

TRAVERSE® IN ACTION

CHILD WELFARE DIRECTOR

Investing in Technology to Empower Caseworkers



“A system like this is absolutely needed to support caseworkers.”

JOE KELLERBY—Child Welfare Director, Mesa County Department of Human Services, CO

Joe Kellerby has worked in child welfare at Mesa County Department of Human Services (DHS) since 2004 and served in a leadership role since 2011. He’s seen first-hand how both the child welfare system and the families it serves have gotten more complex over the past several years.

“What we know about family dynamics and things like substance abuse, domestic violence, and the effects of trauma on kids have exploded the area of child welfare.”

Like many child welfare directors, Joe believes it takes highly skilled caseworkers to handle these complex cases, while meeting increased demand to demonstrate how they’re effectively engaging families. He knows that focusing on prevention and safety requires prioritizing practice over simply meeting requirements.

That’s where Traverse comes in, allowing caseworkers to repurpose time previously spent on administrative tasks to fully focus on building trust, engaging families, and reducing trauma. Mesa County DHS purchased and implemented Traverse under the leadership of Director Tracey Garcher. Joe’s role is ensuring the solution remains successful and sustainable over time.

“A system like this is absolutely needed to support caseworkers to do what I believe they are walking through the door to do. That’s to keep kids safe, to find them permanency, and to assist families in being healthy and self-sufficient. From an administrative standpoint, Traverse is how we feel we can impact and empower workers to meet those goals.”

Child welfare caseworkers do incredibly important work under extremely difficult circumstances. One way agency directors and program administrators can make a difference for their staff is by providing purpose-built technology that enhances this critical work while minimizing administrative burdens. This is a story about how Traverse, Northwoods’ solution for child welfare, gives caseworkers at Mesa County Department of Human Services (DHS) in Colorado the ability to utilize all the meaningful content and information they need—including the entire case history—to help children and families succeed.

“ It truly felt like Traverse was built by people who worked in the system to say, ‘there’s got to be something better out there that will have a positive impact on caseworkers working with families.’ It’s built for people in child welfare. ”

— JOE KELLERBY

Mesa County Department of Human Services, CO



ABOUT TRAVERSE & MESA COUNTY DHS

Mesa County DHS partnered with Northwoods to begin using Traverse in January 2020. The cloud-based software helps caseworkers easily and quickly collect and retrieve case information, while accessing electronic case files from anywhere—the agency, their homes, in court, or clients’ homes.

They can mine critical information and data to make safety and permanency decisions, plus complete digital forms with families to refer them to services faster.

[Read the case study to learn more.](#)

Joe says connecting a software product to child welfare practice is already leading to safer decisions and stronger families.

For example, being able to quickly get authorizations or supervisor oversight on safety plans while discussing processes and services in real time helps caseworkers build and create trusting and transparent relationships with families, which helps them more successfully navigate the road ahead.

“Looking at safety plans and support plans in real time really does make a difference in the moment when you’re working with families.”

“We don’t want to make any decisions without families at any level. When some of our administrative work can be done right there with families, there’s more conversations that can be had, there’s more brainstorming in regard to solutions with families, and that’s where our caseworkers want to be. Traverse allows us to do that more than we have in the past.”

The result is that workers can fully focus on doing the job they signed up to do—making a difference and assisting families in being healthy, safe, and self-sufficient.

“As directors, it is our sole responsibility to clear the path and move obstacles out of the way for people to stay in our agency and be fulfilled and grow as professionals and people. Any time you can give caseworkers more time with families, it helps with their morale and their balance. That ultimately has a positive impact on the work we’re doing.”

“ I think the opportunities are endless, and I think the caseworkers are extremely excited about what those opportunities can yield in regard to helping them be successful in their jobs. ”



Learn more:

teamnorthwoods.com/products/traverse