work flow states of DECSYS cases and the states of de-identified children entered into the DECSYS system are analyzed to determine if the proper steps are being taken by DECSYS users in a timely manner. These reports are high level system health checks that also take into consideration the behavior of the end users to determine the overall effectiveness of DECSYS.

De-identified summation reports can also be run on individual agencies or counties/regions. These reports have similar summation output to the instance report that is required by all state partners quarterly and have been used in the past by supervisors to secure funding, measure success, determine workload, and understand DECSYS usage.

## Conclusion

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As the development and expansion of DECSYS continues, it is hoped that eventually DECSYS will be a nationwide effort. As more agencies come online with DECSYS they discover that with very little effort, law enforcement, child welfare, drug endangered children, and communities all experience significant benefit. Law enforcement agencies find an easy way to share information with child welfare and feel better knowing that at-risk children are being identified. Child welfare agencies find a reliable and predictable way to get information on law enforcement activities that pertain to families they are already working with, as well as families that may need their intervention. Most importantly, children that may have previously fallen through the cracks are now receiving necessary attention to ensure their well-being. Finally, communities get information about the number of children impacted by their caregivers' drug activities.

It is widely accepted that standardized identification of drug endangered children is the first step to ensuring that all such children get the resources they need to grow up in safe and healthy environments, and DECSYS serves as a reliable tool to meet that need in communities across the nation.

## Appendix A: Additional Resources

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“National Alliance for Drug Endangered Children.” 2013. [www.nationaldec.org](http://www.nationaldec.org).

“Colorado Alliance for Drug Endangered Children.” 2013. [www.coloradodec.org](http://www.coloradodec.org).

“The Drug Endangered Children Task Force.” 2013. U.S. Department of Justice. [www.justice.gov/dec](http://www.justice.gov/dec).

“State Sites.” 2013. National Alliance for Drug Endangered Children. [www.nationaldec.org/statesites.html](http://www.nationaldec.org/statesites.html).

State of Colorado Methamphetamine Task Force. 2007. *Strategic Plan* [Colorado Blueprint]. [www.coloradodec.org/?site\\_id=880&page\\_id=26226&id\\_sub=26226](http://www.coloradodec.org/?site_id=880&page_id=26226&id_sub=26226).

“COPS.” 2013. U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Community Oriented Policing Services. [www.cops.usdoj.gov](http://www.cops.usdoj.gov).

## Appendix B: State Expansion Survey Instrument

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1. Is your child welfare system state based or county based?  
 County  
 State
2. If it is state based, how many regional offices exist?
3. What resources do you currently have that would help you implement the system?
4. If it is county based, how many counties are there in your state?
5. What obstacles do you see to implementing the DECSYS system?
6. Securing commitment from a participating child welfare and law enforcement agency can take some time communicating to them about the system. Can you see the commitment for this within the state?
7. Is there a centralized office that handles reports of child abuse or neglect?  
 Yes  
 No
8. Do you do any DEC program work that reaches out to all of the child welfare offices in your state?  
 Yes  
 No
9. Does your state have any regional drug task forces?  
 Yes  
 No
10. Do you do any DEC program work that reaches out to law enforcement drug agents across your state?  
 Yes  
 No
11. If not, how does law enforcement approach drug cases/investigations?
12. How do you fund your work?
13. Is there a line item in your budget for IT or Technology development or infrastructure?
14. Is travel for your statewide work a line item in your budget?
15. Do you have a website?
16. If so, how do you host your website?
17. Does your organization have any employees that have official job descriptions that include carrying out DEC work?
18. Does your organization have an e-mail domain name (xxx@coloradodec.org)?  
 Yes  
 No
19. Do you see the need for this within your state?  
 Yes  
 No

## Appendix C: List of Counties in Colorado

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Adams	Fremont	Morgan
Alamosa	Garfield	Otero
Arapahoe	Gilpin	Ouray
Archuleta	Grand	Park
Baca	Gunnison	Phillips
Bent	Hinsdale	Pitkin
Boulder	Huerfano	Prowers
Broomfield	Jackson	Pueblo
Chaffee	Jefferson	Rio Blanco
Cheyenne	Kiowa	Rio Grande
Clear Creek	Kit Carson	Routt
Conejos	La Plata	Saguache
Costilla	Las Animas	San Juan
Crowley	Lake	San Miguel
Custer	Larimer	Sedgwick
Delta	Lincoln	Summit
Denver	Logan	Teller
Dolores	Mesa	Washington
Douglas	Mineral	Weld
Eagle	Moffat	Yuma
El Paso	Montezuma	
Elbert	Montrose	

## Appendix D: Overview of the States Selected for Expansion

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**Wisconsin:** The Wisconsin Alliance for Drug Endangered Children is housed in the Wisconsin Department of Justice's Division of Criminal Investigation. Wisconsin has taken a very strategic approach in promoting DEC statewide through the creation of multiple local DEC alliances with signed protocols, thus laying the ground work to make DECSYS a natural fit for implementation.

**Nevada:** The Nevada Alliance for Drug Endangered Children operates through the Nevada Attorney General's Office. Due to the great relationships built within the state from department heads to the practitioners in the field, it was clear from the start that the DECSYS system would be a welcome addition to the DEC efforts in Nevada.

**Tennessee:** The Tennessee Alliance for Drug Endangered Children is a broad partnership among multiple state and local agencies across the state. Due to the broad reach of the DEC efforts and a strategic approach to educating users on the DECSYS system at upcoming conferences and trainings, it quickly became clear that the practitioners in Tennessee were ready to implement the DECSYS system, beginning in Cumberland County.

**West Virginia:** The West Virginia Alliance for Drug Endangered Children is housed at the West Virginia Prosecuting Attorneys Institute. Since 2008, WVDEC has met quarterly to assess what is going on in the field with drug endangered children and to provide training on emerging issues. Due to the strong connections throughout the state and the recognition of the benefits of the DECSYS system, WVDEC was a natural selection for the program.

## Appendix E: Letter from COPS Director

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From: Office of Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS Office)

Subject: Letter from the Director



**COPS**  
Community Oriented Policing Services



*August 7, 2012*

Dear \_\_\_\_\_

*As a former chief of police, I understand the complexities of investigating drug cases. That complexity is greatly increased when children are involved. The most unfortunate, and sadly all-too-often scenario, is when their plight goes unnoticed by the responding police or social service providers.*

*We know that information sharing between the appropriate stakeholders, including the police and social service providers, is vital in helping these at-risk children. To help address this, Colorado Drug Endangered Children (Colorado DEC) has created an information sharing system to help fill this gap—helping agencies track instances of children exposed to risk and ensure that the necessary follow-up occurs.*

*This system, called the Drug Endangered Children Tracking System (DECSYS), enables identification of children who are endangered well before they might otherwise receive the attention necessary to protect their safety and welfare. DECSYS is a secure system that captures information related to the circumstances of these at-risk children, so that they can be best protected through an interagency collaborative approach. So far, based on the results of a 2-year, six-county pilot and the thousands of cases that have already been entered into the system, it was found that 60 percent of at-risk children were not present at the scene at the time of the arrest and would likely have gone unnoticed by authorities. The potential to literally save thousands of innocent children from a dangerous and destructive environment is why the COPS Office is invested in this project.*

*Use of DECSYS has produced promising results thus far, and I am contacting you with the hope of continuing this success by alerting your agency to the benefits of this program. Colorado DEC is working hard to introduce DECSYS to all 64 counties in Colorado, and you will be contacted by Colorado DEC in the next several months concerning this important resource. I would encourage you to learn more about this product, see a demonstration of how it works, and then determine whether this vital tool is right for you. I am confident that together we can help protect these at-risk children.*

*If you have any questions, please feel free to reach out to the COPS program manager Nazmia Alqadi at [nazmia.alqadi@usdoj.gov](mailto:nazmia.alqadi@usdoj.gov).*

*Sincerely,*

*Bernard K. Melekian*

*Director*



The Drug Endangered Children Tracking System (DECSYS) offers local law enforcement and child welfare agencies an automated process for quickly identifying children at risk that is predictable, reliable, and measurable. From the Colorado Alliance for Drug Endangered Children (CODEC), DECSYS is:

■ **A web based system**

Only internet access and an authorized username/password is required.

■ **Easy-to-use**

Both law enforcement officers and child welfare caseworkers can learn and utilize the system easily.

■ **Less than 5 minutes to enter a case**

With less than a day of training, which CODEC brings to your agency, individual cases can be entered into the system, helping you to save children.

**The numbers are telling:** in a 2-year six-county pilot, thousands of cases have been entered into the system. By early 2012, 60% of children found were not present at the scene at the time of the arrest, meaning DECSYS is responsible for a 150% increase in the number of drug endangered children identified and brought to the attention of child welfare. With an easily accessible and automated system, collaboration between law enforcement and child welfare agencies will not only build stronger cases, but also potentially save hundreds of children who would have gone unnoticed.

Children whose parents abuse alcohol or drugs are 3X more likely to be verbally, physically, or sexually abused... and 4X more likely to be neglected.

The majority of the time these children are not present at the scene during an arrest, making it even more difficult to make the appropriate referrals and identify them for any future risk.

**Contact CODEC now and learn more about DECSYS and how it can help your agency as well as your community.**

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