**Fremont County Department of Family Services Review**

Date of Review: September 15-16, 2014

The Wyoming Citizen Review Panel (WYCRP) conducted interviews of staff and community stakeholders to compile information about the state of child welfare in the Fremont County area.

Total Interviews:

DFS Staff – 4

Community Stakeholders – 12

**Fremont County Demographics**:

* There are 5 DFS offices in Fremont County.
* Fremont County has 7 primary law enforcement agencies.
* There are 13 school districts.
* There are 3 GAL’s
* As of 2013 the population for Fremont County was 40,998.
* The Wind River Reservation is located in Fremont County. Two tribes reside on the reservation; Eastern Shoshoni and Northern Arapahoe

**Strengths:**

1. The judge is committed to juvenile cases and making sure he is doing what is best for the children in Freemont County. This includes trying to make the best decision possible for the children and where they are staying.
2. The Case workers are working hard and able to see their children face to face monthly. This even includes the children that are out of town. The caseworkers are seeing the probation kids once a week.
3. The workers that are in Freemont County are truly caring and compassionate. Yet, they are starting to feel the effects of burn out.
4. Communication within the office and within the community is reported to be strong.
5. Caseworkers are reported to follow up in a timely manner on issues related to child welfare in the community.

**Opportunities for Growth:**

1. Fremont County is experiencing a lack of foster families. It is reported that as a result of this, children have been placed back into unstable environments. This has a potential to increase re-entry and decrease the likelihood of long term permanency.
2. It was reported that there is a lack of mental health providers in Fremont County. This includes specialized counselors for youth and families.
3. There are 2 group homes in Fremont County which includes a girl’s home in Riverton and a boy’s home in Lander. As a result, children are remaining in Fremont County but are being removed from their community supports (such as their home and school) in order to reside in the appropriate facility.
4. Follow up with children and their families is essential after reunification. It is necessary to ensure there is consistency in follow up for a designated period of time to ensure safety of the children and offer support to the family for successful reunification.
5. Turnover in the offices causes turn over for the children’s cases and causes children to feel unsure.

**Recommendation (local and state)**

1. Ongoing training for WYCAPS especially when updates are made. It was also recommended to create “cheat sheet” for general data entry steps into WYCAPS could be distributed upon hiring of a new staff. Staff could then update this information after CORE training and after WYCAPS updates.
2. Increase available training opportunities for APS workers to attain their required professional development hours. A possibility to increase availability would be to offer online opportunities
3. It would be beneficial to partner with law enforcement to offer trainings to staff about current trends in the community related to drug activity including what to look for inside a home related to drug paraphernalia and behaviors of those individuals who are under the influence.
4. It is difficult to complete data entry and reporting due to computer malfunctions. It would be beneficial to investigate improved computer systems. It is also difficult to complete narratives when the WYCAPS system is down because word is directly linked to this system. Investigate other alternatives to decrease loss of productive work hours related to computer issues.
5. A way to do a training to train new workers and a refresher for old workers about mandatory reporting in our state and who else is mandatory reporters.
6. Ensure that safety plans are in place prior to reunification.
7. A conversation regarding the group homes is necessary in order to ensure youth have the opportunities to remain connected to their support network in their home area. It might be beneficial to consider transportation options for schooling or a centralized location.

**Summary:**

Fremont County is working together to improve the lives of children and families. Operations are complicated due to a variety of jurisdictions due to the presence of the Wind River Reservation located within the county boundaries. At times it is difficult to determine who needs to be involved in cases that pertain to individuals residing on the reservation. It is imperative that all entities, both on and off the reservation, have good communication to ensure the safety & well-being of children in Fremont County. The local Fremont County DFS offices are well respected in the communities and communicate among stakeholders to ensure safety and wellbeing of children.

Ongoing training will be necessary to continue the quality work that is evident in this office. Overall Fremont County is making efforts to ensure that children and families are successful by offering quality services that impact the future.