

Wisconsin Citizen Review Panel Annual Report
January 1-December 31, 2017

Name of Panel:	Citizen Review Panel Serving Outagamie County
Contact Person & Title:	Maria Turner, Secretary

Briefly describe the panel’s meeting schedule – including number/types of meetings, and schedule of any subcommittee and workgroup meetings held in 2017.

Our CRP convenes for regular meetings that run 1.5 hours the first Wednesday of every other month from 11:30 a.m. to 1 p.m. In 2017, that included meetings in January, March, May, July, September and November. We further added two additional meetings in February and October, strictly for case studies, as we were finding it too difficult to incorporate thorough case reviews within the regular meeting schedule. Officers also meet prior to the regular meetings to plan agendas and discuss larger topics to bring forward to the full Panel.

Please provide a summary of the panel’s activities related to:

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

Through various subcommittees and our CRP as a whole, we’ve reviewed not only some of the cases our county has taken part in, but we’ve also held one-on-one interviews with workers to obtain information related to job satisfaction and issues that affect their ability to do their work at the highest quality possible. Those activities are detailed within other parts of this report and therefore, will not be reiterated here.

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

Our local CRP continues to evaluate local and State progress under the State CAPTA Plan related to a few key components within the plan.

Significant for us within our case reviews was the growing number of children coming into local care due to drug abuse – specifically heroin and prescription drugs. Our concerns locally mirror efforts being done statewide through the DCF Opioid Steering Committee. One thing we might consider from a local perspective is to find out more about what is currently under way within that statewide steering committee and attempt to align local initiatives related to child safety with those efforts.

The overlap between domestic violence and child abuse is well-documented. Within one of our case studies, we identified that statutes at the state level do not seem to recognize DV as a significant factor in determining substantiated child abuse. Conversations related to the overlap between child abuse and domestic violence took place across the state in 2017, specifically related to MOUs addressing how county CPS and local DV programs would work in concert to address the two issues in collaboration. Our CRP’s concerns

focused more on the lack of our state statute to recognize the connection between child abuse and domestic violence and feel the statutes could be reviewed to include domestic violence more prominently within the children's code.

Finally, ongoing review of our local child protection practices gives us insight into how state and federal laws impact workers' abilities to effectively serve children. Our case studies have yielded concerns over time spent in care and a lack of oversight in ensuring guidelines already in place are indeed administered. Please see our findings and recommendations later within this report for specifics.

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.

- As part of Child Abuse Prevention & Awareness Month in April, our CRP hosted the 3rd annual Hands Around the Courthouse event on April 5. The event featured a welcome and informational overview by Co-chair Pastor Larry Creamer, proclamation by County Executive Thomas Nelson and testimonial speaker by Leah Hart-Landsberg, a foster parent and CRP member who gave perspective on children in foster care and the need for more caring foster parents. Local musician Walt Hamburger provided musical entertainment and Bikers Against Child Abuse was on hand to kick off the event. We handed out statistical info to attendees, as well as details on how to become foster parents, as well as promotion of other events happening during April to mark Child Abuse Prevention & Awareness Month. Approximately 150 people were in attendance and the event received publicity prior by local talk radio station, WHBY.
- Through our Website & Facebook Subcommittee, the CRP completed work on a new Website design and url. This was a significant project in identifying ourselves as a separate entity from the county's child protection division. The new site can be found at www.crpofoc.org. The Facebook page was also implemented and is managed solely by CRP members, rather than through the county.
- Our CRP has signed on as a partner for the license plate program. They are selling the "Celebrate Children" license plates. Plate is \$25 extra over what a normal plate would cost. Group wants to help promote the license plate sales by use of a toolkit they have provided.
- Maria Turner presented the Webinar for Power of Community Awareness through National CRP on Sept. 12, which brought attention to our local CRP.

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

Yes, our CRP conducted two reviews of CPS cases during 2017. Significant findings from those cases involved the following concerns over processes, procedures and statutes governing children in protective services:

- Lack of adherence to TPR time limit filing (15 of the last 22 months) is causing children to be in care for far too long. Permanency plan checkbox every 6 months requires workers to check why a TPR hasn't been filed, which is considered an exception to the federal Adoption and Safe Families Act. A federal review occurs as part of an audit process to ensure counties adhere to these standards. However, these don't happen often enough. The last one in Outagamie County occurred in 2003.
- Barriers of jurisdiction when parents move out of Outagamie County and how that negatively affects the length of time children are in care.
- Wisconsin is just 1 of 9 states that does jury trials for TPRs. Could speed up process if it was just before the Court. Takes out jury using the wrong facts to determine a finding in the case.
- Opioid abuse in our community is having a significant impact on the number of children entering protective services. More needs to be done to educate the community about the use of heroin and the devastating impact it is having individually, within family units and within systems (child protection, law enforcement and courts).
- Domestic violence in and of itself should be written into statutes as sufficient grounds to qualify child abuse.

Please describe any other panel activities or issues addressed in 2017.

- Our Social Worker Subcommittee, made up of members Andrea Alpert-Buss, Karen Dickrell and Wendy Gehl, conducted its annual one-on-ones with workers and how that feedback would be given to supervisors. The subcommittee's findings on technology deficits (and comparisons with other human service departments around the state) were included in Larry's letter and verbal presentation before the Outagamie County Health & Human Services Commission during its Annual Hearing.
- Our CRP hosted the annual Social Worker Appreciation Breakfast in March at Valley Baptist Church. There was good attendance and fellowship among the team of county CPS staff.
- Four members of our panel were selected as workshop presenters at the 14th annual National Citizen Review Panel Conference in Anchorage in May. Melissa Blom and Larry Creamer presented on *Organization Effectiveness in a Human Service Agency Partnering with the Local CRP*. Maria Turner and Lisa Hunt presented on *The Power of Community Awareness: Events & Ideas to Engage Others in CRP Work*. Maria also did the presentation a second time for a Webinar presented by the National CRP that took place Sept. 12.

- Co-chairs Larry Creamer and Connie Raether attended the annual state CRP meeting and reported a positive experience, especially in learning about trauma-informed care.

Please describe activities planned or held in 2017.

These are noted in greater detail elsewhere: Hands Around the Courthouse and Annual Social Worker Appreciation Breakfast.

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

- Our CRP invested \$2,000 of funding and has membership involved in our county's Retention & Resiliency Task Force to work with consultant to look at issues from the social work staff. Two CRP members – Wendy Gehl and Andrea Alpert-Buss – will be part of the task force. There is also an upper advisory group (made up of Melissa Blom, Rosemary Davis, CRP Co-Chair Pastor Larry Creamer, two social workers and the consulting firm). CRP is to be receiving details from Blue Spiral Consulting Group regarding what metrics they will use for measuring effectiveness/success, current retention rate amongst local social workers and how that compares elsewhere, etc. Data collection is important, especially for justifying the analysis of the problem. CRP Focus Groups were the genesis of this initiative and the involvement of CRP membership on the Task Force itself. Retention is important for families, especially from a trauma-informed perspective.
- Our Social Worker Subcommittee through its annual one-on-one interviews with workers found technology utilized amongst social workers to be inefficient and outdated. Subcommittee members collected comparative information regarding technology among other counties' CPS workers. This information was presented to the Outagamie County Health & Human Services Commission during its Annual Hearing. Some funding to address the issue was put in place for 2018, but more is needed to bring Outagamie County in line with others around the state.
- After the National Conference, it was suggested that our CRP require more reporting at each of its meetings regarding such things as:
 - number of children under protective orders
 - number of children in foster care
 - average case length
 - social worker caseloads
 - social worker turnover/retention rates

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

- Wisconsin is just 1 of 9 states that does jury trials for Termination of Parental Rights. Could speed up process if these cases were just before the Court. Takes out jury using the wrong facts to determine a finding in the case, which we feel occurs regularly and given we are in the minority of states currently doing TPRs this way, our feeling is this is something that should be looked into.

Optional/additional information or comments:

- Our CRP bussed folks to Madison to take part in the Youth Advisory Council's first-ever Hands Around the Capitol event on May 23. Co-chair Larry Creamer was one of the attendees and reported that even though the event had to be pulled together quickly, YAC secured some amazing speakers: UW-Platteville Chancellor who is a former foster child; Wisconsin First Lady Tonette Walker; and the mother of Green Bay Packer player Ty Montgomery who has fostered many children. The event was on the second floor of the rotunda. Several foster parents, plus county workers and Larry representing CRP, attended the event. The event did get significant news coverage.
- Our CRP restarted its Shaken Baby Doll initiative by assigning a subcommittee to begin looking at ways the doll could be utilized within the community, as the CRP feels it is currently under-utilized.

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 to Jamie Gennrich at jamie.gennrich@wisconsin.gov. The annual report and the DCF response to each report will be posted on the DCF Citizen Review Panel web page at <https://dcf.wisconsin.gov/prevention/crp>. Thank you.