



Wyoming Citizen Review Panel



2011 Annual Report

Wyoming Citizen Review Panel, Incorporated

P.O. Box 1504 - 3001 Henderson; Suite H

Cheyenne, WY 82003-1504

(307) 632-0032

www.wycrp.org



Executive Summary

In our annual report for 2011, the reader will find a variety of information presented about different aspects of the child welfare system in Wyoming.

The first information presented is a compilation of questions from those who have experienced the foster care system; while the questions don't necessarily require an answer they do serve as a critical reminder for all of us what those entering foster care are thinking. And our charge is to anticipate those questions and answer them through assurances. After reading this section, the reader will understand that more than anything those in foster care want to know that their foster parents are sincere and providing the services for them, not for the money.

Each year, the Wyoming Citizen Review Panel publishes a web survey; during this reporting period it dealt with questions about foster care in Wyoming. One area that stands out is the continued need for caseworkers to do home visits and involve those that are appropriate in case planning.

During this reporting period, Wyoming Kinship Advocacy provided 62 guardianship packets keeping over 80 children safely out of the child welfare system.

Prevent Child Abuse Wyoming emerged in April of 2011 after ceasing operations in late 2009. As a charter chapter, the organization is anticipated to stand for full chartering in the second half of 2012.

A total of eight SYNC reviews were conducted around the state; in keeping with our theme of consumer comments for this annual report, we have published comments that our reviewers heard around the state while coordinating and conducting these reviews.

Even though no cases were received for review by the then Wyoming Child Major Injury and Fatality Review Team, the group stayed busy. During this reporting period they expanded their membership and changed their name to the Wyoming Child Death Review and Prevention Team. Additionally, the team assisted other like organizations in a western regional coalition collaboration.

The Wyoming Citizen Review Panel is proud to be an active member of the Wyoming child welfare system through our CAPTA mandate and proudly presents this report as a compilation of the accomplishments made and data collected in 2011. More importantly, we give Wyoming children and families a voice.



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2013 NCRP Conference

May 21 – 24

Jackson, WY

<http://wycrp.org/2013-ncrp.html>



Wyoming Citizen Review Panel

June 20, 2012

The Power of Community



Dear Stakeholder;

This year, we have opted to try something different with our annual report; engage and listen to those who have experienced the foster care system and publish what they are feeling!

You won't find recommendations in this year's report, but you will find some great insight from alumni of foster care, and those still in foster care as to what they are thinking. From those comments, we are hoping that providers across the state can gather useful insight, review their own programs, and individually answer the collective thoughts of these young adults.

Wyoming Advocates for Youth or WAY is responsible for gathering these thoughts. These thoughts, along with some from foster care providers are going to be used for a board game that WAY is developing that providers and those entering foster care can play and get to know each other better.

In addition to WAY, you will also find updates in this report about our other programs such as Prevent Child Abuse Wyoming, Wyoming Kinship Advocacy and other activities that the Wyoming Citizen Review Panel has undertaken over the past year.

As always, if you have any questions or thoughts, please contact me at (307) 632-0032 or by email at khamilton@wycrp.org.

Also, please check your website regularly at www.wycrp.org.

Best,

Kelly J. Hamilton, Executive Director



Wyoming Advocates for Youth (WAY)

The following are thoughts and comments from those who have experienced the Wyoming foster care system. These thoughts were gathered by WAY and can serve as a reminder to those that provide services what is often on the minds of those experiencing the foster care system:

- “What will you spend the state money on?”
- “Do you raise your voice when you are mad?”
- “Where do you work?”
- “When do I need to be home?”
- “Do you have a drinking problem?”
- “Will you go through my personal stuff?”
- “Do you drink during the holidays?”
- “Will you let me cook?”
- “Please don’t make me call you “mom” or “dad” unless I want to.”
- “What is your dream car?”
- “Have you ever not paid your bills and have they got shut off?”
- “What is your most cherished moment to this day?”
- “What’s something your parents or foster parent did that you would change now that you are a foster parent?”
- “Do you have a religion”
- “What’s your favorite color?”
- “What are your hobbies?”
- “Do you have any family traditions?”
- “What’s your favorite food?”
- “Did you go to college? If so, for what? Is college important?”
- “Do you have any regrets? If so, what are they?”
- “What are your hobbies? What do you like to do?”
- “Tell me about your favorite holiday; what do you do?”
- “Tell me about your best friend.”
- “Is this your first foster child?”
- “What was your favorite class at school?”

“Why did you willingly give up your parental rights for me?”

“Are you going to keep all the money you get from the state or will you share it with me?”

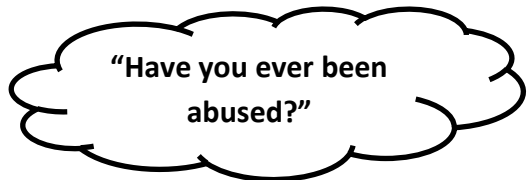
- “If you could do anything you wanted, what would you do?”
- “Do you or your husband smoke in the house?”
- “If you could plan a trip, where would you go?”
- “What is your favorite food? Will you share it with me as your foster child?”
- “If we were to go somewhere, how would you want me to introduce myself?”
- “What is your favorite way to spend free time?”
- “Will you treat me the same as your real son?”
- “If you could invent anything, what would it be?”
- “If you could go anywhere, where would you go and why?”
- “Do you believe in God?”
- “What is your happiest memory?”
- “What did you want to be when you were my age?”
- “What did you like most about school?”
- “What did you dislike most about school?”
- “If you could be anybody, who would it be?”
- “How would you describe the perfect family?”
- “If you could live anywhere, where would it be?”
- “If you were to write your life story, would it be an animation, science fiction or scary story?”
- “Tell me about you and your family?”
- “What happens if I get in trouble?”
- “Am I going to do chores?”
- “Are you doing this only for the money?”
- “Will your own kids treat me differently?”
- “Are you prepared to let me see you as mom or dad in my life?”
- “What do you think of having me as your child?”
- “How will you support me financially? (pay for phone or gas, or is that my responsibility?)”
- “What do I do if one of your real kids wants to have sex with me?”
- “What’s your background in your own family and as a youth?”
- “Will I have the opportunity to tell you what I need in a parent?”
- “What exactly is curfew?”



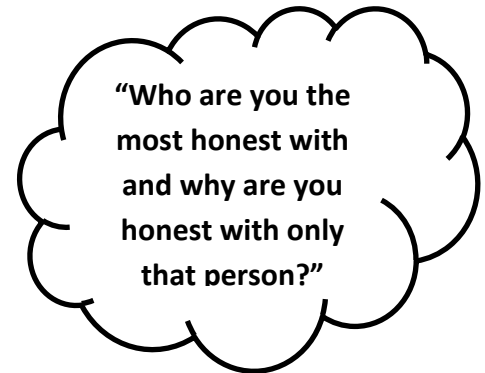
- “Can I see my friends and family?”
- “Do I need to find my own way of getting around for activities I want to do?”
- “Can I have a boyfriend?”
- “Will you respect my boundaries?”
- “How do you discipline the foster kids here in your home?”
- “What made you become a foster parent?”
- “How many foster kids have you had here?”
- “How will you use the money that you receive from the state?”



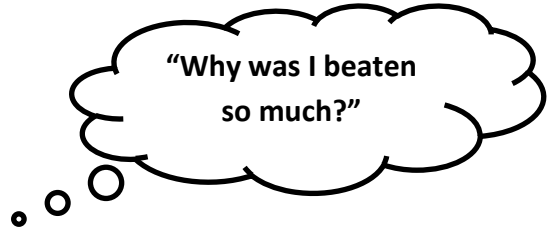
- “Is there a certain age you foster or do you do all ages?”
- “Why did you become a foster parent?”
- “Is religion a big thing in your home? Like, can I be of a different religion than you?”
- “Do you like being outdoors or sports?”
- “How do you discipline?”
- “Do you have incentives?”
- “If I need to talk, whether it may be about past, present or future things, will you listen?”
- “Where are my medications?”
- “How do you feel about tattoos and/or piercings?”
- “What made you want to become a foster parent?”
- “Do you really care about the kids you take in?”
- “Have you ever been in the same situation as me and my brothers and sisters?”
- “When do you expect your foster child to be honest about something?”
- “Do you do foster parenting for the money?”
- “Are you really wanting to help us or are you not going to help us?”
- “Will we have chores?”



- “Have you ever lost someone you really loved?”
- “How many siblings do you have?”
- “Have you ever had a substance abuse problem?”
- “If you could have any super power, what would it be? Why?”
- “What kind of music do you like?”
- “What kind of food do you like? Do you want to help me cook that?”
- “What kind of rules do you want to make? You are the boss.”
- “How can we help my mom or dad to help get us back?”
- “What did you want to be when you were a kid and then grew up?”
- “What do you want to know about me?”
- “If you could change the world in any way, what would it be?”
- “You live on a farm, will you teach me to drive?”
- “How can we fix my mom’s house so I can go home someday?”
- “How many other foster children have you had? Did they all live?”
- “What is your biggest goal in life?”
- “Did you go to college?”
- “Are you willing to help me thru troubled times?”
- “What did you want to be when you were younger?”
- “What is your hardest childhood memory?”
- “Did you play any sports when you were younger?”
- “What is your favorite animal?”
- “What was your first job?”
- “What high school did you go to?”
- “If you could be anyplace in the world right now, where would you be?”
- “What do you wanna be when you grow up?”
- “What are you most thankful for?”
- “What activity puts you in the best mood and why?”
- “If you could change one event in your life, what would it be?”
- “Describe what your perfect day would look like?”
- “What activity puts you in the worst mood?”
- “Why do you lie whenever possible?”
- “What does it take to earn your trust?”
- “Why do rules change every day?”



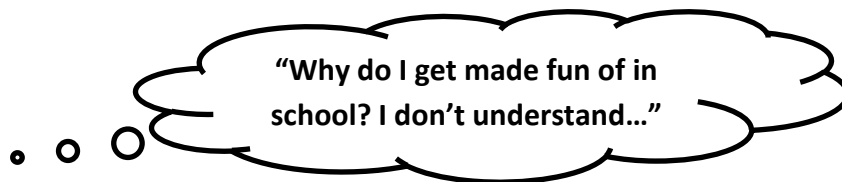
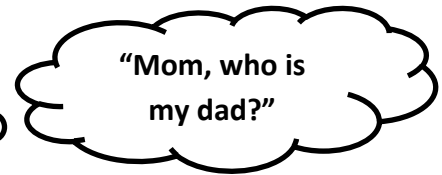
- “What’s your favorite type of dog?”
- “Where were you born?”
- “Have you ever done drugs?”
- “What type of music do you like?”
- “What exactly is foster care and what is it like? What did I do wrong?”
- “Have you found your real parents?”
- “Did you graduate and go to college?”
- “What was your first job?”
- “Why are you so strict?”
- “Why must you control me so damn much?”
- “Why was I placed here?”
- “Why were my real mom and dad so, so, so very extremely abusive to me?”
- “Why do you love me? I’m a piece of crap!”
- “What’s so great about me?”
- “Why did my adopted mom have to die?”
- “Why can’t I have control over my life and do what I want to do?”
- “Why don’t I have very many friends?”
- “Why did you become a foster parent?”
- “Do you favor some foster kids over others?”
- “What does foster care mean to you?”
- “Would you adopt me or another foster child?”
- “Do you want to keep in contact with foster kids who lived with you?”
- “What is something traumatic that happened to you?”
- “Why did you choose this job?”
- “What is your favorite color?”
- “What is one of your favorite memories?”
- “When is your birthday?”
- “Did you like school?”
- “Did you ever get in trouble?”
- “How did you meet and fall in love with your spouse?”
- “What comforts you?”
- “How can I earn your trust?”
- “What’s the most important thing to you?”



- “If you could have anything in the world, what would it be?”
- “What does unconditional love mean to you?”
- “What are you most afraid of?”
- “How can I make you feel special?”
- “What was the best day of your life?”
- “When you kicked me out, did you think it would be better for me?”
- “Why do kids get sent to the crisis shelter for time out...what good does it do for the kids?”
- “Why can’t I spend more time with my real family?”
- “How was your life growing up?”
- “When do you think I will grow up?”
- “Did you leave to better yourself or was it because you didn’t want to take care of me?”
- “Where do you live?”
- “Where did you grow up?”
- “Where you ever in a gang?”
- “Have you ever been abused or hurt?”
- “Why did you leave me?”
- “Why are you a foster parent?”
- “Why are they free and I’m in here?”
- “Have you ever been abused?”
- “Do you enjoy seeing me suffer in this place?”
- “Why can’t I live with a friend?”
- “Why can’t I live with daddy?”
- “Why do you hate me?”
- “Do you smoke weed?”
- “What are your views of marijuana legalization?”
- “Have you ever hit a child?”
- “Why do you do, what you do?”
- “How did you decide to do this?”
- “Do you have any felonies?”
- “Have you ever been in a treatment center?”
- “What is your favorite thing you like to do for fun?”

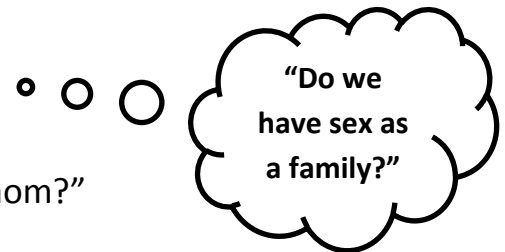


- “Do you mind piercings and colorful hair?”
- “What’s your favorite type of movies?”
- “Are you a diabetic?”
- “Do you have any medical conditions?”
- “Why don’t I get to see my caseworkers?”
- “Why can’t I have my pets?”
- “What is for dinner?”
- “Why do I have to start a new school with a teacher I don’t know?”
- “If you love me so much, why do you hit me?”
- “Do I have to miss school again?”
- “Where is my old caseworker?”
- “Will my parents be at this meeting?”
- “If I was a foster parent, I would want to know “what can I do to help you be more comfortable? Where would you like to sleep, the couch, bed, floor, etc.?””
- “Do you know what is going on with my life and why I am really here?”
- “Please don’t tell people my story and why I am living with you.”
- “Why did my parents leave me when I was three years old?”
- “Why do people have to go through foster care? It’s awful...”

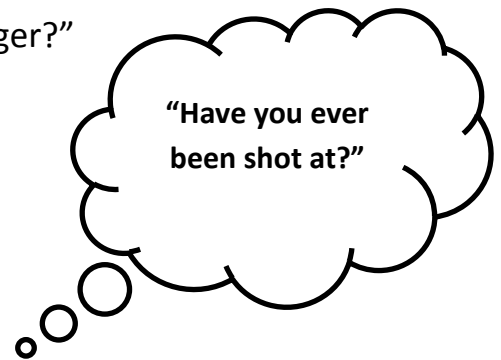


- “How do I become what I want to be if I don’t believe in myself?”
- “Why does life have to be so hard for people?”
- “Why do we get discipline?”
- “How do I succeed if I don’t know what I’m doing?”
- “Why do parents abuse their kids?”
- “Why did I make a bad choice in my life?”
- “How do I know what to become in life if I don’t know what’s going to happen to me?”
- “If you ever hit me, what would be the reason?”

- “Why would you get mad with something you don’t like?”
- “How would you like to get to know me more?”
- “Do you like to help kids and care for them?”
- “Are you fun to be around every day?”
- “What are you interested in when you are at home?”
- “Are you a good parent with everyone you take in?”
- “Will you let me have friends that are good?”
- “Will you help me know what I did wrong when I get in trouble?”
- “Where do you work?”
- “What kind of friends do you have?”
- “Why did you beat me?”
- “Why do you deny that my uncle raped me, mom?”
- “Why did you rape me?”
- “Mom, why were you not there when I need you and where were you?”
- “How come I had to raise myself and my two brothers?”
- “Why did you and dad put me through a lot of stuff?”
- “What was going through you mind when you had sex with my cousin?”
- “Dad, why did you put me last to everything until now?”
- “How many times do I have to go through treatment and be in foster care?”
- “Why were you selfish mom?”
- “Why are people discriminated against based on their past?”
- “Why did you use drugs and get sent to prison?”
- “Why wasn’t I allowed to go to my grandparents instead of other placement?”
- “Do you like kids?”
- “Why do you stop kids from doing things that help them?”
- “Why are boys and girls separated when we are supposed to learn communication skills?”
- “Why do you single out one person when you have ill feelings towards that person?”
- “Why do you see one person as better than every one being equal?”
- “Why do you push kids to freaking out or doing something dumb, instead of stopping and helping them?”



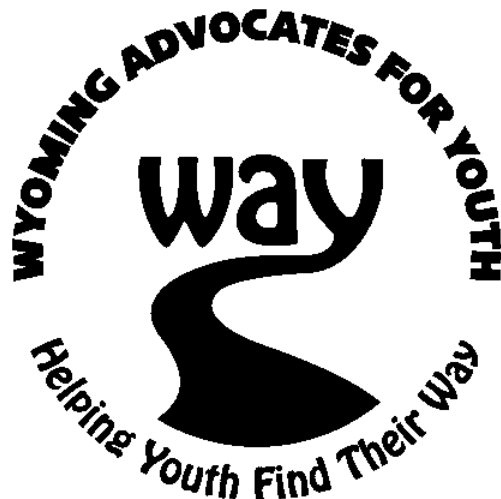
- “When were you born?”
- “Have you ever been sexually or physically or verbally abused?”
- “What is your favorite holiday?”
- “Do you have anger and depression issues?”
- “Does your family do drugs, alcohol or tobacco?”
- “What is your family history?”
- “Why do you take my things when I did not deserve it?”
- “Where do we go when you get drunk?”
- “Why are you so harsh?”
- “Why do you get so annoyed at me all the time?”
- “How can you say you’re there for me and want to help, but you treat me like crap?”
- “Why do you lie?”
- “Why do you work here if you are mean?”
- “How could you take my stuff I bought myself?”
- “Why did you do that?”
- “What’s your problem?”
- “How many other foster children have you had in your home?”
- “What is your biggest goal in life?”
- “Did you go to college?”
- “Are you willing to help me through troubled times?”
- “What did you want to be when you were younger?”
- “What is your fondest childhood memory?”
- “Did you play any sports when you were younger?”
- “What is your favorite animal?”
- “What was your fist job?”
- “What high school did you go to?”
- “What does it take to earn your trust?”
- “Why do you lie whenever possible?”
- “Why do rules change every day?”
- “Will I be able to contact my family on the phone?”
- “Will you allow me to use the internet and Facebook to talk to my friends?”
- “Are there a lot of rules in your house?”



- “If I am scared here, who do I tell?”
- “When will I start to develop, you know...”
- “What made you want to become a foster parent?”
- “What kind of things do you expect from your foster children/teen?”
- “While I live here, what kind of things/activities will we be doing?”
- “How many foster kids have you had?”
- “How long is the longest you have had a foster kid in your care?”
- “What will we eat here; will we eat the same thing as everyone else?”
- “Do you eat out a lot or cook home meals?”
- “Are you a workaholic and will you have time to spend with me?”

“Does anybody other than you know where I am at?”

- “Why did you want to become a foster parent?”
- “What’s a case worker?”
- “How do you like being a foster parent?”
- “Are you shy around your new foster kids?”
- “Do we get money for doing chores here?”
- “Will we get to see or spend time with family on our birthdays?”
- “Have you ever lost someone you love or really cared deeply about?”





Foster Parent Web Survey Results

Each year, the Wyoming Citizen Review panel creates and publishes a survey on its website at www.wycrp.org. During this reporting period, the survey was focused on foster care services in Wyoming. One of the questions has become irrelevant; question #12 asked about therapeutic foster care and that is no longer a sponsored program in Wyoming.

The following questions give the reader some insight into the feelings of foster care providers in Wyoming. In particular, there appears to be a desire for a more efficient reimbursement system and a greater number of consistent home visits.

1. How do child welfare services in Wyoming ensure that foster parents have an opportunity to be heard, respected and have meaningful input into case plans?
 - a. "This is an area that needs to be worked on with the Tribes; they never do follow ups with foster care; either Tribe."
 - b. "The only time foster parents are heard is at MDT meetings."
 - c. "They have us participate in MDT's."
 - d. "I would typically receive notice from the case worker about hearings and MDTs."

2. Do children in foster care have stability in their placements?
 - a. Yes – 100%
 - i. "When the foster parents are sincere."
 - ii. "Sometimes they have to be separated if there are not enough foster care homes."
 - iii. "Sometimes it makes me upset when DFS decides to split them for no reason."
 - iv. "Foster parents usually have to ask for it."
 - v. "DFS tries not to move them unless necessary."

3. What transitional living services in Wyoming for children exiting foster care are most effective?
 - a. "Follow-ups by all involved especially the CPS people and have an educated/qualified staff to do the job."
 - b. "I don't know of any."
 - c. "Haven't found one yet. It seems like independent living takes kids who are on the right track (i.e. graduation) after they graduate high school."

4. Are important connections to culture, neighborhood, community, faith, family and friends preserved for children in foster care?
 - a. Yes – 25%
 - b. No – 75%
 - i. “Most of the time, we foster parents don’t know the background of the kids so we can’t keep those connections.”
 - ii. “Foster parents are not given the information to know what connections those are; I think they ask the children and will do their best to preserve them.”
 - iii. “We really don’t have any training to understand what is important to preserve.”

5. How are the needs of foster parents, children and others appropriately assessed and then met?
 - a. “Mostly the foster parents’ needs are met with financial help; the kids, well that’s another story.”
 - b. “I don’t feel they currently are.”
 - c. “DFS worries more about meeting the needs of the birth parents and making things easy for them.”
 - d. “Meetings/conversations with the case worker and/or GAL.”

6. Are face-to-face visits with children in foster care frequent and of sufficient quality?
 - a. Yes – 50%
 - i. “GALs, CASA and case workers come to our home.”
 - b. No – 50%
 - i. “Some case workers are excellent about this, some need help. GALs same thing.”

7. Can the identification and resolution of medical needs and dental needs of children receiving foster care services be improved in Wyoming?
 - a. Yes – 100%
 - i. “More services and facilities are need in Wyoming.”
 - ii. “We need more dental providers who will take Title 19.”
 - iii. “Just finding a health care provider that will take kids is hard.”
 - iv. “Create a list of those providers accepting new patients.”

8. Can the identification of and treatment for emotional and mental health needs of children receiving foster care services be improved in Wyoming?
 - a. Yes – 100%
 - i. “We need more providers and the children should be allowed to see the provider that is right for that child even if that provider is not part of

therapeutic foster care. It's insane that a child with an established relationship with one counselor can't keep that same counselor when they get moved into the wraparound program. It should be the needs of the child steering the ship not the contract DFS has with social workers making the decisions."

- ii. "I find it hard to get kids into mental health services. Maybe create a list of providers in the area."

9. Foster parents are an incredible and necessary resource in Wyoming. Is communication with local and state Department of Family Services Office strength based and effective?

a. Yes – 50%

b. No – 50%

i. "DFS needs to follow-up to have these qualities'."

- ii. "There is a retaliatory issue towards us when you have concerns about a DFS employee and express them."

10. Are payments processed quickly and effectively for foster parents?

a. Yes – 25%

b. No – 75%

i. "We turn ours in on the 1st of the month and usually don't see anything until the 17th or later."

ii. "Direct deposit would be nice."

iii. "I wish we had direct deposit."

iv. "It takes two weeks to get our check and then I have to go to the bank and deposit it."

v. "Having to take five kids into the bank to deposit a check is a trial."

vi. "It seems like waste and abuse could be cut down if there was direct deposit."

vii. "DFS portrays an attitude that you, as the foster parent, are some sort of "robber" for even taking the money."

11. What types of specialized foster care and associated training might be needed in Wyoming?

a. "All kinds of training, especially for a special needs child to the foster parent can help the child excel in life."

b. "Detachment disorder."

c. "Meth abuse in biological parents and the impact on children."

d. "Effects of enduring child abuse."

e. "Emotional needs."

f. "I think we need more credits with the foster parent college. Then we can pick the topic and learn."

- g. "If we go to trainings, there is never child care provided; so we can seldom go because we are taking care of kids."
- h. "Training? What's training???"

12. As a foster parent, have you considered becoming a therapeutic foster parent?

- a. "Yes, due to the great need; however we were told we had to choose one or the other which did not seem fair."
- b. "We tried to sign up and DFS said we could not do both because TFC and DFS don't work together and talk to each other."
- c. "I don't like the wrap around program. I have taken kids that were previously in TFC and kids who have left me have gone into TFC. I don't understand the distinction other than who is available for foster care and that determines whether it's TFC but I personally hate the rules of TFC and wouldn't be a TFC foster parent."

13. If you could change one thing with the Wyoming foster care system, what might that be?

- a. "More follow-ups from DFS."
- b. "Encourage DFS to employ educated and qualified staff to do the job."
- c. "The DFS foster parent coordinator in our city seems more worried about her control than the children we are taking care of."
- d. "DFS never changes...same old excuses, director after director, year after year."
- e. "Let foster parents be on the hiring committees for the foster parent coordinator and caseworkers since we are the ones who work with them most often."
- f. "Direct deposit of reimbursements."
- g. "I would like to see the children get to permanency faster (whatever that permanency will be – reunification; kinship; guardianship; TPR). Once kids have permanency, they thrive."

14. Do you know if Wyoming has any sort of a "foster care passport" or document that stays with the foster child documenting medical conditions and other important information?

- a. No – 100%
 - i. "DFS doesn't know or find out the information; they rely on us foster parents to give them information."

15. Please feel free to share any other thoughts with us:

- a. "We simply do not have home visits from our case workers."
- b. "Specifically to a Tribal program, we need staff that is trained to do the job properly."



During this reporting period, Wyoming Kinship Advocacy (WYKA) provided 63 guardianship packets; 62 were granted. Of those, providers were:

- Grandparents 45%
- Aunts/Uncle 15%
- Other 40%
 - includes sisters, brothers, father, stepfather, stepmother and single mother.

Ethnicity for the 62 was:

- Caucasian 58%
- Hispanic 31%
- Other 07%
 - includes African American, Native American, and Thai nationalities

Statistical employment for the 62 was:

- Employed 66%
- 150% of poverty 60%
- Disabled 14%
- Other 15%
 - Included going to school and/or retired.

Reasons for out of home care:

- Child Abuse/Neglect 70%
- Drugs/Alcohol 68%
- Other 90%
 - includes jail, prison, deportation, education, disabilities, abandonment.

Average income for providers was calculated at:

- \$1,345.00:
 - Lowest \$190.00
 - Highest \$2,500.00

Education level of providers was:

- 0-11 16%
- 12/HS/GED 50%
- Associates 19%
- Bachelors 11%
- Masters 4%

Ages of providers:

- Youngest provider = 21 yoa
- Oldest = 82 yoa
- Average age = 42 yoa

Disabilities:

- 8% of children are living with disabilities.

14% of youth will age out of kinship care in 2012.

WYKA assisted 126 clients with referrals to other agencies to meet client needs, including:

- Legal services,
- Department of Family Services,
- Behavioral health providers,
- Immediate needs such as diapers and shoes, and
- Assisted four families with the \$70 filing fee necessary to file for guardianship.

Respite opportunities provided during this reporting period include:

- 12 training meetings averaging 18 adults and 12 children (not including parties), and
- 12 support group meetings averaging 8 adults and 5 children.

The 62 guardianships equated to:

- 86 children being kept safe with kinship providers:
 - 97% (84) of these children would have entered the child welfare system had they not entered kinship care;
 - This multiplied by the maximum age foster care payment of \$732 equals a savings to the state of \$61,488 for one month, or
 - A yearly savings of \$737,856.

The average age of a child in WYKA kinship care is 14 years of age.

**WYOMING
KINSHIP
ADVOCACY**





Prevent Child Abuse Wyoming

In April of 2011, Prevent Child Abuse Wyoming began operations thanks in large part to assistance from United Way of Laramie County and the Wyoming Children's Trust Fund. The previous chapter ceased operation in December of 2009. A number of benchmarks have been achieved during this reporting period including:

- Working with former chapter employees to retrieve documents and products from the previous chapter;
- Creating a pinwheel garden campaign, an effort to draw attention to child abuse;
- Garnering statewide support for the re-opening of a Prevent Child Abuse Wyoming;
- Attending multiple conferences throughout Wyoming, increasing awareness of the charter chapter and delivering an early primary prevention message;
- Developing a small library of resources for parents, children and professionals to use that relate to the early prevention of child abuse and neglect, as well as how to recognize, report and understand those who have been abused and neglected;
- Working with governmental and non-governmental groups to support and/or sponsor campaigns, trainings, and conferences that promote the safety of children or prevention of child abuse and child neglect;
- Contacting public health offices around Wyoming to work with the charter chapter on Safe Sleep Wyoming, the Halo sleep sack initiative;
- Working with governmental and non-governmental groups on developing a shaken baby syndrome campaign through the distribution of message carrying bibs;
- Working on a program for children of incarcerated individuals in Wyoming, as well as potentially working with the incarcerated individuals themselves;
- Working with members of the Northern Arapaho Tribe and Eastern Shoshone Tribe to develop shaken baby information guides that are both informative and culturally sensitive;
- Engaging Department of Family Services Child Protection Teams in Wyoming, and
- Expanding the Safe Sleep Project.



**Prevent Child Abuse
Wyoming**

a provisional chapter of Prevent Child Abuse America



This year a total of eight (8) SYNC¹ reviews were completed in Wyoming. All of the reports are available on our website at www.wycrp.org. This year, in our annual report, some of the thoughts and expressions given to us through interviews have been reproduced as a way to capture the good of the behavioral health treatment services occurring in Wyoming.

- “Waiting lists don’t have to be a part of mental health or substance abuse treatment services for anyone!”
- “Now that I am in the program, I don’t have to flick the devil off my shoulder every morning when I get up.”
- “Only when you raise a client up do they have a reason not to fall back down again.”
- “Participants become humanized to the bench and the bench becomes humanized to the participants.”
- “This program gave me the confidence that I needed to deal with my issues...it is ok to be a man and vent and cry.”
- “We have moved from ‘therapist knows all’ to ‘client centered...’”
- “No matter what time of day, I always got my questions answered.”
- “We don’t have wait times; we just make it work!”
- “I heard about “this place” through word of mouth; they put me in the right direction in life.”
- “The people here are genuine!”
- “GREAT SERVICES in this program...it has a lot of foundation and I would not change a thing!”
- “The “meth signs” around Wyoming make you think twice about doing it!”
- A client felt like they had input into their case plan... “This is your program.”
- “I watched my parents drink and I thought it was cool, so I started.”
- “My dad was abusive to my mom and me; and I really hated her for taking him back...”
- “I hated the accountability of the program; ironically I ended up loving the accountability of this program.”
- “The team is consistent; you can ask anybody a question and get the same answer.”
- “These people have been in my life for a long time; I feel comfortable coming back to them in the future if I need help.”

¹ SYNC stands for Systems and You Networking and Collaborating. SYNC reviews are done for court supervised treatment programs, are strength based and utilize vetted community professionals in the review process. Individual SYNC reports can be viewed at www.wycrp.org.

- “The kids that have been in drug court have learned something and have some tools. Families also have a greater ability to function.”
- “We find ways to treat whatever walks in the door!”
- “I am treated and respected as a person; nobody is pointing a finger at me or making me feel bad; just helping me to get better.”
- “You might describe us as “change agents” in this field; we believe in checks, balances and transparency.”
- “This is just an amazing place; I feel cared about.”
- “We want to treat this person from a coordinated team approach.”
- “Whatever I want to accomplish, the clinicians support me in creating an appropriate goal.”
- “I am really glad I found this place; when I needed them I really needed them and I didn’t have to go a long ways.”
- “We are family.”

We can't use the same mind
that created our problems to solve
our problems

- “My passion is the family; they are afraid and we have to involve them, we can’t alienate them.”
- “This program is just as tough as you make it.”
- “...you are a totally different person now!”
- “When a client relapses, the staff doesn’t just stick them back in the same program and say “redo this;” an individualized program is created to the extent possible to assist the client in succeeding.”
- “I would not have been rehabilitated without this program; regular probation would not have worked for me and I would have cheated on that.”
- “This is an aggressive, yet non-confrontational program that works if you commit to it and work it!”
- “Supervision, testing and counseling has been extremely helpful; the nutritionist is very helpful too.”

- “They promote life changes.”
- “The accountability and the structure have been the most valuable tools and have taught me how to be a better member of the community.”
- “...members coordinate and put on a New Year’s Eve alcohol and drug free family event; last year there were 750 people in attendance for games, dancing with a disk jockey and it is a great time for teenagers and families.”
- “Drug court has been a necessary experience that has been more positive than negative; my child came out ahead in the program!”
- “This is community working with youth; everyone from 4H programs to the Department of Family Services.”
- “A simple lack of parenting may be the biggest factor in youthful clients having to become involved with our program.”



**SYSTEMS & YOU
NETWORKING & COLLABORATING**



Wyoming Child Death Review and Prevention Team

The following are summary strengths and recommendations made by the Team during this reporting period:

2011-005: (Major Injury)

Strengths –

- 1) The injured child and sibling were placed into safe environments after the incident. They were unfortunately separated in this process but that was due to the children having different fathers.
- 2) All law enforcement and legal action was done thoroughly and appropriately. There was not enough evidence for legal prosecution of the mother or her boyfriend.
- 3) Even though the mother and boyfriend did not want to comply with a reunification plan, services were provided to the children and relatives they were placed with as continued support.

Recommendations –

- 1) A more thorough interview could have been performed with the sibling of the injured child to ensure they did not suffer from any previous abuse or neglect as well.

2011-011: (Death)

Strengths –

- 1) Law enforcement and DFS made numerous efforts to educate the tribal court's decision to allow this child and four siblings to live in the grandmother's home, however they were not heard.
- 2) Multiple services and trainings were offered after this incident to the family and others.

Recommendations –

- 1) There is nothing that can be done about jurisdictional issues, but it is extremely troubling that the tribal court would pull the children out of a safe and functional foster home that the children preferred, to put them into an abusive and unsafe home.
- 2) This entire family had a history of abuse and neglect from victim and perpetrator stand points. It was not documented that much outreach was made to the family prior to this or other incidents. If services were offered, the family rejected any attempts.

2011-012: (Death)

Strengths –

- 1) All parties (DFS, Law Enforcement) did thorough and appropriate jobs with this case and seemed to communicate very well. Formal charges were brought against mother's boyfriend and he pled. Mother and boyfriend were also substantiated on for neglect of the infant who died, and twin sibling.

Recommendations –

- 1) Mention was made by the team that education about child abuse and neglect should be better interjected into schools and health classes. There was little chance to identify

possible harm in this case, but better public education on Shaken Baby Syndrome and other abuses would be beneficial.

- 2) There was some concern that the mother re-gained custody of the sibling of the deceased child, but she did successfully complete the required plan to do so.

2011-013: (Major Injury)

Strengths –

- 1) Coordination was very good in this case among law enforcement, DFS, and the courts.
- 2) After the child and two other siblings were placed in temporary foster care, reunification and custody with the bio-father was made. A number of services were offered and utilized by this family with positive outcomes.

Recommendations –

- 1) One comment made in the narrative by the DFS caseworker mentioned that the child appeared “clumsy.” This wordage could have been damaging for the legal aspect of this case if charges had been filed. Just better choice of wording in the narrative would solve this issue.

2011-014: (Death)

Strengths –

- 1) Despite the public scrutiny, all law enforcement, DFS, and legal involvement were done appropriately and thoroughly. There was a short delay in the filing of charges, but a judge did step in to close the child care facility where the child died.

Recommendations –

- 1) This case brought about a number of issues that needed addressing by childcare licensing rules in the state. There were no current rules relating to the competency of workers in facilities, directors being able to work for a facility (even if not on physical premises) if substantiated on for wrongdoing, or the use of eggshell mattresses for infants in these facilities.
- 2) More and/or continued education is needed to all workers in childcare facilities on how to appropriately work with infants in contrast to other children.

The group also made some changes during this reporting period: Those include:

- Changing the name of the organization to Wyoming Child Death Review and Prevention Team. This nomenclature better aligns itself to national efforts;
- Soliciting increased involvement in the organization from the Wyoming Department of Health and Wyoming Department of Transportation;
- Creating policy that would look at all trends in child deaths and near deaths in Wyoming, and
- Participating in and leading a western coalition of other like organizations.

Wyoming
Child Death Review and Prevention Team

The **mission** of the Wyoming Citizen Review Panel is:

The Wyoming Citizen Review Panel's mission is to review procedures throughout the state offering summaries and recommendations for improvements benefiting children and families.

The **purpose** of the Wyoming Citizen Review Panel is:

The Citizen Review Panel is a federally mandated group of citizens who are responsible for determining whether state and local agencies are effectively meeting child protective responsibilities pursuant to the Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (CAPTA) and subsequent amendments. Through a review of service networks, policies, procedures, research and reviews of child protective and juvenile service cases the purpose of the Citizen Review Panel is to promote child safety, permanency and well-being for children and families.



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