

The Wyoming Citizen Review Panel's mission is to review our child welfare procedures throughout the system offering summaries and recommendations for improvements benefitina children and families.

Wyoming



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Citizen Review Panel, Inc. **D6R4 February 5-6, 2007 Mini CFSR Report**

Case Ratings:

#D6273 (*Newcastle*)

- Six areas needing improvement: Item 2 – Repeat maltreatment; Item 3 – Services to family to protect child(ren) in home and prevent removal; Item 17 – Needs and services of child, parents, foster parents; Item 18 – Child and family involvement in case planning; Item 19 – Worker visits with child and Item 20 – Worker visits with parent(s).

#D6277 (*Gillette*)

- Two areas needing improvement: Item 1 – Timeliness of initiating investigations of reports of child maltreatment and Item 8 - Reunification, guardianship, or permanent placement with relatives. *This case will be featured in the Casper Star Tribune with mother's consent.*

#D6278 (*Gillette*)

- Six areas needing improvement: Item 2 – Repeat maltreatment; Item 3 – Services to family to protect child(ren) in home and prevent removal; Item 4 – Risk of harm to child(ren); Item 17 – Needs and services of child, parents, foster parents; Item 18 – Child and family involvement in case planning and Item 19 – Worker visits with child.

#D6279 (*Gillette*)

- Three areas needing improvement: Item 7 – Permanency goal for child; Item 9 – Adoption and Item 21 – Educational needs of the child.

#R4272 (*Sundance*)

- Two areas needing improvement: Item 18 – Child and family involvement in case planning and Item 20 – Worker visits with parent(s).

#R4274 (*Gillette*)

- Two areas needing improvement: Item 17 – Needs and services of child, parents, foster parents and Item 20 – Worker visits with parent(s).

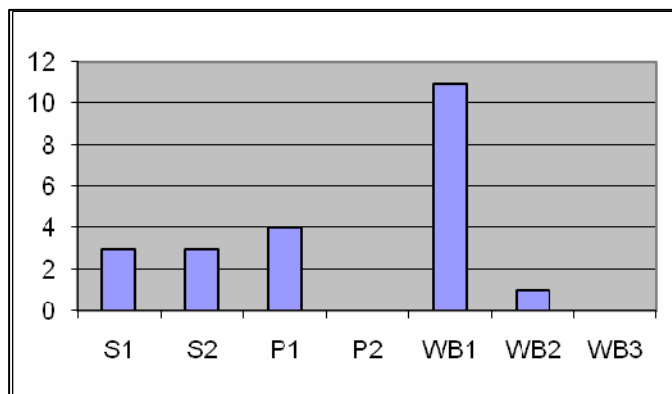
#R4275 (*Gillette*)

- One area needing improvement: Item 5 – Foster care re-entries.

#R4276 (*Gillette*)

- Perfect scoring case.

The graph to the right shows the number of Mini CFSR instrument items rating as "areas needing improvement" in the broad outcome categories of safety, permanency and well-being.



DFS has taken ownership of the following policy issues:

- “Special investigation policy regarding children under 6 years of age”
- “How long should an unsubstantiated case be open when the family is not cooperating, protective custody has not been taken and the county attorney’s office has not filed charges? What is DFS’s role and policy?”

Local DFS Office issues:

- “County attorney would like copies of case plans”
- “Décor of the Gillette DFS office is not inviting for clients and workers alike.”
- “Numerous meetings in a one month period covering many of the same issues, is there anyway to dovetail and streamline this process?”

Issues requiring DFS administrative level attention:

- “Juvenile services unit has limited or no administrative support in these areas and probation officers have high (40-50 case loads); these case loads combined with extensive “windshield” time cause delays”
- “Case load distribution”
- “County attorney’s office is concerned about the high caseloads and high turnover in the Gillette DFS office”
- “Wyoming Girl’s School is reported not to have shared important medical information with parent about illness and optical medical appointments citing HIPPA”
- “Could DFS hire an attorney for the child in certain circumstances when there is a lack of cooperation from parents and other agencies?”
- “Can juvenile service units use social service aids such as child protection units do with family assistance workers?”

The Wyoming Citizen Review Panel has taken ownership of the following systemic issues and/or community issues:

- “Basic training at the Wyoming Law Enforcement Academy needs to incorporate the understanding that DFS cannot take protective custody of children”

Strengths:

- Advocacy:
 - “Department of Family Services (DFS) was willing to fly the low functioning mother back to Wyoming from another state to visit with the judge in hopes of expediting the relinquishment process”
 - “DFS workers stuck with a case with little support and cooperation from other agencies”
 - “Caseworker really held the case together and worked well with difficult people”
 - “Kids taken into custody due to mother’s drug (methamphetamine) use”
 - “Nobody in the system or family gave up on the child”
- Consistency:
 - “Good caseworker accessibility”
 - “The caseworker kept everyone informed with consistent communication”
- Documentation and adherence to procedure:
 - “Good documentation in WYCAPS of the efforts by the caseworker to get mom to follow-through”
 - “Citizen reviewer was very impressed with DFS’s work; communication was good and people in the case felt they were treated well. Even though there were relinquishments in the case, the parents felt that their rights were observed”
 - “Six home studies were done in the case before a suitable home was found”
 - “Documentation in case file was excellent to build a system around the mother”
 - “Initial work on all three cases was very timely; responses were the same day as reports”

- “Investigations initiated by this office were done very timely”
- Effective use of service array:
 - “Mental health needs of child and mom were closely monitored and addressed”
 - “The caseworker addressed needs of everyone including the foster parents, parents and child”
 - “Mother refused any type of counseling; put did complete a parenting class”
 - “Good assessments of the child facilitated by Campbell County Probation”
- Engagement of the child:
 - “Child had a great relationship with his caseworker who saw him one to three times a week at different locations”
 - “Face to fact contacts with child were very good”
 - “Child was willing to do the work to be successful”
 - “Case was started due to educational needs”
- Family involvement:
 - “Child and family were involved in the case planning and felt their needs were heard and met”
 - “Caseworker involved the mother in the case planning process”
 - “Caseworker had a good relationship with the mother even though the caseworker was consistently holding the mother accountable”
 - “Caseworker was very honest with mother yet in a compassionate way”
 - “Both sides of the child’s families were supportive of the child and treatment”
 - “Foster mother/grandmother needed some extra help with mileage; DFS tried to schedule and coordinate appointments for family to reduce mileage and trips for family”
 - “Working with DFS has been a positive experience; mother says she felt like a parent during the whole process”
 - “Father had good insurance to pay for treatment and that probably kept the child out of state’s custody”
- Foster care services:
 - “Biologic mom has called the foster mom to see if she would adopt her unborn child too”
 - “Foster family helped prepare the child for transition to new family”
 - “Quality of foster home was excellent”
- Preserving connections:
 - “DFS did a good job of working with the child to address the child’s needs and didn’t just move for revocation when that might have been an easier course to pursue”
 - “Relative placements in the child protective unit is used whenever possible”
 - “Family had a lot of mental health issues; to find someone in the family that the child could go with was incredible and took a lot of work”
- Successful outcomes:
 - “The stability of the case was good resulting in no foster care reentry”
 - “This case review represented how DFS cases should be done”

Additional contributing factors:

- “Rural geography of Wyoming creates a real logistical problem such as having to travel long distances”
- Parental Decisions:
 - “Mother refused to accept services from DFS”
 - “Parents were in denial regarding their child’s behavior”
 - “Mother sought substance abuse treatment on her own, but she did not follow the recommendations”
 - “Mother turned to alcohol rather than addressing her depression and other issues”

- “Mom felt it was unfair that she had to attend parenting class and dad did not have to attend due to dad’s work schedule”
- “DFS has limited authority to see children in the school system based on the parents cooperation in the case”
- “Juvenile services cases do not fit the CFSR process according to DFS reviewer; thus DFS is focusing on the child in juvenile services case and not paying as much attention to the family resulting in the case plan being focused on child and not family”

Opportunities for improvement:

- Case planning:
 - “Original case plan never changed even though the child’s placement changed”
 - “March of 2005 to November 2005 there was no case plan completed”
 - “Early child hood prevention screening records were not in the case file”
 - “There was not a case plan in the file and mother indicated that she had never seen one”
 - “Better documentation in the case file would have been helpful”
 - “Concurrent planning would have been good especially since this is a second placement at the Wyoming Girl’s School”
 - “Case plans late, lacking, unsigned or needing updates”
- Collaboration:
 - “Increased follow-up with schools and others might be beneficial; this also helps other organizations understand what DFS is about and what services they can provide”
 - “Lacking communication between family, DFS, law enforcement, county attorney and probation; DFS was expecting one thing; probation was expecting something else”
- Contact:
 - “Consistent and more frequent home visits may have helped”
 - “Caseworker visit with the child and parent could have been more frequent and consistent”
- Family involvement:
 - “Family was not aware there was a case planning process; they reported that they would have like to have been involved”
 - “A family partnership in the case would be very beneficial”
 - “The case was not viewed as family centered; good contact with child but not with parent”
 - “Parents would have liked to have had more involvement in their child’s juvenile services case”
 - “Mother was concerned that the Wyoming Girls School had not reported to her that her child was ill; additionally, mother wanted to be informed about the status of her child’s case, but did not receive information from the Wyoming Girl’s School”
 - “Mother had a prejudice against DFS; a family partnership may have helped resolve this issue”

Systemic Barriers:

- Crisis beds:
 - “In certain cases, children using crisis shelters without DFS payment, do not get reported and DFS has missed an opportunity for earlier intervention”
- Legal system:
 - “Case has been open for quite a while; in the justice system, criminal cases take precedence so other things are put on the “back burner.” Mother was in jail five months before there was any resolution as to how her case would be resolved leaving DFS and the child in limbo; no sharing of information with DFS further complicates what to do with the child”

- “15/22 month rule is hard to adhere to when there is not good coordination and cooperation with the court system”
- “When custody is not taken of the child, it often times ties the hands of DFS as to what services they can even provide”
- “Law enforcement officers in the community do not understand that they or medical doctors are the ones that have to take protective custody of a child, not DFS. In addition some of the law enforcement officers will not take protective custody unless they have the county attorney’s office blessing”
- “There is inconsistent application of Wyoming’s new methamphetamine law”
- “Protective custody was never taken so DFS could not do much even though the same circumstantial situation happened three times”
- “Law enforcement did not take custody of the child; county attorney did not file on the matter”
- “DFS waited months to hear something from the County Attorney’s Office about whether they were going to file charges or not; during that time DFS tried to provide services with the mother who continually refused; efforts should have been documented in a case plan”

Review process dynamics and considerations:

- Citizen reviewers in this review consisted of:
 - WYCRP panel member;
 - single parent;
 - pastor;
 - pastor;
 - children’s center worker;
 - RENEW director;
 - CASA worker;
 - Casper Star Tribune reporter;
 - DFS PIO;
 - WGS representative;
 - YES House Director, and
 - independent living coordinator.
- One citizen reviewer wanted DFS to “celebrate” their many success from time to time and appreciated all the hard work that DFS does regularly.
- The period under review was December 1, 2005 through May 31, 2006.
- 1 out of 8 (12.5%) review samples was a child of color.

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