

**Washington County Citizen Review Panel for Child Protection
Meeting Minutes October 16, 2018**

“Citizens partnering with Child Protective Services to keep children safe.”

Members Present:

Jan Hayne, Amy Berge, Jennifer Dailey, Gracie George, Key-C Green, Dawn Hyland, Mike Laughton, LaJuan McIntyre, County Representatives Nissa Knutson and Sarah Amundson, State Representative Mary Doyle

Members absent:

Teri Bottum

Jan chaired the meeting, starting at 5:00 p.m.

September Minutes Approved

Guest Speaker: Glynis Shea from the University of Minnesota on “Reframing”

- Glynis comes from the School of Public Health, with a prior ad agency experience. She helped us understand the concept of “reframing” to be more effective in our advocacy for children who need protective services.
- Our goal has been to be spokespeople in our daily conversations. We read in the newspaper about all sorts of negative media on child protection and want to share the good work we see going on. We’ve also volunteered at the County Fair and in library displays. We see a need for there to be more positive information out about Child Protective Services in Washington County.
- “Child protection” itself pulls up a host of preconceived notions and our message can get lost on the listener even before we start. Even strong data points won’t be successful in opening up the conversation.
- One obstacle has been that government media is very controlled and there is a history of Child Protection’s goals to stay out of the press, not to use it to spread positive messages. In cases like this, it’s often helpful to have a partner involved with messaging if we can’t own our own space. Often the space is controlled by who funds an entity. We are not a legal entity ourselves, but a federally mandated group with some State funding that reports annually to the County Board.
- Framing involves a process in the brain, where we use mental “shortcuts” that drive how we think and react. It’s a concept pioneered by psychologists, linguists, and cognitive scientists.
- We can intentionally choose our words to influence others to think differently. This is well understood by advertisers. For example, if we hear the word “spanking” we automatically think certain things. Same with “tax relief” or “unrest” versus “uprising.” At some level it will become political as it boils down to how governmental money is spent.

- It's similar to the idea of "Don't think of an elephant." People will automatically think of the elephant, so we need to avoid mentioning the elephant in the first place. So don't lead off by saying, "People usually think X but that's not true." Because it will cause people to think about X, which is what we did not want to reinforce in the first place.
- How do we describe who we are and what we do? Instead of talking about "child protection" which is automatically associated with bad parenting, talk about the amazing resilient families and the socioeconomic and racial environmental factors they have overcome. We need to move the conversation beyond the realm of the **individual/relational** where fault and responsibility lie to fix it on their own. People automatically default to what someone did, not what economics, schools, public health, government, media, culture, food systems, etc., did to the person. We need to bring the conversation up to the **community/institutional/societal** level where there are factors individuals and families can't control that affect them and they need our assistance to make the community a better place for everyone.
- Words trigger shortcuts and always trump facts. People will dismiss data or debate facts. Instead lead with a personal story or position that implicates shared values.
- Be intentional with the words we chose. If we want a different result, we need to start the conversation differently.
- Make it about the community/institutional/societal factors and stay away from the individual/personal. Stories that talk about these bigger factors are impactful.
- Check Frameworks Institute for different ways to frame child abuse prevention. Look to other groups to see how they are framing so we can differentiate in a world competing for limited funding.
- Check the Collaborative Safety work and how we do messaging in reactive ways. For example, if there is negative media coverage and the response is "Who needs to be fired for this" then that damages all workers. Better to place the incident in the context of environmental factors that we all have responsibility to work towards fixing. For example, in training mandated reporters, don't say "if you suspect abuse, call us" (triggering the automatic framing: Social Workers take away kids). Instead focus on how we all want to help families who are stressed with these environmental factors so partner with family and call social services together to get help to deal with these things that are beyond the families' control.
- We know environmental stressors affect development which affects a child's trajectory. Society/MN/Washington County is not as awesome as it could be because of these environmental factors that a child and family face. We love MN/Washington County which is why we do what we do. Start with why we care, not facts that we have found compelling. Start with the community benefit to engage the community to join with us.
- Imagine the pyramid with **Shared Benefit, Category, and Specifics**. Move the conversation up the pyramid, so it doesn't get down to where people automatically frame and quibble. Stay at what we all agree on and don't engage the old frames. For example, don't discuss how "teen pregnancy" is important (with all the baggage

and implication that it's the teen's fault or teen's responsibility to fix). Start with the shared benefit of wanting a strong and resilient community of future work force. Then move to the category of healthy young people. Then move to what kind of sex education is necessary to make that happen. In child protection, perhaps start with how our future prosperity depends on the ingenuity of workforce (shared benefit). We can pay now or pay later/return on investment. We all know we can support brain development. (category) The problem is toxic stress that leads to neglect or abuse that impedes brain development. (specifics) In this conversation, we can avoid the automatic framing of it's a bad family or kids and they need to fix it. Instead the focus on what we all can do to fix it, as there exist environmental factors beyond their control that we all can impact (for example the mom with three kids and three jobs).

- Check "Brain Builders" video on vimeo.com, explaining that to build a better future we need to build better brains, and its most cost effective to do this upfront by preventing abuse and neglect than trying to do repair work later.
- It is good to get ongoing positive ideas and images out there.

Old Business

- **Foster Care Appreciation project**
 - Panel members signed the Thanksgiving cards
 - Key-C drafted a letter to ask for donations of pizza gift certificates to add to the foster care appreciation. There are 82 foster care providers - 15 families in Hugo/Forest Lake area, 17 in Stillwater area, 19 in Cottage Grove area, and 31 in Oakdale/Woodbury area. An email will be sent for Panel volunteers to use the letter to seek donations.

Update from Washington County (Sarah and Nissa)

- No additional update this month.

Update from DHS (Mary)

- No time for updates this month.

Meeting Adjourned at 6:40 p.m.

<p style="text-align: center;">Upcoming meetings: November 27 (after Thanksgiving) December 18 (at the Bungalow Inn) Check your and your guest's availability to RSVP for the December meeting</p>

*Minutes by Jen
Snacks by LaJuan*