

**Wisconsin Citizen Review Panel Annual Report**  
January 1-December 31, 2014

Name of Panel:	Outagamie County CRP
Contact Person & Title:	Melissa Blom, Manager, Outagamie County Dept. of Health and Human Services Division of Children, Youth and Families

**Briefly describe the panel’s meeting schedule and number/types of meetings, including subcommittee and workgroup meetings, held in 2014.**

The panel meets bi-monthly, generally the first Wednesday of each month, for one and one half hours. Six meetings were held in 2014.

There are 2 workgroups. They are:

- Guardian ad litem; met 4 times
- Town Hall; met 5 times

**Please provide a summary of the panel’s activities in regards to:**

**1. Evaluating the extent to which the State and the local child protection agencies are fulfilling their child protection responsibilities.**

Our CRP reviewed one CPS case looking for any gaps in the service system. Melissa Blom, the Manager of Outagamie County’s Division of Children, Youth and Families, is a member of our panel and reported on issues pertinent to child protection at our January 2014 meeting. There are internal and systems issues related to worker retention, which is a problem as nine staff have left the agency in the past year. It was determined that the panel look at court scheduling, burdensome paperwork and standards, and issues with the Guardians ad litem (GALs). (See section on social work support workgroup for more details.)

**2. Evaluating local and State progress under the State CAPTA Plan.**

The three main areas addressed in the state CAPTA plan are integrating safety intervention throughout the CPS case process, preventing maltreatment of children and the recurrence of maltreatment, and promoting cross system collaboration in order to enhance services to children and families. The CRP considers these areas when reviewing CPS cases and child fatalities. We also receive regular reports on the progress of the pilot program on dual status (formerly called crossover) youth.

There are both a judge and a representative from the District Attorney’s office on our panel so we frequently discuss any concerns around the court system. Our effort to improve the guardian ad litem program is a collaboration with the court. We recently reviewed the work we have done on the GAL brochure and realized that we need to monitor the process and ensure that the brochure is up to date and in the hands of parents, and that GALs are seeing the children they are representing and turning in required reports. (See section on GAL workgroup for more details)

Panel members routinely bring up topics at the state and national level that affect children and families and recommendations are made to contact legislators. In 2014 we added a member who is the Homeless Coordinator for the Appleton School District, which allows us to have a connection with the schools and to better understand whether the county is meeting the CAPTA requirements for promoting school attendance among homeless children.

**3. Activities related to public outreach and comment to assess the impact of current child protection procedures and practices on children and families in the community.**

The town hall meeting was held in November. There was a presentation by author Lesley Kagen, a panel of representatives of law enforcement, child protection services, CRP, foster care, mentoring and CASA, and a simulation of a call reporting a family abuse situation. Agencies were also invited to have a booth and those who did were CASA of the Fox Cities, Youth and Family Services, Catalpa Health, Child Advocacy Center and Outagamie County Health. Activities were also offered for children if needed. As a follow up, we will ask for volunteers on the panel to look into ways we can offer this to the community.

In addition, the CRP has developed and posted a website which contains an overview of the CRP, members, minutes and agendas, and a resource page. Plans are in place to add updates, our mission and vision, links to national and local CASA and National CRP, and ways in which citizens of the county can become involved. Interns with Outagamie County designed a CRP display board which can be taken to community events to educate community members about the panel and encourage people to join.

**Did the panel conduct any reviews of CPS cases, child fatalities and near fatalities?** If yes, please describe.

**Case reviews:** The panel reviewed one case in 2014. The case involved a child who suffered a traumatic brain injury, allegedly at the hands of the partner of the mother. This case was dismissed because the abuser moved out of the home and the mother ostensibly did what she was required to do to protect the child. No criminal charges have yet been filed against the alleged abuser. This is a case in which the system had some failures and there still may be some danger to the child, but as the case was dismissed, no further action can be taken. No recommendations were made by the panel.

The panel receives regular reports from the **Child Death Review Team**. The Team has developed guidelines for educating the community related to suicide due to the number of child suicides in our area. It was noted that after the Team implemented the safe sleep campaign, there has only been one death related to unsafe sleep. The Team has been distributing statistics on injuries from falls to different agencies. For the summer, the Team will focus on the cities playgrounds and creating a safe place to play.

**Please describe any other panel activities or issues addressed in 2014.**

The panel members toured the Fox Valley Child Advocacy Center (CAC) where there was a presentation and question & answer session. Children's Hospital of Wisconsin is the nation's largest provider of Child Advocacy Centers, operating seven centers throughout Wisconsin. The Fox Valley Child Advocacy Center helps children who may have been abused, neglected, sexually assaulted or witnessed violence.

The care team at the Fox Valley Child Advocacy Center works in tandem with representatives from community and county agencies including area law enforcement departments, district attorneys, county social service agencies and non-profit partner organizations to provide full wrap-around services that are child-focused. The staff provides child abuse assessments which include a complete medical evaluation and an interview with a social worker specially trained to work with kids who have been traumatized. Following an assessment, suspected victims of abuse are referred to appropriate counseling, safe shelter for families impacted by domestic violence and mental health services in their home communities who can aid in the recovery process. Annually the team provides services to more than 400 children in the Fox Valley.

Three members of the panel attended the National CRP Conference in Atlanta. They shared information with the panel via a report at our July meeting and an email summary. Of particular interest were sessions on GALs, training houses used to desensitize social workers re: situations they may face in practice, and childhood trauma.

The CRP purchased a cake and our Co-Chair presented the cake and our appreciation to the social workers at the Children Youth and Families Division meeting in March, in honor of Social Worker Appreciation Month.

**Workgroups:**

The **local Guardian ad litem workgroup** reconvened in 2014. Members met with a local GAL to get his input on the system. He believes it is working well and he gave some recommendations for the brochure. The workgroup is finalizing the brochure. Workgroup sent out surveys to foster parents, social workers and child advocates asking them whether they felt children were being properly represented and being seen face to face by the GALs. The results were presented to one of the judges currently overseeing selection of GALs. The judge will no longer renew a GAL if he/she is not meeting expectations.

Three Outagamie CRP members serve on the **statewide GAL workgroup**. This group is currently surveying all the GALs in the state who are willing to participate. Information is being compiled. They also produced a survey for former foster children. Plan is to take the first 6-8 months for fact finding and then move on to next steps.

The **Social Worker Support WorkGroup** did not meet in 2014, but in January of 2014, panel members discussed the internal and systems issues identified by focus groups as

causing difficulties with social worker retention. The focus groups were initiated by the social worker support workgroup in 2013.

Regarding internal issues, the group looked at the possibility of developing a mentoring system with the seasoned staff and/or making changes to the on call schedule. Both will be investigated further. It was also revealed that workers struggle when cases involve children with disabilities. It was determined that more data needs to be gathered to determine what is causing the most problems for the workers.

Regarding systems issues, the group looked at which systems are standing in the way of workers performing their jobs more efficiently, in particular court scheduling, paperwork and standards, length of time to disposition in court, and problems with guardian ad litem. Two members of the CRP will see if there could be changes made in the way cases are scheduled to allow workers to use their time more efficiently. They will also look at the ongoing standards to see if more training would be helpful. There already is a workgroup looking at issues with GALs.

Three panel members are part of the statewide egregious incidents work group. They have reviewed data on these incidents through 2013.

**Please describe activities planned or held to date in 2014.**

Panel will look at what activities we could plan to coincide with Child Abuse Awareness Month (April) in 2015.

Panel will also hold a strategic planning session in early 2015.

**Panel recommendations to improve child protection services at the local level:**

Recommendations:

- The CPS standards manual created by Outagamie CPS workers be posted online so changes can be incorporated as they are made.
- Hold focus groups of social workers once or twice a year to obtain input on issues that hinder worker retention. The social worker support workgroup will reconvene in 2015.
- Investigate the purchase or lease of a visitation house for supervised visits for children in out of home care. Possibility of collaborating with CASA of the Fox Cities.
- Continue working with the court to improve the GAL system.
- Demonstrate continued support of social work staff

**Panel recommendations to improve child protection services at the State level:**

- The state integrate the Ongoing Service Standards and the Safety Intervention Standards so they do not conflict.
- The eWISACWIS documents should also be in line with the standards and released prior to laws taking effect

**Optional/additional information or comments:**

Please submit the **completed CRP Annual Report** and the **panel's current membership list** to the State of Wisconsin Department of Children and Families by e-mailing copies to Paula Brown at [PaulaL.Brown@wisconsin.gov](mailto:PaulaL.Brown@wisconsin.gov). The annual report and the DCF response to each report will be posted on the DCF Citizen Review Panel web page at [http://dcf.wisconsin.gov/children/citizen\\_review/default.htm](http://dcf.wisconsin.gov/children/citizen_review/default.htm). Thank you.