



State of North Dakota
SUPREME COURT
BISMARCK

CHAMBERS OF
Gerald W. VandeWalle
CHIEF JUSTICE

May 10, 2011

Jan Rothstein
Division of Policy, Children's Bureau
Administration on Children, Youth & Families
Administration for Children & Families
1250 Maryland Avenue, SW, 8th Floor
Washington, DC 20024

Dear Ms. Rothstein:

I write in response to the invitation for public comment on how the Children's Bureau (CB), monitors a child welfare agency's compliance with Title IV-B and IV-E Requirements through the Child and Family Services Reviews.

The Children and Family Services Reviews (CFSR) have been helpful in identifying shortcomings in the delivery of services and concerns in practice in the various states even though the states do take some exceptions to the reports. The process allows the states to appeal the parts of the report to correct some errors.

The states are expected to establish a program improvement plan to address the issues found by the federal auditors.

Part of the CFSR is the stakeholder sessions that the federal auditors conduct with the different groups that are involved with the child welfare process:

case workers, social service administrators, legal community, community providers, and the education community.

While these sessions are enlightening, sometimes statements are made that are not factual and those statements make their way into the final report. The auditors do not take the time to check out the validity of the statement. Anyone can make a statement about an agency, the court, a provider, or anyone associated with the process and no one has the opportunity to rebut the statement. The statement gets memorialized in a federal report whether it is factual or not.



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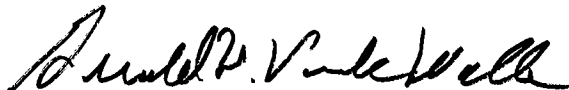
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North Dakota Department of Human Services has embraced the CFSR process and, in fact, replicates the federal process each year throughout the state's eight regions. The court is part of that process by having a representative from the Supreme Court's Administrative Office take part in the local CFSRs. It affords the stakeholder groups an opportunity to inquire why courts do the things we do and really helps the different groups to understand the court process. This has reduced the number of complaints of the courts over the years. It also helps the court identify areas of improvement the courts need to work on.

Overall, the CFSR process is beneficial but some modifications in the stakeholder comments section would be appropriate.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Gerald W. VandeWalle". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "G".

Gerald W. VandeWalle

GWV/cja