



**2020**

**Wisconsin Citizen Review Panel  
Annual Report**

January 1, 2020 - December 31, 2020

**Name of Panel: Jefferson County Citizen Review Panel**

**Panel Contacts: Brent Ruehlow, Panel Coordinator and Chair  
Laura Wagner, Panel Coordinator and Chair**

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## Submission Information

Please submit the completed report and a current panel membership list to the Wisconsin Department of Children and Families by emailing both documents to Sarah Hanson at [sarah.hanson1@wisconsin.gov](mailto:sarah.hanson1@wisconsin.gov) by **February 1, 2021**.

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### Notes:

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 2020 updates are available through the following link: <https://dcf.wisconsin.gov/files/cqi-cfsr/pdf/report/apsr.pdf> (see page 14). 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>.

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> no later than six months after receipt of each report.

**Section 1: Report of 2020 Activities:**

1. Please describe the panel’s 2020 meeting schedule, including the frequency and type of panel meetings; and the frequency and type of any subcommittee and workgroup meeting.

Due to the pandemic and moving to a 100% virtual workplace for Human Services and our partners in March of 2020, our scheduled meetings were put on hold as this new “work practice” was put into place. With that being said, we were still able to hold three meetings with a mix of in person to start and then virtual as we rounded out the year. Our CRP did hold some “subcommittee” work back at Human Services as the co-chairs worked on items during the inter-session between committee meetings. We did meet on 2/27, 10/7, 12/16 and had to cancel on 3/3 leading to a big delay.

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.

Despite the pandemic, our panel still provided basic outreach to community groups by speaking at Human Services board, law enforcement, Kiwanis, Judge meetings, foster parents’ groups and with a variety of pupil service directors to spread the word about the work of our CRP, while recruiting members. In particular we received feedback from foster parents and schools that we will capture later in this report.

3. Please describe any case reviews conducted by the panel in 2020.

Jefferson County CRP does not conduct case reviews as this time.

4. Please summarize any other panel activities or panel events that took place in 2020.

**2020 Panel Activities:**

TIC upgrades within the Agency  
Gift cards and gas cards for consumers due to the pandemic  
Family Find & Connectedness Project  
CPS & Youth Justice Community Partners Presentation (held on 3/4/2020)  
Heart Math for children in crisis due to the pandemic  
Camp Cope-A-Lot for children in crisis due to the pandemic  
Therapy tools for Agency’s children’s therapists  
Children In Crisis Response Guide – MDT Meeting and materials

**Section 2: State 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:

- 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).

**The Alternative Response Pilot:**

This is interesting timing as AR is being phased out moving forward, but we believe AR was handled tremendously by DCF. From roll out to training and technical assistance, this was a much-appreciated initiative that meets the CAPTA standards and definition. Our panel was disappointed to hear it will be phased out per se.

**Cross Systems Collaboration Between CPS and Law Enforcement Agencies:**

The standards certainly list out expectations and best practice in this area which is a helpful framework. The difficult part is that each county really needs to execute CAPTA and its principals locally from county to county.

- 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):

Our panel was silent on this area.

### **Section 3: Local 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:

- 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.

#### **The Alternative Response Pilot:**

As an agency we held community stakeholders' meetings for AR as part of the implementation process in our county. Additionally, we have met with corporation counsel, schools, GALs, public defenders and law enforcement individually to assure all stakeholders were on board with AR, its tenants and that safety would not be compromised. Our county utilizes AR whenever possible and allowable per policy guidelines and created a Community Response Program to carry out DCF expectation and CAPTA policy around referrals for these families.

#### **Cross Systems Collaboration Between CPS and Law Enforcement Agencies:**

In Jefferson County we have close ties with law enforcement and the panel has been able to hear and see that first hand. At our annual mandated reporter training and "Understanding screening of CPS reports" events we were able to share instances of tremendous collaboration and law enforcement was even able to talk about reporting, screening and investigation on behalf of Human Services. Additionally, as DEC was a CRP project, the panel was able to see the development of our policies with law enforcement and the formation of this process in real time. The panel believes this relationship to be an asset.

- 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).

In Jefferson County our Health Department facilitates our child fatalities and we have often had a CRP member sit on that committee. In terms of foster care, we have a rich coordination with foster care, and in particular foster care recruitment and retention. We would list this as a strength. On the adoption side, we often feel a disconnect with adoption after the referral is made.

## **Section 4: Recommendations**

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

- The panel wanted to explore the expansion of like kin to get benefits and recognition of that as a relative. This was sparked due to the family find effort that we engaged in.
- The panel appreciated the expansion of TSSF and hope that would expand even further in terms of time limits moving forward.
- Truancy arose as an issue as it is a common fact that truancy with young children is parent driven typically and is that something that can be addressed differently via statutes, so it's not so child driven.

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

- The panel discussed the children who don't meet the criteria for a "screen in" and parents are unwilling to engage in community response programming or voluntary services, falling through the cracks.
- Truancy arose as an issue as it is a common fact that truancy with young children are parent driven typically and is that something that can be addressed differently locally or responded to differently.

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

Once again, the panel is appreciative of the resources and freedom to do this work that is provided by DCF. Thank you!