



2019
Wisconsin Citizen Review Panel
Annual Report

For the period of: January 1, 2019-December 31, 2019

NAME OF PANEL:	Langlade County Citizen Review Panel
CONTACT PERSON:	Stephanie Fassbender, Panel Coordinator

I. REPORT OF 2019 ACTIVITIES:

1. Please describe the panel's 2019 meeting schedule. Please include the following specific information:
 - a. The frequency and type of panel meetings;
 - a. *Langlade County Citizen Review Panel met monthly as a large group with the exception of July. The panel did not meet during the month of July due to the Independence Day holiday falling during the week of our standing meeting date.*
 - b. The frequency and type of any subcommittee and workgroup meetings.
 - a. *Small workgroups met occasionally to work on planning a foster parent appreciation event and gather information for the 2019 annual report.*
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.
 - a. *The panel began planning a foster parent appreciation night which was going to serve as a recognition and thank you event for foster providers in Langlade County. After beginning the planning the panel decided to postpone the event until 2020 when it can be more thoughtfully planned.*
3. Please describe any case reviews conducted by the panel in 2019.
 - a. *The panel conducted two case reviews in 2019. Cases were reported on by the social worker assigned to the case. Both cases reviewed were 60 day assessments which had since been closed. The following aspects of the cases were discussed:*

- i. *Geographic challenge of making contact with all necessary individuals residing in and outside of Langlade County within specified timeframe. Collaboration between counties to assist when possible.*
- ii. *Multiple caregivers in family and the possibility that those caregivers are influencing what is reported to CPS based on personal dislike for other caregivers. Being able to sort through and distinguish actual concerns versus frustrations and allegations of other caregivers.*
- iii. *Strong collaboration between juvenile justice team and social workers*
- iv. *Benefit of having agency cell phones for taking photos to documents environment and be more accessible to families.*
- v. *Collaboration between CPS and public health to assist when sanitation is a concern.*
- vi. *Rational and success with taking least restrictive approach. How known history of family helped social worker to determine approach.*
- vii. *Department's role in providing support for maintenance of safe home environments for families.*
- viii. *Impact of poverty on child welfare.*
- ix. *Barrier of affordable and appropriate garbage disposal in city which leads to public health and sanitary concerns.*

- 4. Please summarize any other panel activities or panel events that took place in 2019.
 - a. *The panel celebrated National Child Abuse and Neglect Prevention Month by assembling a pinwheel display at the Boys and Girls Club with members of the club, surrounding school district students, staff, and administration, law enforcement, Child Protective Services staff, Health Department staff, Senator Tom Tiffany, local media, and panel members present. The panel also constructed a display at the Public Library that remained up during the month of April which offered tips and information on protective factors and recognizing and building on family strengths. The panel also organized a poster contest for students with the top three posters were published in the local newspaper. The winning artists were also awarded gift certificates. The panel also sponsored a staff development day for CPS staff as well as a Strengthening Families program for children and families facilitated by UW Extension staff.*

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 **two below listed** child protection responsibilities assigned to it under the State CAPTA Plan, and the Wisconsin Child Welfare Standards (Child Protective Services Safety Intervention Standards, Access and Initial Assessment Standards, and Ongoing Services Standards).

- Cross System Collaboration Between CPS and Tribal Child Welfare Agencies
 - i. *State level cross system collaboration between CPS and Tribal Child Welfare Agencies was not successfully evaluated.*
 - Cross System Collaboration Between CPS and the Judicial System
 - i. *Wisconsin was awarded the Children’s Court Improvement Project federal grant which aims to enhance the processing of child welfare cases in the court system. As part of this grant multiple projects and subcommittees exist including the Child Safety Decision-Making Subcommittee, the Out-of-Home and Education Subcommittee, the CCIP E-Learning Project, the Wisconsin Judicial Committee on Child Welfare, the Wisconsin Indian Child Welfare Act Continuous Quality Improvement Project, a Making Permanency Hearings Meaningful training curriculum, the Confidential Project, the Subcommittee of Chief Judges and District Court Administrators, and a comprehensive county circuit court review. All of these projects independently and collectively are designed to strengthen and support the processing of child abuse and neglect, termination of parental rights, and adoption cases in the court system.*
- 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 does not have input on the extent to which DCF is complying with other criteria that impacts the protection of children at the state level.*

LOCAL

- a. The extent to which local child protection agencies are effectively carrying out the **two below listed** child protection responsibilities assigned to them under the State CAPTA Plan, and the Wisconsin Child Welfare Standards, referenced above.
- Cross System Collaboration Between CPS and Tribal Child Welfare Agencies
 - i. *Key stakeholder from multiple Tribal Child Welfare Agencies surrounding Langlade County were interviewed and the following themes and perspectives were reported:*
 1. *Accurate reporting and screening being completed by county agencies.*
 2. *Collaboration varies on case by case basis, including county consultation, primary case management, secondary case management, or supportive services.*
 3. *Ability and desire for tribe to be regularly consulted when cases are screened out by the county to provide the tribe the opportunity to offer the family services as a preventative measure. Families screened out may also access tribal services and resources, responsibility of county to be actively accessing these services for families.*
 4. *Tribal child welfare has equal access to county services and resources. Tribal child welfare has monthly meetings with*

county to establish better collaboration and relationships between teams

5. *Permanency decisions are viewed from a very cultural perspective and termination of parental rights should be avoided whenever possible. Tribes feel termination of parental rights is ineffective and is a way of exterminating the Native American culture. All parties involved must work to understand cultural perspectives and consider influence of decisions made as well as possible ramifications of those decisions. Preservation of culture is key.*
 6. *When children are unable to be reunified with parents it is the County's responsibility to find tribal placements to do what is best for the child while maintaining the child's cultural identity whenever possible.*
 7. *Langlade County has been a good partner to Sokaogon Chippewa Indian Child Welfare with good communication and collaboration.*
 8. *One area to continue to focus on is that of screening – to ensure that screening reports get to the tribe within 2 hours and also that at initial intake, questions of tribal affiliation are being completed in a comprehensive way to ensure that families are being offered services and support in ways that allows cultural identity to be preserved and honored tribal resources are able to be accessed.*
- **Cross System Collaboration Between CPS and the Judicial System**
 - i. *Key stakeholders in both the CPS and judicial systems were interviewed and the following themes and perspectives were reported:*
 1. *CHIPS cases are prosecuted by the assistant district attorney and all social workers and case managers share responsibility for CHIPS cases.*
 2. *Child welfare cases are scheduled to be processed every Monday morning from 830 to 1130 and also one Friday a month from 130 to 430 to cover any cases that were not able to be processed during the scheduled Monday time. Often cases are delayed and not processed within 30 days as CPS standard suggests. Stakeholders report that parents are typically okay with this as it offers them an opportunity to stabilize their family unit &/or prepare further. Court schedules are routinely adjusted to accommodate required hearings to take place in a timely manner.*
 3. *Judge considers progress made by parents over course of the case and if conditions are being met by parents. Judge asks for an explanation and update from parents and social workers on the following items: why children have not been returned to their care, what parents are doing to get children back to care, conditions being met by parents, wellbeing of children, and reunification or permanency status.*
 4. *There is a history of parental notices not being provided to parents by responsible party which has caused issues and delays in court. Stakeholders are adjusting current process*

to ensure this issue is resolved. Stakeholders have improvised and innovated to deliver paperwork to allow court to proceed.

5. *Judge sometimes forgets to read TPR warning but does so when reminded by ADA and/or clerk.*
6. *Permanency hearing are made a priority but often feel routine and rushed at times.*
7. *Social workers are not receiving appropriate respect in court. Judge makes remarks to build rapport with parents while not considering that such remarks promote the distrust of social workers and also ruins the credibility of social workers in the courtroom and in day to day work with families.*
8. *Judge is very willing to appoint attorneys to parents when necessary and appropriate, and encourages this.*
9. *The CFS unit reports feeling very supported by ADA. The department and ADA have weekly staffing. ADA is very accessible to the department even outside of ADA's part-time work schedule.*
10. *Social workers noted that the lack of court calendar availability for scheduling cases is a concern. Many times a case might be dragged out due to scheduling issues and conflicts. The lack of having more than one judge makes it difficult for cases to be closed quickly. There is also concern that there is inconsistency in court rulings.*

- 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).

- *Tracy Chernetski, CPS Supervisor, participates in Langlade County's Child Death Review team as the co-chair. This team meets quarterly to review fatalities of individuals aged 0 to 25.*
- *The CPS unit also restructured their team in 2019 to implement a full time foster care coordinator to equal a 1.5 position for the county. This change will allow the county to recruit and license foster homes in a more timely manner.*
- *The foster care coordinators also established a foster care support group which meets monthly. These meetings provide updates, information, and policies that providers should know. The group also offers time for providers to ask any question to CPS staff. A meal and childcare is also offered.*

III. RECOMMENDATIONS:

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

- a. *The panel would recommend that in order to strengthen communication and the relationship between CPS and the Judicial System, regular meetings occur between the decision makers and leaders in these systems. To include, Judge, CPS, and DA's office.*
 - b. *District Court Administrator offer and encourage opportunity for Judge to shadow other Children's Court Judges and complete Children's Court Training to strengthen knowledge and understanding of children and family court as well as Child Welfare System.*
 - c. *Consideration for additional funding for second judge to help process through rising number of child welfare cases in a timely manner.*
 - d. *County CPS staff regularly consult with Tribal Child Welfare agencies on screened out cases to determine if families can be supported by tribal services or resources.*
3. Please list any additional information or comments that the panel wishes to share.
- a. *The Panel does not have any additional information or comments.*

Current Membership List

Tracy Chernetski, Langlade County Department of Social Services

Stephanie Fassbender, Children's Hospital of Wisconsin Community Services

Chrissy Hegewald, Department of Children and Families

Heidi Preul, Unified School District of Antigo

Jamie Roth, Langlade County Health Department

Kyle Schilling, Antigo Police Department / Unified School District of Antigo

Angela Wickesheim, White Lake School District

Debbie Witman, Aspirus Langlade Hospital