

Child and Family Services Review Newsletter

A Regular Publication from the Department of Human Services, Division of Child Welfare



Safety



Permanency



Well-being



October 31, 2008

Issue 8



Colorado's Site Selection for the Review

By Judy Kissel, Interim CFSR Coordinator, Division of Child Welfare



Colorado's Judges Take an Active Role in the CFSR

We are pleased to announce that the Reviewers have been selected for Colorado's Child and Family Services Review. We are excited to have participation from Colorado's Judicial Branch in this review. Judge Robert Lowenbach from the 19th Judicial District and Chief Judge Michael O'Hara with the 14th Judicial District have committed to participating in Colorado's Child and Family Services Review.

Site selection has been finalized for Colorado's Child and Family Services Review! Denver County, as the largest metropolitan county, is automatically one of the three counties involved in the onsite review. Larimer and Fremont will be the other review sites.

Fremont and Larimer Counties are two of many

progressive counties in Colorado. They both use Trails, the automated case management system to document activities in their counties. The counties also use reports generated from Trails to drive their services and to identify client and county needs and services. Larimer has additional reports to identify compliance issues including face-to-face contact with the child, the initial response time, and 15 of 22 months in out-of-home care. Performance measures are used in staff evaluations in Larimer County.

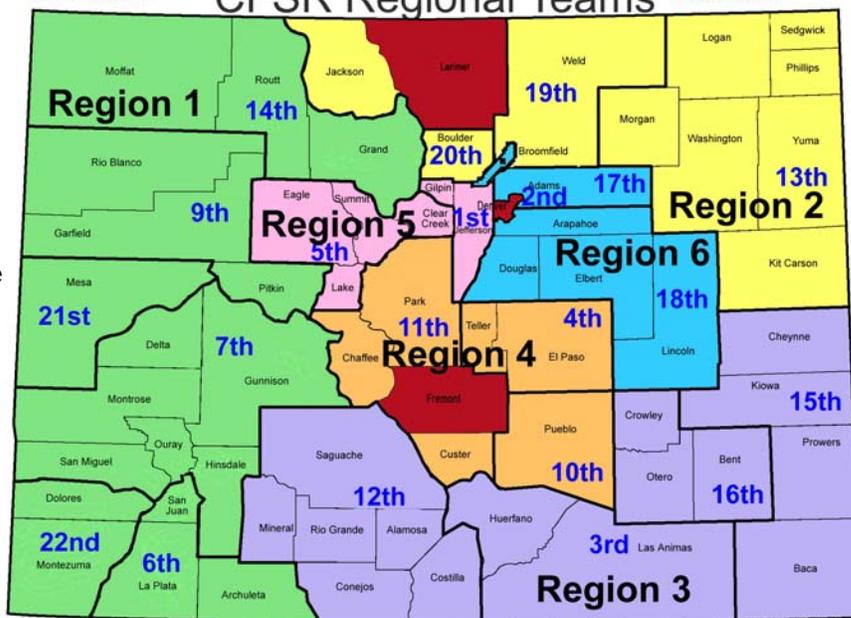
Fremont and Larimer Counties work closely with their courts and they have several community partnerships. Fremont and the 11th Judicial District have implemented several collaborative partnerships, steering committees, and programs. Together they developed the Family to Family model, the Family Treatment Drug Court, the Family Friendly Court grant (supervised parenting), the Heart of Colorado Court Appointed Special Advocate program, Fremont county Collaborative Management Program, and a common Dependency and Neglect (D&N) protocol for the entire District.

In Larimer County, the D&N and Juvenile Magistrates are members of the Collaborative Management Larimer County Interagency Oversight Group. This group has designed new programs to specifically help resolve D&N cases as expeditiously as possible. Larimer and Weld Counties are teaming together on a Federal Regional Methamphetamine grant. Larimer County teamed with both of their magistrates to create a D&N Family Drug Court.

The counties include youth and families in treatment planning, in treatment plan reviews, and in family meetings. The counties use Team Decision Making as well as family group conferencing.

Region 1 Western Region
Region 2 Northeast Region
Region 3 Southern Region
Judicial Districts are in Blue

CFSR Regional Teams



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CFSR Kickoff
May 23, 2007

Regional Kickoffs
July - October,
2007

CW Conference
May 27-30, 2008

Statewide
Assessment
August, 2008

Site Selections
for Review
October, 2008

Receive State
Data Profile
Sept 4, 2008

State Reviewer
Training
Feb 23-27, 2009

Child and Family
Services Review
March 16-20, 2009

Good Old-fashioned Social Work Values

By Tim Hart Child Welfare Program Administrator, Pueblo County Department of Social Services

First of all, I want to thank the Department for the opportunity to discuss Pueblo's child welfare practice and how we've been able to maintain positive services to children and families as evidenced by good Administrative Review and CFSR scores.

I have had about a week now to consider the answer to this seemingly simple question. Since I am basically a simple man, I went to some of the people that know best; interviewing several of our supervisors and caseworkers. The results confirmed what I had originally thought about the practices that define how we go about the business of protecting children and serving families. My first response is that Pueblo County emphasizes good old-fashioned social work values and practice. I believe we have an outstanding staff of knowledgeable and empowered employees. The Child Welfare Division in Pueblo County has a long history of collaborating with our community partners, magistrates and judges, and the community at large. In basic terms, we try to keep our practice direct and simple. If you believe as I do, that the CFSR really only describes to us how we are doing at our most fundamental job, then it is Pueblo's focus on doing the basics well that lead to the positive results.

In the locality it all starts with making sure that we see all of our children every single month. Several years ago, our Child Welfare Administrator Cheryl Divine, was asked to speak about how Pueblo County addresses this need. Her answer then, as it continues to be, is that nothing less than monthly contact is acceptable. How can you possibly keep the child safe, if you do not see that child? Pueblo County's Child Welfare Division has long maintained an organizational culture that they are our children and we are responsible for their safety. Rarely, if ever will Pueblo County caseworkers ask for courtesy supervision of a family or child. On the unusual occasion that a foster care reviewer, a supervisor or other person discovers that a child was not seen for any specific month, the caseworker must inform the Child Welfare Administrator in writing identifying the reasons the contact was missed. With this basic founding behavior in place, one will discover that Pueblo's caseworkers have strong relationships with the people they serve. The caseworkers know the children, the parents, and often the extended family members. Pueblo County has been hesitant to engage



in any practice or initiative that would increase the caseloads, thus creating barriers to these basic relationships. Because of this, Pueblo maintains generally manageable workloads that are conducive to the implementation of the social work values and practice we all strive to implement.

Pueblo has a long tradition of community stability with strong blue-collar values including that of hard work and dedication to doing things well. Whether creating the steel that is the foundation of many great things in our country or being passionate for protecting children and serving families, our people are the backbone of the positive results for Pueblo County DSS' Child Welfare Division. We cherish the incredible experience and wisdom that our experienced staff offers while embracing the energy of our younger staff. We are fortunate enough to have supervisors with 10 to 29 years of service to our county yet continue to be open to creative solutions for the woes of those we serve. Passion is a must for our caseworkers. The caseworkers are encouraged to be fierce warriors for the safety, well-being and permanency of our children. I consistently get feed back about how demanding Pueblo's caseworkers are to community partners, contractors or placement providers and how this attitude is based on their personal knowledge of the dynamics that affect the situation. I do not apologize for their strong advocacy and zeal.

Pueblo County Department of Social Services is starting our second year of the HB 1451 initiative but have long sought and maintained a collaborative environment with our human service partners. These relationships often have years of history with many disagreements
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yet we maintain a powerful respect for the opinions of other professionals in our community. Curt Tuffin, the Director of Child and Adolescent Services for our local mental health center, was one of my first bosses nineteen years ago. The newly appointed Judge for Dependency and Neglect cases, Debra Eyler, has been serving families and children in the Pueblo community for over twenty years. I do not hesitate and invite these partners to call me if they see any chinks in the armor that may keep a child safe. We are placing more emphasis on truly giving the families a voice in identifying what services they need and feel like we

are reaping great dividends for their children. We look forward to continuing to strengthen the safety nets for our community's vulnerable.

As I am writing this we, the state of Colorado, are investigating another child's death. This is basic. This is powerful. It is not about data. It is not about rules or regulations. It is about a child. As we move forward with the CFSR and in implementing the multiple recommendations that are sure to follow, I say, "Let's focus on the basics and do them very well."

Denver County's Second Mock Review

By Shannyn Romero, Program Quality Assurance Technician, Denver County Department of Human Services

Denver County Department of Human Services (DDHS) hosted its second mock Child and Family Services Review (CFSR) August 12-14, 2008. Child welfare lead workers, supervisors, administrators, quality assurance staff, and a Family-to Family community representative made up the fifteen, two-person review teams. Twenty-nine cases were reviewed, 20 foster care and nine in-home, using the CFSR Onsite Review Instrument.

The difference between this mock CFSR and the one that was co-facilitated by Colorado Department of Human Services (CDHS) in December 2007, was that this time the primary focus was on case file and Trails review and did not include case specific interviews. The reason for this approach was that during the 2007 mock review it was determined that lacking and/or incomplete documentation was a substantial area in need of improvement in order to increase outcome ratings. The mock review provided an excellent opportunity to explore this issue further.

One significant finding from the 2008 DDHS mock CFSR revealed that while diligent efforts to locate absent parents are often taking place, they are not being documented in a consistent or timely manner in the case file or in Trails. As a result, DDHS Child Welfare management is working with the Performance Improvement and Accountability Division's Quality Improvement staff to implement improvements in policy guidelines, consistency with procedures, and case file documentation of diligent search efforts.

By improving this one area, DDHS anticipates considerable improvement in the items related to CFSR outcomes:

- Permanency 1 - Children have Permanency and Stability in their Living Situations;
- Permanency 2 - The Continuity of Family Relationships and Connections is Preserved for Children;
- Well-being 1 - Families have Enhanced Capacity to Provide for their Children's Needs

Other areas identified as needing improvement during both of the DDHS mock reviews included CFSR items *Adoption; Permanency Goal for Child* (specifically around OPPLA); *Child and Family Involvement in Case Planning; Risk Assessment and Safety Management; and Needs and Services of Child, Parents, Foster Parents, and Kin*. Efforts are already being implemented to improve compliance in these areas as the county prepares for the onsite review.

Multiple items were rated as strengths as a result of both mock reviews and include *Caseworker Contacts with Children; Foster Care Re-entries; Proximity of Foster Care Placement; Placement with Siblings; Services to Family to Protect Child(ren) Safely in the Home and Prevent Removal; and Educational Needs of Child(ren)*. Work that is being done through the Family to Family collaborative partnerships has also presented as an area of great strength.

Both mock reviews have helped to engage supervisors and case workers and have already provided valuable exposure to CFSR outcomes in a way that is meaningful to the work that they perform every day. The State will be coordinating mock reviews with the other two selected counties. It is anticipated that mock reviews will be completed in both counties before the end of the year.





Introducing Colorado's New CFSR Coordinator

By Roni Spaulding, CFSR Program Administrator, Division of Child Welfare

Five children, ages 8 to infancy, were removed from their home in El Paso County a couple of years ago. The mother had been leaving the children alone for days at a time. At the time of removal, the infant was 48 hours away from death; the diaper, stuck to his skin, had to be medically removed by hospital emergency room staff. A neighbor made the report after seeing the children going through the trash, looking for food. The newspaper headlines concerning the plight of these children lasted a couple of days, but anyone working in child welfare knows the issues for these children and the county agency go on for many years. What happens to a child's development when he takes care of his siblings and must forage for food? Will the children remain together as a sibling group? What constitutes a suitable treatment plan? Child Protection workers deal with the issues of Safety, Permanency and Well Being every day. These issues are at the heart of the Child and Family Services Review. I was thrilled when the Department offered me the position of CFSR Program Administrator. After working at El Paso County Department of Human Services for 34 years, I was ready for a new challenge.

I began my career in El Paso County as an eligibility technician and then became a caseworker in Child Welfare Intake. I worked in ongoing Child Protection and then became a CPS supervisor. I had the opportunity to develop the Family Visitation Center with a wonderful group of community volunteers in 1992. I worked with our staff to guide the development of The Center on Fathering, which opened in 1995. At the recommendation of El Paso County's Director, Barbara Drake, I developed and implemented a blended services unit comprised of

TANF Income Maintenance Technicians and Child Welfare workers as Welfare Reform was rolled out. We focused on relatives receiving TANF Child-Only assistance. We developed support groups and developed a good working relationship with the Probate Court. As my duties expanded to management and administration, I had the opportunity to develop new voluntary services programs and write grants. As a member of El Paso County's Executive Management Team, I developed a knowledge base about budgets and the complexities of county, state and federal funding.

During my career, I have had many opportunities to develop innovative services for families and children—and work to improve resources for caseworkers. As CFSR Program Administrator, I will have the opportunity to work on a larger scale, with many Colorado Counties. As I have reviewed county work plans, I have seen a number of innovative ideas and high levels of accountability. The counties are very unique and are developing plans for their communities and agency needs. With every county working to improve its outcomes, we will all be sharing in the continuous work to improve our services. The CFSR is more than a periodic review; it is about continuous quality improvement of our Child Welfare practice. It is about the future outcomes for children who need child welfare services and depend upon us when their families cannot meet their needs. I am looking forward to our review in March 2009, to assess the outcomes of our community systems in working with these children and youth. If we think in terms of continuous quality improvement, the future is open and ahead of us!

