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## 2017 Teamwork Award

### Child Support Services – Intake Unit

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Nomination submitted by Brandon Montoya

How do you define a team? When I have asked this question, I have heard a wide variety of answers. I have heard a team is a group of people who work together toward a common goal. I have also heard a group of folks who work in the same area. After having the opportunity to work alongside the Intake Unit in Child Support Services, I have come to have a different definition of the word team. A team is collection of leaders fearlessly striving to achieve success. That is how I view each and every one of these individuals on this team. They are leaders.

This team has redefined the word teamwork for me. This team has heart. This team has dedication. This team has spirit. This team has resilience. But most of all this team has passion for the work they do. Each person on this team has contributed to the success of the division and our department.

When I had the opportunity to be the supervisor of this team in 2015, I was excited to see the new folks I would be working with. On my first day, I could tell this team had faced some hard obstacles. The Child Support Intake Unit had gone through five different supervisors in a two-year time span. During my first few days, I sat with my team and shadowed all of their processes. I asked about their obstacles and barriers. This team had little to no standard processes or procedures. This team had employees at three different locations. Some members of the team had never even met each other. After sitting with each of them, I instantly observed that it was a group of excellent employees. However, they were not a team...yet. They were not given the guidance or resources to achieve their goals.

Throughout that year, we all worked together on ways to standardize our work. We spent time working on each other first. We were able to bring the entire team to a central location. After time getting to know each other's strengths and abilities, we were able to move forward with working toward our goals.

Our major issue we had was seeing clients. At one point, clients were being turned away to other counties because we did not have the capability to see the amount of clients coming in. After numerous innovation meetings, this team came up with the Intake Orientation process. On a normal week, Intake was able to see 84 clients a week. Seeing the clients took almost half of their day. After the Intake Orientation Process was implemented, Intake was able to see 150 clients a week in only a two-hour time span. Child Support is here to serve our most vulnerable population, but if our clients are being turned away, we are not aiding in our purpose. This is why Intake strived to do better for our clients and our customers. Because of the success of our Intake Orientation Process, the State took this our process and implemented it in another county.

After the success of Intake Orientation Process, I saw hope in these employees eyes. Each employee presented ideas to help improve our processes to better serve our client. We may have reached a major landmark in Intake, but continued growth and improvement is on everyone's mind. Orientation was only the beginning. Each employee submitted a procedure last year and all earned their Green Belts. That motivation did not end. My team began more involved in the division and the department.

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I currently have three Black Belts on my team and three more employees applying this year. One employee is part of the Denver Human Services Viewmasters Committee. She the point person who helped put together the DHS STARS Awards to recognize all the employees in the department. I have one employee part of the Child Support Speakers Bureau to help educate the public and other stakeholders about Child Support and its' importance. One employee is part of the Employee Task Force to help be the voice of line staff to create a better work environment for our division. I have an employee that is part of the Child Support Fun Committee to boost the morale and put on events in the division. Another employee part of the DHS Safety Task Force to ensure all employees feel they have a safe place to work. There is an employee who is part of the Employee Advisory Council who assist with the issues facing our employees in the department. There is also an employee who is heavily involved with the GIVE Denver projects that occur in our department. I even have one employee who writes an article each month for the Child Support Services Newsletter.

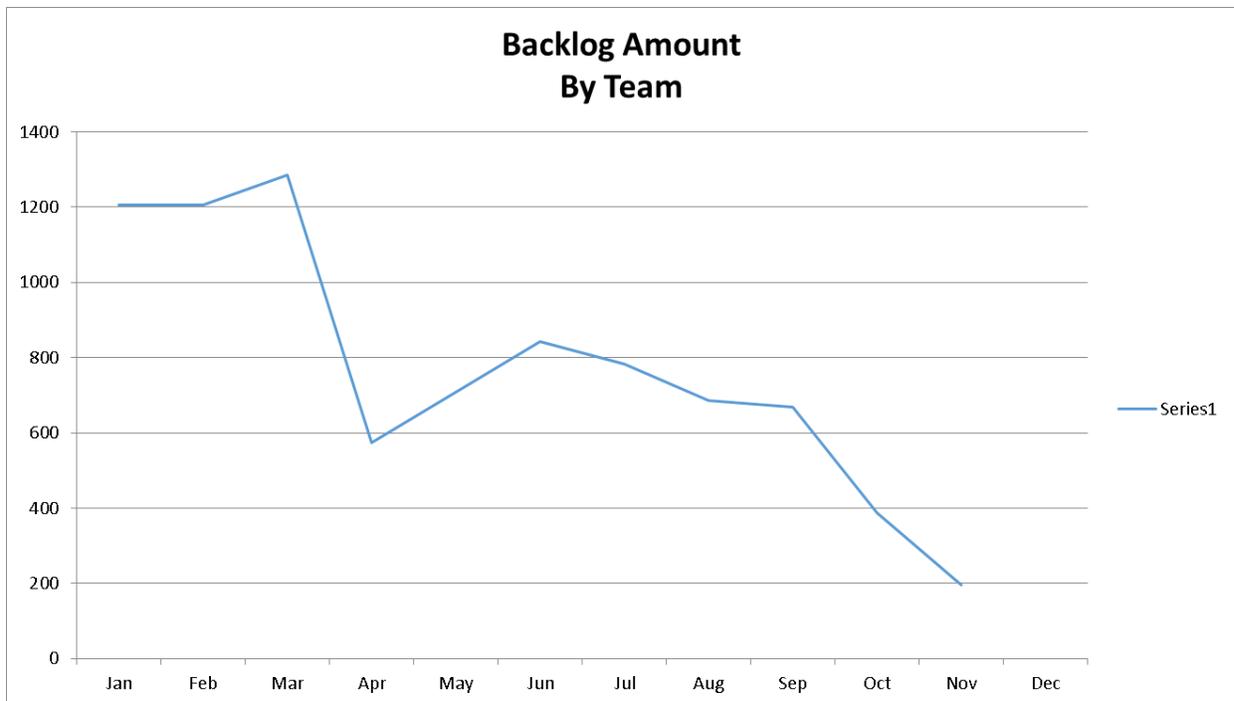
Intake has accomplished many goals during my two years with this team. Intake is responsible for processing all the incoming referrals. When I started, the average number of referrals coming in were around 300. Now the team may receive upwards of 750 referrals each month. It was already difficult for my staff to maintain the amount of referrals coming in. Intake was already behind in processing referrals before I started. The increased work made it difficult to reduce the existing backlog that Intake had. Many cases were on our referral list were over a year old. However, this did not stop my team. They were able to see the light at the end of the tunnel; it was dim, but they could still see it. We dedicated their time to innovating our processes. My team spent time making commitments to themselves and each other to do their best to dig ourselves out of backlog. A member of the team has seen backlog in the 24 years they have worked on this team. By the end of 2016, Intake was able to have 0 cases in backlog. Getting out of backlog was like climbing Mount Everest. It seemed impossible for some, but they did. But this was not a success for just them, this was a success for the families in the City of Denver. They are families heavily relying on this income. Whether it is to feed their children or put a roof over their head, this money is essential each child's well-being. By continually making improvements like this, we are able to better support those in need.

All statistics aside, I feel Intake is the epitome of what teamwork is. Regardless if you meet a specific goal, complete a certain project, or even improve a certain process; teamwork is much more than that.

Teamwork is being able to work together even if a goal is met. There are times when you do your best and you did not accomplish what you set out to do. But it is at that moment when how you move forward defines who you are. The first year with this team, we implemented numerous projects and new processes. It seemed like a new process was being implemented each week. Most people would have difficulty with constant change. However, these folks embraced change. They wanted to do what was best for our clients. There were times when things were going so well and a wrench seemed to find its' way to halt our progress, my team never gave up. For years, this team has been scrutinized for the work that was produced. Instead of getting bitter, they got better. They genuinely wanted to do better for both our internal and external customers.

Even with the day to day stress, they will find ways to keep the morale up. One employee will send out a daily trivia email to engage one another. We have gone on teambuilding events. We participated in team competition events. Last year, the Intake Unit placed 3rd in the Halloween Decorating Contest out of all of the team in the department. We placed 1st for our unofficial Halloween Decorating Contest within our division. This team works hard, but they play hard too.

From where this team was to where this team is now can be described as nothing short of spectacular. The time spent together working to make this a better place for the families in the City of County of Denver have made these people more than a just a team; they are a family. The respect and care they show for one another is beautiful. They support each other and genuinely care for the success of one another. The individuals have exemplified the true meaning of STARS. They have demonstrated what true “Teamwork” can achieve. This team has had the potential for greatness since day one; they just needed someone to believe in them, but first they needed to believe in themselves.



Goal
0 cases in backlog by end of year

Intake Caseload												
	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Team Total	1207	1206	1285	573	708	842	784	687	668	388	196	0