

The Wyoming Citizen Review Panel's mission is review of our child protective system across agencies offering summaries and recommendations for improvements benefiting children and families.

# Wyoming



**Citizen Review Panel, Inc.**

## Board of Directors

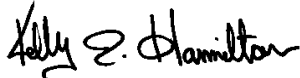
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## ***“The story behind the data, through the eyes of citizens”***

**DATE:** September 26, 2006

**TO:** Richard Linson, District Manager - Child Protective Services  
Shad Bates, Regional Manager - Juvenile Services

**FROM:** Kelly J. Hamilton, Wyoming Citizen Review Panel 

**RE:** September 2006 Mini CFSR Review; District 8 and Region 3

### **Executive Summary:**

Two comments summarize the changing attitude of social service work that is being done in Torrington and Wheatland. From citizen reviewer Marion Moats: “Family partnership meetings have come miles since I was last a reviewer three years ago,” and from District 8 Manager Richard Linson, “It’s getting better and better.”

This third round of Wyoming Mini Child and Family Services Reviews were held September 27 and 28, 2006. The review involved three (3) child protection cases and three (4) juvenile services cases from the Torrington Department of Family Services Office and two (2) child protection cases and two (2) juvenile services cases from the Wheatland Department of Family Services office.

With child protective caseworker case loads in Torrington and Wheatland at 16 and 13 respectively, both office’s child protective cases scored perfectly in Torrington and very well in Wheatland. One case sample was removed from the sample in Torrington as it was only an assessment case with no services provided. One Wheatland DFS office case had a single area needing improvement in child protective service case reviews and that was in the area of “needs and services of child, parents and foster parents.”

### **Safety:**

The outcome of safety is divided into two subcategories: “Safety 1” (children are, first and foremost, protected from abuse and neglect and “safety 2” (children are safely maintained in their homes whenever possible and appropriate).

As noted above, child protective services did very well in all areas including safety. Only one case was partially scored in juvenile services in the Torrington samples in this area and it received a positive score. In the three Wheatland juvenile services samples

all scored a strength in preventing repeat maltreatment in those partially applicable cases.

### **Permanency:**

The outcome of permanency is divided into two categories: “Permanency 1” (children have permanency and stability in their living situations” and “permanency 2” (the continuity of family relationships and connections is preserved for children).

In this area, Torrington juvenile service cases did not score as well as they had in the previous round of reviews in both Permanency 1 and 2. In Wheatland, one juvenile service case did not score well in the area of Permanency 2.

One of the poorly scoring Torrington juvenile services cases can be attributed to a case where a juvenile male who was placed in a detention facility in Casper for almost the entire period under review while the district attorney considered charging the male as a juvenile or adult. It was mentioned at the debriefing that while 6 months of detention may have been disturbing, the other option of a possible twenty year sentence if charged and convicted as an adult is worse; we respectfully disagree. It is not acceptable to allow a juvenile to languish in a detention facility while officials weigh their options for charging. This particular case continues to score poorly for juvenile services in the next outcome category as well.

### **Well Being:**

The outcome of well being is divided into three categories: “Well-being 1” (families have enhanced capacity to provide for their children’s needs), “well-being 2” (children receive appropriate services to meet their educational needs) and “well-being 3” (children receive adequate services to meet their physical and mental health needs).

For juvenile services in the Wheatland samples reviewed, the results were positive with the exception of one area needing improvement in the area of child and family involvement in case planning.

Torrington juvenile service cases did not score well in the three areas of well being again due in large part to one case where the young man was in a detention facility in Casper and was not being provided any services; DFS advises that they cannot provide services until the matter was adjudicated.

### **Contributing Factors:**

It is the intent of the Wyoming Citizen Review Panel to do more than just highlight data: The CRP looks for various observations that are worthy to note and may help to explain the story behind the data in an effort to promote best practices throughout the state.

As mentioned in the preceding permanency section and the well being section, one case in Torrington drug a largely positive review down a great deal with eight (8) items scoring as “areas needing improvement.” During the debriefing meeting for this case, it was made clear that often times when decisions are made about children outside of

DFS's control and involvement, DFS often times gets to pay the bill and be held accountable for that child not receiving necessary services; however they are in the unique position of not being able to provide services until after the matter is adjudicated. One has to be concerned with this particular as the juvenile remained in juvenile detention for approximately six (6) months while prosecutors weighted options as to whether to charge as a juvenile or adult.

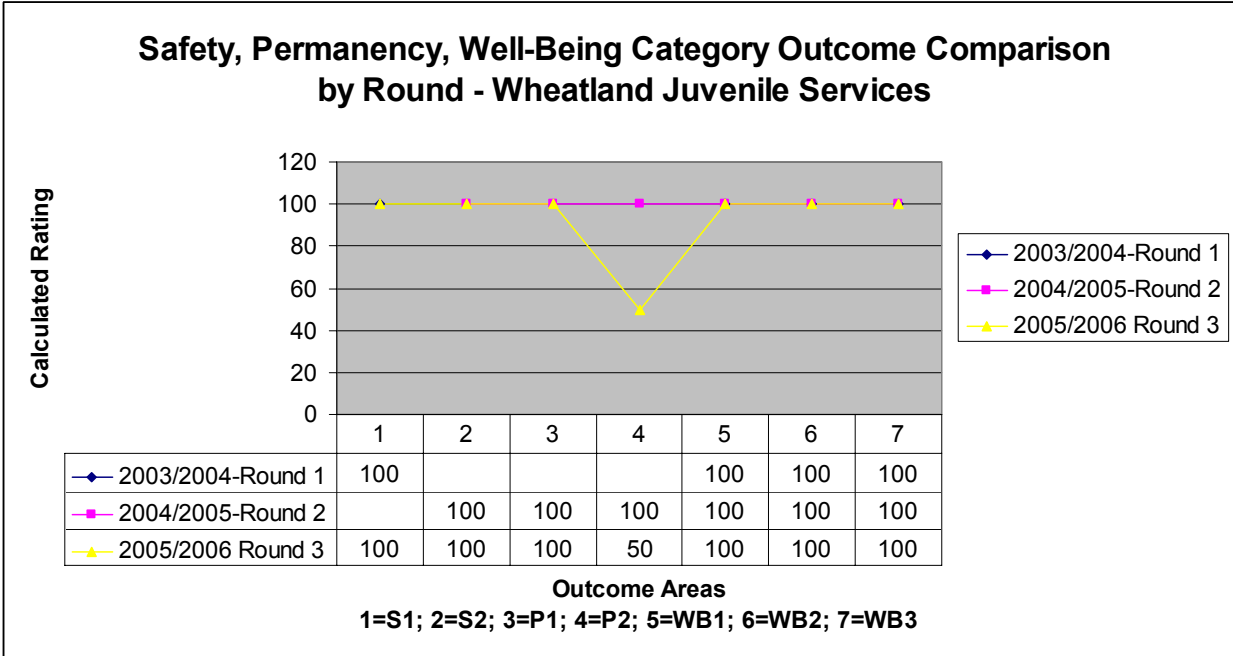
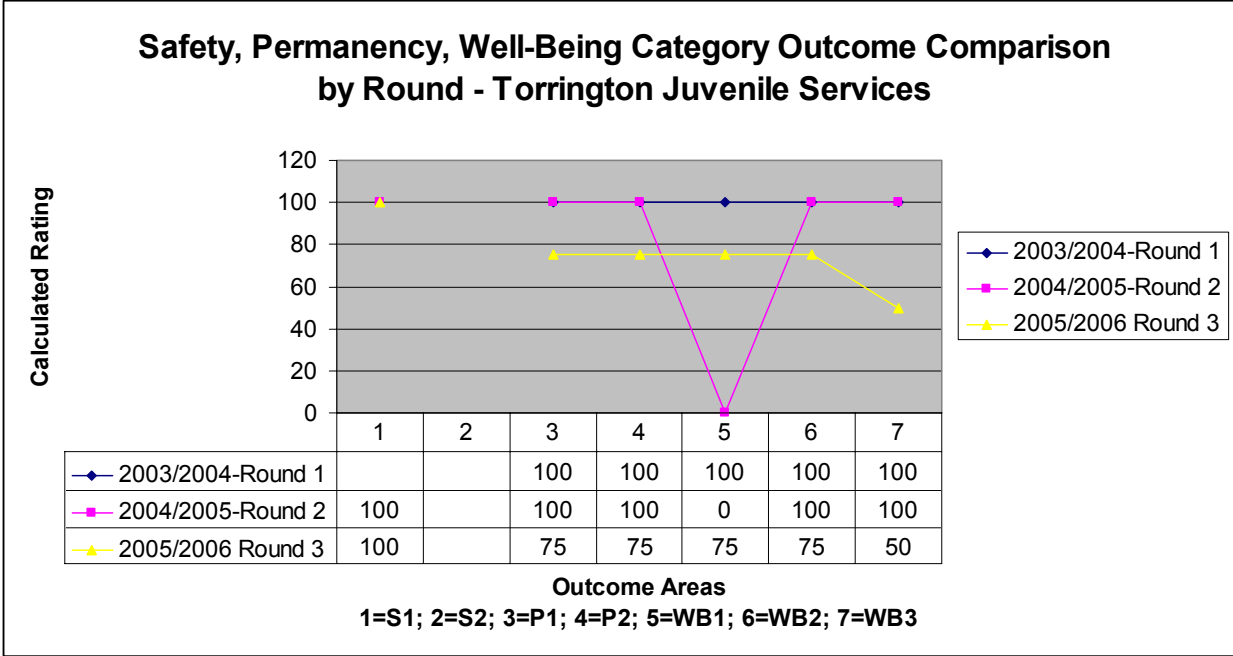
**Conclusion:**

We started this report with positive quotes and we will end it with one made about a juvenile services case worker in Torrington: "When we call her, she does something." Examples of good services and excellent case work were heard numerous times throughout this review, the debriefings and the exit meeting.

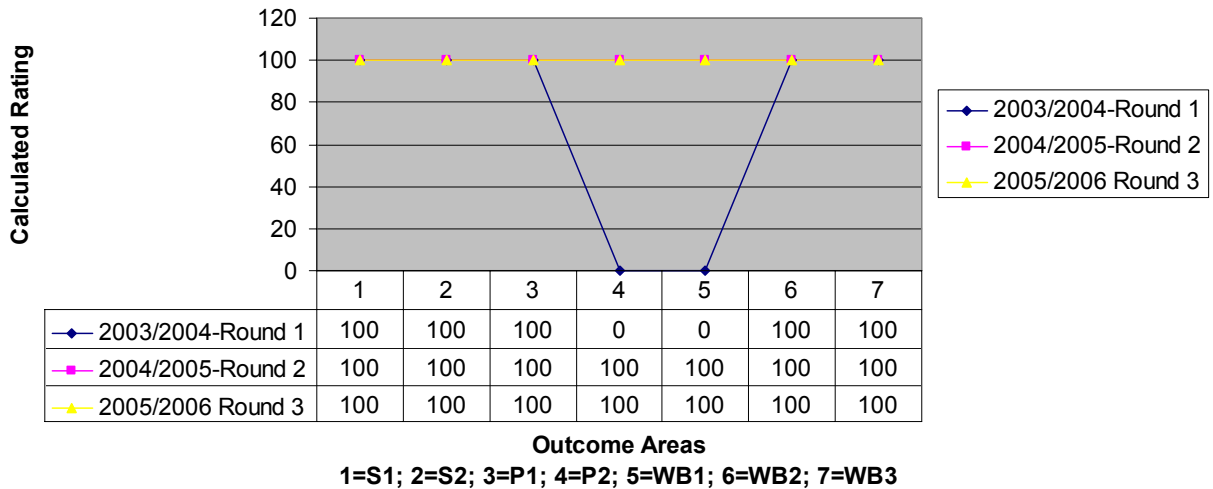
Interestingly, the debriefing in Torrington for both Torrington and Wheatland cases was somewhat confrontational. Productive discussion is certainly the impetus for positive change, but it is important to remember that these reviews are not about any one person and not about the work of DFS; they are looking at the services offered by the system and based on outcomes.

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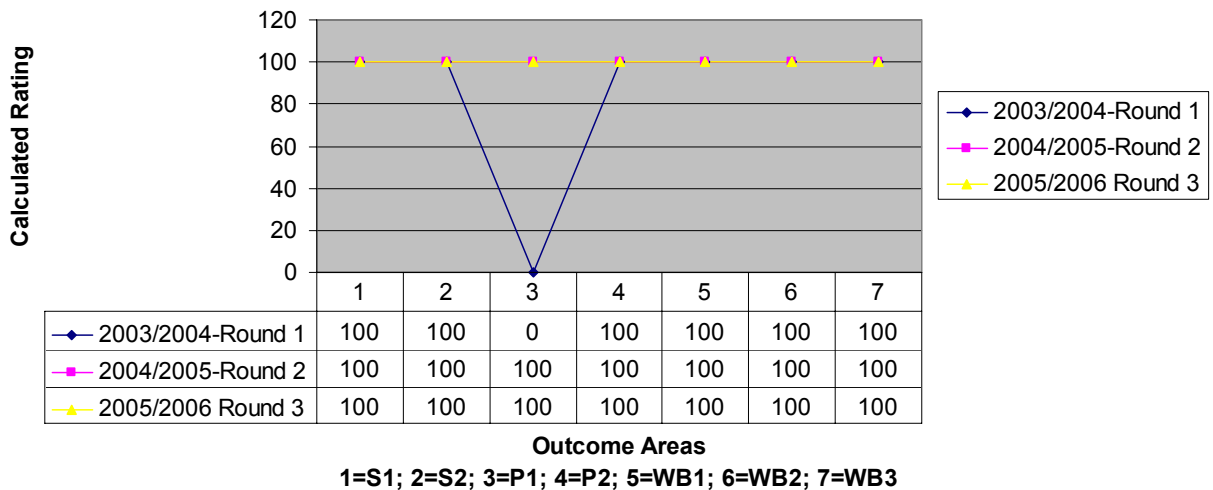
# Appendix A



### Safety, Permanency, Well-Being Category Outcome Comparison by Round - Torrington Child Protective Services

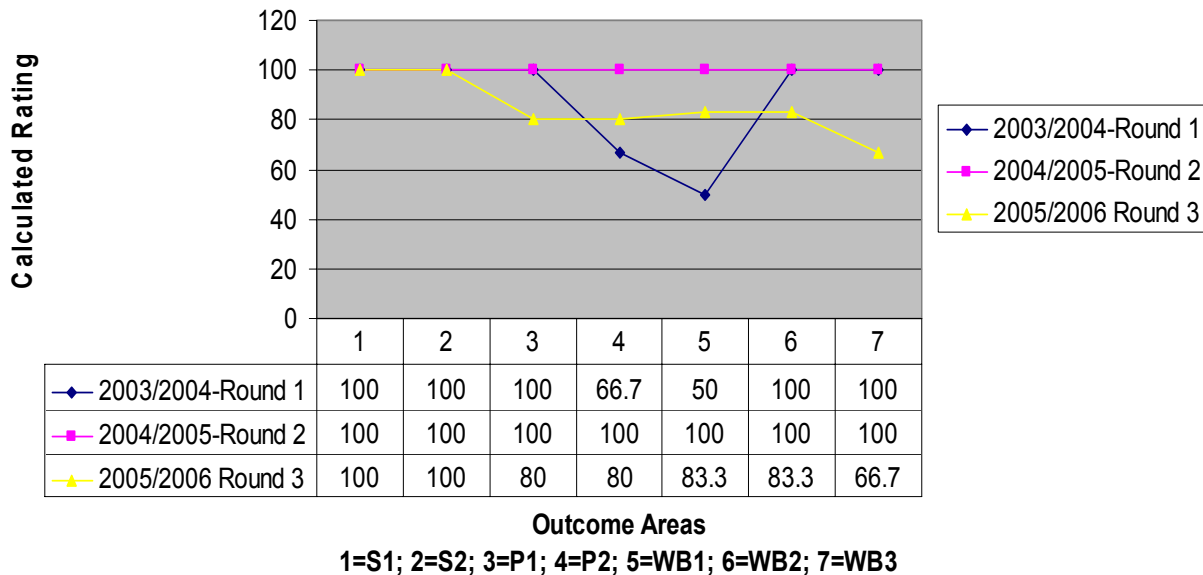


### Safety, Permanency, Well-Being Category Outcome Comparison by Round - Wheatland Child Protective Services

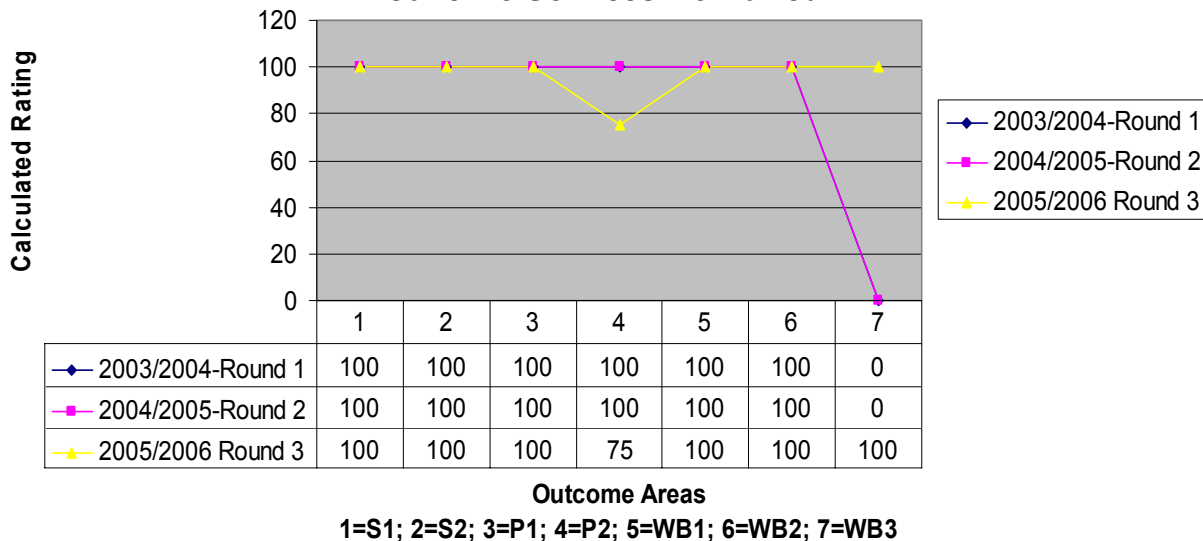


Gaps in graph and blanks in table indicate ratings of N/A, not 0%

### Safety, Permanency, Well-Being Category Outcome Comparison by Round - Torrington Child Protective Services and Juvenile Services Combined



### Safety, Permanency, Well-Being Category Outcome Comparison by Round - Wheatland Child Protective Services and Juvenile Services Combined



The graph above shows category comparisons in the areas of safety, permanency and well being. It is important to note that the 2002 graph line represents a state average, not a specific local office average. Wyoming Mini CFSR items are listed below for further clarification along with category explanations *highlighted in blue*. Individual item ratings contribute to the corresponding category rating in the review process.

Item 1 = Timeliness of investigation

Item 2 = Repeat Maltreatment

*S1 - Children are protected*

Item 3 = Services in home/prevent removal

Item 4 = Risk of harm to children

*S2 - Children are safely maintained at home*

Item 5 = Foster Care

Item 6 = Stability of foster care placement

Item 7 = Permanency goal for child

Item 8 = Reunification/Guardianship/Relative

Item 9 = Adoption

Item 10 = Other planned living

*P1 - Children are stable in placement*

Item 11 = Proximity of foster care placement

Item 12 = Placement with siblings

Item 13 = Visiting w/parents and siblings/fc

Item 14 = Preserving connections

Item 15 = Relative placement

Item 16 = Relationship of child w/parents

*P2 - Family relationships are preserved*

Item 17 = Needs/services

Item 18 = Child/family involvement in plan

Item 19 = Worker visits w/child

Item 20 = Worker visits w/parent(s)

*WB1 - Families can provide child's needs*

Item 21 = Educational needs of the child

*WB2 - Educational needs met*

Item 22 = Physical health of the child

Item 23 = Mental health of the child

*WB2-Physical and Mental health needs met*

For further definition explanations, the entire Wyoming Mini CFSR instrument is available for review and downloading at <http://www.wycrp.org/page9.html>.

## Appendix B

### Strengths

- No repeat maltreatment
- Quick investigations
- DFS worker created meaningful connections for child in community during the re-entry process
- Family empowerment and involvement in MDTs and planning was a strength; both mom and child felt involved
- Worker visits were strong with the child and parents
- Very strong case with good outcomes and family centered practice
- Comprehensive MDT meetings were held
- Caseworker did a great job, all involved respected her
- School counselor had great praise for juvenile services worker and recognized the good work while acknowledging her large case load
- Very respectful and appropriate
- Good networking
- Good work beyond what is in the file
- “When we call her, she does something”
- DFS took an advocate role in getting child out of NSI after he had been there for 18 months
- Mom was grateful to DFS because it had caused her to become more involved in her children’s lives
- Family partnership was held; family members were all involved
- Everyone involved said good things about Wheatland DFS
- Good relative placements in this area
- Mom couldn’t say enough good about the case worker and DFS
- Everyone came together to work this case
- Family very positive about case worker
- Lots of services provided between DFS and Casey Family Programs
- Case worker liked and respected
- Grandparents still commented to kids
- “That meeting” was good...ie Family Centered Partnership
- Child has mainstreamed in school
- Many positive comments on the case workers
- School worker has seen a very positive change in the Torrington DFS in the past year and has worked with DFS for many years
- Family was not overwhelmed with wrap around services
- Many services for mom were provided such as transportation and finding someone who could drive her as she did not have a license
- Numerous family partnerships
- Worker sees child and mother much more frequently than monthly
- Team approach to having child in school, however the school is resistant; school was not ready for child after three month notice because “they did not think that he would make it in a rehab home this long”

- Great community team approach
- Children are safe together
- Everyone praised the case worker
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### **Additional contributing factors**

- Father did not respond to DFS attempts to involve him
- Wyoming Boys School tries for behavior modification without medication before resorting to medication
- Strong transition from the Wyoming Boys School into the community
- Functional relatives not available for placement
- Counselors worked well with DFS and vice versa
- Judge is recognizing systemic barriers, calling meetings and trying to resolve them
- Dad feels that the kids are in a good place and that the system insured that
- School has been involved
- Child has not been in school since 6<sup>th</sup> grade
- Vague “black hole” of detention; difference between DFS’s good work and the work of others
- When child is in detention, pre adjudication, services cannot really be offered and DFS even though they have custody, cannot really visit with them about the issue
- Casey Family Programs helped advocate for the child with the school
- Grandparents still in good health and committed to kids
- Youth feels that she is in a good place
- Psychological was done by school and an IEP was done
- School is invested in this child and has tried to engage mom
- Child protection teams allow community partners to reach out to one another and collaborate for the benefit of children and families
- Child going through court ordered anger management
- Father chose not to be involved in the life of the child or any of the family partnership meetings; does pay child support and maintain insurance for the child
- Continuing doing the good job that you are doing; may be hard to maintain that level of commitment and service

### **Opportunities for improvement**

- Services not available
- Participation by parents and children
- At JDC 53 days waiting for a bed at the boy’s school
- Child expressed a concern that notifications were not given to him
- Follow through when caseworkers change
- The juvenile services case may have started out as a child protection case but just not recognized as such
- Mother wishes that she would have pushed for child to stay in NSI longer to get his degree so he would be employable
- More in patient treatment options needed in Wyoming

- Parenting classes may be needed
- No formal case plan for period under review
- No formal health screening done when entering JDC
- No formal case plan
- Get peer providers on the same page

## **Systemic barriers**

- Lack of resources in the community for the child
- Distance and transportation barriers
- Psychological evaluation was done, however a copy was not in the file and provider did not have one either
- Lack of local resources in area
- Intensive outpatient treatment for substance abuse was not available locally
- Everyone except the principal felt the child was set up to fail in school; and given that, he did!
- School district was extremely inflexible working with child
- Principal did not include DFS worker at all; wrote letters directly to the county attorney
- Principal had it out for the kid
- No psychiatrist in the community
- Took county attorney 6.5 months to determine whether to try child as an adult or child; no education, no case planning
- Very difficult to converse with bio dad in prison for child; mother was deceased
- Children often languish when in “detention;” DFS cannot really offer services
- Money, or the lack of in a county, often drives what happens to children
- Adoption is often not considered because once the adoption is finalized, services often times cease
- Substance abuse treatment not available (creates visitation obstacles)
- Waiting lists for treatment
- Incarcerated parents creates visitation obstacles with regards to bonding with children, etc
- Juvenile detention issues:
  - Education
  - Visitation
  - No DFS control without adjudication
  - No ability to do casework
  - Mental Health
  - Placement and custody without adjudication
  - Funding issues
  - Delayed adjudication
- Delayed adjudications
  - Delays effective casework
- Juveniles on adult probation placed in juvenile facilities
- Limited counseling resources

- Length of time to get psych evaluation
- Adults (ie 18 year olds) on juvenile petitions
- Guernsey school has a limited response to juveniles with disabilities
- Communication with adult probation when parents on probation
- Limited services resources in rural settings (TFC) substance abuse treatment not available locally

The preceding are comments captured from verbal and written sources during and after the review. They are provided for informational purposes only and do not necessarily reflect the opinions of the Wyoming Citizen Review Panel.

### **Review process dynamics and comments:**

- Citizen reviewers in this review consisted of:
  - DFS Director
  - DFS Faith Based Administrator
  - DFS Public Information Officer
  - NOWCAP Director
  - Goshen County Youth Alternatives Director
  - St. Joseph's Children's Home Residential Director
  - Torrington Learning Center Coordinator
  - Goshen County Educator
  - Casey Family Transitions Specialist
- Question 4; computer questionnaire version, will not allow the "no" to be entered.
- The period under review was July 1, 2005 through December 31, 2005.
- All cases were randomly selected and consent was given by the appropriate party for each case reviewed.
- Training was held for reviewers on September 20, 2006.
- The review instrument that is used looks at 23 specific items in the broad outcome areas of safety, permanency and well-being. The review instrument can be viewed and/or downloaded at <http://wycrp.org>.

### **District and regional goals:**

- More emphasis searching for absent biologic parent
- Hire MDT coordinator (juvenile services)
- Continue to increase family partnerships
- Invite Lusk generic worker to JS staff meetings
- JS does not have access or control of foster homes
- JS foster care coordinator
- Maybe open up therapeutic foster care to other providers and encourage therapeutic homes providers to develop programs

### **Big picture issues:**

- Can district 8 MDT's meet requirements for family partnerships?
- Coordination for supervisor and generic worker in Pinedale and Lusk

- Working generic cases
- (APS, CPS, JS)
- Data entry coordinating (YFS, JS, CPS)
- Flexible funding for FPM recommendations
- Caseload distribution (especially JS cases)
- FCS contract outside Cheyenne is used because of funding
- School system not buying into family centered practice
- Look for ways to engage school personnel in training
- DOC will not come to MDTs or family partnerships