

Wyoming Citizen Review Panel  
Strategic Plan – DFS-Oriented Team  
October 27 and 28, 2005

Team Members: Jackie Brown, Brenda Oswald, Lori Kickery, Karen Ross Milmont and DFS Liaison, Andy Aldrich.

Chairperson of Group: Jackie Brown

2005/2006 Goal of the DFS-- Oriented Team:

Work to Strategize how the Panel can help DFS implement the Panel's October 2005 Annual Report Recommendations #1, #4 and #6.

**Recommendation #1** -- Require the Department of Family Services to follow their own recommendation to implement the Family Centered Practice Model. The Family Centered Practice model assesses the whole family's needs so that the child's need for safety, permanence and well-being can occur by servicing the whole family. If policy were followed and if family centered practice was used with every family, in all DFS offices and with all cases, most case outcomes would improve. The Panel found that many "area needs improvement" scores were directly attributable to some family members not being involved in the case planning or in visitations with children and DFS case workers. Notably, family members left out most often were non-custodial fathers.

**Objective:** Increase number of cases where non-custodial fathers are involved in the case.

**Action Steps:**

1. Schedule a meeting with *Diana Shaeffer*, DFS State Office. Objectives of meeting are to share the Panel's strengths and needs improvements around family centered practice and about how we could join together to meet with fathers that haven't been involved to get their input from the beginning.
2. **Brenda Oswald** will ask who from the Father Factor could be represented on the Panel and will invite.
3. Make sure citizen reviewers list specific strengths and weaknesses on their instruments during case reviews and are trained in best practices.
  - a. Help citizen reviewers know best practices by providing a best practice checklist during the reviews; and
  - b. Be sure to have the second-party reviewer check for specific comments about how the case is a strength and how it needs improvement.

#### Recommendation #4:

Develop a system that will easily and consistently inform case workers, managers and supervisors of DFS policies, changes in DFS policy and other rules, laws and regulations needed to perform their jobs. Quite often when an item was rated as "area needing improvement" there was discussion between reviewers, case workers and management. The discussion often revolved around someone not being aware of a policy or change in policy. The Panel suggests adding a "technical assistance" box on the DFS web site that pops up when a DFS employee turns on his/her computer. The "technical assistance" box could state a variety of messages, from up-coming training information to policy reminders and policy changes.

**Objective:** Make sure DFS policies are accessible to caseworkers, judges, DA, GAL, parents, foster parents and the public.

#### Action Steps:

1. Get a copy of DFS policies for this team.
2. Contact DFS's webmaster to propose putting DFS policies on the DFS web site for public viewing. *Paul Yaksic is DFS' webmaster. He was called during this team Panel meeting. He agreed to check to see if DFS policy could be publicly viewed. **Brenda Oswald** will follow up with what he finds.*
3. Continue working with DFS to find ways to make DFS policy more accessible to case workers, judges, DA, GAL, parents, foster parents and the public.

#### Recommendation #6:

Require those involved in the court systems in Wyoming to act on termination of parental rights and adoption procedures with urgency and consistency, as there are Wyoming children who are counting on them for permanency in their lives. Most striking of the review findings were that judges, district attorneys and guardian ad litem functioned differently in each county, thus having a different effect on cases, either positively or negatively.

**Objective:** Look at DFS policies, procedures and forms to see if adequate or deficient. Help the system give permanency to children by raising awareness about the numbers of Wyoming kids waiting for permanency.

#### Action Steps:

1. Compile a list of DFS practices that might expedite court proceedings.

2. Ask the Permanency Barriers project, headed by *Jeanne Jerding*, Casper DFS Manager, 473-3926, to come to the January Panel meeting to present their findings for the purpose of determining what they can implement
3. Compile a two-page summary of the Panel's October 2005 Annual Report to send to the courts for the purpose of educating them what we do.
4. The Panel will help with reviewing the court system by participating in the survey *Tara Ackerman* has and by reviewing the draft report before Tara puts it out.
5. Meet with *Marilyn Patton*, DFS Administrator of Child Protection for the purpose of determining what the new assessment is and how accessible and easy it will be to administer.

#### Timelines:

November 2005 – These objectives out to the Panel Members

December 2005 – Panel will have access to the DFS policies – *work with Paul Yaksic to get this done!*

January 2006 – talk to *Marilyn Patton*, gather check lists and forms

February 2006 – figure out best practice

March 2006 – send out checklists and good forms to Wyoming DFS offices with suggestions to use.

April 2006 – Information review letter to the public and system partners to inform what has been done.

Exactly who will do what will be a work in progress. This team will need to have monthly meetings via phone or face-to-face to accomplish these tasks. The new ***Panel Program Director*** will need to coordinate these tasks.