

CHILD WELFARE REFORM IN UTAH

- ◆ 1984 to '92 Multiple investigations of CW system undertaken, each of which documented serious problems:
 - ▶ Committee formed by DHS director (1985)
 - ▶ Utah Children (1988)
 - ▶ DHS Task Force (1989)
 - ▶ Case records audit by DCFS (1992)

- ◆ Feb. 1993 *David C.* federal class action lawsuit filed:
 - ▶ 17 named plaintiffs, ranging from 3 to 17 years old
 - ▶ Class: children in state custody, & those for whom DCFS has received a report of suspected abuse or neglect
 - ▶ Alleged that named plaintiffs, rather than being protected, had experienced severe harm in the CW system
 - ▶ National Center for Youth Law, attorneys for the plaintiffs
 - ▶ SLC law firm, Jones Waldo, local attorneys for the plaintiffs

- ◆ 1993 Legislative Performance audit of the Child Welfare system begins.

- ◆ Jan. 1994 Legislative Performance audit report:
 - ▶ Confirmed issues raised in *David C.* lawsuit
 - ▶ Some of the findings:
 - Case loads too high
 - Inadequate training
 - Inadequate policies
 - Lack of accountability
 - Lack of home visits & direct observations
 - Inadequate treatment plans
 - ▶ 37 separate numbered recommendations
 - ▶ FUNDING recommendations:
 - Add caseworkers & reduce caseloads
 - Add support staff
 - More comprehensive training program
 - Add staff & resources to provide preventive services
 - Develop better system of services for ungovernable youth

- ◆ 1994 HB 265, Child Welfare Reform Act, passed

- ◆ 1994 HB 396, Revision of GAL Program, passed

- ◆ 5/3 1994 Legislative Performance audit (limited) of GAL program
 - ▶ Inconsistencies - program varies among districts
 - ▶ Standards not uniformly followed
 - ▶ Not all children are represented
 - ▶ Need:
 - Policies
 - Training
 - Accountability
 - ▶ Noted that HB 396 addressed many audit concerns
 - ▶ Recommendation: more GAL's

- ◆ 5/24 1994 *David C.* lawsuit settled by stipulated agreement

- ◆ 1995 HB 334 & 1008, Child Welfare Reform Act Amendments
[refinements to the Act]

- ◆ 1996 HB 373, Child Welfare Reform Act Amendments
[further refinements to the Act]