

State of Wyoming Citizen Review Panel, Inc.



Annual Report Summary

November 2005

The Citizen Review Panel is a federally mandated group of professional and private citizens who are responsible for determining whether state and local agencies are effectively discharging child protective responsibilities; pursuant to the 1996 amendments to the Child Abuse Protection and Treatment Act (CAPTA) and any subsequent amendments. Through a review of policies, procedures, research and case review, the purpose of the Citizen Review Panel is to promote child safety and quality services to children and families.

During the period of January through June, 2005, almost 130 citizens and DFS staff were trained to conduct child abuse/neglect and juvenile probation DFS cases, using a scoring instrument. The reviewers looked at each case to determine if a child's safety, permanence and well-being were adequately addressed by the child protection system of DFS and the community.



A total of 95 randomly selected cases were reviewed in each of DFS's eight (8) districts. Each case was reviewed by a team of two people – one DFS employee and one citizen (non-DFS employee) using a scoring instrument. Fifty-two (52) child protection cases and forty-three (43) juvenile probation cases were reviewed. Additionally, focus group meetings were held with groups in a variety of Wyoming communities:

- School district social workers, counselors, nurses, teachers, administrators
- Community service providers
- Therapists and counselors
- Foster Parents
- DFS Case Workers
- DFS Managers and Supervisors

After the reviews were completed and scored, a team of Citizen Review Panelists met to analyze the results of the reviews. *Statewide results showed that DFS had improved the percentage of “strength” scores received in 18 of the 23 items since the last review was conducted in 2002 by a federal review team (only Cheyenne and Casper cases were reviewed by this team). This is quite an achievement, worthy of praise.*



However, percentage scores remained the same or decreased over the 2002 federal review in five item areas. These items areas were:
Item #7, Permanency goal for child;
Item #8, Reunification/Guardianship/Relative Placement;
Item #9, Adoption;
Item #11, Proximity of foster care placement; and
Item #16, Relationship of child with parents.

Therefore, the Citizen Review Panel made the following recommendations after analyzing the results of the case reviews and the focus group meetings.

Recommendations for DFS:

Recommendation #1:

Require the Department of Family Services to follow their own recommendation to implement the Family Centered Practice Model. The Family Centered Practice model assesses the whole family's needs so that the child's need for safety, permanence and well-being can occur by servicing the whole family. If policy were followed and if family centered practice was used with every family, in all DFS offices and with all cases, most case outcomes would improve. The Panel found that many "area needs improvement" scores were directly attributable to some family members not being involved in the case planning or in visitations with children and DFS case workers. Notably, family members left out most often were non-custodial fathers.

Recommendation #2:

Require the use of a consistent battery of assessments be given in all cases to the child and to all family members the child is associated with, including foster parents, if applicable. And, encourage providing services in a timely manner when needs are identified. If this was done, overall case outcomes would improve.

The Panel recognizes that in some communities, some services are filled to capacity or not available at all and the child and/or family must travel to other communities to receive services, which takes more time. The Panel also recognizes that some families refuse services offered by DFS and the community. Finally, the Panel recognizes that all community services in Wyoming are not of the same quality and do not meet the individual needs of all children and families, thus opening the window to failure even when DFS has the best intentions in mind for the families and children it works with.

Recommendation #3:

Require consistent case file format across the state. Reviewers and case workers alike noted difficulty in finding necessary items in the case file. This may account for some lack of steps being taken by a DFS caseworker with a family, as it was difficult to determine what had been done in a case when referring to the file. Consider a format that is easy for the case worker to navigate. Involve case workers in determining case file format.

Recommendation #4:

Develop a system that will easily and consistently inform case workers, managers and supervisors of DFS policies, changes in DFS policy and other rules, laws and regulations needed to perform their jobs. Quite often when an item was rated as “area needing improvement” there was discussion between reviewers, case workers and management. The discussion often revolved around someone not being aware of a policy or change in policy. The Panel suggests adding a “technical assistance” box on the DFS web site that pops up when a DFS employee turns on his/her computer. The “technical assistance” box could state a variety of messages, from upcoming training information to policy reminders and policy changes.

Recommendation #5:

Report to the Citizen Review Panel about exactly how the review scores are being used by DFS across the state.

Recommendations for systemic change: The following recommendations pertain not only to DFS but to other Wyoming child protection systems as well.

Recommendation #6:

Require those involved in the court systems in Wyoming to act on termination of parental rights and adoption procedures with urgency and consistency, as there are Wyoming children who are counting on them for permanency in their lives. Most striking of the review findings were that judges, district attorneys and guardian ad litem functioned differently in each county, thus having a different effect on cases, either positively or negatively.

Recommendation #7:

Require the strengthening of; continuance of; and creative additions to community partnerships and good communication between them and DFS as they pertain to these cases. Realize that there is a need in some Wyoming communities to establish physical health and/or mental health resources for these Wyoming children and families, especially as they pertain to drug addiction.



Citizen Review Panel Members

Board of Directors

President: Brenda Oswald
Vice President: Lisa Gossert
Secretary: Tara Ackerman
Treasurer: Carla Thurin
Member at Large: Rose Kor

Jacqueline Brown

Wyoming Coalition Against DV&SA
Attorney
1224 S. Wolcott
Casper, WY 82601
237-1300

Twila Kauffman

Wyoming Indian Middle School
School Counselor
9 Coolidge Dr.
Ethete, WY 82520
349-4602

Brenden McKinney

Casey Family Programs
Director, Field Operations
130 Hobbs Ave.
Cheyenne, WY 82009
638-2564 X225

Laurien Rahimi-Alangi

Sheridan Co. School Dist. #2
Principal
PO Box 277
Dayton, WY 82836
673-8730

Carmen Thomas

Northern Arapaho Tribe – WEW
Care Coordinator
PO Box 41
Fort Washakie, WY 82514
332-3074

Andy Aldrich

Asst. Dep. Faith-Based & Com. Init.
Dept of Family Services
Hathaway Building, 3rd Floor
2300 Capitol Ave
Cheyenne, WY 82002-0490

Lori Kickery

90th Srvs Family Member Program
Flight Chief
2492 Peterson Drive
Cheyenne, WY 82009
773-4368

Rose Kor

Prevent Child Abuse Wyoming
Director
1902 Thomes Ave.
Cheyenne, WY 82001
637-8622

Brenda Oswald

Governor's Planning Council on
Developmental Disabilities, Ex. Dir.
6501 Julia Rd.
Cheyenne, WY 82009
777-7230

Debora Renneisen

CASA for 6th Jud. Dist. Ct.
Director
3204 Fitzpatrick
Gillette, WY 82718
687-9440

Carla Thurin

Safehouse/Sexual Assault Srvs,
Inc., Director
PO Box 1885
Cheyenne, WY 82003
634-8655

Scott Coleman

Mercer House
Prevention Specialist
825 ½ St. John
Casper, WY 82601
258-3934

Lisa Gossert

Casey Family Programs
Supervisor, Clinical Services
130 Hobbs Ave.
Cheyenne, WY 82001
638-2564

Kenneth Lee, Jr.

Cody Foursquare Church
Pastor
1443 Bleistein Ave.
Cody, WY 82414
527-4444

Debbie Petrie-Bullock

Sweetwater Co. School District
Social Worker
1652 Walnut
Rock Springs, WY 82901
352-3440

Lee Ann Stephenson

Div of Victim Srvs, AG's Office,
Family Violence Prog Mngr
122 West 25th St., 1st Fl. West
Cheyenne, WY 82002
777-6086

Lou Ann Wineman

New Hope Counseling
Counselor
Torrington, WY 82240
532-2119

Tara Ackerman

Children's Justice Project
Wyoming Supreme Court
2301 Capitol Ave.
Cheyenne, WY 82002
777- 7629

This report was written by Karen Ross Milmont, Executive Director for the State of Wyoming Citizen Review Panel, Inc., A copy of the complete 2005 Annual Report may be obtained by contacting the Panel at 1902 Thomes Ave., Suite 215A, Cheyenne, WY 82001 or by calling 307-632-0032.