

**Wisconsin Citizen Review Panel Annual Report**  
January 1-December 31, 2015

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 2015.**

The panel meets bi-monthly, generally the first Wednesday of each month, for one and one half hours. Six meetings were held in 2015.

There are 3 workgroups:

Townhall: met 5 times

Social Work Support: met twice

Youth Aging out of Foster Care: met 3 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 reports on issues pertinent to child protection at all meetings. They are:

Continuing work with the dual status youth project. This project between both child protection and juvenile justice sought to integrate practice as it relates to youth that commit a crime that have a maltreatment background.

Improving organizational effectiveness of the division using a model taught by APHSA Need for social worker support.

In response to her comments, the panel decided to focus on social worker support. A workgroup was created to survey the workers to find out what needs they have and look at ways in which we could assist.

**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. There are both a judge and a representative from the District Attorney's office on our panel so we frequently discuss any issues around the court system and we recently added a new panel member, an officer with the Appleton Police Department. His participation in our meetings is very helpful in promoting cross system collaboration.

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 Guardian Ad Litem (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. The GAL workgroup will reconvene to monitor this process.

Melissa Blom, Manager of CYF in Outagamie County, is a panel member and updates us on new and innovative efforts by the county, ie. Alternative Response, National Resource Center Trauma Project, pilot program on dual status youth, Project YES (Youth Empowered Solutions to assist youth age 16-25 with mental health and/or substance abuse problems), and work around frequently involved families. The panel then determines if there are any of those efforts around which we can and should become involved.

Panel members routinely bring up issues at the state and national level that affect children and families and recommendations are made to contact legislators.

**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 CRP updated its brochure and members share that with the community whenever possible. We also sponsored an event to kick off Child Abuse and Awareness Month; Hands Around the Courthouse, on April 1<sup>st</sup>. This event drew about 200 people. One goal was to have enough people to make a complete circle around the Outagamie County Justice Center. While we were about 20 people short, the event was a success. The County Executive proclaimed April Child Abuse and Awareness Month and one of the CASA volunteers talked about his experience. Flyers with all events relating to child abuse/awareness were passed out to all participating. The event drew press coverage from both local television stations and the newspaper. It was determined that this event will be repeated on an annual basis.

The CRP continues work on our website to ensure that it is visible and up to date. We also opened a Facebook page, but due to concerns about the connection between the CRP and Outagamie County, the page was taken down. We are now looking into possibilities of securing a fiscal agent other than Outagamie County so we are able to proceed with a stand alone website and our own Facebook page.

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

The panel reviewed a case that involved a mother with a newborn. There were allegations of drug use and there were mental health concerns regarding the mother. It was determined that the allegations were unsubstantiated but services (Birth to 3 and Parent Resource Center) were offered so the case became a child welfare case rather than

CHIPS . Father and grandparents are involved and able to provide necessary support. There was good cooperation and coordination between the police and mental health. The panel members learned more about the complexities involved in protecting children while preserving the rights of the parents and trying to keep families together.

The Outagamie County Child Death Review Team is a project of the CRP. In 2015, the team met a total of 10 times and reviewed 19 deaths:

<1 year: 7  
1-9 years: 5  
10-19 years: 7

**Safety projects and conclusions:**

- **Safe Sleep Efforts:** A safe sleep environment is crucial to prevent deaths in our community. A baby should always be **A**lone, on his **B**ack and in a **C**rib (ABC). In order to ensure this, families in Outagamie County identified as not having the resources to provide a safe crib for their child are provided a crib, along with safe sleep education and follow-up by a public health nurse. The CRP also purchased more “Pack and Plays” to be given out by social workers who see unsafe sleeping conditions.
- **Falls Prevention through Medical Providers:** As a result of reviewing the causes of injury in our county, it was determined that efforts to educate parents would assist in decreasing not only the injuries related to falls but also potential deaths. For that reason, medical providers in the county were provided with information on “Keep Kids Safe: Prevent Harmful Falls.”
- **Playground Safety:** A contest was coordinated with the public library systems in the county to have children create pictures of ways kids can be “safe” while playing on playgrounds. The winning selections were then utilized to create a playground safety book that has been distributed county wide through schools, medical clinics, libraries and various community agencies. Funding was provided for this initiative through the Citizen Review Panel.
- **Continued work in the community on suicide prevention is occurring through the Zero Suicide Initiative.** Members of the Death Review Team share the information concerning risk factors from the review of suicide deaths back to their workplaces and organizations to develop strategies to meet the goal of zero suicides.

CPS is always at the table to give input on background and recommendations for prevention and Pastor Larry Creamer, CRP Co-Chair is a representative on the team.

**Please describe any other panel activities or issues addressed in 2015.**

- Outagamie County has rolled out alternative response as a way of handling CPS referrals when appropriate. Melissa Blom, Manager of CYF at Outagamie County, explained the “new pathway” for CPS cases allows more engagement with the parents.
- Several panel members attended a CASA training to learn more about the logistics of how an abuse/neglect report is handled and to better understand the terminology used by workers when reporting on a case.

- The CRP provided food for Social Worker Appreciation Day and panel members were invited to attend the event. Pastor Larry, the CRP Co-Chair, thanked the workers for their diligence and compassion in caring for the children and families in our county. Several panel members attended the event and the presentation on human trafficking in the Fox Valley.
- Three CRP members attended the National Conference in Portland, Oregon. Report given to CRP in July. Attendees noted that Outagamie County is “ahead of the game” in many areas that were addressed at the conference. Some recommendations for the CRP were to consider adding parents who have been involved with the system and/or former foster youth to the panel, to investigate possible partnerships with local universities, and to become more independent of Outagamie County while retaining the wonderful working relationship we have with the CYF staff .
- Six panel members attended the statewide CRP meeting in August. The highlight of the meeting was a presentation by five former foster youth. As a result of attending this meeting, our panel decided to investigate forming a group of youth who were in the foster care system during their teen years and youth who have aged out of the system.
- Judge Mitch Metropulos gave a presentation on sex offenders and the sex offender registry to help panel members understand how this impacts young adults, especially those coming out of foster care. Discussion ensued on “sexting,” which seems to be a big problem in the county. We will look at the possibility of a collaboration with the Sexual Assault Crisis Center to help teens understand that sexting is a felony and can have serious ramifications for them.
- The panel revised the CRP logo to state that we are the “Citizen Review Panel **Serving** Outagamie County” rather than the Outagamie County Citizen Review Panel. We believe it is important to make that distinction.
- One member of our CRP is on the statewide Guardian ad Litem workgroup and reported that two surveys were sent out, one asking for input on GALs from parents and providers and another seeking input from youth and the GAL role. Mixed findings were reported. Some states have moved to a system in which the GAL does not have to be an attorney. This may be something this workgroup researches and recommends.

**Please describe activities planned or held to date in 2016.**

The Aging out Youth Work Group hosted some of the members of the Youth Advisory Panel at an event on Jan. 14<sup>th</sup> 2016. Approximately 80 community members attended and learned about the struggles and triumphs of the young adults on the Youth Advisory Panel. Follow up will be to work with the Bay Area Workforce Development Agency, which is now in charge of Independent Living Services for youth, to see if we can form a similar panel here in Outagamie County.

Hands Around the Courthouse event to kick off Child Abuse and Awareness Month is planned for April 1<sup>st</sup> 2016 at 4:42 p.m.

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

The child protection workers have a very challenging and difficult job. The CRP is looking into ways to help them cope with the stress they face every day. We will be surveying the workers to ask them what they need and if there are ways we can assist that are in our purview, ie. hosting a training on secondary trauma, providing occasional “pats on the back,” such as food, cards, etc. When the results of the survey have been tabulated, we will proceed.

The Aging Out Youth workgroup will be meeting with Bay Area Workforce Development to assist in forming a panel of young adults who have been in foster care during their teen years or have aged out. We believe it is important to hear the voices of those youth in order to evaluate what is working well and what could be improved in our foster care system.

Work needs to continue to ensure that the GAL program is working to truly meet the needs of children in the human services system.

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

No recommendations at this time.

**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.

Submitted by: Connie Raether  
CRP Co-Chair