



# Wyoming Department of Education

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## MEMORANDUM NO. 2009-092

**TO:** School District Superintendents

**FROM:** Jim McBride, Ed.D. 

**DATE:** June 5, 2009

**SUBJECT:** Community Juvenile Services Boards

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### IMPORTANT: PLEASE NOTE DEADLINE

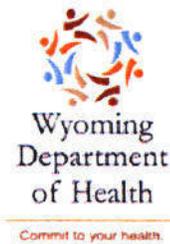
In 2008, the Wyoming Legislature passed a bill addressing juvenile justice reform. The youth adjudicated into the juvenile justice system are brothers, sisters, sons, daughters, and friends of people in our communities. Their education should not stop because they are placed out of their resident school districts, nor should the systems of care and safety stop when youth are placed out of their homes.

In an effort to address the unique issues of youth placed out of their homes and resident school districts, the Wyoming Departments of Health, Family Services, and Education have collaborated and integrated with each other to support active participation by members of communities to create their own Community Juvenile Services Boards.

The attached letter is signed by the chief operating officer of the three agencies indicating the development of Community Juvenile Services Boards is not facilitated by one agency or organization, but in fact, is a joint effort of agencies, organizations, and individuals to support all youth and families in a community, especially those in crisis. Please take the initiative to contact your local agency representatives to express interest in participating. Hopefully, every district will participate in a comprehensive support system for their students.

JM:JN

Attachment



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May 27, 2009

Dear Community Stakeholder:

As you may know, the Wyoming Legislature passed a bill addressing juvenile justice reform in 2008. This law, a modification of the Community Juvenile Services Act, encourages community planning in four core areas.

The first area is planning for a single point of entry or review for youth who are arrested or cited for violations in local municipal, circuit or district courts. With this kind of planning, youth who commit less serious crimes or show little chance of recidivism are more likely to be dealt with in lower courts, with fines or community service. Juveniles who commit more serious crimes or exhibit signs of repeat or escalating behavior problems are likely to be elevated to juvenile court, where more intensive services are available.

The second area is juvenile detention. Most counties in Wyoming do well with temporary hold and release types of situations with youth. But there's no question that from region to region, communities and state agencies need to commit more time planning around longer term incarceration for pre- and post-trial situations, as well as the use of detention as a corrective sanction.

The third area addressed in the Community Juvenile Service Act is the system of care for juvenile offenders. These are the services every Wyoming community looks for to help keep youth out of trouble, like recreation and school mentoring programs, as well as services adjudicated youth may require, such as counseling or assignment to residential treatment.

Of course, the fourth area deals with planning and sustaining all of the services necessary to serve youth in crisis, to ensure healthier and safer communities. The law names agencies that should be represented on these planning boards. That list includes school districts, law enforcement, mental health providers, community youth organizations and others.

As directors of state agencies whose programs address the needs of youth in crisis, we can think of no more effective way to improve outcomes for Wyoming youth than to encourage, assist with and help fund these planning efforts. We all believe the best success for our youth is success in their home school districts. The state can lend technical expertise and provide funding, but we believe communities know their needs and assets better than we can from a state perspective.

By now, most county commissioners have received letters of encouragement for these efforts from Governor Dave Freudenthal and his administration's top juvenile justice reform advisor, former Wyoming District Court Judge Gary Hartman. We encourage you to encourage or assist with these efforts in your communities as a significant first step towards meaningful juvenile justice reform in Wyoming.

Each county has an opportunity to receive at least \$50,000 per year from the Department of Family Services. Planning committees are required to adopt a joint powers agreement and conduct an assessment around each of the four areas described above. Letters of intent, which are necessary to receive funding, must be postmarked or received by July 1.

For more information, please visit [www.wyjuvenilejustice.com](http://www.wyjuvenilejustice.com).

We appreciate your consideration and your voice. If you feel the time is right for your community, please let your county and municipal representatives know what you think.

With regards,



Dr. Jim McBride  
State Superintendent  
of Public Instruction



Tony Lewis  
Director,  
Department of  
Family Services



Dr. Brent Sherard  
Director,  
Department of  
Health