



QUARTER 1
PIP 1.2.1
WASHOE

**Nevada Program Improvement Plan
Washoe County Social Services
Quarter 1 Submission, March 14, 2011
Goal 2, 1.2.1**

Goal 2

WCDSS Parental Incarceration Report

A total of 120 cases were reviewed to analyze children placed into care due to parental incarceration from January, 2010 to December 2010. There were 186 children involved. Forty one percent were 2 and under, 33 percent were between 3-6 years old, 28 percent were 7-12, and 4 percent were 13 or older at the time of removal. Fifty six percent of the cases involved only one child.

The analysis included evaluating the day and time of removal. Washoe County Department of Social Services normal business hours are Monday through Friday, 8 a.m. until 5 p.m. There is an after-hours unit (Emergency Response Unit) staffed to respond to reports of child abuse and neglect from 5 p.m. to 10 p.m. Monday through Friday, and 12 noon to 10 p.m. on Saturday and Sunday. Twenty four percent of removals due to parent incarceration occurred on Saturday and Sunday. The date and time breakdown is as follows:

Day of the week removal occurred						
Sun	Mon	Tues	Weds	Thurs	Fri	Sat
9%	11%	13%	17%	20%	16%	15%
Time of removal						
8-5 p.m.	5-11 p.m.	11 -2 a.m.	2 – 8 a.m.			
43%	39%	7%	11%			

The review was concerned about efforts made to locate a relative or other care provider prior to placement. It was determined that there were efforts to prevent placement in 57 percent of the cases and no efforts made or documented in 41 percent. Eight percent of the selected cases were identified as Not Applicable. Of the 41 percent deemed to have no efforts made, 39 percent were handled by ERU staff, 37 percent by staff on-call, and 27 percent by staff operating during normal business hours. A specific issue identified in this review was a higher incidence of removal by a select few staff members. Based on this, identified staff are to undergo performance management, coaching, and training on an individual basis to ensure the continuity of the service delivery. Additionally, as a result of the review the Department has begun to review existing policy guidelines and procedures that may be adversely impacting placements. It was determined that in 57 percent of the cases the sole allegation for placement was incarceration.

WCDSS demonstrated very strong efforts in contacting the incarcerated parent quickly. Most parents, 71 percent, were contacted within less than 24 hours of incarceration. However, there were two cases identified where the parent was not contacted during their incarceration. In both of these cases the incarceration was less than 48 hours.

In 39 percent of the cases (47 N) the children were returned home within 8 days of placement. Of those, 43 percent were returned within one day. Of the 47 cases, 43 percent were found to have no efforts made to prevent placement prior to removal through outreach to other support systems.

Arrest charges for parents were reviewed and it was determined that 34 percent were related to child maltreatment, for example child endangerment or child abuse. Twenty two percent were related to Domestic Violence, and 15 percent were related to drug or alcohol charges. It was also determined that 18 percent of the arrests were made for reasons unrelated to child maltreatment including burglary, forging an instrument, immigration, etc. CPS allegations may have included one or more types and it was noted that 52 percent included inadequate supervision, 13 percent physical abuse, and 26 percent for neglect.

The following characteristics were identified:

- Parent Drug Use (28)
- Parent Meth Use (11)
- Parent Alcohol Abuse (26)
- Domestic Violence (30)
- Physical Abuse (9)
- Abandonment (2)
- Child Behavior (2)
- Child Alcohol Use (1)
- Child Drug Abuse (2)
- Emotional Abuse (2)
- Inadequate Housing (8)
- Juvenile Justice System (1)
- Neglect (51)
- Parent's Can't Cope (4)

It is evident there is inconsistency among staff regarding documenting characteristics. Therefore, it has provided an opportunity to better train staff to document all pertinent information for future analysis to positively impact efforts for cases in which parents are incarcerated.

There were four reviewers involved including the Children's Services Division Director, two Children's Services Coordinators, and the Case Compliance Reviewer. As part of the process each case was reviewed with qualitative analysis via case notes. While the overall consensus was that staff has been applying the safety model appropriately and complying with policy related to placement, there were concerns noted. These concerns include staff workloads, timeframes and the subsequent impact to prevent and or minimize the impact to children. As an example, policy rightfully requires that a home safety check be completed prior to allowing a child to go to a relative home.

Washoe County is large geographically and has many rural areas. While not statistically significant, there were cases noted where the staff member simply "ran out of time" based on given workload in the day to be able to travel the distance to perform a home check. Further, it was evident that staff must improve efforts at locating absent parents and relatives prior to placement. It should be noted that both ERU and on-call are minimally staffed and there is not

always the availability to provide diligent search efforts after hours. However, diligent search is necessary and should resources be available it would be beneficial to expand diligent search capabilities.

In summary, the analysis has been significantly beneficial in identifying areas for improvement specific to incarcerated parents. As indicated this will result in policy and practice changes, individual training, and changes to staffing and resources to improve outcomes. The Department will initiate this improvement in accordance with the next quarter goal of 1.2.1 to develop an action plan to improve outcomes.