

Kelly J. Hamilton
Executive Director



Executive Committee

Lisa Gossert, *Chairperson*
Rose Kor, *Vice Chairperson*
Carla Thurin, *Treasurer*
Tara Ackerman, *Secretary*
Jackie Brown, *Member at Large*
Brenda Oswald, *Ex Officio*

**October 22 and 23, 2007 Mini CFSR Report
Sheridan/Buffalo Department of Family Services (DFS) – D6R4**

**S
U
M
M
A
R
Y**

Three Strongest Review Areas:

- Safety 1 (S1) = 100%
- Well Being 2 (WB2) = 100%
- Tied:
 - Safety 2 (S2) = 85.7%
 - Well Being 3 (WB3) 85.7

Greatest Strengths from Stakeholder Interviews:

- DFS recognizes and provides quality services to “non traditional” families, and
- others in the community perceive DFS as providing for support services to help families succeed such as assisting with transportation.

Review Challenge Area:

- Well Being 1 (WB1)

Issues for administrative level consideration:

- Diversion cases do not fit well within this agency; if coded as a youth and family services (YFS case), it may be more beneficial;
- knowledge of and access to continuing training beyond core training;
- greater communication and collaboration between Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA) volunteers and DFS;
- training on new methods to locate paternal family members, and
- policy on how long to offer services when families are not motivated to work with DFS.

Issues requiring local DFS office attention:

- Increased efforts to engage non-custodial parents;
- maltreatment allegations were not substantiated when the perpetrator took off and could not be found;
- DFS policy states that case plans must be sent to the court, even when the judge requests to not receive them;
- having two agencies (DFS and Volunteers of American (VOA)) placing foster children has become confusing for both foster parents and both organizations;
- occasional communication concerns between mental health provider and DFS worker in regards to concerns for the child’s needs, and
- parents in this area of the state cannot find daycare for developmentally delayed children.

Case Ratings:

#D6437 - 4 areas needing improvement: Item 17¹ - Needs and overall services of child, parents, foster parents (overall rating); Item 18 - Child and family involvement in case planning; Item 19 - Worker visits with child and Item 20 - Worker visits with parents; (***mother saw opportunity for help from the community for her son and enjoyed working with the DFS team.***)

#D6439 - Perfect scoring case: (***Once the referral from the school came to DFS, the family was loaded up front with many services.***)

#D6440 - 2 areas needing improvement: Item 18 - Child and family involvement in case planning and Item 20 - Worker visits with parent(s); (***no contact was made with the father or paternal relatives for potential placement; this may have likely prevented a placement change.***)

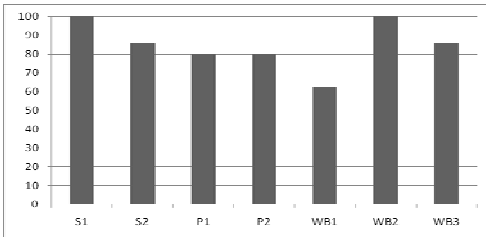
#D6441 - 4 areas needing improvement: Item 4 - Risk of harm to child(ren); Item 7 - Permanency goal for child; Item 8 - Reunification, guardianship, or permanent placement with relatives; Item 22 - Physical health of the child; (***children experienced a placement change because of an investigation on foster home, not related to this case.***)

#D6443 (Buffalo) - Perfect scoring case: (***Mother remained resistant to agency’s consistent efforts to engage her in services and case involvement.***)

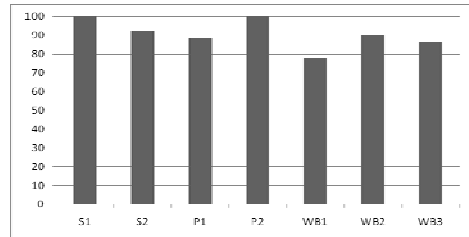
#R4436 - Initial case was dropped because it was a diversion case and services had been offered by another agency prior to DFS involvement; second case was a perfect scoring case: (***Caseworker did a tremendous job working a juvenile justice case from a strength based, family centered approach.***)

#R4438 - Perfect scoring case: (***Child protective services and juvenile services both had open cases; workers worked together closely to provide great wrap around services.***)

#R4442 (Buffalo) - Perfect scoring case: (***Child was initially placed at the Wyoming Girls School (WGS) and at 90 day hearing she requested to remain at the facility so she could get her high school diploma. Her requests were granted, and child graduated at WGS.***)



The graph above depicts the composite scores of the **ROUND IV** Mini CFSR in the broad outcome categories of *safety, permanency and well-being*. A total of eight case cases were reviewed; six in Sheridan and two in Buffalo.



The graph above shows the percentage composite scores of the **three previous rounds** of Mini CFSRs.

¹ Item 17b – Assessment and service provisions for parents failed.
3001 Henderson Avenue, Suite B, PO Box 1504, Cheyenne, WY 82003-1504
Phone: 307-632-0032 Fax: 307-632-1591 wycrp@wycrp.org
Visit us on the world wide web at: <http://wycrp.org>

Strengths:

- Effective case planning and work:
 - “The community felt that this case would probably not go well; however, DFS followed through diligently despite initial reservations;”
 - “Multi Disciplinary Team (MDT) meetings towards the end of the case were almost monthly, which had an impact on the positive outcome of this case;”
 - “child had a medical concern; DFS addressed and solved this issue in less than a week;”
 - “the child had a voice and felt involved in case planning;”
 - “mother said that the case worker was always available, and when she needed something the case worker always got her services;”
 - “although the father was in prison, he was notified of all MDT meetings and given the option of attending by phone;”
 - “despite the fact that funding of mother’s mileage got very expensive for the local office, mother was able to visit her child regularly;”
 - “both siblings in case were placed in foster care together;”
 - “the visits between case worker, mother and caregiver were amazing;”
 - “there was good documented evidence of trying to locate the father;”
 - “relative placement was looked at right away, although it was not appropriate;”
 - “father was immediately contacted by DFS;”
 - “case had concurrent child protective services and juvenile services involvement and caseworkers worked together to provide great wrap-around services;”
 - “everything has been documented well in the case;”
 - “the permanency goal for the case was reunification; the entire case was driven by the goal,” and
 - “the whole child welfare team worked well together which impacted the positive nature of the case.”
- Effective collaboration with the education system:
 - “Child was provided an independent education plan (IEP) prior to being placed in kindergarten,” and
 - “educational services were very well met; the son was on an IEP because of severe arthritis and was moved to another school to accommodate his educational needs.”
- Effective use of service array:
 - “The child received amazing independent living (IL) services; the mother was impressed by the skills her daughter learned while at the Wyoming Girls School (WGS);”
 - “counseling services were provided prior to DFS having custody of the child;”
 - “once the referral from the school came to DFS, the family was front loaded with many services;”
 - “all needs were identified and many services were provided by DFS for all the identified needs;”
 - “mental health worker had glowing reports of the case worker and enjoys working with her;”
 - “there was both parenting counseling through DFS as well as through the Wyoming Boys School (WBS);”
 - “DFS worked diligently to get extra services to the family; however the family was unwilling to participate in the case plan;”
 - “necessary counseling was provided for the mother and the child;”
 - “case worker identified mother’s persistence in getting her children back and offered assistance with her mental drawbacks to help her reach her goal,” and
 - “mom was suicidal and the case worker connected her with the appropriate services.”
- Family Involvement and Support:

3001 Henderson Avenue, Suite B, PO Box 1504, Cheyenne, WY 82003-1504
Phone: 307-632-0032 Fax: 307-632-1591 wycrp@wycrp.org
Visit us on the world wide web at: <http://wycrp.org>

The Wyoming Citizen Review Panel’s mission is to review our child welfare procedures throughout the system offering summaries and recommendations benefiting children and families

- “Child’s initial permanency goal was other planned living arrangement (OPLA) through independent living but has changed to reunification because the family environment has made positive changes;”
- “mother was able to work full time, despite a difficult case and struggles with her children;”
- “child and mother have a great bond, and the child has no resentments of the mother’s alternative lifestyle as well as her actions that put him into foster care;”
- “there was a lot of contact between mother and caseworker;”
- “father agreed to be involved in case;”
- “mother was cooperative in attending all meetings, and was always interested in getting her children back,” and
- “there was a great deal of trust and rapport between the mother and the case worker.”

Opportunities for improvement:

- Case planning and work:
 - “Although the worker did see the child at the school, the worker visitation in this case was not adequate because there were no face to face visits at the home;”
 - “safety in the home was questionable due to drug use by mother and mother’s girlfriend; during this time children were in a trial home placement;”
 - “family was involved with CASA, Big Brothers Big Sisters, and Mental Health but no reports from those providers were in the case file;”
 - “no documentation was completed for a compelling reason not to file termination of parental rights (TPR);”
 - “the county attorney’s office was not aware that the DFS case had been closed;”
 - “there was no yearly screening for dental needs during the period under review;”
 - “there were no safety assessments done on trial home placement, despite a previous failed trial home placement,” and
 - “the reunification goal was not reached within twelve (12) months; the first trial home placement was not started for fourteen (14) months.”
- Family involvement and support:
 - “There were no continued efforts to contact the father,” and
 - “although the child was placed in the same community with liberal visitation with mother, the paternal father in another state was not contacted as a possible placement while child was in foster care.”

Systemic Barriers:

- Education:
 - “The school counselor did not notify DFS that a letter was going to be sent to the county attorney regarding truancy; better communication between the school and DFS could have helped in this case.”
- Legal:
 - “Charges were not filed through the county attorney’s office, despite a substantiated report with DFS;”
 - “CASA coordinates with the county attorney and not DFS; the worker is not aware of what services are being offered through CASA, or what services might be needed;”
 - “county attorney rarely attends MDT meetings,” and
 - “there were delays in getting a guardian ad litem (GAL) appointed for the case.”
- Regional Issues:
 - “Child was developmentally delayed and the mother could not find daycare for this child.”
- Service Array:

- “There were some concerns for mental health needs for the child, but the mental health provider did not indicate this to the DFS worker nor in any evaluation; this need was not expressed until the Mini CFSR interview.”

Additional contributing factors:

- “Both child and mother were uncooperative and reluctant to receive offered services;”
- “father was given proper notices but did not follow up with proceedings;”
- “the youth was from a small community where officials may have been related to him;”
- “the CASA worker helped with the positive outcome of the case;”
- “father was out of the home for a while due to domestic violence charges and parole violation;”
- “family’s use of alcohol had a negative impact on the child’s life,” and
- “father admitted to physically abusing the child causing brain injury and developmental delays; he has allegedly sexually abused the child as well. This caused mother to become overwhelmed and she was not able to take care of her children.”

Review process dynamics and considerations:

- Citizen reviewers in this review consisted of:
 - Retired DFS employee;
 - CASA employee;
 - CASA employee;
 - DFS Advisory Council;
 - Advocacy and Resource Center employer;
 - new DFS employee, and
 - Independent Living Coordinator.
- The period under review was October 1, 2006 through October 22, 2007.

Trend

A juvenile services case was reviewed that reflected a strength based, family centered approach; the child is successfully off probation and doing well.

Stakeholder identified promising practices:

- “Mental health providers felt that when they have a team (with DFS), this feels like an intensive community based service. This includes transportation, food, extra-curricular, home repairs, etc. They feel that DFS goes out of their way to transport clients to appointments and help them provide services;”
- “workers do well in responding to therapeutic recommendations for foster families;”
- “in some cases, MDT’s include tribal CASA and other members of the tribes;”
- “not only is DFS supportive in maintaining parent/child relationships, DFS has been supportive of non-traditional families as well,” and
- “even when a child is not placed at home, workers are very diligent in helping not only the child, but the family as well. IL skills are also routinely discussed at MDT’s for older youth.

Stakeholder Identified Issues:

- “Due to budget cuts, mental health agencies have refused to complete necessary parent assessments and psychological evaluations;”
- mental health providers feel that many times placements are disturbed because foster parents need more training and preparation; without this preparation, placements are jeopardized;”
- “there is a gap in this community for older children with behavioral concerns entering foster care; group homes will not take these youth for liability purposes but the child is not necessarily residential treatment appropriate;”
- “having two agencies (DFS and VOA) placing foster children has become confusing for both foster parents and both agencies involved; communication has been lacking;”
- “case plans are normally made before the MDT and do not allow for much MDT input,” and
- “county attorney does not always receive a copy of the case plan.”



Office determined strengths:

1. Good community relationships;
2. longevity of the juvenile service workers;
3. positive working environment, in that people like each other, it is fun, and there are good support among the staff;
4. energetic, youthful staff;
5. stable Child Protection Team;
6. workers with social work degrees;
7. strong supervisors and manager;
8. good relationships with the school;
9. numerous community resources;
10. strong foster parent programs;
11. positive relationships with law enforcement;
12. great foster care coordinator;
13. use of Family centered practice;
14. a manageable case load number;
15. CPS and JS work well together, and
16. sense of teamwork in case workers.

Office determined needs and concerns:

1. Ongoing training for staff, skill building;
2. finding and engaging non custodial parents and assessing parents needs;
3. documenting better:
 - a. safety assessments;
 - b. risk assessments;
 - c. communication with other agencies like CASA and VOA.
 - d. compelling reasons for not doing TPR, and
 - e. other casework decisions.
4. Distant supervision;
5. unable to recruit male staff, and
6. confusion over county juvenile services in CHINS/truancy cases.

Office determined Program Improvement Plan for the upcoming year (PIP):

1. Ongoing raining for staff, skill building;
2. finding and engaging non custodial parents and assessing parents needs, and
3. documentation.