V. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The New Hampshire Division for Children, Youth and Families (DCYF) was required by Senate Bill 86 to submit a report by February 1, 2004 to the Governor, the President of the Senate, the Chairs of the Finance and Public Institutions, and Health and Human Services Committees of the Senate, the Speaker of the House of Representatives, the Chairs of the Finance, and Children and Family Law Committees of the House of Representatives, the Legislative Budget Assistant, the Advisory Board, and the Child Fatality Review Committee, regarding the feasibility, costs and possible outcomes associated with the Division's pursuit of accreditation through the Council on Accreditation.

DCYF engaged the Child Welfare League of America (CWLA) through its National Center for Field Consultation (NCFC) to prepare an independent and objective report that addresses the questions posed in Senate Bill 86. CWLA consultants began this work on November 19, 2003 with a two and one-half day accreditation readiness assessment visit, and completed their work on January 30, 2004 with a meeting with the Commissioner of the Department of Health and Human Services and the Director of the Division for Children, Youth and Families to review the final report.

The CWLA consultants have concluded, as a result of their work, that DCYF is well positioned, organizationally, to pursue COA accreditation, could submit a formal application to COA at any point in the future, and would be successful in its pursuit of accreditation. DCYF is a quality organization, where the senior leadership views accreditation as a quality improvement activity rather than a "paper chase". Many of the more troublesome elements of the accreditation process have already been addressed by DCYF, in one manner or another, and groundwork has already been established that will allow compliance with accreditation standards to be less arduous than usual.

CWLA consultants estimate that DCYF could achieve accreditation within a 14-16 month timeframe and that the hard costs needed to achieve accreditation are relatively moderate. The largest cost item is resolving, what the CWLA consultants believe, is a brewing crisis with case

supervision that has been created by shifting the prime case supervision for almost 25% of the CPSW workforce to DCYF Supervisors within each District Office. Even within this evolving dilemma, DCYF senior leadership has attempted to address the intent of best practice and quality case work supervisory practice.

A CWLA consultant, in collaboration with staff from the DCYF Bureau of Quality Improvement and program staff, have developed 14 indicators, embedded within three outcomes, that will measure the impact of DCYF becoming accredited on the safety, well-being and permanence of children. The outcomes utilize existing DCYF data sources and efforts to address the findings from the Child and Family Services Review, thus conserving resources and saving time.

There remains work to be done to achieve accreditation. DCYF policies, procedures and protocols will need to be reviewed and revised, when necessary, to adhere to accreditation standards, and, in some instances, new policies will need to be developed. Systems and processes will need to be instituted that will allow organization-wide awareness of accreditation, its organizational value and any change that is accreditation or best practice driven.

DCYF is a wonderful example of a "can do" culture, created by outstanding leadership and the belief in a learning environment. The CWLA consultants are confident that DCYF will become the first state-administered system in the Northeast to achieve COA accreditation.

Recommendations

- 1. Develop an Accreditation Steering Group and an accreditation action plan that allows participation from all levels of DCYF.
- Develop a written continuous quality improvement plan that builds upon the quality improvement systems already in place and incorporates additional elements required by COA.
- 3. Develop a strategy for increasing the number of cases that are reviewed using the newly implemented Case Review Process.
- 4. Create a method for developing program and functional area specific short-term plans.

- 5. Review all data that are currently collected and develop a method for including an analysis of that data in the continuous quality improvement process.
- 6. Develop outcomes and outcome measurements, in addition to the national CFSR standards and the outcomes developed for this report, which include all service areas.
- Develop outcomes and outcome measures for the DCYF community-based provider network that will support New Hampshire CFSR efforts and initiatives.
- Develop a method for monitoring and reporting on the case load size for individual CPSW staff.
- 9. Review the current CPSW supervisory responsibilities of District Office Supervisors and eliminate this responsibility whenever possible.
- 10. Hire at least four additional CPSW Coordinators.
- 11. Review the current training and professional development schedule to assure that all levels of staff have training opportunities and specific COA training requirements are included.
- 12. Review current case recording requirements to assure that all related COA standards are addressed and that practice is implemented consistently across all of the District Offices.
- 13. Review job descriptions and job qualifications and revise, as needed, to correspond with COA accreditation standards.
- 14. Review the job description and job qualifications for CPSW III staff to determine if this group of current or future staff is available to relieve the CPSW supervisory responsibility for District Supervisors.
- 15. Apply to COA for accreditation and negotiate a timetable that is realistic for the Division.