



Department for Community
Based Services
Response to
Citizen Review Panel
Annual Report

September 30, 2019

Division of Protection and Permanency

INTRODUCTION

As required the by Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (CAPTA), Kentucky maintains four citizen review panels (CRP), comprised of volunteers from around the state, who review aspects of the state's child welfare system and submit an annual report to the federal Administration for Children and Families (ACF). Their report is also submitted to the Commissioner of the Department for Community Based Services (DCBS/department) and the state's Legislative Research Commission (LRC). The report is due June 30th each year.

At this time, DCBS is submitting its required response to LRC. A copy of this response will also be provided to the ACF as part of its next Title IV-B Annual Progress and Services Report (APSR).

PANEL ACTIVITIES FOR SFY 2019

In state fiscal year (SFY) 2017, efforts began to develop CRPs in all nine (9) DCBS service regions. There are four (4) active panels now that Eastern Mountain has had their first full year of activities. Additionally, leadership identified specialists within the remaining service regions to facilitate the development of panels in the existing five (5) service regions. DCBS leadership supports expansion of the CRPs to ensure each region can benefit from panel activities.

The Commissioner meets with panel chairs each quarter. These meetings provide panel chairs an opportunity to receive feedbacks and allow the Commissioner to answer questions from the panels. The department values this relationship and prioritizes time and attention to the issues identified by the CRPs. CRPs provide an invaluable service to the department, their communities, and the children and families served within their regions.

DCBS is committed to fulfilling its obligations set forth in the MOU and supporting the panels and their mission.

EASTERN MOUNTAIN PANEL

The Eastern Mountain CRP began recruitment in December 2017 and had their first full year of activities for SFY 2019. The panel identified two areas of focus for SFY 19: safe sleep and membership recruitment. Panel members developed a safe sleep video that was distributed and played in regional medical provider offices. Panel members capitalized on their skills and relationships to produce a high quality, short, and informative video that can educate viewers to the risk of co-sleeping with infants. Eastern Mountain identified an increase in investigations, and child fatalities, as a result of unsafe sleep. A panel member worked with a local contact in the business community to facilitate the distribution and utilization of the safe sleep video to increase awareness. The panel is already planning a training session on The Connected Child. This training is designed to build the bonds of affection and trust with a child and how to effectively deal with learning and behavior disorders. This training will be impactful to any person who parents, especially foster and adoptive parents, as well as fictive kin caregivers.

JEFFERSON PANEL

In SFY 2019, the Jefferson CRP identified two areas of focus: educational programming on regionally identified issues and worker appreciation. The panel hosted the Hope and Healing Conference which provided Continuing Education Units (CEU) and Continuing Legal Education (CLE) for DCBS employees for free and to the general public for a nominal fee. Recognizing substance abuse and its pervasive impact upon the community, the panel wanted to highlight resources and providers who work to serve the families that have been impacted. Sessions included a presentation from Allyson Taylor, Attorney General's office, on human and sex trafficking, the Handle with Care

project, Jefferson County Recovery court, and PTSD and trauma caused by addiction.

Handle with Care is a program where children, whose lives have intersected with police or trauma during non-school hours, are handled with care. The program entails police notification to the child's school, simply by providing their name and a notation to handle with care, and school personnel will respond to the child's needs as they arise, if at all, during the day. Jefferson County Recovery Court works as a voluntary, one-year program that makes weekly contact with treatment and service providers, participants, and their families to help provide access to services. Participants are identified by cabinet staff and undergo regular drug testing and appear once a week to assess progress.

Vendors were present during the conference and provided information to attendees about their agencies and available services. There were over 50 attendees and 5 local vendors. The panel requested door prizes in lieu of a registration fee from vendors, which were awarded among attendees. The panel also sought worker appreciation nominations from Jefferson County Family Court judges which were presented by Service Region Administrator (SRA), Amanda Gehring.

The panel will focus future activities on recruitment and increasing the public's understanding of the child welfare system as well as their perception of the department.

SOUTHERN BLUEGRASS PANEL

In SFY 2019, the Southern Bluegrass panel focused their efforts on substance abuse and the impact upon Kentucky's children and families. Recognizing Kentucky had high rates of child abuse when compared nationally, over 9,700

children in foster care, and 1,600 in the Southern Bluegrass region alone, the panel collaborated and focused their efforts to programming that support at-risk children and the agencies who intersect in their lives.

The panel continued to support the expansion and implementation of Handle with Care throughout all Fayette County schools, designed the “Conversation on Collaboration” to focus on strengthening the community, and developed a YouTube channel that provides resources for stress reduction, self-care, mindfulness, and meditation that can be done quickly to minimize worker stress.

Handle with Care is now in its second year of implementation in Fayette County schools. Chief Martin Schaefer, Fayette County Public Schools, Chief Safety Officer, is the primary law enforcement personnel to interact with local law enforcement to increase participation from Lexington police and the Fayette County Sherriff’s Department, as well as the face of Kentucky’s implementation of Handle with Care. Chief Schaefer presented Handle with Care at the What Works in Child Welfare conference in Bowling Green and Hope in Healing conference in Louisville to interested parties who seek to have Handle With Care in their community and schools.

The Conversation on Collaboration conference is an annual community forum that has continued to grow, expanding to a full-day conference with vendors, presenters/trainers, CEUs, and provides lunch to participants. This year the conversation included a presentation on the Family First Prevention Services Act (FFPSA) and Kentucky’s decision to become an early implementer, an abbreviated version of Darkness to Light, Narcan training, Hiding in Plain Sight by Kentucky State Police Trooper Robert Purdy, warning signs and how to access treatment for teens experiencing substance misuse, and stress and trauma in the community and how to promote resilience and equity in communities. It was a full day of learning that included worker recognition

awards chosen from peer nominations by SRA, April Davis.

TWO RIVERS PANEL

The Two Rivers CRP decided to focus their activities on a pilot project that would integrate video clips from child protection workers and community partners in Kentucky, recognizing their important work and integrating this effort as a key component in the 2019 What Works in Child Welfare Conference.

With the support of Commissioner Eric Clark, panel members arranged individual meetings with 24 agency professionals, answering the following question, "Why do you do what you do?". Community partners also participated in this effort, by creating and sharing short video clips that offered thanks to child protection workers in Kentucky. Three former foster children and five community partners participated (Ricky Garmon, LCSW; Honorable Carlos Bailey; Kim Wilson, LCSW; Honorable Judge Mica Wood-Pence; and Honorable Judge Catherine Holderfield). The video concluded with a message from Commissioner Eric Clark, thanking Kentucky's child protection workers for their service and assuring his workforce of his diligent support. Each interview clip was compiled and edited by DCBS personnel, Chris Anderson. This video was entitled Agents of Change and broadcasted at the 2019 What Works in Child Welfare conference, posted to the CRPs website, shared on DCBS' Facebook and Twitter pages and WKU Social Work YouTube channels. The video can be found here:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eIElCpyFnnk&t=7s>

The panel presented the What Works in Child Welfare conference, as well. The theme of this year's conference was the FFPSA and Kentucky's efforts to be an early implementation state. During the day long conference information was shared about Kentucky's child welfare transformation efforts and how it

integrates with FFPSA by Jennifer Warren, who also presented the employee recognition awards to nominated staff. Additional sessions focused on how staff can better collaborate with experts and integrate these skills into practice, a presentation on the Giving Voice to Kentucky's Foster Parents research project from WKU and agency staff, and lastly, how growing up in foster care impacted a former foster youth.

AGENCY RESPONSE

Citizen Review Panels provide regionally specific support to the cabinet and the families served. Ongoing efforts to become an early implementation state for the FFPSA requires child welfare, especially within regions, to examine how families access services and how providers respond to the needs of those families. The cabinet recognizes the need for more education surrounding safe sleep. The department currently does not currently track statewide data for investigations as a result of unsafe sleep, however, regional specialists identified this as a local issue. Additionally, collaboration with the Department for Public Health (DPH), who tracks sudden unexplained infant deaths, to develop safe sleep policy may be beneficial in future panel activities around this issue. The rise of substance misuse present in investigations and ongoing cases warrants additional efforts to educate the public on the importance of safe sleep. Leadership anticipates receipt of the video for distribution through the department's social media platforms.

Leadership appreciates the efforts of the Eastern Mountain CRP in their first full year of activities and looks forward to their continued efforts. Increasing appropriate permanency for children in OOHC is a priority of leadership. The agency supports the panel in their efforts to host a conference in SFY 20 on the Connected Child Model. Child welfare is an issue entire communities need to be a part of and offering this type of resource to people who have stepped up to parent a child who is not their own is a valuable community resource.

The department appreciates the efforts Jefferson CRP made to host their first conference designed specifically to meet the needs of their community. Gaining input and support from the judiciary that guides and leads the department's work was a brilliant decision and is a credit to the panel members. The success of recovery, or drug court, in keeping families together is a credit to the Louisville community and a positive resource for families who are struggling with substance abuse issues.

DCBS continues to hear great things about Southern Bluegrass CRPs conference, the Conversation on Collaboration, and is glad that the panel continues to present this conference. Identifying regionally relevant topics with local professionals, provides attendees an opportunity to network and learn new approaches to service delivery.

DCBS appreciates the Two Rivers CRPs commitment to continuing the What Works in Child Welfare conference and presenting topics that are relevant to its current workforce and child welfare system. The video was wonderfully done and the department was pleased to be able to share on social media.

The department looks forward to the continued expansion of CRPs into the remaining service regions. The efforts and good works of the CRP within their regions are an asset and a valuable resource to the department and the families served.