



QUARTER 4

PIP 3.1.3

Washoe



WASHOE COUNTY

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DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES
Children's Services

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To: Kevin Schiller, Department Director

From: Dena L. Negron, Case Compliance Reviewer

Date: November 20, 2011

Subject: Synopsis of the case review completed by Washoe County Department of Social Services in February and April 2011

Two reviews were conducted at Washoe County Department of Social Services the in the months of February 2011 and April 2011. The purpose of the review was to address children that remain in long- term foster care. WCDSS initial defined "long-term" foster care as children in the Agency's custody for over 36+ months. The review assisted the Agency with understanding some key risk case characteristics that may be indicators for children who remain in long term foster care within Washoe County. Thirty cases in total were reviewed during this time period. I will address them separately in this synopsis.

In February 2011, 15 cases were randomly picked from a list of 60 cases of children who were identified as being in foster care longer than 36 + months. The reviewer consisted of five teams, with two reviewers to a team that reviewed the cases. The reviewers were a combination of staff from ACTION for Child Protection, staff from the Ruth Young Center with University of Maryland's School of Social Work, internal Agency staff and one contracted person hired by the Department to handle special assignments. . The review consisted of a paper review of the case file and a UNITY review. The instrument developed by the team captured 48 items which ranged from the age of the youngest child, ethnicity, date of birth of the child, the number of months in foster care placement, child contact case notes in the UNITY system, permanency goals, case plan and service agreements, parental contacts, visitations, parental issues to include substance use, mental health issues, housing and social support along with the characteristics of the children to include education, medical, mental health issues and needs, safety factors/threats identified at the time of the removal and a list of the removal reasons listed in UNITY to name just a few. These items were collated and the data collected to share with the Children's Bureau regarding the Agency's collaborative grant through the Permanency Innovations Initiative.

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In April 2011, a discussion occurred regarding the definition of long-term foster care. How long of a time period is identified before the child is determined to be in "long-term" foster care. A request was made of the Agency to complete another case review for children in long-term foster care 12+ months. This number was chosen to increase the sample size of the pool of the number of children in foster care. The cases were randomly assigned utilizing the research protocol from the University of Maryland's School of Social Work. The instrument used contained the 48 items from the February 2011 review; however the instrument was modified for the April review. Additional information was requested and the total number of items looked at during the second review in April 2011, totaled 92. Some of the additions are listed below. The parental items were listed separately for both the mother and father (whereas the first instrument had combined these two participants), another addition was the fact that questions were asked about contact with the child, mother, father and visitation with each to include data within the first 18 months of a case and then within the last six months of the case. A diligent search question was also asked regarding the cases. The reviewers consisted of five teams with two people in each team. They included agency staff, contracted personal and three staff members of the Children's Cabinet who have worked directly with the Agency through the DRU process and the Agency's ILP case management program. This data was collated, collected and provided to our partners for review and summarization.

The data has been included in the Agency's Target Population 1 and 2 templates that have been submitted to the Children's Bureau as part of the PII. One of the results from the review was the fact that most all children in long term foster care have at least 1 of the 4 risk case characteristics that we identified. These four risk case characteristics are: parental incarceration, single parent household, parental substance use and inadequate housing or homelessness. The information will also be utilized to address case practice regarding engagement of parents, initiating meaningful services timely, quality case plan and service agreements, and it will drive contact with parents and the quality and quantity of visitations between parents and children. It will assist the Agency in developing training and a Q.A. process to address finding permanency for children more quickly. The review did address safety, permanency and well-being regarding the Agency's initial involvement with a family, services offered to the family and once placement, permanency being established for the child and their well-being addressed to ensure children's needs are being met while in the Agency's custody.