

**Wisconsin Citizen Review Panel Annual Report**  
January 1-December 31, 2016

Name of Panel	The Citizen Review Panel of Outagamie County
Contact Person & Title	Pastor Larry Creamer, Co-Chair Connie Raether, Co-Chair
Panel Chairperson(s)	Pastor Larry Creamer and Connie Raether

**Briefly describe the panel's meeting schedule and number/types of meetings, including subcommittee and workgroup meetings, held in 2016.**

The panel meets bi-monthly. The meetings are generally the first Wednesday of each month. Each meeting is one and a half to two hours in length. Six meetings were held in 2016.

In 2016 there were six workgroups/subgroups:

1. Social Work Support Task Group
2. Youth Aging Out of Care Focus Group
3. Community Event Workgroup
4. GAL Workgroup
5. CRP Website and Facebook Workgroup
6. Technology Workgroup

**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.**

In early 2016, The Citizen Review Panel discussed the structure and the relationships of the Citizen Review Panel between the County/State. A decision was made to separate the Citizen Review Panel from operating as an extension of the County and instead operate as an independent entity. This decision came after the Citizen Review Panel attempted to launch a Facebook page. Since Outagamie County was serving as the fiscal agent and custodian of the Citizen Review Panel records, the Citizen Review Panel was viewed as being a part of Outagamie County and therefore, had to abide by Outagamie County rules and regulations. This created a conflict of interest as the Citizen Review Panel is meant to objectively analyze who Outagamie County is performing under the Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (CAPTA).

Separation occurred July 1, 2017. The panel is now called The Citizen Review Panel Serving Outagamie County. The mission of the Citizen Review Panel Serving Outagamie County is to provide opportunities for citizens to assess the child welfare

system and make informed recommendations for continuous improvement that ensures the safety, permanency, and well being of children, youth, and families within the community.

The Citizen Review Panel Serving Outagamie County reviewed one CPS case this past year, looking for any gaps in the service system. There are three Outagamie County Child Welfare staff on the panel. This includes Division Manager, Melissa Blom, Supervisor Rebecca Spulak and Foster Care Supervisor, Jennifer Sailer. Also serving on the panel is Youth and Family Services Supervisor, Scott Kornish. These panel members report out on issues pertinent to child protection and juvenile justice. These include:

- **The Dual Status Youth Project**  
Staff are continuing to develop and enhance protocol in working with youth who cross both the child welfare and juvenile delinquency systems. Staff are working on efforts to find ways to prevent children from entering into the juvenile justice system.
- **Youth Aging out of foster care**  
A community event titled “Hear My Voice” was put on by the Citizen Review Panel in January 2016. Youth who grew up in foster care and/or aged out of care spoke at this event in regards to challenges and barriers. Information was also presented on Independent Living Services in Outagamie County and the regionalization of Independent Living Services
- **Organizational Effectiveness-Frequently Encountered Families**  
The Frequently Encountered Families Workgroup was tabled due to Organizational Effectiveness work being done by Outagamie County in this area.
- **Staff turnover and retention**  
The panel conducted focus groups with child welfare staff and child welfare supervisors to determine what works in child welfare, what are barriers/challenges and what makes workers stay in the field. Barriers with technology was a major issue discussed in these focus groups.

In response to focus groups conducted by the Citizen Review Panel Serving Outagamie County, the panel is working with the local county agency to determine technology needs and barriers with technology. The panel feels that this is an important topic to explore as technology can make staff more efficient in their work and provide the opportunity to spend more time providing services to families.

## **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. Due to concerns of what may be viewed as a conflict of interest, the Citizen Review Panel Serving Outagamie County separated from

Outagamie County being the fiscal agent and holder of the CRP records. As outlined in the panel's Structure and Process Document,

**\*\*The Citizen Review Panel serving Outagamie County exists to fulfill the provisions found in the Citizen Review Panels section (2.2) of the Federal CAPTA legislation. It is the intention of this Panel to work closely with the State of Wisconsin and Outagamie County yet at the same time maintain the objectivity necessary to effectively examine the practices of these government entities. In this sense the Citizen Review Panel serving Outagamie County maintains a clear distinction from both the State of Wisconsin and Outagamie County.\*\***

The CRP considers these three main areas addressed in CAPTA when reviewing CPS cases and when discussing case practice philosophies. On the CRP is a judge, an attorney from the DA's office, a law enforcement officer, county child welfare staff, a school social worker, a representative from CASA and a staff member from the Child Advocacy Center. The participation of all of these members is extremely helpful in promoting cross system collaboration.

The local GAL workgroup is in a monitoring phase and intends to gather information from 2016 and obtain feedback from the judges.

Members from Outagamie County Children Youth and Families and Youth and Family Services, are panel members and provide updates to case practice in the areas of Alternative Response, Dually Involved Youth, and Organizational Effectiveness. The members from Outagamie County also provide information in regards to local trends in child welfare, as well as access to case reviews.

A new member this year is from CASA (Court Appointed Special Advocate) and this member is able to offer insight in regards to trends as well. Of concern that has been noted is the length of time it takes to achieve permanency for children in out of home care and a recommendation has been made to explore this further.

### **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 Citizen Review Panel hosted a community awareness event titled "Hear My Voice" event at Valley Baptist Church on 01/14/2016. This presentation was an introduction to the topic of foster youth and Independent Living. The Youth Advisory Panel did a presentation and a question and answer session on growing up in and aging out of foster care. There are numerous barriers for youth aging out of care in terms of securing housing, pursuing secondary education and implications of the criminal justice system.

The Citizen Review Panel sponsored Hands Around the Courthouse, a child abuse awareness event, to kick off Child Abuse and Awareness Month. The event occurred on 4/1/2016. Approximately 120 people attended. Attendance was down from the

prior year, likely due to rain, snow and sleet. A proclamation was given by the County Executive, a former foster youth spoke at the event, and Bikers Against Child Abuse drove two circles around the health and human services building to kick off the event. Also provided at the event were statistics on child abuse and neglect.

In July 2016, the Citizen Review Panel Serving Outagamie County launched a Facebook page to create awareness of the panel and what the panel is doing in the community in terms of child welfare.

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

The panel reviewed one case in July 2016, looking for any gaps in the service system. Kay Kiesling, supervisor of initial assessment presented a case. The case involved a mom and her four year old child. There were concerns of heroin use multiple times per day, mom attempting to provide care for her child while consistently under the influence, and concerns of mom having a gun pointed at her head for stealing drugs. The case was assigned as Alternative Response. The child was taken into temporary physical custody (TPC) as a result of an assessment. The TPC was granted. The Department requested a CHIPS petition based on Wisconsin State Statute 48.13(10), for neglect. The District Attorney's office was not willing to file a CHIPS petition under 48.13(10), as the DA did not feel that grounds existed. The DA was willing to file a petition under 48.13(4), where a parent signs a petition requesting services. The parent initially agreed to this, however, did not follow through in doing so. As a result, the temporary physical custody order was dropped and the Department had to return the child home, with no jurisdiction to intervene.

As a result of this case review, the panel members learned about the complexities of AODA issues and the increase of heroin use. The panel also learned about the complexities and limitations of the state statutes and the DA's ability to meet the burden of proof. There are concerns that the legal system and the child welfare system has some gaps as the child welfare system had to close a case with a child that was "unsafe" per their standards but the DA's office was indicating there were no legal grounds to intervene. The Department had communication and cooperation with the extended family members to provide the necessary support. The Department attempted to coordinate AODA services and mental health services with/for mom on a voluntary basis after the dismissal of the TPC order.

The Outagamie County Child Death Review Team was a project of the panel until July 1, 2016, when separation occurred. As a result of the separation, the Death Review Team is currently not receiving any funding from the Citizen Review Panel Serving Outagamie County. However, the panel has agreed to continue to assist with Child Death Review's team Safe Sleep Efforts. The panel purchased 15 pack-n-plays for social workers to provide to families when there is an unsafe sleep situation. Along with the pack-n-play, families are provided with safe sleep education and follow up by a public health nurse.

In 2016, The Child Death Review team conducted 11 meetings and reviewed 17 cases. Prevention recommendations centered around suicide prevention, safe sleep and accidental asphyxiation.

**Suicide prevention:**

The team recommended providing education to parents about current trends, use of inhalents, safety plans, limiting access to lethal weapons and support groups.

**Safe Sleep:**

It is recommended that the prevention group continue to promote safe sleep and that health departments continue to offer information on risks of smoking.

**Accidental Asphyxiation:**

Increase awareness regarding cords on blinds during Window Covering Safety Month in October.

**Please describe any other panel activities or issues addressed in 2016.**

- The panel provided dessert for Social Worker Appreciation day in March 2016. Pastor Larry, Co-Chair for the CRP provided a motivational talk and thanked workers for their work with keeping children and families safe in Outagamie County.
- Two CRP members attended the National Conference in Phoenix, Arizona in June 2016. A recommendation was to enhance media relations and look for the opportunity for the CRP to look at ways to increase public awareness and outreach in order to better inform the public about child welfare issues.
- Panel members attended the statewide CRP meeting in August 2016. The panel learned about what other panels are doing in terms of education and outreach. There was also discussion about youth affected by domestic violence and prevention. Bikers Against Child Abuse also attended the annual meeting and there was discussion about having a member of this organization serve on the Citizen Review Panel.
- A group of panel members has been working diligently to get a website up and running. Members met with a website designer and secured a web address. The group determined content and links for the webpage.

**Please describe any potential activities being planned for CY 2017.**

In 2017 and moving forward, the Citizen Review Panel of Outagamie County will conduct bi-annual case reviews at meetings independent of the regularly scheduled meetings. This will allow for sufficient time to focus on the case review and understand gaps in the service system.

The Citizen Review Panel will again be organizing Hands Around the Courthouse to kick off Child Abuse and Awareness Month. This is planned for April 2017.

The Citizen Review Panel is looking to coordinate with Outagamie County a trip to Madison to support the Youth Advisory Council's Hands Around the Capital event in May 2017.

The Citizen Review Panel will launch the Citizen Review Panel Serving Outagamie County website in 2017.

An agency program, called NOAHH (Neighbors Offering a Helping Hand) is a volunteer based goods and services program. Local churches work together to help meet the needs of families in terms of beds, mattresses, dressers, car repairs, etc. It would be beneficial to have some volunteers from the CRP become involved in the promotion of NOAHH, to help meet the needs of families in the child welfare system.

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

The Citizen Review Panel conducted focus groups for child welfare staff and for child welfare supervisors in attempts to understand what works in child welfare, barriers in their work and what keeps them in their job. It was clear based on these focus groups that lack of technology is a major issue for workers. Workers feel that better technology would increase their efficiency and allow more time to work in the field. The panel recommended that further information and options need to be explored in terms of improving technology for child welfare workers.

The Citizen Review Panel also will be conducting bi-annual case reviews in separate meetings from our annual meetings. These reviews will occur in February and October. By reviewing cases on a regular basis, it will allow the panel to explore challenges in the work and developing recommendations to the local and state level.

**How did the local agency respond to your previous recommendations?**

The agency was willing to meet with a set of panel members to discuss technology at Outagamie County and explore other options. Panel members will gather data in terms of how other counties utilize technology for child welfare staff.

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

Please provide a brief description and example of the issue that contributed to this recommendation:

No recommendations provided.

**Optional/additional information or comments:**

**Membership List:**

Allaback, Monica  
Alpert-Buss, Andrea  
Blom, Melissa A.  
Brown, Paula  
Creamer, Larry  
Davis, Rosemary V.  
DesJardins, John A.  
Dickrell, Karen M.  
Frisch, Michael  
Gehl, Wendy  
Glad, Darrin  
Hart-Landsberg, Leah  
Hunt, Lisa  
Metropulos, Mitch J.  
Kornish, Scott M.  
Laumer, Sara  
Lewis, Emily  
Matczynski, Sue  
Matthews, Amanda  
Raether, Connie  
Sailer, Jennifer L.  
Smarzinski, Sally  
Spulak, Rebecca L.  
Stubing, Beth  
Turner, Maria  
Vander Weilen, Blaine  
Williams, Elder  
Wisnet, Mary  
Ziglinski, Amy

Please submit the **completed CRP Annual Report** and the **panel's current membership list** 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. Thank you!