

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.

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## D7R4 January 11-12, 2007 Mini CFSR Report; series II

### Case Ratings:

#### #D7260

- Eight areas needing improvement: #7-permanency goal for child; #9-adoption; #13-visiting with parents and siblings in foster care; #14-preserving connections; #16-relationship of child in care with parents; #17-needs and services of child, parents, foster parents; #18-child and family involvement in case planning and #20-worker visits with parent(s). Continuity of family relationships may have needed to be improved; but there was a sincere concern for the best interests of the child by everyone involved.

#### #D7265

- Perfect scoring case; Department of Family Services (DFS) gave the reins to another agency and the services were provided very well.

#### #D7266

- Perfect scoring case; original pornography issues (and related counseling for children) were never really addressed when other, immediate issues were discovered during original pornography concern.

#### #D7267

- Five areas needing improvement: #2-repeat maltreatment; #5-foster care re-entries; #6-stability of foster care placement; #14-preserving connections and #22-physical health of the child. District court ruled that the Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA) does not apply, however only the respective tribe can make that determination and the proper tribal representative should have been notified.

#### #R4268 (incomplete until the child is interviewed)

- One area needing improvement: #17-needs and services of child, parents, foster parents.

#### #R4269

- One area needing improvement: #18-child and family involvement in case planning.

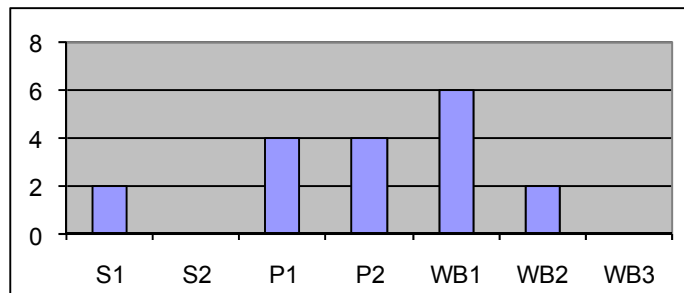
#### #R4270

- Two areas needing improvement: #2-repeat maltreatment; #17-needs and services of child, parents, foster parents

#### #R4271

- One area needing improvement: #21-educational needs of the child (child was without education for the 44 days while she was in treatment at New Directions)

The graph to the right shows the number of items rating as "areas needing improvement" in the broad outcome categories of safety 1 and 2, permanency 1 and 2 and well-being 1, 2 and 3. For definitions of items comprising these categories, visit <http://wycrp.org>.



# Summary

## **Department of Family Services (DFS) has taken ownership of the following policy issues:**

- “When DFS is paying for services, there should be better documentation in the case files from that provider”
- “Should DFS core training address who to call and when to call them for toxic living conditions?”
- “Should CHINS cases be handled in CPS or JS?”
- “Staffing process with Child in Need of Supervision (CHINS) cases might need to be more family centered and clarified with Mercer House.”
- “Do defendants know how to have their cases expunged? Should they be informed? When a case is expunged, does it get removed from WYCAPS or is it least noted in some fashion in WYCAPS?”

## **Local DFS Office issues:**

- “DFS and county detention officials; a way for better visitation between parents and children”
- “Confusion exists why some cases go to JS and some go to CPS according to a GAL. A written protocol may be useful and the distribution of the protocol would benefit all in the system”
- “Visitation plan should be included in case file”

## **Issues requiring DFS administrative level attention:**

- “Casper DFS office is greatly understaffed”
- “Ensure that ICWA is followed and connections are preserved”

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

- “Create policy and procedures on the Mini CFSR process”
- “If there are multiple cases or multiple files in a case, we need to insure that all cases are pulled and available to the reviewers”
- “Terminology used in the system needs explained” – *Proposed 2007 Annual Report Recommendation*

## **Strengths:**

- Consistency:
  - “One probation officer throughout the life off the case helped maintain consistency”
  - “Visitations by the DFS family assistance worker on a weekly basis”
- Documentation and adherence to procedure:
  - “Quick services and strong involvement by DFS caseworker”
  - “Family partnership meeting was beneficial in Juvenile Services (JS) case”
  - “Good safety plan was developed if something went wrong at home”
  - “DFS caseworkers are very involved in the case”
  - “Good follow up by the DFS worker when the kids went home”
  - “Proper number of assessments were done in the case”
  - “DFS probation officer held the child accountable”
  - “Positive role model by the JS probation officer; daily check in”
  - “Current DFS case worker does an excellent job”
  - “Good transition between the two DFS case workers”
- Effective use of service array:
  - “Good therapy for the child”
  - “Educational piece was very strong; speech and language needs met”
  - “Good probationary services provided, including counseling”
  - “Child received individual counseling which was needed”
  - “Good counseling and education oversight for the child”
  - “Educational referrals were appropriate”
  - “Good wrap around services for family”
- Engagement of the child:
  - “Good relationship between child and JS probation officer”

- Family involvement:
  - “DFS did a good job of helping mother and child maintain their relationship”
  - “Good contacts between DFS worker and the family”
- Successful outcomes:
  - “Children are receiving excellent care in foster care”
  - “Child feels that she can contact her probation officer though she is not in DFS custody now”
  - “Both social workers had JS and CPS experience which was useful in the case”

**Additional contributing factors:**

- “Local social workers commitment to the mother and child was very good”
- “Lack of documentation from contractor in case file; even though DFS has paid for those services”
- “Court order saying that ICWA does not apply”
- “Parents thought that it was just “bad luck” that the child got caught doing delinquent behaviors”
- “Judge Hartman’s family court process in the Big Horn Basin should be replicated in other courts”
- “Family felt the therapy was useful”
- “A process is being developed in Casper that will assist and mentor other families who are involved in the system and have had their children removed (program is being nurtured by Uplift)”
- “Mercer House has a prevention contact to provide services before a CHINS is filed”
- “Child did not know who Guardian Ad Litem (GAL) worker was; child did not know what a MDT was and why it was done even though she had attended it”
- “District Attorney could not find the witness; witness was known to be available to the school”
- “Counselor allowed strong minded grandfather to attend counseling with the victim”
- “Services for child were available in the community of residence”

**Opportunities for improvement:**

- Communication:
  - “Communication between district attorney’s office, counselor and DFS could have been better”
  - “Contact between DFS and the parents was lacking in the case”
  - “Personnel who provided services often use acronyms that are presumed to be understood by participants but are not; we need to do better explaining who we are and what we bring to the table especially in Multi Disciplinary Team Meetings (MDTs)”
- Placement and Service Options
  - “Mother needs continued or refresher parenting course”
  - “Parenting class for teenagers who have substance abuse issues would be helpful”
  - “Worker training may be useful on how to engage children and parents without them feeling threatened”
  - “Parenting class and family counseling would have been beneficial for the parties in the case”
- Health
  - “No initial health screening appeared to have been done”
  - “Sex offender denial issues may have needed to be broken down for real case success”
- Documentation and adherence to procedure:
  - “Documentation of medical issues was not strong in the case file”
  - “Court does not need to sanction the case plan to create it; they may order it changed”
  - “CPS case worker was thought to not be real nurturing by family”
  - “Children were not assessed for the original sexual allegation issues that initiated responding agencies to become involved; even though the case went in a different direction, the pornography concerns in the home remained along with other inappropriate sexual allegations”
  - “Medical needs, medications and medical issues were transposed in the case plan as reported by the parents and were not accurately reported in the DFS case plan; children may have gone for 10 days without psychotropic medications”
  - “Lacking documentation in DFS case file on what was going on with contract and other service providers”
  - “Grandfather intimidated the probation officer, however she continued to do a very good job; training on how to deal with an intimidating, strong willed parent might be useful for caseworkers”
  - “Social worker thought that she could have offered more services if case load volume was less”

- “Case plan was not in the case file, but it was in the WYCAPS”
- “Correct areas of dates once discovered in case file; discrepancy of dates in case file”
- “DFS need to ask and notify the tribe about ICWA involvement; would be a good intake question”
- “Case needed to get off to a “running start” in order to meet the 24 month adoption deadline”
- “Low percentage of urine analysis was done in case”
- “Intake forms show child was Caucasian, but follow-up paperwork indicate African American”
- “Continued assessment on “easy cases” must be done; case load volume often times causes this not be done”
- Preserving connections:
  - “Contact between the children and parents was not established or maintained”
  - “Correspondence from the parents to the child was not delivered to the foster mother to read to the children”
  - “Lack of contact between children and parents led to separation issues”
  - “Lack of services to maintain and strengthen youth’s relationship with mother were not available”
  - “Contact was needed between dad and child; but it was not pursued”

### **Systemic Barriers:**

- “Casper DFS office is greatly understaffed”
- “Lack of reports from mental health providers appear to not have been received by DFS”
- “Greater community aftercare would be helpful”
- “Child was less than ½ of a semester from graduating, if child could have been on probation just a bit longer, she would have graduated”
- “Child did not get academic credit while in treatment that would transfer to main stream educational system”
- “If a child is in treatment without a court order, and the child does not leave their school district, neither DFS or the Department of Education are required to pay for school while in treatment”
- “Termination of parental rights (TPR) is scheduled for June of 2008; TPR filed in May of 2006; hearing set for summer of 2007; 2008 case is second on “stack.” Court is very busy and needs a new court house so they have to schedule this far out; two court rooms, three judges; whether true or not, the GAL felt that this whole issue was political to raise awareness for the need for a new court house; does Wyoming need to consider a family court system separate from the general court system?”
- “A contractor did the forensic interviews with the children, but they would not share their video taped results with DFS and when they were finally required by the court to share it or to be held in contempt, it was realized how poorly done the interviews were”
- “GALs are not kept in the loop as much as may be needed. CASA has just begun a process of doing monthly reports which do help”
- “According to some Casper DFS personnel, they feel that GALs and the District Attorney’s Office may micromanage the case too much; however, is the perception that DFS needs the help?”
- “Child was on probation, but was handled by CPS; case turned out great, but may have been better classified as a JS case”
- “Coordination between school and DFS needs to improve; truancy officer wrote letters and filed the matter with DA without involving DFS”
- “Advocacy around education issues needs enhancement; Individual Education Plan (IEP) created but not followed, boy put into GED program at Wyoming Boy’s School (WBS) and did well.
- “Do people know how to petition for their records to be expunged and should that information be more readily available? This might be best pursued through GALs and public defenders; possibly also through the Children’s Justice Project”

### **Review process dynamics and considerations:**

- Citizen reviewers in this review consisted of:
  - A WYCRP administrative assistant;
  - a CASA volunteer;
  - a foster parent;
  - a representative from Department of Health;

- a case worker for the Northern Arapahoe Nation;
- an adoption worker and former legislator;
- a retired social worker;
- a representative from early child hood development, and
- a college student.
- The period under review was October 1, 2005 through March 31, 2006
- “The citizen reviewer involved in the DFS case review process added an important perspective”
- 2 out of 8 (25%) review samples were biracial

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