

Wisconsin Citizen Review Panel Annual Report Information
January 1, 2018-December 31, 2018

Name of Panel:	Polk County Citizen Review Panel
Contact Person and Title:	Betsy Byker, Coordinator

I. REPORT OF 2018 ACTIVITIES:

1. Please describe the panel’s 2018 meeting schedule. Please include the following specific information:
 - a. **Full panel is scheduled to meet monthly for one hour. In 2018, the panel met 10 of 12 months.**
 - b. **Subcommittees were formed to provide case reviews, event planning committees and to review by-laws. Subcommittees met 4 times in 2018.**

2. Please describe how the panel provided for public outreach and comment in order to assess the impact of current procedures and practices upon children and families in the community.

January 2018: Resiliency film screening event: The panel planned and provided a local resource fair to accompany a county wide viewing of the film “Resiliency.” The county hosted a similar event in 2017 to view “Paper Tigers” as part of a community-wide plan to provide education in the area of trauma-informed care.

April 2018: Blue pinwheels symbolizing child abuse awareness were purchased and distributed to 8 county school districts. The CRP joined with the local Bikers Against Child Abuse (BACA) group to highlight Child Abuse Awareness Month. Six Public Awareness articles were published in local newspapers promoting child abuse and neglect prevention efforts.

May 11th, 2018: Financial support was given to promote a community event to welcome and provide mindfulness education to new mothers in the area. The panel’s decision to support was based on data from CPS indicating a great increase in infants in foster care and the need to provide community support as a protective factor to ALL mothers. To date the event has been held 3 times in the county. More than 30 families have been served and 8 different agencies have collaborated to provide resource referral, education and on-going support.

3. Please describe any case reviews conducted by the panel in 2018.
February 13th, 2018: Reviewed case #171002-DSP-POLK-768
October 16th, 2018: Reviewed case #180406-DSP-POLK-826
4. Please summarize any other panel activities or panel events that took place in 2018.
 1. **One panel member was sent to the national CRP Conference in Michigan.**
 2. **A Subcommittee was formed to review and approve panel by-laws.**
 3. **Panel Coordinator attended the state-wide panel CRP Conference in the Dells.**
 4. **A community leadership group was supported in attending the “Healing Trauma Healthy Communities” Conference in Milwaukee, September 2018. Scholarships were offered to those in the County who had demonstrated a leadership role in trauma-informed care and a willingness to continue that work.**
 5. **Financial support was allocated and partially spent to support the needs of children moving into foster care. The CPS department indicated a need for lice and flea kits, clothing, gifts and snacks to ease the stress on children as they transition from one home to another. As a result of the panel’s action 2 community individuals/groups have made large donations of toys and socks to the cause. Discussions are continuing to include coordination of such donations so as not to burden the department with that task.**

II. EVALUATION: In completing the evaluation portion of this report, please examine, to the best of your ability, the policies, procedures, and practices of State and local agencies, and where appropriate, specific cases.

1. Please provide an evaluation of the following:

STATE

- a. The extent to which the Department of Children and Families (DCF) is effectively carrying out the child protection responsibilities assigned to it under the State CAPTA Plan, and the Wisconsin Child Welfare Standards, which include the Child Protective Services Safety Intervention Standards, Access and Initial Assessment Standards, and Ongoing Services Standards.

Special Note:

If you wish to review any portion of the State CAPTA Plan in formulating your response, a copy of the Plan, and its most recent update dated June 30, 2018, are attached to this form.

If you wish to access any of the Wisconsin Child Welfare Standards in formulating your response, they are available through the following link: <https://dcf.wisconsin.gov/cwportal/policy?accactive=0>.

Alternative Response: Wisconsin has provided support to counties implementing alternative response in the form of Readiness Assessments and documents detailing FAQ, frequently asked questions. In 2018, support was offered to assist counties implementing alternative response in documenting the screening process in EWISACWIS to include alternative response.

Safety and stability of Children Placed in Relative or Foster Care: Data regarding the safety and stability of children being cared for foster care is made available to the public through the Wisconsin Children and Families Website. Data is presented by annual report and through more up-to-date data through the EWISACWIS dashboards. The panel has used this data to compare Polk County to the rest of the state.

Training for CPS caseworkers, CPS supervisors, and Guardians ad litem: The panel was unable to identify any training provided for guardians ad litem in the state.

Citizen Review Panels Support: The state has provided technical and financial supports to panels in the form of quarterly conference calls and yearly state gatherings. Support has been consistent through-out the staff vacancies and changes.

- b. The extent to which the DCF is effectively complying with any other criteria that the panel considers important to ensure the protection of children (e.g., the extent to which the State child protective services system is coordinated with foster care and adoption programs; a review of child fatalities and near fatalities).

The panel has nothing further to add at this time.

LOCAL

- a. The extent to which local child protection agencies are effectively carrying out the child protection responsibilities assigned to them under the State CAPTA Plan, and the Wisconsin Child Welfare Standards, referenced above.

Alternative Response: Polk County has not yet implemented an Alternative Response Program.

Safety and Stability of Children Placed in Relative or Foster Care:

Polk County DCF have indicated that a shortage of local foster homes has impacted the ability to care for all children in need of out of care. Families are waiting to be certified, but staff shortages in the department have stalled that process. This has resulted in the use of shelter homes more often.

EWISACWIS statistics highlight a concern for the stability of children in placement beyond 12 months who are experiencing an unacceptable number of placements. DCF staff have met with the CRP to discuss and make plans to address the problem.

Cross System Collaboration:

Law enforcement: Polk County Child Protection continues to partner with local Law Enforcement to develop and improve the DEC program protocol.

Domestic Abuse shelters: Polk County Child Protection frequently works with our local Domestic Abuse Shelters, Community Referral Agency (CRA), to coordinate services for families and children that are victims of domestic abuse. In 2018, Polk County Child Protection and CRA initiated planning to develop and formalize an MOU to better coordinate services and to assist families.

Health Care Physicians: Collaboration between CPS and Health Care Physicians happens often with cases involving an unborn child, newborn children, and significant physical abuse. CPS works with physicians to gather medical records, create safety plans, determine the needs of the child, and to ensure that follow up medicals needs/appointments are completed.

Tribal Child Welfare: Polk County Child Protection continues to work closely with our local tribe to serve tribal families. We have work to ensure our local Tribe is provided

timely notice when child protection intervention is necessary. We have also increased planning meetings and communication with our local tribe.

Judicial System: Polk County Child Protection continues to participate in monthly Judicial Procedure meetings to discuss local issues and concerns. Our local Judicial team has a firm understanding of child protection and trauma informed interventions. CPS caseworkers have benefitted by attending panel supported trainings in and outside of the county.

Training for CPS caseworkers, CPS supervisors and Guardians ad litem: CPS caseworkers have benefitted by attending panel supported trainings in and outside of the county.

Training has been provided for foster parents and staff in some or all of the following areas

- Trauma Informed Care and Resilience
- ACES
- Prudent Parenting Refresher
- Drug Awareness Training

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Citizen review Panels Support: Polk County CPS has supported staff members to attend and participate in the CRP activities. Case review teams have attended and presented to the panel and provided information to the panel in a timely manner.

- b. The extent to which local child protection agencies are effectively complying with any other criteria that the panel considers important to ensure the protection of children (e.g., the extent to which the State child protective services system is coordinated with foster care and adoption programs; a review of child fatalities and near fatalities).

Concern has been raised for the child welfare system due to long-term vacancies in administrative positions. This coupled with a dramatic rise in children in need of out-of-home care has raised alarm. While no specific events have been identified as a result of the staffing vacancies the panel intends to review data in 2019 in an effort to support the department and workers in any way possible. Specific regard will be given to when and how community resources are being offered to families.

III. RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. Please list any panel recommendations to improve child protection services at the State level.

- 1. The panel continues to advocate for the state to consider revising the follow-up letter sent to mandated reporters following a report that is subsequently screened-out. The panel asks that wording be added that encourages reporters to continue reporting and that indicates that “information will be kept on-file should subsequent information arise.”**
- 2. Regarding concerns raised above concerning alternative response, the panel suggests the financial support be given to counties to support inter-disciplinary collaborative meetings.**
- 3. The panel suggests that the CRP state meeting be used to review the CAPTA plan with panel members to promote evaluation and support in their local communities.**

2. Please list any panel recommendations to improve child protection services at the local level.

- 1. The panel recognizes the strained schedules and heavy caseloads that local workers are experiencing. To that end the panel recommends that collaborative meeting be planned to introduce and reintroduce local resources that provide prevention and intervention services with families and can through that work ease the load of the current situation in our community.**
- 2. The panel would like to request access to data to examine local statistics as they pertain to foster care placement and length of stay as well as use of supporting community resources.**

3. Please list any additional information or comments that the panel wishes to share.

Please submit the **completed Citizen Review Panel Annual Report** and the **panel’s current membership list** to the State of Wisconsin Department of Children and Families by e-mailing to Alicia Breininger at alicia.breininger@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.