

I. INTRODUCTION

The New Hampshire Division for Children, Youth and Families (DCYF) is one of several state agencies that operates under the administration of the New Hampshire Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS), with the Division Director reporting directly to the DHHS Commissioner. The DCYF was first created in 1983 under the New Hampshire's Governor's Commission on Crime and Delinquency.¹ Legislation resulted from the work of this Commission which created an umbrella state agency that dealt with services for children. DCYF was given the authority and responsibility to provide services for children, youth, and families in areas that address:

- ↳ abuse and neglect;
- ↳ child care and child development;
- ↳ domestic violence.

DCYF manages protection and child development programs on behalf of New Hampshire's children, youth and families. This is accomplished with a staff of approximately 370 and a budget of \$122 million. DCYF staff provides a range of family-centered services with the overall goal of meeting the needs of parents and children and strengthening the family system.

DCYF is organized into eleven functional areas: Child Protection; Child Care; Head Start; Family and Community-Based Services; Administrative Support; Clinical Services; Fiscal Services; Information Systems and Policy; Legal Services; Staff Development and Training; and, Quality Improvement. Services are located in the Administrative Offices and the 12 district offices located throughout New Hampshire's 10 counties.

DCYF has considered, for several years, the possibility of pursuing accreditation through the Council on Accreditation (COA). COA is a national, independent accreditor that currently accredits approximately 1400 public, private, voluntary and proprietary organizations that provide the full continuum of social and behavioral health care services.

¹ New Hampshire Division for Children, Youth and Families, Comprehensive Child and Family Services Plan, 2000-2004

The New Hampshire State Legislature required DCYF to submit a report to the Governor, New Hampshire Legislature and several other boards, no later than February 1, 2004, that addresses a projected timetable for achieving accreditation, staffing requirements, associated costs and outcomes of the impact of accreditation on the number of abused and neglected children, the nature of their abuse and neglect, and the relationships between families and abused and neglected children.²

The senior management of DCYF has requested the assistance of the CWLA, through its National Center for Field Consultation, in gathering the necessary information to form a professional opinion regarding DCYF's pursuit of accreditation and the questions posed in the Legislation. The report that follows is the result of that activity and is solely based upon the work of CWLA and the experience and expertise of CWLA staff relative to COA accreditation, best practice, quality improvement and outcomes management.

² New Hampshire Senate Bill 86, passed with amendment on 6/5/03, signed by the Governor on 6/30/03.