

**Smith, Angela**

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**From:** b.corena@yahoo.com  
**Sent:** Sunday, January 31, 2016 3:19 PM  
**To:** HHS CFS PMK Comment  
**Subject:** PMK Comment Received

First Name: Corena  
Last Name: Barber  
Email: [b.corena@yahoo.com](mailto:b.corena@yahoo.com)

Comment: If you need a person to train, I can tell you the wrongful training. The first step in training is don't assume they know anything. It seems that many fail the training projects and have continually. It is my belief failure occurs during training. THE WRONG TRAINING: Hey you got that right, but let me show let me me show you how its really done. The employees should not fear retaliation. [REDACTED] feared for a long time, we live in fear that a embarrassing moment will occur furthering agency caused damages. The best practices not followed seems to be a well thought out practice and the only practice since the seventies? The number of calls received happen by our schools, medical people. The calls are on the hotline phone bank.. Many professionals state employees and some panelist and other members, sounded emotionally immature and intellectually stunted and all are learned people. A few years back those employees were of the same reputation.. And the chuckles. Its seems to me quite a confession was made. My question answered when those statements were made. I understand reimbursement, it seems that the state did not exceed the expenditures and making up for budget shortfalls in undisclosed areas. A training expert would train Sarah to not be worried about making money in her position and about saving money unless alternate agenda to make money.

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File Link: [FileLink]

**Smith, Angela**

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**From:** b.corena@yahoo.com  
**Sent:** Sunday, January 31, 2016 2:09 PM  
**To:** HHS CFS PMK Comment  
**Subject:** PMK Comment Received

First Name: Corena

Last Name: Barber

Email: [b.corena@yahoo.com](mailto:b.corena@yahoo.com)

Comment: That group expects something changed? It is my belief the head of the commission this last meeting that the head of the commission puts no restraint on her staff. Sarah chuckled ,the panel coached gave non answers. A person complained about checking into a hotel room at 1 am not able to return to home as a result of employment related matters. The employees complained about retaliation from those that they have been in contact with,gave no date ,time ,place or who. Sarah stated that this state is not making much money,then denies and chuckles. The state takes youth to make up budget short falls.

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File Link: [FileLink]

**Smith, Angela**

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**From:** Corbally, Sarah  
**Sent:** Monday, February 01, 2016 8:47 AM  
**To:** HHS CFS PMK Comment  
**Subject:** FW: Child Bridge Submission to Protect Montana Kids Commission  
**Attachments:** Child Bridge and Protect Montana Kids Commission Propoal 1.31.16.pdf

**From:** Mary Bryan [mailto:[mbryan@childbridgemontana.org](mailto:mbryan@childbridgemontana.org)]  
**Sent:** Sunday, January 31, 2016 2:14 PM  
**To:** Jani McCall <[janimccall65@gmail.com](mailto:janimccall65@gmail.com)>; Corbally, Sarah <[SCorbally@mt.gov](mailto:SCorbally@mt.gov)>; Joyce Funda <[jfunda@centurytel.net](mailto:jfunda@centurytel.net)>; [jfunda@casagal.org](mailto:jfunda@casagal.org)  
**Cc:** Mary Bryan <[mbryan@childbridgemontana.org](mailto:mbryan@childbridgemontana.org)>  
**Subject:** Child Bridge Submission to Protect Montana Kids Commission

Dear Sarah, Jani and Joyce,

Thank you for your ongoing dedication to improving outcomes in child welfare... and now, for your service on the Protect Montana Kids Commission.

As we've had the opportunity to work with the three of you, Child Bridge wanted to submit the attached document for your review, and to ask you to share it with the Commission. Would you be so kind as to share it with others via the process that you have in place? If you'd prefer hard copy submission, please let me know.

Should you feel that any of our suggestions have merit, or require further description or discussion, we'd be happy to assist you in any way possible.

Thank you for the opportunity to share our thoughts and ideas with you and for your consideration. Look forward to talking with you soon.

Warmly,  
Mary

Mary Bryan  
Director of Operations  
[mbryan@childbridgemontana.org](mailto:mbryan@childbridgemontana.org)  
406-837-2247 x 301



Please consider supporting this vital work at [www.childbridgemontana.org](http://www.childbridgemontana.org)



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*Finding and supporting foster and adoptive families for children in need.*

P.O. Box 310, Bigfork, MT 59911 Non-profit tax ID# 27-3382066



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Bigfork, MT 59911  
406-837-2247  
[www.childbridgemontana.org](http://www.childbridgemontana.org)

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2/1/16

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Helena, Montana

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Dr. Todd Strizich  
Ms. Jaci Noonan  
CC: Governor Steve Bullock

Executive Director  
Steve Bryan

Dear Protect Montana Kids Commission,

Thank you for the opportunity to share our thoughts with you and ask for your consideration of the opportunities offered below.

We are appreciative of your work and service, and offer our enthusiastic support, as all stakeholders must work together in new and innovative ways to improve outcomes for Montana children in need.

Sincerely,

Steve Bryan

Mary Bryan

Founders

Child Bridge

Child Bridge finds and supports foster and adoptive families for Montana's children in need. We are a nonprofit, tax exempt, 501 (c) (3) Public Charity. Your donations are tax deductible.

Nonprofit tax id # 27-3382066

## **Background:**

Child Bridge is a faith-based, non-profit founded in late 2010 with a simple and focused mission of finding and supporting foster and adoptive families for Montana children in need. Originating in the Flathead Valley, we now recruit and serve foster/adoptive families with full time staff in the Flathead, Billings and Missoula. Our Flathead staff serve Kalispell, Bigfork, Whitefish, Columbia Falls, Libby and Polson. Additionally, our efforts have recruited families who are in pre-service training or caring for children in Helena, Bozeman, Butte and Dillon. We have ongoing statewide expansion plans and a heartfelt desire to serve children and families in every major Montana community.

Our model is based on creating awareness of the need for foster and adoptive families and assisting interested families through the process. Recruiting of families is done primarily in churches where we meet with families to explain the process. Later, we host in-depth informational meetings that include a Child and Family Services representative, a therapeutic foster care partner representative, and a panel of foster/adoptive families. Employing a customer service model, we walk alongside families throughout the journey and support them after a child is placed in their care. We offer multiple touch points on an ongoing basis creating relationships with the families. We connect them to supports that can strengthen the placement and minimize disruptions. These supports might be provided by individuals, churches, community or therapeutic level services. Child Bridge monthly resource groups offer a time of respite, connection and foster/adoptive licensing renewal credits.

During these past five years, Child Bridge recruited and/or supported families are making a significant impact on children in their time of need...caring for 150 children who entered out of home care...whether temporary or permanent. Child Bridge families have adopted 26 children, and our monthly resource groups for foster/adoptive families and child welfare providers have served over 5,000 (instances) of children and adults in ongoing evenings of support and education.

Since we began our first foster family recruiting and awareness efforts in 2011, we've had the privilege of working with many Child and Family Services staff, in local field offices, with the five Regional Administrators, former Field Services Manager, Cory Costello, and Administrator, Sarah Corbally.

We're encouraged by the Governor's Executive Order creating the Protect Montana Kids Commission, and are extremely thankful for your service. While we have not yet met all of you, we have had the opportunity to work with Sarah, Jani McCall, have met with Joyce Funda, and work closely with CASA and other child welfare partners across the state.

While we understand there are many, many aspects of child welfare that you are tasked with reviewing, we'd like to share a few ideas and observations that relate to our area of focus, **Foster Care**, as well as addressing key factors of **Culture, Leadership and Technology** that must be thoroughly examined to improve outcomes. You'll note that throughout this document, we stress expanded collaboration. Care of our children in need should not be the sole responsibility of the government. Your efforts are critical, but it is not humanly or fiscally possible to do this work alone. Innovative thinking and creating "best of breed" partnerships can expand your outreach and improve care.

While each item could be presented in great detail, at this time, we're simply providing some high level points for your consideration. I'm sure you'll understand the thinking behind each...but if elaboration is desired, please let us know. We'd welcome the opportunity to work with you in more detail.

### **Strategies for Improving Child Welfare Services and Outcomes**

Nearly 30 years ago, Frank Farrow, now head of the Center for the Study of Social Policy wrote:

*"There is growing consensus about the need to change how states and communities protect children. Alarmed by steady increases in child abuse and neglect reports, and a child protective services (CPS) system that is only intermittently successful in safeguarding children, professionals and politicians alike are calling for a new approach.*

*... To promote children's safety, a child protection system should broaden the responsibility... beyond the public child welfare agency."* Farrow, Building Community Partnerships for Child Protection

## **CULTURE & LEADERSHIP**

With your formation of a Workplace Culture/Staff Recruitment and Retention Subcommittee, you are already very well aware of the staffing issues, turnover, and the devastating impact that these issues have on children, families and child welfare as a whole.

While obvious needs to be addressed include: providing competitive salaries, training, quality improvement incentives or measurable success criteria to drive retention, rewards for performance, professional growth and satisfaction, and reduced caseloads, root cause also needs to be determined and investigated.

We believe it's probable that over time, the stress of the current workloads, shorthandedness, current processes, staff experiencing secondary trauma, and lack of resources create a toxic culture that spirals and cycles into ongoing problems. This kind of culture has significant impact on employees, and extends outwardly to those the department serves and partners with. It seems that what currently exists is a system where even the best intentioned, best trained and most diligent employee (and we work with many) simply cannot succeed professionally, or achieve personal satisfaction.

Cultural change and leadership attitudes could be addressed in the following ways:

1. Governor, Executive and Regional Leadership teams need to create an agreed upon and embraced vision for change with a focus on child centric leadership. The vision must include a foundation of truth, transparency, collaboration, accountability and an environment where information can be shared without fear. Then, leadership must disseminate to their regions this critical investment in values, belief, encouragement and vision. This should extend to internal staff and community collaborations.
2. Governor and legislative support and involvement should be encouraged in spearheading vision and improvements.

3. Promote and demonstrate receptivity for change from leadership to downline workers and partners. This might be done via a bi-monthly, "all-hands" conference call or Skye, hosted by the Governor. This would encourage positive organizational morale that would elicit better outcomes and build teamwork.
4. While we understand the extremely confidential nature of the work, leaders need to create an environment of less secrecy and more transparency.
5. Improve communication between administration and the field.
6. From the Governor level, promote a desire for expanded collaboration with community partners, and ask Regions to identify professional, high-quality connections, define collaborations and execute together at local levels. Collaborations will help to develop a full service continuum and approaches based on common values. Communication, transparency and mutual trust are key to these relationships and will provide significant returns.
7. Leadership should ensure strict adherence to federal law of Section 475(5)(E) regarding terminating parental rights if child has been in out of home care 15 of the last 22 months.

## TECHNOLOGY

Success in the private sector often comes from the ability to innovate and make regular investments in technology improvements. Why are we handicapping Child and Family Service workers with lack of appropriate tools?

We understand a new case management system is being adapted from the Department of Corrections. We're not familiar with the technology so we don't know the answer to this, but we urge you to ask, is it really the right tool? Is it a band-aid, a step in the right direction or a fully integrated system that enables workers to spend less time on paperwork, more time with families, offers tablet and phone updates, provides current relational data at their fingertips in meaningful, easy to understand web type interface? We can't afford to approach this critical issue with half measures. A robust and well planned commitment to useful, modern technology must be made. Significant updates and new tools can improve the outcomes for children and families as well as the lives, effectiveness and efficiency of workers.

1. Update case management software to the most current, useful tools. Consider a subcommittee to review and make recommendations. Implement solutions that go beyond case management by moving from traditional case management tools to "person-centric" tools where longitudinal data models are employed that focus on persons, relationships and groups such as families and households. Person centric applications enable users to follow individuals and families and look at meaningful data over time. These tools enable an easy view of data, metrics and trends that get actionable data to workers faster. Many programs have predictive modeling capabilities that can show a family or child's projected paths. This information is valuable for managing current caseloads and longer term outcomes. Some programs also include algorithmic modeling and scoring to address issues such as the best match for a child to a foster/adoptive family.

2. For maximum effectiveness, every social worker should have a tablet. This will enable workers to maximize time in the field, eliminate duplication of work (writing and transposing later, or entering information later that may not be fresh in their minds) and have data and innovative applications (points 3 & 4 below) available at their fingertips. With some applications, they can even speak their notes to the tablet. Case notes and data will be entered in a timelier way.
  
3. Consider a major collaboration with the University of Montana or Montana State University, to develop a Data Portal (Child Well Being Portal). The portal could address two important areas:
  - a. Address Quality Assurance or Continual Process Improvement Components where families, foster families, partners, etc., can log in, and make suggestions, log concerns or complaints. Data can be collected and sorted and made actionable using relational database fields and text analytics for unstructured data. Develop a timely, feedback and response process. Compare key practice areas among regions and share successful strategies. Communicate results and findings regularly with the public.
  
  - b. The portal can also show and share relevant research and data findings with partners and community to encourage informed decision making about child welfare policy and practices. Easy to understand maps, graphs and reports can highlight information about our states child welfare data by region. Please see the work being done in Washington state as an example: [www.partnersforourchildren.org](http://www.partnersforourchildren.org) and [www.pocdata.org](http://www.pocdata.org)

4. Empower social workers when temporary foster or permanent placements need to be made with software that provides thorough visual information about available families. This secure portal and searchable data base has already been developed by Child Bridge at our own expense. The vision for the portal is to help tear down silos of information and shrink our expansive state geography for social workers and family resource specialists. Child Bridge is willing to administer the portal annually in partnership with the State. Sarah Corbally and all Regional Administrators have been introduced to this work in 2015.

Of course, technology is a significant investment. But we seem to make short sighted decisions to save money, with little regard for the excessive costs and negative outcomes that the decisions will bring about in the long run. When we invest in technology, we are investing in people... the CPS staff and the children and families they are serving. State of the art technology investments are ones that will pay dividends.

## **FOSTER CARE**

Child Bridge believes that caring for children in need should not reside solely on the shoulders of government. Collaboration with community partners can strengthen the child welfare system immensely. What if Montana was a state where an army of well trained, well supported and connected families were available to care for children in their time of need? It's a disgrace that kids are waiting for families...families should be waiting for children to care for them in their most vulnerable time. But, it takes awareness, education and tremendous supports to make that a reality. Child Bridge works towards this goal every day and believes that together we can do more.

1. Implement a statewide foster/adoptive (child centric) campaign led by the Governor centered around foster care recruiting and adoption issues. Successful states have clearly demonstrated that once goals for the number of needed foster families and adoption from foster care are set and publicly announced by the Governor, that the highly dedicated parties responsible for foster care will work collaboratively with community partners and together, they will implement highly effective programs to achieve them. (See Oklahoma,

Virginia, Colorado.)

2. Foster care typically only gets attention when a scandal or abuse occurs. The many great foster parents who are doing very difficult work are often treated poorly, unrecognized and not considered as professional members of the team. Foster parents must be full members of the child welfare team. This concept needs to be incorporated in social worker training to underscore in policy and practice the important role that foster parents play as child welfare practitioners. Skills of workers and supervisors to engage foster adoptive families as professional members of the child's care team must be implemented. If there is a clear sense that local offices and workers are listening to foster families and working with them as vital team members, outcomes will improve. Consider additional ways to establish channels for communicating with and learning from your foster families (your clients) and others who serve them. (Perhaps this channel could be integrated in the portal recommended above.)
  
3. Improve the foster/parent training and licensing process. While organizations like Child Bridge focus on recruiting quality families that can provide immediate assistance to an overwhelmed system, in many communities, the process is stymied far too often by lack of available State (Keeping Children Safe/KCS) Foster Parent Trainings held locally. When trainings are available, home study completion creates a tremendous bottleneck. This training and licensing system must be re-evaluated and re-structured. Put additional resources behind completing home studies, by contracting them out or adding staff to complete them. Ensure that monthly trainings occur in all major cities, (kudos to Great Falls for this.) Consider creating a State training academy to train and certify partners to train families to your satisfaction, or partner with private agencies to develop and improve training.

4. Expand collaboration with recruiters and facilitators in potential adoptive placements. Again, collaboration with trusted partners is key in expanding the volume and quality of your work, and improving outcomes for children and families. Partner with agencies like Child Bridge who are working full time with families across the state in the areas of recruiting and support. Under your direction, guide agencies who are not licensed child placing agencies, to assist you in finding families for children who are in Permanent Legal Custody (PLC) of the state and in need of permanent families.

Working closely with the social worker of a child in permanent legal custody, agencies like Child Bridge can dramatically expand the reach of sharing the needs of waiting children and assisting in child specific recruiting of families. Child and Family Services is still responsible for the matching and placing of the child. But allow your partners to bring many potential families to the table to ensure the best fit for the child, and taking some of the workload off your plate. Repeal, or amend Statutes 42-7-105(1)(a) and 42-7-105(1)(b) to facilitate broader, valuable collaborations in this area.

As you partner with trusted agencies, many additional opportunities exist for family recruiting for children awaiting permanency. These collaborations can be designed to highlight the good work of CFS, and not only improve outcomes for children and families, but also the perception of the Department by the public.

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Thank you for the opportunity to share our thoughts with you and your consideration of these ideas. We firmly believe that transparency, collaboration and sustained attention from all stakeholders are needed in order to achieve real reform. Child Bridge welcomes the opportunity to assist in these efforts in any way we can.

**Smith, Angela**

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**From:** b.corena@yahoo.com  
**Sent:** Monday, February 08, 2016 12:33 PM  
**To:** HHS CFS PMK Comment  
**Subject:** PMK Comment Received

First Name: Corena  
Last Name: Barber  
Email: [b.corena@yahoo.com](mailto:b.corena@yahoo.com)

Comment: I have a word for the atty that spoke for several minute during the word dunder. That is deflection. I listen till i have to take a break from listening to the banal recording of all that is uttered. To weed through all the data would include line item by line item review by other than stakeholders with vested interest and the right questions asked by the right person. Or, persons that wish to keep information from public view.

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File Link: [FileLink]

**Smith, Angela**

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**From:** b.corena@yahoo.com  
**Sent:** Monday, February 08, 2016 1:11 PM  
**To:** HHS CFS PMK Comment  
**Subject:** PMK Comment Received

First Name: Corena  
Last Name: Barber  
Email: [b.corena@yahoo.com](mailto:b.corena@yahoo.com)

Comment: I have contacted the Office of Public Instruction many times in four years, my local School Board and the Local Superintendent's office. It seems that one can announce publicly personal sexual preference, but not call a parent of a student. It seems the school is sometimes Rogerian, the school Board member either a Brain Surgeon or a hood rat and the whole of [REDACTED] Employees practice fell off the back of a turnip truck medicine. All failed those collaborative and those whose livelihoods are of a tax base economy, I want them to know [REDACTED] is might have enrolled UM but our schools here with the assistance of many made a really bad decision and attacked our family. [REDACTED] is enrolled in a school that speaks five languages and understands assimilation and mathematics in many perspectives. Tell our finest I believe the because of actions by the various departments I now have a advance degree from school of street.

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**Smith, Angela**

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**From:** Corbally, Sarah  
**Sent:** Monday, February 08, 2016 11:36 AM  
**To:** Vining, Marti  
**Cc:** HHS CFS PMK Comment  
**Subject:** RE: commision letter for sarah

Yes, workers are free to send public comment. Anyone can submit public comment as long as it is their own comment (and not speaking on behalf of the agency – just like testifying at the legislature...)

Here is the e-mail address:

[PMKComment@mt.gov](mailto:PMKComment@mt.gov)

Thanks!

**From:** Vining, Marti  
**Sent:** Monday, February 8, 2016 10:55 AM  
**To:** Corbally, Sarah <[SCorbally@mt.gov](mailto:SCorbally@mt.gov)>  
**Subject:** FW: commision letter for sarah

Amanda wanted me to see if she could send this to the commision.....

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**From:** Ball, Amanda  
**Sent:** Monday, February 08, 2016 10:39 AM  
**To:** Vining, Marti  
**Subject:** commision letter for sarah

Let me know if I can submit it.

Thanks!

**Amanda L. M. Ball**  
Child Protection Specialist Supervisor  
2300 12<sup>th</sup> Ave South Suite 211  
Great Falls, MT 59405  
(406)268-3749

**Smith, Angela**

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**From:** mhighlanderiii@msn.com  
**Sent:** Thursday, February 11, 2016 9:55 AM  
**To:** HHS CFS PMK Comment  
**Subject:** PMK Comment Received

First Name: Matt

Last Name: Furlong

Email: [mhighlanderiii@msn.com](mailto:mhighlanderiii@msn.com)

Comment: Here is a link to what I believe is the Gold Standard of where we could be. <http://www.cssp.org>  
Many other states have been implementing the framework and collaborative efforts, and if I were in a system trying to develop plans, I would definitely want to have this information to consider. These are the 5 focus points;

- Parental Resilience
- Knowledge of Parenting and Child Development
- Social Networks
- Concrete Support in Times of Need
- Social and Emotional Competence of Children

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# Center for the Study of Social Policy

[\(http://www.cssp.org/\)](http://www.cssp.org/)

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5. [Board \(http://www.cssp.org/about/board\)](http://www.cssp.org/about/board)
6. [Racial Equity Agenda \(http://www.cssp.org/about/racial-equity-agenda\)](http://www.cssp.org/about/racial-equity-agenda)

7. **Major Funders** (<http://www.cssp.org/about/major-funders>)
8. **Employment Opportunities** (<http://www.cssp.org/about/employment-opportunities>)
9. **Contact Information** (<http://www.cssp.org/about/contact>)
- **Our Vision** (<http://www.cssp.org/vision>)
- **System Reform** (<http://www.cssp.org/reform>)
  1. **Child Welfare** (<http://www.cssp.org/reform/child-welfare>)
    - **Alliance for Racial Equity in Child Welfare** (<http://www.cssp.org/reform/child-welfare/alliance-for-race-equity>)
    - **Child Welfare and Supportive Housing Resource Center** (<http://www.cssp.org/reform/child-welfare/child-welfare-and-supportive-housing-resource-center>)
    - **Class Action Reform** (<http://www.cssp.org/reform/child-welfare/class-action-reform>)
    - **Expectant & Parenting Youth In Foster Care** (<http://www.cssp.org/reform/child-welfare/expectant-parenting-youth-in-foster-care>)
    - **getREAL** (<http://www.cssp.org/reform/child-welfare/get-real>)
    - **Institutional Analysis** (<http://www.cssp.org/reform/child-welfare/institutional-analysis>)
    - **Youth Thrive™** (<http://www.cssp.org/reform/child-welfare/youththrive>)
  2. **Early Childhood** (<http://www.cssp.org/reform/early-childhood>)
    - **Early Childhood - LINC** (<http://www.cssp.org/reform/early-childhood/early-childhood-linc>)
      - **CSSP and NLC Join Forces to Help Grow Early Learning Communities** (<http://www.cssp.org/reform/early-childhood/early-childhood-linc/cssp-and-nlc-join-forces-to-help-grow-early-learning-communities>)
    - **Quality Improvement Center on Early Childhood** (<http://www.cssp.org/reform/early-childhood/quality-improvement-center-on-early-childhood>)
  3. **Strengthening Families** (<http://www.cssp.org/reform/strengtheningfamilies>)
- **Public Policy** (<http://www.cssp.org/policy>)
  1. **Policy for Results** (<http://www.cssp.org/policy/policy-for-results>)
  2. **Policy Briefs** (<http://www.cssp.org/policy/policy-briefs>)
  3. **Policy Matters** (<http://www.cssp.org/policy/policy-matters>)
  4. **Harold Richman Public Policy Symposium** (<http://www.cssp.org/policy/harold-richman-public-policy-symposium>)
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    - **Results-Based Technical Assistance** (<http://www.cssp.org/community/neighborhood-investment/results-based-technical-assistance>)
    - **Financing for Sustainability** (<http://www.cssp.org/community/neighborhood-investment/financing-for-sustainability>)
    - **Place-Based Initiatives** (<http://www.cssp.org/community/neighborhood-investment/place-based-initiatives>)
  2. **Constituents Co-Invested in Change** (<http://www.cssp.org/community/constituents-co-invested-in-change>)
    - **Customer Satisfaction** (<http://www.cssp.org/community/constituents-co-invested-in-change/customer-satisfaction>)

- [Community Decision-Making \(http://www.cssp.org/community/constituents-co-invested-in-change/community-decision-making\)](http://www.cssp.org/community/constituents-co-invested-in-change/community-decision-making)
- [Resident and Youth Engagement \(http://www.cssp.org/community/constituents-co-invested-in-change/resident-and-youth-engagement\)](http://www.cssp.org/community/constituents-co-invested-in-change/resident-and-youth-engagement)
- 3. [International Learning \(http://www.cssp.org/community/international-learning\)](http://www.cssp.org/community/international-learning)
- [Publications \(http://www.cssp.org/publications\)](http://www.cssp.org/publications)
  - 1. [Young Children and Families \(http://www.cssp.org/publications/young-children-and-families\)](http://www.cssp.org/publications/young-children-and-families)
  - 2. [Child Welfare \(http://www.cssp.org/publications/child-welfare\)](http://www.cssp.org/publications/child-welfare)
  - 3. [Public Policy \(http://www.cssp.org/publications/public-policy\)](http://www.cssp.org/publications/public-policy)
  - 4. [Neighborhood Investment \(http://www.cssp.org/publications/neighborhood-investment\)](http://www.cssp.org/publications/neighborhood-investment)
  - 5. [Constituents Co-Invested in Change \(http://www.cssp.org/publications/constituents-co-invested-in-change\)](http://www.cssp.org/publications/constituents-co-invested-in-change)
  - 6. [International Learning \(http://www.cssp.org/publications/international-learning\)](http://www.cssp.org/publications/international-learning)
  - 7. [General \(http://www.cssp.org/publications/general\)](http://www.cssp.org/publications/general)
- [Media Center \(http://www.cssp.org/media-center\)](http://www.cssp.org/media-center)
  - 1. [Press Releases \(http://www.cssp.org/media-center/press-releases\)](http://www.cssp.org/media-center/press-releases)
  - 2. [News Clips \(http://www.cssp.org/media-center/news-clips\)](http://www.cssp.org/media-center/news-clips)
  - 3. [Video Library \(http://www.cssp.org/media-center/video\)](http://www.cssp.org/media-center/video)
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  - 5. [Blog \(http://www.cssp.org/media-center/blog\)](http://www.cssp.org/media-center/blog)
  - 6. [Events \(http://www.cssp.org/media-center/events\)](http://www.cssp.org/media-center/events)
  - 7. [Annual Reports \(http://www.cssp.org/media-center/report\)](http://www.cssp.org/media-center/report)
- [1 \(#slide1\)](#)
- [2 \(#slide2\)](#)
- [3 \(#slide3\)](#)
- [4 \(#slide4\)](#)
- [5 \(#slide5\)](#)
- [6 \(#slide6\)](#)

## **Announcing the CSSP Accelerating Change Award**

The 2016 Accelerating Change Award will honor and uplift the valuable contributions of organizations, programs, initiatives and agencies serving young women and girls of color involved in intervening public systems.

<http://www.cssp.org/accelerating-change-award>

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### **Stay Informed**

**Feeds (<http://www.cssp.org/feeds>)**

- [All \(#all-tab\)](#)
  - [Blogs \(#blogs-tab\)](#)
  - [Facebook \(#facebook-tab\)](#)
  - [Twitter \(#twitter-tab\)](#)
- 

Here's how one state uses federal paid leave resources to make a difference for families. <https://t.co/uAZhkVM91W> (<https://t.co/uAZhkVM91W>) <https://t.co/lSnHtVXfZg> (<https://t.co/lSnHtVXfZg>)

Feb 11, 04:05 PM - CSSP TWITTER FEED

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**The Maternal, Infant, Early Childhood Home Visiting...**

Feb 11, 03:50 PM - CSSP FACEBOOK FEED

([http://www.facebook.com/permalink.php?story\\_fbid=1088305697895603&id=119688008090715](http://www.facebook.com/permalink.php?story_fbid=1088305697895603&id=119688008090715))

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**Our Strengthening Families Webinar starts at 3pm Ea...**

Feb 11, 02:11 PM - CSSP FACEBOOK FEED

([http://www.facebook.com/permalink.php?story\\_fbid=1088205041239002&id=119688008090715](http://www.facebook.com/permalink.php?story_fbid=1088205041239002&id=119688008090715))

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Our Strengthening Families Webinar starts in one hour. Sign in early!  
<https://t.co/aWYTG5oOyq> (<https://t.co/aWYTG5oOyq>) <https://t.co/HtBdNq7Yqu> (<https://t.co/HtBdNq7Yqu>)

Feb 11, 02:01 PM - CSSP TWITTER FEED

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Who Are the Low-Income Childless Adults Facing the Loss of SNAP in 2016? |  
[@centeronbudget](https://t.co/ogsopratNd) (<http://twitter.com/centeronbudget>) <https://t.co/ogsopratNd> (<https://t.co/ogsopratNd>)

Feb 11, 01:10 PM - CSSP TWITTER FEED

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**Talking with the leaders of your faith community ab...**

Feb 11, 01:08 PM - CSSP FACEBOOK FEED

[http://www.facebook.com/permalink.php?story\\_fbid=1085993628126810&id=119688008090715](http://www.facebook.com/permalink.php?story_fbid=1085993628126810&id=119688008090715)

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**Our new budget brief highlights strategies to advance equity in early childhood.**

<https://t.co/8mZwrBa9uk> (<https://t.co/8mZwrBa9uk>) <https://t.co/OrUqRTatK9>  
(<https://t.co/OrUqRTatK9>)

Feb 11, 09:55 AM - CSSP TWITTER FEED

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**Paid leave is a critical investment for families. T...**

Feb 11, 09:35 AM - CSSP FACEBOOK FEED

[http://www.facebook.com/permalink.php?story\\_fbid=1088146041244902&id=119688008090715](http://www.facebook.com/permalink.php?story_fbid=1088146041244902&id=119688008090715)

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**Letting your child wear clothes and hairstyles that...**

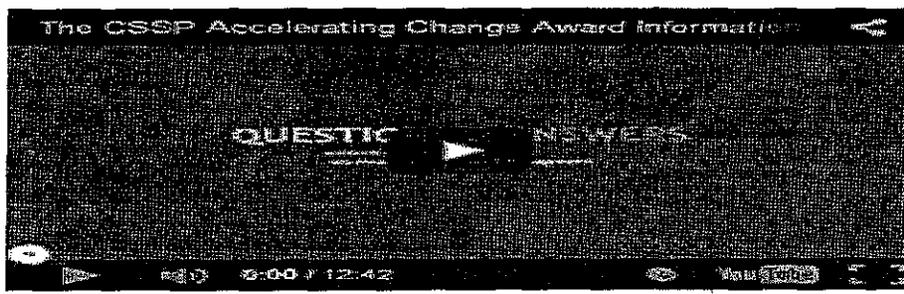
Feb 10, 11:07 PM - CSSP FACEBOOK FEED

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[More » http://www.cssp.org/feeds](http://www.cssp.org/feeds)

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**Voices (<http://www.cssp.org/media-center/video>)**



**Accelerating Change Award Informational Webinar**

This informational webinar describes our new Accelerating Change Award in greater detail and answers questions from prospective applicants. The award will honor programs serving young women and girls of color involved in intervening public systems.

<http://www.cssp.org/accelerating-change-award>

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[More »](#) (<http://www.cssp.org/accelerating-change-award>)

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## **Events (<http://www.cssp.org/media-center/events>)**

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Feb 11

### **February 2016 Strengthening Families Webinar**

<http://www.cssp.org/media-center/events/february-2016-strengthening-families-webinar>

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[More »](#) (<http://www.cssp.org/media-center/events>)

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## **Highlights (<http://www.cssp.org/highlights>)**



Feb 01, 2016

### **Accepting Applications for the Accelerating Change Award Until March 11**

Programs, initiatives and agencies using innovative strategies to serve and advocate on behalf of girls and young women of color between ages 9-21 are encouraged to apply for our first Accelerating Change Award. Selected programs will join a network of like-minded partners to share ideas and help accelerate positive change and promising futures for women and girls of color nationally.

<http://www.cssp.org/media-center/blog/announcing-the-accelerating-change-award>



Jan 11, 2016

**Lisbeth Schorr on Reconsidering Evidence in Social Policy**

CSSSP Senior Fellow and Friend of Evidence Lisbeth Schorr published an article in the Stanford Social Innovation Review on the need for a new approach to knowledge building about social policy – and the growing chorus of voices that are supporting this movement.

[http://ssir.org/articles/entry/reconsidering\\_evidence\\_what\\_it\\_means\\_and\\_how\\_we\\_use\\_it](http://ssir.org/articles/entry/reconsidering_evidence_what_it_means_and_how_we_use_it)

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Dec 17, 2015

**Laquan McDonald and Barriers to Well-Being for Youth in Multiple Intervening Systems**

Before being killed by police in October 2014, Laquan McDonald shuffled between foster homes and spent time in juvenile detention. Senior Associate Tashira Halyard says his life uncovers a "continuum of trauma and public system involvement" for many children of color.

<http://www.cssp.org/media-center/blog/laquan-mcdonalds-life-highlights-barriers-to-well-being-for-youth-in-multiple-intervening-systems>

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Dec 10, 2015

**ESEA Reauthorization Shows Promise**

CSSSP lauds provisions for Promise Neighborhoods, youth involved in public systems and recognizing the importance of early childhood education but concerned about accountability.

<http://www.cssp.org/media-center/press-releases/esea-reauthorization-shows-promise>

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**More »** (<http://www.cssp.org/highlights>)

(<http://www.cssp.org/reform/child-welfare/get-real>)

(<http://www.cssp.org/reform/child-welfare/youth-thrive>)

(<http://www.policyforresults.org>)

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**Smith, Angela**

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**From:** Ryan Ball <rball51@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, February 10, 2016 4:24 PM  
**To:** HHS CFS PMK Comment  
**Subject:** Public Comment  
**Attachments:** Commission letter.pdf

I've attached a public comment letter. Thank you

January 29, 2016

Protect Montana Kids Commission  
RE: Public Comment

Members of the Protect Montana Kids Commission,

Thank you for allowing me to provide my comments. First, I would like to introduce myself. My name is Amanda Ball and I have worked at the Department of Family Services for nearly 4 years in the Great Falls office. I began as a Child Protection Specialist and I'm currently a Child Protection Specialist Supervisor. When I first applied for employment at DFS I heard a lot of criticism from community members and I was discouraged from applying. Initially, I found the criticism inspiring and I used it as motivation to pursue my passion for social work and child protection. I was determined to do a job that no one else wanted and no one else would step-up and do. However, the volume and vitriol of criticism over these last 4 years has increased to the point I have found myself trying to avoid media coverage, social media criticism and, more recently I have even avoided reading, hearing or talking about the commission hearings. I have realized this avoidance has done no good for the workers that I lead and only allows more room for unproductive criticism to be espoused.

I could write the commission and give generalities about how child protection workers have the hardest, most thankless jobs. I could tell you how hard-working and dedicated to child protection my co-workers are and it would be entirely true. I could give the commission a general idea of idea of the people I work with every day, but writing that feels cliché and I fear that those words would not resonate with the commission. Instead, I would like to share a few of my own experiences as a CPS. I'd like the commission to know how hard it can be at times, but also how rewarding, and let the commission know just what the life of a CPS is like. Hopefully, we can raise the level of discourse from some of the groups against the Department of Family Services and any discussion about improvement can actually be a civil constructive conversation about child protection.

The Great Falls office has been the target of many protests. During one of the protests I had to leave the office to go on a report. When I returned to the office, one of the protestors, a man, put down a baby sized coffin and approached my car. He held a sign detailing something about 'DFS and sex offenders'. As I tried to get out of the car the man yelled out and called me a "child rapist". I couldn't speak. If he was willing to approach my vehicle and call me a "child rapist" what else was this "protestor" willing to do? I made it into the office and was flooded with emotion. It hit me then how ironic this man's epithet was. He called me a child rapist. Me. A Child Protection Specialist who has helped many children who have been victims of child sexual predators. I have conducted countless forensic interviews regarding child sexual assaults. I have heard young children tell me about how trusted individuals hurt them. I have sat next to children when they have received sex assault exams. I have comforted not only the children but have comforted and guided families through the most difficult times of their lives and I am not the only one.

I can think of several times I was an on call emergency worker being woken up in the middle of the night. I have responded to the hospital, I have responded with law enforcement, I have responded to reports :

alone. Often reports in the middle of the night result in a worker being alone in an office with a scared confused child or children. I have rocked a child I just met to sleep as I call family member after family member and eventually foster parent after foster parent. Hoping that I will find the one person who will say "yes" to taking in a child unknown to them in the middle of the night who is in need of safety and security.

I have been the victim of violent assaults at the hands of unstable or intoxicated parents. I responded to an apartment complex and after an investigation determined a baby was in need of intervention. The parent confronted me outside of an apartment at the top of the stairs. I held the baby as the parent verbally berated me and threatened to throw me down the flight of stairs. The parent chased me down those stairs and away as I narrowly avoided being physically assaulted, that time. I've responded to a hospital at night on a report of a neglected baby. The parent did not want to cooperate with any type of investigation and soon became irate. The parent shoved and hit me, and had I not been in the hospital and with a security guard who knows what else she would have done. I respond to motel rooms and dark homes by myself in the middle of the night. I've been treated at the hospital for drug exposure after a report where children were in a home that was used as a meth lab. I have had experiences with people who have severe mental health issues and have threatened to violently self-harm themselves in front of me. All of this because I was doing my job to keep kids safe.

I have spent all day driving a parent to Butte and Helena countless times to facilitate face-to-face counseling between the parent and their emotionally disturbed children. I have advocated for those children and family demanding that ongoing services be provided at a level that was necessary for the family's success. I now regularly see this family in our community and I am filled with so much pride when I see children who used to be so emotionally disturbed. Children that people called dangerous now smiling and playful, and the parent is always excited to tell me about their success.

I had a case I worked for over 3 years. The children's parent suffered from an addiction to methamphetamine. During those three years I worked tirelessly trying to engage this parent into getting into treatment. I would wake the parent up in the morning and try and convince the parent to go to their appointments. I drove the parent to the appointments that they were willing to attend or scheduled urinalysis, I wrote court documents, testified at court, attended Family Engagement Meetings. I would get to work early and get home late, leaving my own family, so I could drive back and forth from Billings to facilitate a relationship between this parent and child. And when the parent didn't attend visitation I would have the child sit with me in my office pretending to help me file paperwork as I was asked difficult, heartbreaking questions about why the parent missed their visit. Eventually, the questions stopped. One day this child told me that they wanted to work in my office and be a "helper" just like me. I didn't feel like a helper. I felt like a failure. I felt I had failed these children because I couldn't figure out a way to engage their parent and put their family back together.

I have sat all day on a Saturday at the hospital holding a baby with broken bones. Loving and comforting that child because I didn't want the baby to be alone after being so severely beaten. I have had a grandparent hug me and thank me for saving that babies life.

The majority of the job includes being outside of the office driving, transporting kids, transporting parents, investigating cases and finding solutions to problems. I am always on the go, and when I'm not on the go it's a constant effort to try and catch up on paperwork. At times I have put my own families'

needs second to the needs of a family on my caseload. I am home late nearly every day and when I am home I have my work cell-phone so that if my clients have an emergency they would be able to reach me. I constantly feel rushed and worried that I missed something, worried that I did not complete something that needed to be done. There is no rest in this job, but the rewards that I get and the satisfaction from helping these kids make it worth it.

In my office hangs a framed picture of a water-colored painting of a dragon. The dragon was painted by a foster child on my caseload and given to me by their therapist. The therapist told that me it was meant for me because it was a painting of me that I was the dragon. My foster child told the therapist that "Amanda would blow fire on anyone who would hurt me." I tell the commission this not because I am the exception to this job. This is the job. Child Protection workers pour their hearts into our work. The level of dialogue introduced by some of the groups against our agency has become outrageous. It's hard to believe that some of these groups are given the platform that they have with the intimidating and abrasive tactics that they use. The truth is that Child Protection workers care about the work we do and despite the endless, ruthless, and now more and more threatening criticisms we come back to this job. It is never done and we will always find ways to improve.

Over the years the department has made so many improvements in our assessment abilities and I have seen so much dedication to our continuing improvement. It is my hope that the commission begins to recognize and commend the work the department does and that somehow we shape the platform for criticism so that it becomes more productive and supportive for the children in our communities.

Thank you,

Amanda Ball

**Smith, Angela**

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**From:** Hodgescheryl54@hotmail.com  
**Sent:** Wednesday, February 17, 2016 7:20 PM  
**To:** HHS CFS PMK Comment  
**Subject:** PMK Comment Received

First Name: Cheryl

Last Name: Hodges

Email: [Hodgescheryl54@hotmail.com](mailto:Hodgescheryl54@hotmail.com)

Comment: The last meeting you cancelled then emailed us it was on again at 4:30 the day before the meeting. Today I got the email at 5:35 about tomorrow's meeting. I hurried and tried to let everyone know but several can't make it as it's of course too late of notice.

Is this because you all want it more secret and don't want as many to give you the input that is needed to help our kids? This is not professional. Not at all. How much effort does it take to alert us? Montana is a big state, I live in Shelby and that's hard to arrange and why I couldn't make the last meeting, I am not going to speak tomorrow as you haven't allocated us enough time for letting us give you our experiences of the result of why Governor Bullock formed this commission in the first place. Again, I had hope that the Opper, Corbally, the Governor and especially Allie were sincere in this matter of our kids being harmed and dying in part because of the failed leadership of this department. Fooled again. I'm very disappointed in this lack of Montana Citizens to be notified and not enough time to write a letter except this quick one Bly concerning your lack of interest in we who's Children's lives are now responsible for! Very disappointed. I asked you to leave your egos and career aspirations at the door and only think about the importance of your affect on the lives of our poor children.

Apparently that plea from a grandmother who list two grandchildren due partly to the negligence of this corrupt department you have accepted the responsibility to fix didn't work.

Hopefully this quick note will remind you of the Children's Lives you hold in your educated hands. Please try. Children are depending desperately on the decisions you will make in this matter and the lives of your future grandchildren also depend on you. I never want one of you to go through what my family and son have gone through. I do not wish that upon anyone. Please make decisions based on the lives of our Children and their futures. Not yours.

File Upload: <http://dphhs.mt.gov/Portals/85/Documents/ProtectMontanaKids/FileUploads/>

File Link: [FileLink]

**Smith, Angela**

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**From:** b.corena@yahoo.com  
**Sent:** Thursday, February 18, 2016 2:49 PM  
**To:** HHS CFS PMK Comment  
**Subject:** PMK Comment Received

First Name: corena

Last Name: barber

Email: [b.corena@yahoo.com](mailto:b.corena@yahoo.com)

Comment: I have trouble believing the CASA Worker. She received no notice ,but yet appeared in court to object, she spoke with a judge yet was not notified.

"The relative was the person who told me the baby was gone and that the social worker had met with the mother and relative, told them that the Department was dismissing the case and that the mother could take the baby out of state. The Motion to Dismiss was filed by the Department, submitted with an Order of Dismissal and with no notice to me as the court appointed CASA for the child. I appeared in Court to object to what had occurred and was advised by the Judge that his hands were tied by the law and that he had no alternative but to grant the Order of Dismissal."

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File Link: [FileLink]

**Smith, Angela**

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**From:** b.corena@yahoo.com  
**Sent:** Thursday, February 18, 2016 4:01 PM  
**To:** HHS CFS PMK Comment  
**Subject:** PMK Comment Received

First Name: Corena  
Last Name: Barber  
Email: [b.corena@yahoo.com](mailto:b.corena@yahoo.com)

Comment: To the youth, its interesting your application submitted, accepted, camp to receive a Gold Star, following a Constitution, all are vetted accepted by the Department? My family do you have a bill of Rights? [REDACTED] that the specialist APPROACHED HER IN SCHOOL. While [REDACTED] was at the attendants office [REDACTED] stated [REDACTED] name to attendants office personnel, a specialist in a public school in front of everyone repeated [REDACTED] name twice and states "you're back". A violation of confidentiality policy that has been addressed. I called the division, I was asked what if [REDACTED] complained that the worker did not say hello? Our complaint unaddressed as apparently most all of the other complaints. [REDACTED] quit school as a result of continual harassment by specialist in their field fearing that the stress would lead [REDACTED] to medical people that were capable of distorting [REDACTED] statements. The reports stopped after the drop, from school, the fear of medical people has eased. The group home to stop contacting [REDACTED] wrote after the 18 yr. fearing group home personnel would make public contact as well. I have written correspondences if you would like copy. The group home personnel ran like "a gulag, among other educate terms and comparisons.

File Upload: <http://dphhs.mt.gov/Portals/85/Documents/ProtectMontanaKids/FileUploads/>  
File Link: [FileLink]

Smith, Angela

**From:** b.corenas@yahoo.com  
**Sent:** Friday, February 19, 2016 1:35 PM  
**To:** HHS CFS PMK Comment  
**Subject:** PMK Comment Received

First Name: Corena  
Last Name: Barber  
Email: [b.corenas@yahoo.com](mailto:b.corenas@yahoo.com)

Comment: I am not a drug abuser or an addict, I do not use Drugs. I hear Sarah getting stuck on data. I am not mentally deficient, incompetent or ill. I was accused "yelling and scaring other patients and would not defray" Have any of you ever spoken to people that are hard of hearing, those that turn the TV up? My husband and I both want to know. I worked in health care, apparently in Mt. that grade for medical has been diminished. I spoke to my mother she and grandmother both have asked me to speak up, my husband asked to, he is very hard of hearing, but no one in that medical office asked why I was so loud, but said that I was scaring other patients. In a disgraceful manner of micromanagement, rather than address my concern about a nurse that [REDACTED] reported to me, I easily observed the specialist and doctor speaking the late time of day and "you should have union like ours" And nurse and doctor discussing how they learned in school. A specialist burst through the door scared the hell out of both of us and my entire family, I was of course never yelling other than into a phone, never at [REDACTED] but no one asked. I was taken away threatened with arrest. THE TIMES THAT I WAS IN AND OUT OF [REDACTED] MEDICAL CUBICLE [REDACTED] WAS NEARLY [REDACTED] MONTHS and returned to [REDACTED] WORDS DISTORTED [REDACTED] WAS FRIGHTENED and angered BY THE MEDICAL PEOPLE AND CPS AND POLICE. I was engaged with my husband and others ON THE PHONE while out of [REDACTED] medical room. Several people some of whom do not like me much, would state the same. I hear the data Sarah collects, Sarah is the person that stated to me "What if [REDACTED] became angry if the specialist did not say hi [REDACTED]?" I called Sarah and complained about the specialist violating confidentiality approaching [REDACTED] stating [REDACTED] in public and because [REDACTED] wanted [REDACTED] to "stop the humiliation" [REDACTED] in public. Sarah has heard more than data, does she get stuck on Data? Does she get stuck on facts and support statements when the persons speaking are not selected by her? Our mementos insurance records, phones and call records. I was a nurse aide for long time, I can see why many would not want to seek medical care in missoula from certain clinics. And just so you know [REDACTED] asked and was given a passport when [REDACTED] returned to missoula when [REDACTED] was seventeen. [REDACTED] was not going to allow another person state another statement subjecting [REDACTED] to the truths of others rather than facts. And of the many descriptions we bestow on those involved, it is private comparison not available for statisticians

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**Director of Operations**

Mary Bryan

2/1/16

Governor Steve Bullock  
Office of the Governor  
P.O. Box 200801  
Helena, MT 59620-0801

4 FEB 2016 RCUD

Dear Governor Bullock,

As private agency, child welfare executives, we thank you for establishing the Protect Montana Kids Commission to explore current issues, and provide solutions and innovations to improve outcomes for Montana children and families.

Child Bridge has taken the liberty of preparing the enclosed document for your review. It contains observations and suggestions for improvements primarily in the areas of culture, leadership, technology and foster care. This document has been submitted electronically to the Commission members that we know personally... Sarah Corbally, Jani McCall and Joyce Funda. All have acknowledged their receipt of the document and commitment to share with the Commission.

Please let us know if you have any questions or wish more detail on any of the items addressed. We're happy to assist in this vital mission in any way we can.

Thank you again, Governor.

Sincerely,

Mary Bryan  
Director of Operations  
Child Bridge  
[mbryan@childbridgemontana.org](mailto:mbryan@childbridgemontana.org)

Child Bridge finds and supports foster and adoptive families for Montana's children in need. We are a nonprofit, tax exempt, 501 (c) (3) Public Charity. Your donations are tax deductible.

Nonprofit tax id # 27-3382066

Post Office Box 310, Bigfork, MT 59911 (406)837.2247

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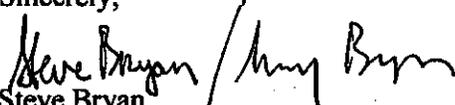
**Executive Director**  
Steve Bryan

Dear Protect Montana Kids Commission,

Thank you for the opportunity to share our thoughts with you and ask for your consideration of the opportunities offered below.

We are appreciative of your work and service, and offer our enthusiastic support, as all stakeholders must work together in new and innovative ways to improve outcomes for Montana children in need.

Sincerely,

  
Steve Bryan

Mary Bryan

Founders

Child Bridge

Child Bridge finds and supports foster and adoptive families for Montana's children in need. We are a nonprofit, tax exempt, 501 (c) (3) Public Charity. Your donations are tax deductible.

Nonprofit tax id # 27-3382066

**Background:**

Child Bridge is a faith-based, non-profit founded in late 2010 with a simple and focused mission of finding and supporting foster and adoptive families for Montana children in need. Originating in the Flathead Valley, we now recruit and serve foster/adoptive families with full time staff in the Flathead, Billings and Missoula. Our Flathead staff serve Kalispell, Bigfork, Whitefish, Columbia Falls, Libby and Polson. Additionally, our efforts have recruited families who are in pre-service training or caring for children in Helena, Bozeman, Butte and Dillon. We have ongoing statewide expansion plans and a heartfelt desire to serve children and families in every major Montana community.

Our model is based on creating awareness of the need for foster and adoptive families and assisting interested families through the process. Recruiting of families is done primarily in churches where we meet with families to explain the process. Later, we host in-depth informational meetings that include a Child and Family Services representative, a therapeutic foster care partner representative, and a panel of foster/adoptive families. Employing a customer service model, we walk alongside families throughout the journey and support them after a child is placed in their care. We offer multiple touch points on an ongoing basis creating relationships with the families. We connect them to supports that can strengthen the placement and minimize disruptions. These supports might be provided by individuals, churches, community or therapeutic level services. Child Bridge monthly resource groups offer a time of respite, connection and foster/adoptive licensing renewal credits.

During these past five years, Child Bridge recruited and/or supported families are making a significant impact on children in their time of need...caring for 150 children who entered out of home care...whether temporary or permanent. Child Bridge families have adopted 26 children, and our monthly resource groups for foster/adoptive families and child welfare providers have served over 5,000 (instances) of children and adults in ongoing evenings of support and education.

Since we began our first foster family recruiting and awareness efforts in 2011, we've had the privilege of working with many Child and Family Services staff; in local field offices, with the five Regional Administrators, former Field Services Manager, Cory Costello, and Administrator, Sarah Corbally.

We're encouraged by the Governor's Executive Order creating the Protect Montana Kids Commission, and are extremely thankful for your service. While we have not yet met all of you, we have had the opportunity to work with Sarah, Jani McCall, have met with Joyce Funda, and work closely with CASA and other child welfare partners across the state.

While we understand there are many, many aspects of child welfare that you are tasked with reviewing, we'd like to share a few ideas and observations that relate to our area of focus, **Foster Care**, as well as addressing key factors of **Culture, Leadership and Technology** that must be thoroughly examined to improve outcomes. You'll note that throughout this document, we stress expanded collaboration. Care of our children in need should not be the sole responsibility of the government. Your efforts are critical, but it is not humanly or fiscally possible to do this work alone. Innovative thinking and creating "best of breed" partnerships can expand your outreach and improve care.

While each item could be presented in great detail, at this time, we're simply providing some high level points for your consideration. I'm sure you'll understand the thinking behind each...but if elaboration is desired, please let us know. We'd welcome the opportunity to work with you in more detail.

### **Strategies for Improving Child Welfare Services and Outcomes**

Nearly 30 years ago, Frank Farrow, now head of the Center for the Study of Social Policy wrote:

*"There is growing consensus about the need to change how states and communities protect children. Alarmed by steady increases in child abuse and neglect reports, and a child protective services (CPS) system that is only intermittently successful in safeguarding children, professionals and politicians alike are calling for a new approach.*

*... To promote children's safety, a child protection system should broaden the responsibility... beyond the public child welfare agency."* Farrow, Building Community Partnerships for Child Protection

## **CULTURE & LEADERSHIP**

With your formation of a Workplace Culture/Staff Recruitment and Retention Subcommittee, you are already very well aware of the staffing issues, turnover, and the devastating impact that these issues have on children, families and child welfare as a whole.

While obvious needs to be addressed include: providing competitive salaries, training, quality improvement incentives or measurable success criteria to drive retention, rewards for performance, professional growth and satisfaction, and reduced caseloads, root cause also needs to be determined and investigated.

We believe it's probable that over time, the stress of the current workloads, shorthandedness, current processes, staff experiencing secondary trauma, and lack of resources create a toxic culture that spirals and cycles into ongoing problems. This kind of culture has significant impact on employees, and extends outwardly to those the department serves and partners with. It seems that what currently exists is a system where even the best intentioned, best trained and most diligent employee (and we work with many) simply cannot succeed professionally, or achieve personal satisfaction.

Cultural change and leadership attitudes could be addressed in the following ways:

1. Governor, Executive and Regional Leadership teams need to create an agreed upon and embraced vision for change with a focus on child centric leadership. The vision must include a foundation of truth, transparency, collaboration, accountability and an environment where information can be shared without fear. Then, leadership must disseminate to their regions this critical investment in values, belief, encouragement and vision. This should extend to internal staff and community collaborations.
2. Governor and legislative support and involvement should be encouraged in spearheading vision and improvements.

3. **Promote and demonstrate receptivity for change from leadership to downline workers and partners. This might be done via a bi-monthly, “all-hands” conference call or Skye, hosted by the Governor. This would encourage positive organizational morale that would elicit better outcomes and build teamwork.**
4. **While we understand the extremely confidential nature of the work, leaders need to create an environment of less secrecy and more transparency.**
5. **Improve communication between administration and the field.**
6. **From the Governor level, promote a desire for expanded collaboration with community partners, and ask Regions to identify professional, high-quality connections, define collaborations and execute together at local levels. Collaborations will help to develop a full service continuum and approaches based on common values. Communication, transparency and mutual trust are key to these relationships and will provide significant returns.**
7. **Leadership should ensure strict adherence to federal law of Section 475(5)(E) regarding terminating parental rights if child has been in out of home care 15 of the last 22 months.**

## **TECHNOLOGY**

Success in the private sector often comes from the ability to innovate and make regular investments in technology improvements. Why are we handicapping Child and Family Service workers with lack of appropriate tools?

We understand a new case management system is being adapted from the Department of Corrections. We're not familiar with the technology so we don't know the answer to this, but we urge you to ask, is it really the right tool? Is it a band-aid, a step in the right direction or a fully integrated system that enables workers to spend less time on paperwork, more time with families, offers tablet and phone updates, provides current relational data at their fingertips in meaningful, easy to understand web type interface? We can't afford to approach this critical issue with half measures. A robust and well planned commitment to useful, modern technology must be made. Significant updates and new tools can improve the outcomes for children and families as well as the lives, effectiveness and efficiency of workers.

1. Update case management software to the most current, useful tools. Consider a subcommittee to review and make recommendations. Implement solutions that go beyond case management by moving from traditional case management tools to "person-centric" tools where longitudinal data models are employed that focus on persons, relationships and groups such as families and households. Person centric applications enable users to follow individuals and families and look at meaningful data over time. These tools enable an easy view of data, metrics and trends that get actionable data to workers faster. Many programs have predictive modeling capabilities that can show a family or child's projected paths. This information is valuable for managing current caseloads and longer term outcomes. Some programs also include algorithmic modeling and scoring to address issues such as the best match for a child to a foster/adoptive family.

2. For maximum effectiveness, every social worker should have a tablet. This will enable workers to maximize time in the field, eliminate duplication of work (writing and transposing later, or entering information later that may not be fresh in their minds) and have data and innovative applications (points 3 & 4 below) available at their fingertips. With some applications, they can even speak their notes to the tablet. Case notes and data will be entered in a timelier way.
  
3. Consider a major collaboration with the University of Montana or Montana State University, to develop a Data Portal (Child Well Being Portal). The portal could address two important areas:
  - a. Address Quality Assurance or Continual Process Improvement Components where families, foster families, partners, etc., can log in, and make suggestions, log concerns or complaints. Data can be collected and sorted and made actionable using relational database fields and text analytics for unstructured data. Develop a timely, feedback and response process. Compare key practice areas among regions and share successful strategies. Communicate results and findings regularly with the public.
  
  - b. The portal can also show and share relevant research and data findings with partners and community to encourage informed decision making about child welfare policy and practices. Easy to understand maps, graphs and reports can highlight information about our states child welfare data by region. Please see the work being done in Washington state as an example: [www.partnersforourchildren.org](http://www.partnersforourchildren.org) and [www.pocdata.org](http://www.pocdata.org)

4. Empower social workers when temporary foster or permanent placements need to be made with software that provides thorough visual information about available families. This secure portal and searchable data base has already been developed by Child Bridge at our own expense. The vision for the portal is to help tear down silos of information and shrink our expansive state geography for social workers and family resource specialists. Child Bridge is willing to administer the portal annually in partnership with the State. Sarah Corbally and all Regional Administrators have been introduced to this work in 2015.

Of course, technology is a significant investment. But we seem to make short sighted decisions to save money, with little regard for the excessive costs and negative outcomes that the decisions will bring about in the long run. When we invest in technology, we are investing in people... the CPS staff and the children and families they are serving. State of the art technology investments are ones that will pay dividends.

## **FOSTER CARE**

Child Bridge believes that caring for children in need should not reside solely on the shoulders of government. Collaboration with community partners can strengthen the child welfare system immensely. What if Montana was a state where an army of well trained, well supported and connected families were available to care for children in their time of need? It's a disgrace that kids are waiting for families...families should be waiting for children to care for them in their most vulnerable time. But, it takes awareness, education and tremendous supports to make that a reality. Child Bridge works towards this goal every day and believes that together we can do more.

1. Implement a statewide foster/adoptive (child centric) campaign led by the Governor centered around foster care recruiting and adoption issues. Successful states have clearly demonstrated that once goals for the number of needed foster families and adoption from foster care are set and publicly announced by the Governor, that the highly dedicated parties responsible for foster care will work collaboratively with community partners and together, they will implement highly effective programs to achieve them. (See Oklahoma,

Virginia, Colorado.)

2. Foster care typically only gets attention when a scandal or abuse occurs. The many great foster parents who are doing very difficult work are often treated poorly, unrecognized and not considered as professional members of the team. Foster parents must be full members of the child welfare team. This concept needs to be incorporated in social worker training to underscore in policy and practice the important role that foster parents play as child welfare practitioners. Skills of workers and supervisors to engage foster adoptive families as professional members of the child's care team must be implemented. If there is a clear sense that local offices and workers are listening to foster families and working with them as vital team members, outcomes will improve. Consider additional ways to establish channels for communicating with and learning from your foster families (your clients) and others who serve them. (Perhaps this channel could be integrated in the portal recommended above.)
3. Improve the foster/parent training and licensing process. While organizations like Child Bridge focus on recruiting quality families that can provide immediate assistance to an overwhelmed system, in many communities, the process is stymied far too often by lack of available State (Keeping Children Safe/KCS) Foster Parent Trainings held locally. When trainings are available, home study completion creates a tremendous bottleneck. This training and licensing system must be re-evaluated and re-structured. Put additional resources behind completing home studies, by contracting them out or adding staff to complete them. Ensure that monthly trainings occur in all major cities, (kudos to Great Falls for this.) Consider creating a State training academy to train and certify partners to train families to your satisfaction, or partner with private agencies to develop and improve training.

4. **Expand collaboration with recruiters and facilitators in potential adoptive placements.**  
Again, collaboration with trusted partners is key in expanding the volume and quality of your work, and improving outcomes for children and families. Partner with agencies like Child Bridge who are working full time with families across the state in the areas of recruiting and support. Under your direction, guide agencies who are not licensed child placing agencies, to assist you in finding families for children who are in Permanent Legal Custody (PLC) of the state and in need of permanent families.

Working closely with the social worker of a child in permanent legal custody, agencies like Child Bridge can dramatically expand the reach of sharing the needs of waiting children and assisting in child specific recruiting of families. Child and Family Services is still responsible for the matching and placing of the child. But allow your partners to bring many potential families to the table to ensure the best fit for the child, and taking some of the workload off your plate. Repeal, or amend Statutes 42-7-105(1)(a) and 42-7-105(1)(b) to facilitate broader, valuable collaborations in this area.

As you partner with trusted agencies, many additional opportunities exist for family recruiting for children awaiting permanency. These collaborations can be designed to highlight the good work of CFS, and not only improve outcomes for children and families, but also the perception of the Department by the public.

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Thank you for the opportunity to share our thoughts with you and your consideration of these ideas. We firmly believe that transparency, collaboration and sustained attention from all stakeholders are needed in order to achieve real reform. Child Bridge welcomes the opportunity to assist in these efforts in any way we can.