

Wyoming Annual Report: FY2008

Agency Name: Wyoming Department of Family Services

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With field offices in: Afton, Buffalo, Casper, Cheyenne, Cody, Douglas, Evanston, Gillette, Glenrock, Greybull, Jackson, Kemmerer, Lander, Laramie, Lovell, Lusk, Lyman, Newcastle, Pinedale, Powell, Rawlins, Riverton, Rock Springs, Sheridan, Sundance, Thermopolis, Torrington, Wheatland and Worland

Web: <http://dfsweb.state.wy.us/>

Agency Statutory Authority: W.S. 9-2-2101 through 9-2-2105

Clients Served: Individuals in need of economic assistance, families in need of preventative services, youth in care, elders and children at risk for abuse and neglect.

Budget Information: DFS' operating budget is a mix of funding from the state's general fund, federal funds and money collected in fees and in the form of restitution from public assistance fraud cases.

Wyoming Department of Family Services

Report Period: FY 08 (July 1, 2007 through June 30, 2008)

Wyoming Quality of Life Result:

Wyoming families and individuals living in a stable, safe, supportive, nurturing, healthy environment.

Contribution to Wyoming Quality of Life:

The Department of Family Services supports families in achieving a stable, safe, supportive, nurturing and healthy environment through the following six programs:

1. Eligibility - determining eligibility for social service programs
2. Investigation - following up on abuse and neglect reports
3. Service planning and delivery - working with families and communities to develop social service plans for families in crisis
4. Monitoring - determining if the agency is receiving quality of services for which it is paying providers
5. Certification - developing rules and process to ensure quality of out-of-home care
6. Collections and Recovery - assisting families with obtaining a livable income and maintaining the integrity of public assistance programs within the agency

Basic Facts:

The Department of Family Services employs 813 people in the following service areas: Director (2), Economic Assistance (224), Juvenile Services and Protective Services (527), Child Support Enforcement (33), and Early Childhood Development (29). DFS has 27 field offices serving Wyoming's 23 counties.

Funding: In FY 07-08, the total operating budget for the department was \$271.1 million with \$167 million of that being general funds and \$95 million being federal funds and \$9.6 million in other funds, collected as central registry fees, Children's Trust Fund, heating assistance, welfare fraud and overpayment recovery.

Division Budgets:

Child Support: \$13,334,456	Juvenile Services: \$37,897,458
Economic Assistance: \$35,598,319	Protective Services: \$26,679,277
Early Childhood Development: \$17,799,502	

The Protective Services Unit managed 752 cases statewide on average in each month of fiscal year 2007-08. The division paid for services for 2,519 children in that same fiscal year. (That number includes subsidized adoptions while excluding tribal incidents.)

Juvenile Services provides services to an average of 1,315 youth on probation, including those on intensive supervised probation. The intensive supervision program consistently served 194 youth and their families in fiscal year 2007-08. The Wyoming Boys School served 210 boys. The Wyoming Girls School served 91 girls.

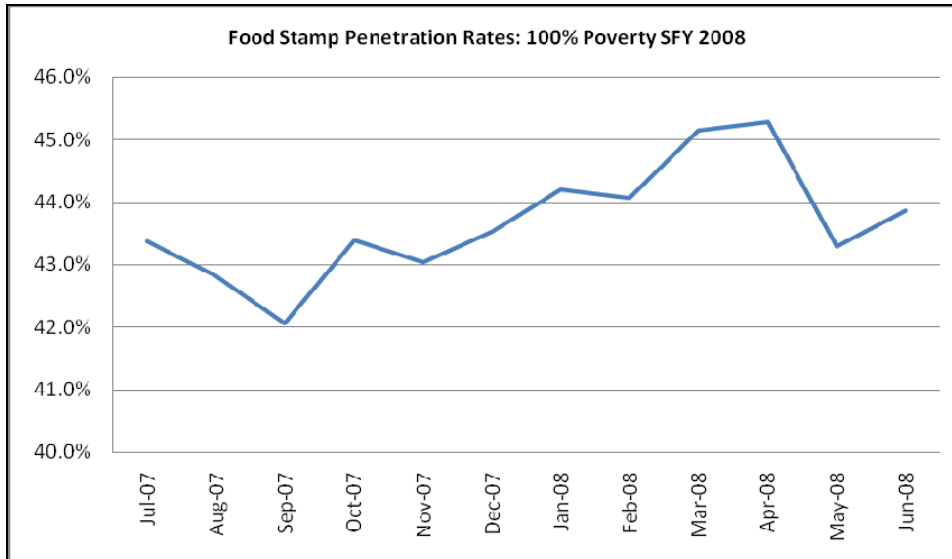
Economic Assistance has several programs. The TANF caseload was 274 on average each month. The food stamps program served, on average, 24,278 individuals (or 10,145 households) per month with an average benefit of \$216 each month. That represents an increase of \$5 each month over FY 06-07.

Child Support Enforcement served 29,564 non-custodial parents and worked with 26,049 custodial parents in FY 07-08.

Early Childhood Division reports 26,770 children were enrolled in licensed child care programs in FY 07-08. Of those, 8,207 benefitted from the child care subsidy program, which helps families cover the cost of high quality child care.

The Low Income Energy Assistance Program (LIEAP) monthly benefit of \$594 was paid on behalf of 11,035 Wyoming families. Weatherization was provided at 779 homes in FY 07-08.

Performance:



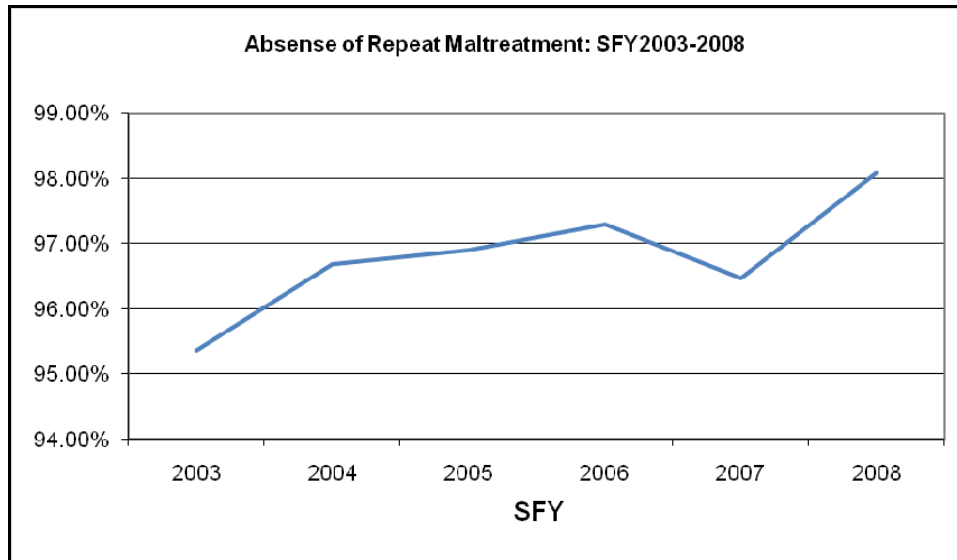
Story behind the last year of performance:

Food Stamp Penetration Rates: The measure looks at the number of people using the federally-funded nutrition program SNAPs (formerly known as food stamps) compared to the number of people living below the poverty level in the state. This is DFS' best measure to determine how well the SNAPs delivery system is working. This area of performance has remained low and stable for the past several years, though there are large numbers of eligible people but don't apply. The agency reviews policy and practice in consideration of increasing access to this program for people living below the federal poverty level. The hope is to enable those who want and qualify for nutrition help to get it when they need it without additional hardship.

What has been accomplished?

DFS continues its work to understand and impact positively barriers people face in applying for and receiving food stamps. Among the steps taken to minimize those barriers is the use of an EBT-card, which allows for easier use at grocery stores in Wyoming. Clients now can use the "credit and debit card machine" at the check out line instead of relying on a separate machine, which was used by the old technology known as smart cards. Because this state now uses the same technology as others states, clients traveling throughout the US now can use their Wyoming-issued SNAPs card for grocery purchases made out-of-state. Outreach work continues to be strong and well-supported by federally funded public service announcements. Nonetheless, the food stamp penetration rate is lower in Wyoming when compared with other states, and it's clear much work remains to be done on behalf of Wyoming's children whose parents' incomes qualify them for the program.

Performance:



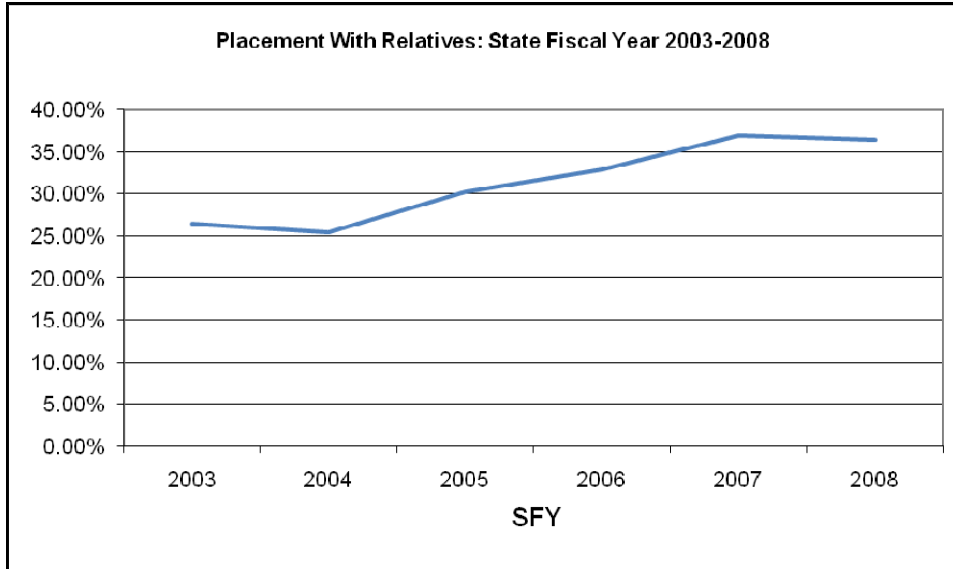
Story behind the last year of performance:

Absence of Repeat Maltreatment: The number of children who do not experience repeat child abuse has increased over the last six years. Wyoming was in conformity with the item that measures the absence of repeat maltreatment during the most recent 2008 Federal Child and Family Services Review (also known as the Federal CFSR).

What has been accomplished?

The department has continued to monitor, train and implement family partnerships consistent with the 2005 update of the July 1, 2004 to June 30, 2008 Strategic Plan. Each county has worked with local stakeholders to develop a family partnership model tailored for that community. In essence, family partnership is a movement among social service agencies nationwide to improve communication and coordination with families in crisis. This is done by encouraging the child welfare system's stakeholders to be more inclusive of the family's supporters, which can include extended family or close family friends. That group, made up of attorneys, counselors, family friends and others, then work cohesively to support that family's goal for self-sufficiency and reunification. DFS has established a system to track the implementation of this model that supports the family-centered practice model. Also, family-centered practice is the focus of training for supervisors and social workers.

Performance:



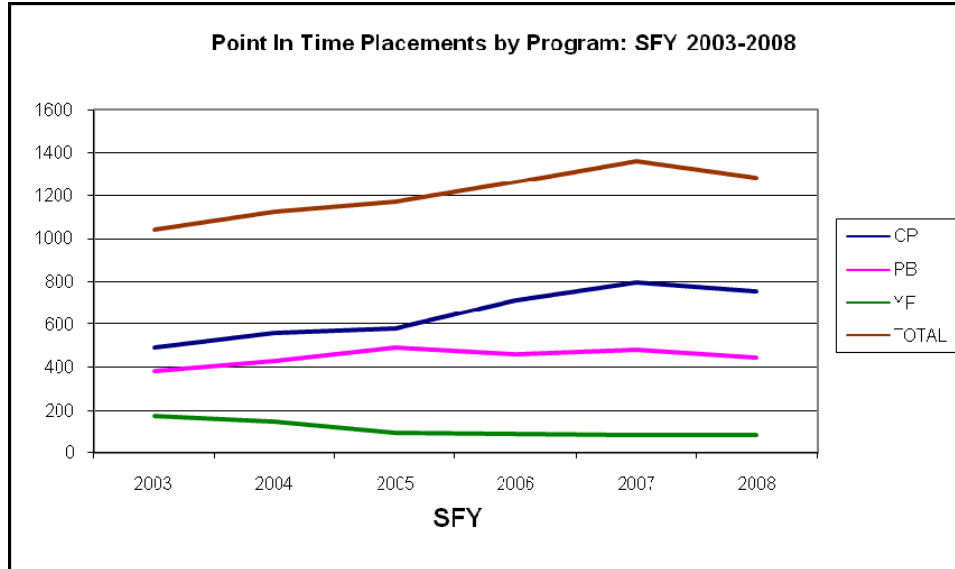
Story behind the last year of performance:

Relative Placement: Wyoming has seen an increase in the percentage of children placed with relatives over the last six years. DFS policy, practice and training, support the practice of placing children with relatives thereby reducing trauma associated with removing a child from the home. This effort also benefits children by maintaining the continuity of family. DFS anticipates continuing its commitment to placing children with appropriate relatives and providing support services to those placements.

What has been accomplished?

Until two years ago, relative placement had been rising. The department saw the increasing role played by extended family in the placement of children thanks to the use of a program called Family Finder. DFS trained staffers and presented the program to Guardian ad Litem last year. Using high tech and low-tech measures, workers learned how to find families using unconventional methods, including buying subscriptions to a people-finding database called Accurint. Two new policies went into effect in September 2007 directing staff on diligent searches for absent parents and relatives for kinship care. Since then, most of the cases using the Family Finder techniques connected youth and children to family members. For most of those youth, permanency was established when they were reconnected with family members. Additionally, DFS worked with Casey Family Programs and targeted efforts to find family for older youth living in treatment centers and group homes who lacked a lifelong family connection.

Performance:



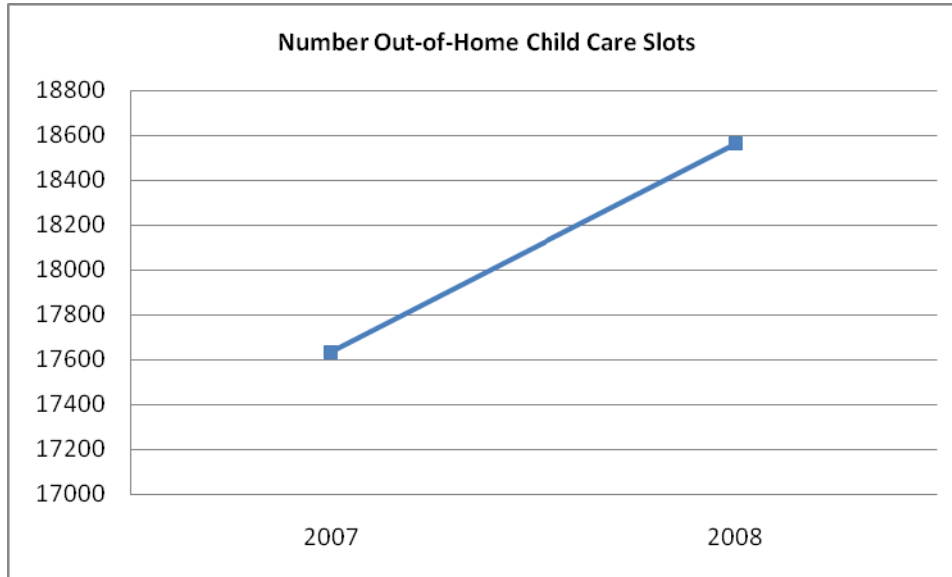
Story behind the last year of performance:

Placements by Program: Wyoming has seen a gradual increase in the number of children in out-of-home placement 2003-2007. Placement rates seem to have leveled off and could be on the decline, given the data collected over the last year. The most significant increase in placements is within the child protection population. Internal analysis suggests the increase in child protection-related placements is due to increased use of methamphetamine throughout the state. DFS has made efforts to modify its safety planning and risk assessment processes to address the issues created by meth use, and overall the state has improved the availability of substance abuse treatment, which contributes to the more recent reduction in the number of child protection-related placements.

What has been accomplished?

In the 2005 update of the July 1, 2004 to June 30, 2008 Strategic Plan, the department committed to working on family treatment courts and the broader use of community-based services for children and families. The agency has partnered with the court improvement process and, in at least one court, helped in the development of the family court model and advocated for its implementation statewide. The department has adopted and piloted the use of community partnerships to allow communities to explore outcomes and available services, which is done in hopes of guiding communities to supporting its own families.

Performance:



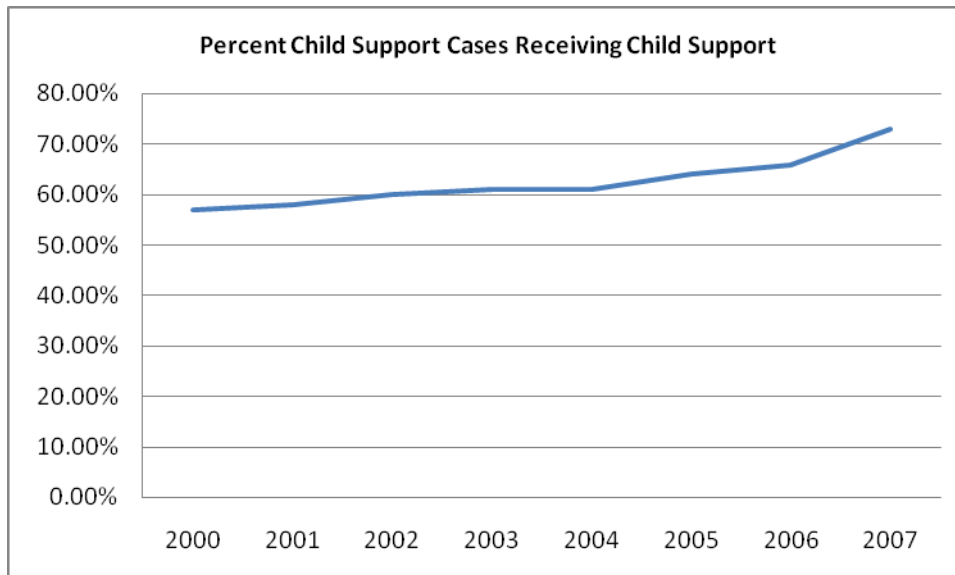
Story behind the last year of performance:

Number of Out-of-Home Child Care Slots: An increased demand for child care is the primary factor in the increased slots. The department has engaged in several activities including certification and training efforts that contribute to the increasing number of slots while adopting a proactive position of trying to help child care providers remove barriers to certification. (Certification is required by state statute in the interests of serving young children and the process of becoming certified or licensed is managed by Wyoming Family Services.) This has been met with a great degree of success as the department has created and maintained solid relationships with those most directly affected by certification issues – providers.

What has been accomplished?

The state saw an increase in the number of licensed child care slots, though it still is experiencing a short fall in every community. The growth is attributable to educational and promotional programs facilitated by the Department of Workforce Services, the agency tasked with tracking and promoting the need for and development of child care slots at the community level. That education has allowed DFS to actively engage providers through the licensing process, which results in better quality care for young children whose parents choose a licensed provider.

Performance:



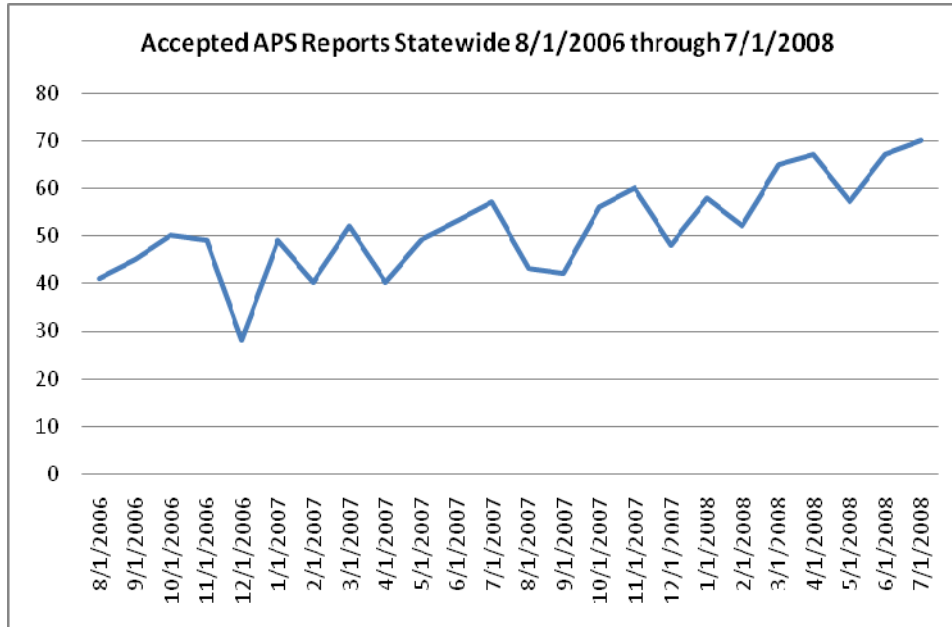
Story behind the last year performance:

Percent of Child Support Cases Receiving Child Support: Wyoming exceeded the national standards for helping families achieve a livable income. The child support office continues to use performance-based contracts and increased communication efforts between state and county districts to increase child support dollars collected. In fact, nearly \$68 million in child support payments were collected by the Wyoming Child Support Enforcement program from parents during state fiscal year 2008, marking nearly a 10 percent increase over 2007. This increase could be attributable to the energy boom's high-paying jobs and increased employment rate.

What has been accomplished?

Child support collections improved as a result of increased use of automated data sources, performance-based contracts, and more efficient and effective casework activity that allows for unenforceable cases to be closed. The department continues its support of visitation services after recognizing an increase in the likelihood a non-custodial parent will make support payments as ordered by the court. This is done by supporting community efforts through grant funding, money that's ultimately used to hire facilitators for non-custodial parents interested in understanding child support and visitation issues better.

Performance:



Story behind the last year performance:

Accepted Adult Protective Services Reports Statewide: The agency has seen steady growth in the number of intakes (cases accepted for review) in the interest of vulnerable adults, a population that includes elders as well as disabled and developmentally delayed people. The growth in the number of reports of abuse and neglect are attributable to increased community involvement. By the end of 2007, each of the state's 23 counties had an APS team in place to receive reports and track the progression of those cases as well as to work with victims and families.

What has been accomplished?

Reports increased, a measure that coincides with the growth in the aging population in Wyoming, making the creation of the 23 APS teams very timely. This means that every county has a team specially trained in and designated to investigations of abuse and neglect for these populations. That growth means communities now are more aware of the problems and the need to report those concerns to trained professionals.

A Focus on Accomplishment: Serving Youth in Trouble

Wyoming consistently places more youth in care than other states, a measure impacted by the state's failure to comply with the Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act and its reliance on detention services to treat and manage youth whose behavior is inconsistent with Wyoming community values. In the 2007-08 fiscal year, DFS saw a decrease in the number of teens in placement, particularly in regard to detention. The state also saw the return of \$3.8 million to the state's General Fund – money earmarked to cover the costs of out-of-home care.

This shift is viewed as positive change primarily affecting youth in Laramie and Sweetwater counties where placement rates are consistently higher than other counties. This shift means fewer youth are being sent out of county for short- and long-term detention services, and it means more youth stay in their hometowns, home school districts and even safely in their own homes as local services are used more effectively their behaviors. This is just one area of juvenile justice experiencing change.

A clear connection is made between the experience of adult offenders and their lower-level offenses committed as juveniles and their subsequent involvement in the juvenile justice system. DFS' experts in juvenile services examined how the current juvenile justice system contributes to the recidivism rate in Wyoming. As part of that work, probation officers were trained to work with youth offenders using a strength-based interview technique to help youth understand what motivates their behaviors, good and bad. Along with the adoption of this new assessment is an emphasis on diversion services – services to redirect youth and keep them out of the juvenile justice system. The science promoted in recent years on recidivism rates supports the theory that youth who enter the juvenile system remain there and then go on to offend as adults, making juvenile justice a counterproductive effort if it isn't restorative for youth while holding them accountable for their criminal behavior. Much of the work on restorative justice in Wyoming is happening at the community level through the creation of juvenile community service boards.

As they are developed, community boards will focus on which services are available for youth in their communities – including mediation and conflict resolution as well as detention – and which services need better resources so youth experiencing difficulty can be served within the supportive network of their own communities.

The boards, many of which are being organized in fall 2008, are being developed with legislative support under Senate File 66 and a \$2 million budget item, creating financial support (in the form of DFS-administered grants for community boards) for the first time in Wyoming. Under that statute, boards will be guided by DFS rules, created in conjunction with the departments of health and education – the two other agencies involved in youth care when they are court-ordered into state care – and Family Services will report to the Legislature in June 2009 about the efforts and costs of supporting the boards.

In all of this work done by state employees and community leaders, the objective is to safely reduce the number of youth in out-of-home placement. Some children and teens will have difficulties so extreme they cannot be served at home, in their community or even their region of the state. DFS is committed to ensuring young children and teens get the services they need when they need them and services in place so can they return safely to their families and communities.

Wyoming Family Services Organizational Chart

