



Montana Legislative Services Division
Office of Research and Policy Analysis
David D. Bohyer, Director

January 29, 2016

TO: Members of the Task Force on State Public Defender Operations
FROM: Dave Bohyer, LSD Research Director
RE: Center for Children and Families, Billings

The Task Force at its December 10, 2015 meeting requested staff to provide information about the Center for Children and Families in Billings. Please accept this memorandum in response.

According to the website of The Center for Children and Families, the Center is,

... a behavioral health agency promoting safety, permanency, and well-being of children while strengthening families. Our goal is to reduce the number of children who experience the trauma of removal from family and subsequent foster care placements. We believe in the power of relationship, bonding, and connectedness to a child's birth family, when in the best interest of the child. On May 1, 2012, 1,828 children were reported placed in out-of-home care in the state of Montana. Of those children placed, parental substance abuse was identified in 56% of cases as the primary precipitating factor for removal. Yellowstone County ... has the highest number of dependency cases requiring removal of children from their parents' care due to substance abuse issues. As of May 1, 2012, Yellowstone County had 294 children in out-of-home care, 58% (170) of whom were the result of parental substance abuse.

I have attached additional information about the Center, obtained from the Center's website.

I also contacted David Duke, Regional Deputy Public Defender for the OPD's Billings Region, regarding the Billings' Region's public defenders' interactions with the Center. Mr. Duke's response is attached, immediately following this memo.

Finally, Task Force member Juli Pierce is quite familiar with the Center and will share her insights with the Task Force at the February 1, 2016 meeting.

Respectfully submitted.

From: Duke, David
Sent: Friday, January 29, 2016 11:12 AM
To: Bohyer, Dave
Subject: Billings Center for Children and Families

Mr. Bohyer,

As you know, task force member Juli Pierce is the "Immediate Past President" of the Board of Directors for the Center. She would have great insight into the Center. The Center is a major provider of social services in Billings.

Your question below focuses on the idea of OPD and the Center collaborating to divert OPD clients away from the judicial/ correctional systems. Unfortunately, OPD's contact with clients is because a legal action (DN or criminal) has already been filed. Thus, when we receive the case the client is already in the system. The Center can help get the client through the system. Many of our DN clients receive services through the Center. In the family drug treatment court, which has about 20 clients, almost all 20 clients are engaged in services provided by the Center. These are DN cases.

Hope this helps.

David

David Duke
Regional Deputy PD.