



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

September 30, 2023

Division of Protection and Permanency

INTRODUCTION

As required by the Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (CAPTA), Kentucky maintains at least three Citizen Review Panels (CRPs), 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 CRP Annual Report is due by June 30th each year.

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

PANEL ACTIVITIES FOR STATE FISCAL YEAR (SFY) 2023

Kentucky's CRP is enhancing with more focused goals, streamlined objectives, and greater promise to serving its purpose. Currently, the state has five active panels with plans to expand into other service regions. DCBS leadership continues to support the expansion throughout the state, so all regions benefit from panel contributions.

As the CRPs gain more participation from panel chairs, the program coordinator plans to reincorporate meetings with the commissioner to provide open dialog and feedback between DCBS and CRP. In doing so, the panels can optimize the invaluable service to the department, their communities, and the children and families they serve within their regions.

DCBS remains committed to fulfilling its responsibilities set forth in the memorandum of understanding (MOU) and supporting the panels and their mission.

CUMBERLAND PANEL

The Cumberland CRP continued to have challenges with membership recruitment and awareness within the region. Through creating a resource list of organizations, the group's goal was to connect with community partners to work on recruitment and CRP awareness. A DCBS representative attended multiple external organization meetings in the region to represent the CRP. In addition to working on recruitment barriers, the panel continued its focus on supporting other regional panels, such as assisting the Northeastern CRP in promoting the Overdose Response Training event, and the Eastern Mountain CRP's Hope for the Journey Conference.

In the next fiscal year, the primary focus will continue to be recruitment of new members, which will allow the panel to focus on meeting the Cumberland Region's community needs and fulfilling all CRP responsibilities.

EASTERN MOUNTAIN PANEL

The Eastern Mountain CRP continued their efforts on parenting trainings as they aligned with Show Hope to offer their Hope for the Journey Conference again this year. The panel covered the cost for registered participants and provided supplemental books for foster and adoptive parents. The organization limited the two-month trainings to 30 spots for virtual participants, and all spots were filled within the timeframe. The panel has had success with this partnership and recognizes the value it brings to their community.

The panel has identified the need to support caregivers serving children and families in crisis within their region. They plan to continue supporting the Hope for the Journey Conference next year. In addition, the Eastern Mountain Service Region panel is interested in training as parent café trainers to establish the program within their communities. Finally, the CRP understands the importance of recruitment and retention. In turn, the members are committed to expanding their panel membership in the upcoming fiscal year.

JEFFERSON PANEL

This past year, the Jefferson CRP has seen an increase in membership and participation from previous years. With this increase, the panel is discussing ways to serve families within their community. At the same time, members have been involved in promoting the Northeastern CRP's Overdose Response Training event and the Eastern Mountain CRP's Hope for the Journey Conference.

In the next year, the panel intends to enrich Jefferson County families in several new ways. One focus area is to develop a social worker recognition event to better support frontline workers serving at-risk families. Another focus is to become trainers in the parent café program to expand it into their region. Also, the panel wants to build on the momentum from last year and increase the CRP's membership.

NORTHEASTERN PANEL

Northeastern CRP members had another successful year promoting their Overdose Response Training event. The panel increased their partnerships within the community, including Pathways, King's Daughters Medical Center (KDMC) Wellness Recovery Team, KDMC Health Screenings, HEALing communities, and the health department. In addition to appropriate Narcan training at the event, the community had access to other services offered, including Hepatitis C and HIV testing, counseling services, and peer support

through Pathways To Go mobile unit. Additionally, the panel ensured Narcan is available to each DCBS office in the Northeastern Service Region.

The Northeastern CRP also is actively promoting the Strengthening Families Program to DCBS clients as a referral option to those in need. This 30-year, evidence-based intervention program has 11 sessions tailored for high-risk families focusing on parents and their children, seven years old and older.

Looking to the upcoming year, the focus will remain on addressing the addiction challenges within their region and expand to collaborate with the Southern Bluegrass Service Region to host a collaborative first responders training event. The panel is also interested in introducing the parent café program to offer additional support to caregivers. Once trained, the plan is to offer regular sessions through local community partners. Like all other panels within the state, the Northeastern CRP will focus on recruitment to expand their membership, allowing for optimal impact for citizens in need.

SOUTHERN BLUEGRASS PANEL

The Southern Bluegrass CRP has taken this year to refocus their overall strategic planning goals and objectives. While doing so, they also worked on their social worker recognition project. This year, instead of just focusing on one worker for the region, they expanded the winners to include one worker from each county within the region. This strategy was well-received and allowed for more support for workers throughout the whole region.

For the upcoming fiscal year, the Southern Bluegrass CRP has three primary focus areas: recruitment, social worker recognition, and the first responders training event. Although the CRP membership has been strong in recent years, they are facing term expirations and lower membership participation. The panel has set a goal to increase awareness and membership throughout their

communities. The panel also envisions the social worker recognition project improving and getting stronger in the approaching months. And finally, the members are excited to co-host a first responders training event with the Northeastern panel. Empowering communities to help reduce overdoses is a direct, tangible way to promote child protection and serve children and families in need.

AGENCY RESPONSE

The Commonwealth of Kentucky is fortunate to have five active CRPs providing support to DCBS and families within their regions. DCBS appreciates the dedication that CRP's professional members provide to communities and values the continued commitment to the panels. These efforts enhance the goals of the department in child protection and permanency for vulnerable families.

DCBS is privileged to have the Cumberland Panel's devotion to supporting other panels until their memberships increase. Being an active part of a larger team only enhances success for everyone.

Department leadership continues to celebrate and acknowledge the valued efforts the Eastern Mountain Panel has demonstrated by supporting caregivers within their communities. It is a commendable effort to empower foster and adoptive parents with hands-on trainings to help reduce the risk of harm to vulnerable children.

The Jefferson Panel is showing great resiliency in meeting community needs, while also actively addressing membership challenges. DCBS is excited to see the future projects implemented by the panel to improve lives and support its citizens within the region.

DCBS congratulates the Northeastern Panel for once again providing needed

services within the community with their Overdose Response Training event. The panel's pledge to eliminate substance abuse overdoses within their region and executing a much-needed service is an excellent example of what the CRPs can achieve.

The Southern Bluegrass Panel has also had another inspiring year with their social worker recognition project. The panel's tireless efforts in supporting frontline workers and assisting others does not go unnoticed and is greatly appreciated.

DCBS is optimistic in the progress CRP continues to make, even with the challenges for the upcoming year identified. Department leadership is hopeful regarding CRP's upcoming strategic planning retreat and looks forward to supporting the panels' visions for the future. Combined partnership between the two entities will only enhance the quality of work dedicated to child protection within the state of Kentucky.

DCBS is excited to see CRP expanding into more regions and increasing membership within existing panels. The department is eager to see the implementation of new evaluation tools to monitor compliance with the state's overall plans of child protection responsibilities. Reaching out to additional service regions only brings opportunities of improvement to communities in need. Now, with fewer restrictions, offering more in-person activities along with maintaining virtual options should promote greater participation during regular meetings. Integrating panel duties to effectively assess the department's compliance to child protection through policies, procedures, and practices is essential to the CRP's main purpose.

DCBS leadership sends sincere gratitude to all CRP members for their time, talents, and dedication to serving communities and families in crisis. Your individual contributions make the wave of positive change that instills the

healing in so many lives. Thanks to the combined hard work and commitment of CRP members, community partners, and DCBS workers, Kentucky's children have a bright future ahead.