

Nevada
Children's Justice Act (CJA)
Task Force

State Task Force Study Report: 2006 – 2008



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Executive Summary

The Nevada Children’s Justice Act (CJA) Task Force operates as a committee organized under the Nevada Division of Child and Family Services (DCFS), based on requirements for states that receive grants under Section 107 of the Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (CAPTA). Consistent with the requirements of CAPTA, the CJA Task Force works to assist the State of Nevada in developing, establishing, and operating programs designed to improve:

1. The handling of child abuse and neglect cases, particularly cases of child sexual abuse and exploitation, in a manner which limits additional trauma to the child victim.
2. The handling of cases of suspected child abuse or neglect related fatalities.
3. The investigation and prosecution of cases of child abuse and neglect, particularly child sexual abuse and exploitation.
4. The handling of cases involving children with disabilities or serious health-related problems who are victims of abuse or neglect.

Membership for the Nevada CJA Task Force is also consistent with the requirements of CAPTA, and a detailed membership compliance grid is included as Appendix B of this report.

The above purposes outlined for grants to states for programs relating to the handling, investigation, and prosecution of child abuse and neglect cases serve as the primary goals of the Nevada CJA Task Force. This three-year State Study Report has been completed in compliance with CAPTA Section 107(d). Based on the State Study requirement, the Task Force develops a triennial plan consistent with the federal grant cycles, which includes specific objectives toward the accomplishment of the CAPTA goals. For the 2006 – 2008 triennium, the Task Force established eight objectives. These objectives, along with significant accomplishments, are summarized as follows:

Objectives	Accomplishments
Objective 1: Ensure access to specialized training on child abuse and neglect.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review of DCFS online mandated reporter training and addition of information on substantiation. • Detailed review of Peace Officers Standards and Training (POST) curriculum for law enforcement agencies on child abuse and neglect training. • Review and discussion to ensure that regional law enforcement agencies engage in regular contact with CPS agencies where appropriate. • Review and discussion of new DCFS core curriculum approach for training CPS caseworkers.
Objective 2: Support the coordination, technical assistance, and training of child death review teams.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regular updates and monitoring of statewide child death review (CDR) activities.

Objectives	Accomplishments
Objective 3: Develop access protocols on jurisdictional issues and specialized training related to the Indian Child Welfare Act.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regular updates and monitoring of Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA) Steering Committee activities. • Updates on annual ICWA Symposium. • Information on new statewide approach to ICWA projects undertaken in collaboration with the Inter-Tribal Council of Nevada (ITCN).
Objective 4: Include health professionals in the CPS system to evaluate and report child abuse and neglect.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Detailed overview of telemedicine projects implemented nationwide, with comparative overviews of leading state programs in Florida, Texas, Alabama, Utah, Kentucky, and California. • Formation of a Telemedicine Workgroup to explore the implementation of a pilot telemedicine project in rural Nevada for the purpose of remotely conducting forensic child abuse and sexual assault examinations.
Objective 5: Improve the investigation and prosecution of child abuse and neglect through the use of advanced technology.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review and discussion of technology projects implemented by the child welfare jurisdictions in the northern, southern, and rural regions of Nevada with CJA grant funding provided under this objective.
Objective 6: Increase collaboration with the Court Improvement Project (CIP) and the juvenile justice system.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Detailed overview of Washoe County program to improve educational outcomes for foster children and youth. • Detailed overview of initiatives and trainings through CIP to improve the handling of child abuse and neglect cases by regional Family Courts.
Objective 7: Promote child advocacy and collaboration between child welfare agencies and other programs; support developmental assessments of children who are victims of abuse and neglect.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Extensive review of the CPS referral process and follow-up on developmental assessments of children who are victims of abuse and neglect between regional child welfare jurisdictions and Nevada Early Intervention Services (NEIS).
Objective 8: Support the development of legislative and advocacy recommendations and collaborate with other committees and work groups to improve the child protection system.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Extensive work by the Legislative Subcommittee to review and ensure children’s rights in substitute care settings. • Extensive review, discussion, and advocacy for improved outcomes related to child representation in family court and adherence to Adoption and Safe Families Act (ASFA) timelines.

Detail on the major work undertaken by the Task Force during the past three years for each objective is provided in the body of this report under *Progress and Outcomes 2006 – 2008*. The work done by the Task Force during the 2006 – 2008 triennium will be continued through the refinement of existing objectives, and the addition of new objectives, for next three-year cycle. Objectives for the 2009 – 2011 triennium include the following:

- Ensure ongoing core training for CPS caseworkers and cross-training across child-serving disciplines.
- Support and monitor new ICWA work with ITCN, including related training.
- Continue development of the rural telemedicine pilot project.
- Improve the investigation and prosecution of child abuse and neglect through the use of advanced technology.
- Ensure legal representation for children and collaborate to improve the handling of Family Court cases.
- Ensure changes to the UNITY system to track referrals made for developmental assessments; collaborate with the Nevada Citizen Review Panel (CRP) to evaluate case compliance with CAPTA-required referrals.
- Investigate and ensure adherence to ASFA permanency planning rules.
- Collaborate with the Nevada CRP to promote developmentally appropriate visitation with parents, siblings, and other relatives.

Current Objectives 2006 – 2008

A. *Investigative, Administrative, and Prosecution Recommendations*

CAPTA Section 107(e)(1)(A):

(A) investigative, administrative, and judicial handling of cases of child abuse and neglect, particularly child sexual abuse and exploitation, as well as cases involving suspected child maltreatment related fatalities and cases involving a potential combination of jurisdictions, such as interstate, Federal-State, and State-Tribal, in a manner which reduces the additional trauma to the child victim and the victim's family and which also ensures procedural fairness to the accused;

Objective 1: Ensure that child protection workers; law enforcement officers; multidisciplinary teams; attorneys; judges; and medical, mental health, and other professionals who work with child abuse investigations and abused children have access to specialized training and technical assistance for the development of protocols, policies, and procedures. The following are priority specialized training on child abuse and neglect targeted for the next three years: a) law enforcement, b) medical professionals, and c) children with disabilities. For the 2006 – 2008 triennium, the CJA Task Force will partner with DCFS to ensure that training opportunities are expanded to other disciplines outside of existing child protective services (CPS) staff training.

Short Title: Ensure access to specialized training on child abuse and neglect.

Objective 2: Support the coordination, technical assistance, and training of child death review teams to ensure the transition to a new statewide child death review system as established by State Assembly Bill 381, and improvement of the statewide child death review process. The CJA Task Force will partner with DCFS to ensure that a quality assurance (QA) component is developed and implemented to measure training outcomes that contribute to statewide process improvement.

Short Title: Support the coordination, technical assistance, and training of child death review teams.

Objective 3: Continue to explore and assist with the development of access protocols on jurisdictional issues related to the Indian Child Welfare Act and ensure that child protection workers; law enforcement officers; multidisciplinary teams; attorneys; judges; and medical, mental health, and other professionals who work with child abuse investigations and abused children have access to specialized training and technical assistance for the development of protocols, policies, and procedures.

Short Title: Develop access protocols on jurisdictional issues and specialized training related to the Indian Child Welfare Act.

Objective 4: Examine and recommend a systemic approach for the inclusion of health professionals operating within the CPS system to evaluate and report child abuse and neglect, particularly child sexual abuse and children with disabilities.

Short Title: Include health professionals in the CPS system to evaluate and report child abuse and neglect

B. *Experimental, Model, and Demonstration Program Recommendations*

CAPTA Section 107(e)(1)(B):

(B) experimental, model and demonstration programs for testing innovative approaches and techniques which may improve the prompt and successful resolution of civil and criminal court proceedings or enhance the effectiveness of judicial and administrative action in child abuse and neglect cases, particularly child sexual abuse and exploitation cases, including the enhancement of performance of court-appointed attorneys and guardians *ad litem* for children, and which also ensure procedural fairness to the accused;

Objective 5: Continue to examine and improve the investigation and prosecution of child abuse and neglect through the use of advanced technology in video, photographic, recording, computer, and/or related systems.

Short Title: Improve the investigation and prosecution of child abuse and neglect through the use of advanced technology.

Objective 6: Explore and examine opportunities to increase collaboration, communication, and judicial training between the CJA program and the Court Improvement Project (CIP) and the juvenile justice system. Monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of new court initiatives and explore the feasibility of developing or supporting a project that will improve the judicial handling of child abuse cases.

Short Title: Increase collaboration with the Court Improvement Project (CIP) and the juvenile justice system.

Objective 7: Continue to explore, develop, and support pilot projects to promote child advocacy and collaboration between child welfare agencies and other programs, including community-based organizations that work with domestic violence victims, substance abuse, and children with disabilities. Support the implementation of CAPTA requirements related to developmental assessments of children who are victims of abuse and neglect.

Short Title: Promote child advocacy and collaboration between child welfare agencies and other programs; support developmental assessments of children who are victims of abuse and neglect.

C. Legislative, Regulatory, and Policy Recommendations

CAPTA Section 107(e)(1)(C):

(C) reform of State laws, ordinances, regulations, protocols and procedures to provide comprehensive protection for children from abuse, particularly child sexual abuse and exploitation, while ensuring fairness to all affected persons.

Objective 8: To continue to examine and invite discussion among multiple disciplines on improving the laws, regulations, protocols, and procedures on child protection and to increase the opportunities for child advocacy on best practice issues. Support the development of legislative and advocacy recommendations and collaborate with other committees and work groups to improve the child protection system.

Short Title: Support the development of legislative and advocacy recommendations and collaborate with other committees and work groups to improve the child protection system.

Progress and Outcomes 2006 – 2008

1. Ensure access to specialized training on child abuse and neglect.
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STATUS: COMPLETED

☉ **Action Plan Priority 1:** Ensure training for all disciplines involved.

⇒ **Activity 1:** Add material to mandated reporter guide on unsubstantiation.

The Division of Child and Family Services (DCFS) established an online mandated reporter training in November, 2007, accessible through the DCFS website. This training includes specific information on substantiation and unsubstantiation as follows:

Nevada's Child Abuse and Neglect Information

In 2004 there were more than forty-three hundred substantiated cases of child abuse and neglect in Nevada. Out of the 600,000 children in Nevada, there were more than 16,000 unsubstantiated cases that generated insufficient evidence to conclude or suspect that the child had been maltreated or was at risk of being maltreated.

⇒ **Activity 2:** Connect with law enforcement agencies on terminology.

The Task Force began work on this activity by reviewing new curriculum materials developed by the Nevada Peace Officers Standards and Training (POST) Commission, as follows:

POST Draft Regulations 09-09-2007: These proposed regulations modify Nevada Administrative Code (NAC) to update training requirements for law enforcement officers in Nevada, including revising minimum standards for specific topic areas including child abuse and sexual assault investigations.

POST Performance Objectives for Child Abuse and Child Sexual Assault: This document outlines specific performance objectives to be accomplished based on child abuse and sexual assault investigative training.

POST Child Abuse and Child Sexual Assault Lesson Plan: This document represents the revised curriculum adopted by the Nevada POST Commission to provide child abuse and sexual assault investigative training to law enforcement officers in Nevada. This curriculum outlines and eight-hour course that ensures a uniform, statewide approach to training in these topic areas.

At the Task Force meeting on April 1, 2008, the Task Force members received a detailed presentation from Richard Clark, the POST Executive Director, and Scott Johnston, the POST Bureau Chief. They reviewed the statewide curriculum on child abuse and sexual assault

investigative training in detail with the Task Force members. Curriculum highlights include the following:

- The training is mandated for all Nevada peace officers as part of the POST Basic Academy, which applies to new officers, reserve officers, and those that come from out of state.
- POST also requires 24 hours of annual continuing education for certain areas of specialty, which includes child abuse and neglect. POST collaborates with various agencies for ongoing training in this area.
- Within each topic area, there is a standardized set of minimum requirements and objectives. The requirements for abuse and sexual assault were developed across a 14-month period by academy instructors, utilizing subject matter experts. Consensus was developed through a consortium to develop minimum standards.
- Each academy has the option to go over the minimum, but they must each at least teach the minimum, which ensures consistency.

The Task Force members wanted to ensure that regional law enforcement agencies engage in regular contact with CPS agencies where appropriate. In Washoe County, the Child Protection Enforcement Team (CPET) coordinates with law enforcement on specific cases, and the Reno Police Department has officers co-located with WCDSS. In Clark County, they have CPS emergency response staff available for after-hours calls. These caseworkers meet with officers and conduct a safety assessment. This allows the officers to focus on the criminal aspect of the case, while CPS caseworkers focus on safety. POST staff indicated that while a linkage between law enforcement and CPS is a performance objective of the training, the logistics are determined at the local level.

The Task Force members were also made aware that mandated contact with CPS in cases of child death was a recommendation from a national expert panel convened in Nevada to make recommendations for improvement to the statewide child death review (CDR) process. This is being implemented regionally based on separate work undertaken by DCFS.

<p>RECOMMENDATION 1: DCFS should ensure that all child welfare jurisdictions have agreements and/or protocols in place for contact between local law enforcement agencies and CPS in cases of child abuse, neglect, sexual assault, and death.</p>

⇒ **Activity 3:** Support improved caseworker knowledge of mental health assessment and referral.

At the Training Subcommittee meeting on May 8, 2007, the Subcommittee members received a presentation by DCFS on the plans to integrate training to address the mental health needs of children into the new statewide core curriculum. Related topics will surround domestic violence, child safety, sexual abuse, and substance abuse. DCFS would like to see that caseworkers are given a framework to recognize and understand mental health problems that may be encountered. The main goal is make more accurate assessments for need and appropriate referrals for service.

⇒ **Activity 4:** Ensure CPS staff understand changes in the RFQ process.

At the Training Subcommittee meeting on May 8, 2007, the Subcommittee members received two presentations: 1) New DCFS statewide training initiative and 2) University System links with DCFS statewide training.

DCFS staff reported that there is currently an initiative to expand training statewide in order to support child welfare caseworkers. The expansion plan includes training beyond initial workshops, to include both intermediate and advanced levels of training for long-term employees. In order to accomplish this, a request for qualifications (RFQ) was released to develop specialty courses to support caseworkers in their professional development. This may include experts from out of state, and subject matter experts in specific areas of training.

Some Subcommittee members expressed concern about the departure from involving Nevada's University System in the training process, as has been done historically. DCFS staff made it clear that the RFQ process is not intended to disinclude the universities, but rather it opens up the process to other training providers in addition to the Nevada schools. The RFQ process allows DCFS to identify a set of training providers that may be used to provide a variety of different trainings or focus on specific topic areas. This differs from the request for proposal (RFP) process, which awards a contract to a single provider.

Subsequent to the RFQ process in 2007, DCFS awarded the new training contract to three universities: the University of Nevada, Reno (UNR); the University of Nevada, Las Vegas (UNLV); and the University of Denver (DU). These three universities, along with the regional child welfare jurisdictions, are members of the Nevada Partnership for Training (NPT), which is responsible for providing training for CPS caseworkers. Details on the new core training provided to CPS caseworkers are outlined below under Activity 5.

⇒ **Activity 5:** Support realignment of the Academy concept in terms of basic, intermediate, and advanced trainings.

At the Task Force meeting on October 29, 2007, the members received the first of a series of ongoing updates that allow the group to regularly monitor DCFS training efforts. Staff explained that the tri-university contract would serve to develop a new basic training for CPS caseworkers to be established by the end of 2008. The DU Butler Institute had the primary responsibility of developing the new statewide core curriculum. They have curriculum experts on staff who drew from an existing New York curriculum that was customized for Nevada. UNR and UNLV will be the primary training providers.

The Nevada New Worker Core (Core) replaced the New Worker Academy in 2007. Core is a 10-week comprehensive training program with five weeks of in-class activity, and five weeks of on-the-job training with supervisors, training staff, and supplemental reading materials. Starting in early 2007, the NPT began the curriculum revision process. More than 30 individuals participated, over the course of 24 months, meeting as often as weekly or more to accomplish a variety of training development activities including:

- Reviewing curriculum materials from other states and deciding on using the New York Core Curriculum as the model for Nevada.
- Working with DU to revise the New York Core curricula to meet Nevada's needs.
- Developing several subcommittees to review pre-reading materials for participants and develop on-the-job training components, evaluation materials, embedded skills activities and training-of-trainers plans.

In late Spring 2008, the Core was piloted in Washoe County by five NPT trainers, two from UNR and three from UNLV, with 13 participants and training supervisors from each of the child welfare jurisdictions and DU contract staff. The NPT trainers then participated in a Trainer's Boot Camp hosted by DU and a week of intensive training on the New York Core Curricula in New York prior to implementing the second pilot in Clark County in September 2008. The second pilot was delivered to an additional 14 participants and supervisors, and concluded in November.

The roll out of the completed curriculum will begin in January 2009 in both Clark and Washoe Counties and has the capacity to train more than 200 case workers per year. The Specialty Core curricula include several modules and are delivered either by the NPT trainers or by contractors. From July 2007 through November 2008, several Specialty Core trainings were provided and several more are under development for piloting in Spring 2009. These focused on advanced child welfare practices including:

- Domestic Violence in Child Welfare: Child abuse and domestic violence have serious consequences on child safety. This class helps child welfare workers better recognize a home environment where domestic violence occurs and how this environment can affect children in much the same way as physical abuse. 30 individuals participated in this class.
- Child Welfare and Disabilities: This class helps child welfare workers identify myths and misconceptions relating to disabilities, including characteristics of children with disabilities and recognizing how some forms of maltreatment can mirror a disability. 46 individuals participated in this class.
- Forensic Interviewing: The goal of this class is to promote the importance of collaboration between multiple agencies in interviewing children who are victims of maltreatment. The focus on single collaborative interviews will minimize further trauma to the victim. 142 individuals participated in this class.
- Child Fatalities: Death Scene Investigation: This training is aimed at improving Nevada's response to child deaths by utilizing multidisciplinary investigation. This type of training focuses on the integration of scene information, evidence collection, interviews, autopsy findings, and family history. 114 individuals participated in this class.
- Substance Abuse: The Elephant in the Case Plan: This class teaches child welfare workers how to work more effectively with parents with substance abuse disorders and their children. Workers learn how to recognize the primary signs and symptoms of substance abuse, how to understand the direct impact of parental substance abuse on children, and how it affects parenting and child safety. 41 individuals participated in this class.

- CPS Investigation: A Social Child Safety Intervention: This class is focused on child safety intervention. Workers learn how to collect and analyze information and how to differentiate between risk and maltreatment. In addition, workers learn how to justify their decisions and to select the most appropriate family interventions when completing a safety plan. 398 individuals participated in this class.
- Structured Decision Making Risk Assessment: This training covers how to assess risk by using a specific risk assessment tool in addition to and accordance with the updated policy. 200 individuals participated in this class.
- Ethics Training: Through this course the participants are able to: identify social work and child welfare values; to identify ethical dilemmas; to demonstrate an understanding of practice; and to identify high risk situations and how to reduce risk. 53 individuals participated in this class.
- Indian Child Welfare Act: The provisions of the Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA) are presented in this workshop. The critical processes of identifying children who may be eligible for Tribal enrollment and noticing and utilizing Tribes in decision-making throughout the life of a case are highlighted, along with the many cultural considerations that are essential for positive outcomes for child welfare cases involving children, families, and Tribes. 53 individuals participated in this class.
- Multiethnic Placement Act: Participants receive an overview of the Multiethnic Placement Act of 1994 (amended in 1996) which addresses the prohibition against discrimination in foster and adoptive placements. 53 individuals participated in this class.
- Quality Improvement Case Review: Participants receive an overview of the Nevada's case review process related to the Child and Family Services Review (CFSR) in order to conduct internal case reviews of each of the three child welfare jurisdictions in Nevada. 32 individuals participated in this class.
- NCFAS-G (North Carolina Family Assessment Scale – General) Training of Trainers: This course prepares trainers and other staff to implement the use of this scale for assessing family strengths. 12 individuals participated in this course.

Additional courses are under development for training in the Spring. These include Family Preservation through Reunification, Supervisory Core, and Rural Court Preparation.¹

Because of the Governor's funding cuts during 2007 and 2008, intermediate and advanced trainings may be limited as part of the Specialty Core curricula. However, DCFS is working to provide some intermediate and advanced trainings. Full rollout of trainings beyond the new Core curriculum will have to be addressed when Nevada's State budget has improved.

¹ Freeman, C. (2008). *The Nevada Partnership for Training – Training Summary November 2008*. Carson City: Division of Child and Family Services.

⊙ **Action Plan Priority 2:** Target the following professionals for priority specialized training on child abuse and neglect: law enforcement, medical professionals, and other professionals who provide services to children with disabilities.

As noted above, the NPT developed a two-day special training curriculum entitled *Child Welfare and Disabilities*. This training provides an overview of children affected by various physical, mental, and emotional disabilities. This class was held in Las Vegas and Elko in September, 2007, and in Reno in November, 2007, with a total of 46 participants. This class may be offered again in the future as the need for specialty training in this area arises, but current budget constraints limit DCFS' ability to offer the training regularly.

RECOMMENDATION 2: DCFS should offer specialty training on children with disabilities as an intermediate and/or advanced training course for current CPS caseworkers. Additionally, DCFS should offer cross-training across child-serving disciplines in order to increase providers' understanding of the needs of children who are victims of abuse, neglect, and sexual assault, as well as children with physical, emotional, and other disabilities.

2. Support the coordination, technical assistance, and training of child death review teams.

STATUS: ONGOING

⇒ **Activity 1:** Update on statewide CDR activities

The CJA Task Force receives regular updates on statewide child death review (CDR) activities at each meeting as part of a standing agenda item to review all related actions related to ongoing CJA recommendations.

⇒ **Activity 2:** Conduct presentation on FIMR to Executive and Administrative Committees for Child Death Review

Actions related to Fetal and Infant Mortality Review (FIMR) are summarized below under recommendation eight because work on this topic area was undertaken by the Legislative Subcommittee.

3. Develop access protocols on jurisdictional issues and specialized training related to the Indian Child Welfare Act.
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STATUS: ONGOING

⇒ **Activity 1:** Continue regular meetings to draft protocols

Across the past three years, the ICWA Steering Committee has continued meeting to draft protocols to address the interface of child welfare services between the State of Nevada and local American Indian tribes. Primary activities and accomplishments include the following:

2006

- Supported and participated in the development of the Tribal Foster Care Licensing Manual.
- Participated in the review of the ICWA curriculum.
- Requested specific quality improvement (QI) activities related to ICWA.

2007

- Reviewed and re-approved the ICWA Jurisdictional Matrix, which provides guidance for determining which agency has the responsibility to respond to child abuse and neglect when it involves American Indian children.
- Considered addressing child fatality in collaboration with the child welfare jurisdictions.

2008

- Completed Tribal Foster Care Licensing protocols which were adopted by the Inter-Tribal Council of Nevada (ITCN); these protocols make it easier for tribal foster families to meet State licensing standards for Title IV-E.
- Developed a model memorandum of understanding (MOU) for Title IV-E Foster Care Reimbursement with the Yerington Tribe.
- Participated in the ITCN 43rd Annual Conference by conducting a workshop on the Indian Child Welfare Steering Committee and its work related to ICWA, jurisdictional issues, and placement issues.

⇒ **Activity 2:** ICWA Symposium

The DCFS annual ICWA Symposium was held for the past three years, with highlights as follows:

- **2006:** The Symposium included Child and Adolescent Service Intensity Instrument (CASII) training for tribal social workers, along with a Program Improvement Plan (PIP) presentation on items related to ICWA.

- **2007:** The Symposium included national American Indian speaker Lori New Breast. Eighteen of the 27 Nevada tribal entities were represented. A judicial panel presented on ICWA and other jurisdictional issues.
- **2008:** The Symposium was held in conjunction with the National Congress of the American Indians (NCAI) conference, and borrowed several key presenters from this conference including Cecilia Fire Thunder. The 2008 Symposium had the largest attendance ever with approximately 180 participants including Nevada tribal leaders; representatives from the National Indian Child Welfare Association (NICWA); representatives from the Native American Rights Fund; representatives from the Congressional Committee on Indian Affairs; and Tribal, State, and County social workers. Eighteen of the 27 Nevada tribal entities were represented. A judicial panel presented on ICWA and other jurisdictional issues. The Governor's Proclamation for Indian Child Welfare Month was presented. Participants also were able to attend an NCAI Child Welfare Subcommittee meeting with representatives from the Congressional Committee.

Beginning in 2009, DCFS will be replacing the annual ICWA Symposium with long-term projects completed in collaboration with ITCN, the ICWA Steering Committee, and local tribes. The goal is to find a more effective way to meet ICWA requirements. As a result, DCFS and ITCN identified eight priority areas of focus to be addressed to support the needs of Nevada tribes. The ICWA Steering Committee is developing a new process around this, which will include a five-year action plan to address these items and participation in regional meetings with tribes. The eight priority areas of focus are:

1. Disaster response and planning
2. Child fatality analysis
3. ICWA online training
4. Tribal access to Title IV-E funding
5. Social work stipends for education at Great Basin College
6. Hazardous materials (hazmat) training related to investigating methamphetamine labs
7. Collaboration for joint investigations of non-enrolled tribal children
8. Targeted case reviews for ICWA compliance

This work will replace the smaller scope of work done through the annual Symposia and will serve as a better use of time and funding with more focused outcomes. Additional funding will be provided by a private foundation grant to supplement the CJA funds allocated in the budget.

4. Include health professionals in the CPS system to evaluate and report child abuse and neglect.

STATUS: ONGOING

⇒ **Activity 1:** Presentation by Candy Hunter on Georgetown University research related to health care workers for foster children.

⇒ **Activity 2:** Consider partnership with the PIP DCFS workgroup, including key stakeholders to review state progress and current needs for health care professionals in CPS.

The above activities were set aside by the CJA Task Force upon examining a different approach to include health professionals in the CPS system through the use of telemedicine in the rural areas for child abuse and sexual assault examinations.

⇒ **NEW Activity 1:** Explore the use of telemedicine in the rural areas for child abuse and sexual assault examinations and develop a pilot project in Elko.

At the Task Force meeting on October 29, 2007, the Task Force received a presentation on telemedicine and medical consultation for CPS by Kristen MacLeod, MD, from the University of California (UC) Davis Medical Center, Department of Pediatrics. Dr. MacLeod provided a detailed overview of how telemedicine projects have been implemented nationwide, with comparative overviews of leading state programs in Florida, Texas, Alabama, Utah, Kentucky, and California.

Subsequent to this presentation, the Task Force formed a Telemedicine Workgroup that met four times in 2008 to begin exploring the implementation of a pilot telemedicine project in rural Nevada for the purpose of remotely conducting forensic child abuse and sexual assault examinations. Key activities from the four meeting are summarized as follows:

May 16, 2008: The workgroup identified first steps for the project including: 1) identify key players; 2) identify funding sources; 3) start grant seeking; and 4) identify rural locations where a pilot project might be implemented. The University of Nevada School of Medicine (UNSOM) was identified as a primary partner in the process because of an existing telemedicine infrastructure they have in place as part of their rural health system. Currently, UNSOM operates 47 sites in every rural hospital in Nevada. All public rural health clinics are connected. There was detailed discussion about possible grant sources for the pilot project, including opportunities through the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA).

May 30, 2008: The workgroup discussed the Nevada State Board of Nursing's restrictions on sexual assault exams, and their potential effect on recruiting qualified medical staff to conduct these types of exams as part of the planned telemedicine pilot project. In Nevada, no exam can be performed on a child under the age of 12 by anyone with less than a nurse practitioner's degree. Therefore, the examiner must be a nurse practitioner, a physician's assistant, or a

pediatrician in order to evaluate children under 12. Additionally, registered nurses must go through a 40-hour training and pass a licensing exam before they can be qualified to conduct sexual abuse exams for children over 12. This process can take between six and 12 months. Nationally, regular nurses typically conduct sexual assault exams, while physicians typically conduct physical abuse exams because of the complexity of the medical aspects of physical abuse. The unusual restrictions in Nevada present challenges for staffing the pilot project. The workgroup concluded that outreach to nurse practitioners or physician's assistants would be the best approach for staffing. The workgroup also identified Elko as the most likely rural town in which to implement a pilot project.

June 24, 2008: The workgroup received an update on legislative action surrounding the sexual assault examination restrictions through the State Board of Nursing. Several groups are advocating to reduce the restrictions because it is so difficult to obtain trained and qualified staff. The workgroup also reviewed rural abuse and sexual assault examination data for children and adolescents from 2005 through 2007. Detailed discussion began surrounding specific grant funding sources, including the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ) and the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA). Initial ideas were set forth regarding stakeholders and providers in the Elko Area that may want to collaborate in the pilot project.

July 31, 2008: This grant-writers-only workgroup meeting focused specifically on evaluating the eligibility of the proposed pilot project for two grants: 1) Rural Health Network Development Planning Grant Program and 2) Rural Health Care Services Outreach Grant Program. There was extensive discussion about possible lead agencies and partners in the pilot project and how they would interact with DCFS if a grant was received. The workgroup also began to identify data needs for the grant applications as well.

It was determined later that the project was ineligible for the Rural Health Network Development Planning Grant Program based on requirements for the specific target population to be served and the lead agency to be identified. However, DCFS will continue to explore additional grant opportunities in the future. The Task Force has carved out a budget line item specifically for development of the telemedicine pilot for SFY 2009 and 2010.

<p>RECOMMENDATION 3: Starting in 2009 the CJA Task Force should resume meetings of the Telemedicine Workgroup, in partnership with DCFS staff, to continue the development of a pilot project in Elko with a focus on obtaining additional funding, recruiting providers, developing project infrastructure, and building collaborations with community service providers.</p>

5. Improve the investigation and prosecution of child abuse and neglect through the use of advanced technology.

STATUS: ONGOING

⇒ **Activity 1:** Provide funds to rural counties.

Each year, \$10,000 of CJA funds are subgranted to the child welfare jurisdictions in the northern, southern, and rural regions of Nevada to improve the investigation and prosecution of child abuse and neglect through the use of advanced technology. These funds may supplement larger equipment purchases made by agencies, or allow for the piloting of new technology in the field that may assist CPS caseworkers in conducting investigations. Funding was awarded from 2006 – 2008 as follows:

Region	Year
Clark County	2006 (SFY 2007)
Washoe County	2007 (SFY 2008)
Rural Region	2008 (SFY 2009)

⇒ **Activity 2:** Review reports on purchase and use of new technology

Clark County – SFY 2007

During SFY 2007, the Clark County Department of Family Services (CCDFS) purchased the following items:

- 36 quick pads
- 2 photo-quality color inkjet printers
- Printer cartridges and photo paper

Quick pads are small portable computers that are taken into the field and used to complete field notes, which can later be uploaded into Microsoft Word and then copied into the UNITY data system. These devices reduce the time spent on developing case notes and written reports. Additionally, caseworkers can work on case documentation during down times such as waiting for court hearings, accompanying other caseworkers in the field, and waiting for meetings. Case notes can also be completed in a short time after family contact, therefore increasing compliance with documentation requirements.

For investigations of child abuse and neglect, it is necessary to use photographs to document injuries to children and dangerous home situations. These photographs are critical to providing evidence in court when children are living in unsafe conditions. Photo-quality printers provide the ability to present to the court, district attorneys, and CCDFS staff the best quality documentation needed to make safety decisions.

Washoe County – SFY 2008

During SFY 2008, the Washoe County Department of Social Services (WCDSS) purchased the following items:

- 4 HP Photosmart cameras
- 4 camera bags
- 5 HP Photosmart printers
- 18 HP printer cartridges
- 4 Dell notebooks
- 4 Microsoft Office Suite software packages
- 6 Logitech digital pens
- 25 Logitech digital pen ink refills
- 20 Logitech digital A4 notebooks (for use with digital pens)

The technology grant was used to purchase equipment to help maximize WCDSS worker time and improve efficiency in documenting child abuse and neglect investigations. Digital cameras and photo printers were purchased because of the necessity of documenting injuries to children. Photos provide a historical framework required by the courts. Because camera technology is rapidly improving, WCDSS needed to upgrade its current cameras with lighter, more versatile, and better quality cameras. The purchased printers provide a high-quality image in a short timeframe.

Investigators must complete standardized forms and document information quickly. Laptop computers provide easy access to documentation requirements and improve staff efficiency when used during down-time such as waiting for court hearings or appointments.

Much of the grant funding went toward the purchase of digital pens, digital notebooks, and replacement digital ink cartridges. WCDSS staff piloted the use of digital pens and confirmed how efficient it makes their work. During an investigation, staff can write notes, upload the information to Microsoft Word, and then transfer the notes directly to the UNITY data system. This grant allowed the purchase of six digital pens to pilot with investigators. The response has been overwhelming and staff are currently on a wait-list for new pens.

Rural Region – SFY 2009

The rural technology enhancement project for SFY 2009 is currently ongoing and a report will be provided to the CJA Task Force at the end of the State fiscal year.

6. Increase collaboration with Court Improvement Project (CIP) and the juvenile justice system.

STATUS: COMPLETE

⇒ **Activity 1:** Presentation to CJA on: 1) Court Improvement Project; and 2) Improving educational outcomes for foster children and youth.

Improving educational outcomes for foster children and youth

At the Task Force meeting on May 16, 2007, the Task Force received a presentation on the Washoe County Second Judicial District Court initiative to improve educational outcomes for foster children and youth by Tom Murtha, manager of the project. The initiative is one of only a few nationwide, and is funded by the Walter S. Johnson Foundation in Menlo Park, California. Only about half of children who age out of the foster care system graduate from high school, and they are at greater risk of homelessness, greater risk of abusing their children, and have incarceration rates double that of the general population.

Primary education issues include transportation and school stability. Approximately 40% of children in foster care have moved at least four times. With each move to a new school, it is estimated that a child regresses educationally three to six months. With an average of four moves, this sets foster children back substantially in their education. The number one barrier to school stability is transportation. School districts are often willing to give students waivers to attend a school they have been enrolled in previously, but they cannot obtain the transportation needed to get there.

Mr. Murtha provides individual advocacy on behalf of children in foster care, and consultation on individual cases by working through court system, Court-Appointed Special Advocates (CASA), and the Sierra Association of Foster Families (SAFF). He is appointed as a liaison through the court, which allows him to access school records for individual clients. For individual advocacy, he works with the various parties involved to effect changes in youth educational outcomes. Sometimes there can be disagreements between the school district, CASA, CPS, and families. He works to mediate solutions. Mr. Murtha also provides training to foster parents on ways to improve education for foster students.

Additionally, Mr. Murtha is developing a data system to track four major performance indicators: 1) grades, 2) school attendance, 3) discipline, and 4) special education needs such as Individualized Education Programs (IEPs). Preliminary data shows about 40% of children in foster care were found to not be enrolled in school, as part of a recent data analysis for foster care in Washoe County.

Court Improvement Project

At the Task Force meeting on July 16, 2007, the Task Force received a presentation on current activities undertaken by the Court Improvement Project (CIP), which operates as part of the Administrative Office of the Courts (AOC). The CIP was formed to address changing roles of

court oversight in child abuse and neglect cases brought on by federal guidelines and Nevada statutes.

Sheryl Overstreet, CIP Coordinator, noted that the CIP Select Committee Chair, Chief Justice William Maupin, has emphasized child protection as a major priority for the group. CIP staff currently has monthly meetings with staff from DCFS to coordinate outreach to stakeholders in the court process, including the Washoe County Department of Social Services (WCDSS) and the Clark County Department of Family Services (CCDFS), in order to work collaboratively to improve the handling of child welfare cases throughout the state.

The CIP is currently focusing on four priorities related to the child welfare system:

1. **Development of a bench book:** This included collaboration with the William S. Boyd School of Law, which is part of the University of Nevada, Las Vegas (UNLV), and the National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges (NCJFCJ). The bench book will serve to guide judges on a uniform approach to handling Family Court cases statewide.
2. **Training and education of judges and attorneys regarding representation for children:** This will include multiple tracks for different stakeholders in the process. NCJFCJ provided technical assistance to the CIP, and is taking the lead to develop a curriculum for the judges. They will use some of their member judges to provide training, including Judge Deborah Schumacher and Judge Gerald Hardcastle. They will also have participation by the National Child Welfare Resource Center on legal and judicial issues.
3. **Representation of children in Nevada courts:** There is a draft survey developed by the Eighth Judicial District Court currently being reviewed. This will be sent to judges and attorneys statewide to identify needs and issues surrounding the representation of children in the courts.
4. **Statewide CASA initiative:** The CIP is working to support existing CASA programs and to expand them statewide. The AOC originally contracted with Bill Fowler from Washoe County as an interim statewide Executive Director for Nevada CASA. Mr. Fowler subsequently agreed to take the position permanently. The most recent CASA program was developed in Elko. Nevada CASA and the AOC are working to develop CASA programs in other rural areas, including Pahrump.

Major AOC/CIP training initiatives include the Focus on Kids Conference (December 2007); training on methamphetamine abuse and mental health (January 2008); family law outreach in Ely (March 2008); and the Nevada Judicial Leadership Summit (May 2008), which is held every four years. This is largest event coordinated by the CIP.

During the next triennial cycle, the Task Force plans to review key areas of the completed bench book with CIP staff. Additionally, several recommendations related to permanency outcomes

were forwarded to the CIP by the Legislative Subcommittee. This is discussed below under recommendation eight.

7. Promote child advocacy and collaboration between child welfare agencies and other programs; support developmental assessments of children who are victims of abuse and neglect.
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STATUS: COMPLETED

⇒ **Activity 1:** Explore Children’s’ Bill of Rights.

⇒ **Activity 2:** Revisit policies governing children’s rights in foster care.

⇒ **Activity 3:** Invite key informants to discuss gaps between current and best practices and develop solutions.

Actions related to the development of a Foster Children’s Bill of Rights (FCBR) and outcomes related to activities one through three are summarized below under recommendation 8 because work on this topic area was undertaken by the Legislative Subcommittee.

⇒ **NEW Activity 1:** Review CPS referral process and follow-up on developmental assessments of children who are victims of abuse and neglect.

As part of the work completed under recommendation seven, the Task Force initiated an extensive review of the referral process for CAPTA-required developmental assessments of children who are victims of child abuse and neglect. Key activities from various Task Force meetings are summarized as follows:

October 29, 2007: The Task Force received a presentation on CAPTA requirements related to developmental assessments of children who are victims of child abuse and neglect from Nevada Early Intervention Services (NEIS), which operates as part of the Nevada State Health Division (NSHD). Subsequent to the 2004 reauthorization of CAPTA, which included the new developmental assessment requirements, related regulations for Nevada were developed by NEIS. At the time, it was determined that CAPTA referrals would come from CPS. A referral form was developed, and social workers can also make referrals by telephone. NEIS has traditionally received referrals from CPS, but the new legislation made it clear that more referrals would be received from other sources as well.

The CAPTA requirement applies to all children under age three living with substantiated abuse and neglect and/or exposure to substances. In State fiscal year (SFY) 2003, there were about 1,500 children annually that fell into this category. At the time, discussions began regarding how there could be shared responsibility to address the fiscal and staff impact of the growth in referrals. The first year this process was initiated, referrals did not go up significantly, largely due to roll-out time and education required for CPS agencies. In SFY 2007, NEIS received 616 CAPTA referrals, which accounted for 16.3% of referrals received.

Originally, in-person screening was done, but they had a problem with missed appointments by families. Based on this, they started implementing a mailed Ages and Stages Questionnaire (ASQ), which is a parent-scored screening instrument completed by families. The return rate has been surprisingly high, and NEIS believes the mail-in format is less intimidating for families than an in-person visit. They follow up on assessments that are not returned by contacting assigned caseworkers. They complete similar follow-up on no-shows for those that demonstrate need based on the ASQ.

At the beginning of the process, NEIS examined whether they could access the DCFS UNITY system to obtain related information. It was determined to be too difficult, so NEIS decided to maintain its own database. Task Force members requested that NEIS break referrals down by County, which could help identify more specific areas of need. This request began a series of detailed data reviews that occurred at subsequent meetings through the end of 2008.

January 14, 2008: The Task Force received a presentation on DCFS Policy 0502.0, which addresses the developmental assessments required by CAPTA. The policy requires that within two days of substantiating abuse and neglect, or a known positive drug screen, a referral is made to NEIS by child welfare agencies. Once a CPS caseworker makes a referral to NEIS, the ASQ is sent for completion by the family. If the results of the questionnaire indicate a need for a full screening, the family is contacted to complete the additional screening and receive a referral for services, as appropriate.

The question arose as to whether the referrals are being tracked within the UNITY data system. Staff reported that there is a UNITY referral form, which was provided to the Task Force members. The policy states that a caseworker may either complete the referral form, or make contact by phone. Currently, referrals are noted in the case notes section of UNITY, so that a quantitative report on total referrals cannot be pulled from the system. Staff from DCFS Information Management Services (IMS) indicated that a UNITY window could be created to track when referrals are made. However, they do not recommend that this be done. Instead, they propose a more automated approach, such that if a case is substantiated, then the system generates the referral, which would be automatically tracked.

Discussion followed about the possibility of linking the NEIS and UNITY data systems. DCFS staff said this possibility was reviewed early on in the process, and it was determined that it could not be done. The best solution is that the total number of children substantiated, as reported in UNITY, be compared with NEIS data.

Other data issues addressed by Task Force members included concern that there is no data available on the total number of children in child welfare who have a disability. IMS staff explained that this data is available and required as part of Adoption and Foster Care Analysis and Reporting System (AFCARS) reporting. However, there are debates about the definitions of various disabilities and staff agreed that DCFS is likely under-reporting children with disabilities. AFCARS defines medical and behavioral conditions, but staff is not certain that this can be translated into the types of disability data that the Task Force would like to review. The Task Force members requested a review of what behavioral conditions are listed in UNITY for AFCARS reporting and aggregate counts from the prior SFY.

April 1, 2008: DCFS staff explained that when they started looking into the requested report on children with disabilities in the child welfare system, they realized that there are hundreds of possible diagnoses that represent disabilities, and to request a report on certain ones necessitated paring down the list. Based on this, a list of medical, psychological, and educational diagnoses was sent to the Chair of the Task Force, who was asked to pare down the diagnoses of interest for the report. The Chair pared it down to about 20 items, resulting in a two-page report distributed to the Task Force members.

The Chair posed the question: How can this information be compared with referrals from NEIS? Some Task Force members questioned the reliability of the data in the report, noting that the numbers do appear to demonstrate that disabilities are under-reported in the system. Staff noted that there is an AFCARS improvement plan to address this. Other Task Force members indicated that comparing children with reported disabilities against CAPTA referrals may not be a viable approach. The Chair noted that another problem is matching NEIS reports with substantiation. DCFS staff agreed and noted that the law states that siblings can be substantiated for abuse and neglect, and this is not necessarily tied to a specific child that would be referred to services through NEIS.

Extensive discussion followed about approaches to analyzing data sources to determine if referrals are being made on the CPS side and followed up with on the NEIS side. Based on this, the Task Force decided to request that NEIS track CAPTA referrals at the county level from the three child welfare agencies. Subsequent discussion surrounded the possibility of addressing this in conjunction with the Nevada Citizen Review Panel (CRP) through a targeted case review process. If so, the CRP would be asked to review a sample of cases to determine if CAPTA-required referrals were made by CPS and if screening was completed by NEIS.

There was additional discussion about accurately determining the number of children in the child welfare system with disabilities. Task Force members identified two primary concerns: 1) Child with disabilities who need medical and educational support; and 2) children with serious emotional disturbance (SED) who need emotional and educational follow-up.

July 15, 2008: DCFS staff reported that as a result of the requests made and discussion at the April 1 meeting, they have undertaken two activities:

1. Staff have requested a report from Nevada Early Intervention Services (NEIS) that breaks down CAPTA referrals by jurisdiction for SFY 2007 and 2008.
2. Staff have been exploring different types of reports from UNITY related to children with disabilities.

In order to put the state data into perspective, the Task Force members reviewed national child welfare data on children in the child welfare system who have disabilities. In an article entitled *Abuse and Neglect of Children with Disabilities* (Kendall-Tackett 2002), national research suggests that 35.5 per 1,000 children with disabilities are victims of abuse and neglect, compared with 21.3 per 1,000 children without disabilities. Some Task Force members underscored that

children with disabilities are more likely to be victims of abuse and neglect, and therefore this should be an area of review for the Task Force.

Discussion followed about clarifying the Task Force's goals of ensuring that consistent referrals are made to NEIS for developmental assessments, versus examining data on children with disabilities in the child welfare system. The Chair agreed to separate the objectives as follows:

1. The Task Force will look at CAPTA referral data to determine if the referrals are being made by CPS and followed up on by NEIS.
2. The Task Force will begin to examine larger issues related to State and federal definitions of disabilities, and whether children with disabilities are being tracked in the State's data system.

October 7, 2008: NEIS staff provided reports on CAPTA-required referrals for developmental assessments of children who are victims of abuse and neglect for SFY 2007 and 2008. DCFS reported that they are addressing the issue of tracking NEIS referrals through work with IMS to update related UNITY screens.

RECOMMENDATION 4: DCFS should 1) complete changes to the UNITY system to track referrals made to NEIS for developmental assessments and 2) implement a system of data cross-checks between UNITY and NEIS data to ensure consistent referral by CPS caseworkers and follow-up by NEIS staff.

RECOMMENDATION 5: DCFS should undertake review of improving data on children with disabilities in the child welfare system.

RECOMMENDATION 6: DCFS should begin monitoring compliance with CAPTA requirements for developmental screenings of children who have been victims of abuse and neglect, as well as IDEA Part C requirements for timely provision of developmental services to children in the child welfare system who qualify for such services.

RECOMMENDATION 7: The Task Force recommends that the Nevada Citizen Review Panel (CRP) conduct a targeted case review to determine if CAPTA-required referrals are made by CPS in compliance with policy, and if screening is completed by NEIS.

8. Support the development of legislative and advocacy recommendations and collaborate with other committees and work groups to improve the child protection system.

STATUS: ONGOING

- ⇒ **Activity 1:** Explore Children’s’ Bill of Rights.
- ⇒ **Activity 2:** Revisit policies governing children’s rights in foster care.
- ⇒ **Activity 3:** Invite key informants to discuss gaps between current and best practices and develop solutions.
- ⇒ **Activity 4:** Develop and prioritize child welfare concerns requiring legislative action or policy change.
- ⇒ **Activity 5:** Obtain information regarding DCFS assessments related to legislative actions.
- ⇒ **Activity 6:** Consider suggesting CJA representation on DCFS legislative teams.

The above activities were undertaken by the newly-formed Legislative Subcommittee of the CJA Task Force, which began meeting in late 2007 to ensure an ongoing, detailed review of areas of concern that may be best addressed through legislative action. This work of this Subcommittee was timed to occur in advance of the 2009 legislative session.

The leading activity proposed as part of potential legislative and advocacy recommendations to improve the child protection system in Nevada was the development of a Foster Children’s Bill of Rights (FCBR). The initial proposal was made at the CJA Executive Committee meeting held on May 8, 2007, with subsequent review at the Executive Committee meeting on June 25, 2007. Review of this and other related topic areas was the impetus to establish the Legislative Subcommittee.

Lengthy discussions surrounding the development of an FCBR led the Legislative Subcommittee to conclude that advocacy for a bill draft request (BDR) to establish an FCBR as part of Nevada Revised Statutes (NRS) was not a viable approach. Instead, the Subcommittee agreed to three new activities:

1. Learn about existing laws, regulations, and trainings focused on children’s rights.
2. Identify and prioritize five action steps related to supporting the rights of children in the child welfare system.
3. Monitor the development and implementation of the FIMR Pilot Project in Washoe County.

Outcomes for each are summarized below.

⇒ **NEW Activity 1:** Learn about existing laws, regulations, and trainings focused on children's rights.

At the Legislative Subcommittee meeting on April 1, 2008, the members received a presentation on Assembly Bill (AB) 507. This bill required DCFS to develop regulations for training requirements surrounding the rights of children. AB 507 does not specifically require a bill of rights, but rather requires institutions to train their staff on children's rights. Specific qualifications and principles of care for group homes are outlined in the bill as follows:

- Provide a safe, stable, and humane environment.
- Encourage a child's autonomy, respect a child's need for privacy and consider a child's preferences and choices while providing care, supervision, guidance, and instruction.
- Provide care that is respectful toward the beliefs, interpersonal styles, attitudes, and behaviors of children and families of various cultures.
- Have knowledge and understanding of child(ren) who have increased physical, medical, mental, emotional, or behavioral needs.
- Be mature to provide effective supervision and possess the vitality, interest, and understanding to meet the needs of children accepted for treatment care, when appropriate. Prospective parents or staff shall be selected for their ability to care for children in relation to the ages and needs of the children to be accepted for care.
- Have the ability to work with and guide children both within a group setting and individually. Parents and/or staff must also have physical and emotional health to carry out assigned responsibilities involved in caring for children in a manner consistent with the program or home's operation.
- Work cooperatively with caseworkers, teachers, and other professionals in carrying out the plan to meet the individual child's needs.
- Accurately observe and report each child's progress in carrying out a treatment plan.
- Treatment staff not responsible for direct care shall be able to understand inconsistencies in child behavior to better support the work of staff with direct responsibility for carrying out a treatment plan.

At the Legislative Subcommittee meeting on July 15, 2008, the members received a presentation on the Parent Resource for Information, Development, and Education (PRIDE) curriculum and training requirements. This curriculum is used to train new foster parents recruited into the child welfare system. It was developed in conjunction with the Illinois Department of Child and Family Services and the Child Welfare League of America (CWLA). DCFS began using the curriculum in July, 2005. Overall, the curriculum includes three components:

1. Adopt PRIDE pre-service training
2. PRIDE core training
3. PRIDE advanced training

DCFS only uses the first of the components, the pre-service training. This is a 27-hour training offered in both English and Spanish. Sessions are co-taught with adoption staff along with

current and former foster parents. The training is primarily designed for recruiting, assessing, and preparing potential adoptive parents. There are nine PRIDE modules/topic areas as follows:

1. Connecting with Pride
2. Teamwork Towards Permanency
3. Meeting Developmental Needs: Attachment
4. Meeting Developmental Needs: Loss
5. Strengthening Family Relationships
6. Meeting Developmental Needs: Discipline
7. Continuing Family Relationships
8. Planning for Change
9. Making an Informed Decision: Taking PRIDE

In Nevada, all foster parents are required to complete the training prior to being licensed as a foster parent. NRS require only eight hours of training, but the curriculum is approximately 27 hours. There is currently no pre- and post-test for evaluation, but DCFS is working on developing this with the CWLA. Development of a pre- and post-test is a Program Improvement Plan (PIP) requirement from the last Child and Family Services Review (CFSR). The University of Nevada, Reno (UNR) and the University of Nevada, Las Vegas (UNLV) work with the child welfare jurisdictions to provide PRIDE training.

Regarding portions of the curriculum pertaining to children's rights, although there is not language that specifically focuses on this, DCFS staff believes the nine modules focus on the rights of children in terms of appropriate care. The training is currently provided in a classroom-based format. However, DCFS is working to make it accessible online. Some CJA members noted the importance of participant discussion during training. DCFS staff said the web-based system would have an online forum that would allow for participant interaction. This would require monitoring, and so staff or foster parents would be assigned to manage this.

Regarding foster parent monitoring, it was explained that foster homes are re-licensed every year, and foster parents have to obtain continuing education in order to maintain their license. In the rural areas, questionnaires are sent to caseworkers regarding areas needing attention or additional training as a form of quality improvement. Foster parents themselves also identify areas where additional training is needed.

A future concern identified is the fact that Clark County is discontinuing use of the PRIDE curriculum and instead will use the Model Approach to Partnerships in Parenting (MAPP) curriculum. CCDFS is currently completing a crosswalk between MAPP and PRIDE to determine strengths and weaknesses.

The Legislative Subcommittee members agreed to follow up with a future presentation on the contents and implementation the MAPP curriculum in Clark County.

⇒ **NEW Activity 2:** Identify and prioritize five action steps related to supporting the rights of children in the child welfare system.

1. Legal representation for children, including assignment at the beginning of cases, 12-month mark, and 18-month mark.

At the Legislative Subcommittee meeting on January 14, 2008, the members spoke with Bill Fowler of Nevada CASA, the statewide CASA organization, about necessary legal representation for children. Mr. Fowler agreed that there are not enough CASA volunteers available, nor is there a defined guardian ad litem (GAL) process. Discussion began about determining the availability of data on legal representation for children in County or State custody.

DCFS staff advised that the issue of legal representation is being addressed through the Court Improvement Project (CIP), including an ongoing effort to try to recruit more CASAs. A CJA member who also participates in the CIP agreed that that if an attorney is not appointed at the beginning of a case, a child is not likely to get one. It was suggested that when a court is reviewing the permanency plan at the one-year hearing, if it appears that the case is not moving to permanency, the court could consider the appointment of an attorney at this stage. The Legislative Subcommittee members agreed to make this a formal recommendation.

At its meeting on July 15, 2008, the Legislative Subcommittee received an update that upon informal discussion surrounding the recommendation regarding legal representation for children among CIP members and court staff, the problem of funding representation was a primary concern. NRS allows for children to either be represented by a CASA or a GAL. However, the courts are not currently meeting this requirement because of lack of funds.

Regardless of funding concerns, it was agreed that a letter would be drafted to both the Washoe County Model Court and the CIP to move forward with this recommendation.

Based on the discussions surrounding action item one, DCFS staff agreed to develop a request to Information Management Services (IMS) to develop a window and/or selections in UNITY that mark legal representation milestones. Also, staff noted that legal representation for children in rural areas is much better than anticipated. Several rural counties are assigning attorneys, using CASAs, or using Parole Officers as GALs.

<p>RECOMMENDATION 8: The CJA Task Force should collaborate with the Court Improvement Project (CIP) to increase resources for the appointment of attorneys, GALs, or CASAs for children in dependency proceedings.</p>

2. Adherence to ASFA permanency planning and addressing the problem of long-term placements for cases that go past the 12-month mark.

Some members expressed concern regarding compliance with Adoption and Safe Families Act (ASFA) timelines, specifically that there are some children in the child welfare system for four or five years that do not achieve permanency. The specific concern is that once the ASFA timeline has passed and permanency is not achieved, the pressure is off of permanency caseworkers to find a placement.

It was agreed that the Legislative Subcommittee would obtain data on the length of time children spend in custody, in order to determine number of cases either adhere or do not adhere to the ASFA timelines. This data will be separated out to examine children both in custody and in out-of-home placements, with a focus on children ages zero to six years, which would be considered a priority population.

3. Maintenance and availability of children's transition items and personal possessions through out-of-home placements.

There was extensive discussion at various Subcommittee meetings regarding children's rights to personal property, which can sometimes be abrogated for kids entering the child welfare system. They often lose access to personal items, Christmas gifts, and other possessions across multiple placements. Particular concern was voiced regarding this problem for children placed in shelter care in the southern region.

At the Legislative Subcommittee meeting on April 1, 2008, the members received a presentation on a policy and procedure redesign initiative at the Clark County Department of Family Services (CCDFS). Staff explained that many of the existing CCDFS policies pre-date the integration of child welfare services. Based on this, they have begun the process of updating policies, procedures, and protocols in order to become current and help families understand their rights within the system. The policy redesign is a three-phase process that will focus on specific policy areas as follows:

- Phase 1: Intake, investigations, placement, and shelter
- Phase 2: In-home services, foster care, adoption, caregiver services
- Phase 3: Clinical services, medical services, Child Haven

CCDFS specifically addressed children's rights in relation to the policy and procedure redesign, and to Child Haven, the primary shelter care facility in the southern region. A bill of rights for children at Child Haven will be formally integrated as part of Phase 3.

Staff also explained that in January, 2008, Child Haven became a licensed facility and therefore falls under changes required by Assembly Bill (AB) 507, outlined above. One of the topics required by AB 507 is training in youth rights. This was completed in January based on consultation with Boys Town and the use of the Family Teaching Model. All Child Haven staff members were trained based on the AB 507 requirements. Staff emphasized that they support as

much freedom as possible and as little restriction as necessary through the Child Haven Active Teaching Model. This requires staff to have a minimum number of positive interactions in proportion with negative interactions, at a ratio of about five to one.

Regarding personal property rights for children at Child Haven, staff explained that emergency shelter programs are the most high-risk type of residential treatment. There are risks of children being suicidal, homicidal, or sex offenders. Based on this, they need to be screened accordingly. Many children come in with inadequate clothing or are dressed inappropriately. Children are routinely given new undergarments and new, clean clothes. When they are discharged, they can take their new clothes with them. Clothing control results from problems surrounding contraband, health risks such as lice and bed bugs, sexually provocative clothing, and the display of gang colors. Beyond clothing, there are similar health and cleanliness concerns with personal possessions such as blankets, teddy bears, and toys.

Upon admission to Child Haven, children and adolescents are provided with new clothing and, as appropriate, blankets, teddy bears, and toys. Bicycles are made available on campus for children to ride around. Personal possessions brought with children go through an inventory and storage process that ensures that belongings are accessible, as appropriate, and taken with them upon discharge.

4. Developmentally appropriate visitation with parents, siblings, and other relatives.

At the Legislative Subcommittee meeting on April 1, 2008, the members were informed that Child Haven offers visitations with parents 12 times per week: twice each weekday and once each on Saturday and Sunday. At subsequent meetings, CJA members reported that the CCDFS Director is considering the implementation of a three-visit per month standard. However, concerns were expressed that this is not enough for younger children, and that sibling visitation is difficult to manage and implement.

At its meeting on July 15, 2008, the Legislative Subcommittee received an update that another community site in Las Vegas will be opened for visitation. In Washoe, visitation is a focus for WCDSS as well as the Family Court. Judges are encouraging visits between families and children. There was discussion about including visitation tracking in the UNITY system, which is not currently done through a specific window, although this information may be included in case notes.

Regarding possible efforts to audit visitation, three suggestions were made:

1. Consider requesting the Nevada Citizen Review Panel (CRP) to audit a selection of cases to determine the adequacy of visitation.
2. Review new Washoe County Court reporting requirements that will include documenting visitation.
3. Review new CCDFS policies surrounding visitation.

The Legislative Subcommittee members agreed to continue follow-up on this action item in 2009.

5. Transition out of child welfare for children who enter the system at an older age.

At the Legislative Subcommittee meeting on July 15, 2008, the members discussed poor outcomes for children who leave the child welfare system and asked what the jurisdictions are doing to make this better. Three suggestions were made to address this action item:

1. Request a presentation from the Independent Living Specialist on the current developments in this program.
2. Request a presentation on how funds from the Chafee Independence Program and Funds to Assist Former Foster Youth (FAFFY) are being spent toward independent living for children who transition out of the system.
3. Obtain information on how transition-age youth are being connected to healthcare services.

The Legislative Subcommittee members agreed to continue follow-up on this action item in 2009.

⇒ **NEW Activity 3:** Monitor the development and implementation of the FIMR Pilot Project in Washoe County.

In addition to the activities related to FCBR, the Legislative Subcommittee has also been monitoring the development of a pilot project in Washoe County to implement a Fetal and Infant Mortality Review (FIMR) process to contribute to the reduction of child death.

FIMR is a process where the death of fetuses greater than or equal to 20 weeks of age, and infants up to one year of age, are reviewed in detail. The goal of the FIMR pilot project is to bring together key stakeholders to look at factors associated with fetal and infant deaths, and work toward prevention. A specific issue relevant to FIMR is maternal drug use. The objectives of the project include the following:

- Examine significant social, economic, cultural, safety, and health systems factors associated with fetal and infant mortality through review of individual cases.
- Plan interventions and policies to address these factors to improve service systems and community resources.
- Participate in the implementation of community-based interventions and policies.
- Assess the progress of the interventions.

Per Activity 2 under Goal 2, presentations were made to both of Nevada's statewide oversight groups for child death review (CDR): 1) the Administrative Team and 2) the Executive Committee. These were completed in August, 2007. Both groups were supportive of the project, and at the same time CDR stakeholders recognized that there were challenges in terms of

obtaining the legal authority to implement the process. Primary outcomes for the FIMR pilot project are summarized as follows:

- The NSHD Maternal Child Health (MCH) Advisory Board and the Nevada Attorney General (AG) conducted a lengthy examination of the legal authority for this project, ultimately concluding that it could be authorized under existing language in NRS. [confirm]
- A cost-benefit analysis for the project was completed, along with identifying initial staff and resource needs for the pilot project.
- A formal proposal was developed and submitted to NSHD as part of obtaining legal authorization to implement the pilot project in Washoe County.
- A stakeholder meeting was held with representatives from NSHD, the AG's Office, and WCDSS to discuss project implementation, data sharing, and confidentiality concerns.

New Objectives 2009 – 2011

A. Investigative, Administrative, and Prosecution Recommendations

Objective 1: Ensure that child protection workers complete the basic core training, and that opportunities for intermediate and advanced training, especially in children's mental health, are developed as the budget permits. The CJA Task Force will partner with DCFS to ensure that training opportunities are offered when available to other disciplines outside of existing child protective services (CPS) staff training.

Objective 2: Support and monitor the ICWA collaborative process designed to address eight priority areas of focus throughout a five-year plan. Ascertain if training needs are met for the tribes, social workers, and court personnel in the new process.

B. Experimental, Model, and Demonstration Program Recommendations

Objective 3: Continue work on a rural telemedicine project to provide expert consultation for diagnosis of child abuse, neglect, and sexual assault. Activities will include the development of a strategic action plan for project implementation, identification of rural health care providers, and investigation of funding opportunities for infrastructure and operating costs.

Objective 4: Provide funds to Clark, Washoe, and rural counties to purchase technology to improve the investigation and prosecution of child abuse and neglect. Review expenditure reports and identify successful applications for use by the other counties.

Objective 5: Collaborate with the Court Improvement Project (CIP) and Juvenile Justice system to support initiatives and activities that improve the handling of family court cases, including the appointment of attorneys, GALs, or CASAs.

C. Legislative, Regulatory, and Policy Recommendations

Objective 6: Ensure that DCFS completes changes to the UNITY system to track referrals made to NEIS for developmental assessments, and implements a system of data cross-checks between UNITY and NEIS to ensure consistent referral by CPS caseworkers and follow-up by NEIS staff. Conduct targeted case reviews by the Nevada Citizen Review Panel (CRP) to determine if CAPTA-required referrals are made by CPS in compliance with policy, and if screening and treatment is completed by NEIS and/or private providers.

Objective 7: Investigate adherence to ASFA permanency planning rules by obtaining information on any compelling reasons and the length of time children spend in custody and out-of-home placements to determine the number/percentage of cases not in compliance with ASFA.

Objective 8: Promote developmentally appropriate visitation with parents, siblings, and other relatives through targeted case reviews of existing practices by the Nevada Citizen Review Panel (CRP).

Appendix A: Summary of 2006 – 2008 State Study Recommendations

RECOMMENDATION 1: DCFS should ensure that all child welfare jurisdictions have agreements and/or protocols in place for contact between local law enforcement agencies and CPS in cases of child abuse, neglect, sexual assault, and death.

RECOMMENDATION 2: DCFS should offer specialty training on children with disabilities as an intermediate and/or advanced training course for current CPS caseworkers. Additionally, DCFS should offer cross-training across child-serving disciplines in order to increase providers' understanding of the needs of children who are victims of abuse, neglect, and sexual assault, as well as children with physical, emotional, and other disabilities.

RECOMMENDATION 3: Starting in 2009 the CJA Task Force should resume meetings of the Telemedicine Workgroup, in partnership with DCFS staff, to continue the development of a pilot project in Elko with a focus on obtaining additional funding, recruiting providers, developing project infrastructure, and building collaborations with community service providers.

RECOMMENDATION 4: DCFS should 1) complete changes to the UNITY system to track referrals made to NEIS for developmental assessments and 2) implement a system of data cross-checks between UNITY and NEIS data to ensure consistent referral by CPS caseworkers and follow-up by NEIS staff.

RECOMMENDATION 5: DCFS should undertake review of improving data on children with disabilities in the child welfare system.

RECOMMENDATION 6: DCFS should begin monitoring compliance with the CAPTA requirements for developmental screenings of children who have been victims of abuse and neglect, as well as the IDEA Part C requirements for timely provision of developmental services to children in the child welfare system who qualify for such services.

RECOMMENDATION 7: The Task Force recommends that the Nevada Citizen Review Panel (CRP) conduct a targeted case review to determine if CAPTA-required referrals are made by CPS in compliance with policy, and if screening is completed by NEIS.

RECOMMENDATION 8: The CJA Task Force should collaborate with the Court Improvement Project (CIP) to increase resources for the appointment of attorneys, GALs, or CASAs for children in dependency proceedings.

Appendix B: Nevada CJA Task Force Membership

Required Category Membership:		Members:
(A) – 1	Law enforcement: “individuals representing the law enforcement community”	
	1) Law enforcement	Lt. Raymond Steiber, Las Vegas Metropolitan Police Department, Las Vegas
(B) – 4	Judges and attorneys, both civil and criminal: “judges and attorneys involved in both civil and criminal court proceedings related to child abuse and neglect (including individuals involved with the defense as well as the prosecution of such cases);”	
	1) Judge – civil	Judge Deborah Schumacher, Washoe County Family Court, Reno Mast Buffy Dreiling, Washoe County Family Court, Reno
	1) Judge – criminal	Vacant
	1) Attorney – civil	Sharon Benson, Deputy Attorney General, Carson City
	1) Attorney – criminal	Kathleen M. O’Leary, Chief Deputy Public Defender, Washoe County Public Defender, Reno
(C) – 2	Child advocates: “child advocates, including both attorneys for children and where such programs are in operation, court appointed special advocates;”	
	1) Attorney, child advocate	Jane Femiano, Clark County – Office of the Special Public Defender, Las Vegas
	1) CASA	Patricia Thacker, CASA Program, Las Vegas
(D) – 2	“Health and mental health professionals;”	
	1) Health	Candace Hunter, Washoe County District Health Department, Reno
	1) Mental Health	Kathleen Bent, Carson Mental Health Clinic, Carson City
(E) – 1	Child Protective Services: “individuals representing child protective services;”	
	1) CPS representative	
	a) Clark County CPS	Paula Hammack, Supervisor, CCDFS, Las Vegas
	b) Washoe County CPS	Otto Lynn, WCDSS, Reno
	c) DCFS - CPS	Larry Robb, District Office Manager, Elko
		Betsey Crumrine, CPS Specialist, Family Programs Office, Carson City
	d) Bureau of Indian Affairs/Tribal CPS	Norma Moyle, BIA – Western NV Agency, Carson City
(F) – 1	Disabilities: “individuals experienced in working with children with disabilities; and”	
	1) Disabilities representative	Don Stromquist, Easter Seals Sierra Nevada, Reno
(G) – 1	Parents Groups: “representatives of parents’ groups.”	
	1) Parent group representative	Karen Taycher, Executive Director, Nevada PEP, Las Vegas
	1) Parent	Lydia Snead, Parent Advocate, Nevada PEP, Reno