

**February 19-21, 2008 Mini CFSR Report**  
**Lander/Riverton Department of Family Services (DFS) – D5R1**

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**Three strongest review areas:**

- Safety 2 (S2) – 100%
- Well Being 2 (WB2) – 100%
- Well Being (WB30) – 100%

**Greatest strengths from stakeholder interviews:**

- “Medical, dental and optometry services are readily available in this area,” and
- “the court recognizes the efforts of others such as DFS and appreciates their dedication and work.”

**Review challenge area:**

- Safety 1 (S1) – 50%

**Issues for DFS administrative level consideration:**

- “The physical layout of the Riverton DFS office is concerning; no elevator exists in the building for access to the second floor where CPS and JS offices are located; workers with mobility difficulties struggle to get up the stairs, especially when carrying up office supplies; one would wonder if a person with a disability would be encouraged to apply for a DFS position;”
- “case planning may be better served if only the four AFSA permanency goals were listed in WYCAPS as selection options;”
- “computer system that mirrored the quality assurance program might be helpful for caseworkers to better understand the required standards of their casework;”
- “one caseworker visit can include several required monthly contacts, however that is difficult to capture in WYCAPS;”
- “few training dollars are available in the local DFS budget;”
- “foster care licensing and accreditation “hoops” may be too extreme and labor intensive resulting in DFS losing foster care homes;”
- “additional foster care coordinators, one in each office, would be beneficial;”
- “an innovative, sustained effort to engage the Northern Arapaho and Eastern Shoshone caseworkers, not just administration, would benefit all,” and
- “training on other planned living arrangement (OPLA) applications is necessary.”

**Issues requiring local DFS office attention:**

- “Concurrent case plans when used, needs to be worked and documented;”
- “case file documentation could be more consistent and complete,” and
- “OPLA understanding and appropriate usage.”

## Case Ratings:

**#D5470** - (*Riverton*) - Six areas needing improvement: Item 7 - Permanency goal for child; Item 13 - Visiting with parents and siblings in foster care; Item 16 - Relationship of child in care with parents; Item 17(a) - Needs and services of child; Item 18 - Child and family involvement in case planning and Item 20 - Worker visits with parent(s). (***Use of consent decree, in a case involving allegations of inappropriate behavior against a step parent, resulted in the matter never being addressed by the court.***)

**#D5471** - (*Riverton*) - Perfect scoring case. (***Through the efforts and diligence of the caseworker, the child was able to go into foster care, and remain, with a relative.***)

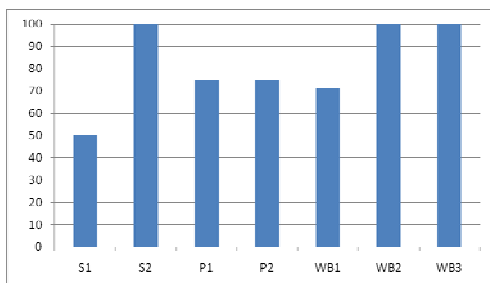
**#D5476** - (*Lander*) - Two areas needing improvement: Item 13 - Visiting with parents and siblings in foster care and Item 17 - Needs and services of child, parents, foster parents (overall rating).<sup>1</sup> (***Strong assessment and services to the child in a family that had multi jurisdictional court and agency involvement.***)

**#R1472** (*Riverton*) - Perfect scoring case. (***Father and child felt that had it not been for the caseworker the child would be dead.***)

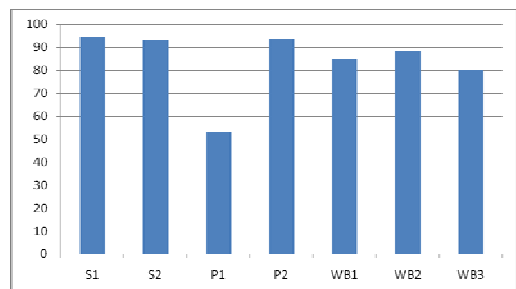
**#R1473** (*Riverton*) - Perfect scoring case. (***Father felt he knew caseworker so well they should be exchanging Christmas presents; excellent caseworker contacts.***)

**#R1474** (*Riverton*) - Perfect scoring case. (***Family allowed the child to suffer the consequences from their child's choices; Multi Disciplinary Team (MDT) was seen as a support group by the parents.***)

**#R1475** - (*Lander*) - Two areas needing improvement: Item 3 - Timeliness of initiating investigations of reports of child maltreatment and Item 18 - Child and family involvement in case planning. (***Refusal of the family to comply with court orders and lack of accountability in the system for that refusal was an issue.***)



The graph above shows the percentage composite scores of this Mini CFJR review (round IV).



The graph above shows the percentage composite scores for the three previous rounds of Mini CFJR. (rounds I, II, III)

<sup>1</sup> Item 17b failed; rating for the parent's assessment of needs and service provision.

## Strengths:

- Education:
  - “Clear educational goals going into the case: Graduate from high school and stop using marijuana;”
  - “child has had an Independent Education Plan (IEP) developed for her through the child development center;”
  - “school has worked with the caseworker on educational concerns;”
  - “IEP done on child with good involvement from all involved in the child’s case,” and
  - “Riverton School District has a liaison to work with children involved with DFS.”
- Effective case planning and work:
  - “Caseworker had extensive knowledge of family and resources and how to match them up;”
  - “team effort between Wyoming Girl’s School and case worker in Fremont County;”
  - “child feels that she would be dead had it not been for the caseworker;”
  - “case workers assisted child in getting enrolled in college;”
  - “despite distance barriers, face to face visits were frequent and meaningful;”
  - “team decision making was beneficial;”
  - “when child relapsed, the caseworker physically located her and engaged her; great engagement by caseworker;”
  - “transportation, fuel and mileage were offered to the father;”
  - “child was allowed to choose her own religion despite strong family religious ties with another religion;”
  - “DFS took financial applications to their clients to help them pay for medical services;”
  - “DFS feels that they have engaged the family to the point that they are comfortable contacting them at anytime;”
  - “foster family placement was a good match for the child;”
  - “good diligent search for bio dad;”
  - “good case planning in a potential termination case so mother knew what was coming;”
  - “visitation for mother and child was offered every day;”
  - “dad was kept informed and involved in the case planning process;”
  - “medical and dental needs met;”
  - “good transportation by DFS;”
  - “mother encouraged to be involved in the child’s school activities;”
  - “good safety plan developed with the entire family;”
  - “caseworker did a good job locating absent parents;”
  - “placement with siblings in same community;”
  - “numerous visits in a neutral, positive setting;”
  - “connections outside of just family were well preserved;”
  - “child’s safety was assured while in placement;”
  - “case worker did a good job of keeping the child in school and on track;”
  - “good case worker strength in a Youth and Family Services (YFS) case engaging a relative for placement;”
  - “good use of safety planning in a probation case;”
  - “consequence was created by DFS when there was none from the court;”
  - “immediate action by juvenile services case worker to engage the child rapidly helped get the child needed services;”
  - “child was placed in same community and did not have to change schools,” and
  - “relative placements were considered.”
- Effective use of service array:
  - “Current therapist for juvenile is ready to continue treatment with child as he becomes an adult;”
  - “Moral Recognition Therapy (MRT) need was recognized and provided;”

- “good mental health services for entire family;”
- “good mental health and development services offered and used;”
- “many evaluations for the family;”
- “public health worker was engaged in the home;”
- “Kemp Center evaluation was used and did not support reunification; DFS honored that evaluation and petitioned the court for appropriate disposition.” The safety of the child when returning home was of paramount concern to DFS.”
- “Child is receiving mental health services through the counseling center,” and
- “commitment of foster parents was of great benefit for permanency of the child.”
- **Family Involvement and Support:**
  - “Both mother and father, despite being separated and having joint custody of the child, worked closely with the caseworker for the benefit of the child;”
  - “despite mom and dad separating, they both continued their efforts for the child including family counseling;”
  - “two psychological assessments were done for the mother;”
  - “maternal grandmother made visits with the child on a regular basis;”
  - “numerous relatives were involved and supportive of the family;”
  - “family member, who is a professional in the community, was involved in a Child Protection Team (CPT) meeting where law enforcement provided incorrect information about the family member’s son; she now has little use for any agency in the system.”
  - “Good family involvement in case planning;”
  - “grandmother was a great help and support to the child and took guardianship of the child;”
  - “the stepfather’s relationship with his son was very strong and supportive;”
  - “parents have participated in all MDT’s,” and
  - “stepfather is wanting the establish the paternity of the child so he can proceed with the adoption process of the child.”

**Opportunities for improvement:**

- **Case planning and work:**
  - “Youth, in recovery, was discharged from the Wyoming Girl’s School (*independent living program*) with \$7,100.00 in some form; she relapsed;”
  - “case file was not well documented:
    - “no narratives were present documenting significant changes in the case;”
    - “when face to face visits occurred there was no documentation of those;”
    - “the administration of urinary analysis tests were documented, but the results of those tests were not documented;”
    - “not clear whether absent parent was notified or involved in MDT’s;”
    - “include copy of the IEP in the case file;”
    - “informal assessments of safety, risk, needs;”
    - “documentation of appropriate services, including usage of those services:”
    - “day to day ongoing activities:
      - medication usage, and
      - who is in the household.”
    - “Copies of evaluations should be in the case file,” and
    - “current case plan goals should be noted in the case file.”
  - “Placements with relatives who are not aware that DFS is pursuing long term guardianship with the relatives;”
  - “a home visit is needed in the case;”
  - “understanding and misuse of “OPLA” (other planned living arrangement),” and
  - “once located, engagement of absent parent is needed.”
- **Family involvement and support:**

3001 Henderson Avenue, Suite B, PO Box 1504, Cheyenne, WY 82003-1504  
Phone: 307-632-0032 Fax: 307-632-1591 wycrp@wycrp.org  
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- “DFS attempted to engage the family for services however the family would not follow through with the services offered such as MDTs and family partnerships.”
- **Mental Health:**
  - “Child was receiving adult doses of medication which had an undesired effects for the child’s ability to stay awake in school,” and
  - “child decided to take himself off medication; child and family were not following through with their service providers and there was little or no court oversight.”

**Systemic Barriers:**

- **Regional Issues:**
  - “Distance that families must travel to the Wyoming Girls School is a barrier for visitation;”
  - “use of consent decrees can become a systemic barrier; when DFS wants to revoke the consent decree, there is a hesitancy of what to introduce as evidence;”
  - “consent decrees can often delay permanency,” and
  - “inability of DFS to get evaluations from providers, such as mental health, and written reports is a hindrance.”
- **Legal System:**
  - “Use of consent decrees and stipulations are creating some confusion with others and the perception exists that there are no consequences for not successfully completing a case plan;”
  - “someone in the system needed to ask for review hearings as family was not complying with the court orders;”
  - “stepfather had numerous allegations against him, but was never part of the court process and the matter went to a consent decree; county attorney would not press charges since the step father was not the biological father and as stepfather, he had no legal responsibility to the children;”
  - “suspended sentence to Worland on a stipulated order;”
  - “when guardianship is transferred, the court needs to carefully explain the responsibility of that position; in one case the guardian did not realize that the state did not have further responsibility in the case;”
  - “a petition alleging third degree sexual assault was filed, but there was no adjudication for the matter;”
  - “in many cases there are numerous petitions followed by numerous consent decrees with little action;” and
  - “child has three stipulated orders, case worker has asked for a hearing, but has not been granted one.”

**Additional contributing factors:**

- “Parents usage of marijuana was detrimental as a role model for the child,” and
- “once DFS was no longer involved, the child dropped out of school.”

**Review process dynamics and considerations:**

- Citizen reviewers consisted of:
  - Eastern Shoshone social services worker;
  - Eastern Shoshone social services worker;
  - Department of Health, mental health representative;
  - foster parent;
  - foster parent and CASA representative;
  - retired police officer;
  - public health nurse, and
  - tribal services legal representative.

**Promising Trends:**

- Medical, dental and optometry services are accessible and plentiful for children in placement in the Lander/Riverton area;
- communication with the Northern Arapaho and Eastern Shoshone Tribes exists to an extent including monthly meetings among all program supervisors;
- despite stipulated agreements, DFS will go ahead and do a multi disciplinary team meeting (MDT) but there is often no judicial involvement;
- good use of relative foster care placements;
- the court recognizes the efforts of others such as DFS and appreciates their dedication and work;
- community stakeholders feel a part of the team and are always willing to be involved more to the extent possible;
- the juvenile detention center in Lander meets federal requirements and is supported by the court; a beneficial diversion program (youth services) is also operated out of the facility, and
- juvenile drug court is beneficial.

**Concerning Trends:**

- Credits will not transfer smoothly between schools; even Lander and Riverton.
- Overuse of stipulation and consent decrees; filings are not abundant and without the “teeth” often times clients are not motivated to follow through:
  - Meetings involving the attorney and court, in consent decrees and stipulations, are occurring behind closed doors without much DFS or family involvement;
  - if the language is not correct in these, IVE dollars could be in jeopardy for a child; it is believed that this actually may be effecting the IVE dollars;
  - prosecutor may feel that it is safer to get services through a stipulated order than to take a chance in court;
  - JS has more stipulated orders (estimated 50%) and CPS has a lot of consent decrees (estimated 80%), but both are used in both types of cases;
  - If the family does not stipulate, the case can just be dismissed. In other cases if the family does not stipulate, it can be sent to a lower court and the juvenile can be charged as an adult;
  - consent decrees are suppose to be six months and available to extend six months but they typically start out at 12 month;
  - lack of consequences by court and support by prosecuting attorney;
  - consent decrees often follow consent decrees, and
  - consent decrees often delay permanency.
- ICPC child transferring into the local school district; the school was not willing to work with or talk to DFS about getting this child enrolled;



# Program Improvement Plan

## Office determined strengths:

1. “Team approach among CPS and JS exists; even to the point of responding to cases together;”
2. “great coordination and cooperation between Lander and Riverton DFS offices;”
3. “community support and appreciation;”
4. “communication with schools;”
5. “quarterly meetings with the judge and county attorney;”
6. “communication and networking with county attorney’s office;”
7. “good working relationship with defense attorneys and Guardian Ad Litem (GALs);”
8. “administrative level meetings with the Northern Arapahoe and Eastern Shoshone;”
9. “workers care about what we do; commitment to the work;”
10. “relationship with families;”
11. “good assessment skills and can connect families with the services they need;”
12. “lower caseloads;”
13. “good relationship and networking with the drug court program;”
14. “Multi Disciplinary Team (MDT) process works really well;”
15. “doing family centered practice with the community;”
16. “workers get creative;”
17. “good relationship with mental health such as Fremont Counseling,” and
18. “we have really have a good relationship.”

## Office determined needs and concerns:

1. “Placement services for youth who cannot go home, but are aging out of the system with needs;”
2. “more efficient way to enter narrative in WYCAPS;”
3. “would be nice to be able to scan something besides the case plan;”
4. “is there technology out there that would help with the automation of case planning and document retention?”
5. “Input and trial usage of case plan revisions;”
6. “laptops or a Palm Pilot with a keyboard;”
7. “worker just lost five years of information on the existing computer with IT help; it had not been backed up for four months on the F drive/DFS system; not a WYCAPS issue;”
8. “computer runs slow; takes a hour to boot up;”
9. “copy machine and fax machine are outdated and not operating properly;”
10. “have to be creative and find free training; no training dollars in the local budget:
  - a. Being able to attend training and network with others, and
  - b. specialized training regarding emerging issues such as gangs, cutting, mental health issues other specific up to date topics.”
11. “Independent living services; currently do 18-21 year olds and only 20 hours per week for entire county.”

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

1. Technology; continue communicating that need to Cheyenne.
2. Channeling policy from Cheyenne to the field; returning comment to Cheyenne consultant.
3. Working with Youth Services and County Attorney on filing of charges.
4. Create independent living (IL) services to augment IL coordinator in area:
  - a. Have identified a lead, and
  - b. currently assembling resources.
5. Documentation could be improved, especially through improved technology and WYCAPs modification.

3001 Henderson Avenue, Suite B, PO Box 1504, Cheyenne, WY 82003-1504  
Phone: 307-632-0032 Fax: 307-632-1591 [wycrp@wycrp.org](mailto:wycrp@wycrp.org)  
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