



2020

**Wisconsin Citizen Review Panel
Annual Report**

January 1, 2020 - December 31, 2020

Name of Panel: Polk County Citizen Review Panel

Panel Contact: Betsy Byker, Panel Coordinator

Table of Contents

Submission Information/Notes	Page 2
Section 1: Report of 2020 Activities	Page 3
Section 2: State Evaluation	Page 4
Section 3: Local Evaluation	Page 5
Section 4: Recommendations	Page 6
Section 5: Panel Membership List	Page 7

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 by **February 1, 2021**.

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.

1. Meeting Schedule and Subgroups:

Polk County CRP met a total of 9 times during the 2020 calendar year. Meetings were scheduled monthly on the first Thursday of the month, but did not occur in January, April, and July. Beginning in March 2020, meetings occurred via Zoom due to COVID-19 limitations on gatherings.

Due to projects chosen by the Polk County CRP, a select number of members (3-5) worked in subgroups to accomplish a variety of tasks. There were two projects (Diversity Books and Foster Care Family Appreciation) that required the work of subgroups to organize and distribute materials. Each subgroup met twice. A subgroup of 5 members were organized to complete the annual report remotely due to COVID protocol of participating members.

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.

2. Public outreach was difficult due to COVID-19 restrictions and limitations. However, the CRP was able to complete public outreach through multiple projects that benefited the foster care families throughout the county, as well as local nonprofits and school districts. Additionally, the CRP was able to assess current procedures through the case review that occurred in January.

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

3. Case Reviews

The panel met January 22nd, 2020 to reexamine a case previously reviewed. The case progressed and had recently ended in a voluntary TPR. Panel members were present along with child protection supervisors, social workers, family support workers, public health employees as well as home visitors from community partnering agencies. Review focused on timeline of events and services offered. Case was closed with a determination of "unknown maltreater."

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

4. Panel Activities/events

- a. CRP supported a PIWI (Parent Interacting with Infants) training where approximately 20 home visitors across the county attended. The goal of this training was to create a uniformed approach to working with families. The panel received positive feedback regarding this training.
- b. CRP financially assisted with developing a Mindfulness Room for Department of Health and Human Services employees. This room would be a calming area where workers would be able to decompress during the day.
- c. CRP purchased tickets Fawn-Doe-Rosa, a wildlife educational park, to each of the foster family to support family activities in lieu of their annual event which was canceled due to COVID-19.
- d. Given the cancelation of many National conference and local non-profits struggling financially due to COVID-19, the CRP chose to support three local non-profits by purchasing supplies such as sheets for the domestic violence shelter, diapers and wipes for Head Start and books for the Family Resource Center.
- e. Supportive gifts for the Child Protection work in the form of gift cards for local coffee shops were purchased and distributed.
- f. CRP purchased \$1000 worth of books on diversity, safety, and emotional regulation. The guidance counseling departments of each of the 8 schools in the county received 10 books on Diversity and Acceptance for multiple ages. Head Start and the Family Resource Center received books appropriate for 3-4-year-olds on the above topics, as well as the Family Resource Center receiving 30 books on Safe Sleep. CPS and the local domestic violence shelter received 21 books related to Sexual Abuse Prevention.
- g. Polk County is working on creating a jail reading project to support the connection between incarcerated parents and their children. Books were purchased for this project with the hopes that there would be books at the jail for parents to record themselves reading and then the children would receive a copy of the book their parent was reading.
- h. CRP participated in a driver-though Foster Care Holiday Party by creating family fun night baskets to provide to each of the 30 foster and respite homes throughout the county. The baskets included items to promote family bonding including movies, games, and treats.

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).

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 Professionals:

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.

Representatives of Polk County Child Protection report there is a need for more training in the following:

- 1. State standards and guidelines
- 2. Use of state data base.
- 3. Forensic interviewing,

These trainings have been difficult to find and not readily available in the state.

- 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):

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.

Cross System Collaboration Between CPS and Health Care Professionals:

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.

A family navigator position has also been created to assist individuals in finding and using the resources available.

Because we are a very rural county, the difficulty in Polk county Wisconsin comes from the lack of readily available local resources. There is not currently available a local physician willing or able to provide forensic medical examines for child abuse or neglect. The County has compensated by using the numerous resources available in Minnesota. County Departments have requested from local medical providers, to date no response.

The lack of resources has become apparent in the increase of hair follicle testing particularly of infants and toddlers in drug endangered homes. A traveling lab has been hired by the County.

Training for CPS Professionals:

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.

New procedures have been established giving each worker a training budget to choose trainings outside of mandatory training to meet their individual needs and interests.

The Polk County CRP pays for conferences attendance when possible.

- 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).

Section 4: Recommendations

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

The panel recommends that the current rule on relative placement through ICPC be changed to allow county workers to place a child immediately with a biological parent in other states if background check comes back as appropriate, prior to ICPC process. Many biological parents have been found to be appropriate, however we cannot place immediately with them due to the ICPC process. This leaves many children in foster care when we have an appropriate biological parent in another state.

The panel recommends that the state allow tribes to have full access to eWISACWIS so they can complete needed case notes and case work. –This is still a wish and would improve communication with the tribe. An example of this is that when a perm plan review is conducted, the tribe writes the report, and then we have to go in and fill everything into the eWISACWIS system. If they do not do the report, we are continuing to inquire and request that. Many times, the tribe does not supply us with these documents.

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

Upon completion of Wisconsin caseload study, 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.