



**2019**  
**Wisconsin Citizen Review Panel**  
**Annual Report**

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

NAME OF PANEL:	<b>Citizen Review Panel Serving Outagamie County</b>
CONTACT PERSON:	<b>Connie Raether, Panel Co-Chair</b>

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;** The CRP meets bi-monthly the first Wednesday of the month from 11:30-1:00. In addition, we hold two case reviews, one in February and one in October.
  - b. **The frequency and type of any subcommittee and workgroup meetings.** We have 5 task groups; Period of Purple Crying, Social Work Support, Guardian ad Litem, Outreach, and Website/Facebook.

**Period of Purple Crying:** CRP members met with the local federally qualified health center, Partnership Health Center. After a training on sentinel injuries that was facilitated by the colleague of one of our CRP members, they have agreed to use Period of Purple crying in their practice. The CRP's shaken baby doll (doll whose head lights up if shaken) will be lent to Partnership for their use. The task group is considering offering a training on sentinel injuries to social workers and medical professionals. The task group will continue talking with other clinics about Period of Purple.

**Social Work Support:** After the CRP Social Work Support Task Group led focus groups with Outagamie County social workers in 2017, it was determined that there were some issues that were leading to turnover. The findings were discussed with the Division of Children, Youth and Families (CYF) management and as a result, a consulting group, Blue Spiral Consulting, was hired to assist in working on the issues. CYF formed the Retention and Resiliency (R and R) group. Two members of the CRP serve on that committee and Co-Chair Larry

Creamer serves on the R and R Sponsorship Committee. The Sponsorship Committee is responsible for ensuring that the recommendations brought forth are implemented if at all possible. The R and R team meets monthly. They are focusing on improving the culture in the Division, especially in the area of making sure employees feel comfortable speaking up, trusting, practicing self awareness and learning how people feel valued. All Division employees participated in the Real Colors training and they are working on implementing the learnings from the training. The sentiment among workers is that this 2 year long process has been instrumental in improving relationships among Division staff. The CRP has also funded some of the work of Blue Spiral.

**Guardian Ad Litem (GAL) Task Group.** Several years ago, the GAL Task Group developed a brochure that was to go out to parents who have children in the system so they are aware that their child has a GAL and know what they should expect of that person. It was determined that the brochure needed updating, so the GAL Task Group updated the brochure. They are now looking at ways to ensure that it gets in the hands of people who need it. They have also developed a survey that will be sent electronically to as many people as possible who are involved in the child welfare system, ie. biological parents, lawyers, foster parents, judges, school professionals, etc. The survey has questions not only about GALs but about the child welfare system and processes.

Once the results are tabulated, team will review and chunk out the issues that need attention and see if there are ways the CRP can assist

**Outreach:** The Outreach Task Group worked with the Boys and Girls Club of the Fox Cities to plan a “Pinwheels for Prevention” event for Child Abuse and Neglect Prevention Month. It was held at the Club on April 4. The Outagamie County Executive spoke and the children planted 240 pinwheels. Media was present. The Task Group is looking for ways to partner with a local child prevention agency to hold other events.

**Facebook and Website:** The CRP has a website (<http://www.crpofoc.org/>) and a facebook page (<https://www.facebook.com/outagamieCRP/>) CRP members are encouraged to post and share information.

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.** The CRP maintains a website and facebook page. The Pinwheels for Prevention event was one event sponsored by our CRP.
3. **Please describe any case reviews conducted by the panel in 2019.**

**The first case review was conducted in February. The case was one in which children were in care for much longer than the law allows. Issues that surfaced were**

- Need for more legal training for social workers or a paralegal on staff
- Lack of attorneys willing to take TPR cases
- Need for more support for foster parents
- Lack of contact with GALs
- Cases bumped for criminal cases
- Lack of enough district attorneys

- TPR supposed to happen after 15 out of 22 months
- Lack of court time
- Difficulty scheduling court due to attorney schedules/vacations/etc.
- changing workers, DAs and judges
- difficulties due to incarceration of the parents

Since this case, the DAs will now be drafting TPRs, not workers, and there are two new DAs and one new paralegal.

**The second case review was conducted in October. This case involved a successful family reunification. Issues that surfaced were:**

- Worker knowledge of the recovery community is vital
- Grandparent participation is important
- Commitment of parents to each other helped in the reunification
- No parenting program at Oshkosh Correctional
- Local methadone clinic is for profit and not cooperative with the Division
- Good relationship between client's probation officer and social worker was beneficial
- A unique "outside of the box" ruling by the judge allowed a trial reunification with mom moving home
- Involvement with home consultant very helpful
- Lack of housing for people with prison records makes reunification difficult

4. **Please summarize any other panel activities or panel events that took place in 2019.** One member of the CRP testified at the Outagamie County Budget Hearing requesting more funding for child welfare services. Six members participated in the Statewide CRP meeting in October. Two members attended the National CRP Conference in June.

- 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.

**STATE:** 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).

**Training for Guardians ad Litem;** GALs are required to complete training under Supreme Court Rule

Chapter 35: <https://www.wicourts.gov/sc/scrule/DisplayDocument.pdf?content=pdf&seqNo=1078>. The CLE credits are self-reported by each attorney to the Board of Bar Examiners (BBE).

Everyone sponsoring the training will have records of the sign-in sheets in the event BBE needs to confirm an attorney's attendance. In addition, when an attorney takes a GAL appointment, circuit court form JD-1798B has a place for the attorney to affirm that he/she is in compliance with Supreme Court Rule 35.01. Each training is different as far as any testing, polling, or surveys involved. The CCIP E-Learning online training modules have a Test Your Knowledge section at the end of each learning activity, but the results are not tracked.

The Children's Court Improvement Program offers several training events for judges, attorneys, social workers, and other stakeholders. Many of the training events are open to guardians ad

litem and have been approved for GAL-Minor continuing legal education (CLE) credits. For example: Conference on Child Welfare and the Courts: A 2½ day conference held biennially. It is co-sponsored by CCIP and the Department of Children and Families. It is a multi-disciplinary training covering issues that impact both the child welfare and the court systems.

Together for Children Conference: This annual conference is organized by Prevent Child Abuse Wisconsin through the Children's Hospital of Wisconsin: <https://chw.org/childrens-and-the-community/community-partners-professionals/child-abuse-prevention/prevent-child-abuse-wisconsin/together-for-children-conference>. The Children's Court Improvement Plan provides some financial support with the requirement that the conference qualify for CLE credits, including at least one attorney ethics session. The conference is multi-disciplinary and attendees include attorneys, social workers, school personnel, law enforcement, and child advocates.

The Children's Court Improvement Plan also provides training for guardians ad litem and other stakeholders throughout the state, including multiple training sessions on the Wisconsin Indian Child Welfare Act and Child Safety Decision-Making. There were two Child Welfare Law Orientation for Attorneys seminars in 2019 with two additional seminars planned for 2020. There have been trainings in the past that covered early child, child, and/or adolescent development, but it is not covered in every training.

Finally, while GALs and other attorneys cannot earn CLE credits, the CCIP E-Learning Project is available as a resource: [www.wicciptraining.com](http://www.wicciptraining.com). It is a tool that GALs can use at any time to obtain information on conducting key court hearings in child welfare cases, including statutory requirements, applicable case law, and recommended best practices. There are currently a total of 19 learning activities falling under the following three categories: child in need of protection or services (CHIPS), termination of parental rights (TPR), and specialty topics. In addition, the State Bar of Wisconsin also holds an annual GAL Training. The training is not required by the Children's Court Improvement Program.

**Cross System Collaboration Between CPS and Tribal Child Welfare Agencies :** The Children's Court Improvement Plan provides training for guardians ad litem and other stakeholders throughout the state, including multiple training sessions on the Wisconsin Indian Child Welfare Act and Child Safety Decision-Making.

#### LOCAL

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:**

Outagamie County primarily collaborates with the Oneida tribe. There is an agreement in process between the county and the tribe. It has been approved and will soon be signed. This will implement act 161 and will improve systems and establish procedures that will enhance collaboration. Both representatives from Outagamie County and from the Oneida tribe expressed that there has been great collaboration and they both feel that the agreement will make things even better. They estimate that about 22 children each year are involved. After the agreement is signed, Oneida will have their own children's court, which will give them sovereign responsibility. They will still need to collaborate with the county as children are tribal residents as well as county residents. This will result in more conversations and collaboration between tribes and counties.

Both representatives from Outagamie County and from the Oneida Tribe expressed the need for more opportunities for their teams to get together. There is also a need to be more clear in the process as children move through the system. Both feel that the other is operating in the best interest of the child, but realize that sometimes perceptions are different. After the agreement is signed, they will be more equal partners. There is a chance that there will be some disagreements as this agreement moves forward, but as long as they continue their relationship, they see that this will not be a problem. Both feel that they have similar views re: reunification of families.

**Training for Guardians ad Litem:** Judge Greg Gill is responsible for the GALs in the county. He stated they are required to go through a training to be certified as a GAL unless they meet certain exceptions (none of them meet those exceptions at this time.) They also need a certain number of hours annually to renew their certification. He does not require any type of proof that GALs complete their training. He does annual performance based reviews. Locally, we contacted our GALs and two responded. They replied that they have had specialized training in early child development, child development and adolescent development. One GAL responded that he had taken seminars through the State Bar of Wisconsin as well as local Bar Associations, the Fox Valley Tech and private providers such as Pinnacle. Regarding proof of completion, this was one response: Attorneys are required to attend a minimum of 30 hours of continuing legal education every two years and to report the details of those classes to the State Bar of Wisconsin in order to maintain their license to practice law. When Judge Gill contracts with the GAL he must note in a check box that they are current in their licensing requirements, or that they have enough practical experience to meet minimum standards. Currently there is a lifetime cap of 30 hours of required GAL legal training since 1/1/1995. Both respondents felt their training was adequate.

#### **RECOMMENDATIONS:**

1. **Please list any panel recommendations to improve child protection services at the State level.** Both representatives from Outagamie County and from the Oneida Tribe request that tribal social workers be allowed to enter information into EWISACWIS as they feel that would be very helpful. At this point they can only enter case notes, but no plans. The CRP agrees that this would be a great step forward in improving child protection services.

Based on our case reviews, there is a need for more legal training for social workers and more support for foster parents, which could be provided by the state. In addition, increased funding for more child protection workers would help with reducing turnover. Staff turnover is one of the reasons children stay in out of home care longer than they should. Increased funding would provide for more workers.

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

Social Workers need more knowledge of the substance use recovery community so they can refer to appropriate resources. More district attorneys and attorneys willing/able to represent parents in TPR cases and more court time would help reduce the backlog of cases and help children achieve permanency.

**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 both documents to Alicia Breininger at [alicia.breininger@wisconsin.gov](mailto:alicia.breininger@wisconsin.gov) **no later than January 31, 2020.**

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> not later than six months after receipt of each report. Thank you.