

PART II: APSR Report FY 2005

(1) Accomplishments and Challenges

*I wanted to thank you.
For everything.
For helping me stand when I almost fell.
For picking me up when I did.
For believing in me.
For giving me a chance and not letting me fail.
For holding onto me when I wasn't able to walk alone.
For pushing me into believing in myself.
I never woulda made it had it not been for you.
You helped mold me into what I'm becoming to be.
You gave me the tough love I needed to stay strong.
I love you like the mother I never had.*

- Poem written by a former foster child and parent of a child previously in foster care, to their child's Social Worker

**Children's Administration
Department of Social and Health Services**

Annual Progress and Services Report FY 2005 Accomplishments and Challenges

The Children's Administration Comprehensive Improvement Plan

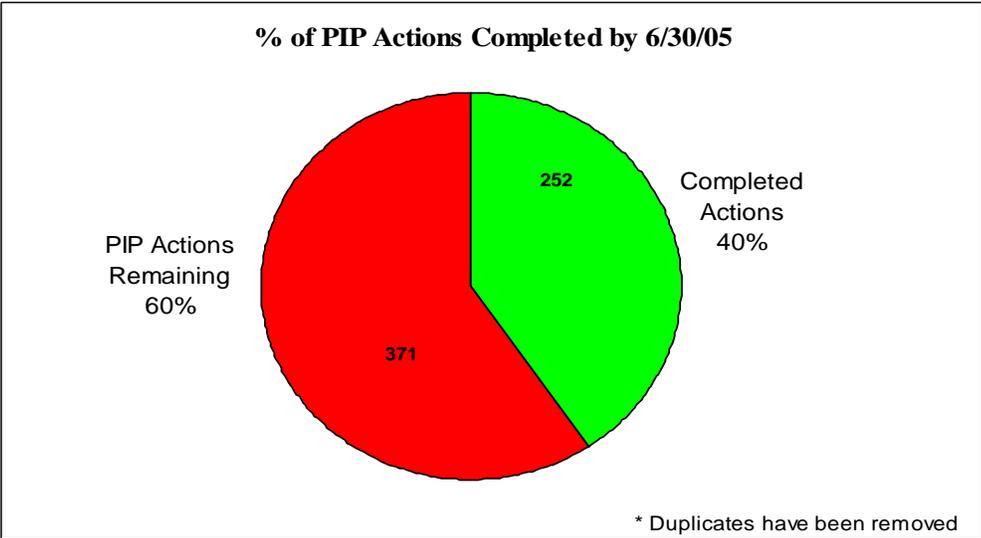
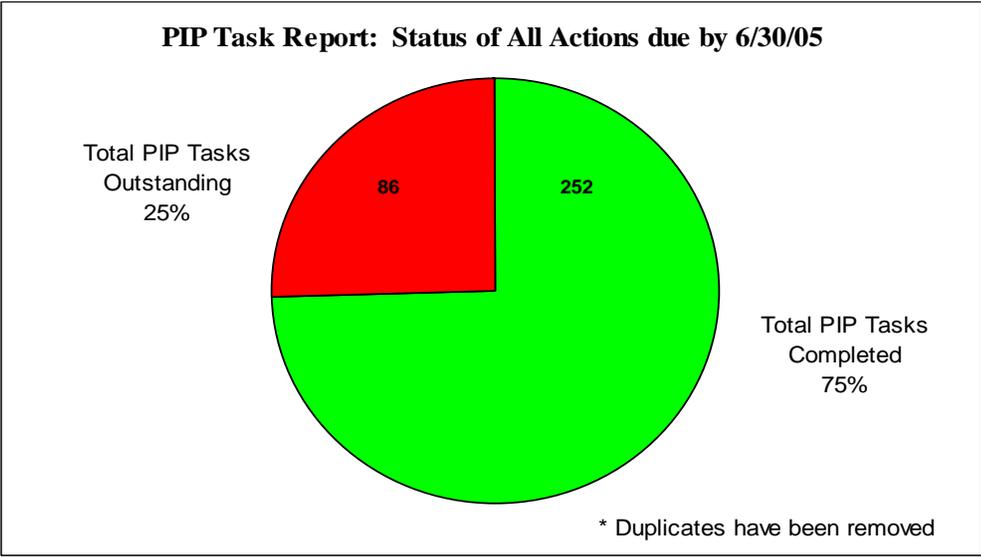
The Children's Administration Comprehensive Improvement Plan and the Kids Come First II (KCFII) plan include updates on the progress in achieving the requirements of the Federal Program Improvement Plan (PIP). The final version of the PIP was approved by the Federal Government on October 13, 2004.

The first and second quarters (10/04 – 12/04 and 1/05 - 3/05) of the PIP were very busy and productive. Efforts were focused on the development of programs and policies to support various KCF II initiatives. New policies were drafted and implemented; old policies were revised; practice guides and program initiatives were developed. Implementing the entire KCF II plan requires that 1180 tasks be completed, with 623 tasks related to implementing the Program Improvement Plan.

During the first quarter (10/04 – 12/04), a system for tracking progress on completing the KCF II plan was implemented and also a process for communicating and implementing the program and policy changes into field practice was developed. Two hundred and thirty-five (235) tasks were scheduled to be completed in the first quarter. Seventy-nine (79) percent or 185 of these tasks were completed. There were 50 tasks outstanding at the end of the first quarter, and most were projected to be completed by January 2005. All of the 50 items that were not completed on time were evaluated to determine if the time frames for subsequent actions steps could be adjusted to ensure that the final implementation of the initiative is completed on schedule.

During the second quarter (1/05 – 3/05), 228 items or 37 percent of the entire PIP was completed. For the second quarter alone, 89 tasks were required to be completed and 64 of these tasks, or 72 percent of the required items, were completed. There were 32 tasks outstanding at the end of the second quarter.

During the third quarter (4/05 – 6/05), 252 items or 40 percent of the entire PIP was completed. For the third quarter alone, 100 tasks were required to be completed and 40 of these tasks, or 40 percent of the required items, were completed. In addition to the 40 tasks completed, 24 tasks were marked as complete and removed from the plan, per agreement between ACF/RO and Children's Administration during second quarter status review. There were 86 tasks outstanding at the end of the third quarter. All of the 86 items that were not completed on time have been evaluated to determine if the time frames for subsequent benchmarks could be adjusted to ensure that the final implementation of the initiative is completed on schedule.



Program and Policy

Six new KCF II items were released and effective on January 1, 2005, as a result of policy work completed in the first quarter. Those items are as follows:

1. Interim guardianship policy

The purpose of the interim policy is to improve the quality and consistency of current practice related to guardianship as a permanent plan for a child. The policy clarifies how guardianship decisions are made, the roles and responsibilities of Children’s

Administration and guardians. New court documents related to guardianships have been developed.

2. Post-Adoption and Permanent Kinship Resource Centers

These permanency resource centers are being developed in each region. The centers serve adoptive, guardianship and kinship families who have children legally placed with them by the Children's Administration. Regions 2 and 6 are in the process of contracting with local providers to provide these services and will be operational shortly. Other regions are in the development phase.

3. Case Conferences

In September 2004 interim guidelines for case conferences, as required by legislation, were distributed to all staff. The guidelines have been finalized and will be distributed to all social workers. The guidelines will assist social workers in knowing which case conferences are required at what point in the case process, and what their responsibilities are related to each case conference.

4. Notification to Guardian ad Litem (GAL)/Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA) of placement moves

This new policy will require social workers to notify the GAL/CASA or the legal representative of a child in out-of-home care to be notified in advance of any placement moves. An exception is provided in emergent situations in which the child's safety and well-being requires an immediate move. In these circumstances, notification is provided as soon as possible after the placement change.

5. Individual Service and Safety Plan (ISSP) Desk Guide

The ISSP Desk Guide is a user friendly guide for social workers to assist them in developing appropriate and effective ISSP's. The Desk Guide includes instructions for: providing a clear history of a child's placements, identifying and updating service goals for the child and family, involvement of children, parents, resource families and Tribes in case planning, and frequent and consistent visitation with parents and siblings.

6. Mandatory Training Policy

The policy outlines the required Academy trainings each social worker must take at the beginning of their employment and before they can carry cases. The policy also outlines additional training requirements for social workers to complete within the first two years of hire, and a requirement to complete at least 20 hours of training annually thereafter. This policy is effective January 1, 2005.

Six new KCF II items were released on March 1, 2005, as follows:

1. Interim Policy for One-Business Day Response for Emergent Referrals

This new policy will require social workers, on all emergent referrals, to have face-to-face contact with alleged child victims by the end of the next business day from the date of the referral alleging abuse and/or neglect.

2. Interim Policy Requiring Cases to be Transferred from CPS to CWS by the Date of Fact-Finding

Currently, when a child is placed in out-of-home care, the CPS social worker assigned to the investigation carries the case and completes the required court work to establish a dependency. After dependency has been established, the case is then transferred to the CWS worker to begin working on reasonable efforts and permanency and concurrent planning. Usually case transfers have occurred some months after the establishment of the dependency. This new policy will require that the case be transferred no later than the date that dependency is established. This will allow for the CWS worker to begin working sooner on reasonable efforts and permanency planning with the family.

3. **New Intake Timelines for Referral Review and Transfer to CPS**

Emergent Referrals: (Mandatory Policy) The intake process for emergent referrals must be completed within 24 hours from the date/time of receipt of referral for both DCFS and DLR. **Non-emergent Referrals:** (Guideline) For non-emergent referrals, a guideline has been established, recommending that the intake process will be completed within 48 hours from the date and time of receipt of referral to Children's Administration.

4. **Five Day Guideline for Responding to Non-Emergent Referrals**

Social workers are currently required to make face-to-face contact with alleged child victims of alleged abuse and/or neglect within ten days of the referral. This new guideline recommends that social workers make their first attempt at the face-to-face contact by the fifth day from the date the referral is received.

5. **Mandatory Training for Foster Parents**

All licensed caregivers (including private agency, Children's Administration and licensed relative homes) will be required to complete 36 hours of ongoing training during each three year licensing period. The mandatory training hours must be completed prior to the caregiver's license being renewed. If a current licensed caregiver is scheduled to be re-licensed in less than three years, the 36 hours of training has been pro-rated during the transition period, based on the remaining months of the current license.

6. **Establishment of a Youth Advisory Board**

The Youth Advisory Board will be composed of youth and young adults (up to age 25) who have been recipients of services provided by CA. This board will serve in an advisory function, providing CA with input and recommendations regarding policy and practices on a quarterly basis. The establishment of the board will provide opportunities for adolescents to have their voices heard and provide input into CA policy and program decisions.

Six new KCF II items were released on April 29, 2005, as follows:

1. **24-Hour Face-to-Face Contact with Child Victims on Emergent Referrals**

This policy requires CA social workers to have face-to-face contact with all alleged victims of child abuse or neglect in emergent referrals within 24-hours from the time and date CA receives the referral. If additional victims are identified during the course of an investigation, a CA social worker will have face-to-face contact with them within 24-hours of the date and time they are identified, if they are assessed to be at risk of serious and immediate harm. Exceptions to the 24 hour face-to-face timeframe are outlined in the policy.

2. **Mental Health Resource Guides**

Mental health resources for the children and families will now be easier to locate for every county in the state, including treatment and services that may be purchased using Medicaid and contact information to help locate appropriate service providers who have contracts with the Children's Administration for services.

One new KCF II items was released on June 1, 2005, as follows:

1. **After Hours Support Crisis Line for Foster Parents and Caregivers**

The Foster Parent & Caregiver Support Line is a resource for foster parents licensed by the Office of Foster Care Licensing (OFCL) and unlicensed relative caregivers caring for children in state custody. The support line is intended to help them handle emergent situations after business hours. The support line will be available from 4:30pm - 8:00am Monday- Friday and 24 hours a day on weekends and holidays.

Performance Measures

Children's Administration has now completed the process of changing the AFCARS extraction methodology to include in-home dependencies and trial home visits in the period for which children are considered to be in out-of-home care prior to reunification. As we anticipated, this required change has impacted the baseline for foster care re-entry, in addition to some of the other performance measures that we are currently required to report on. We have renegotiated the performance goals for the performance measures, based upon the more recent data. As a result of this more recent data, the performance goals for adoption and re-entry have now reached the national standard after the AFCARS re-program, and both of these items are now considered complete.

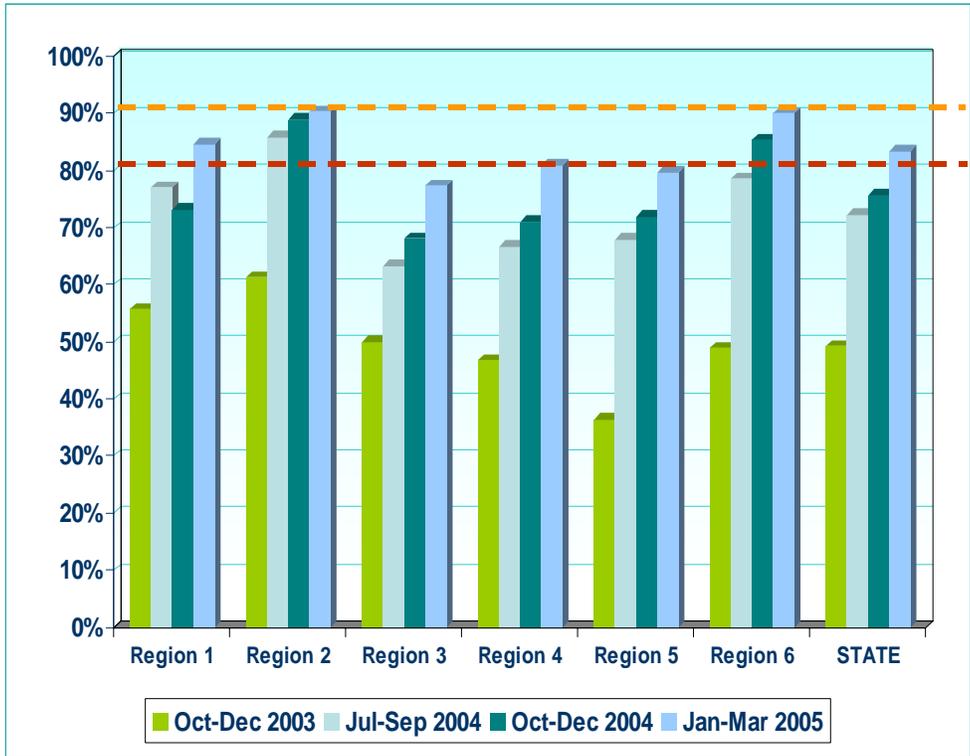
In addition to the four PIP performance measures (re-entry, reunification, stability of placements and adoptions), Children's Administration has been focusing on improving timeliness of response to abuse/neglect referrals and completion of health and safety visits with children in placement every 90-days. Across the state social workers have been working hard to improve practice on these performance measures. The commitment and hard work on behalf of Children's Administration staff is evident in the improvement in performance on these measures during the second quarter (1/05 – 3/05).

The Children's Administration case review model has been revised to meet the requirements of the Federal Program Improvement Plan and the Council on Accreditation. The model has been piloted successfully and is now being utilized statewide. The new model provides a more in-depth assessment of both the compliance and qualitative aspects of case practice. During the second quarter, we worked with the program staff at the US Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) to review the results of the pilot and establish new baselines and target performance measures.

Children's Administration policy requires that social workers make face-to-face contact with child victims of alleged abuse and/or neglect within ten working days from the date of the referral. The following chart is a summary of the progress being made to improve compliance with this policy.

10-Day Face to Face Contact State & Region

Target: 80% by September 2005, 90% by September 2006



- Regions 1, 2, 4, and 6 have already met the September 2005 target.
- Regions 2 and 6 have already met the September 2006 target.

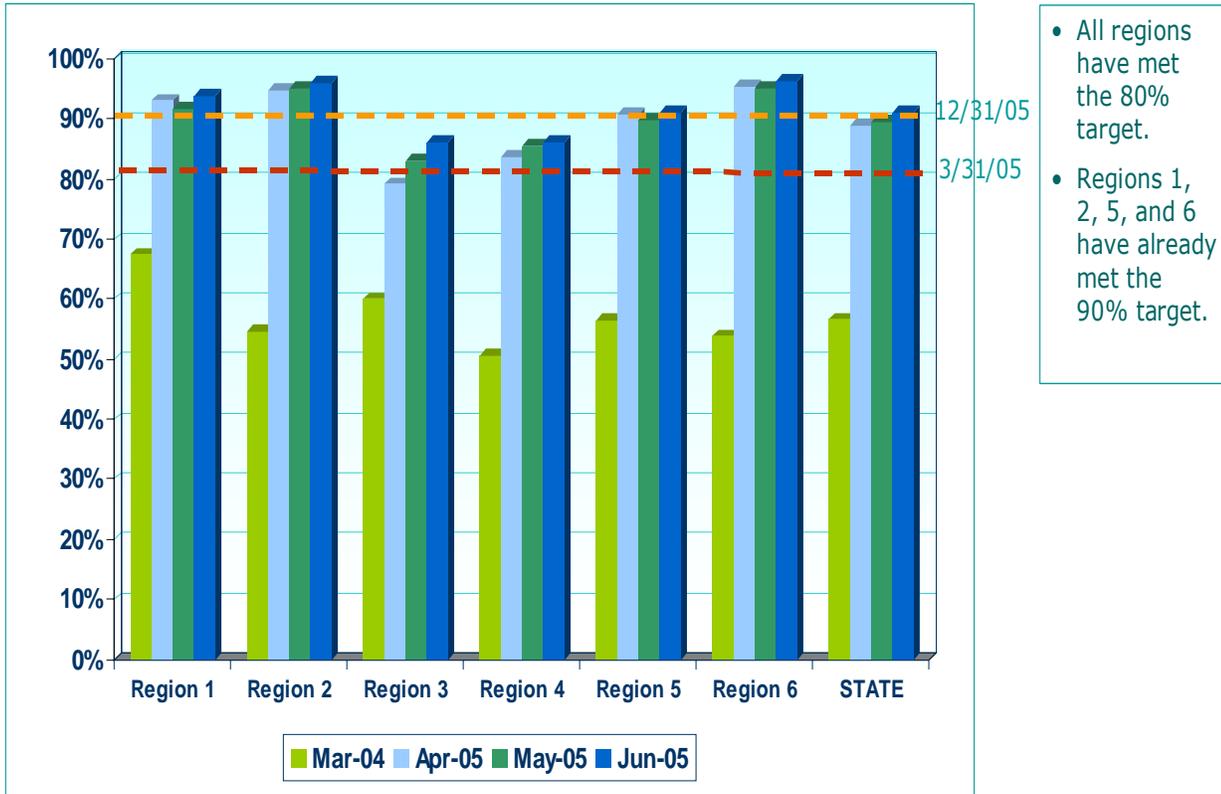
Per request by ACF/RO, the chart has been updated to show quarterly results instead of monthly results.

Percentage based on documentation of each identified child victim seen with initial face-to-face (SER action code 'IF') within 10 working days (14 calendar days) of referral receive date. Data presented is based on the month the referral was received; calculation was done 60 days after the end of the month to allow time for documentation.

Children’s Administration policy requires that social workers conduct a health and safety visit with a child in out-of-home care in the location of their placement every 90 days. The following chart is a summary of progress on improving compliance to this policy.

90-Day Health & Safety Visit State & Region

Target: 75% by 12/31/04 - 80% by 3/31/05 - 90% by 12/31/05



Percent of children in out-of-home care who received a health & safety visit from their social worker in the previous 90 days as documented in CAMIS by SER code of 90 or 9T. Data presented is based on children in care on the first day of the month shown; calculation was done 25 days following to allow time for documentation.

The Children's Administration 2004 Performance Report

The Children's Administration 2004 Performance Report, [See Part II (11) on how to access this report], details the specific outcomes of the Children's Administration's goals, objectives, and outcomes from the Children's Administration 2005 – 2011 Strategic Plan. Strategic Plan goals and objectives not only mirror the three key federal goals, but also address organizational issues, many from the *Kids Come First Action Agenda* launched in 2000:

- **Child Safety:** Children will be safe from abuse and neglect
- **Child and Family Health and Well-Being:** Help families and communities improve the well-being of children in their own homes and in out-of-home care.
- **Permanency:** Provide stable, nurturing, and permanent placements as quickly as possible for children who are placed into out-of-home care.
- **Supporting Client Outcomes:** Continuously improve the organization's capacity to achieve better outcomes for children and families.

Depending upon the specific measure, data reaches as far back as 1994 so trends can be readily seen. The latest data available is included in this report. Data is drawn from two primary sources: 1) the Case and Management Information System (CAMIS), a fully automated system which stores data regarding referrals, placement, case activity, contracts, licensing, and other case-specific information, and 2) regional handcounts. During this last fiscal year, the Children's Administration (CA) has made serious efforts to improve the methods by which data is collected, calculated, and reported through such efforts as the development of a Data Warehouse and the restructuring of the Technology Services Division.

Overview: During the course of any given year, the CA will impact the lives of nearly 4% of the Washington State population. CA used about 61% of the biennium budget for 2003 – 2005 to purchase services, including services provided by nearly 6,100 licensed foster homes or other state licensed facilities, professional services, and financial support to over 10,000 families who have adopted children with special needs to assist them in providing for their adoptive children.

Child Safety: Data indicates that there is a trend of increasing numbers of accepted referrals for neglect, while accepted referrals for physical abuse, sexual abuse, abandonment, and other types of abuse have leveled off or even decreased.

Every year since 2001, the Division of Field Operation's Licensed Resources has met or exceeded their target of 90% for timeliness of investigations of allegation of abuse or neglect of children in state licensed or state regulated care.

There is a trend of improvement in the percent of CPS referrals where the identified victims were seen face-to-face by a social worker within 10 days and it was documented in CAMIS. For the time period of August 2004 – June 2005, the statewide average percentage of children seen increased from 72.3% to 83.8%.

In the last four years, there is also a trend of improvement in the number of children who are victims of re-abuse. Washington State is still over the national standard of 6.1%, however some offices do meet this standard.

Washington State continues to successfully exceed federal expectations for the number of children who are abused or neglected while placed in out-of-home care. Washington State also has met or exceeded the mandate to conduct annual health and safety checks in at least 10 percent of all licensed family foster homes.

CA has continued to improve systems for tracking child fatalities, both through CAMIS and the new Administrative Incident Reporting System (AIRS).

Child and Family Health and Well-Being: CA uses CAMIS data to track quarterly social worker visits with a child in their placement, and to ensure that these contacts were documented correctly. There has been a trend of steady improvement since March 2004, from 56.4% to 81.3% in November 2004, the latest data available.

Permanency:

The data in this section reflects the latest data available during FY 2005.

- There was an increase in the number of children in out-of-home care (March, 2005).
- There was a slight decrease in the number of out-of-home dependencies established (September, 2004).
- The state has shown a steady, incremental increase in the proportion of children placed with relatives for children in care with all lengths of stay to 36.8% by May, 2005, exceeding the performance target of 36% by July, 2005.
- Although the number of children in paid foster care shows a trend of slightly declining, there is a steady trend of a significant increase in the number of children with adoption support as of March 2005.
- In fiscal year 2004, the percent of children with two or fewer placements in their first 12 months in out of home care increased to 85.3%, closer to the PIP target of 86.1 by September, 2006. There is also an increase in the percent of children currently in care for at least two years with no moves during their most recent full year of care or a reduction in moves of two or more compared to their previous full year in care as of December 2004. As of December 2004, the state exceeded the target of 86.7% for the percent of children with no more than two placements during their first 12 months in care for children exiting or remaining in care for any length of stay.
- The state showed improvement and met the federal standard of 32% for adoptions achieved within 24 months of placement as of March 2005.
- As of March 2005, the state and all regions successfully exceeded the target of 76.2% for the percent of children reunified within 12 months. The state trend for the number of African-American children in care longer than two years who do not have a completed permanent plan has remained between 35% and 45% since FY 2002, however during FY 2005 was showing a gradual decline until the last reporting period in March 2005. There has been a leveling off or improvement in the state and all regions in the over-representation of minority children in care as of December 2004.
- As of December 2004, there has been a slight increase in the proportion of children re-entering care within 12 months of reunification but is only slightly above the target of 8.6%.

Supporting Client Outcomes:

CA strives for continuous quality improvement in a number of areas, further identified through the following:

- **Accreditation Process:** The national Council on Accreditation (COA) assesses management and services per a set of standards for child welfare practice.
- **Internal Audits of Service Delivery and Stewardship:** Audits performed as part of the ongoing quality assurance program.
- **Child and Family Services Review (CSFR):** The federal review measures compliance with the requirements of the Adoption and Safe Families Act (ASFA).
- **Braam v. DSHS:** Jessica Braam, et al, v. State of Washington Department of Social and Health Services lawsuit filed in 1998 and settled in August 2004. Current and former foster children claimed they experienced significant harm to their well-being due to deficiencies in the existing foster care system.
- **Gomez Child Fatality Review:** Recommendations resulting from a multi-disciplinary fatality committee convened to review the events, case practice and decision-making prior to the death of two-year-old Rafael Gomez in September 2003.

Accreditation Process: Washington State is working toward full accreditation through the national Council on Accreditation (COA) for all the forty-four field offices and state headquarters by late 2006. So far, 12 field offices and the state headquarters office have met the highest COA standards for child welfare practice. Six additional offices are preparing for accreditation in 2005.

Internal Audits of Service Delivery and Stewardship: The proactive process of reviewing, assessing, and improving services to children and families through reviews of a random sample of open and closed case files has led to a realistic picture of the strengths and needs for improvement.

There are a number of initiatives at the office and regional level that have resulted from this process. Some examples include the following:

- *Families and Communities Together* in Region 1 focuses on prevention of involvement with CPS through early community intervention with families.
- *Common Ground* in Region 2 attempts to improve retention of caregivers for children with challenging behaviors through mediation of conflict.
- *Can You Hear Me Now? Yes, We're Listening!* in Region 3 was designed to address the expressed concerns of staff for improved communications within the region.
- *Culturally Competent Professional Practice* in Region 4 is an effort to address possible cultural bias and improve cultural awareness and practices in working more effectively with African American children.
- *Family Assessment Stabilization Team (FAST)* in Region 5 was created to provide a crisis response team to intervene in families where children are at risk of being placed due to the child's behavior or where children are at risk of disruption from the current placement.
- *Neglect Project* in Region 6 was started to reduce repeated findings of neglect within families. Early evidence shows a reduction in re-referrals of the families

involved in the project, with feedback from families indicating a positive benefit for them and their children.

The Data to Practice Bulletin has been created to share best practices. It is located on the CA intranet and is also sent out to all staff every other month. It has suggestions, recommendations, and information on a variety of subjects.

The federal Child and Family Services Review, settlement of the Braam et al vs. DSHS lawsuit, and the Gomez Child Fatality Review: The mandates specified by these three events led to development of Kids Come First Phase II: Safe Kids in Healthy Families.

Kids Come First Phase II is the comprehensive plan for revitalizing and improving every facet of the Child Welfare System in Washington State, and has a ten point summary of major improvements to be made, as well as a mechanism for measuring the implementation and outcomes of the plan for accountability. It also focuses on building strong and sustainable partnerships with parents, relatives, tribes, foster parents, service providers, schools, court systems, social workers, advocates, and the community to keep children safe.

The new Secretary of DSHS, Robin Arnold-Williams, announced her decision on April 21, 2005 to accelerate Kids Come First reform timelines. The policies already implemented are described above. By August 1, 2005 workers will be required to have face-to-face contact with children identified in lower risk referrals within 72 hours, 7-days a week. By October 1, 2005 workers will be required to make follow-up visits within 30 days for children receiving in-home services. Robin Arnold-Williams has also ordered a review of the current DSHS policy and procedures in conducting applicant, employee, and provider criminal background checks for those individuals working with vulnerable people to ensure clear standards, consistently applied. She is seeking suggestions internally and from the community on how to further improve DSHS services and operations, and will seek a short-term independent review to highlight what is working and what needs improvement.