

**UAACOG BOARD REPORT
February 2010**

DEPARTMENT/PROGRAM: SSUF (Statewide Strategic Use Fund)

SUBMITTED BY: Beth Lenz

REPORTING PERIOD: December 2009-February 2010

PURPOSE: To promote self-sufficiency for families in need in Chaffee, Custer, Fremont, and Lake Counties. This will be accomplished through the expansion of programs and the addition of community resource navigators.

GOALS: For the purpose of this report: Help 30 families achieve self-sufficiency over the next 14 months. Program has multiple goals

<i>Number of Clients planned</i>	<i>Number of Clients served</i>
30	104 (77 active clients)

(Program year runs 05-05-09 through 07-01-10)

<i>Budget</i>	<i>YTD Spent</i>	<i>% of Funds Spent</i>	<i>% of Year expired</i>
\$264,647	\$114,548.02	43.28%	71%

Expected changes to budget? None at this time

Highlights: In 6 months of the project, the SSUF program has tripled the anticipated caseload. Both navigators have done an exceptional job in recruitment of clients, as well as developing relationships with partnering agencies. When the project began, more than 90% of client referrals were internal. Currently, more than 60% of our referrals are coming from partnering agencies.

It was estimated that during the grant cycle, our Navigators would see 30 clients. As of December 31, 2009, the Navigators have seen 98 clients with 71 active cases currently. We have seen some remarkable things: Of the 98 clients, 15 have become employed and are well on the way to being self-sufficient. 8 of the 98 clients have seen an increase in wages or hours, thereby improving their ability to be self-sufficient. 13 of the 98 clients are now enrolled in college, to include one in trade school to become a truck driver and two who are on their way to becoming Certified Nursing Assistants. This is 36.7% who have made significant changes in their lives to become self-sufficient.

We have completed two sessions of the "Financial Success Classes". One was in Fremont County and had 9 families participate; the Chaffee County event had 3 families. We are reworking the Finance classes to be more pertinent to families who struggle and lack stability. We will also be adding a section on predatory business practices that we see are clients falling prey to; including pay-day advances and rent-to-own. We have discovered that the families need to have more exposure to simple budgeting and that most of them would like to know how to teach their children to be more responsible with money. We intend to include a class that is geared to teaching parents how to teach their children about financial success.

With the GED Preparation classes, we are now offering preparation classes at times that are convenient for working parents and offering childcare for the class. This has allowed persons to attend who previously were not able to. Currently, 4 of the Navigator clients are taking classes weekly to prepare for taking the GED test.

As of December 31, 2009, we have completed 92 sessions with the Alchemy SISTEM. The sessions work particularly well with those who have been out of the workplace for more than 2 years or those who are entering the workplace for the first time. We have also learned that it is a great tool to use with teenage children. We will continue offering the sessions as needed.

Upcoming Events and FYI's: On February 17, 2010, we will begin the 8-week Life Skills class in Chaffee County. The following topics will be covered:

1. Introduction to the classes. Clients will look at the situation they are currently living in and set goals they feel will improve their lives. We will discuss how to get from "here" to "there".
2. The basics of budgeting. Debt-to-income ratio will be determined.
3. Meal planning. How to plan, shop for, and prepare low cost, healthy meals.
4. Organizing and maintaining a house for children.
5. The theory of change. Clients will discuss what changes need to be made in order to get out of poverty.
6. The relationship between making good choices and good self-esteem.
7. Assessment of resources/Building resources.
8. Create a plan to live a self-sufficient life.

On March 11, 2010, we will run the second round of Life Skills classes in Fremont County, as well as the third Financial Success Class, reworked to meet the needs of our clients.

Heads Up aka "DUCK" : Our funder, Colorado Department of Human Services, Division of Colorado Work, will conduct a site visit on March 8, 2010.

Letters, notes, testimonials, client stories: Below is a letter we received on January 30, 2010, from a client.

"I am a single mother of 2 children and recently moved back to Colorado from (removed to protect identity) as a result of a separation. Just as I thought things were looking up I was laid off from my job 2 weeks before Thanksgiving. I used up everything I had in savings and felt like I was headed down a dead end road with no hope. I finally swallowed my pride and went to Human Services for help with my living expenses only to find another stop sign. A woman gave me a business card (for the Navigator) and told me that she may be able to help. Honestly I did not want to involve anyone else in my problems, but after going to the local food bank another person told me I should really call the Navigator and talk to her.

My financial status was nonexistent and I was having a terrible time finding a job; not to mention I was losing my self-esteem and motivation. I called Sheri and set up an appointment thinking it would be some woman who would judge me and eventually brush me off as another "case in the community", but I was wrong. After our first meeting I could see that this woman and program was different than anything I had ever heard of. At last it appeared that there was no end to this road but a beginning I needed desperately.

Sheri got me into Life Skills classes that have made me look at my situation from another view. I found someone to talk to and be a positive influence where I had none. When I was feeling my lowest, it was Sheri who made me see the bigger picture and that I could get there if I just asked for help. Not only was asking for the help a big step but having someone to make me feel unashamed was the best part of all. Knowing that I wasn't the only one out there made me feel better about myself and fixing my situation.

I have now been part of this program since November and my life is so much better because of it. I am 3 weeks away from attaining my Colorado Child Care License and just a step from being a substitute teacher for our local school district. I have found the road to stability through this program when just months ago I was hopeless.

I want you to know that this program has had a life changing experience for me. It is an asset and resource that goes beyond words for our community. It gives people hope, a positive plan to change and support people desperately need to make that change. I hope that one day I can make a difference in someone's life like the SSUF Navigator has done for me."