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The Wyoming Citizen Review Panel's mission is to review our child welfare procedures throughout the system offering summaries and recommendations for improvements benefitina children and families.

Wyoming



Citizen Review Panel, Inc. **D6R4 February 7-8, 2007 Mini CFSR Report**

Case Ratings:

#D6281 (*Buffalo*)

- Five areas needing improvement: Item 7 – Permanency goal for child; Item 8 – Reunification; guardianship, or permanent placement with relatives; Item 17 – Needs and services of child, parents, foster parents; Item 18 – Child and family involvement in case planning and Item 22 – Physical health of the child.

#D6282 (*Sheridan*)

- One area needing improvement: Item 14 - Preserving connections (ICWA).

#D6283 (*Sheridan*)

- Eight areas needing improvement: Item 3 – Services to family to protect child(ren) in home and prevent removal; Item 4 – Risk of harm to children; Item 17 – Needs and services of child, parents, foster parents; Item 18 – Child and family involvement in case planning; Item 19 – Worker visits with child; Item 20 – Worker visits with parent(s); Item 22 – Physical health of the child and Item 23 – Mental health of the child.

#D6284 (*Sheridan*)

- Five areas needing improvement: Item 17 – Needs and services of child, parents, foster parents; Item 19 – Worker visits with child; Item 20 – Worker visits with parent (s); Item 21 – Educational needs of the child and Item 23 – Mental health of the child.

#R4280 (*Buffalo*)

- Perfect scoring case

#R4285 (*Sheridan*)

- One area needing improvement: Item 17 – Needs and services of child, parents, foster parents

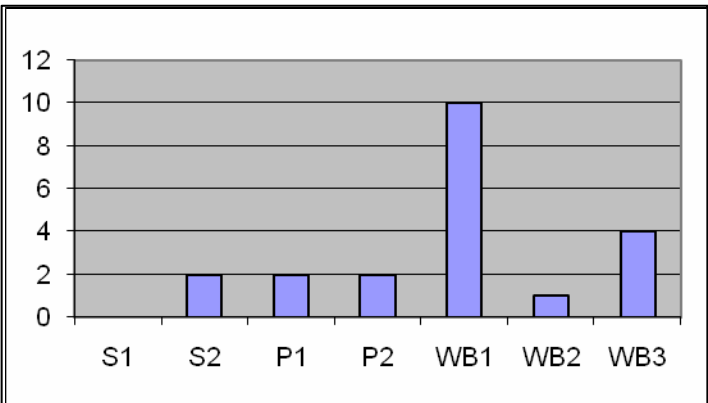
#R4286 (*Sheridan*)

- Perfect scoring case

#R4287 (*Sheridan*)

- One area needing improvement: Item 13 – Visiting with parents and siblings in foster care.

The graph to the right shows the number of Mini CFSR instrument items rating as "areas needing improvement" in the broad outcome categories of safety, permanency and well-being.



DFS has taken ownership of the following policy issues:

- “Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA); caseworker efforts need to be made and documented”
- “Safety assessments need to be done regularly, such as when a child returns home; (*next Federal Child and Family Services Review will be very strong on this issue*)”
- “Analyze assessment track and its application statewide; are there clear requirements for case planning?”
- “Juvenile justice may need clarification/assistance/training as they evolve their policy to be more family centered practice including a look at assessments used”
- “Lack of ongoing training for juvenile service workers”

Local DFS Office issues:

- “Transition period from intake to an ongoing case needs consistency and greater attention in the transitional period”
- “Facilitator and training for MDTs”
- “Provide district court judge with a checklist of requirements for shelter care hearings”
- “Caseworker supervision in the Buffalo office”
- “Permanency planning in juvenile cases”

Issues requiring DFS administrative level attention:

- “Strategies to deal with high case loads, high case worker turnovers and case load distribution”
- “A need for consistent family centered practice in juvenile justice cases”

The Wyoming Citizen Review Panel has taken ownership of the following systemic issues and/or community issues:

- “Support DFS efforts to address high caseloads and staff turnover strategies ”

Strengths:

- Advocacy:
 - “DFS case worker has taken the “bull by the horns” and got this case to where it needs to be”
 - “Caseworker requested a “show cause” hearing; county attorney did not follow thru on it”
- Consistency:
 - “This case had just one DFS case worker”
 - “Case kept the same county attorney since it began”
 - “Case only had one worker throughout the duration of the case”
- Documentation and adherence to procedure:
 - “Good documentation and adherence to timeframes by the caseworker”
 - “DFS followed their own procedures”
 - “Background checks were done by the next day”
 - “Good initial documentation of visits with the child by caseworker”
 - “Case had a lot of 1 on 1 contacts”
 - “Good screenings”
- Effective use of service array:
 - “Numerous services provided to child and family”
 - “Child always had access to counselors; mental health and school”
 - “Childs needs were addressed and services provided”
 - “Good planning for child’s upcoming transition”
 - “DFS did a good job in addressing the child’s needs”
 - “Lifenet came in and helped the family get the house in order”
 - “Parenting classes were very beneficial”
- Engagement of the child:

- “Child has done a 180 degree turnaround; child graduated high school at the Wyoming Girl’s School”
- “Child did a good job in placement at the Yellowstone Boys and Girls Ranch in Billings, MT”
- **Family Involvement:**
 - “DFS case worker had an open relationship with the family”
 - “DFS caseworker did a good job including extended family members in the case planning”
 - “Since juvenile case was opened, mother feels that she has a voice in the child’s care”
 - “Department of Family Services (DFS) caseworker recognized generational influence”
 - “Extended family was brought in to assist mom getting on track”
 - “Mother was a strength in the case and stuck to the recommendations of the MDT’s”
- **Foster care services:**
 - “Foster family did a great job working with biological father”
 - “Foster care provider did an outstanding job with the child”
- **Preserving connections:**
 - “When child was placed, the worker made sure daycare stayed the same”
 - “Faith based activities were offered to the child and father”
- **Successful outcomes:**
 - “The child was out of care in fourteen (14) days”
 - “Case was closed and there have been no further referrals regarding the family”

Additional contributing factors:

- “Lack of cohesive family unit”
- “Mother did not make her needs or desires known to case worker”
- “10 year old child reported that he had 4-5 different case workers in the case; others in the case did not know, but the child knew and it obviously mattered to him”

Opportunities for improvement:

- **Assessment:**
 - “Safety assessment could be completed before child returns home”
 - “When things started to fall apart in the case, DFS did not intervene to try and advocate or solve things”
 - “When step brother came into the home, he was not brought into the case planning and work that was already going on with DFS (in home services case)”
 - “Addressing mom’s needs earlier may have helped the family unit sustain”
 - “Parent’s divorce may have been the reason that the child began acting out”
 - “Assessment to investigation change; narrative did not give reviewers much information from the case file”
- **Collaboration:**
 - “School counselor did not know DFS was involved in the case”
 - “Individual Educational Plan (IEP) was sent to DFS case worker who did not follow thru; the child was needing help and the child’s behavior had gotten worse”
- **Contact:**
 - “Increased monitoring when child returns home”
 - “Child did not know who caseworker was; caseworker may have seen child once asleep on the couch”
 - “Caseworker needed to meet with the client more frequently”
 - “It is helpful for the child to know the identity of his or her DFS case worker”
- **Family Involvement:**
 - “Ensure that both parent’s rights are being considered and maintained”
 - “Identifying strengths of others and focusing on those strengths might have been helpful”

- “Mother reports that she was “told” what to do but did not have input into the case plan”
- “GAL reported that neither he or other officials asked the child what he wanted to happen in the case”
- “Mother felt that there could have been better communication about what options are available”
- “Parents needs were not adequately addressed”
- “It is necessary to ensure that both parents rights are being addressed”
- “Dad would come to DFS but was unsure what services DFS offered”
- “Mother felt like the only reason the caseworker contacted her was to get information about what was going on with other professionals in the case, not to see how mom was doing”
- “There was not good follow through by family”
- Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA):
 - “Child was Native American; tribes were eventually notified but only after placement ended”
- Outcomes:
 - “Reunification took 22 months”
 - “15 reports of maltreatment dating back to 1991”
 - “DFS worker advised that DFS has spent too much money on this case and wanted the county attorney to close the case; county attorney would not close it”
- Physical Health Documentation:
 - “Documentation regarding physical health needs to be obtained from group home placements and put into the DFS case file; group placements get it done within five days; unsure about crisis bed placements”
 - “No initial physical health screening in the case file”
- Transition:
 - “When case was transferred between caseworkers services seem to have fallen off”

Systemic Barriers:

- Case load distribution/turnover:
 - “DFS is tied into a position allocation system by the legislature that does not allow for the ebb and flow of case volume”
- Crisis Beds:
 - “Parents voluntary use crisis bed placements without DFS involvement limiting early intervention opportunities”
- Legal System:
 - “Some judges view the Wyoming Girl’s School as a resource (even for status offenses), some judges view the facility as the most restrictive placement possible for children”
 - “Court process was very slow; hearing did not take place for five months”
 - “Show cause hearing occurred without GAL involvement and was only among the county attorney and dad’s attorney”
 - “Deals should not be “cut” outside of the formal court proceedings when children are involved”
 - “Johnson County has a shortage of GALs according to county attorney”
 - “The system did not ensure that the family had legal representation”
 - “Court process placed child in most restrictive environment for “detention” for thirty days which was probably in accordance with state statute; Mini CFSR process may be in conflict with this (W.S. 14-6-246)”
 - “New judge ordered the child to visit mother when it is not in the child’s best interest (outside the period under review); court did not do their homework in this matter and child did not have a GAL, DFS has since gotten the child a GAL”

- “It could move the case along if the court would hold the parent accountable”
- “County attorney’s office did not attend MDTs or send a report”
- “New judge took over the case from the retiring judge; what had already been done in the case did not transfer”
- “Lack of GAL’s in Johnson and Sheridan counties; they need to be appointed earlier in the case”
- Multi Disciplinary Team Meetings (MDTs):
 - “Principal did not feel like he could participate or disagree during the MDT; a facilitator to conduct MDT’s might be beneficial to provide consistency and an open forum”

Review process dynamics and considerations:

- Citizen reviewers in this review consisted of:
 - CASA representative;
 - pastor;
 - independent living coordinator;
 - CASA representative;
 - WGS representative
 - retired WGS caseworker and current WYCANN representative
 - recreation district representative and
 - a retired social worker.
- The period under review was December 1, 2005 through May 31, 2006.
- 2 out of 8 (25%) review samples were biracial
- “Does the child want to meet with us? Possibly get his or her permission to do these reviews”
- “Acronym sheet would be helpful in the training instrument”

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