

Washington County Citizen Review Panel for Children's Services

Transforming Risk to Wellness

2019 Annual Committee Report

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About the Citizen Review Panel

Purpose

Mission Statement: Citizens partnering with child protection services, advocating to keep children safe.

The Panel is charged with evaluating the effectiveness of the county’s child protection services and enhancing the quality of those services whenever possible. The Panel offers recommendations regarding changes in the child protection system to both the County and the State. Through policy evaluation, community outreach, and education the Panel’s goal is to partner with Washington County Children’s Services to keep children safe.

Panel Members

Citizen Review Panel (CRP) members that served in 2019 included:

Name	Status
Jan Hayne (Chair)	Current
Pam Clifton (Secretary)	Current
Susannah Barnes	Current
Amy Berge	Current
Teri Bottum	Current
Laurie Gravelle	Current
Jody Koch	Current
Ann Mozey	Current
Gracie George	Resigned - Grad School conflict
Key-C Green	Resigned - moved out of the County
Dawn Hyland	Past Member
Mike Laughton	Past Member
LaJuan McIntyre	Past Member

Three new CRP members joined the Panel in September. Two of these new members are from Hugo, an area that had not been represented on the CRP. The Panel said heartfelt goodbyes to three members in June: Mike, Dawn, and LaJuan. They represented a combined total of 18 volunteer years. We had one resignation in April, another in November and added a new member that same month. As of December 31, 2019, the Panel consisted of 8 members.

County and State Liaisons

A special thank you to our Washington County Representatives, Nissa Knutson, Children’s Services Supervisor, and Sarah Amundson, Division Manager, Washington County Community Services, and to Mary Doyle, Human Service Program Representative, Child Safety and Permanency, Minnesota Department of Human Services, for your support and for keeping us informed about issues affecting child protection at the County and State levels

Panel Meetings

Our Panel met on the third Tuesday of every month, with the exception of July. A sub-group of the Panel met in September, 2019 to brainstorm our Reframing Project and positive media messaging and reported back to the Panel with recommendations. Various Panel members have met throughout the year to conduct reconsiderations.

Identified issues of concern are homelessness/affordable housing, sex trafficking, messaging and education and family/community support.

Panel Members' On-Going Development

- Washington County's Citizen Review Panel Orientation
- Minnesota Department of Human Services Citizen Review Panel Orientation
- Various Panel members attended:
 - Trauma Training at Tubman
 - The 2019 Guardian ad Litem Training Institute. Topics included privilege, diversity, prejudice, etc. The *Broken Places* documentary, a film by Roger Weisberg, was shown. <https://brokenplacesfilm.com/#!/synopsis>
 - The Annual Joint Training sponsored by DHS where we learned about the basic philosophy of the Collaborative Safety model currently being used by DHS, MN counties, and tribes.
- As a group, the Panel also discussed the HBO documentary, "Foster", which focuses on the needs of youth in foster care and watched the following videos:
 - *Toxic Stress* (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rVwFkcOZHJw>)
 - *Building Core Capabilities* (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6NehuwDA45Q>)

Updates from Washington County liaisons included, but were not limited to:

- The Crisis Response Team's (in-house) official start was January 1, 2019. This Team was developed to meet community needs and to better coordinate with partners. Services include adult/child mental illness mobile crisis unit and after hours child protection. The 20 FT and on-call staff are trained in mental health, chemical dependency, and child protection. The CRT is embedded in the Sheriff's Department office. Within the first 6 weeks there were 519 adult calls (age 18+) and 163 child-related calls (up to age 17). The CRT phone number is 651-275-7400.

**CRP members shared this number with their networks to help get the word out.*

- Sarah Amundson presented a PowerPoint on behalf of the Foster Care Recruitment Task Force showing 2-year data on providers and placements. (See Attachment A)

**CRP members gained an understanding of the ongoing challenges involved in provider recruitment and finding good placement matches for kids in the system.*

- New County guidelines (color, font, etc.) for printed materials and social media were shared.

**CRP will need to consider these guidelines in future marketing and informational materials.*

- Great support from the County Commissioners!

Updates and resources from the State included, but were not limited to:

- Governor's budget for child protection.
- Chisago County's CRP info cards were reviewed for possible use in Washington County.
- The National Youth Database as a resource.
- Minnesota Statue 256.01 Subd. 15. Citizen review Panel
- Children's Justice Initiative (CJI) and the Children's Justice Act (CJA); federal mandates for court improvement. Focus is on removing log jams to permanency, screening decisions, and system front-ends with a multidisciplinary approach.
- Minnesota CRP Planning Tool Kit

Guest speakers at our meetings

- Dana Dumbacher, Planning Division, and Doreen Farrell, Homeless Outreach Services, presented the Community Needs Assessment for Housing and information from the Homeless Outreach Team. This included data and statistics on Washington County homelessness and homeless resources for our County. Some shelters in our area include: Tubman, Hope House, Youth Bureau Services, and St. Croix Family. The concern is that we have few dedicated and available shelters compared with the needs of the area. Having a felony on one's record is an additional hurdle to locating housing. Face-To-Face provides housing support, but no overnight options. We questioned how we could encourage the County to create more affordable housing options.
- Joanne Mooney, Family and Community Well-Being Coordinator, Child Safety and Permanency Division, MN Department of Human Services, presented information about the ['MN Preschool Development Grant'](#) and its impact on services in the state. This was a federal planning grant awarded by the Administration for Children and Families in January, 2019. Since then, applications for a funding grant for implementation were accepted and awarded in December 2019. The implementation plan will be integrated across numerous agencies.

What the CRP Did This Year

Facilitation

Kids Club Art Projects with Stillwater Schools Adventure Club. The art was included in displays at three libraries as part of the Child Abuse Awareness Month displays. The focus of the art projects was “Kids Being Safe” and “What makes a Strong Family.”

Child Abuse Awareness Month

We focused on larger libraries (Forest Lake, Cottage Grove, Woodbury) and smaller displays. The theme this year was “Protective Factors” and included prevention pinwheels, posters, youth art projects, and the booklet *2019 Prevention Resource Guide*. Librarians pulled relevant books to be displayed as well. Parent Support Outreach Program (PSOP) assisted with this.

Donations

A Panel member was contacted and facilitated the donation of hats, mittens, and other items to Stillwater Schools from the store Five Below, located near the Stillwater Target.

Reframing

This project was a carry-over from 2018 when Glynis Shea, School of Public Health, University of Minnesota, delivered a presentation to the Panel on “reframing.” We were left with the question, “How do we describe who we are and what we do with positivity?” Because biases occur when talking with the community about Child Protection and are often associated with poor individual behaviors (e.g. bad parenting) and/or government intervention (e.g. interference in family issues) versus looking at bigger picture issues (e.g. poverty, domestic abuse, parenting education), the Panel wanted to “reframe” and focus on family resilience and healthy communities. After additional discussion and research this past year, the Panel agreed to change our name from the Citizen Review Panel for Child Protection to:

Washington County Citizen Review Panel for Children’s Services
Transforming Risk to Wellness

Our hope is this will encourage residents to take better advantage of County services and resources that are offered, to reduce stigma on families receiving services, and to increase community support for the important work done by County staff and the Citizen Review Panel to build a healthy Washington County community.

Increased community understanding, ownership, and investment in child protection

The CRP brochure was updated with our new messaging and Panel name and in keeping with Washington County’s print material guidelines. A QR code has been added to the brochure that, when scanned, will link to Washington County’s website for more information about the CRP and the bios of our Panel members. (SEE ATTACHMENT B)

Foster Care Appreciation Banquet: Several members represented the Panel at the banquet, gaining a deeper understanding of the numbers, dedication, and commitment of our County's foster care providers.

Pizza Project 2019 was a success. We received enough pizza vouchers for all foster care provider families. Total donation amount was valued at \$2,115.00. The certificates were mailed along with a holiday card to our foster care families and acknowledgments were sent to the pizzerias that donated vouchers for this project.

Washington County Info Cards: We were given permission to adapt Chisago County's CRP Info cards for use in Washington County. This effort is in process using the County guidelines for fonts and colors. There are five Info Cards focusing on how the community can play a role in preventing child abuse and neglect, and strengthen families from the varying perspectives: as a CRP member, parent, employer, neighbor, service industry, and spiritual community.

Replicate SoWashCo CARES (<https://www.facebook.com/SoWashCoCARES/>) in Stillwater Schools. Panel member Amy Berge will meet with Stillwater Community Education Director and Equity & Integration Director to develop a game plan. Mary suggested we form support groups/connections in addition to the tangibles offered by the program and Sarah suggested tapping into volunteers through a website.

Reconsiderations

Panel members reviewed 8 reconsideration requests. Of those, the Panel recommended a reversal in one case. The agency made maltreatment determinations in 98 cases in 2019.

Proposed CRP activities for 2020

Analyze trends and offer insight that those working within the system may overlook regarding reentry rates.

Washington County has requested CRP assistance in analyzing a statistically significant number of cases reopening after being closed. This will be conducted through a file review responding to a set of specific questions and interviews with child protection workers. The CRP will look at 10 cases out of a pool of 40. We will walk-through the first file review as a group at our March 2020 CRP meeting to determine if any adjustments need to be made to our review process to make it as efficient, effective, and useful as it can be.

Cultural Considerations; our panel

We are currently an all-woman, all Caucasian review panel. We understand the importance of diversity and different perspectives to better carry out our mission. This past year we reviewed and revised our recruitment literature, agreed on more positive messaging, and identified our approach for 2020 in soliciting interest and participation in our Panel from men and people of color. This approach will include social media posts by individual Panel members and on County websites, postings in County papers, and visiting men's and minority social groups, church groups, and other offerings/locations as are determined.

Effectiveness of the County's child protection services

Sex trafficking

There is a lot of great work being done in Washington County to fight sex trafficking. The County rarely has one of these cases screened in. One of the Community Services staff member will be attending a training this year with a multi-disciplinary team from Washington County. Once the Panel is presented information from this training, our strengths and possible areas for improvement, we will determine if further evaluation is needed as we want to ensure we remain focused on child protection's role in this work.

Adolescent drug use/life choices

Seek to develop a CRP partnership with CONNECT Washington County to determine if we can assist with a review of current statistics and their county-wide education efforts. Data sources may include the National Youth Database, Minnesota Student Survey (every 3 years, can be searched at the County level), and data from the foster care system (every 2 years) that looks at substance use, school achievement, homelessness, and employment.

Training for Relevant Stakeholders

The Children's Justice Initiative is committed to providing ongoing training to judges, attorneys, social workers, guardians ad litem, court administration, and other child protection system stakeholders in an effort to improve practice and child safety, permanency, and wellbeing for abused and neglected children and their families.

The Panel would like to work with Children’s Services to ensure all stakeholders have consistent and relevant information. The CRP is considering a half-day training symposium later in 2020 with a possible panel, speakers, and vendors.

Increased community understanding, ownership, and investment in child protection.

Child Abuse Prevention Month

We will be targeting more libraries with our Prevention Month displays, different age groups (middle school versus grade school youth), and hope to offer some family events in April 2020.

Pizza Party

Although there has been an annual recognition dinner for foster care providers, child foster care providers are less likely to attend than our adult foster care providers due to child care issues. Changing the CRP pizza project we’ve done the last two years from soliciting pizza vouchers to requesting pizza restaurants host a pizza party in various County locations might be a better “thank you” and would also facilitate support among our child foster care providers. We’re currently considering scheduling these pizza parties for some time in August before the new school year starts.

Recommendations

Decrease Disparities in Child Protection

Blind Removal

To transform child welfare, take race and neighborhood out of the equation: Blind Removal, eliminates implicit bias from child protection screenings and decisions. In recent studies of blind removal, there has been a 20% change in decisions over 5 years; a 31% drop in children of color.

"In this eye-opening talk about the impact of race and neighborhood on foster-care decisions, social worker Jessica Pryce shares a promising solution to help child welfare agencies make bias-free assessments about when to remove children from their families. "Let's work together to build a system that wants to make families stronger instead of pulling them apart," Pryce says." This talk was presented at an official TED conference, and was featured by their editors on the home page.

https://www.ted.com/talks/jessica_pryce_to_transform_child_welfare_take_race_out_of_the_equation?language=en

"Broken Places Documentary"

This documentary illustrates how some children are permanently damaged by early adversity while others are able to thrive. The Panel recommends purchasing a copy of this documentary to use for County-wide education.

Thank you

The Citizen Review Panel would like to thank the Washington County Commissioners for their continued support.

ATTACHMENT A - Presentation: Sarah Amundson on behalf of Foster Care Recruitment Task Force

Washington County Foster Providers

2017 Task Force Meeting for 2018 Plan

29 FC Providers available to take unrelated children
5 homes on hold
13 homes at capacity
4 home take only respite
6 homes available for placement
10 applications awaiting licensure

2018 Task Force Meeting for 2019 Plan

36 FC Providers available to take unrelated kids
6 homes on hold
6 homes at capacity
2 homes take respite only
22 homes available for placement
10 applications awaiting licensure

Washington County Placement Requests

2017

6 homes available to take placements
3 could take age 0-5
5 could take age 6-12
2 could take age 13-18

2018

22 homes available to take placements
17 possibilities for age 0-5
22 possibilities for age 6-12
4 possibilities for age 13-18

Washington County Placement Requests

2017

2016 Placement Requests
Total for the year: 166
Emergency Placements: 71
37 Placed
12 No Options
22 Withdrawn

2018

2018 Placement Requests
Total for the Year 105
Emergency Placements 66
49 Matches Found
2 No Options
15 Withdrawn
8 went to a relative

2016 Planned Placements

Total 51
Placed 15
No Options 20
Withdrawn 16

2018 Planned Placements

Total 39
26 Matches Found
2 No Match Found
8 Withdrawn
7 placed with a relative
3 Unknown

2016 Respite Placements

Total 42
Placed 14
No Options 18
Withdrawn 12

2018 Respite Placements

Total 61
35 Matches Found
8 No Match Found
9 Withdrawn

Washington County Applications Received

2016

Apps Assigned 11
6 licensed
5 withdrawn
Homes licensed 3

2017

Apps Assigned 21
9 licensed
10 withdrawn
Non-Kin Homes licensed 10
Average days to license 298

2018

Apps Assigned 21
9 licensed (3 pending soon)
4 withdrawn
Homes licensed 12
Average Days to license 194

New Materials Developed: Foster Care Brand; General Brochure; Teen Brochure; Postcards; Magnets; New Tabletop Poster; Flyers for Community Distribution; and Labels.

ATTACHMENT B – CRP Rack Card



**CITIZEN REVIEW
PANEL FOR
CHILDREN'S
SERVICES**

PURPOSE

The Citizen Review Panel for Children's Services was created with an amendment to the Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act in 1996. The Panel in Washington County is made up of citizen volunteers with the charge of evaluating the effectiveness of the county's child welfare services and enhancing the quality of those services whenever possible. The panel is able to offer recommendations regarding changes in the child welfare system to both the county and the state. Through policy evaluation, community outreach, and education, the panel's goal is to partner with Washington County Children's Services to keep children safe.

COMPOSITION

The Citizen Review Panel for Children's Services includes individuals with sensitivity to cultural, ethnic, and economic diversity. Members do not need to have expertise in the areas of child abuse or prevention, but must be open to learning. The panel is made up of community members with a wide range of backgrounds who are interested in learning and providing a general citizen's perspective and feedback to the agency regarding the child welfare programs in Washington County.

Transforming risk to wellness.
651-430-4111



**CITIZEN REVIEW
PANEL FOR
CHILDREN'S
SERVICES**

MEMBERSHIP

VOLUNTEERS

- Must be sensitive to diversity
- Maintain confidentiality
- Take special training related to various aspects of the child welfare process
- Review records
- Gather information
- Provide insight
- Report findings to the County Board

QUALIFICATIONS

- Desire to learn about the current child welfare system
- Must be 21 years old
- May not be a current county attorney's office, district court, social services, court services employee, foster care provider, or an active guardian ad litem in Washington County
- Ability to listen, be open-minded, non-judgmental, and constructive
- Ability to work as part of a team
- Sensitivity to cultural, ethnic, and economic diversity

The panel is supported by county and state staff, who provide updates and guidance.

See below information if you are interested in volunteering as a panel member.

651-430-4111

