

EMERGENCY FAMILY ASSISTANCE ASSOCIATION

EFAA's 100-Year History

Emergency Family Assistance Association (EFAA) has a long and proud history of service to and support from the Boulder County community. EFAA's origins date back to 1918, when Boulder served as the center of trade and commerce for mining activity underway in the mountains to the west, and in the coalfields to the south and east.

As World War I drew to a close, a severe downturn in the metals and coal mining industries created major economic problems for the community in general and especially for people working in mining-related jobs. What few governmental programs existed at the time (e.g., the Colorado Mother's Pension Act of 1912, and the Boulder Poor Farm started in 1913 and operated as part of Corrections) were woefully inadequate to meet the basic needs of women-headed households with children, and the elderly or infirm for financial and in-kind aid and support for things like food and heat. In response to this situation, members of the community, many of whom were associated with local churches, organized additional efforts to provide help for people in need. The efforts of neighbors helping neighbors formed the Social Service-Child Welfare Association of Boulder (EFAA's former name) whose purpose was "to render social service and relief to indigent and destitute people of Boulder, Colorado and to aid in the mental, moral, and physical growth of the children of Boulder, Colorado, in cooperation with other relief agencies of the state, county and community to promote these aims."

In 1973, after the County Department of Public Welfare changed its name to Department of Social Services, the organization's name was changed to Emergency Family Assistance Association, Inc. to more accurately describe its work in the community.

Collaboration & Partnership

Throughout decades of history, the EFAA has been at the center of collaborations and partnerships to meet local need. For example, at the height of the great depression, when 25% of the community was on some sort of aid, the organization not only survived when others were folding, it worked with the PTA and others to provide hot lunches at school to the rapidly growing number of "undernourished children." Or, in 1987, when need was growing in the Longmont community, EFAA participated in a unique cooperative effort to create a unified service delivery system—the Outreach United Resource Center—to meet basic needs in Longmont. OUR Center, Inc. later became a completely independent organization.

Responding to a Growing Need: Preventing Family Homelessness

In 1979, EFAA took a big step in expanding its services to families in need by assuming responsibility for managing an existing short-term housing site in Boulder, ECHO House (Emergency Community Housing Organization). That same year, EFAA also opened an office in Longmont with a part-time case manager in space donated by Central Presbyterian Church. This expansion came just in time, because in the early 1980's demand for short-term housing increased significantly after the Federal government reduced its role in assisting people living in poverty.

During the mid-1990s, EFAA began operating a transitional housing program, in addition to the short-term housing program. This included partnerships with an existing, volunteer-based transitional housing program called Second Step, and what was then the Housing Authority of the City of Boulder. EFAA has continued to expand housing stock throughout Boulder County by purchasing existing units, managing

units owned by the City of Boulder, or building new units. Today, EFAA owns or manages more than 55 short-term or transitional housing units across Boulder County for families with children who would otherwise be homeless.

Focus on Children's Wellbeing

During this time of housing expansion, EFAA also created its Children's Program for families living in EFAA housing. Over the decades, the program has expanded to provide additional family support services. The goal of the program is to mitigate the trauma and stress children may be experiencing by creating a stable, supportive environment for children to become school and life ready. The program is focused on trauma management, socioeconomic support, school readiness, communications and life skills, and parenting resources.

True to Our Historical Purpose, Yet Evolving and Improving to Meet Tomorrow's Needs

In 2015, EFAA's Board of Directors and staff set in motion a 5-year strategic plan to reduce poverty and family homelessness in Boulder County by focusing on long-term, whole-family solutions that improve household outcomes. To do this, EFAA put in place new programs to provide deeper levels of case management and supporting services, better leveraged partnerships with other agencies to forge a stronger network of services, and took a much more active role in educating the community about the issues that locally impact poverty and family homelessness.

Some of the new programs formed to empower families to thrive include *Internships to Careers for Motivated Parents*, a partnership with Workforce Boulder County that connects parents to on the job training and skills needed to improve long term earning potential, *Bringing School Home*, a partnership with Boulder Housing Partners that provides permanently affordable housing linked to educational opportunities and support for children, and hiring a Mountain Services Liaison to increase service access to the more rural Boulder County mountain communities.

In 2017, EFAA began the process of becoming a Family Resource Center, with the goal of not only helping families in immediate crisis, but also providing a safe, accessible place for all families to connect with comprehensive, coordinated services that help them become stronger and more self-reliant.

The Next 100 Years

While Boulder County has changed throughout the decades, local need has remained constant, as has the great potential families have when they are helped through moments of insecurity or crisis. As Boulder's official Family Resource Center, EFAA has been a central part of the community for a century, empowering families to thrive and building a better future. Those who have donated, volunteered or partnered with EFAA have made EFAA's work possible.

Working collaboratively with the community, EFAA will continue to find new ways to do our work even better to respond to the evolving needs and potential of our community.

Updated January, 2018

