



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

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

<b>NAME OF PANEL:</b>	<b>Polk County Citizen Review Panel</b>
<b>CONTACT PERSON:</b>	<b>Betsy Byker, Panel Coordinator</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.
    - i. Polk County CRP meets monthly as a full panel for one hour (60 minutes). These meetings usually occur the first Thursday of every month from 8:00am until 9:00am. The panel met 11 of 12 months in 2019.
  - b. The frequency and type of any subcommittee and workgroup meetings:
    - i. Subcommittees were formed to provide case reviews and event planning committees. Subcommittees met approximately 3-4 times in 2019
  
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. April 2019 – Polk County CRP financially supported two professional development presentations at St. Croix Falls High School by Mark Yarbrough, nationally known speaker on burn out and compassion fatigue. There were two presentations and the invitation to attend was given to school staff, local providers (mental health and medical), and county employees. More than 180 employees from multiple disciplines across the county attended the trainings. The feedback that was provided was exceptional and much appreciated by those that attended.

- b. June 2019 – Polk County CRP supported a foster care outing with the Polk County foster Care Department to Fawn-Doe-Rosa animal Farm. This outing was for foster and bio parents and their children. 13 foster and bio families and 45 children attended this event.
  - c. September 2019 – Polk County CRP panel members cleaned and organized the visitation rooms at the county. The CRP bought new toys and supplies including a vacuum. Feedback provided by county workers and those who utilize the rooms was positive and the updated supplies, organization, and cleanliness of the rooms was much appreciated. This allows for more productive and welcoming visits between children and family members.
3. Please describe any case reviews conducted by the panel in 2019.

Polk County CRP did not complete case reviews in 2019 due to the state of influx at the county level. Polk County was operating without a Director for most of the year. Additionally, turn over with social workers was significant. Polk County has a case review scheduled for January 22<sup>nd</sup> at 11:30am.

4. Please summarize any other panel activities or panel events that took place in 2019.
- a. Focus was given to increasing the number of panel members as two members resigned in the early part of the year. One new panel member, Brent Waak, Polk County Sheriff, joined the panel in February 2019. Polk County CRP also added two county panel members, Leigh Wahlen and Peggy Gilbertson.
  - b. Sponsored 11 individuals to attend the National DEC conference in July 2019. As a requirement to have a sponsorship/conference admission paid for, a commitment to attend a follow-up meeting on August 1<sup>st</sup> occurred. We had 15 individuals attend the follow-up meeting to discuss the past, present, and future goals of DEC in Polk County regarding policy, procedure, and leadership.
  - c. Provided support and gifts of recognition to the Child Protection and Juvenile Justice Social Workers and Parent Support Workers.
  - d. Sent one panel member to the State CRP Conference in October.
  - e. Sponsored one Polk County Family Support Worker in attending an Infant Mental Health conference.
- 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 Health Care Professionals

The state has mandated that all substantiated reports for children under the age of 3 will be automatically referred to Birth to 3 for evaluation. This was already policy in Polk County; however, data systems are now in place to improve the process. Chapter 56 also mandates that all children who go into foster care have a well child exam within a specified amount of time.

- Training for CPS Caseworkers

The State provides guidelines under Chapter 43 for orientation training for new County CPS employees. The county pays for that training at a discounted rate.

Special Note:

If you wish to review any portion of the State CAPTA Plan and its most recent updates in formulating your response, a copy of the Plan is attached to this report, and the 2019 updates are available through the following link:

<https://dcf.wisconsin.gov/files/cqi-cfsr/pdf/plans/2015-2019-cfs-report-draft.pdf> (see pages 107-113). 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>.

- 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).

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 Health Care Professionals

Under the Polk County Community Services Division model, the Public Health, Department of Children and Families, and Behavioral Health have formally integrated into an efficient, holistic model for better healthcare programming for the citizens of Polk County.

Of note, a centralized services model has allowed for more seamless referrals, better information sharing, and enhanced continuity of care between programs. By breaking down the siloed walls of programming, services such as Child Protection have been better able to coordinate and integrate with other relevant programs such as Birth to Three, WIC, Public Health Nursing and Behavioral Health, to name a few. Program staffing's are now regularly attended by partner programs, ensuring tighter alignment of services, elimination of redundancy, and better overall care.

It has been policy for some time now in Polk County that all children below the age of 3 years brought into the CPS system through substantiation will receive an assessment through county Birth to 3 services.

Polk County has for many years contracted and collaborated with local home visiting services to provide in-home parent education and family well-being services. Health outcomes are shown to be more positive for families who engage in long-term home visiting services.

- Training for CPS Caseworkers

In house trainings are provided every 2 years in compliance with licensure requirements for social workers. In addition, child welfare workers have 2 years to complete 15 days of required foundation courses. These courses focus on safety, engaging and building trusting relationships, case practice with American Indian Tribes, Trauma-informed Care, placement, family interactions and permanency.

- 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).

### III. RECOMMENDATIONS:

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

The Polk County Citizen Review Panel recommends the following;

1. The current rule on relative placement through ICPC be changed to allow county workers to place with fit and willing relatives in other states prior to the completion of the ICPC process.
2. Allow tribes to have full access to eWISACWIS so they can complete needed case notes and case work.

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

After Wisconsin caseload study is complete, Polk County citizen Review Panels recommend that CPS workers caseload will reflect the outcomes of the study.

2. 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.