

# Administrative Review Division



COLORADO DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES



# 2009 Annual Report

July 2008 - June 2009

*The Administrative Review Division's mission is to promote safety, permanency and well-being for Colorado's children.*

## Administrative Review Division: *Colorado's Child Welfare Quality Assurance System*

Colorado's Administrative Review Division (ARD) serves as an independent third party review system under the auspices of the Colorado Department of Human Services. ARD is the mechanism responsible for the federally required Case Review System and a portion of the Quality Assurance System for both the Division of Child Welfare and the Division of Youth Corrections. With an ultimate passion of providing permanency and well-being for Colorado's children, the Administrative Review Division works closely with Colorado's counties to train, measure and assess their adherence to State and Federal regulations. The most prominent of ARD's requirements are the administrative case reviews which are required every six months for each child in out-of-home foster care; ARD conducts approximately 10,000 out-of-home reviews per year. Such regulations are in place to help prevent unnecessary moves for children in foster care and to assess (and encourage) that the needs of the families' and children are being appropriately addressed.

ARD's staff members comprise a closely knit team that truly operates with outward enthusiasm and optimism. ARD's employees maintain notable academic and professional credentials and utilize these skills to conduct reviews, create strong working relationships with their regions of responsibility, provide technical and compliance training to county caseworkers and supervisors and, most importantly, assist in achieving high quality and consistent care for Colorado's children.

Founded in 1991, ARD has collected and analyzed years of information from reviews, conferences, surveys and other forums and maintains extensive databases that have assisted in the production of professionally published white papers. ARD encourages its stakeholders and other industry professionals to utilize its publishings and research as a data source and an opportunity to systematically take steps toward ever-improving the field of child welfare.

Colorado's Administrative Review Division shares a common goal within the profession and amongst the community as a whole: the well-being of our children. ARD seeks your continued support to engage families, care providers, and the community to promote healthy, safe, and positive outcomes for Colorado's children.

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## Executive Summary

The Administrative Review Division (ARD) of the Colorado Department of Human Services presents its annual report for State Fiscal Year (SFY) 2009. The Administrative Review Division continued to face challenges in SFY 2009 while attaining significant achievements. The largest of the challenges continued to be meeting Federal and State mandates with a reduced budget and staff, although, the ARD was fortunate to add three FTE during the fourth quarter of the State Fiscal Year.

In SFY 2009, the ARD had an operating expense of \$1,951,619, consisting of \$1,196,849 of general fund and \$754,770 of federal IV-E funding. Overall, this was an increase of \$52,125 from SFY 2008. The ARD operated with 25.2 FTE, three of which were added during the fourth quarter of SYF 2009.

The ARD conducted 10,822 reviews in SFY 2009, which included 9,909 Child Welfare Administrative Reviews, 351 Division of Youth Corrections Administrative Reviews, and 562 In-Home Service Reviews.

The ARD established a number of goals for SFY 2009 through the 1 - 2 year planning which occurred for SFY 2008 and based on the Colorado Department of Human Services Strategic Planning Matrix. The goals are listed below, categorized by whether or not they were achieved.

### GOALS ACHIEVED

- Develop measurements with the county departments, regions, and other stakeholders that help Colorado improve practices that effect safety, permanency, and well-being.** The ARD provided data to assist counties and the State in preparing for Colorado's Child and Family Services Review (CFSR) held in March 2009 and in developing the subsequent required Performance Improvement Plans. In addition, the ARD is currently developing new review instruments based on desired outcomes from the CFSR and Federal law.
- Produce and distribute timely data reports by assigned due date.** Quarterly reports are to be distributed within 30 days of the end of the quarter. This goal was met in 4 out of 4 quarters.
- Improve relationships with the Division of Child Welfare (DCW).** The ARD continued to request participation from Child Welfare staff at Steering Committee meetings, in development of new review instruments, and in training for county staff. The ARD partnered with the DCW in conducting the Screen Out Review.
- Have a fully functioning Permanency Hearing process in place statewide that meets the requirements of federal law.** The ARD continued to partner with the Division of Youth Corrections (DYC) to hold Permanency Hearings, in an effort to meet federal requirements.
- Continue the working relationship with State Judicial through regular, open communication, joint training and problem solving and by providing data reports by judicial district.** All quarterly reports continued to be made available by Judicial District. Also, the ARD participated in the Judicial Department's Court Improvement Project (CIP) and on Denver County's Model Court Improvement Project.
- Institutionalize the daily, monthly and annual awards given for outstanding case practice.** The ARD continued to utilize a rewards process, previously developed in partnership with the Butler Institute, that highlights exceptional case practice by caseworkers and client managers.
- Co-lead and facilitate the National Foster Care Review Coalition (NFCRC).** The ARD continued to participate in monthly teleconference calls throughout SFY 2009 and continued as the lead body responsible for data for the NFCRC.
- Continue to receive outstanding results on the different customer service surveys conducted.** The ARD continued to receive overall positive responses on the Internal Satisfaction Survey and Coordinator's Survey in SFY 2009.

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**Maintain an easily accessible and recognizable web page for all to access their data reports.** The ARD maintained a web page that was in compliance with all CDHS guidelines and formatting.

**GOALS PARTIALLY ACHIEVED**

**Increase the staffing level of ARD to complete the Federal requirements of a case review system and statewide QA system.** The ARD received three additional FTE during the last quarter of SFY 2009, which is anticipated to contribute to an increase in timely case reviews.

**Develop reports that are easily understood and helpful to all stakeholders.** The ARD continued to utilize a Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) model for reporting and discussing data and measuring desired outcomes, to include strengths and weaknesses of county practice. A narrative portion of the reports was not incorporated.

**GOALS NOT ACHIEVED**

**Complete the Statewide Quality Assurance Reviews of cases receiving in-home services through Child Welfare within two years.** The In-Home Service Reviews were temporarily discontinued in January 2009, due to the development of a new review instrument and process for assessments and in-home service cases. It is anticipated that the In-Home Service Reviews will resume in August 2009.

**Reinstitute the Services Survey for recipients of CW and DYC services, as well as major stakeholders.** Due to staffing levels and other assignments, the ARD was not able to pursue this goal.

The ARD identified a variety of systemic issues related to Trails, policy, rule, and training. Trails issues focused on the usability of Trails. Policy issues centered around differences in practice across counties. Volume VII (rule) issues focused on the need for clarity and specific definitions of terms and concepts. Training issues related to consistency in training requirements and practice throughout the state.

The ARD had a variety of systemic accomplishments, including: 1) partnered with other states' Foster Care Review Programs to maintain the National Foster Care Review Coalition, 2) affected Trails changes, 3) came into compliance with the State Automated Child Welfare Information System (SACWIS) Audit requirements by adding the ARD narrative findings into Trails, 4) partnered with the Division of Child Welfare, Colorado counties, and other partners in preparing for, conducting, and providing data for the Child and Family Services Review (CFSR), 5) the ARD was identified in the CFSR as a strength for Colorado, providing a process for foster parents, pre-adoptive parents and relative caregivers to be notified and heard, and 6) the information gathered and analyzed by the ARD continued to be a major source of data for improving safety, permanency, and well-being outcomes for children and families in Colorado and in assisting counties and the State in development of a Performance Improvement Plan to address issues identified in the CFSR.

Overall, it was another exciting year filled with challenges, enhanced partnerships, and successes, and the ARD looks forward to continuing to fulfill its role in providing an independent third party administrative review every six months for children/youth that are in out-of-home care, as well as implementing and improving Colorado's Quality Assurance system.

## Responsibility



Colorado's Administrative Review Division (ARD) is responsible for conducting administrative reviews/foster care reviews and implementing Colorado's identifiable quality assurance program as outlined in Section 471 (a)(22) of the Social Security Act and the Federal rule and interpretation at 45 C.F.R. 1355.34(c)(2001).

## Values and Guiding Principles

- Children need to be raised in their own families whenever safe and possible
- Better outcomes are achieved when parents are actively involved in decision-making about their child's needs and future
- Children in out-of-home care should achieve developmentally appropriate benchmarks in their physical, psychological, interpersonal and educational growth
- Services that actively engage families and build on family strengths achieve more successful outcomes
- Stable, consistent care for children is essential to healthy development and successful reunification or other permanent living arrangements
- Culturally responsive and respectful services and reviews that engage families and providers achieve positive results for children in foster care
- Children are more likely to achieve healthy adulthood if raised in the least restrictive, most family-like environment that is appropriate to their needs

## Program Description

The ARD is the independent, third party review system for Colorado; the ARD is not responsible for program structure or policy and is not the direct service provider. The ARD is uniquely positioned to function as Colorado's quality assurance entity, as outlined in Section 471 (a)(22) of the Social Security Act and the Federal rule and interpretation at 45 CFR 1355.34(c)(3). The ARD fulfills this role by combining several required functions. Specifically, Colorado's Quality Assurance System is comprised of both quantitative and qualitative data collected from Six-Month Periodic Reviews (Administrative Reviews) and Case Reviews, IV-E Reviews, In-Home Service Reviews, the Screen Out Review, Ad Hoc Reviews, and surveys. This combination allows the capture, analysis, and reporting of findings/data from one central office. The ARD provides crucial process and outcome related reports to both the State Department of Human Services and the various county departments of human/social services. The ARD works collaboratively with both the Division of Child Welfare and the Division of Youth Corrections to improve services for Colorado's children and families while maintaining an independent viewpoint guided by the mission of ensuring the safety, permanency, and well-being of Colorado's children.



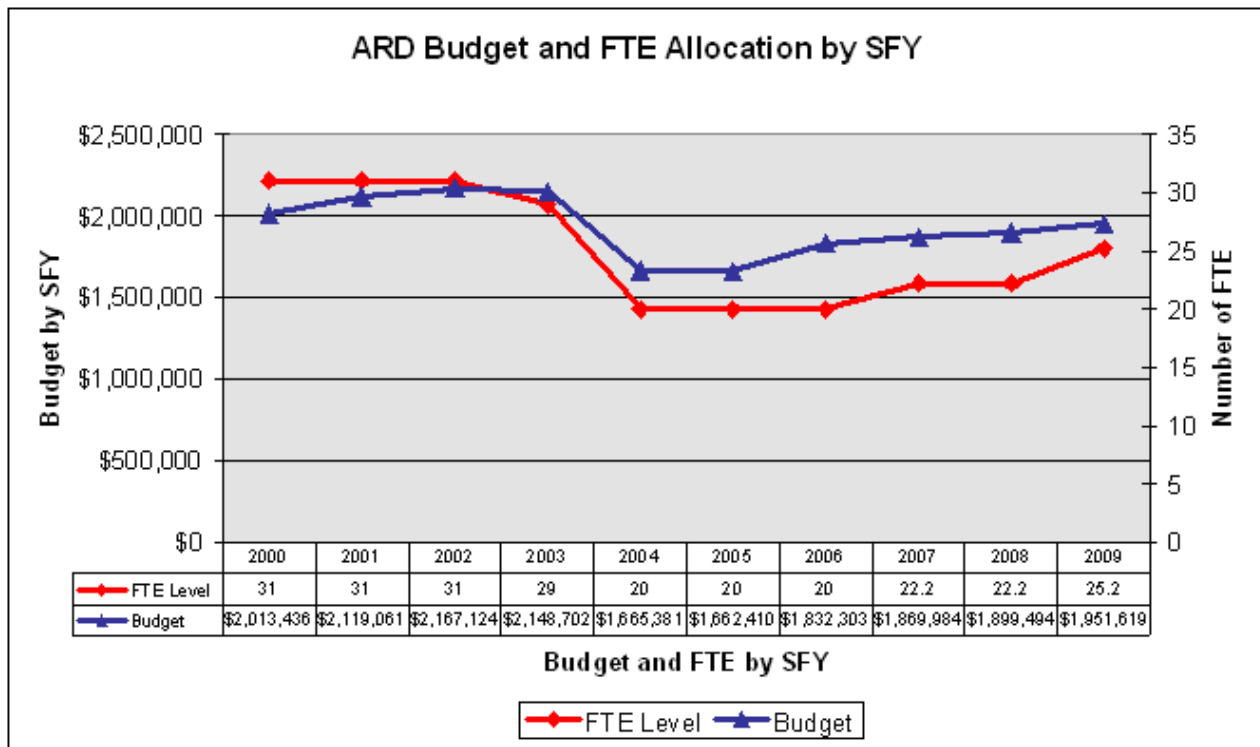
*The Administrative Review Division's mission is to promote safety, permanency and well-being for Colorado's children.*

## Organizational Structure

The ARD is located within the Office of Employment and Regulatory Affairs in the Colorado Department of Human Services. The ARD works cooperatively with both Programs it reviews; the Division of Child Welfare and the Division of Youth Corrections. In addition, the ARD has cooperative relationships with many external partners including: State Judicial, the Office of the Child's Representative, the State of Colorado Foster Parent Association, the Denver Indian Family Resource Center, Colorado Coalition of Adoptive Parents, the National Resource Center for Organizational Improvement in Child Welfare, the American Humane Society, the Butler Institute for Families at the University of Denver, the Center for Applied Research in Child Welfare (ARCW) at Colorado State University, the National Foster Care Review Coalition, and others. The ARD Steering Committee, comprised of many of the external partners listed above, guides the review processes and practices of the Division.

## Budget

The ARD's budget for State Fiscal Year (SFY) 2009 was approved at \$1,951,619 and 25.2 FTE. This included \$1,196,849 of general fund and \$754,770 of federal IV-E funding. This represented a \$52,125 increase in funding from SFY 2008, while the staffing level remained the same until the fourth quarter of 2009 (at which time 3 FTE were added). The chart below displays the ARD's budget and staffing patterns since SFY 2000.



## IV-E Training Dollars

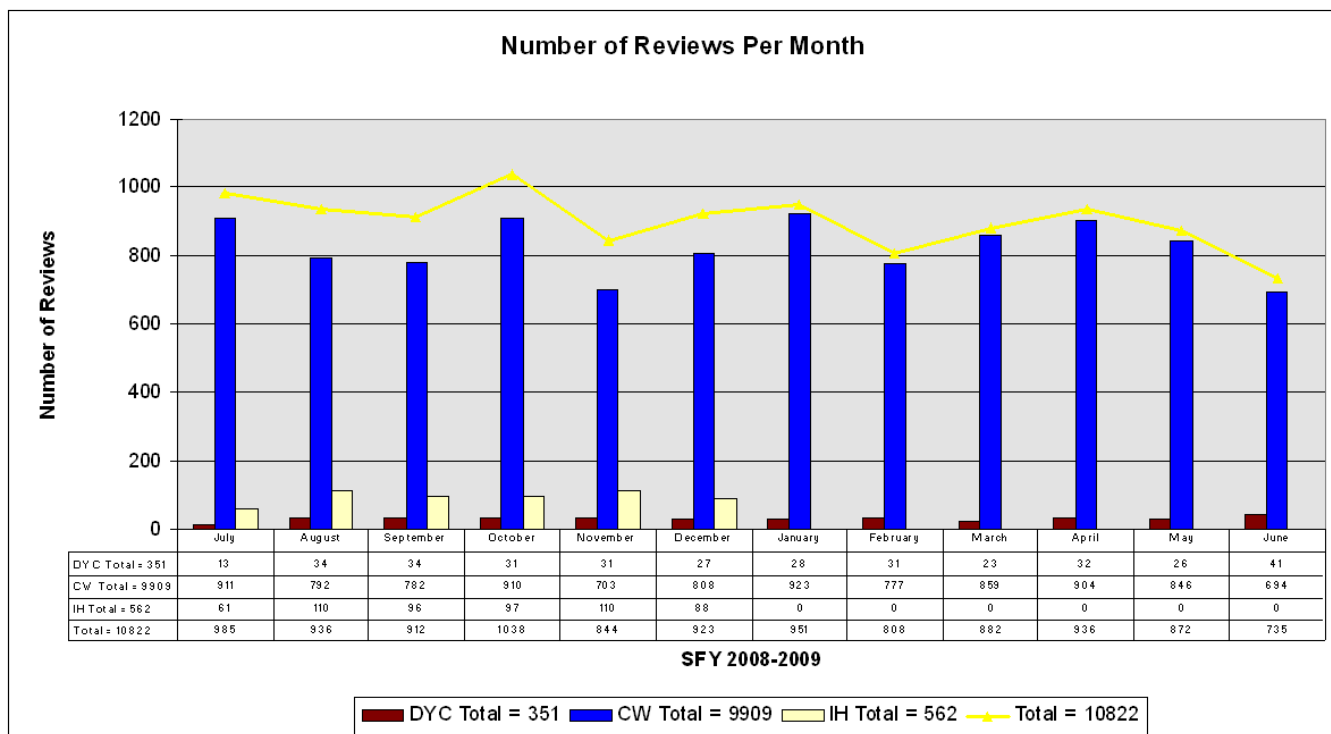
The ARD receives a Federal Title IV-E match for the review system. Training related to IV-E processes also receives a funding match. The University of Southern Maine manages Colorado's IV-E training dollars.

In SFY 2009, ARD requested IV-E funding for several purposes, including the on-going training of review staff and the Annual Administrative Review Coordinator's Conference. In response to these requests, the ARD received \$32,443 in IV-E training dollars in SFY 2009. This provided ARD staff the opportunity to attend and participate in the Annual Child Welfare Conference.

Funding also allowed for the ARD to continue to participate, and co-lead, a national organization whose mission is to serve as a coalition of independent foster care review programs. This organization, the National Foster Review Coalition, strives to ensure, through individual case review and advocacy for systemic change, the safety, well-being and timely achievement of permanency for children in foster care by: informing and influencing individual state and national policy makers, as well as the public; promoting the establishment of an independent review system in each state to assess the status of these children; and supporting the work of active independent review systems. Specifically, Colorado serves as the lead over data collection and has established a data collections system for participating members to use in gathering national data on selected topic areas, as well as created and maintain the coalition's website ([www.nfrcr.net](http://www.nfrcr.net)).

## Reviews Conducted in SFY 2009

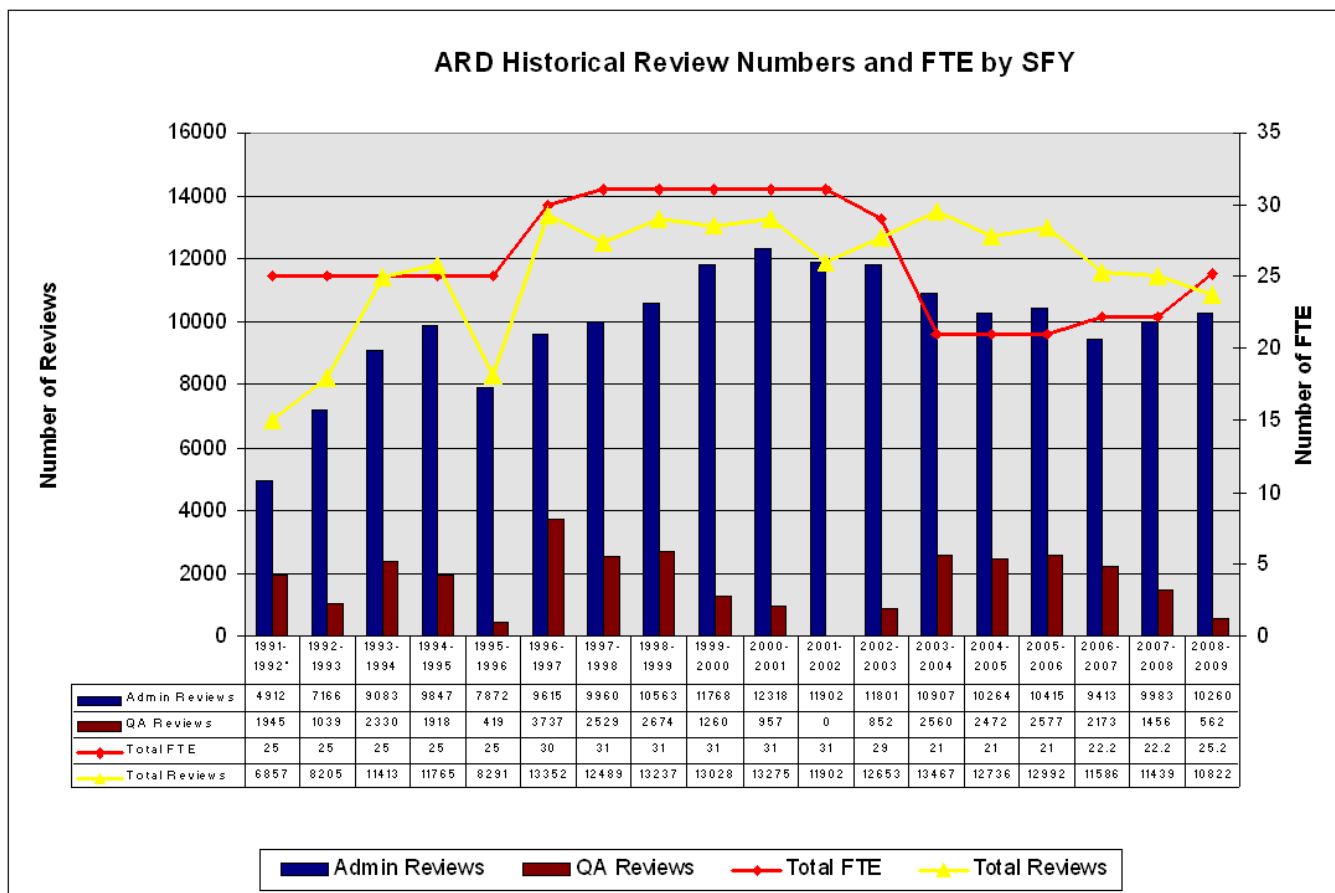
In SFY 2009, the ARD conducted a total of 10,822 reviews. This total included 9,909 Administrative Reviews conducted in Child Welfare (CW), 351 Administrative Reviews held in the Division of Youth Corrections (DYC) and 562 In-Home Service Reviews on Child Welfare cases. The review numbers for SFY 2009 are displayed in the following chart.



## Historical Review Numbers

The ARD has monitored the historical trends of total reviews conducted and staffing patterns since SFY 1992, as shown in the following chart. Compared to SFY 2008, the ARD conducted 617 fewer (5.4 % decrease) reviews in SFY 2009. This included a 61.4% (894) decrease in In-Home Service Reviews and a 2.8% (277) increase in Administrative Reviews. This overall increase in Administrative Reviews consisted of a 5.2% (490) increase in Child Welfare Administrative Reviews, and a 37.8% (213) decrease in Division of Youth Corrections Administrative Reviews from SFY 2008. The decrease in DYC Administrative Reviews resulted from changes in the review universe subsequent to HB 08-1156.

The overall decrease in review numbers was due to a significant decrease in In-Home Service Reviews. In-Home Service Reviews were not scheduled after January 2009, due to the development and piloting of new In-Home Service Review Instruments, as well as the Screen Out Review conducted in September 2008.



## Timeliness of Reviews

The following table summarizes the timeliness status of reviews for children in out-of-home care for SFY 2009. The “Universe of Eligible Children” includes all children in out-of-home care for seven months or longer during the quarter. If a child had been in out of home care for seven months or longer and the child’s most recent review was either within the sixth month following removal or within the sixth month of the last review, the child’s review would be considered timely and would be reported in the “Number of Children with Timely Review Status.” If the child was not reviewed within the sixth month of removal or within the sixth month after the last review, the child’s review would be considered late. Further, if the child did not receive a review and a review was due, the child’s review would be considered late. These children would be reported in the “Number of Children with Late Review Status.” It should be noted that the ARD received 3 additional FTE during the last quarter of SFY 2009, so an increase in timely reviews is expected in SFY 2010.

### SFY 2009 Timeliness

Timeliness Status of Children in Out of Home Care FY 2008-09 (Considering those children in care 7 months or longer and those who were reviewed early)								
	1st Quarter		2nd Quarter		3 <sup>rd</sup> Quarter		4 <sup>th</sup> Quarter	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Number of Children with Timely Review Status	3710	63.1%	3789	65.4%	3648	61.7%	3622	65.5%
Number of Children with Late Review Status	2169	36.9%	2001	34.6%	2269	38.3%	1903	34.5%
Universe of Eligible Children	5879	100%	5790	100%	5917	100%	5525	100%

Cumulative FY 2008-2009 = 47%



# The Relationship Between Timely Case Review, Review Findings, and Child Welfare Outcomes

*A Dissertation by Tia Maria Whitaker*

***Timely case review reduces the length of stay for children placed in out-of-home care by approximately 10 months.***

Nationally, there is recent evidence that periodic case review is a factor related to improved outcomes for children served by the child welfare system.

The primary role of an ARD reviewer is to perform the six-month periodic reviews for children in out-of-home care, as mandated in State and Federal law. During the review process, the reviewer is required to interpret State and Federal rules to the situation and to the policies of the judicial district and county departments serving children in out-of-home care across the state. The reviewer is required to negotiate, mediate and facilitate problem solving sessions and conflicts during face-to-face reviews. Through the review process, the reviewer evaluates the casework processes and experiences of the child throughout the review period. The reviewer provides expert guidance and consultation to county child welfare workers and managers. The reviewer highlights strengths of the casework process as well as identifies problems and systemic issues within the case planning and casework process that may directly and indirectly effect the experiences for children served in out-of-home care in Colorado. The reviewer assesses the casework processes of decision-making and case planning, educates caseworkers on pertinent State and Federal regulations, and when necessary problem solves and identifies possible solutions with county child welfare workers and agencies, with the goal of improving the lives of the children and families served through the child welfare system by strengthening the child welfare system in Colorado. Overall, the ARD review process serves as a casework intervention to improve outcomes for children served in Colorado's public child welfare system.

In 2008, a study was conducted on children and youth entering out-of-home care for the first time between January 1, 2004 and June 30, 2005, identified as Program Area 5, who remained in out-of-home care for six months or longer and received at least one administrative case review by the ARD.

***The ARD review process serves as a social work intervention to improve outcomes for children served in Colorado's public child welfare system.***

The study indicates that several variables (including race/ethnicity, age at removal, initial placement setting, removal reasons of other parental incapability and child specific issues, entry cohort, case planning, visitation, review attendance and *timely case review*) are significant predictors of a child achieving permanency. Furthermore, the research model shows that several variables, including the interaction between *timely case review* and caseworker contacts, are significant predictors of a child's length of stay. Specifically, the research shows that *timely case review* reduces the length of stay for Colorado's children placed in out-of-home care.

The ARD is encouraged by these positive outcomes and is interested in studying the effects of the case review system on outcomes for children and families receiving in-home services, after the In-Home Service Reviews are reinstated.

Source: Whitaker, T.M. (2008). The Relationship Between Timely Case Review, Review Findings, and Child Welfare Outcomes. Retrieved from [www.cdhs.state.co.us/.../PositiveEffectsOfReviewOnOutcomesSummary.pdf](http://www.cdhs.state.co.us/.../PositiveEffectsOfReviewOnOutcomesSummary.pdf)

## Demographics of SFY 2009 Review Population

During SFY 2009, the ARD conducted 10,260 Administrative Reviews for children in out-of-home care, including 9,909 Child Welfare reviews and 351 DYC reviews. Of these reviews, approximately 67% of the reviews were re-reviews (meaning the child had been reviewed previously), and nearly 33% of the reviews conducted were initial reviews.

Because a child can be reviewed multiple times during the year, it is important to understand that the 9,909 reviews do not reflect the number of children reviewed during the year. During SFY 2009, the ARD reviewed 6,900 unique children in the 10,260 reviews. Slightly over half of the children were reviewed one time (51.9%), while 48.1% of children reviewed were reviewed two or more times during the year. The average length of time a child had spent in out-of-home care at the time of the review was 26.57 months, and the median length of stay was 14 months.

In Colorado, children are served in the Child Welfare system through several program areas.

Children served because of child abuse and neglect issues (PA5) represented 38.9% of the children reviewed. Children served identified as children in need of specialized services (PA6) represented nearly 39% of the children reviewed. Children committed to the Division of Youth Corrections represented slightly over 4% of the children/youth reviewed.

Of the 6,900 children reviewed, 77.9% were Caucasian (5,373). Children identified as Black or African American (994) represented 14.4% of the sample. The remaining 7.7% included children identified as American Indian or Alaskan Native (1.3%), Asian (.4%), Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander (.2%), children with more than one race identified (5.5%), and nineteen children with no race/ethnicity identified. There were more males (56.1%) than females (43.9%) reviewed. The mean age at review was 10.47 years, and the median age at review was 12 years. However, children age 17 and older were reviewed most often. Over half of the children reviewed were from single female households (50.5%), followed by married couples (23.9%), unmarried couples (14.9%), and single males (7.4%), with 4.3% unable to be determined.

Colorado's public child welfare system is a state-supervised, county-administered social service system.

The Colorado Department of Human Services oversees the sixty-four counties in Colorado. The counties in Colorado are commonly grouped into three categories as follows: The ten large counties (TLC), middle sized counties (MSC), and balance of state counties (BOS). Most of the children reviewed were from one of Colorado's ten large counties (80.5%), 11.6% of the children came



## Demographics of SFY 2009 Review Population (continued)

from one of Colorado's middle sized counties, and 3.5% of children reviewed were from Colorado's rural areas. Slightly over four percent of the children reviewed during SFY 2009 were committed to the Division of Youth Corrections.

When a child is removed from their home in Colorado, reasons for the removal are identified and documented in the Trails system. A child can have multiple reasons for removal identified. The removal reasons identified most often for children reviewed were neglect (32.1%) and child's behavior (18.8%). Other reasons for removal can be reviewed in the following table.

Demographic Characteristics of Children reviewed by the ARD in SFY 2009						
Characteristic	Detail	n	%	Mean	Median	Mode
<b>Review Type **</b>	Initial - Child Welfare	3116	30.4%			
	Initial - DYC	219	2.1%			
	Re-Review - Child Welfare	6793	66.2%			
	Re-Review - DYC	77	0.8%			
	Permanency Review	55	0.5%			
<b>For Children, Number of Reviews Provided During SFY 2008 **</b>	Child Received One Review	3582	51.9%			
	Child Received Two Reviews	3276	47.5%			
	Child Received Three Reviews	42	0.6%			
<b>Race/Ethnicity *</b>	American Indian or Alaska Native	91	1.3%			
	Asian	28	0.4%			
	Black or African American	994	14.4%			
	Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander	15	0.2%			
	White	5373	77.9%			
	More than one Race Identified	380	5.5%			
	Missing	19	0.3%			
<b>Gender *</b>	Female	4502	43.9%			
	Male	5758	56.1%			
<b>Family Structure *</b>	Female, Single	3482	50.5%			
	Male, Single	442	6.4%			
	Married Couple	1646	23.9%			
	Unmarried Couple	1030	14.9%			
	Undetermined	299	4.3%			
<b>Case Category *</b>	DYC	300	4.3%			
	Other	290	4.2%			
	PA 4	834	12.1%			
	PA 5	2685	38.9%			
	PA 6	2661	38.6%			
	Missing in Trails	130	1.9%			
<b>County Size *</b>	DYC	300	4.3%			
	Ten Large	5554	80.5%			
	Mid-Sized	802	11.6%			
	Balance of State	244	3.5%			
<b>Age at Time of Review **</b>	Birth to Age 2	1677	16.3%	10.47	12	17
	Age 3 to 5	1217	11.9%			
	Age 6 to 9	1371	13.4%			
	Age 10 to 12	1053	10.3%			
	Age 13 to 14	1125	10.9%			
	Age 15 to 16	1739	16.9%			
	Age 17 and Older	2078	20.3%			
<b>Length of State (LOS) **</b>	LOS in Months			26.57	14	5
<b>Removal Reasons ***</b>	Abandonment	315	3.1%			
	Child's Alcohol Abuse	84	0.8%			
	Child's Behavior	1925	18.8%			
	Child's Disability	154	1.5%			
	Child's Drug Abuse	216	2.1%			
	Death of Parent	43	0.4%			
	Housing	617	6.0%			
	Neglect	2373	23.1%			
	Parent's Alcohol Abuse	564	5.5%			
	Parent's Drug Abuse	1562	15.2%			
	Parent's Inability to Cope	1777	17.3%			
	Parent's Incarceration	641	6.2%			
	Physical Abuse	825	8.0%			
	Reinquisition	40	0.4%			
	Sexual Abuse	521	5.1%			

Based on Number of Children Reviewed \*  
 Based on All Reviews Completed \*\*  
 Multiple Responses Allowable \*\*\*

## Other Accomplishments

### *Screen Out Review*

During the week of September 22 - 26, 2008, the ARD conducted their second annual Screen Out Review of PA5 Child Protection referrals. The review included approximately 44 reviewers, including two child welfare professionals from the Division of Child Welfare, 16 ARD staff, and 26 county staff. Reviewers included representatives from 14 Colorado counties. The review sample was extracted from Trails on September 6, 2008, and the sample universe included PA5 Child Protection referrals screened out between March 5, 2008 and September 5, 2008. A stratified random sampling technique was used to create the sample included in the review.

Within five days, eleven paired review teams (of two to four reviewers) reviewed 1,291 screened out referrals from around the state. Based on information documented in the referrals in Trails, reviewers found that 11.7% of the referrals reviewed met the criteria for assignment, a 2.4 % decrease from the previous year. Thirty-two counties were asked to respond regarding 102 referrals (approximately 8%) for follow-up and/or feedback. Of those referrals, 65 were sent back to 29 counties for follow-up. Thirty-seven referrals were sent back for information purposes only. All but three of the 29 counties responded. County responses varied from full assessments to no further action taken. As in 2007, many counties had already completed the work but had not documented their efforts in Trails.

The Screen Out Review results were presented to various stakeholder groups, including the ARD Steering Committee and the Governor's Child Welfare Action Committee.



### *Internal Satisfaction Surveys*

The ARD conducted their 11th annual Client Satisfaction Survey to determine if the ARD is meeting federal goals and if reviews continue to be worthwhile to the review participants. Each reviewer was given 50 surveys to distribute to participants at administrative reviews during the months of September and October of 2008. The participants were asked their perceptions and impressions based on their experiences with the ARD review process, including what the ARD could do to improve the review process. Survey respondents included parents, youth/children, foster parents, caseworker/client managers, supervisors, guardians ad litem, kinship providers, other providers, and others. As the ARD believes that the participation of these individuals is critical to the success of the review process, their feedback is crucial to ARD's continuing improvement.

Overall, responses to the questions were once again positive and indicated that the Administrative Reviews achieved the specified goals. The following present an overview for each question:

- The permanency goal was discussed in 99.6% of the reviews
- Progress, or lack of progress, towards the permanency goal was discussed in 99.6% of the reviews
- The needs of the children/youth in placement was discussed in 99.4% of the reviews
- The safety of the children/youth in placement was discussed in 99.4% of the reviews
- Participants felt they were able to express their views/concerns in 99.6% of the reviews
- 99.6% of the respondents indicated that the reviews were worthwhile

## Coordinator Surveys

In eight of the last nine years, ARD has surveyed the Administrative Review Coordinators in Colorado's 64 counties. In addition, coordinators for the four DYC regions have been included since 2002. The ARD is committed to gathering information to aid in evaluating strengths and weaknesses in the scheduling process, with the goal of making the review scheduling process as efficient and effective as possible.

In October of 2008, the ARD was honored to once again host a Coordinator's Conference. Coordinators attending the conference were provided with the survey. The remaining coordinators were asked to return the survey via email. The survey addressed the receipt and timeliness of review findings, the sufficiency and timeliness of review days provided to counties, and responsiveness of the reviewers and the ARD state office. This year's return rate of 81% was 3% lower than the previous year, with responses received from all four DYC regions and 51 County Coordinators for 54 counties.

Regarding individual items, the proportion of coordinators responding positively increased over prior years for four of the six performance-related items. These items involved whether review findings were provided timely; days for scheduling were received by the last workday of the month; the appropriate number of days were received from reviewers to keep current; and that reviewers respond to questions and concerns.

The two items that showed a decline in performance addressed whether review findings were being received in the county/region and the responsiveness from the State ARD Office to the county's/region's questions and concerns. The focus for improvement will be on identifying the specific problems in the declining areas, in an effort to enhance ARD's ability to provide accurate data. The ARD believes in providing the

highest excellence in customer service to our counties/regions and will take the necessary steps to improve in this area.

Overall, the 2008 survey results were very positive and consistent with previous years. The results indicate that most coordinators are satisfied with the scheduling process and the reviewers.

## Workgroups and Committees

In SFY 2009, ARD staff participated in numerous workgroups and committees, in an effort to develop new, and enhance existing, partnerships and collaboration toward positive outcomes for Colorado's children.

### Internal Workgroups and Committees:

- Quality Improvement Team (QIT)
- Consistency Training Workgroup
- Recognition Committee
- Coordinator's Conference Committee
- ARD Steering Committee

### External Workgroups and Committees:

- County Caseworker and Region Client Manager Rewards and Incentives Group
- Governor's Child Welfare Action Committee
- County Trails Users Group (CTUG)
- Child Welfare Training Group with the Center for Governmental Training
- Denver Court Improvement Project
- Child Welfare Protection Group
- National Resource Center for Organizational Improvement in Child Welfare
- State Trails Change Control Board
- System Wide Analysis Team (SWAT)
- National Foster Care Review Coalition
- Child Welfare Sub-Policy Advisory Committee
- SANCA
- 1451

## Recognition Awards

The ARD acknowledges exceptional case practice of caseworkers and client managers throughout the state. Based on compliance findings and outstanding efforts toward achieving safety, well-being, and permanency for children in out of home care, caseworkers and case managers are eligible to receive daily, monthly and annual awards. Daily award certificates are given to caseworkers whom demonstrate excellent case practice in the areas that they are directly responsible for. Monthly and annual Excellence in Case Practice Awards are also given to caseworkers whom demonstrate one or all of the following on a specific case:

- Engagement and collaboration through interaction with parents and providers as seen at the reviews
- Thorough knowledge of the child's and family's needs and services
- Accessing or mobilizing the resources to meet the child's needs
- Establishing and maintaining life connections for the child
- Outstanding collaboration with other professionals
- Exemplary movement towards permanency

Reviewers nominate workers for these monthly awards, which consist of a certificate acknowledging their receipt of the award, an additional "prize" (such as a note pad or coffee cup), and notification to the county directors. Annual awards are selected from the ARD Recognition Committee, based upon all of the monthly award nominations made by reviewers throughout the year.

In SFY 2009, the ARD presented 1,676 awards to caseworkers. This included 1,658 daily awards, 12 monthly awards, and six annual awards. Letters of notification of the annual awards were sent to county directors and supervisors, and the award recipients were presented plaques of

appreciation at a recognition luncheon held in their honor at the ARD office. The six annual award recipients received scholarships to the annual Child Welfare Conference, held in June 2009. In addition, names of daily, monthly, and annual award recipients were displayed on a rolling list at the ARD information booth at the Child Welfare Conference.



## Community Service

The ARD recognizes volunteer service as an essential component to sustaining healthy Colorado communities. To support and promote volunteer service and team-building, and in an effort to help address local community needs, the ARD participated in the following community service projects in SFY 2009:

- Provided school supplies for children at a local residential treatment center
- Provided gifts and gift cards and prepared holiday food for children at a local residential treatment center
- Provided Easter baskets for children at a local residential treatment center
- Provided and distributed toiletries for local shelters throughout the state

## Systemic Issues, Recommendations, and Changes

As a result of the Quality Assurance System (which includes the Administrative Reviews, In-Home Service Reviews, Assessment Reviews, and the Screen Out Review), the ARD was able to capture information from various sources (e.g., aggregate data, interviews with county staff, feedback from child welfare stakeholders, etc.) and integrate this information to identify systemic issues in Colorado's Child Welfare system. This information is shared regularly with State Child Welfare staff and the ARD Steering Committee, and is briefly summarized below. For more detailed information, please contact the ARD.

### *Identified Systemic Issues and Recommendations*

#### TRAILS

- "Emotional Abuse - 3rd Party" is not currently available as a screen out reason in Trails.
- Institutional abuse history can not be conducted in Trails through the provider identification number. Instead, abuse history is only accessible by searching under the child's name. If the child under review is not the alleged victim, the institutional abuse allegation may not be associated with the child under review. This could result in lack of information regarding allegations (on another child) in a placement that may pose significant risk and/or safety issues for the child under review and other children in the placement.
- Counties have requested adding two new sections to the Assessment Summary Report: 1) prior case search results (in addition to prior referral search results) and 2) supervisory override information, regarding screened out referrals (an outstanding issue from SFY 2008).
- The alleged Person Responsible for Abuse/Neglect (PRAN) address defaults to the child's address unless specifically data entered. It is difficult to determine if the PRAN's actual address has been entered correctly or if it defaulted to the child's address. This is also an outstanding issue from SFY 2008.

#### POLICY/RULE

- Counties have requested clarification on the level of detail required when completing and documenting a records check. Specifically, it is unclear which databases are to be searched and if parents (as children) should be checked.

- If the alleged PRAN is someone who has some caregiving responsibility of the child and resides in the household (such as a live-in-partner or boyfriend), it is unclear whether intra-familial or 3rd party abuse/neglect is the appropriate allegation type.
- Counties are using various definitions for I & R (Information and Referral), when chosen as a referral screen out reason. As a result, there is no standard for its meaning across counties, often resulting in confusion regarding what services the child and family may have received, if any.
- There is no clear definition of what contacts (and with whom) determine when an assessment begins.

#### TRAINING AND OTHER

- It appears that training requirements for screeners vary across the state. This issue was also identified and is being addressed in the Governor's Child Welfare Action Committee.
- There is no protocol for entering hyphenated surnames in Trails, often making it difficult to conduct accurate or complete client and records searches.
- Some counties have multiple client identification numbers for a single client. This may result in difficulty locating accurate historical information regarding a client and in identifying open referrals and/or cases. There may be a need to develop a regular notification process to counties regarding duplicate identification numbers.

## *Systemic Accomplishments*

- Colorado's ARD partnered with other states' Foster Care Review Programs in an effort to maintain a unified national organization of Foster Care Review Programs, named the National Foster Care Review Coalition. The ARD attended regular teleconferences with the NFCRC and was instrumental in developing the NFCRC's national database and data-collecting measures.
- Findings and recommendations from the Screen Out Review conducted by the ARD (in partnership with the Division of Child Welfare and county staff) in September 2008 resulted in Trails changes, including ongoing cases being "flagged" a different color in Trails when a new referral is associated with the ongoing case.
- The ARD narrative findings were added to Trails, to meet requirements identified in the State Automated Child Welfare Information System (SACWIS) Audit.
- The information gathered by the ARD through the various reviews, analyzed, and distributed through quarterly reports continued to be a major source of data for improving safety, permanency, and well-being outcomes for children and families in Colorado, in preparing counties for the Child and Family Services Review, which was held in March 2009, and in developing a Performance Improvement Plan to address issues identified in the CFSR.





## Administrative Review Division Staff

Eighteen Administrative Reviewers cover reviews in Colorado's 64 counties and four DYC regions.

**Kristy Bennett**

*Adams, Boulder, Denver,  
Gilpin, Broomfield*

**Janet Black**

*Arapahoe, Denver,  
Douglas, Elbert, Lincoln*

**Sara Blumberg**

*In Training*

**Kristy Braunschmidt**

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*Adams, Cheyenne,  
DYC South, El Paso,  
Kiowa, Kit Carson, Pitkin*

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Moffat, Montrose, Ouray,  
Rio Blanco, Routt,  
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Chaffee, Conejos, Costillo,  
Fremont, La Plata/San Juan,  
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**Steve Turner**

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**Please contact the Administrative Review Division:**

- To discuss this report further
- For more information on Colorado's case review system
- For additional copies of this report

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