

Administrative Review Division

Colorado Department of Human Services



2010 Annual Report

July 2009-June 2010

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

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The Administrative Review Division

Colorado's Child Welfare Quality Assurance/Improvement 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. The ARD is the mechanism responsible for the federally required Case Review System and a portion of the Quality Assurance System for the Division of Child Welfare (DCW) and the Division of Youth Corrections (DYC). To fulfill our mission to promote safety, permanency and well-being for Colorado's children, the ARD works closely with Colorado's counties to train, measure and assess adherence to State and federal regulations. Such regulations are in place to help prevent unnecessary moves for children in foster care and to assess and encourage that the needs of families and children are being appropriately addressed. The most prominent of the ARD's requirements are the administrative case reviews, which are required every six months for each child in out-of-home foster care. The ARD conducts approximately 10,000 out-of-home reviews per year.

The ARD is comprised of a closely-knit team of staff members who truly operate with outward enthusiasm and optimism. The ARD's staff members maintain notable academic and professional credentials and utilize their skills and knowledge base to conduct reviews, create strong working relationships within their counties and regions of responsibility, provide technical assistance and compliance training for caseworkers, client managers and supervisors and, most importantly, assist in achieving high quality and consistent care for Colorado's children.

Founded in 1991, the ARD has collected and analyzed years of information from reviews, conferences, surveys and other forums. The ARD also maintains extensive databases that have assisted in the production of professionally published papers and articles in referenced journals. The ARD encourages its stakeholders and other industry professionals to utilize its published papers and research as a source for data 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. The 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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2010 Executive Summary

The ARD of the Colorado Department of Human Services (CDHS) presents its annual report for State Fiscal Year (SFY) 2010. This report is intended to create a transparent view of the Administrative Review Division's work toward creating better futures for Colorado's children and families throughout SFY 2010.

In SFY 2010, the ARD was allocated \$2,185,382. This amount includes general funds totaling \$1,421,098 and federal IV-E funds totaling \$764,284. The ARD operated with 25.2 FTE as it did in SFY 2009; no new positions were added during SFY 2010. Eight furlough days in SFY 2010 resulted in an approximate three percent cut in funding that is not reflected in the above figures.

The ARD completed 11,074 reviews in SFY 2010, which includes 9,039 Child Welfare Administrative Reviews, 453 DYC Administrative Reviews, and 1,582 Quality Assurance Reviews.

SFY 2010 was a year of growth, accomplishment and change for the Administrative Review Division. As the landscape of child protection is ever-changing, the ARD is committed to evolving, improving and monitoring its review systems and oversight to best meet the needs of the children and families served through Colorado's child welfare and youth corrections systems.

As part of its evolution, the ARD collaborated with County Departments of Social/Human Services, State Child Welfare, Field Administration and Trails divisions, Federal Children's Bureau regional staff and the ARD Steering Committee to develop, pilot and implement

new Out-of-Home, In-Home, Assessment and Screen Out review instruments. These instruments more closely examine the processes through which children and families enter and exit Colorado's child welfare and youth corrections systems, the quality of their experiences while they are within these systems, and the collection of meaningful information and data that accurately reflects how services are delivered and monitored throughout the child's involvement in these systems.

The ARD provided training sessions for county, judicial and child welfare staff with regard to the new instruments, the associated instructions and the piloting and implementation of the instruments through case reviews. The ARD was also able to use the feedback received during the pilot phase to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of each instrument prior to the instruments being fully implemented.

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2010 Executive Summary, continued

The ARD fulfilled its role as Colorado's Quality Improvement System by continuously collecting and analyzing data collected through each type of review and presenting results to each county department as part of the ARD's ongoing monitoring processes. In addition, the ARD developed ad hoc research projects at the request of State and county staff on a variety of topics related to Colorado's child welfare system at the State and County level.

Dr. Marc Mackert and Dr. Tia Whitaker, the ARD's Data Unit Manager and Data Analyst, respectively, authored a study based on data obtained from the ARD's annual Screen Out Review in October 2009. This study was selected for publication in the American Humane Association's *Protecting Children Journal*. This national publication is reviewed by child welfare professionals and is well-respected in the child welfare arena.

In 2011, the ARD will remain committed to evolving as an agency by emphasizing the provision of monitoring services, technical assistance, training, data collection and analysis and customer service with the utmost professionalism. The ARD will continue to strengthen its collaborative relationships with other agencies and will continue to play an integral role in enhancing the child welfare system to improve safety, permanency and well-being for Colorado's children.



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Goals and Accomplishments During State Fiscal Year 2010

Enhance review processes and review instruments to be more focused on the best interests of children.

During SFY 2010, the ARD developed new review instruments that allow for greater focus on the best interests and well-being of children. By creating instruments that emphasize the importance of good case practice, the ARD is also able to identify areas in which training and technical assistance may be useful to county departments of social/human services and the DYCS. As an independent review body, the ARD is able to examine child protection policies and their efficacy in supporting and guiding good case practice and decision-making.

The ARD has provided training sessions to county departments and State agencies to increase stakeholder understanding of the ARD's processes, goals and motivation, how the case review process helps to clarify each child's needs and how to meet those needs while simultaneously keeping each child's best interests in focus. The ARD believes that providing opportunities for technical assistance and training throughout each of its review processes is an intervention that affects the best interests of children.

Focus on the review process as a casework intervention to improve outcomes for children.

Administrative Reviews are intended to identify avenues through which progress can be made toward permanency for each child in care. The ARD has identified through research that children in out-of-home care reach permanency more timely when their cases are reviewed by an independent third party in a consistent and timely manner. The ARD has also renewed its focus on encouraging increased stakeholder participation in case reviews for children in care which will also lead to more detailed information regarding needs and progress toward permanency.

In SFY 2010, the ARD increased the number of In-Home Service Reviews and Assessment Reviews conducted within county departments of social/human services. Assessments are the first opportunity for child protection professionals to intervene on the behalf of children, but there must be a balance between the assessment of the child's safety needs and the assessment of the capabilities and needs of the child's caregivers. Concentrating the focus on assessments and in-home services through the ARD's instruments allows for a more in-depth analysis of assessment processes and service delivery for a vulnerable population—children who remain in the custody of their caregivers, but who require services and supervision to remain at home.

In addition, at the completion of in-home service reviews (QA reviews) the ARD provides an analysis of the data collected at an aggregate level and meets with county staff to discuss the results of the review. The ARD uses a Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) model for reporting and discussing data and measuring desired outcomes, to include strengths and weaknesses of county practice. Additionally, the ARD holds an exit interview with each county. ARD reports and county-requested ad hoc information are then distributed to the counties for review. Based on the reports, counties may voluntarily participate in a county-level, CQI Mini Logic Model, which the ARD will assist them in developing and monitoring.



Goals and Accomplishments During State Fiscal Year 2010, continued

Focus on Federal 475 and IV-E requirements.

The ARD understands that in order to maintain programmatic and fiscal viability throughout the State of Colorado, it must maintain its role in ascertaining and tracking whether initial IV-E eligibility determinations have been completed timely for children removed from their homes, and that redeterminations occur in a timely manner as well. Also, as reviewers identify potential IV-E issues within a county department, the ARD has improved its follow-up process through which these potential issues are addressed. The ARD is also evaluating the use of Trails to identify children who have been removed from home but have not had initial IV-E eligibility determined, thereby affecting the potential fiscal impact to the county departments and the State of Colorado when IV-E eligibility is not determined.

Focus on using the CQI process for all ARD functions.

The ARD continues to provide surveys to all review participants in order to continuously refine our processes through stakeholder feedback. ARD Coordinators in each of Colorado's 64 counties and four DYC regions are also surveyed yearly to ensure that the ARD's scheduling protocol is working well and that the ARD is responsive to the needs of the Coordinators. This year, each set of surveys indicated positive progress in a number of areas and also identified areas for improvement.

While developing new review instruments, the ARD worked to improve its narrative findings to be more easily understood and Reviewers now focus on allowing the questions in the instrument to drive the content of their narrative findings. This has improved the ARD's ability to ensure that it is identifying the areas in which progress is being made and areas in which there are questions or concerns to be addressed. Long-term, the ARD is confident that using this system will allow stakeholders to more easily track progress within each case and to be able to observe the evolution of a case through each narrative finding.

Throughout each month, reviewers submit instrument questions and concerns to an internal Consistency Workgroup for discussion during monthly team meetings, and also collect other case components, such as treatment plans, that may be valuable teaching tools for the team. Small groups examine the same treatment plan identified for discussion and evaluates each plan's compliance with review instrument questions. The large group then reconvenes to discuss how each small group arrived at their responses. This facilitates lively conversation about the intent of each question and allows for ongoing, targeted evaluation of the consistency of responses and understanding of State and Federal rules and regulations.

The ARD also utilizes Inter-Rater Reliability (IRR) training within each county and region. During this training, at least two reviewers read and examine the same case record and document their responses to the review instrument questions. The reviewers then share their justifications for each response. Again, this process ensures that reviewers in each county and region are using similar reasoning when reviewing a case record. Quarterly consistency reports, sorted by county or region, also assist the ARD in ensuring that there is a uniform pattern of responses among reviewers in each county on a regular basis.



Collaborations

The ARD has cooperative relationships with many external partners: 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 Association, 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.



The ARD works with the Butler Institute for Families at the University of Denver to develop training for caseworkers and supervisors that is comprehensive and consistent regarding topics such as the Administrative Review Process and understanding how Volume VII rules apply to case practice.



National Foster Care Review Coalition Speaking Together for Children in Foster Care

As an active member of the National Foster Care Review Coalition, the ARD serves as the primary data collection point for research projects. In the first half of SFY 2010, a study was conducted regarding the ability of states to meet the educational needs of children in foster care. The ARD provided the data analysis and composition of the subsequent report outlining the findings of this research project. The project is described on the following page, which also includes a link to access the full report.

Data collected during the ARD's annual Screen Out Review in October 2009 was chosen for publication in the American Humane Association's *Protecting Children Journal*. This national, peer-reviewed, quarterly journal is dedicated to a wide variety of child welfare topics, and the ARD was honored to have its process recognized at the national level.



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Research Project

Throughout SFY 2010, the ARD has maintained its membership within the National Foster Care Review Coalition (NFCRC). The NFCRC's mission is "to serve as a national coalition of independent foster care review programs 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 foster care review system in each state to assess the status of these children; and supporting the work of active independent review systems."

The ARD serves as a co-lead within the NFCRC, is the lead data collection point for all research projects conducted by the coalition, and also created and continues to maintain the NFCRC website. "The NFCRC is committed to conducting data projects focused on improving practice through research. The NFCRC believes that independent foster care review programs can provide qualitative assessments of various events, as well as independent analysis of systemic and case specific efforts toward protecting children and ensuring their well-being and permanency."

Meeting the Educational Needs of Children in Foster Care: A National Perspective

Data were collected from July 1, 2009 through December 31, 2009 for a project related to the educational stability of children in foster care. A total of 20,469 children were reviewed in order to answer the following questions:

1. For children aged 3-5: Is the child enrolled in Early Head Start or another early childhood education program?
2. For children of school age: Is the child currently enrolled in school?
3. For youth aged 16 or older: Is the youth on track to graduate and/or complete high school?
4. When the child entered foster care, did the child remain in his/her school at the time of their initial placement into foster care?
5. During the review period, has the child been able to remain in the same school?
6. If appropriate, is the child receiving federally required 504 or IEP Special Education services?

58% of children changed schools at the time of initial placement and/or during their time in foster care (32%), indicating that educational stability is lacking for children placed into foster care.

The project found that although most children in foster care were enrolled in either an early education program or school, a large portion of those children were not receiving the special education services they needed and they appear to have significantly lower rates of graduation from high school compared to the general population.

Recommendations from the project include: increase the level of documentation of assessments, needs, services and progress in case records; ensure that age-appropriate children are enrolled in an early childhood education program; make educational stability a priority in case planning and service delivery; improve educational attainment, and improve efforts to meet the needs of children requiring special education services.

Please visit <http://nfcrc.wordpress.com/publications/> and click on Download Report for a full copy of the data project report.

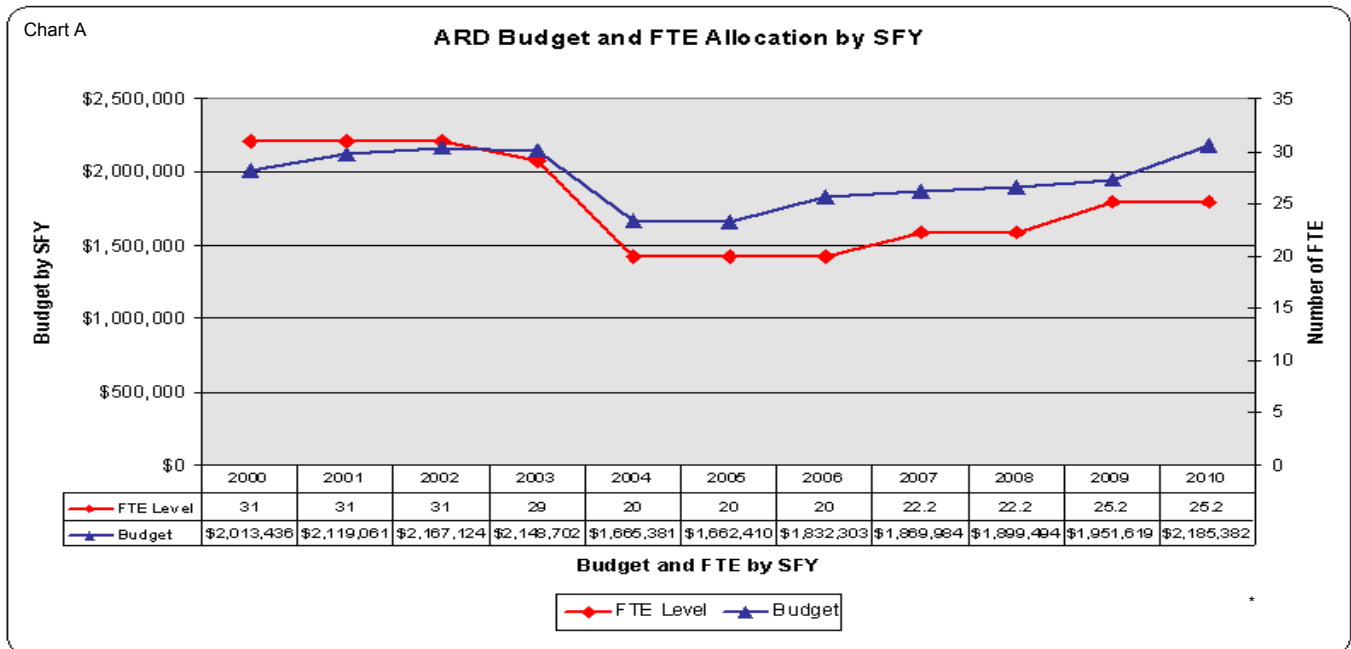
Source: Meeting the Educational Needs of Children in Foster Care: A National Perspective (January 2010). Retrieved 10/09/2010 from <http://nfcrc.wordpress.com>.

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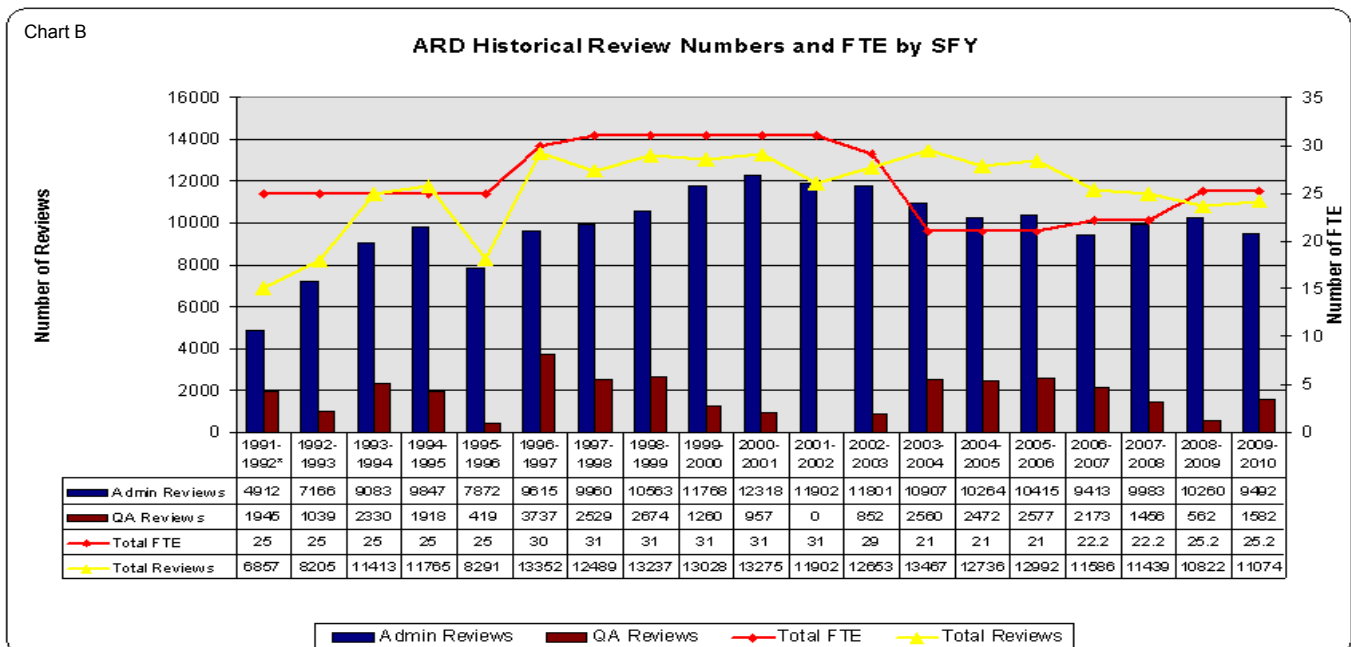


Budget and Reviews Conducted in SFY 2010

The ARD's budget for State Fiscal Year (SFY) 2010 was approved at \$2,185,382 with 25.2 FTE. This amount includes \$1,421,098 in general funds and \$764,284 in federal IV-E funds. Despite an increase in completed reviews, the ARD did not add additional staff during SFY 2010. Chart A below displays budget and staffing patterns within the ARD since SFY 2000, while Chart B tracks the total number of reviews conducted as compared to the total number of FTE since SFY 1992.



* Furloughs resulted in an overall budget decrease for 2010.



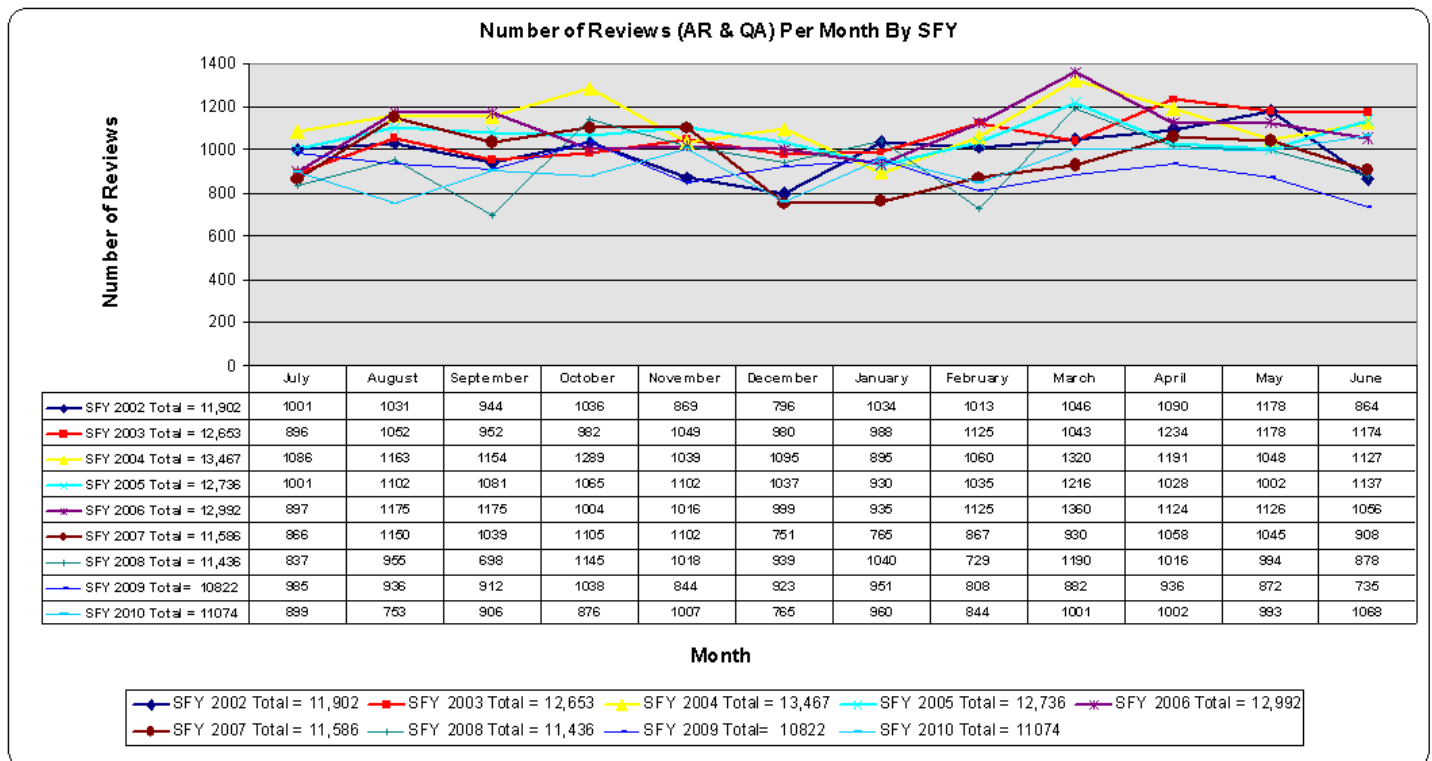
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Review Trends

In SFY 2010, the ARD conducted 252 (2.3%) more reviews than in SFY 2009, with a total number of 11,074 reviews completed. This number includes a 9.2% (870) decrease in Child Welfare (CW) Administrative Reviews (AR), a 22.5% (102) increase in DYC Administrative Reviews, and a 35.5% (1020) increase in In-Home Service (QA) Reviews. The chart below illustrates the historical trends in Administrative Reviews and In-Home Service Reviews since 1992.

The decrease in Child Welfare Administrative Reviews was due to the development and implementation of the new review instruments. During the pilot period for the Out-of-Home Review instrument, ARD reviewers temporarily reduced the number of administrative reviews conducted in county departments and the DYC each day in order to accommodate the analysis and research time required to implement the instrument correctly.





Timeliness of Reviews



Section 422 of the Social Security Act requires periodic reviews of all children in out-of-home care at least every six months. The information regarding the timeliness of these reviews is tracked using Federal measurements within the Adoption and Foster Care Analysis and Reporting System (AFCARS) and the Child and Family Services Review (CFSR). The allowable noncompliance limits set within the AFCARS and the CFSR data are 13% and 10%, respectively. All states must comply with these limits.

During SFY 2008, the Federal Children's Bureau determined that Colorado was not in substantial compliance with AFCARS and CFSR periodic review requirements, placing the State at significant risk of fiscal sanction. According to AFCARS data, a large number of cases were displaying a "late" review status, thereby resulting in AFCARS errors. State Auditors subsequently issued a recommendation that the ARD prioritize "late" reviews. However, the ARD already had a protocol for scheduling reviews, and prioritizing overdue reviews would have negatively impacted the timeliness of regular six-month periodic reviews.

The ARD has worked diligently to ensure children in out-of-home care are reviewed timely. Between SFY 2009 and SFY 2010, there was a significant drop in the number of late reviews. This decrease is due to the ARD being granted three additional FTE during the last quarter of SFY 2009. By mid-first quarter of SFY 2010, the additional FTE were fully trained and able to conduct independent reviews, thereby creating several additional review slots and allowing additional children to be reviewed in a timely manner. However, despite the increase in staff and the number of reviews conducted, the AFCARS database continues to show that some periodic reviews are "late."

The ARD was interested in understanding the reasons some children were still displaying a "late" review status. As a result of its research into this issue, the ARD discovered that many of the "late" reviews were due to a number of data entry errors in the Statewide Automated Child Welfare Information System (SACWIS) used in Colorado, known as Trails. These errors include cases of subsidized adoption, cases open for DYC Medicaid Only, and youth placed in secure settings. Although these children do not meet the criteria to be included in the ARD's review universe, they are being included in the AFCARS count and in the calculations for Table 1 (opposite page) because they have an open removal. Initial analysis shows that, once the errors are corrected, the percentage of children with a "late" review status should be within the allowable 13% noncompliance limit set within AFCARS and the allowable 10% noncompliance limit set through the CFSR. The ARD is working with the Division of Child Welfare to identify and correct these issues.



Timeliness of Reviews, continued

Table 1: Colorado's AFCARS Noncompliance Percentage

FY 2007-08	FY 2008-09	FY 2009-10
Actual	Actual	Actual
13.56%	17.32%	11.55%

The primary strategy being utilized by the ARD to positively impact the timeliness of reviews is to assist county departments of social/human services and the DYC in cleaning up their Trails data. The current Monthly Administrative Review List has numerous problem cases that do not actually require a review, but the data needs to be corrected by the counties or the DYC to avoid ongoing AFCARS errors.





Responsibility and Program Description



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 DCW and the DYC.

Colorado, per Section 471 (a)(22), is responsible for developing and implementing standards to ensure that children are provided quality services that protect their safety and health. The Code of Federal Regulations (at 45 C.F.R. 1357.15 (u) and 45 C.F.R. 1355.34 (c)(3)) also requires a Quality Assurance System to regularly assess the quality of services provided to children and families and to assure that issues identified by this system are addressed. In order to increase efficiencies and reduce duplication of work for both State and county staff, the State of Colorado, in the Child and Family Services Plan, identified the ARD as the entity responsible for implementing a majority of this Quality Assurance System. Within the Quality Assurance System, the ARD combines information from the federally required Administrative Reviews (Section 475 (6)), and Case Reviews (Section 475 (5)), as well as In-Home Service Reviews, Assessment Reviews, and Ad Hoc Reviews. The combination of data and reports from these reviews allows Colorado to fulfill these Federal requirements while simultaneously having processes to measure and provide feedback on case practice, and processes designed to improve outcomes for children and families served through the county departments of social/human services.

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.
- Engaging families and providers in culturally responsive and respectful services and reviews achieves positive results.
- Children are more likely to achieve healthy adulthood if raised in the least restrictive, most family-like environment that is appropriate to their needs.



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Steering Committee

Administrative Review Division Steering Committee

The ARD Steering Committee is a multi disciplinary team charged with the oversight of the processes and functions of the Administrative Review Division. The Steering Committee exists primarily to advise, inform, educate and approve proposed changes to the ARD processes and procedures. Before any changes are made to the ARD's processes or procedures, proposals for change are presented to the Steering Committee. This ensures that our numerous stakeholders, through their representatives on the ARD Steering Committee, have the opportunity to discuss proposed changes and provide input from the perspectives of their unique positions.

Current membership of the Steering Committee consists of representatives from the following groups and agencies: County Directors, county employees from a wide variety of levels, community members, providers, Child Welfare staff, a City Attorney, the State Court Administrators Office, foster parents, the Foster Parent Association, the Colorado Adoption and Foster Care Association, Denver University's Butler Institute for Families and Children, Trails staff, the Office of the Child's Representative, the Alcohol and Drug Abuse Division, the Mental Health Division and the ARD.



The ARD Steering Committee operates with many of the same purposes as those of a non-profit board or Type 1 State Agency. The Steering Committee:

- provide continuous quality improvement through the varied experience and backgrounds of the members, which allows for a well-vetted decision making process;
- create and oversees policy decisions;
- review and approves the ARD review instruments and instructions;
- provide resources for smaller task workgroups;
- verify that the ARD's policies and procedures do not conflict with the legal policies and procedures of county programs and providers;
- protect the best interests of children and families and provides transparency;
- maintain fidelity to agreements reached in Steering Committee meetings by holding ARD accountable for its role;
- provide negotiation and conflict resolution;
- share resources;
- approve any directives, Agency Letters, Dear Director letters, and rule changes; and
- address issues and complaints from the counties and from the community; and provides a check and balance system for the ARD.

This year, the Steering Committee played a critical role in the planning, development and implementation of the new review instruments and instructions.

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Internal Workgroups



As part of the CQI process, the ARD utilizes workgroups within the agency to facilitate positive interaction between the ARD and its stakeholders, and to focus on areas and processes that may be improved upon with regard to the child welfare system of service delivery. Currently, the ARD is actively maintaining its Steering Committee and four workgroups, which assist the Division in improving and moving forward. Each workgroup consists of a manager, several reviewers and one or two office staff members. These workgroups assist the Division, as a whole, in improving and moving forward. Listed below are descriptions of each workgroup, tasks each group is charged with completing, and any achievements or accomplishments made throughout SFY 2010.

Quality Improvement Team

This team is tasked with identifying systemic issues that impact children and families, county departments of social/human services, the DCW, the DYC and the Administrative Review Division. The Quality Improvement Team (QIT) also extracts and analyzes data obtained through administrative reviews, ad hoc reviews and other research projects. During SFY 2010, the QIT examined the correlations between placement stability and involvement in case planning, parent agreement with the permanency goal and timely permanency for children. QIT also evaluated how engagement in case planning affects the child's experience within the foster care system. Additionally, the QIT assisted in the collection and analysis of data for the ARD's portion of the National Foster Care Review Coalition research projects regarding the educational needs of children in foster care and placement stability for children in foster care.



Recognition Workgroup



This group is committed to recognizing and rewarding outstanding work among County and DYC staff. Caseworkers and Client Managers may earn daily Certificates of Appreciation, monthly Certificates of Outstanding Case Practice, and annual Excellence in Case Practice Awards from the Administrative Review Division. The Recognition Workgroup notifies County and Regional Directors of all certificates and awards earned so that the efforts of each Caseworker and Client Manager are recognized among his or her peers, supervisors and administrators. This year, 1,137 awards were presented to caseworkers and client managers. This includes 1,120 daily awards, 12 monthly awards and five annual awards. This year's annual Excellence in Practice Award winners were Ms. Jessica Snyder of Denver County, Mr. Nicholas Lincoln of Jefferson County, Mr. Ian Fetyko and Ms. Amberly Mitchell of Larimer County, and Ms. Jennifer Jaynes of Weld County.

The Recognition workgroup also develops team building activities to increase and maintain morale within the ARD's internal staff. They play an integral role in identifying community service and volunteer activities for ARD staff while also ensuring that employment anniversaries, birthdays and other important life events are remembered and celebrated.

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Internal Workgroups, continued

Consistency Workgroup

This group provides ongoing instrument training for all ARD staff members on a monthly basis. The purpose of each training session is to ensure that each staff member completing any type of review instrument has the same understanding of the intent of each question and has the same method of answering each question. During SFY 2010, the Consistency Training Workgroup began using group development and learning theory to capitalize on the limited amount of time available each month to train all staff members at once. Using this methodology, reviewers are able to send instrument questions in as they arise and have the benefit of group discussion during team meetings to arrive at consensus.



Training Workgroup



The Training Workgroup ensures that all professional parties involved in activities related to children in Colorado's Child Welfare system have the most current and accurate information needed to make critical day-to-day decisions. This includes ensuring that caseworkers, client managers and other professionals involved in case management receive training on various topics, such as writing treatment plans. During SFY 2010, this workgroup was able to ensure that professional parties received continuing education credits for the training sessions they attended, trained county and DYCS staff on the new instruments, and also conducted training and a webinar for the Office of the Child Representative, regarding the importance of Guardian ad Litem involvement in the administrative review process.

Community Service

The ARD believes that by volunteering time and resources, we are helping to promote healthy and sustainable communities for Colorado's families. In keeping with its storied history of providing assistance to those in need, the ARD participated in several community service and volunteer activities this year. ARD staff collected and provided:

- school supplies for children in a remote, rural county;
- personal care items for those in need at area homeless shelters;
- canned goods for two area food banks;
- care packages filled with treats, personal care items, and well-wishes for troops overseas, and
- Christmas gifts and money collected through ARD's year-round Community Service Fund for a family in need.



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External Committees and Workgroups

The ARD participated in numerous external committees, subcommittees and workgroups during SFY 2010. Listed below is a sample of these activities. The ARD is committed to maintaining and preserving collaborative relationships with its stakeholders and State partners.



- The Governor's Child Welfare Action Committee
 - Administrative Structure Subcommittee
 - Child and Family Outcomes Subcommittee
 - Cultural Competency Subcommittee
 - Training Subcommittee
 - Co-occurring Disorder Subcommittee
- The Governor's Working Group on Structure and Call Center
- Child Welfare Sub Policy Advisory Committee
- Colorado Child Welfare Practice Initiative
- Practice Model Design and Development
- Performance Improvement Plan Workgroup
- Employment and Regulatory Affairs Workgroup
- Volume I Revision Workgroup
- ARD-DYC Cross-Division Group
- Performance Management
- County Trails User Group
- Project Operations and Implementation Team
- System-Wide Analysis Team
- Court Improvement Project
- Differential Response Implementation and Evaluation
- Child Protection Task Group
- Cross-Division Group
- Children's Advisory Committee
- Child Welfare Working Group
- Executive Oversight Committee
- Denver Model Court Workgroup and Permanency Subgroup
- Collaborative Management Program (HB 04-1451)
- Communications Protocol Committee
- Contacts Workgroup
- National Foster Care Reviewers Coalition
- Foster Parent Association Committee
- State Trails Change Control Group
- Center for Governmental Training



Screen Out Review

Participants and Process

During the week of September 28, 2009 through October 2, 2009, the ARD hosted its third annual Screen Out Review. This year, review teams consisting of 52 reviewers representing 23 counties, the DCW and the ARD reviewed a random sampling of 1,405 child protection referrals that were screened out (not accepted for assessment) by the counties between March 15, 2009 and September 15, 2009. Using a sample of this size gives the ARD the ability to provide each county with individual data that can be used as a predictor for the rest of their cases with a 90% confidence level. Review teams examined the referrals using a 21-question instrument for first-level reviews, and five additional questions for second-level reviews when indicated.

County and State staff members were assigned to paired teams for first-level reviews for most of the week. If a first-level review team believed a referral should have been accepted for assessment, or safety concerns were identified by the first-level review, the referral was sent for a second-level review. Second-level review teams consisted of ARD managers, DCW program staff and county department supervisors. If the second-level review teams agreed that additional county action was needed on the referral due to safety concerns, the referral was sent back to the county of origin for follow-up.



Findings

Statewide, a total of 137 referrals were referred back to the counties for their review. Of these 137 referrals, 60 required Trails corrections, 34 were referred back with technical assistance and information regarding practice, and 43 required further follow-up or additional information due to safety concerns. This year, only 3% of reviewed referrals required additional follow-up due to safety concerns, as compared to 5% in SFY 2009. In general, it appears that documentation in case records has improved.

The ARD values the Screen Out Review process because it brings professionals together from around the State to work on improving the child welfare system for Colorado's children and families. With each review, we learn more about serving children and families in the best manner possible while fostering cooperative and reciprocal inter-agency relationships.

The ARD's Quality Assurance System—Administrative Reviews, In-Home Service Reviews, Assessment Reviews and the Screen Out Review—allows for continuous interaction and dialogue with each of our stakeholders, including county departments of social/human services, the DCW, the DYC, ARD's Steering Committee and children and their families. Each interaction with stakeholders provides the ARD with an opportunity to view its processes through their eyes, and to receive feedback that facilitates accommodation and change.

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



Surveys

Coordinator Surveys

SFY 2010 marked the ninth annual Coordinators' Survey. Each year, the ARD sends out a survey to Administrative Review Coordinators in each of the 64 county departments of social/human services and in each of the four DYC regions. This year the surveys were sent out and returned via email, allowing for an entirely green survey process. The intent of the survey is to identify the strengths and weaknesses in the review scheduling process and to make the case review system as efficient and effective as possible. This year, 90% of coordinators responded to the survey, which is a 9% increase over the response rate last year.

Each survey contains six performance-related questions regarding the ARD's scheduling process, narrative findings, and the responsiveness of the ARD's staff members. The ARD maintained a 98% satisfaction rate with regard to supplying county departments and the DYC with narrative findings in a timely manner, and 98% of coordinators indicated that there were no missing findings at the time of the survey submission. This is a 5% increase over SFY 2009, indicating that the ARD's staff has been diligent in completing and submitting narrative findings consistently.

While 100% of coordinators indicated that they are receiving available days for scheduling reviews in a timely manner (a 4% increase over last year), there was a 2% drop (to 96%) in satisfaction with regard to being given enough review days to stay current with reviews. The decrease in available review days offered to the counties and the DYC was due to the development and implementation of the new review instruments. However, the ARD is committed to performing with the utmost professionalism and courtesy and will focus on ways in which to improve in this area.

With regard to communication, 96% of coordinators indicated that the reviewers in their county or region were responsive to questions and concerns, and 97% of coordinators indicated that they were satisfied with the level of communication provided to them by the ARD's management team. These numbers represent a 1% and 3% increase, respectively, over satisfaction scores from last year.

Overall, the survey responses indicated that most coordinators are satisfied with the ARD's performance in their counties and regions, which is consistent with years past. The ARD is pleased with the positive responses, but will continue to evaluate and refine its review processes in order to improve service provision to its stakeholders.

Please contact the Administrative Review Division for full copies of the reports generated regarding surveys.



Surveys, continued

Internal Satisfaction Surveys

The Administrative Review Division (ARD) conducted its tenth annual client satisfaction survey in SFY 2010. The intent of the survey is to determine whether the ARD is meeting federal goals and that reviews continue to be worthwhile to review participants. Each reviewer was given 100 surveys to distribute to participants in Administrative Reviews during the months of September and October of 2009. The participants were asked about their perceptions and impressions based on their experiences with the ARD review process. The surveys were distributed in both English and Spanish to a variety of stakeholders.

A total of 1800 surveys were distributed, and 1221 surveys were returned for a 68% return rate. As in prior years, Caseworkers completed the highest percentage of surveys (41%). Respondents listed as Other Providers (therapists, TRCCF staff, outpatient program staff, Chafee workers), and Foster Parents each account for 11% of completed surveys, while Guardians ad Litem represent 9%. Parents and Other Participants (Grandparents, Aunts, Uncles, CASAs, Interns, Probation Officers, Respondent Parent Attorneys and Observers) each account for 8% of completed surveys, and Children/Youth are responsible for 5%. Supervisors, Client Managers and Kinship Providers represent 3%, 2% and 1%, respectively, while another 1% of participants did not identify their role on the survey. The ARD believes that the participation of each of the listed parties is critical to the success of the review process, and their feedback is crucial to the ARD's continuing growth and improvement.

Within each child's/youth's review, there are several items that require discussion with all participants. The first four questions of the survey asked participants whether the child's/youth's permanency goal, progress toward that goal, needs and safety were discussed during the review. The fifth question seeks to ensure that each participant was given the opportunity to express his or her views and concerns during the review.

The survey results indicate that the ARD does a good job of covering the required topics while facilitating a review process through which each participant feels heard. This year yielded the highest satisfaction scores ever received for Question 1: "Was the permanency goal for the youth/child discussed during the review?" with a rate of 99.7%. Comments from review participants were positive as well, and many review participants reported that they enjoyed the review process, as they felt that brainstorming about permanency options was quite helpful. The total range of satisfaction scores for 2009 is .9%, ranging from a high of 99.7% to a low of 98.8%. The ARD has worked diligently to modify processes and increase efficiencies and staff to ensure that reviewers have the time necessary to focus on the best interest of the child in each review.



Identified Systemic Issues and Recommendations

The ARD's Quality Assurance and Improvement System—Administrative Reviews, In-Home Service Reviews, Assessment Reviews, the Screen Out Review, and the Coordinator and Internal Satisfaction Surveys—allows for the collection of many types of information from numerous sources throughout the year. The ARD is then able to analyze this information to identify systemic issues within Colorado's Child Welfare system, with the goal of creating an efficient, effective and beneficial case review system that promotes the safety, permanency and well-being for Colorado's children. The ARD continuously shares information with the DCW and the ARD Steering Committee to facilitate informed decision-making. Listed below and on the following pages are some of the systemic issues noted throughout the year.

Trails Issues

- The referral and assessment summary does not currently include the case history. Adding the case history, similar to the referral history, would be very useful.
- Having a pick list option for “Same/Similar Allegation by Different Reporting Party,” rather than just “Duplicate Referral” would be a more accurate response option if the referral is not a true duplicate of a previous referral.
- Referrals should be sorted by date on the referral and assessment summary.
- A “back” button in Trails would be helpful.
- Allowing for multiple responses for the “Reason for Screen Out” would be helpful.
- Listing clients prior to the narrative on the referral and assessment summary report would be helpful.
- Making “Client Roles” a mandatory field would enhance information in the case record.
- There are numerous errors in “Client Roles” assignments.
- Associating clients with referrals should be mandatory.
- The “Reason for Not Accepting” field does not always populate from referral assign tab to the Trails report.
- The response option, “No Allegations of Abuse and Neglect” seems to be used as a default response, even when there is a more accurate response option.
- There are numerous errors in the spelling of client names. Having a the ability to indicate whether the spelling of a particular name is phonetic, rather than accurate, would be helpful.
- The Trails pick list value related to “Insufficient Information/Unable to Locate to Proceed” needs to be split in to 2 reasons: 1) Insufficient information to proceed and 2) Unable to locate family to proceed.
- There is a significant issue with Duplicate Ids. Efforts should be made to merge these and improve the quality of data in Trails.



Identified Systemic Issues and Recommendations, continued

Policy, Rule and Training Issues

Policy development and/or rule clarification is requested regarding:

- What must happen if a referral is screened out and the reason is “Referring to Open/Ongoing Caseworker.” Direct contact with the receiving worker should be made and documented.
- Placing referrals in other counties’ “In Boxes” and rules related to such.
- The correct manner in which counties must use the “Association” button in Trails, including when to associate referrals/cases/assessments.
- Information found only in hard copy, rather than in Trails. Often, comments such as, “See Hardcopy” are entered in Trails, which is out of compliance with SACWIS requirements.
- Courtesy assessments for other states and whether they should be accepted or screened out when the worker is making face to face contacts and completing some stages of an assessment.
- Whether the following scenario is allowable: Some counties screen out referrals and then re-enter the referral information at a later date—outside the appropriate response time—to assign it, likely to avoid a non-compliance finding during reviews.
- Whether police reports must be scanned into Trails or may remain in hard copy in the paper file.
- The “three referrals in two years” rule. Does the count include institutional abuse referrals? Is acceptance required at this point? Does supervisor review meet the requirement? Practice across the counties varies.
- Entering two-household families—mom’s home, dad’s home—when the parents share custody and one is not involved in the allegation.
- The point at which a Referral becomes an Assessment (i.e. how long the county may “assess” at the referral stage to make a decision about accepting the referral).
- What “attempts” must look like in order to screen out referral.
- Multiple family referrals—when does a referral containing information on two families living in the same home become two individual referrals?
- Practice for assigning domestic violence referrals (e.g. Do kids need to be present? Significant history of referrals in the home?) .
- Whether children under the age of 10 may be coded as perpetrators.

Definitions are requested for the following items:

- Each “Role in Referral.”
- “Screen Out Reason.”
- “Third Party.”
- “Information & Referral.”
- “Duplicate” and “Associated” referrals, as well as applicable business rules.

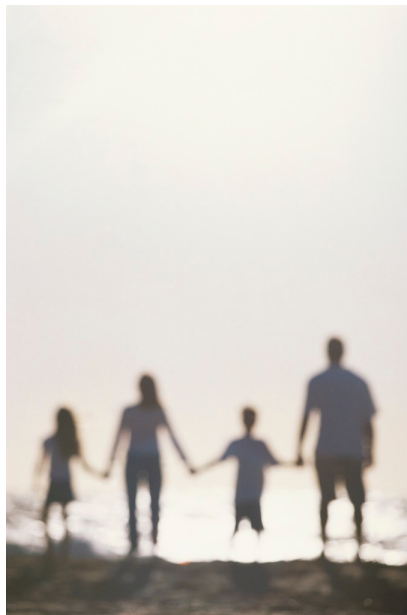


Identified Systemic Issues and Recommendations, continued

Policy, Rule and Training Issues, continued

Training is requested regarding:

- Screening for all levels of each agency.
- The numerous errors in the “Client Role” field, as the roles often do not match the relationships as detailed in the narrative.
- County-specific codes still being used. This makes it difficult for other counties to understand what occurred or why it was screened out.
- Some counties are not listing any clients associated with the referral in Trails as clients.
- Counties documenting “No history in Trails,” yet history and searches show prior referrals. Thorough searches are required to gather all relevant information regarding clients named in referrals.
- Developing a standardized form/guideline listing all areas that must be addressed during a screen out decision. Some of the larger counties are already using such forms and report that they are quite helpful
- Adding notes to the screen out window so that others know exactly why the referral was screened out. These notes should also be added to the “Unassigned” screen so that others will have this vital information.
- How to do a referral count. The counts and methodologies vary widely from county to county.



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Administrative Review Division Staff

Administrative Reviewers conduct reviews in each of Colorado's 64 counties and four NYC regions.

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Please contact the Administrative Review Division
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or for more information regarding Colorado's case review system.

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