IMPLEMENTING THE DRUG ENDANGERED CHILDREN TRACKING SYSTEM (DECSYS)

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COPS
Community Oriented Policing Services
U.S. Department of Justice

COLORADO ALLIANCE FOR DRUG ENDANGERED CHILDREN
Rescue. Defend. Shelter. Support.

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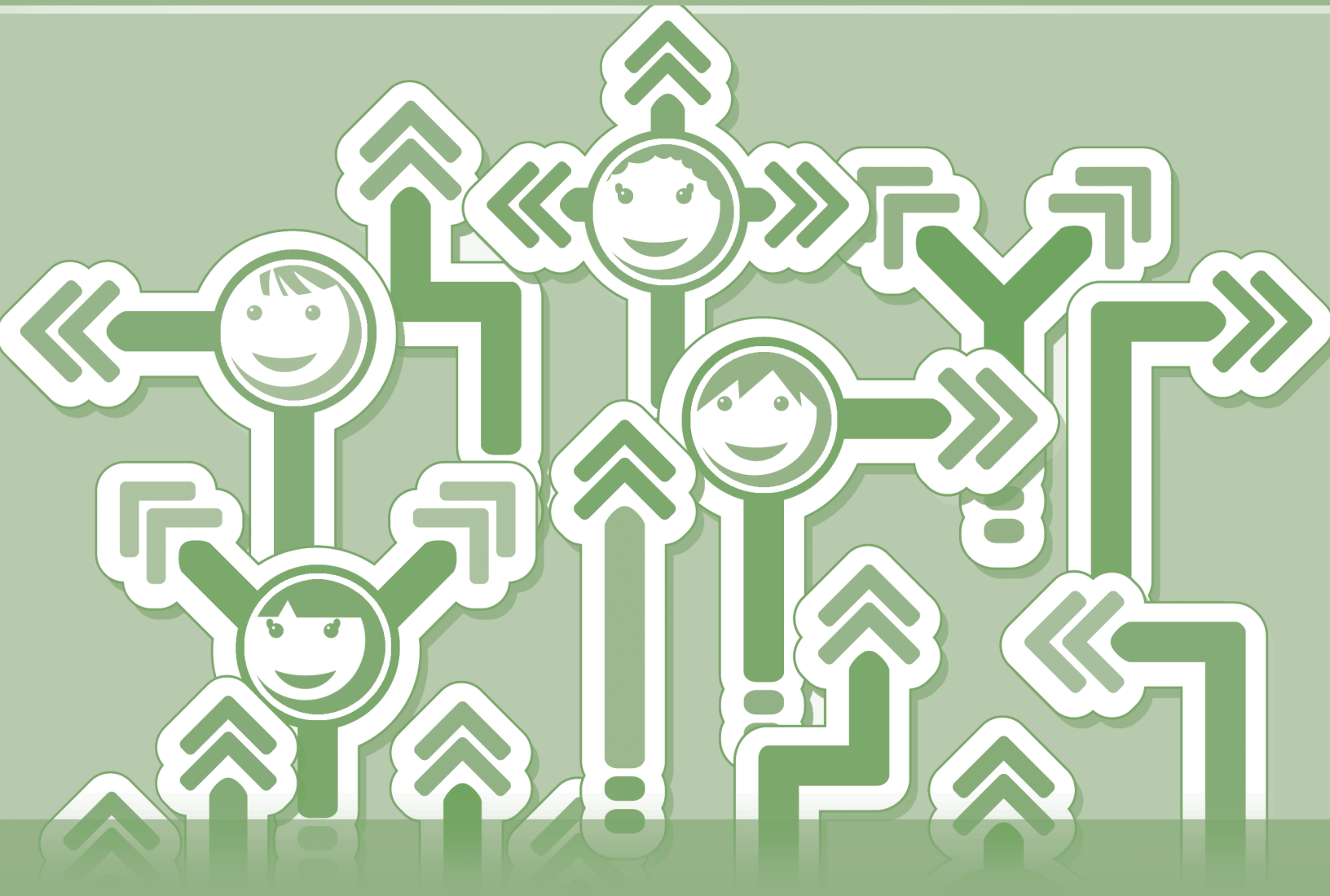

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Introduction

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

Children exposed to drug-related violence in their homes, schools, and communities most often come to authorities' attention by being present at drug-related arrests. There is a serious gap in identifying children exposed to violence who are at school, visiting a relative, or otherwise engaged at the time of an arrest, or whose caregivers have never been arrested. The unfortunate lack of uniform data collection about drug-endangered children means we do not know how many drug-endangered children remain uncounted and at risk.

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 an application for tracking children affected by drug arrests. It was well received and with further development and pilot testing has grown into a robust application to support communication between law enforcement and child welfare agencies and to capture statistics on affected children.

In Colorado DEC's Drug Endangered Children Tracking System (DECSYS), 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. Participating agencies are encouraged to share the statistics captured by DECSYS through public awareness campaigns or other educational materials. The hope of sharing this data is 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 the 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, it provides additional background information about the National Alliance for Drug Endangered Children and the Colorado DEC.

This report is intended for anyone interested in implementing DECSYS in their community, as well as for 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 the scope of drug-related child endangerment. 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

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 (2004)[1] summarizes the existing data. Drug-affected caregivers are emotionally disengaged and unresponsive, denying their children fundamental developmental experiences required to self-regulate, relate to others, and communicate. The children may experience emotional and physical neglect, daily chaos, a lack of safety, poor communication, violence,[2] 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. Many don't make it to school regularly.

According to the National Survey on Drug Use and Health,[3] 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.[4] 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. The lack of uniform data collection about drug-endangered children means we do not know which of these numbers is nearer the truth, nor how many uncounted, at-risk, drug-endangered children are suffering in silence.

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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, Ginny, Michele Staton-Tindall, and James Clark, "Trauma Exposure and the Drug Endangered Child," *Journal of Traumatic Stress* 21(3) (2008), 333–339.

3. United States Department of Health and Human Services, Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, Center for Behavioral Health Statistics and Quality, *National Survey on Drug Use and Health* (Ann Arbor, MI: Inter-university Consortium for Political and Social Research [distributor], 2010). 2012-10-19. doi:10.3886/ICPSR32722.v3.

4. The National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse at Columbia University, *Family Matters: Substance Abuse and the American Family* (New York: The National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse at Columbia University, 2005).

Since the early 1990s, a movement has been growing to help such drug-endangered children: children who are at risk of suffering physical or emotional harm as a result of their caretakers' illegal drug use, possession, manufacturing, cultivation, or distribution. Children may also be considered drug-endangered when their caretakers' use or abuse of legal substances interferes with the caretaker's ability to parent and provide a safe and nurturing environment. 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 than other children to be verbally, physically, or sexually abused and four times more likely to be neglected.[5]

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 danger clandestine methamphetamine labs pose to children. Sue Webber Brown, Butte County (California) DA Investigator, recognized a connection between the child abuse cases she was working and illicit drugs and coined the term "drug-endangered children." Shortly thereafter, in 1993, she and her husband developed a Drug Endangered Children Program in Butte County, forming DEC teams comprising personnel from the District Attorney's office, child services, and law enforcement. Cooperation among DEC team members ensured a swift, comprehensive judicial response to drug cases involving children, and, for the children, earlier intervention services, 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 other California counties, and the Butte County DEC Response Team went on to provide training and community presentations throughout California and in Arizona, Nevada, Utah, Washington, and Washington, DC. These DEC programs gave rise to state DEC alliances targeting specific resources within the states.

As state DEC alliances developed and more practitioners were engaged in DEC efforts, the need arose for a national coordinating body. The National Alliance for Drug Endangered Children (National DEC) is a national non-profit organization coordinating the efforts of law enforcement professionals, prosecutors, child protection workers, medical personnel, treatment providers, prevention specialists and other practitioners responding to the endangerment of children by the manufacture, distribution, and use of all illegal drugs and other substances of abuse.

To support these community-based efforts, National DEC has established a national infrastructure that includes twenty-four affiliated State DEC Alliances. The volunteer network consists of more than one hundred 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 whose missions align with its own.

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5. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, 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, n.d.). www.ncsacw.samhsa.gov/files/TrainingPackage/MOD6/YouCanHelp.pdf.

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 notable for being 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 fourteen-month-old 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.[6] This incident motivated key leaders in Colorado to connect with the California DEC movement to form the Colorado Alliance for Drug Endangered Children (Colorado DEC) in July 2003.

Over the next three years, Colorado DEC was instrumental in passing legislation to restrict sales of methamphetamine precursor chemicals, expand child abuse statutes to define the manufacture of a controlled substance as child maltreatment, and create the Colorado State Methamphetamine Task Force. In 2007, Colorado DEC formally partnered with the State Methamphetamine Task Force to create the Colorado Blueprint[7] 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 brought on new staff and had the Blueprint model vetted in several communities and organizations, referred to as "Learning Sites," across the state. Since then, Colorado DEC has continued to serve as a centralized and valued resource for assisting drug-endangered children.

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 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

6. See www.coloradodec.org/aboutus/history.html.

7. State of Colorado Methamphetamine Task Force, *Strategic Plan* (Denver: State of Colorado, 2007). www.coloradodec.org/goopages/pages_downloadgallery/download.php?filename=3372_3270150.pdf&orig_name=Colorado%20Blueprint.pdf.

enables collection and analysis of 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. **Advocating for systemic and policy change** to support the development and dissemination of best practices, DEC guidelines, and policy regarding child welfare issues related to substance abuse in Colorado.

Additional resources on the DEC Movement are available on page 27.

Drug Endangered Children Tracking System (DECSYS)

HISTORY OF DECSYS

The Drug Endangered Children Tracking System (DECSYS) is a secure web-based application developed by the Colorado Alliance for Drug Endangered Children (DEC) for use by law enforcement and child welfare agencies to facilitate interagency communication and to capture statistics on affected 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-related child endangerment 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 reported the sex abuse to a teacher, but had not 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.

FIGURE 1.
DECSYS theory of change

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.

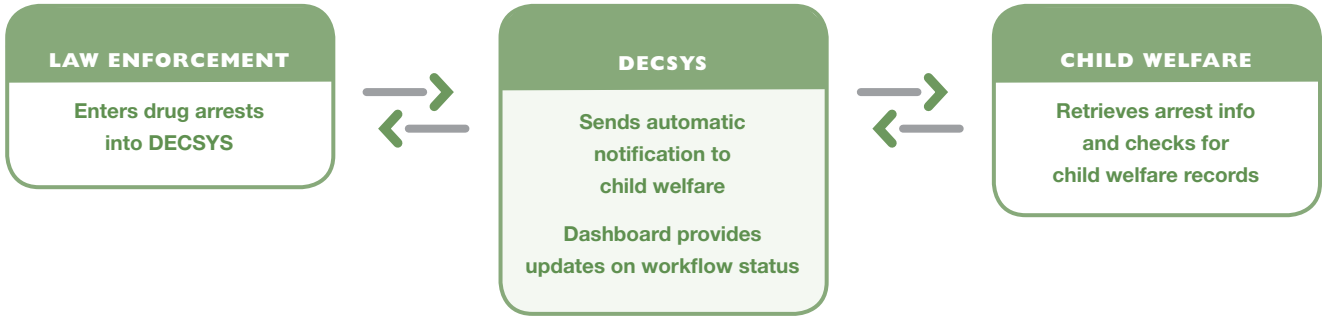
The vision was supported by local funding and built into a database application. The initial implementation of DECSYS was created in 2006. The first version of the system had a strong functional vision, though it possessed complicated system architecture as well as an incomplete software development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

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 redesigned version launched in six Colorado counties in early 2010 and contained significant improvements to usability, automatically notifying the appropriate child welfare agency that a new case has been entered into the system and adding a workflow scheme to follow the case's progress.

HOW DECSYS WORKS

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 entering a case takes less than five minutes. The DECSYS process is very straightforward: law enforcement enters information on drug arrests into DECSYS; DECSYS sends an automatic email notification to child welfare; child welfare then logs in to retrieve the arrest information and checks it against records for child welfare concerns and notes actions taken; and 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 the diagram below. 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; agencies participating in the information sharing available through DECSYS sign a software-as-a-service (SaaS) agreement which contains confidentiality provisions and restricts the use of the DECSYS system. Because of the confidential nature of its content, DECSYS is a closed system. Information passing through DECSYS is strictly controlled to ensure system integrity; full records are shared only between law enforcement and child welfare agencies. Limited, deidentified statistical data for a state may be accessed by the state's DEC administrators or by Colorado DEC, which has master access; this deidentified data is released for the purposes of research, evaluation, and quantification.

With an easily accessible automated system, collaboration between law enforcement and child welfare agencies can not only build stronger cases, but also have the potential to help 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. We hope this sharing of data will lead to greater community awareness and engagement regarding drug-endangered children, cultivating the public will needed to change policies and direct resources to this issue.

USING DECSYS

In June 2012, the Corona Insights program evaluator and Colorado DEC staff conducted a series of site visits with DECSYS users to gather information as an initial step in evaluating 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 use 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. In May 2014 a survey of all DECSYS users was conducted to follow up on the initial interviews and gather quantitative data on outcomes, processes, best practices, and lessons learned. This section is illustrated with findings from the site visits and the survey.

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 their other responsibilities, at some agencies the administrative staff do additional research beyond their agency's own records 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 enter cases into DECSYS 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. Having a single point of contact minimizes the chance that street officers will confuse DECSYS with mandatory reporting of child abuse, a separate process which DECSYS does not replace.

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. Some child welfare agencies have arranged to receive information about domestic violence, felony weapons charges, other types of felony arrests, or misdemeanor drug arrests. However, only felony-level drug arrests are required to be entered into DECSYS at this time. This narrow focus is not intended to suggest that only felony drug crimes harm children, but as a recognition that resource allocation has to be based on a community-level decision about what is not just desirable, but practicable.

It is also important to note that as drug laws change, the specific crimes included in this definition may also change, which may impact reporting and statistics. For example, new laws in Colorado and Washington to legalize and regulate marijuana may impact reporting. Even legal drug involvement may still create a harmful environment for children; the danger of a caregiver's intoxication or the child's unrestricted access to a dangerous substance does not depend on the substance's legality. Communities will have to decide whether to set reporting criteria to pick up such cases; currently, DECSYS does collect and share information on felony DUI offenses, and has the capacity to report other arrests where legal substances are present.

Depending on the volume of cases handled by an agency and administrative capacity, some agencies enter data nearly every day, and others enter data just once a week or less. About 40 percent of DECSYS users enter data at least once per 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 entering information into DECSYS. A large majority, 89 percent, of law enforcement survey respondents agreed that DECSYS is 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 confirmation 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 for review.

Child welfare

Child welfare users receive an email notification when a new case has been entered by a law enforcement agency in their service area. This notification typically goes to multiple people in an agency, including a supervisor, but primary responsibility for DECSYS will be assigned to one person: an intake specialist or screener or a selected caseworker in the agency. The recipients can click a link in the email to log in to DECSYS and see the new case information.

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. Nearly all child welfare users consult their child welfare case management system when researching a case (96 percent), and a majority also consult the benefits management system (52 percent), city/county court records (50 percent), and state court records (46 percent). Many child welfare users also consult other sources when researching a case, including county services databases, Department of Labor, Unemployment Benefits system, LexisNexis, white pages, and reverse address searches. A majority said the element of research that takes the most time for each case is consulting their child welfare case management system.

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 often initially voice concerns that they may be overwhelmed by the information coming from DECSYS. However, the data from DECSYS has shown that, in fact, a majority of children associated with DECSYS cases were already involved with child welfare, and DECSYS merely provided additional collateral information about those children and families. In addition, participating agencies have found that using DECSYS requires very little time. Email 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. Further, a majority of child welfare users agree that DECSYS helps them do their job.

Impacts on coordination between law enforcement and child welfare

Using DECSYS as a standard tool to ensure communication between law enforcement and child welfare agencies facilitates collaboration and increases the amount of information shared between agencies. It also makes information sharing less dependent on specific personal relationships and more a part of organizational culture. On the survey, a majority of each group agreed that DECSYS supports their communication with the other agency, and nearly half of each group said the number of cases they share information with the other agency about had increased since they began using DECSYS.

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 "information sharing helps coordinate efforts better" and ensures that mandatory reporting requirements[8] are met by the law enforcement agencies.

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

All survey respondents said that direct communications between agencies had increased or remained the same since implementing DECSYS, and that the quality of their relationships with the other agency increased or remained the same. Among law enforcement supervisors and officers, 20 percent said that their direct communication with child welfare had increased since using DECSYS, as did 15 percent of child welfare supervisors, screeners, and caseworkers. The same proportions said the quality of their relationships had improved.

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 such tips. That functionality has not yet been implemented, but is under consideration.

Sustainability of DECSYS

To ensure the sustainability of DECSYS, knowledge of and appreciation for the system have to be widespread throughout an agency, not concentrated in a single champion. To survive staff turnover, participation in DECSYS needs to be part of the broader system and culture within each agency. One way to measure the integration of DECSYS into the culture is whether agencies have a system in place for teaching new employees about DECSYS. The survey results show that overall about one-third of agencies have such a system in place, but law enforcement agencies were more likely to have a system in place (41 percent) than child welfare/Child Protective Services (CPS) agencies (22 percent).

Positive attitudes toward DECSYS also support its integration into the culture of an agency. A majority of survey respondents strongly agreed that DECSYS provides a valuable service (overall, 80 percent of law enforcement users and 87 percent of child welfare users agreed), and that DECSYS helps identify drug-endangered children (87 percent of law enforcement users and 78 percent of child welfare users agreed). In addition, 68 percent of law enforcement officers agreed that using DECSYS gives them peace of mind, as did 37 percent of law enforcement supervisors and 48 percent of child welfare supervisors/managers. Further, 62 percent of law enforcement personnel said that using DECSYS has made them more aware of drug-endangered children.

DECSYS RESULTS TO DATE

The following tables contain data from the first four years of DECSYS use, from June 2010 through May 2014. In that time, thousands of felony drug arrest cases were entered into DECSYS. During this period, 70 percent of the children found using DECSYS were not present at the scene at the time of the arrest (see table 1 on page 13), meaning DECSYS is responsible for a more than 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, CPS would not have been notified of the drug arrests affecting those children in order to determine an appropriate service level, if warranted.

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

TABLE 1. Number of children identified from cases entered into DECSYS, June 2010–May 2014 (N = 3316)

	Number	Percentage of total
Children present on scene	988	30%
Children not present on scene	2328	70%
Evidence of children on scene and children idenfied by child welfare	290	9%
No children or evidence of children on scene, but children were identified by child welfare	2038	61%
Total children identified	3316	100%

welfare about children they were already aware of. Roughly 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 more than half of the children present on the scene of an arrest. However, on the whole, fewer than one in five 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. 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. Prior and current child welfare history of children identified from cases entered into DECSYS, June 2010–May 2014

	Number	Percentage
Children present on scene	988	100%
who had a prior history with child welfare	386	39%
who had a current history with child welfare	207	21%
who had no history with child welfare	395	40%
Children not present on scene, but were identified by child welfare	2328	100%
who had a prior history with child welfare	1378	59%
who had a current history with child welfare	413	18%
who had no history with child welfare	537	23%

Overall, just over 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 24 percent of cases had associated children who were not present on scene, but were identified by child welfare.

TABLE 3. Felony drug cases entered into DECSYS, June 2010–May 2014 by whether children were associated (N = 5332)

	Number	Percentage of total
Number of felony drug cases entered into DECSYS without children associated	3428	64%
Number of felony drug cases entered into DECSYS with children associated	1904	36%
that had children present on scene	649	12%
that did not have children on scene, but children were identified by child welfare	1255	24%
Total number of felony drug cases entered into DECSYS	5332	100%

Some 38.4 percent of children associated with felony drug cases were assigned to a new or existing child welfare case or investigation. However, the actual figure is likely higher, as 21.5 percent were forwarded to a non-DECSYS-participating child welfare agency and the responses to these cases were not recorded by DECSYS.

The 1.1 percent of cases marked as both 'Referred to Current Case or Investigation' and 'No Child Welfare History' are considered deidentified data entry errors and generally omitted from consideration by users of the data; however, these cases are still fully searchable within DECSYS.

TABLE 4. Felony drug cases with associated children entered into DECSYS, June 2010–May 2014 by child welfare action taken (N = 1904)

Action taken (percentage of total cases with children associated)*	Child welfare history as a percent of seach action
Not assigned for investigation (40.0%)	
with a prior history with child welfare	72.0%
with no prior history with child welfare	25.0%
unknown	3.0%
Assigned for investigation (24.7%)	
with a prior history with child welfare	66.8%
with no prior history with child welfare	32.2%
unknown	1.0%
Referred to current case or investigation (13.7%)	
with a prior history with child welfare	98.6%
with no prior history with child welfare	1.1%
unknown	.2%
Forwarded to another agency (21.5%)	
with a prior history with child welfare	73.8%
with no prior history with child welfare	23.6%
unknown	2.6%

* Rounding may cause totals not to add up to 100%.

SUCCESS STORIES

The survey conducted in May of 2014 was also used to collect examples of DECSYS success stories. Many examples were given, and examples came from agencies in every participating state. A few examples are provided to illustrate the impact of DECSYS on drug-endangered children.

"The very first case ever entered into DECSYS in West Virginia was a meth lab with a three-year-old child in the home. The officer marked that he contacted CPS and we responded and removed the child. However, that was not accurate. We had an open investigation, but were not notified of the meth lab, and were about to close the family's investigation before we got the DECSYS notification. The first DECSYS entry in West Virginia helped save a child's life."

"We have had so many success stories but our favorite is finding out there was an arrest in a home of a mother and boyfriend who were using and selling heroin. There was no evidence of children, but upon searching our DECSYS hit we learned that there were two young children who happened to be with their father for a visit that weekend. Had we not received this hit in DECSYS, these children would have been left in the home without an assessment for their safety once the mother bonded out and returned home. This system is important in identifying drug-endangered children and allows [us] to work to assess for the safety of children associated with these arrestees."

"We were on the verge of finalizing an adoption on some people when we got the report of them having a grow operation in their home. We had NO idea they had marijuana since they omitted any drug use or grow on their home study. When the caseworker would visit, they apparently would hide any incriminating evidence. Because of [law enforcement agency name omitted]'s great work of sending us the info, the children were pulled from the home until a hearing could be set in court. It's still ongoing so we don't know the outcome yet, but that was AWESOME that they sent us the info, since they only gave them a muni ticket for city code violations."

DECSYS Expansion

EXPANSION PLAN

The United States Department of Justice Office of Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS Office) funded Colorado DEC to expand access to the DECSYS Tracking System across Colorado and into five new states. To implement a successful system expansion, Colorado DEC first optimized the performance adaptability of DECSYS to enable use in different counties with varying needs.

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 partner agencies. All activities are performed in close partnership with contracted web application developers.

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 give tips to law enforcement, and the ability for law enforcement to receive notifications when a suspect with a home address in their jurisdiction gets arrested in another DECSYS-participating region.

SELECTING EXPANSION SITES

State level

Since 2009, Colorado DEC has given a presentation on the DECSYS system at the annual national meeting of state DEC alliances, building a level of familiarity with the DECSYS system. In order to select states for the initial DECSYS expansion, Colorado DEC, National DEC, and the COPS Office program manager went through a 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 A on page 29). 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 related to DECSYS compatibility, available resources, and statewide reach.

These scoring criteria were used to place states into one of three categories: Implementation Ready, Conditional, and Future Potential. States with the highest scores were ranked in the Implementation Ready category, meaning they were currently prepared to have the DECSYS system implemented statewide and were most likely to secure resources necessary to sustain the DECSYS system past the initial award period. States in the Conditional category needed development in some areas in order for DECSYS to be successfully implemented. The states in the Future Potential category had the lowest scores and had many development areas to work on before they would be ready for DECSYS implementation.

Following this process, phone interviews were held with state DEC leaders in the top-ranking states in order to gather more detailed information than could be obtained from the survey and to allow the members 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. From these eight, five states were selected for DECSYS implementation based on internal ranking and the interest of state DEC leaders: Nevada, Wisconsin, West Virginia, Tennessee, and Oklahoma. Descriptions of the implementation environment in each of these states can be found in appendix B (on page 31).

Colorado DEC makes two initial visits to each state selected for implementation of DECSYS. 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 and the state DEC administrator who will be recruiting and supporting new agencies. At this second meeting, a partner agreement is signed between Colorado DEC and the organization supporting the state DECSYS administrator, allowing the partner agency to promote and license DECSYS to law enforcement and child welfare agencies within their state.

Within a state

DECSYS implementation throughout Colorado has predominantly focused on gaining the support of law enforcement and child welfare agencies. However, the process could be initiated by nearly any interested party or stakeholder, including state government representatives, county commissions, city councils, district attorneys, law enforcement, child welfare, community members, or other individuals or groups.

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 its own system for delineating law enforcement and child welfare jurisdictions. 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 the 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 multi-county South Metro Drug Task Force.

To this point, most DECSYS expansion sites have been selected based on community-level interest in DEC work and information sharing. The communities that are most successful with DECSYS typically have a basic understanding of how children are impacted by substance use, an appreciation of the roles of 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.

RECRUITING

In approaching each new agency and community for DECSYS expansion, it is critical to ensure that DECSYS usage aligns with its perspective and priorities. Some communities primarily value DECSYS for data collection, while others appreciate it more as a tool to increase interagency collaboration, especially in times of personnel transition.

Typically, the agency that has been more involved with DEC efforts and more interested in DECSYS, whether law enforcement or child welfare, 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 and were the first contacts at their agencies. Where such an individual has been identified, the initial contact is usually made by email, 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 email of introduction and encourage participation. For example, in Colorado, the former director

of the COPS Office sent an email to all police chiefs and sheriffs introducing DECSYS and encouraging participation. The text of this letter is provided in appendix C (on page 33).

Typically, an in-person meeting is requested with the head of an agency. To that meeting, Colorado DEC brings flyers 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 specific approaches to law enforcement agencies and child welfare agencies is provided in the following sections.

Recruiting law enforcement agencies

To bring a law enforcement agency on board with using DECSYS usually involves a series of meetings. The initial approach varies based on the size of the agency and the types of units within it. Outreach to the police chief or sheriff is a preferred approach, as is working with the commanders of multi-jurisdictional drug task forces, where they are engaged as advocates for drug-endangered children and 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; this can be done in one meeting or over several depending on the department's organization and level of commitment at the beginning of the expansion process.

During Colorado DEC on-site visits with law enforcement officers, officers have provided examples of the reasons they are 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 the following:

- "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, or investigation of child welfare cases. Again, it can be as simple as one meeting with the agency or a series of meetings, depending on the structure of the agency and the engagement of the leadership in DEC efforts. Typically, child welfare agencies are eager to receive additional information on families they may be working with through DECSYS.

On site visits with Colorado DEC, child welfare managers and case workers discussed their motivations for using DECSYS. The key reasons included the value and timeliness of DECSYS information. 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 receive a notification from DECSYS that a parent was involved in a felony drug arrest outside the home and can link all the pieces together and 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."

DECSYS information is also seen as critical for learning about potential hazards in the environment when personnel go out to homes; these warnings can identify occupational hazards, and help keep employees safe.

Collaborative meetings

The recruiting process culminates in the signing of an agreement between the agency and Colorado DEC. Often 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 SaaS agreement with Colorado DEC regarding its use of DECSYS.

Tracking recruiting efforts

A state-wide DECSYS effort requires initiating, cultivating, and maintaining many relationships. Accomplishing this 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 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 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 can make future recruiting efforts more efficient.

IMPLEMENTATION

In each state, implementation of the DECSYS concept was tailored to the needs of the state and the resources available for pilot testing. The structure of law enforcement and child welfare agencies and their existing relationships dictated the type and level of DECSYS customization required for optimal performance in each state. One state opted to implement the DECSYS concept in their state by developing their own system so they could administer, customize, and host it within their state level agency.

State DEC Alliances individually identified and selected counties in which to pilot test the DECSYS concept, with minimal input and support from the Colorado DEC and the COPS Office. Processes for selecting counties varied from state to state, with states selecting counties based on size, current level of collaboration, or existing memoranda of understanding. Each DECSYS expansion state appointed a state DEC administrator to be the primary point of contact for all DECSYS-related communication and to ensure that all pilot counties were supported in their initial implementation of DECSYS.

Highlights of the implementation process for all DECSYS expansion states are included in appendix B (on page 31). DECSYS flyers are included in appendices D and E (on pages 35–36) and a newspaper article highlighting one state's DECSYS implementation process is provided in appendix F (on page 37).

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, DECSYS training also includes discussions about standardizing use to meet the needs of the agencies being trained: for example, 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 or 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 followed by time for each participant to get 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 freeform, to encourage a more informal environment that cultivates team building and paves the way for future collaboration. For the final hour and a half, the child welfare trainees are trained on DECSYS in similar fashion to the law enforcement session, with a presentation and some practical experience on a training system.

The training location must have a projection system for the presentations and computers with Internet access so that the DECSYS training environment can be brought up. This training environment needs to have been configured with student users, test counties, and test agencies so that the trainees can practice on an environment distinct from the production instance of DECSYS. It is best practice to always keep these environments separate.

DECSYS END USER TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

The DECSYS SaaS agreement states that any end user requesting help via the dedicated DECSYS email address will be acknowledged within 48 hours. A solution is not promised within 48 hours, just 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 of any information the support representative may need from the user in order to proceed.

State-level DECSYS support will involve managing user accounts, groups, and other state instance 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–for example, by making sure that notification email addresses are all current for child welfare agency groups. The maintenance of these users and groups requires support representatives to ensure that contact information is stored in the CRM system for all users.

Users email any bugs they encounter while working with the system to the DECSYS email address. The first level of support for such reports is the state support representative, who is responsible for making sure that the problem is not user error by reproducing the issue. Once the issue is reproduced, the report is forwarded on to the next level of technical assistance. The state support representative serves as the liaison between higher levels of support and the state instance end users.

Summary Reports

The DECSYS administrator runs instance reports to evaluate usage and to enable early detection of issues that may arise in the process flow of DECSYS cases. He or she analyzes the work flow states of DECSYS cases and deidentified DECSYS child entities to determine if DECSYS users are taking the proper steps in a timely manner. The resulting reports are high-level system health checks that also take into consideration the behavior of the end users to determine the overall effectiveness of the DECSYS instance.

Deidentified summation reports can also be run on individual agencies, counties, or regions. These reports have similar output to the required instance reports and have been used in the past by supervisors to secure funding, measure success, determine workload, and understand DECSYS usage.

Conclusion

As agencies come online with DECSYS they discover that with very little effort, law enforcement, child welfare, and drug-endangered children 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 affecting both families they are already working with and families that may need their intervention. Children who may previously have fallen through the cracks receive 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. DECSYS serves as a reliable tool to identify such children in communities across the nation. It is our hope that eventually the implementation of the DECSYS concept will be standard for all law enforcement and child welfare agencies, identifying and supporting drug-endangered children nationwide.

Additional Resources

National DEC

www.nationaldec.org

Colorado DEC

www.coloradodec.org

Federal Interagency Task Force on Drug Endangered Children

www.justice.gov/dec

Links to State DEC Alliance websites

www.nationaldec.org/statesites.html

State of Colorado Methamphetamine Task Force

coag.gov/SATF

Office of Community Oriented Policing Services, U.S. Department of Justice

www.cops.usdoj.gov

Appendix A.
State Expansion Survey Instrument

1. Is your child welfare system state based or county based?
   a. county
   b. 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?
   a. yes
   b. no

8. Do you do any DEC program work that reaches out to all of the child welfare offices in your state?
   a. yes
   b. no

9. Does your state have any regional drug task forces?
   a. yes
   b. no

10. Do you do any DEC program work that reaches out to law enforcement drug agents across your state?

a. yes

b. 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 email domain name (xxx@coloradodec.org)?

a. yes

b. no

19. Do you see the need for this within your state?

a. yes

b. no

Appendix B. Highlights of DECSYS Implementation in Expansion States

Wisconsin. The Wisconsin Alliance for Drug Endangered Children is housed in the Wisconsin Department of Justice's Division of Criminal Investigation. Wisconsin has promoted DEC statewide through the creation of multiple local DEC alliances with signed protocols, thus laying the groundwork to make DECSYS a natural fit for implementation. The Wisconsin Alliance for Drug Endangered Children selected pilot counties strategically, launching DECSYS in urban Dane County, suburban Racine County, and rural Waushara County. This approach was designed to test the implementation process and effectiveness of DECSYS in multiple settings.

Nevada. The Nevada Alliance for Drug Endangered Children operates through the Nevada Attorney General's Office. It was clear from the start that the DECSYS system would be a welcome addition to the DEC efforts in Nevada, thanks to the great relationships built between DEC and state child welfare department heads and field practitioners. The Nevada Alliance for Drug Endangered Children was the first state outside Colorado to implement the DECSYS concept. Because of Nevada's region-based child welfare structure, DECSYS was extensively customized to perform in Nevada. DECSYS pilot counties in Nevada included Carson City County, Douglas County, and the Washoe Tribe, a sovereign nation on the Nevada/California border.

Tennessee. The Tennessee Alliance for Drug Endangered Children is a broad partnership among multiple state and local agencies across the state. The Tennessee Bureau of Investigation is the state lead for DECSYS in Tennessee, and its early buy-in helped make Tennessee a good fit for the DECSYS pilot. Tennessee child welfare is administered at the state level, a system which required additional customization of the DECSYS system. DECSYS implementation in Tennessee was spearheaded by a very motivated sheriff, the late Butch Burgess, in Cumberland County.

West Virginia. Since 2008, West Virginia DEC has met quarterly to assess events in the field and to provide training on emerging issues. Its early recognition of the benefits of DECSYS recommended West Virginia as a DECSYS expansion site, as did the strong connections among the state agencies that now administer it. The West Virginia Alliance for Drug Endangered Children is housed at the West Virginia Prosecuting Attorneys Institute, and a special unit of the West Virginia State Police focused on investigation of child abuse joined officials in Kanawha and Putnam Counties to pilot DECSYS.

Oklahoma. The Oklahoma Alliance for Drug Endangered Children is a program of the Oklahoma Bureau of Narcotics. Oklahoma was one of the first states to formally define the term "drug-endangered child" in state law and accordingly has garnered significant support from state partners. The DECSYS concept is a tool for Oklahoma to further drug-endangered child identification efforts. Following several meetings on the DECSYS Concept, the Oklahoma Bureau of Narcotics opted to develop a version of the DECSYS system that could be hosted within the state of Oklahoma. The C4DEC (Collaboration for Drug Endangered Children) System operates similarly to DECSYS and shares statistics with the nationwide DEC program.

Appendix C. **E-mail from the Former Director of the COPS Office**

From: Office of Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS)

Subject: Letter From The Director

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 (CODEC) 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 two-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. CODEC is working hard to introduce DECSYS to all 64 counties in Colorado, and you will be contacted by CODEC 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.

Sincerely,

Bernard K. Melekian
Director

Appendix D. **DECSYS Introductory Flyers**

The DECSYS Tracking System.

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 identified were no longer in the home 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 children 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.

E-mail info@coloradodec.org or call 303.413.3460.

COPS

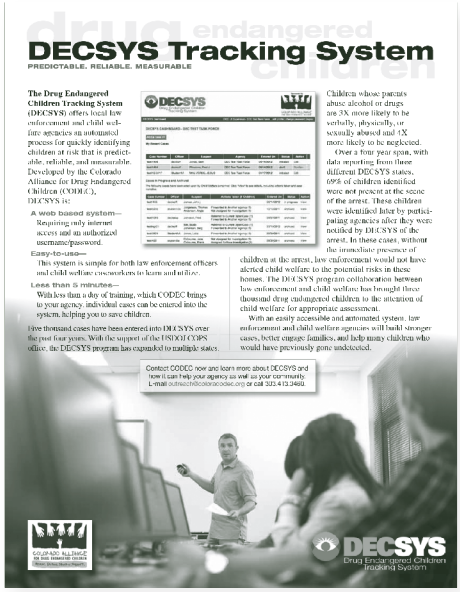
COLORADO ALLIANCE FOR DRUG ENDANGERED CHILDREN

DECSYS Drug Endangered Children Tracking System

DECSYS INTRODUCTORY FLYER ONE

"THE DECSYS TRACKING SYSTEM"

http://ric-zai-inc.com/ric.php?page=detail&id=COPS-W0812



DECSYS Tracking System

PREDICTABLE. RELIABLE. MEASURABLE

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. Developed by the Colorado Alliance for Drug Endangered Children (CODEC), DECSYS is:

A web based system—
Requiring only internet access and an authorized username/password.

Easy-to-use—
This system is simple for both law enforcement officers and child welfare caseworkers to learn and utilize.

Less than 5 minutes—
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.

Five thousand cases have been entered into DECSYS over the past four years. With the support of the USDOJ COPS office, the DECSYS program has expanded to multiple states.

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.

Over a four year span, with data reporting from three different DECSYS states, 69% of children identified were not present at the scene of the arrest. These children were identified later by participating agencies after they were notified by DECSYS of the arrest. In these cases, without the immediate presence of children at the arrest, law enforcement would not have alerted child welfare to the potential risks in these homes. The DECSYS program collaboration between law enforcement and child welfare has brought three thousand drug endangered children to the attention of child welfare for appropriate assessment.

With an easily accessible and automated system, law enforcement and child welfare agencies will build stronger cases, better engage families, and help many children who would have previously gone undetected.

Contact CODEC now and learn more about DECSYS and how it can help your agency as well as your community.
E-mail outreach@coloradodec.org or call 303.413.3460.

COLORADO ALLIANCE FOR DRUG ENDANGERED CHILDREN

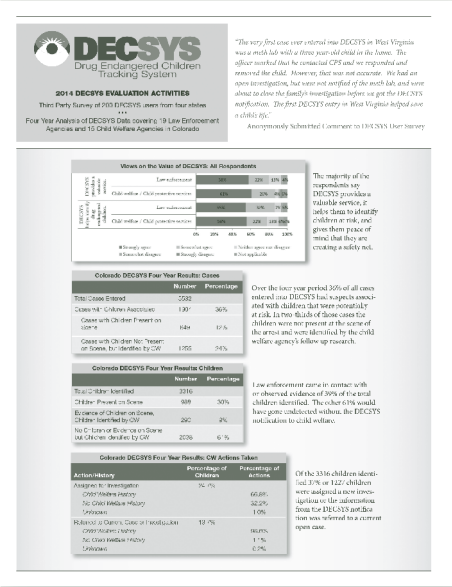
DECSYS Drug Endangered Children Tracking System

DECSYS INTRODUCTORY FLYER TWO

"DECSYS TRACKING SYSTEM PREDICTABLE. RELIABLE. MEASURABLE"

http://ric-zai-inc.com/ric.php?page=detail&id=COPS-W0813

Appendix E. **DECSYS Evaluation Flyer**



DECSYS
Drug Endangered Children Tracking System

2014 DECSYS EVALUATION ACTIVITIES

Third Party Survey of 203 DECSYS users from four states

* * *

Four Year Analysis of DECSYS Data covering 19 Law Enforcement Agencies and 15 Child Welfare Agencies in Colorado

"The very first case ever entered into DECSYS in West Virginia was a meth lab with a three year-old child in the home. The officer marked that he contacted CPS and we responded and removed the child. However, that was not accurate. We had an open investigation, but were not notified of the meth lab, and were about to close the family's investigation before we got the DECSYS notification. The first DECSYS entry in West Virginia helped save a child's life."

Anonymously Submitted Comment to DECSYS User Survey

Views on the Value of DECSYS: All Respondents

		Strongly agree	Somewhat agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat disagree	Strongly disagree	Not applicable
DECSYS is a valuable service	Law enforcement	56%	22%	11%	3%		
	Child welfare / Child protective services	61%	20%	9%	3%		
DECSYS is worth the time to enter children's information	Law enforcement	56%	16%	11%	3%		
	Child welfare / Child protective services	59%	22%	10%	3%	2%	

The majority of the respondents say DECSYS provides a valuable service, it helps them to identify children at risk, and gives them peace of mind that they are creating a safety net.

Colorado DECSYS Four Year Results: Cases

	Number	Percentage
Total Cases Entered	3582	
Cases No Children Associated	1307	36%
Cases with Children Present on Scene	148	4%
Cases with Children Not Present on Scene, but Identified by CW	1958	54%

Over the four year period 36% of all cases entered into DECSYS had no persons associated with children that were actually at risk. In two fifths of those cases the children were not present at the scene of the arrest and were identified by the child welfare agency's follow up research.

Colorado DECSYS Four Year Results: Children

	Number	Percentage
Total Children Identified	3316	
Children Present on Scene	989	30%
Evidence of Children on Scene, Children Identified by CW	290	9%
No Children or Evidence on Scene but Children Identified by CW	2036	61%

Law enforcement came in contact with or observed evidence of 39% of the total children identified. The other 61% would have gone undetected without the DECSYS notification to child welfare.

Colorado DECSYS Four Year Results: CW Actions Taken

Action/History	Percentage of Children	Percentage of Actions
Assigned for Investigation	36.7%	
Child Welfare History		66.8%
No Child Welfare History		32.2%
Unknown		1.0%
Referred to Current Case or Investigation	18.7%	
Child Welfare History		98.9%
No Child Welfare History		1.1%
Unknown		0.0%

Of the 3316 children identified 37% or 1227 children were assigned a new investigation or the information from the DECSYS notification was referred to a current open case.

DECSYS EVALUATION FLYER

"2014 DECSYS EVALUATION ACTIVITIES"

Four year analysis of DECSYS data covering 19 law enforcement agencies and 15 child welfare agencies in Colorado.

http://ric-zai-inc.com/ric.php?page=detail&id=COPS-W0811

Appendix F. Associated Press Article on DECSYS Implementation in West Virginia

Posted on Thu, Aug. 01, 2013

W.Va. to track kids at risk of drug-related abuse

by VICKI SMITH Associated Press

Law enforcement officers know what to do when they find suffering children in the home of a drug suspect: Call Child Protective Services. But what about when they find an empty car seat, a pacifier or a stuffed animal in a vehicle that's become a mobile meth lab?

In Putnam County, sheriff's deputies no longer need to agonize over whether to call child-welfare workers in the middle of the night based solely on suspicion of a threat.

Starting Thursday, the department will enter any drug-related cases where a child's safety could be compromised into the new Drug Endangered Child Tracking System.

Officers have always been required to report suspected child abuse and neglect, said Sheriff Steve Deweese, but without the tracking system, there had been no formal way to share suspicions and concerns directly with child- welfare workers.

"We just didn't input the data to make a black-and-white document," he said Wednesday, "and in law enforcement, if it's not on paper, it didn't happen."

The State Police announced in May it was creating the database to help case workers and to help ensure that at- risk children don't fall through the cracks of overburdened criminal justice and child-welfare systems. Officers will enter every felony drug arrest, and child-welfare workers can log in to look for cases that may not already be on their radar.

The system is not accessible to the public.

Sara Whitney, an investigator in the Putnam County prosecutor's office, said it doesn't replace traditional mandatory reporting but is "just another avenue to share information."

"Law enforcement does a great job of identifying kids — if they're there. But sometimes, you may not know there are children involved," she said. "A lot of these kids come and go from relatives or neighbors, and it may be that when law enforcement interacts with the parents, they are somewhere else.

"By including all felony arrests," Whitney said, "that's going to give CPS a heads up that, 'Hey, we've arrested Mom or Dad' or whatever."

While the system was supposed to go live July 1, Deweese said Putnam County needed a little more time to work out the logistics.

Cpl. Brian Humphreys said the Kanawha County Sheriff's Department is meeting next week to do the same and will start entering data soon. Already, though, two victims' advocates regularly scan reports looking for cases that might involve children and flagging them for CPS.

Now, that information will be in a specific place in the paperwork, noted in a uniform manner.

"If someone is a frequent arrestee, if someone has a drug habit or some other problem in their life, this gives us a way of documenting it without overburdening the system," Humphreys said.

Sometimes, the need to remove children is clear and immediate. In those cases, deputies still call CPS. But sometimes, Humphreys said, the cases can wait, so the tracking system will avoid those late-night calls.

State Police hope the tracking system will eventually be used statewide.

A report released last fall found that children are dying from abuse and neglect at a higher rate in West Virginia than in any other state, a problem judges, social workers and others say is fueled by rampant substance abuse.

While abuse and neglect reports have fallen nationally for five straight years, the National Child Abuse and Neglect Data System found West Virginia had the highest death rate at 4.16 children per 100,000 in 2011. That was slightly ahead of Louisiana and Oklahoma.

Cases of child abuse and neglect have been clogging the criminal court system, accounting for as much as 40 percent of a judge's time in some circuits.

The Justice Center at the nonpartisan Council of State Governments says West Virginians are more likely to die from drug overdoses than residents of any other state, and one in 10 adults has a substance abuse problem.

About Corona Insights

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.

About the Colorado Alliance for Drug Endangered Children

The Colorado Alliance for Drug Endangered Children [DEC] 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 environments of substance use 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.

About the National Alliance for Drug Endangered Children

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.

NATIONAL ALLIANCE
FOR DRUG ENDANGERED CHILDREN
Rescue. Defend. Shelter. Support.

About the COPS Office

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, territorial, and tribal law enforcement agencies through information and grant resources.

Community policing begins with a commitment to building trust and mutual respect between police and communities. It supports public safety by encouraging all stakeholders to work together to address our nation's crime challenges. When police and communities collaborate, they more effectively address underlying issues, change negative behavioral patterns, and allocate resources.

Rather than simply responding to crime, community policing focuses on preventing it through strategic problem solving approaches based on collaboration. The COPS Office awards grants to hire community police and support the development and testing of innovative policing strategies. COPS Office funding also provides training and technical assistance to community members and local government leaders, as well as all levels of law enforcement.

Another source of COPS Office assistance is the Collaborative Reform Initiative for Technical Assistance (CRI-TA). Developed to advance community policing and ensure constitutional practices, CRI-TA is an independent, objective process for organizational transformation. It provides recommendations based on expert analysis of policies, practices, training, tactics, and accountability methods related to issues of concern.

Since 1994, the COPS Office has invested more than $14 billion to add community policing officers to the nation's streets, enhance crime fighting technology, support crime prevention initiatives, and provide training and technical assistance to help advance community policing.

- To date, the COPS Office has funded the hiring of approximately 127,000 additional officers by more than 13,000 of the nation's 18,000 law enforcement agencies in both small and large jurisdictions.
- Nearly 700,000 law enforcement personnel, community members, and government leaders have been trained through COPS Office-funded training organizations.

- To date, the COPS Office has distributed more than eight million topic-specific publications, training curricula, white papers, and resource CDs.
- The COPS Office also sponsors conferences, roundtables, and other forums focused on issues critical to law enforcement.

The COPS Office information resources, covering a wide range of community policing topics—from school and campus safety to gang violence—can be downloaded at www.cops.usdoj.gov. This website is also the grant application portal, providing access to online application forms.

The identification of children exposed to drug-related violence is mostly confined to drug-related arrests for which the child is present. This leaves 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 (DEC). 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. This report documents the implementation of DECSYS and the process of expanding DECSYS to five additional states. Promising practices and evaluation results are reported for each step of the process from system design, to training and support, to implementation.

U.S. Department of Justice
Office of Community Oriented Policing Services
145 N Street NE
Washington, DC 20530

To obtain details about COPS Office programs, call the COPS Office Response Center at 800-421-6770.

Visit the COPS Office online at www.cops.usdoj.gov.

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