

2009 Annual Report - Executive Summary

Includes Recommendations

During this reporting period, the Wyoming Citizen Review Panel hosted the National Citizen Review Panel conference and broadened their perspective of influence for Wyoming children and families. Through reviews and collaborative efforts, a summary of systemic recommendations includes:

- Conversations occurring between state agencies and within communities about social service delivery must continue after the 2010 election.
- Changes made after the 2010 election must be based on data and best practices; what, and who, is working should continue.
- Information outside of state government exists about service delivery in Wyoming; that information should be considered by decision makers.

74 SYNC¹ reviews have been completed in Wyoming; 70 of those have been done collaborating with the Wyoming Department of Health and court supervised treatment programs. These programs are saving lives in Wyoming and provide an incredible return on invested treatment dollars. The Wyoming Citizen Review Panel encourages refinement of the current funding system for these programs and recommends that more of them be developed in Wyoming. Publically funded mental health centers in Wyoming use funding that is provided in part by Wyoming citizens; the services they provide need to be timely, effective and consider the desires and goals of their clients. The Wyoming Citizen Review Panel found that it is difficult to receive mental health or substance abuse treatment services in Wyoming unless the judicial system is involved. A summary of recommendations and issues that need addressed from the SYNC review process includes:

- Publically funded mental health centers are often not timely and willing collaborators in the service deliver network unless through a contractual arrangement.
- Mental health center clients must have input into the services they receive.
- Often it takes an escalation in behavior, and the judicial system becoming involved, before services can be accessed.
- In some instances, the Alcohol Severity Index (ASI) can be done effectively within hours; in other instances it can take months.
- Treatment services for dual diagnosis patients are lacking in Wyoming.
- The funding formula for court supervised treatment programs seems on the surface to be somewhat unbalanced.
- The data system for court supervised treatment programs seems to be cumbersome and of little use for generating meaningful reports.
- A window of opportunity exists for clients to willingly receive services after their contact with the system; sometimes this window is lost due to clients not being able to self-admit to substance abuse problems in order to receive certain services.

¹ SYNC stands for Systems and You Networking and Collaborating. This instrument along with review findings can be viewed at: <http://wycrp.org/page5.html>. 70 of the 74 SYNC reviews are specific to court supervised treatment programs.

- Consistent collaboration must be a priority when working with the Northern Arapaho and Eastern Shoshone Tribes.
- Additional Alcoholic Anonymous groups are needed for juveniles in Wyoming.
- Specialized counseling for juveniles is needed in many areas of the state.
- Greater dispensing accountability for prescription medications is needed for those treatment cases involving abusers.
- Wyoming needs more juvenile and family court supervised treatment programs.

The Wyoming Department of Family Services (DFS) and the Wyoming Citizen Review Panel are ready to embark on a new initiative called Mini Program Improvement Plans to bring the data back to the communities and implement local change. This process uses data that has been accumulated from Federal Child and Family Services Reviews and Wyoming Child and Family Service Reviews to implement change locally with a priority on safety outcomes. Additionally, the Wyoming Department of Family Services is recognized for creating clear and concise goals in their protective services unit along with formalizing and staffing a quality assurance unit. Central intake and the replacement of WYCAPS² are two initiatives the Wyoming Citizen Review Panel endorses. Summary recommendations are:

- Safety should continue to be a priority of DFS.
- DFS should remain open minded to community input and be reflective and transparent.
- The Wyoming Legislature should fund the replacement of WYCAPS.
- The Mini PIP process is a conceptually sound way to implement change locally to the greatest extent possible while recognizing the good work that is already occurring.
- A central intake system should be funded by the Wyoming Legislature.
- A calculated return of the Mini CFSR process should be planned for by DFS. The Wyoming Citizen Review Panel, through the SYNC review process, is hearing some return to trends that the Mini CFSR process helped minimize. Two of these are:
 - Phone calls are not returned timely or at all in an alarming number of instances, and
 - home visits are often not occurring at the frequency families and children need them.

Communities are having needed discussions regarding continuum of care for juvenile justice thanks to the community juvenile service boards. This initiative has resulted in 14 counties applying for funding for such things as diversion programs. Additionally, the Eastern Shoshone Tribe and Northern Arapaho Tribe each applied to fund initiatives such as mentoring and drug court service enhancements. The Wyoming Citizen Review Panel recommends:

- Conversations which "bridge the gap" between child protective services and juveniles services should continue.
- The juvenile justice board initiative and related activities need to be well funded.
- The Northern Arapaho Tribe and Eastern Shoshone Tribe should be given the consideration of being separate cultures.

²WYCAPS stands for Wyoming Children's Assistance and Protection System which is the Wyoming Department of Family Services computerized case management system.

- Any document produced by the state for local communities to apply for funding should be concise, non repetitive and afford smaller communities the opportunity to complete.
- The two words, "juvenile" and "detention" need to continue to be discussed and appropriate standards created. Detention for low-risk youth does not produce meaningful results.
- Organizations outside of state government are often the best to study and report on trends; state government leaders should honor and use their work.
- Wyoming needs a family court.

The Wyoming Child Major Injury and Fatality Review Team makes a number of recommendations from their case reviews during this reporting period.

- In 2009, DFS documented ten child major injuries; two resulted in death. Wyoming needs a statutorily created and well defined child major injury and child fatality review process to review all child major injuries and child fatalities.
- Improved internal communications between DFS county offices remains a need.
- Guardian Ad Litem (GALs) need training to forensically work with children and families.
- A systemic need exists for state agencies to collaborate with local law enforcement.
- Participation by the Wyoming Department of Corrections, Probation and Parole with child protection team meetings would be beneficial.
- Statutes to allow for stronger sentencing in cases that occur between aggravated assault and attempted murder would be beneficial.
- Stiffer penalties for convictions of aggravated assault on juveniles could serve as a greater deterrent.
- Any dealings with children and families need to be family centered.
- The correct assessment needs to be done in all cases.
- Efforts to engage the general public in reporting suspected child abuse and neglect is needed in Wyoming.
- Interviews with mothers should occur without her partner present.
- Communities, possibly through child protection teams, should formulate memorandums of understanding between collaborative agencies and organizations to share information.
- Psychological evaluation requests need to be exact and specific.
- Centralized child abuse reporting through a toll free number is needed in Wyoming.
- Prenatal services, such as parenting classes, should aggressively be offered to at risk parents.
- Greater information dissemination regarding licensed day care providers is needed.
- Placements at residential treatment centers need to be reviewed for appropriateness and effectiveness regularly.
- Children would benefit from day care providers having more training in the areas of child abuse and child neglect.
- Medical personnel need to immediately involve law enforcement when child abuse or child neglect could be a possibility.