



**2010**  
**ANNUAL**  
**REPORT**

**Wyoming Citizen Review Panel**

## A MAP FOR AN ANNUAL REPORT?

**T**HE WYOMING DEPARTMENT OF FAMILY SERVICES ADMINISTRATION HAS CHANGED AND IT appears the new administration is mapping a vision for child welfare services in Wyoming; we wish to suggest some systemic recommendations for that map. The Wyoming Citizen Review Panel is using this forum, our 2010 Annual Report, to republish some of the issues, both unique to the Wyoming Department of Family Services and systemic in nature, that have been identified in recent years. To succinctly relay to the Wyoming Department of Family Services and Wyoming Legislature that all roads should be consistent wherever services are accessed in Wyoming, we have published our recommendations in this graphic fashion.

- ❖ We at the Wyoming Citizen Review Panel are also taking this time to re map our mission and vision as well.
- ❖ We have opened a provisional chapter of Prevent Child Abuse Wyoming and are closely aligning it with the Wyoming Child Major Injury and Fatality Review team so that review findings can be used to influence early prevention efforts across the state.
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- ❖ Wyoming Kinship Advocacy will share roadways with the Wyoming Citizen Review Panel and work with other collaborators to keep children safely out of the system and with kinship providers when appropriate.
- ❖ Creating a strong alumni voice across Wyoming is another destination for the Wyoming Citizen Review Panel through Wyoming Advocacy for Youth.

These are exciting times for children and families across Wyoming and we encourage you to get involved.

Visit us at [www.wycrp.org](http://www.wycrp.org) or call us at 1-855-632-0032

### ALLISON ANDERSON

**A**LLISON (ALLI) ANDERSON BEGAN AS THE PROGRAM COORDINATOR for the Wyoming Citizen Review Panel in late 2010. When the roadway opened for her to consider moving to Prevent Child Abuse Wyoming, she quickly made that trip and transitioned to program manager for Prevent Child Abuse Wyoming. She has a passion for the safety of children and is hoping to make a prevention impact working for the Wyoming Citizen Review Panel. In addition to Prevent Child Abuse Wyoming, she manages the Child Major Injury and Fatality Review Team. Alli plans to bring some fresh ideas and management to these two programs that will influence early, primary maltreatment prevention efforts in Wyoming. With a degree in design, Alli also hopes to bring a creative impact to the new Prevent Child Abuse Wyoming chapter making it user friendly, and collaborative. Alli was born in Thermopolis, Wyoming and raised in southeast Wyoming most of her life. She is a 2008 graduate of the University of Wyoming and lives in Cheyenne with her husband Ryan. Contact Alli at [aanderson@wycrp.org](mailto:aanderson@wycrp.org) or 307-637-8622



### MIGUEL REYES

**T**HROUGH THE EMPLOYMENT OF MIGUEL REYES, THE WYOMING Citizen Review Panel is working to create a roadway in Wyoming for alumni of foster care, and those still in foster care, to have a voice in Wyoming. Miguel was born in Mexico into poverty and made a decision at a very young age that he wanted to be successful and give back to those that cared for him growing up, particularly Casey Family Programs. Miguel came to the United States when he was eight years of age and placed in foster care. While Miguel was in foster care he experienced both the good and the bad; being placed with families that truly loved him and wanted what was best for him, and being placed with families that were foster parents for all the wrong reasons. Miguel doesn't think that the system failed him; he feels it did exactly what it was supposed to do in placing him with a "replacement family." Now employed by the Wyoming Citizen Review Panel, Miguel is making it his personal mission and that of Wyoming Advocates for Youth to better the system for youth and foster parents. Miguel is married to his childhood sweetheart Amy. Contact Miguel at [mreyes@wycrp.org](mailto:mreyes@wycrp.org) or 307-632-0032.





## Prevent Child Abuse Wyoming

a provisional chapter of Prevent Child Abuse America

**T**HE WYOMING CITIZEN REVIEW PANEL, WITH SUPPORT FROM THE WYOMING CHILDREN'S Trust Fund and United Way of Laramie County, has opened a provisional Prevent Child Abuse America Chapter.

"I was deeply gratified to see the Wyoming Children's Trust Fund and United Way of Laramie County reconfirm their historic commitments to primary prevention, especially the prevention of child abuse by providing the basic financial support to revive the Wyoming chapter of Prevent Child Abuse America. I believe having the program located at the Wyoming Citizen Review Panel will enable Prevent Child Abuse Wyoming to provide the statewide prevention focus that is so critical to both keeping children safe and effectively reducing the trauma and cost that occurs when children must enter the protective services system." — Rose Kor

The Prevent Child Abuse Wyoming provisional chapter now operates as a program of the Wyoming Citizen Review Panel using the findings from the review of child welfare services in Wyoming to effect early child maltreatment prevention across the state.

In the first year of operation, Prevent Child Abuse Wyoming will focus on developing its A.C.E. model based on the concepts of Awareness, Coordination, and Education. The chapter will strive to have a presence in as many counties as possible by year-end and get a solid fundraising effort in place.

Visit Prevent Child Abuse Wyoming at [www.pcawy.org](http://www.pcawy.org) or call 307-637-8622.



## SYSTEMS & YOU NETWORKING & COLLABORATING

**S**OME SIGNIFICANT FINDINGS EMERGED IN 2010 THROUGH THE SYNC REVIEW PROCESS. They include in part:

- ❖ A significant dollar savings to society is realized through the use of court supervised treatment programs as opposed to incarcerating offenders. In addition, thousands of hours of community service have been provided by clients of these programs.
- ❖ Willingness by many to take on the most difficult cases, sometimes felony level, and work with the program participant(s) for as long as necessary within state statutes for success.
- ❖ Repeated findings of substance abuse beginning at a very early age in Wyoming for many (7 - 9), and often times at the hands of a parent or relative.
- ❖ A much shorter wait period for both court supervised treatment programs and community mental health centers services. Several mental health centers have adopted a "walk in model" where clients have immediate access to services. Wait times for bed space in residential treatment continue to be lengthy in many cases.
- ❖ Improvement in the time that Addiction Severity Index results are available.
- ❖ A marked shift to include holistic components in treatment options.
- ❖ A need to focus on the successes of treatment programs in Wyoming at the community level.
- ❖ Quality of life funds are essential for basic survival needs for many involved in treatment.
- ❖ A willingness by many of the judges involved in court supervised treatment programs to see the advantage of positive reinforcement. As one judge phrased it: "Only when you raise a client up do they have a reason not to fall back down again."
- ❖ Good coordination between the court supervised treatment programs and the Wyoming Department of Family Services Economic Assistance Programs.
- ❖ Success seems to be acknowledged and celebrated appropriately and consistently with clients, yet the reality of treatment and recovery is appropriately present in the proceedings and interactions.
- ❖ A lack of understanding still exists across the state how to voluntarily access mental health and/or substance abuse treatment services if not through a court in some fashion.

SYNC reports are located on the Wyoming Citizen Review Panel web page at [www.wycrp.org](http://www.wycrp.org).

## Wyoming CHILD MAJOR INJURY AND FATALITY REVIEW TEAM

**D**URING 2010, SIX MAJOR INJURY CASES WERE REVIEWED; NO FATALITY CASES WERE presented for review. Some of the major findings and recommendations for 2010 include:

- ❖ Wyoming should consider legislation allowing for the filing of aiding and abetting charges in child abuse or child neglect cases.
- ❖ Increased monitoring of "at risk" situations could keep children safer.
- ❖ Clear and concise information to the courts regarding prior incidents of child abuse and/or child neglect is necessary in Wyoming.
- ❖ A central intake system is needed in Wyoming for greater consistency and service.
- ❖ Law enforcement and the Department of Family Services need to coordinate and exchange information more consistently and more proactively.
- ❖ Better case documentation on the part of the Department of Family Services is needed.
- ❖ Greater credence to the information that foster parents are able to share with child welfare officials and the court system.
- ❖ Consideration of mandatory intervention for at risk families after years of repeated reports of incidents of child abuse and/or child neglect.
- ❖ Concurrent case planning is still not consistent across the state and when done, it is often vague.
- ❖ Risk assessments, and safety assessments need to be consistently done; they also need to be recognized in Wyoming as two distinct and separate assessments. A risk assessment does not constitute a safety assessment and vice versa.
- ❖ Greater coordination between child protection teams around the state would help publicize systemic issues that need addressed.
- ❖ In child abuse cases, law enforcement officers should arrest on probable cause; too often a case report is compiled and sent to the prosecuting attorney for the jurisdiction while the child remains in danger.
- ❖ Often boyfriends in situations simply leave the area where a child abuse case they are involved in exists and substantiation against them does not occur.
- ❖ Neglect cases are not always investigated as thoroughly as necessary; often times the prosecuting attorney is never given the information on the matter for consideration of charges.
- ❖ When counseling is ordered by the court, it is often not followed thru with by the perpetrator; the court does not always monitor compliance and no consequences result.



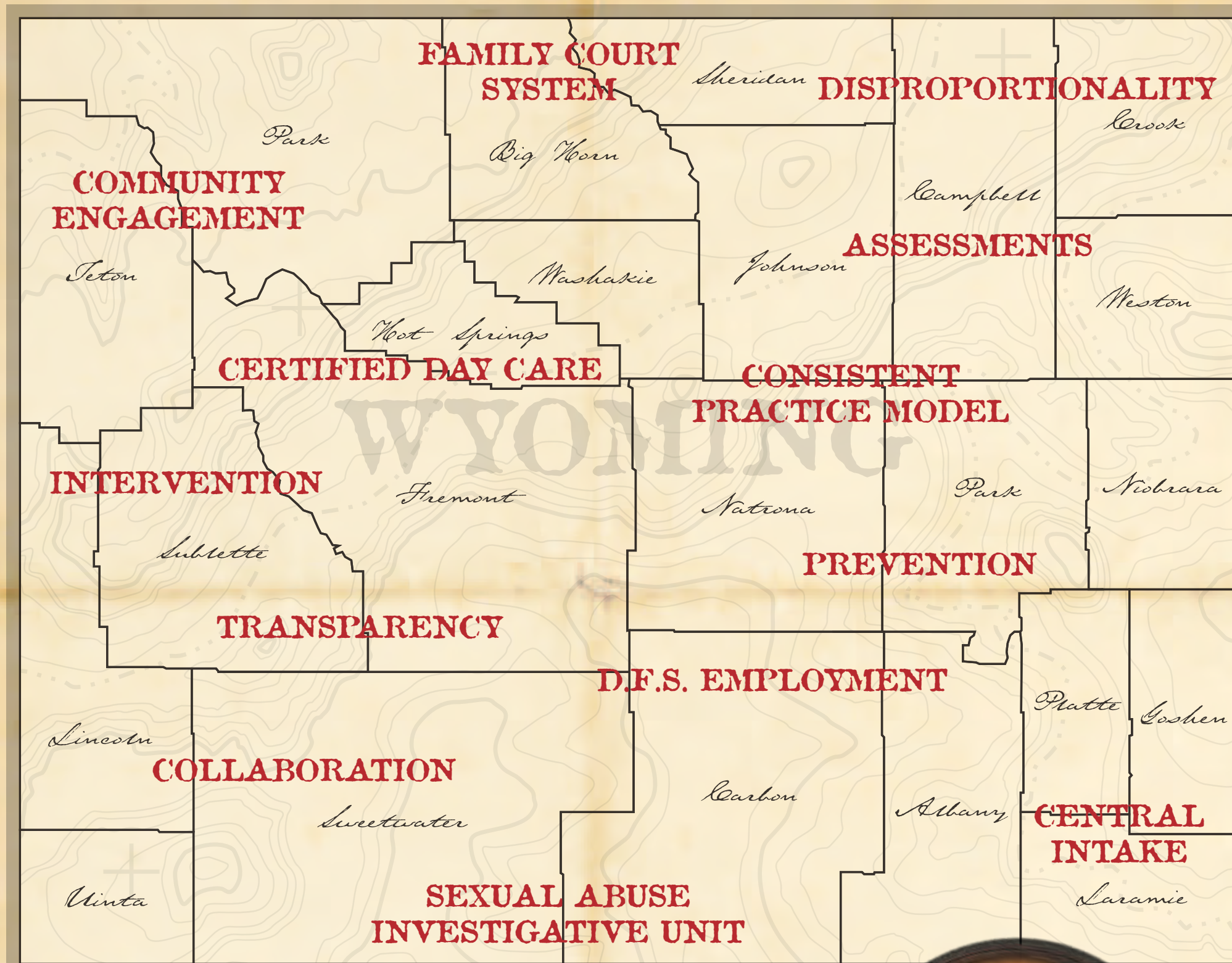
**I**N LATE 2010 WYOMING KINSHIP ADVOCACY JOINED THE WYOMING CITIZEN REVIEW PANEL.

"Looking to the future and envisioning what a kinship care organization can look like has become a reality. With help from the Wyoming Citizen Review Panel and community partners we are creating a new face for Wyoming Kinship Advocacy. We have been given the opportunity to continue to serve and support families for the good and moral well-being of our children" — Alice Carter

Providing children with safe and permanent homes with kin is not a new concept but it has a long and proven roadway of being a successful and safe way to raise children. Through Wyoming Kinship Advocacy, families are provided with services necessary to raise children, while creating and insuring a safe environment for all family members. Many children are not able to return home and living with kin allows for permanency ties with family to be created or continued.

Services provided may include temporary guardianship, parenting trainings, support groups, or just an ear to listen when times get stressful. This is an organization that has already helped over 400 families and over 800 kids in Wyoming.

For more information about Wyoming Kinship Advocacy, contact Alice Carter at [acarter@wycrp.org](mailto:acarter@wycrp.org) or (307) 632-1591.



— MAP KEY —

**ASSESSMENTS** — There is a difference between current safety concerns, and future risk, for children. These two roadways are too frequently “lumped” together and through practice at the worker level need to be assessed and dealt with separately.

**CENTRAL INTAKE** — It has been talked about, and planned for, but never implemented. Central intake is not something that is going to take a new building and millions of dollars. It can start as simple as a phone number, some training, and a few dedicated workers and grow from there. Now is the time to get this done!

**CERTIFIED DAY CARE** — There are those in Wyoming who wish to eliminate or severely reduce the requirements for certified day care facilities in Wyoming; seriously? Rather than spending time going down that road, we need to see what is right with the program and enhance them.

**COLLABORATION** — In most instances, it can probably be said that: “collaboration could be improved” for more effective services. But what we have found through our SYNC review process is that collaboration between agencies and organizations and the Wyoming Department of Family Services is generally a one way street. Typically a mental health center or other entity will reach out to the Department of Family Services, but seldom is that collaboration initiated locally by the Department of Family Services. We suspect that is in part due to past direction from protective services administration; there is a strong desire by many in communities across Wyoming for two way collaboration.

**COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT** — “What can I do for you today? or “It has been a pleasure to serve you.” We suggest Wyoming Department of Family Service workers adopt this attitude, for one year, and see if services improve, or at least their perception. And we are willing to go on record that if workers approached others with a smile and this attitude, they themselves would feel better. Foster parents, providers and those that the Department of Family Services serves should be empowered and respected; it could all start with a smile and warm greeting.

**CONSISTENT PRACTICE MODEL** — The Department of Family Services can be even more effective through greater consistency across the state. Case workers visits, while much improved, should be consistent and frequent; heritage, culture and other related factors should be honored and preserved for children in foster care; a document should move with children in care that details important information. Foster parents have valuable information about the children in their custody and should be engaged. Concurrent case planning should be consistent across the state. Family partnerships started in Wyoming a few years ago, but seem to have fizzled out. In short, the Department of Family Services needs to create, adopt and adhere to a consistent practice model; a model that is concise, inclusive but common sense based on best practices and not something that fills a five inch binder that workers do not understand and cannot possibly adhere to consistently.

**EMPLOYMENT WITH THE WYOMING DEPARTMENT OF FAMILY SERVICES** — What would be the current answer if someone asked the question: “Why would I want to work for the Department of Family Services?” Would that answer include

opportunities for advancement, training and case loads of reasonable size? Would it include an attitude of feeling good about the interaction you as a worker had with others both internal and external to the department? How about programs which assist with worker physical health and mental health? It is time to study how Department of Family Service workers are cared for in Wyoming and then create a program that cares for those that we expect to care for others.

**DISPROPORTIONATELY** — Through other review processes across the state, the Wyoming Citizen Review Panel has documented a higher number of children of color in different systems, some related closely to the Wyoming Department of Family Services. We strongly encourage that the Wyoming Department of Family Services and other related agencies review this and determine where they are at, ending disproportionality and do what needs to be done to end this practice in Wyoming.

**FAMILY COURT SYSTEM** — Juvenile justice, thanks in large part to Judge Gary Hartman, has taken tremendous strides forward in Wyoming to come into the current century. However much needs to be done and it is time that the Wyoming Judicial System and the Wyoming Legislature seriously discuss implementing a true family court system in Wyoming. It simply cannot be that difficult in a state of a ½ million people.

**INTERVENTION** — No matter how good the system, statistics show that children prosper when not in the system but rather with kinship care providers. Investing in intervention efforts, that involve kinship care and mentoring, is truly an investment that makes sense for Wyoming.

**PREVENTION** — Wyoming has valued prevention in the past and is again through Prevent Child Abuse Wyoming. Prevent Child Abuse Wyoming must reach out to providers both in the private and public sectors across the state to instill early, effective prevention efforts in every community in the state. What will really make Prevent Child Abuse Wyoming effective are partnerships with the Wyoming Department of Family Services and their case prevention track; the third track in the “dual track” system that has defied explanation for years.

**SEXUAL ABUSE INVESTIGATIVE UNIT** — Worthy of consideration is the creation of a sexual abuse investigative unit within the Wyoming Department of Family Services. None of us want to believe that any child is every sexually abused in Wyoming, however we know that is not true. And if not handled properly in the investigative stage, so much more damage can be done to the victim(s). While not practical to have in every Department of Family Services office throughout the state, possibly one or two response teams across the state would be a worthy investment.

**TRANSPARENCY** — We encourage the Department of Family Services to define what transparency looks like in a child welfare system, map it, and then take steps to move towards that goal involving outside entities. This also includes sharing positive information and opportunities for improvement internally and externally. It involves capturing the story behind the data compiled by the somewhat hidden quality assurance unit through a review process that involves citizens and customers. The Department of Family Services made significant advancement towards transparency and then slipped backwards rapidly in recent years through a quality assurance program that seems to have little if any public interaction. It is time to make a u turn on that road and head the other way.



— MISSION —

“To review procedures throughout the state, offering summaries and recommendations for improvements benefiting children and families.”



**Wyoming Citizen  
Review Panel**

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