

Administrative Review Division



Annual Report
July 2010-June 2011

Colorado Department of Human Services
Office of Performance and Strategic Outcomes

The Administrative Review Division

Colorado's Child Welfare Quality Assurance and 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 (CDHS), Office of Performance and Strategic Outcomes (OPSO). The ARD is the mechanism responsible for the federally required Case Review System and the Quality Assurance System for the Division of Child Welfare (DCW) and the Division of Youth Corrections (DYC). To fulfill our mission to create a safe and promising future for our children by strengthening the communities, people and systems that work to make that future possible, 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 ARD believes our mission may be realized by facilitating Qualitative Case Reviews (QCRs), as a neutral third party, that provide a comprehensive discussion of the safety, permanency, and well-being of children in out-of-home placement, those who are receiving in-home services, and those who are the subject of referrals. The ARD's review systems and staff allow and ensure impact at every level and every decision point—the referral, the assessment, in-home services and out-of-home services—within the child welfare and DYC systems. These reviews directly and positively affect outcomes for children and families, facilitate cooperative and reciprocal relationships with caseworkers and client managers, and encourage evolution at the systemic level.



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2011 Executive Summary

The Administrative Review Division of the Colorado Department of Human Services (CDHS), Office of Performance and Strategic Outcomes (OPSO), presents its Annual Report for State Fiscal Year (SFY) 2011.

The SFY 2011 allocation for the ARD totaled \$2,183,374.00 and 25.2 FTE. The ARD has operated with 25.2 FTE since SFY 2009. This year brought about significant changes in leadership within the ARD. Our long-time Director, Gayle Ziska-Stack, was promoted to a position within the Executive Management Team at CDHS, then retired in May 2011 after 28 years of dedicated service to the State of Colorado. The ARD's Dr. Marc Mackert was promoted to the position of Director of the ARD after having led the Performance Management and Quality Improvement Unit for the past nine years.

The ARD continued to fulfill its role as Colorado's Child Welfare Quality Improvement System by continuously collecting and analyzing data collected through Qualitative Case Reviews (QCRs) and presenting results to each county department as part of the ARD's ongoing monitoring processes. The ARD also continues to maintain its extensive databases and encourages its stakeholders and other industry professionals to utilize its published papers and research as a source of data and an opportunity to systematically take steps toward improving the field of child welfare.

Although the most prominent of the ARD's requirements are the administrative case reviews, the ARD conducts a large variety of QCRs each year. During SFY 2011, the ARD completed a total of 14,075 reviews. Included in that number were 8,628 Child Welfare Administrative Reviews, 882 DYC Administrative Reviews, 1,288 In-Home Services Reviews, 1,864 Assessment Reviews and 1,413 Screen-Out Reviews (reviews of screened-out referrals). During SFY 2011, the ARD completed In-Home Services Reviews in 43 counties, and completed Assessment Reviews in 45 counties. Additionally, to continue the ongoing training of the ARD team and to better understand the decisions being made on a daily basis in Colorado county intake departments, staff members were able to participate in shadowing experiences with intake team members in various county departments throughout the State. All involved parties reported that these experiences allowed county staff and ARD staff to better understand the decision processes that occur within each agency.

In January 2011, the ARD began publication of the quarterly newsletter *Practice Matters*. This newsletter spotlights issues related to efficient and effective case practice and management, as well as continuous quality improvement (CQI) processes. The premier issue analyzed the origins, intent and use of the Colorado Risk Assessment Tool, and offered recommendations related to mitigating existing barriers to consistent and appropriate use of the tool. The second issue highlighted the role of ARD as a resource for county departments of human/social services and the DYC, while featuring the application of the ARD's CQI logic model to facilitate positive outcomes in child welfare.

Additionally, the National Child Welfare Resource Center for Organizational Improvement recently profiled the ARD and requested that the ARD conduct a webinar to highlight its QCR model and its application within the field of child welfare. This webinar was recently conducted for 48 participants and the ARD received positive feedback regarding the information and processes introduced during the presentation.

The ARD was also honored to be asked to consult with two different states wanting to implement QCR models similar to the model the ARD uses. Furthermore, the ARD's instruments influenced the development of comparable instruments in those states.

February 21, 2011—June 21, 2011

Complete and distribute the second publication of the *Practice Matters* newsletter.

This goal was met in April 2011 through the publication of the second issue of *Practice Matters*. The subject for this issue was a CQI model for child welfare in Colorado, as mentioned in the executive summary on the opposite page.

Following the CQI model, begin to identify effective casework process improvement strategies through the second round of Narrative Quality Assurance Reports.

This goal is in progress. An additional regional review was conducted with four counties. The first round identified baselines for county performance and highlighted county specific strategies for improvement in specific areas. Strategies identified after the first round included risk assessment training and over-the-shoulder coaching, which were subsequently provided to the counties. The second round will identify whether these strategies were implemented and, if so, whether they have started to have the expected impact on casework performance.

Conduct additional Regional In-Home Services and Assessment Reviews.

This goal was met. This impacts the CFSR Finding that the case reviews that inform the QA and CQI process occur primarily in the ten largest counties, and that while it has historically taken 5 years to cover the entire state, the ARD hopes to now be able to review the majority of Colorado counties around the state within one year.

Schedule staff for ongoing shadowing experiences in county departments.

This goal was partially met, as two reviewers were scheduled for shadowing experiences. However, these were cancelled to cover reviews for a staff person who announced an unexpected retirement. Shadowing was a specific request of counties through the ARD Steering Committee after several successful shadowing experiences in three counties. Several staff were able to complete shadowing experiences in January, and found these experiences to be informative and remarkable.

Once the Performance Improvement Plan (PIP) is finalized, begin providing training and technical assistance to the county departments on any area in which they are below the negotiated goal.

This goal is in progress. All but one of the PIP measurements is monitored by the ARD, thus making this goal critical to the successful completion of the PIP. A training module has been developed, but trainings are on hold until the PIP is finalized and approved.

Improve performance on the timeliness of Out-of-Home Reviews.

This goal was met. The April 2011 AFCARS submission had an untimely rate of 11.72%. This is less than 2% from the goal of 10% and improved from the October 2010 submission of 15.38%.

Collaborate with the DCW to identify all data integrity issues impacting compliance with AFCARS Element 5, Timely Periodic Reviews.

This goal was met. The ARD worked with the DCW and Trails to modify coding to address data issues caused by children having adoption identities. Syntax was changed in the calculation process to account for these issues, directly leading to a significant improvement in the error rate on timeliness of reviews.

Responsibility and Program Description

The ARD is located within the Office of Performance and Strategic Outcomes within 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) of the Social Security Act, 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 the QCR portion 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, Screen Out 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.

Core Values and Guiding Principles

Our reviews embrace each review participant's role and perspective regarding the child's permanency goal, progress toward that goal, and the timeframes within which those goals must be accomplished. Our role is to identify and document the relationship between practice and qualitative case review in order to facilitate the most positive outcome possible for each child. The children served within our child welfare and youth corrections systems are our ultimate clients, and our duty to positively affect their experiences within our systems is taken seriously. We believe:

- 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,
- services that actively engage families and build on family strengths achieve more successful outcomes,
- engaging families and providers in culturally responsive and respectful services and reviews achieves positive results for children in foster care, and
- stable, consistent care for children is essential to healthy development and successful reunification or other permanent living arrangements.

Qualitative Case Reviews directly and positively affect outcomes for children and families, facilitate cooperative and reciprocal relationships, and encourage evolution at the systemic level. Case review, as it relates to maintaining consistency in the application of child welfare practice throughout Colorado, is a fundamental element of improving outcomes for the children and families in our child welfare system.

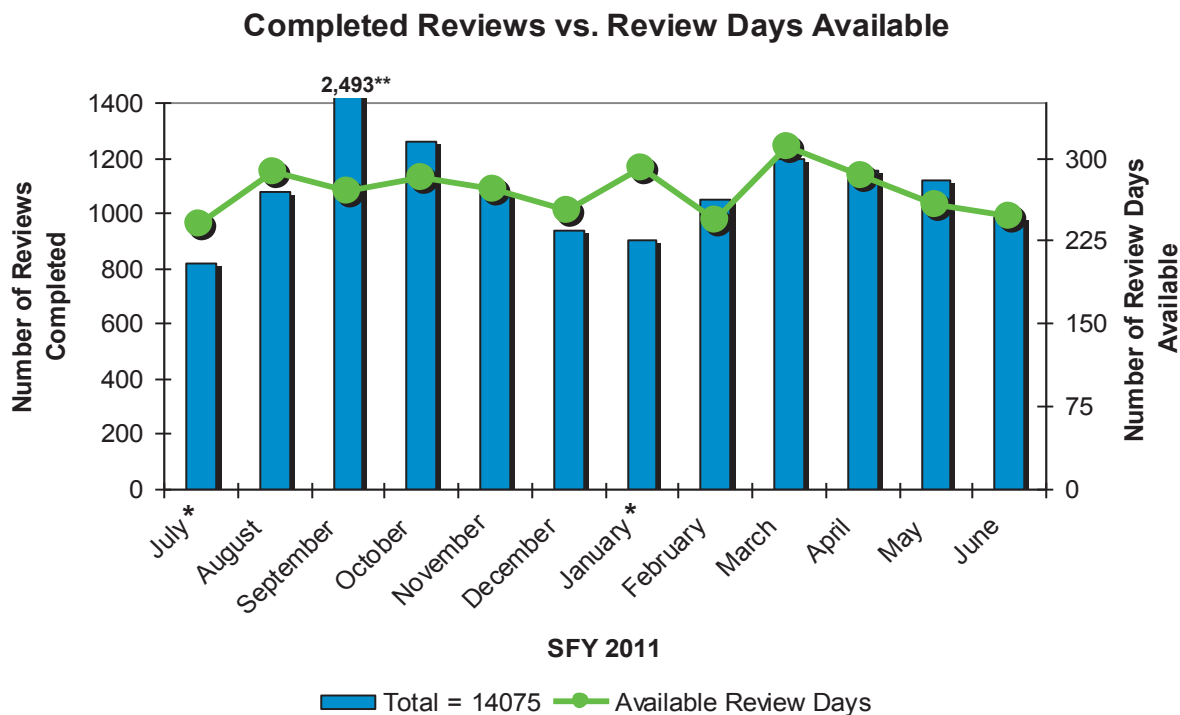
Reviews Completed Versus Available Review Days

The ARD was allocated 25.2 FTE for SFY 2011. This number has remained the same since 2009, but will be decreased to 24.2 FTE for SFY 2012 due to budget balancing efforts during the most recent legislative session. The chart below illustrates the number of review days available during each month of SFY 2011 as compared to the number of reviews completed for those months.

The ARD has thoroughly examined the relationship between the number of review days available and number of reviews completed due to that availability (or lack thereof), and has developed the following chart to explain that relationship. Historically, the number of review days versus the number of reviews completed in any given month has not been calculated. This has led to misinformation among stakeholders, and the ARD's staff as well, that a specific number of reviews should be completed each month, based on the number of staff employed and the number of work days in each month. Because the number of review days available is never constant, inferring that a precise number of reviews may be completed in a specified time span is impossible. Several variables come into play when determining available review days, such as illness, medical leave, funeral leave, annual leave, State holidays, training, retirements, and vacancies.

Caseworker comments indicate that they benefit from the technical assistance provided by ARD Reviewers.

Interestingly, this chart illustrates the commitment of the ARD to efficiently utilize its resources in order to ensure children are receiving the reviews they require and deserve. By doing so, the ARD is able to effect change at every level while continuing to provide quality case review services.



*No In-Home Services and Assessment Reviews were conducted in the ten largest counties during the months of January and July. Additionally, ARD staff shadowed intake staff in various counties during January as well, further reducing review days available.

**September 2011 data include 1,413 Screen Out Reviews conducted at the ARD office with the assistance of State and County staff.

Impact at the Child or Case Level

Out-of-Home Reviews

During SFY 2011, the ARD completed a total of 14,075 reviews. This includes 8,628 Child Welfare Administrative Reviews, 882 Division of Youth Corrections Administrative Reviews (721) and Permanency Hearings (161), 1,288 In-Home Services Reviews, 1,864 Assessment Reviews, and 1,413 Screen Out Reviews. Overall, the ARD conducted approximately 12.7% (1,591) more reviews than during SFY 2010.

"I wish I was always invited to these reviews on my students."

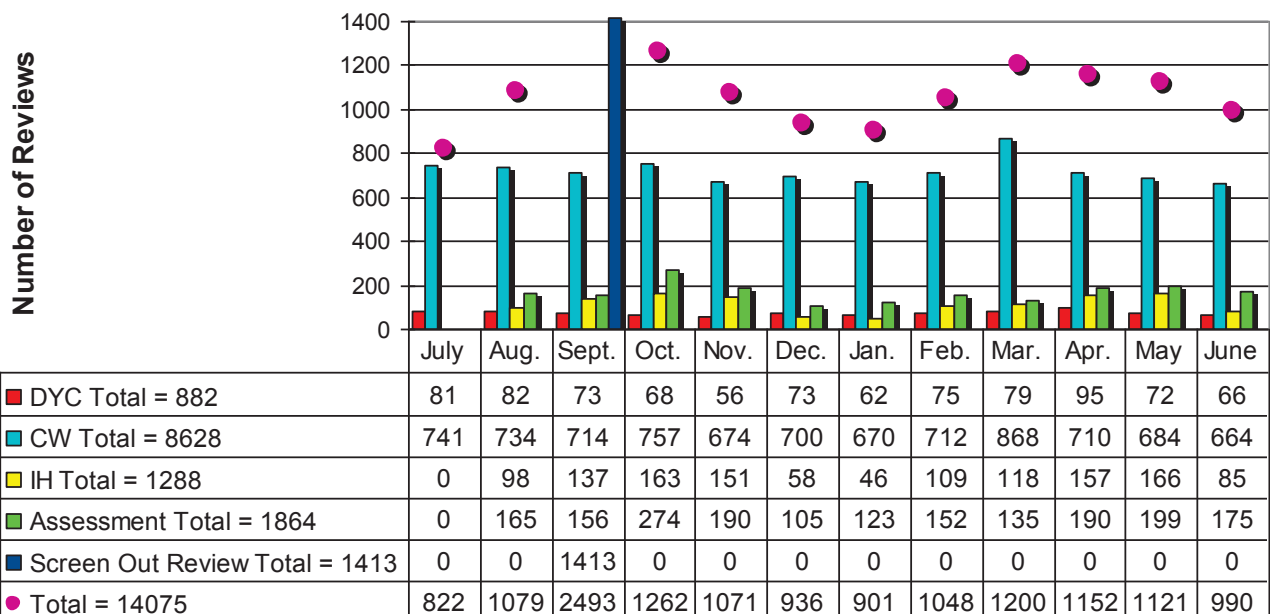
~School Social Worker's suggestion for improvement on the review process

One primary reason for the increase in reviews for SFY 2011 is the reclassification of a large DYC facility from secure/non-IV-E eligible to IV-E eligible and reviewable. The 12.7% increase in reviews conducted represents a 4.5% (411) decrease in Child Welfare Administrative

Reviews, a 95% (429) increase in Division of Youth Corrections Administrative Reviews and Permanency Hearings, a 99% (1,570) increase in In-Home Services and Assessment Reviews, and a 0.2% (3) increase in Screen Out Reviews. The chart below illustrates completed reviews for SFY 2011 by month, sorted by type of review.

This year, In-Home Services and Assessment Reviews were not conducted in the ten largest Colorado counties during the months of July 2010 and January 2011. During this time period, the ARD was evaluating and instituting more efficient and effective review processes, and was participating in over-the-shoulder training with intake staff within various county departments. Although In-Home Services and Assessment Reviews were not conducted in our largest counties during those months, the total number of In-Home Services and Assessment Reviews conducted throughout the year rose sharply. It is important to note, however, that no In-Home Services and Assessment Reviews were conducted during the time period of January 2010 through June 2010. During that time period, the ARD was piloting and implementing its new review instruments, and sought to dedicate all available resources to the consistent application of those instruments.

Number of Reviews Per Month for SFY 2011



*September data include Screen Out Review totals.

SFY 2011 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, and the ARD is responsible for conducting these reviews.

Information regarding the timeliness of out-of-home reviews is tracked using Federal measurements within the Adoption and Foster Care Analysis and Reporting System (AFCARS) . The allowable noncompliance limit set within the AFCARS data is 10%. All states must comply with this limit.

Table 1, below, lists the percentage of noncompliance for the past four State fiscal years. The State has made great strides in timeliness since SFY 2008-2009, when the noncompliance percentage was 17.32%. This substantial improvement is the result of three additional FTE being granted to the ARD in SFY 2009, which allowed the ARD to make additional review days available to the counties and regions each month. However, despite the increase in both FTE and the number of reviews completed, the AFCARS database continues to indicate some “late” periodic reviews.

Although Colorado’s current noncompliance rate of 11.56% is among the lowest rates in the past five years, the State remains beyond the AFCARS allowable rate of 10%. The ARD’s Scheduling and Review Protocol prioritizes out-of-home reviews, and those reviews comprise the vast majority of the ARD’s total reviews each year. However, the ARD has experienced a reduction in staff availability throughout this fiscal year due to medical leave, retirements, and vacant positions created via voluntary resignations. The reduction in staff availability has resulted in a reduced number of available review days each month, thereby allowing for fewer periodic reviews to be conducted. In an effort to compensate for the loss of staff availability, the ARD reduced the number of In-Home Review Coordinators from two (2) to one (1) in order to assign another reviewer to conduct out-of-home reviews in the counties and regions. Despite these limitations, the timeliness rate for SFY 2010-2011 remains steady.

Of note is data integrity in the Statewide Automated Child Welfare Information System (SACWIS) used in Colorado, known as Trails, continues to be a primary source of what appear, at first glance, to be “late” reviews. However, these data issues include cases of subsidized adoption, cases open for DYC Medicaid Only, and youth placed in secure settings. These children do not meet the criteria to be included in the ARD’s review universe, but they are being included in the AFCARS count and in the calculations for Table 1, below, because they have an open removal. The ARD is working with the counties and the DYC to clean up their data entry so that timeliness can be more accurately measured and ongoing AFCARS errors may be reduced.

Table 1: Colorado’s AFCARS Noncompliance Percentage

FY 2007-08	FY 2008-09	FY 2009-10	FY 2010-11
Actual	Actual	Actual	Actual
13.56%	17.32%	11.55%	11.56%

Narrative finding reports, which are generated through six-month out-of-home administrative reviews, are essential to ensure constant communication between the ARD, county departments and DYC regional offices. Along with these findings, case-specific/child-specific compliance findings are reported to the county or region in which each review takes place. These findings ensure that the appropriate information is communicated to the appropriate person within each county or region, in turn facilitating change and progress at the case-specific level. If serious concerns about a child's

"An overview of the case from an outside party offers new ideas and perspective which is helpful."

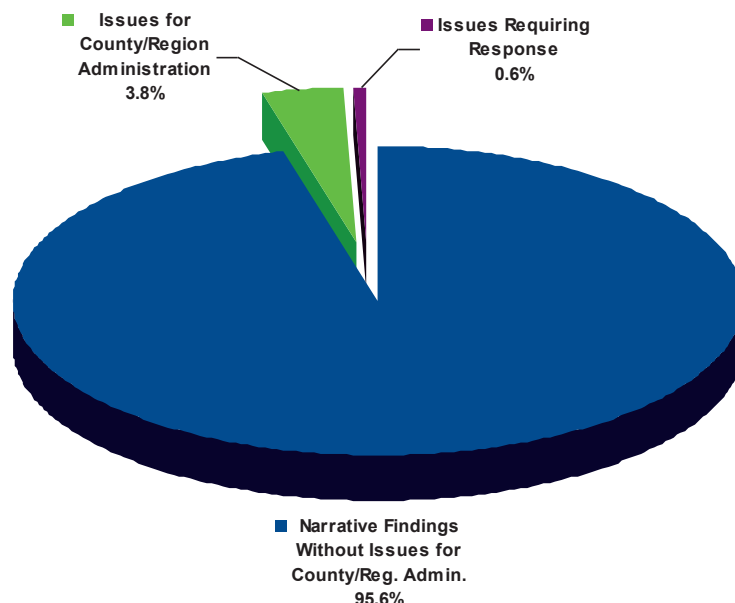
~ Caseworker on the most helpful part of the review

safety, well-being or progress toward permanency arise during a review, the ARD distributes Issues for County/Region Administration findings.

During SFY 2011, the ARD provided counties and the DYC with 7,098 written narrative finding reports related to 9,510 out-of-home reviews. Each case reviewed generates only one narrative finding report, whether there is one child involved in the case or multiple children. Of these reports, 266 included Issues for County/Region Administration. Of those 266 reports, 44 required a response from the county department or regional office. In all, only 0.6% of all findings required a response by the county/region due to serious concerns regarding the safety, permanency or well-being of one or more children involved in the case. Additionally, the aggregate reports the ARD generates assist in the impact on the child welfare system in Colorado by identifying and illustrating county/region progress each quarter.

This method of intervention has directly impacted outcomes for children by quickly and consistently identifying and remedying serious concerns regarding the safety, permanency and well-being of the children we review. For example, in one case the ARD identified that the only barrier to a finalized adoption for the child was the lack of fingerprints from the maternal grandmother (potential adoptive kin). The county subsequently flew the child and the grandmother to Colorado for fingerprinting, and within six weeks of the Issue for County Administration being raised by the ARD, the child's adoption was finalized.

Levels of Intervention During Case Review



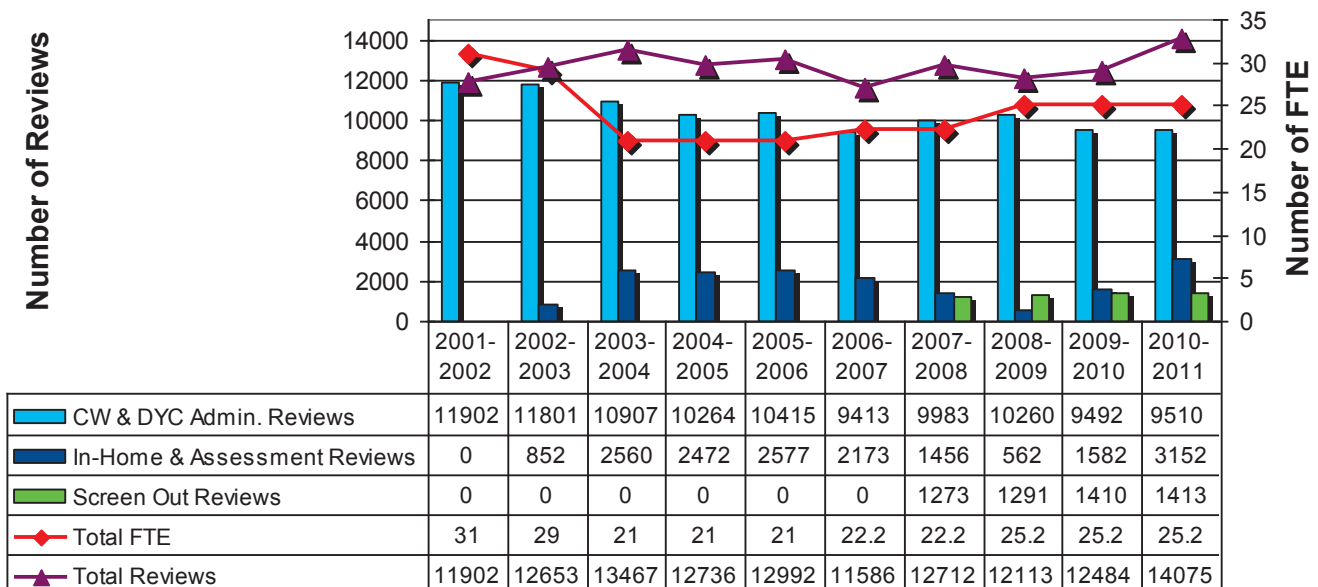
In-Home Services and Assessment Reviews

As is seen throughout the field of child welfare across the nation, out-of-home placements are declining in Colorado. However, the population of children being assessed and/or maintained in their homes is steadily on the rise. This is arguably our most vulnerable population and warrants focused attention from processes designed to assess safety and well-being while simultaneously having an impact on their outcomes. The ARD's In-Home Services and Assessment Review processes allow for an in-depth look at service delivery, safety, risk and well-being for those families receiving in-home services.

As part of its ongoing efforts to become more efficient and effective, the ARD has developed new review methods and processes. These new processes have allowed for an increased number of counties to receive In-Home Services and Assessment Reviews. The ARD developed what are now known as Regional Reviews, which allow several counties to be reviewed simultaneously in one centralized location. For example, the Southeast Regional Review was conducted in October 2010 at the Otero County Department of Social Services, and included Baca, Bent, Crowley, Kiowa, Otero and Prowers Counties. The ARD has received positive feedback regarding this process and regarding the professionalism, knowledge and expertise of the ARD's staff. The broad yet intricate knowledge base of the ARD's staff, combined with the ARD's review processes, has created opportunities for teaching and technical assistance throughout the State.

The chart below displays historical information regarding the ARD's completion of reviews and allocated FTE. The chart illustrates the increase in In-Home Services and Assessment Reviews, largely possible through the use of the Regional Review Process.

ARD Historical Review Numbers and FTE by SFY



Impact at the Child Welfare Professional Level

Recognition and Appreciation

The ARD utilizes a three-tiered system of identifying and acknowledging Caseworker and Client Manager participation in the case review process, the positive outcomes facilitated by their case practice, and reinforcing good case practice at the local level. Caseworkers and Client Managers are charged with the critical task of improving the lives of the children and families with whom they come into contact, and the work these professionals perform is complex and demanding. Through its award and recognition system, the ARD is able to publicly acknowledge the effort, creativity, and tenacity demonstrated by these dedicated child welfare professionals. Each month, letters are sent by the ARD Director to County and Region Directors listing each award recipient and celebrating the work performed by their staff.

Certificate of Appreciation

These certificates may be awarded to Caseworkers and Client Managers on a daily basis for quality case preparation and participation in the Administrative Review Process.

Certificate of Outstanding Case Practice

Nominations for this award may be made by reviewers on behalf of Caseworkers and Client Managers who demonstrate the following criteria in the course of managing a child's case:

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

Nominations are submitted to the ARD's Recognition Workgroup monthly. Upon review, the workgroup determines whether the nominee has met the established criteria. If approved, the nominated Caseworker or Client Manager receives a certificate, presented by the nominating reviewer.

Outstanding Case Practice Award

The Administrative Review Division acknowledges up to six Caseworkers and Client Managers with an award for Outstanding Case Practice each year. These professionals are chosen from among many others previously nominated for monthly Outstanding Case Practice certificates throughout the year. In addition to demonstrating the qualities required for a Certificate of Outstanding Practice, winners of this award must also exhibit some of the following:

- Open mindedness,
- An ability to utilize creative solutions,
- Strong collaboration skills,
- Persistence, and
- Surpassing expectations and overcoming barriers to facilitate safe permanency.

Award recipients are invited to the Administrative Review Division offices for a luncheon in their honor and are presented with a certificate and award for their tenacity and commitment to children.

SFY 2011 Daily Certificate of Appreciation Recipients

Adrienne Killermann	Brandi Puckett	Dawna Jackson	Jennifer Jaynes
Alecia DeLorme	Brandy Bosgal	Debra Walz	Jennifer Jones
Alesch Lacey	Brenda Finney	Denyse Colliatie	Jennifer Rice
Alexandra Prehn	Breonna Ayala	Denyse Mansfield	Jennifer Tillson
Alfred Afriyie	Briana Grossnickle	Derek Dzien	Jennifer Walker
Alicia Corso	Brittany Sievers	Desiree Flores	Jennifer Zuetell
Allison Pearce	Bruce Chisholm	Donna Lee	Jenny Albers
Amanda Mrkvicka	Carol Romero	Dori Weeder	Josette Jaramillo
Amanda Rutt	Cassandra Murrow	Dulcie Johnson	Jessica Brogger
Amber Biss	Catherine Padilla	Elizabeth Howes	Jessica Grey
Amberly Fredrickson	Cathy O'Donnell	Elizabeth Walters	Jessica Kudlock
Amy Andrews	Cece Zavala	Eric Schreiber	Jessica Snyder
Amy Reid	Char Lundberg	Erik Babel	Jim Meadows
Amy Yoder	Charity Andrews	Erin Schumacher	Joann Miller
Andrea Bradford	Charleen Duncan	Fawn Leaf	Joanne O'Callaghan
Andrea Meriano	Charles Pennal	Felicia Torrez	Jodi Lanzi
Andrea Miklos	Charles Pool	Flora LaCruce	Jodi Razi
Andrea Woods	Charmayne Hyatt	Frank Diaz	Jody Caporaso
Andrew Lorensen	Chera Fuller	Gail Kane	John Lujan
Andy Cordova	Cheronda Small	Gretchen Hoffman	John Rampa
Angela Miller	Chip Custer	Gwen Wooten	Johnna McGill
Angela Sneddon	Christiana Fladen	Hannah Denney	Jon Phillips
Angie Dreier	Christine Bessler	Hayley Carlson-Huerd	Joyce Anderson
Anika Phason	Christy Williams	Heidi Boemper	Julia Blomberg
Anna Carmichael	Chrystal Vondersmith	Helen Israel	Julia Koc
Anna Strange	Chuck Peterson	Hilary Gagliardi	Julian Stollmeyer
Annette Perea	Cindy Howard	Hilary Oppie	Julie Horen
April Prock	Cindy Joswiak	Holly Haddock	Julie Shawley
Ashley Bertsch	Claire Heppner	Irene Holguin-Sanchez	Julie Smith
Ashley Elliott	Claudia Budd	Jackie Sanders	Julie Trim
Ashley Henslee	Coleen Schott	Jaime Irwin	Kala Slater
Ashley McDonald	Connie Davis	Jamie Doerschlag	Kamran Kinoshita
Asmik Manukyan	Coral Beasley	Jamie Pike	Karen Chinatti
Becky Atencio	Courtney Hightower	Jane Koehler	Kari Jett
Bernadette Peace	Craig Fischer	Janelle Miller	Kari Kunes
Beth Howes	Cristine Bessler	Janna Hartman	Karla Kelly
Beth Miller	Dacia Kardoes	Jeanna DeHerrera	Kate Racka
Beth Paddock	Dana Hollaus	Jen Dickson	Kate Thornton
Betsy Hamill	Dana Hutchcraft	Jenna Wiley	Kathie Rodriguez
Bob Selover	Danielle Cady	Jennifer Calabrese	Kathy Harvey
Bobbie Griffin	Darby Baldwin	Jennifer DeGrado	Katie Gleason
Bobby LeFebre	Darlene Ashley	Jennifer Gruca	Katie Kingsley
Bonnie Steele	Dave Smith	Jennifer Gunnarson-	Katrina Chambers
Brandi Jamison	David Greig	Scott	Keith Allen

SFY 2011 Daily Certificate of Appreciation Recipients, continued

Kelly Brude	Lisa Travis	Nicole Steele	Sharon Stephens
Kelly Crittenden	Lisel Harkless	Paige Stapleton-Lawlor	Sheree Joseph
Kelly Quinn	Lois Sandland	Pam Yanett	Sherry Riggs
Kerissa Holland	Lorrie Flowers	Pat Killen	Shirley Rudd
Kerry Pedrett	Louella Garcia	Patricia Buddy	Sidney Hawk
Kim VanAuken	Lynn Kelley	Patti Graham	Steffani Fioretti
Kimberly Woolfolk	Lynn Wong	Paul Welander	Stephanie Brinks
Krista Husak	Maggie Brooks	Paul Witty	Stephanie Fumia
Kristel Sharp	Maggie Craig	Peggy Crates	Stephanie Williams
Kristen Brooks	Marci Ascherman	Phiang Mutzbauer	Stephany Hoffman
Kristen Carman	Maribeth Crumlish	Phil Edmonson	Sue Cleary
Kristen Vavrek	Marie Grande	Rachel Huntley	Sue Hoenshell-Brown
Kristin Harbert	Marita Goheen	Rachel Wisdom	Susan Adams
Kristin Wallace	Mark Brosal	Rachelle Hines	Suzette Batey
Kristine Meconi	Mark Smalley	Rashida Gordon	Suzette Keating
Kristine Sims	Mary Malloy	Rea Jimenez	T. Alvarez
L.J. Richardson	Mary McGirt	Rebecca Ball	Taletha Pettis
Lacey Alesch	Mary Olguin	Rebecca Darr	Tammy Gustafson
Lacey Hodges	MaryAnne Cooper	Renee Jeffers	Tandi Schips
Ladonna Garcia	Maryelin Stratton	Rhonda Behring	Te Vuth Loeum
Laura Cannone	Matt Banner	Rhonda Koonce	Terri Carlson
Laura Vizarraga	Matt Watson	Richard Kleiner	Tess Kuckleberg
Laura Wolff	Maureen Ellison	Rishell Hessing	Tessa Louis
Lauren Burns	Megan Espinoza	Rod Gantt	Tiffany Leustek
Lauren Timkovich	Melinda Veith	Roger Powell	Tiffany May
Leah Teglovic	Melissa Sall	Ron Uhrick	Todd Kloosterman
Leann Alvarez	Meredith Newman	Russ Guerrero	Tom Huffman
Leanne Roets	Michael Mathis	Russha Montag	Toni Estes
Leroy Verneti	Michelle Bauer	Samantha Wingert	Tracy Spencer
Lesley Penoyer	Michelle Davis	Sara Marsden	Tracy Williams
Leslie Gearheart	Michelle Kendall	Sara Waite	Tracy York
Leslie Navarro-Conger	Michelle Martinez	Sarah Brown	Valerie White
Levi Middleton	Mike Didonna	Sarah Crisafi	Veronica Valdez
Lila Holden	Misty Berry	Sarah Holladay	Vi Bass
Lily Brown	Molly Somogyi	Sarah Lippert	Wade McMullen
Linda Arroyo	Monica Connell	Sarah Srsen	Wanda Crossley
Linda Elliot	Monique Matthews	Selena Jameson	William Ledoux
Lindsay Harvey	Nancy Hubbs	Serena Nooner	William Meyer
Lindsay Ishman	Nancy Kingolver	Shana Cunnane	Windy Bieker
Lindsay Miller	Nathaniel Winegar	Shanea Nehmer	Ximena Najjar
Lindsay Parks	Nick Lincoln	Shannon Copeland	Yolanda Luna
Lindsay Straka	Nickol Dominguez	Shannon Haley	
Lisa Anderson	Nicole Bortot	Shannon Hickman	
Lisa Rader	Nicole Lator		

SFY 2011 Monthly Certificate of Outstanding Case Practice Recipients

Lisa Travis

Weld County Department of Human Services

Rebecca Ball

Denver County Department of Human Services

Laura Schafer

Denver County Department of Human Services

LaDonna Garcia

Denver County Department of Human Services

JoAnne O'Callaghan

Denver County Department of Human Services

Jennifer Gruca

Denver County Department of Human Services

SFY 2011 Annual Outstanding Case Practice Award Recipient

Sue Hoenshell-Brown, Weld County Department of Human Services



Photograph courtesy, Leslie Mascarenas

Weld County Caseworker Sue Hoenshell-Brown (above, right) was nominated for the ARD's Outstanding Case Practice Award by Reviewer Clint Edgar (above, left).

Ms. Hoenshell-Brown has a 12-year-old medically fragile little girl on her caseload who is native to El Salvador. The child's family continues to reside in El Salvador, and her parents are monolingual (Spanish only) and unable to read. Some time ago, the child's mother and father sent her to live with her biological aunt and uncle in Colorado so that she could receive necessary medical treatment for a rare condition which, left untreated, rapidly results in death. Unfortunately, due to medical neglect, custody of the child was transferred to Weld County DHS. While the child was hospitalized, doctors determined that without a bone marrow transplant, the child would not survive. The search for a bone marrow donor began immediately.

Ms. Hoenshell-Brown obtained cheek swab kits to test the child's sisters for possible bone marrow donation. She had the directions translated into the proper Spanish dialect, sent the test kits to the parents in El Salvador, and was able to (via teleconference) walk the child's mother through the process of obtaining DNA samples from the child's two sisters. Doctors determined that each of the sisters was a match, and Ms. Hoenshell-Brown immediately began working with the family to prepare their visa applications. Partnering with staff at The Children's Hospital of Colorado, the U.S. Department of State, and the El Salvador Consulate, Ms. Hoenshell-Brown was able to secure expedited visas for the family to travel to Colorado for the child's bone marrow transplant.

Ms. Hoenshell-Brown has been instrumental in affording this child the chance to grow into adulthood.

SFY 2011 Annual Outstanding Case Practice Award Recipient

Lindsay Ishman, Lake County Department of Social Services



Photograph courtesy Leslie Mascarenas

Lake County Caseworker Lindsay Ishman (above, left) was nominated for the ARD's Outstanding Case Practice Award by Reviewer Jim Martinez (above, right).

Approximately three years ago, Ms. Ishman took over the case of a then-10-year-old boy who had experienced two removal episodes and had been in placement approximately 10 years. Parental rights were terminated in 2000, and the child's grandmother adopted him in 2001. Sadly, his grandmother suffered a catastrophic health event in 2002 which left her unable to care for the child, and he was subsequently placed with an aunt. The aunt later chose to send the child back to his biological mother's home, where he suffered further abuse and neglect. In 2006, Lake County again became involved, took custody of the child and placed him in a TRCCF due to his need for intensive services. The child was able to make positive progress in treatment, where he was addressing significant loss issues and learning to trust adults once again. The county then began to recruit adoptive homes for the child.

Ms. Ishman combed through the adoption applications previously submitted by several families and found a family she deemed to be a potential match for the child. This family had previously been passed over, but Ms. Ishman was determined to see each of the applicants through a fresh lens. Ms. Ishman carefully evaluated the family's needs and capabilities and established that with the right supports, this family could be a great match for the child. Ms. Ishman began transitioning the child into his adoptive home, and provided continuous support to the family.

Ms. Ishman has played a crucial role in finding permanency for a high-needs, traumatized child, while strengthening his adoptive family through education, support, and encouragement.

SFY 2011 Annual Outstanding Case Practice Award Recipient

Kelly Quinn, Jefferson County Division of Children, Youth and Families



Jefferson County Caseworker Kelly Quinn (above, right) was nominated for the ARD's Outstanding Case Practice Award by Reviewer David Tyner (above, left).

Ms. Quinn has a case in which a sibling group was kidnapped by their biological mother post-termination. The mother fled to Mexico with the children, and disappeared. Ms. Quinn was creative when determining the resources needed to find the children and return them to Colorado, thereby ensuring their safety and well-being. She was able to have the children's maternal grandmother subpoenaed to testify in court as to the whereabouts of the children. The grandmother subsequently lied during her testimony, leading other family members to begin to disclose more information about where the children were living.

Ms. Quinn worked with investigators and family members to find the children, and determined that the family knew where the children were being held. Against the odds, Ms. Quinn was able to persuade the children's uncle to call the paternal grandmother, who was hiding the children in Mexico. The uncle was able to convince the paternal grandmother to bring the children back to United States. The children were returned to Colorado approximately six months after their abduction.

Prior to the children returning to the United States, Ms. Quinn identified a potential adoptive home for them and worked diligently to ready the family for the children's arrival. The family was prepared to receive the children immediately upon their return, and the children remain in this home today. Ms. Quinn's perseverance helped to ensure the safety, permanency and well-being of these children.

SFY 2011 Annual Outstanding Case Practice Award Recipient

Jennifer Rice, Denver County Department of Human Services



Denver County Caseworker Jennifer Rice (above, right) was nominated for the ARD's Outstanding Case Practice Award by Reviewer Eric Hoskins (above, left).

In 2009, Ms. Rice took over the case of a then-20-year-old young man with developmental disabilities whose IQ was in the low- to mid-50s. Approximately one year before Ms. Rice received the case, the young man's SSI eligibility determination had lapsed. Knowing her client would require services well into adulthood, Ms. Rice immediately re-applied for SSI benefits on behalf of her client. The application was denied. In total, Ms. Rice applied for benefits on four separate occasions, with the outcome remaining the same each time.

Ms. Rice was aware that the plan for her client was to receive adult services through Denver Options. However, when she referred her client to Denver Options, they refused to take placement of him due to his status as SSI ineligible. Undaunted, Ms. Rice petitioned the Community Centered Board (CCB) on the eastern plains, Eastern Colorado Services for the Developmentally Disabled, Inc. Ms. Rice fought to give her client access to adult services. Ultimately, Ms. Rice's client was accepted by the CCB, despite SSI not being in place. At the time of her nomination, Ms. Rice's client was on the wait list for adult services and was preparing for a new round of testing.

By fighting for services for her client, Ms. Rice created the possibility for her client to remain, as an adult, in the home in which he had lived since 2002. Ms. Rice also ensured her client would have ongoing, appropriate care, assuring his emotional and physical well-being, permanency and safety.

Impact at the Systemic Level

The ARD conducted its fourth annual Screen Out Review during the week of September 27-October 1, 2010. This year, 64 reviewers participated in the review—39 county staff representing 20 Colorado counties, 17 ARD staff, seven (7) DCW staff and one (1) Trails staff member.

In a five-day time frame, 1,413 screened-out referrals were reviewed from around the State. 540 referrals were from the ten large counties, 547 were from the 22 mid-size counties, and 326 were from the 32 balance-of-state counties. The sample was extracted from Trails on August 26, 2010 and the universe included all Program Area 5 Child Protection referrals screened-out between February 26th, 2010 and August 26th, 2010. A stratified random sampling technique with a 90% confidence level with a 10% interval was used to create the sample included in the review, which allows the ARD 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.

County staff were paired with a team member from a different county or an ARD staff member and were not allowed to review a screened-out referral from their own county. Paired teams of first-level reviewers used a 24-question Screen Out Review instrument. Each reviewer individually completed the instrument before comparing results with their team member. Upon comparison of results, if there was a disagreement about how to answer a question, a team discussion occurred to arrive at a final decision, complete the instrument and enter the information into an Access database created specifically for this review process. If the first-level team believed the referral should not have been screened-out, the referral was given to a second-level review team. The second-level team would review the referral only for the purposes of determining whether or not they believed it should have been accepted for an assessment and whether or not there were safety concerns. If child welfare practice concerns or safety concerns were identified, this information was gathered and sent back to the county departments for information purposes and/or a request for follow-up when appropriate. Additionally, if Trails data issues were found, the information was also given to the counties with a request to clean up the information as necessary.

During this year's review, 144 referrals were sent back to 46 counties. Sorted by size, 43 of those referrals were from large counties, 62 were from mid-size counties, and 39 were from balance of state counties. Bearing in mind that each referral can generate more than one request or recommendation to the corresponding county, this year's review found:

- 122 referrals required a report back to the ARD regarding actions taken by the county.
- 21 referrals did not require a report back.
- 20 referrals required a non-immediate response by the county due to current safety concerns.
- Two (2) required immediate response due to current safety concerns.
- 24 were for county information only.
- 88 had duplicate client identification numbers noted.
- 105 required Trails changes.

As in previous years, the ARD received positive feedback from participants regarding the Screen Out Review process. Participants reported that they learned about new processes that they hoped to bring back to their own counties, they appreciated being able to see referrals through a different lens, and they enjoyed the interaction between county and state staff.

Newsletters

This year, the ARD developed and published a quarterly newsletter entitled *Practice Matters*. The intent of this publication is to focus on identifying effective and efficient casework practice and to examine the role of the case review system in affecting policy and practice throughout Colorado.

Volume 1
Issue 1
January 2011

Practice Matters

A Quarterly Publication of the Administrative Review Division

Quality Assurance and Improvement

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).

This newsletter is a joint project between the ARD and the DCW. This quarter, the co-authors are:

- Kristy Bennett, ARD
- Corina Edgar, ARD
- Kim Mackey, ARD
- Ruby Richards, DCW
- Tara Sava, ARD
- Tracy Street, ARD

The Colorado Risk Assessment Tool

Background

In 1990, the CDHS contracted with the Children's Research Center (CRC), a division of the National Council on Crime and Prevention, to develop a new Risk Assessment instrument. The previous Risk Assessment instrument was consensus-based and was created by importing various items from risk assessments utilized in other states. The process of creating a new Risk Assessment instrument involved a review of national and consensus-based instruments utilized by ACTION for Child Protection, the American Humane Association and the National Council on Crime and Delinquency's CRC.

As the initial step in creating the new Risk Assessment tool, the CRC selected a random sample of 997 families in five Colorado counties—Cherokee, Denver, El Paso, Jefferson and Morgan—who were investigated for abuse and/or neglect between July 1996 and December 1996. Case records were reviewed by trained and experienced case readers. Each family in the sample was observed for a period of two years following the conclusion of the initial investigation. Analysis included the relationship between outcomes and characteristics of children and caretakers, prior investigations of the families, and case service history. The resulting items on the current Risk Assessment instrument were selected based on their statistical association with future abuse or neglect, and the ease with which they could be identified and scored by caseworkers.¹

The final instrument comprised separate scales for Neglect and Abuse. The scores generated by each instrument are classified as low, moderate or high, with disciplinary override capability for the worker completing the instrument. Scores showed correlations to future allegations and substantiated investigations of child maltreatment. Tables outlining these correlations are available on Page 4.

The Colorado Risk Assessment is intended to be completed by investigating caseworkers, based on their observations. After the Abuse and Neglect Scales are tallied, the highest score from either scale reflects the overall risk classification for the family. This risk score is intended to assist caseworkers in prioritizing case service interventions for families.

Quality Assurance and Improvement

The January 2011 issue of *Practice Matters* is entitled “The Colorado Risk Assessment Tool: Origins, Intent, Use and Recommendations for the Future.” In this issue, the ARD described and explained the instrument Colorado uses to assess risk and safety, and offered insights as to how accuracy in reporting is directly related to accuracy of the instrument. Additionally, the ARD utilized data collected from In-Home Services and Assessment reviews to illustrate current barriers to effective use of the instruments. This information was used to inform recommendations regarding important improvements needed to ensure appropriate, proper and effective use of Colorado’s risk assessment instrument.

The April 2011 issue of *Practice Matters* is entitled “Applying a Continuous Quality Improvement Framework in Colorado: A Collaborative Effort Between County Departments, the Division of Child Welfare and the Administrative Review Division.” This issue described and illustrated the application of the ARD’s CQI framework and key indicators to goals defined by the Denver Department of Human Services (DDHS) for their intake department. The ARD assisted the DDHS with identification of outcomes, indicators and standards that would clarify strengths and areas of need regarding the accurate completion of the Colorado Risk Assessment tool. The ARD collected data on this issue during an Assessment Review, analyzed that data, then applied what was learned to develop modified outcomes, indicators and standards for the DDHS. As a strategy to improve Assessment Review performance, the DCW provided over-the-shoulder training to the DDHS intake staff near the end of the time period between In-Home and Assessment Reviews.

Volume 1
Issue 2
April 2011

Practice Matters

A Quarterly Publication of the Administrative Review Division

Quality Assurance and Improvement

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).

This newsletter is a joint project between Denver County Department of Human Services (DDHS), the DCW and the ARD. The co-authors are:

- Tom Rozanski, DDHS
- Amy Boory, DDHS
- Ruby Richards, DCW
- Erin Hall, DCW
- Michael Dominguez, DCW
- Sara Blumhazy, ARD
- Kim Mackey, ARD
- James Martinez, ARD
- Linda MacKenzie, ARD
- Roy Reed, ARD
- Dave Tyler, ARD

Continuous Quality Improvement

The CQI framework created in 2005 includes the following key principles:

- Child welfare staff are committed to better outcomes for the children and families they serve. CQI requires consistent support from all levels within the agency.
- All processes can be improved, even if they are working well.
- Learning is continuous.
- Involvement of children, youth, families, stakeholders and staff is crucial in all phases of implementation.
- Successful implementation requires the provision of training, preparation and support.
- Quantitative and qualitative data should be gathered through formal and informal processes. Qualitative data brings in the 'stories behind the data' and provides recommendations for improvement based on those stories.
- Data analysis should identify trends, it supports decision-making and provides a method to evaluate progress.

Quality Assurance and Improvement

The publication of the *Practice Matters* newsletter highlights issues that affect the quality, efficiency and effectiveness of service delivery to child welfare clients throughout the State of Colorado. The newsletters offer the opportunity to discuss the impact of the case review process on policy and definition changes within the DCW that are of benefit to child welfare professionals, but to customers as well.

Client Satisfaction Survey

In September and October 2010, the ARD conducted its 13th annual Client Satisfaction Survey.

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. 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, including Caseworkers and Client Managers, Parents, Children/Youth, Relatives, Foster Parents, Guardians ad Litem, and several Providers (Kinship Care, TRCCF, Day Treatment, etc.).

“Seeing all my support system.”
~Child, on the most helpful part of the review

A total of 800 surveys were distributed to review participants. Of the surveys distributed, 603 were completed and returned for a return rate of approximately 75%. This is a 7% increase over 2009’s return rate of approximately 68%. As in previous years, Caseworkers returned the highest number of surveys (43% or 253), and this is primarily due to Caseworkers being required to participate during each review.

Within each child’s/youth’s review, there are several items that require discussion with all participants. Questions one through four in the survey examine whether the child’s/youth’s permanency goal, progress toward that goal, needs and safety were discussed during the review. Question five seeks to ensure that each participant was given the opportunity to convey his or her viewpoints and concerns during the review. The total range of scores for the first five questions is .7%, ranging from a high of 99.5% to a low of 98.8%. This range is 0.2% lower than last year, and indicates that nearly all participants believed that permanency, progress, needs and safety were discussed during reviews and that they had the opportunity to be heard. This year’s results indicate that the ARD is continuing to conduct thorough reviews that include guided explorations of the required topics while ensuring that participants have opportunities to voice their concerns and to feel understood.

“I thought it was very helpful that the reviewer and other professionals present made us (foster parents) feel that what we had to say was important and that we are important in the care of the foster child.”
~Foster Parent, on the most helpful part of the review

The sixth question in the survey inquires as to whether participants found Administrative Reviews to be beneficial. This year, 82% (490) of survey respondents agreed that the reviews in which they participated were helpful. Specifically, 56% (338) of respondents indicated that they Strongly Agreed with the question, and 25% (152) Somewhat Agreed. Approximately 12% (71) of review participants indicated feeling Neutral about the review, and 5% (28) of respondents did not answer the question. The remaining surveys indicated that 1% (3) of participants Somewhat Disagreed and 2% (11) Strongly Disagreed that the review was helpful.

Question seven on the survey requests that participants indicate which elements of the review they found to be helpful to them, while question eight solicits feedback regarding methods to improve the review process, while the final question on the survey requests suggestions for improvement, and offers some space to write comments. This year, 94% of surveys received had no suggestions for improvement. Rather, many of those surveys offered praise for the process. The ARD will continue to evaluate its processes and procedures in order to provide efficient, comprehensive and thoughtful oversight and services that focus on the best interests and well-being of Colorado’s children.

Coordinator Satisfaction Survey

The ARD distributed its 10th annual Coordinator Satisfaction Survey in October 2010. The intent of the survey is to collect valuable feedback from Administrative Review Coordinators regarding the strengths and weaknesses of the ARD's processes for scheduling reviews and the delivery of narrative findings. The ARD is committed to streamlining the review system in order to ensure it is as efficient and effective as possible. As in prior years, the survey was distributed to Administrative Review Coordinators representing each of Colorado's 64 counties and each of the four Division of Youth Corrections (DYC) regions. However, this was the first year in which the ARD distributed invitations to complete the survey via email, with a link to an electronic version of the survey on the web. This method has allowed the ARD to create an environmentally-friendly system for survey distribution, data collection, data analysis and reporting.

A total of 62 surveys were distributed; 58 surveys were sent to county coordinators (six coordinators are responsible for two counties each) and four were sent to DYC coordinators. The survey consisted of eight questions comprising a combination of quantitative and qualitative items. Of the 62 surveys distributed, 58 surveys were returned. This included surveys from four DYC regions and 54 county coordinators representing 60 counties. The survey response rate for this year was 94%, which is an increase of 4% over last year's return rate and 13% higher than the return rate in 2008.

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"We have appreciated the positive relationship we have both with our reviewer and with the state management."

~Coordinator commenting on her county's relationship with ARD staff

As in the two most recent years, 98% (57) of respondents indicated that review findings were provided timely per their county or region agreement, and 97% (56) of respondents indicated they had received all findings due. These scores indicate the ARD is continuing to uphold its agreements with counties to provide review findings in a timely manner.

98% (57) of respondents indicated that available review days were provided timely, and although performance decreased by 2% over last year's rate of 100% for this question, only one respondent indicated a "no" response.

Further, the comment submitted with this response indicated that review days were not received timely for only one month, and this was due to the assigned reviewer being on annual leave during the submission timeframe.

Of note is that 95% (55) of respondents indicated that they were receiving enough review days to cover all of their review needs, while 5% (3) of respondents indicated they were not. This represents a decrease of 1% over last year's rate, and a 3% decrease over 2008 scores. These scores indicate a continuing need for additional review days in order to satisfy the needs of the counties and the DYC. The addition of a large DYC facility into the review schedule as a IV-E eligible placement has created the need for additional review days to accommodate regular administrative reviews as well as permanency hearings with Administrative Law Judges. Additional review slots have been added, and additional reviewers have been assigned to conduct DYC reviews.

Lastly, 100% (58) of respondents indicated that the ARD staff are responsive to questions and concerns "always" or "most of the time." The ARD continually strives for consistent improvement and makes communication with its stakeholders a priority.

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"Listening to my son's plans for the future, which the reviewer encouraged him to talk about."

~Parent, on the most helpful part of the review

The ARD maintains 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 remains an active and vital member of the National Foster Care Review Coalition. The ARD maintains the NFCRC website and continues to provide data collection services for the group. The coalition is embarking on a new research project regarding placement stability for children in foster care. Data will be collected from seven member states, including Colorado. Data collection is set to begin on July 1, 2011, and will end on September 30, 2011. Findings will likely be published in early 2012.



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

— American Humane Association —

Referral Acceptance Decision Making: Informing Policy and Practice Through Action Research

Tia Whitaker and Marc J. Mackert

Tia Whitaker, M.S.W., Ph.D., has worked in the field of human services for the past 15 years. She has extensive experience in using administrative data from Colorado's SACWIS system, and in program evaluation, outcome measurement, and research in the field of child welfare. Dr. Whitaker joined the Colorado Department of Human Services' Administrative Review Division in 2006 and is a quality assurance analyst for the division. Prior to joining the division, she worked for the Colorado Department of Human Services' Division of Child Welfare as a research analyst. Before entering the research arena, she was an intake caseworker in Colorado for several years. Dr. Whitaker completed her undergraduate degree in social work at St. Cloud College, obtained her master's degree in social work at The University of St. Thomas/College of St. Catherine, and obtained a Ph.D. in social work from the University of Denver.

Marc Mackert holds a Ph.D. in counseling psychology with an emphasis on organizational development. He has consulted with organizations in both the private and public sector and has worked for the Colorado Department of Human Services' Administrative Review Division for the past 8 years. He is a member of the American Evaluation Association and the Organization for Program Evaluation in Colorado. His main focus is on applying program evaluation and continuous quality improvement methodologies to the field of child welfare to lead to improved outcomes for children and families.

Acknowledgments

The authors would like to acknowledge all the child welfare professionals who have participated in this review process over the last 3 years and who have continued to strive to meet the best interests of Colorado's children and families. Without them, this review process would not be possible.

Background

From the moment a call is made to a public child welfare agency, the decision process begins. This initial decision, whether to assign a report of child abuse or neglect for assessment or to screen it out, is of critical importance to child welfare agencies. This decision must balance between the ultimate task of ensuring safety for vulnerable children with the value of respecting the rights of families (Wells, Lyons, Donock, Brown, & Thomas, 2004). However, little is documented about how this process occurs. Due to the serious consequences of this decision, it is critical that child welfare agencies understand how these decisions are made within their systems and assess the accuracy of those decisions.

The main function of screening is to filter out reports that do not rise to the level for assessment in order to protect families' privacy and best use limited resources (Downing, Wells, & Fluke, 1990; Jones, 1993). At the highest level, most states require that reports meet the legal definition of abuse and neglect in order to justify an assessment or investigation. In other words, in order to justify an assessment of current safety and risk of future maltreatment, a determination

This year, a work entitled "Referral Acceptance Decision Making: Informing Policy and Practice Through Action Research" and authored by Dr. Tia Whitaker, ARD Quality Assurance Analyst, and Dr. Marc Mackert, ARD Director, was published in the American Humane Association's *Protecting Children Journal*, Volume 25, Issue 3. This work is based on data gathered during the 2009 Screen Out Review, conducted by the ARD in partnership with the DCW, Trails and County Departments of Human/Social Services.

Please visit <http://www.americanhumane.org/children/professional-resources/protecting-children-journal/> to request a full copy of the article.

Administrative Review Division Staff

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

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Please contact the Administrative Review Division to discuss this report further, for additional copies of this report, or for more information regarding Colorado's case review system.

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