

**December 12 and 13, 2007 Mini CFSR Report
Rock Springs Department of Family Services (DFS) – D10R2**

Three strongest review areas:

- Well Being 2 (WB2) - 100% (*consistent all four rounds*);
- Safety 2 (S2) - 80% (*lower this time because of one case, but consistently strong*), and
- tie for third:
 - Well Being 3 (WB3) - 66.7
 - Permanency 2 (P2) - 66.7 (*overall improvement, but one case, one item, sibling in foster care in another state that needed to be connected with children in placement in Wyoming*).

Greatest strengths from stakeholder interviews:

- Juvenile welfare stakeholders in Rock Springs are poised to begin a collaborative effort that will provide better services for children and families in the future; it is important that DFS be prepared to be a part of this movement.

Three review challenge area(s):

- Permanency 1 (P1) - 33.3% (*timeliness of permanency goal for child in two cases*) and (*stability of foster care placement*). (*Outcome is consistently low for this office*).
- Safety 1 (S1) - 50% (*one case influencing this one*). (*Consistently improving over all*).
- Well Being 1 (WB1) - 60% (*item 17-parents and children assessments and item 20 case worker visits with the parents*).

Issues for DFS administrative level consideration:

- Policy on advocacy for foreign national clients who are not United States Citizens;
- being able to provide documents in other languages so foreign nationals have a clear understanding of what they are signing;
- compensation for workers who are able to provide translation services, these multilingual folks spend a great deal of their personal time providing translation services for DFS;
- training dollars are not available to learn a foreign language or other needed training that does not "fit" the social work mold;
- inconsistent implementation around the dual (or three???) track case assignments;
- **clarity on how to handle third party sexual abuse allegations consistently**;
- without the new case plans being in the computer, it is hard to remember when to do a new one;
- phone contact policy from WGS and WBS to family is very limited and it cuts them off from family;
- drop box, instead of one pick for face to faces; be able to pick multiple items in WYCAPS as often times multiple people are seen during one visit;
- juvenile services caseloads are high; supervisor carries a caseload;
- caseworker turnover, and
- children at JCW treatment have to call their family collect.

Issues requiring local DFS office attention:

- The perception of DFS in the community may be enhanced through greater collaboration and communication with other stakeholders in the area.

Case Ratings:

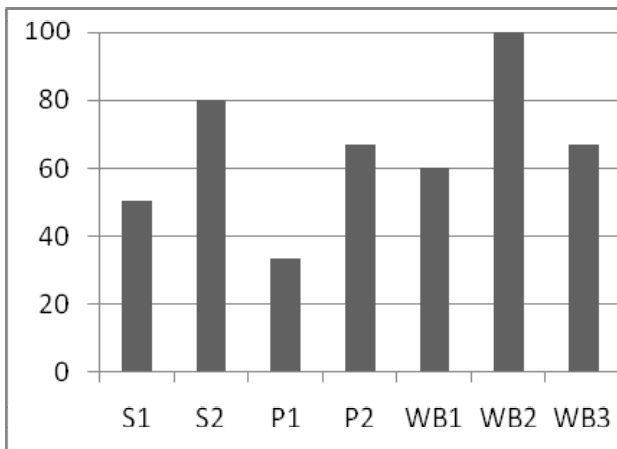
#D10465 - Three areas needing improvement: Item 7 - Permanency goal for child; Item 13 - Visiting with parents and siblings in foster care and Item 19 - Worker visits with child. (**Youth has no community connections**)

#D10466 - One area needing improvement: Item 7 - Permanency goal for child. (**Mother's whereabouts were unknown which slowed down the case progress**)

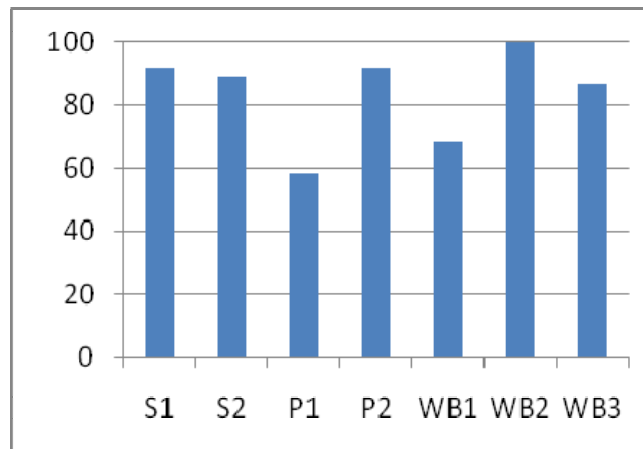
#D10467 - Two areas needing improvement: Item 6 - Stability of foster care placement and Item 22 - Physical health of the child. (**Parents investment in the case made the difference**)

#R2468 - One area needing improvement: Item 17 - Needs and services of child, parents, foster parents (overall rating).¹ (**Courage of family to come forward for services despite not having United States citizenship**)

#R2469 - Eight areas needing improvement: Item 1 - Timeliness of initiating investigations of reports of child 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 (overall rating)²; Item 18 Child and family involvement in case planning; Item 19 - Worker visits with child; Item 20 - Worker visits with parent(s) and Item 23 - Mental health of the child. (**The ability of the caseworker and supervisor to engage the family was very beneficial**)



The graph above shows the percentage composite scores of this Mini CFSR review in round iv.



The graph above shows the percentage composite scores of the first three rounds of Mini CFSRs.

¹ Item 17a Rating for child(ren) rated as an area needing improvement.

² Item 17a Rating for child(ren) rated as an area needing improvement and Item 17b Rating for the parents.

Strengths:

- Education:
 - “Power School; every parent and child has a login on a web account to monitor their children’s grades and other school services,” and
 - “child’s grades and school attendance improved once DFS became involved.”
- Effective case planning and work:
 - “Lots of assessment cases where DFS would try and provide a number of services;”
 - “case plan done very quickly;”
 - “assessments completed in a very timely fashion;”
 - “DFS intern was asked to do a comprehensive home study for children in relative foster care;”
 - “Guardian Ad Litem (GAL) was asked to do a home visit in order to advocate to the court for the children;”
 - “Interstate Compact on the Placement of Children (ICPC) process initiated quickly for children;”
 - “mother feels that DFS is very supportive of her and has made a significant difference in her life;”
 - “case plan occurred the same day as the child was brought to DFS in a delinquency case;”
 - “needs of the other children in the home in a delinquency/in home services case were assessed;”
 - “great “front loading” of caseworker visits with the child and then they were reduced as the child did better in a delinquency case;”
 - “visits with both parents and child were substantive;”
 - “case work was very well tailored to a Hispanic family;”
 - “involving biologic father was culturally inappropriate in the Hispanic culture and DFS recognized this and honored it;”
 - “consistent message was provided to the parents and child by DFS, the school, the GAL and others involved in the case;”
 - “case started before baby was even born; DFS and hospital worked in harmony to see to it that the child was taken into protective custody immediately upon being born as mother was schizophrenic;”
 - “DFS worked well with authorities in California;”
 - “good worker visits with the child;”
 - “great documentation of medical records in case file;”
 - “good diligent searches for child’s relatives;”
 - “family felt they had good relationship with probation officer and supervisor;”
 - “child remained in one foster home and will be adopted by that family,” and
 - “DFS use of language translation services is used making case planning much more effective.”
- Effective use of service array:
 - “When a multitude of services were provided, family did much better;”
 - “good mental health and substance abuse screenings;”
 - “anger management classes were very beneficial to the success of the case;”
 - “child development screening was used in the case,” and
 - “good ongoing child development screenings occurring in this case.”
- Family Involvement and Support:
 - “Both mother and father really worked their case plans to get a handle on their substance abuse issues;”
 - “great commitment to their children of mother and father in a child protective case;”
 - “mother is going to college and working towards her degree;”
 - “mother took child to DFS for help as he was engaging in delinquent behavior and she did not know what to do; DFS was able to provide good services through a CHINS,” and

- “mother is engaged and appreciative of DFS services.”
- Legal
 - “Drug court was a great benefit to the case;”
 - “GAL in a specific case has child deny the allegations at the initial CHINS to “buy time” from the court so that the child can decide whether they want to “get on board” or not; court has a tendency to favor out of home treatment at JCW in Cheyenne,” and
 - “court allowed child to go to a foster family in Riverton; this is unusual for this court but was a great benefit in this case.”

Opportunities for improvement:

- Case planning and work:
 - “Ansell Casey noted some deficits but those deficits were not followed through with; child was not a U.S. citizen so it was unsure if he would qualify for those services;”
 - “better case documentation involving other children in the home in a delinquency, in-home services cases;”
 - “better communication between child protective services (CPS) and juvenile services (JS);”
 - “family partnership would have been useful and opportunity presented itself early in the case;”
 - “engagement of families is often restricted based on JS case loads;”
 - “case plan was created in 2/06 for reunification, case goal was changed to termination of parental rights (TPR) in 12/06 but a new case plan was not made 06/07,” and
 - “case plan was not completed in a timely manner (8 month lapse with changes in placements).”
- Family involvement and support:
 - “Mother was not engaged; she is diagnosed as being mentally ill and rides the trucks going in any direction making any chance of relinquishment difficult; TPR being pursued, and
 - father was not engaged and would not cooperate with DFS on the child’s case plan.”
- Medical:
 - “No well being physical child check on child when the child entered care;”
 - “sexual perpetration counseling may have been useful for victim;”
 - “sexual identity issues were not assessed or support counseling explored,” and
 - “no documentation of continual physical assessments.”

Systemic Barriers:

- Education:
 - “Parents worked with JCW Treatment Center to try and get the child in treatment caught up in school, and the child was doing well in his studies; despite this, the child’s credits did not transfer back to main stream education. The parents then wanted to home school the child to try and get him caught up, but the court would not allow this and wanted him in school and participating in attendance court.”
- Regional Issues:
 - “Interstate Compact on the Placement of Children (ICPC) with Utah was slow;”
 - “distance to treatment options from Rock Springs is great; ie Wyoming Girls School,” and
 - “more after school activities could benefit children in this community.”
- Legal System
 - “Mother’s probation officer has created a no contact area between mother and father making it difficult for DFS to reunify the family;”
 - “the GAL in the case did not have any idea what was going on in the case; the GAL had not met or talked to the children; GAL will not go to Vernal, UT and see the children, he wants them to come to Rock Springs which is difficult since they are very young;”
 - “court appoints same attorney as the child’s attorney and as the GAL in many cases;”

- “follow thru by county attorney’s office with regards to TPR was poor; case started out at county attorney’s office where not much was done, went to the AG’s office where the case load was too high, and then was transferred back to the local county attorney’s office,” and
- “court may ensure greater success with delinquency cases if cases were approached in a strength based fashion.”

Additional contributing factors:

- “County probation becomes disengaged when DFS takes over the case causing some consistency issues.”

Review process dynamics and considerations:

- Citizen reviewers in this review consisted of:
 - WYCRP member and Independent Living Coordinator;
 - alumni;
 - alumni;
 - counselor, and
 - therapist.
- The period under review was October 1, 2006 through September 4, 2007.

Trend:

The Rock Springs child welfare system is beginning to recognize their collective weaknesses and is staged to move forward with new leadership at the county attorney’s office; district court and DFS need to become engaged, respectful of one another and move forward in a positive manner.

Training needs identified in this Mini CFSR

- Need better CORE training for new workers when they are first hired, not months later: **segments taught by alumni and foster parents would be very beneficial;**
- training regarding TPR for DFS staff as well as legal community including the court;
- training or policy clarification on when to do a new case plan; what is meaningful change requiring a new case plan;
- permanency goals; judicial determination (especially reasonable efforts), and
- more funding for training budget; currently has to come from local budget.
- Specific training needs:
 - Forensic interviews;
 - verbal judo;
 - mediation;
 - protection and advocacy;
 - Spanish, and
 - Excel.

Stakeholder identified promising practices:

- Community ready to step forward; proposing an interagency council which is permanency based; want to bring facilitator in for community meeting;
- Wyoming CLIMB seen as a benefit;
- county probation program seen as a benefit; coordination with DFS much improved;
- cases being front loaded, especially with pre-CHINS services;
- IFB (formerly MST) regarded as valuable program to provide services in the home;
- case plans are being written within thirty (30) days; permanency plans include some concurrent planning;
- good independent living services available in the community;
- good efforts to identify relative care for children who must be placed;
- parents are involved in case planning;
- family partnerships seen as a benefit, but used only by CPS;
- six month reviews are happening in court;
- new county attorney doing a good job;
- county probation and DFS Probation working much better together; DFS helps front-load probation cases and does all CHINS;
- children are kept within the community, siblings placed together and with relatives when possible (*exception exists with court*);
- lower caseloads; fewer youth going into placement (40% less from 1 year ago); more pre-CHINS services;
- foster care coordinator has made a big difference; complaints reduced and new foster homes being developed as well as plans for joint training with TFC and help to develop more TFC;
- good foster parents willing to help with transition home;
- children in care average more than once weekly visits with parents;
- MH provides all of drug treatment with a pretreatment group;
- therapeutic community - drug treatment for mothers with their young children;
- youth home system seen as a strength; culturally sensitive, and
- coordination and availability of caseworkers to providers is seen as a strength.

Stakeholder Identified Issues:

- Significant trust issues between DFS and the district court system exist;
- Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA) program is needed in the community;
- community resources are not adequate:
 - Affordable housing not available;
 - need for temporary or transitional housing;
 - daycare shortage;
 - large homeless population;
 - youth crisis facility being used as long term care, and
 - no residential treatment options in community for adolescents.
- Public perception that DFS caseloads are high and caseworkers overwhelmed; results in:
 - Children returning to bad situations; respondents to complaints don't know children.
 - Communication problems:
 - calls not returned, faxes lost;
 - lack of emotional commitment by caseworkers;
 - feel workers treat partners as a burden;
 - clients get bad information from DFS regarding available services;
 - very little exchange of information – community professionals provide information with no feed back from DFS, and
 - confidentiality used as excuse to not share information.
 - Some foster parents are discouraged and do not feel part of the team.
- CPT does not feel current or new cases brought to staff and what is brought to CPT does not have caseworker available during staffing:
 - No follow through on recommendations from CPT, and
 - just meeting the mandate and pretend to listen.
- JS Supervisor has to carry a caseload; lessens time for supervision.
- Foster care issues:
 - Foster parents not given timely notice of hearings and not included effectively;
 - no foster homes for teens;
 - lack of TFC homes;
 - visits with children not taking place in foster homes, and
 - suggestion to assign caseworkers to specific schools for constant resource.
- Case planning does not involve children except in very limited way in MDT.
- School issues:
 - School representatives attend MDT, not school personnel who work with the child.
 - Lack of cooperation between school and DFS:
 - DFS not included in IEP when agency has custody;
 - problems transferring credits from treatment to local school, and
 - DFS does not make good use of school counselors.
- Youth visits with family difficult when placed out of county; weak contact for youth and family when placed at Wyoming Boys School (WBS) or Wyoming Girls School (WGS); use some video conferencing to supplement visitation, and
- dental difficult to find for foster care children in Rock Springs.

Stakeholder Identified Issues (cont):

- Mental Health Issues:
 - IFB (formerly MST) now has only one staff providing services to only a few families; need is much greater; not much wrap around services available;
 - need more parenting classes, to include Spanish speaking parents;
 - clients seen only monthly due to large demand and lack of resources;
 - lack of services for very young children needing psychological services;
 - turnover at mental health center;
 - lack of mental health services (waiting list) with families and children being referred to Evanston for services;
 - using video conferencing to do family therapy when children or youth are placed at a distance;
 - state not adequately funding necessary mental health services;
 - need options for youth with heavy drug and/or alcohol addiction;
 - need substance abuse treatment options for father;
 - need adolescent day treatment options, and
 - no psychiatric services for children in the area; hospital not willing to serve.
- Court related:
 - High number of placements by the court;
 - jail issues:
 - long waits in detention center or in “juvenile wing” of county jail;
 - youth transported in handcuffs and chains, and
 - child of 8-9 years jailed for mental health reasons (ordered by court).
 - Youth taken off medications while in jail;
 - truancy court/school attendance court – juveniles sent to placement from here without parents being present;
 - judge wants MDT coordination run out of her office;
 - judge appoints attorney to be youth’s attorney as well as GAL; conflict of interest;
 - GAL sees child just before court only; no real communication;
 - frequent use of consent decrees which continue when violated;
 - 17 TPRs delayed due to service notices, some cases are 5-6 years old;
 - judge does not allow CPS case children in court;
 - judge hesitant to consider out of county relative placement; has improved over past situation;
 - judge does not embrace family centered practice;
 - trust issues between judge and DFS/CPS;
 - in chambers meetings prior to hearings with DFS excluded;
 - permanency hearings not getting done; “way outside federal guidelines;”
 - cancellation of court hearings at last minute without warning to parents who come from some distance;
 - high rate of court ordered placements out of the region, and
 - previously had monthly meetings to schedule hearings; no longer happening.



Program Improvement Plan

What is going on now? (Since the December Mini CFSR)

1. Sweetwater County Children's Justice Project has been formed:
 - MDT coordinator hired;
 - summit planned for July;
 - mental health coordination;
 - diversion program with county probation;
 - network more in the community;
 - initiating appointments with stakeholders and providers;
 - involvement with the United Way crime initiative;
 - supervisors provide additional policy training and on the case assignment tracks, and
 - monthly meetings with the county attorney's office.
2. Trying to achieve transparency in the child welfare system, and
3. Bringing providers into staff meetings.

Office determined strengths:

1. Having county manager position here is helpful;
2. diversity of strengths in staff to use in case assignment;
3. great communication and support between CPS and JS workers and benefit specialists (BS);
4. help and support from supervisors;
5. newer workers appreciate the willingness of seasoned workers to help them;
6. having two bilingual workers in the office have been helpful (*receive no compensation for this service*);
7. aides are a great strength with good communication with caseworkers; help whenever needed;
8. stable staffing;
9. less on call hours;
10. teamwork;
11. dedicated workers who care about kids;
12. foster care coordinator;
13. reentry and independent living services;
14. thinking outside the box for physical locations for visits rather than just doing them in the office environment;
15. county attorney listens to DFS; comes to the office and works with the caseworkers one on one; returns calls; files court orders and is appreciated by DFS;
16. Happy Campers program is great;
17. video conferencing equipment is used for case plans, reviews, visits etc.;

18. improving working partnership with community partners, and
19. specialization of child protective caseloads promotes teamwork.

Office determined needs and concerns:

1. Caseworkers for juvenile services³;
2. outlets for frustration;
3. barriers and delays to getting funding for re entry services;⁴
4. get more creative and continue to think outside the box regarding all casework.
5. Spanish training;
6. Judge went for attendance court instead of drug court and the community lost the funding:
 - a. Judge is committed to restart it; workers have all the training.
7. Communication flow from top to bottom can be improved;
8. inclusion of DFS in case decisions at legal level;
9. safe transporting of children especially when ordered by the court;
10. information sharing from the state level down needs to be communicated; implement new policy and procedures and do not adequately train on what is to be discontinued;
11. information needs to come to the supervisors so it can be passed on to the caseworkers;
12. it is either feast or famine with regards to training:
 - a. used to be able to train with other caseworkers and exchange ideas, and
 - b. an agency social work conference might be beneficial.

Office determined Program Improvement Plan for the upcoming year (PIP):

1. Safety training:
 - a. Identify what we need to be doing differently as a management team;
 - b. would be useful to know what other offices are doing, and
 - c. utilize training offered by the state office.
2. Communication with stakeholders and networking in the community:
 - a. Continue efforts with established networking groups;
 - b. communication with youth, foster parents, services providers and other entities;
 - c. attendance of caseworkers at foster care meetings;
 - d. communicate and continue networking in child protection teams;
 - e. strive for all professional reporters to know what the outcome was of their report, and
 - f. develop a game plan with the supervisors to address public perception at intake.
3. Involvement of DFS caseworkers and supervisors in work with the court through the SWCCJP:
 - a. Ask for feedback from administration and pass information to administration;
 - b. attention to MDT notice and coordinator with the judge, and
 - c. supervisors motivate good attitudes and casework being taken to court in spite of the difficulty of working with the court.

³ Current JS supervisor also has a case load; she is leaving at the end of February 2008 due in part to caseload frustrations.

⁴ It is noted and appreciated that Paul Yaksic will see that a list of current providers is published and distributed to the field offices.