

Wisconsin Citizen Review Panel (CRP) 2022–2023 Statewide Report

Wis. Stat. § 48.47(9)

Division of Safety and Permanence
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Wisconsin Department of
Children and Families

A Letter from the Administrator 3

Structure of Child Welfare in Wisconsin 4

Overview of Citizen Review Panels 5

Wisconsin Citizen Review Panels 6

Overview of Panel Reports and Activities

- Jefferson County Citizen Review Panel 8
- Langlade County Citizen Review Panel 9
- Marathon County Citizen Review Panel 12
- Milwaukee Child Welfare Partnership Council 13
- Citizen Review Panel Serving Outagamie County 14
- Polk County Citizen Review Panel 18
- St. Croix County Citizen Review Panel 19
- Youth Advisory Council 20

A Letter from the Administrator



Thank you for taking the time to read the Wisconsin Citizen Review Panel 2022–2023 Statewide Report. Our Wisconsin Citizen Report Panels (CRPs) are represented by a wide array of citizen volunteers, including those with lived experience in the child welfare system, who join together to partner with local child welfare agencies to ensure that the needed support systems provide the best possible services, prevent and protect children from abuse and neglect, and meet the permanency needs of children. Furthermore, the CRPs play an important role in efforts to promote positive child welfare outcomes for children and families.

The 2022–2023 CRP Statewide Report contains an update on each panel’s work throughout 2022 and 2023 and their recommendations for enhancements to policy, procedure, and practice within Wisconsin’s child protection system. Each panel’s recommendations and the Department’s responses to these recommendations are contained in the report.

The Department of Children and Families (DCF), Division of Safety and Permanence (DSP) welcomes panel’s collaboration, including recommendations for improvement. DCF recognizes each member for their passion, time, and dedication to ensuring the safety, permanency and well-being of children and families. DCF believes that working together to strengthen families leads to safe, nurturing, and healthy environments for children. By improving our child welfare system, we are closer to realizing our shared vision that all Wisconsin children and youth are safe loved members of thriving families and communities. DCF expresses great appreciation to the CRP members for their ongoing work and dedication in these efforts.

Wendy Henderson

Division of Safety and Permanence Administrator
Wisconsin Department of Children and Families



Wisconsin Department of
Children and Families



Structure of Child Welfare in Wisconsin

Wisconsin is one of eleven states that operates a state-supervised, county-administered child welfare system. Specifically, Wisconsin's child welfare system is "hybrid", meaning that child welfare services are partially administered by the State, and partially administered by counties. Child welfare services in Milwaukee County, the state's most populous county, are administered by the Department of Children and Families (DCF), Division of Milwaukee Child Protective Services (DMCPS). Child welfare services, including child protective services (CPS) and youth justice (YJ), in the balance of the state (BOS) are administered by local child welfare agencies.

The Division of Safety and Permanence (DSP) is the state agency within DCF that supports the supervision of quality services and best practices designed to ensure the safety, permanency, and well-being of children, youth, and families in Wisconsin. There are some intrinsic differences in operating a hybrid state-supervised, county-administered system that impacts statewide outcomes for children and families. Within this structure, Wisconsin provides the statutory and policy framework for delivery of child welfare services and monitors local implementation. Given the variation that exists among the 72 counties, this structure allows for the development of county-specific solutions to address the strengths and needs of families and communities. Each county, through planning efforts, must develop strategies to improve outcomes. This allows for local flexibility to identify unique solutions to local problems. While there many benefits to this local flexibility, this structure can also present challenges in ensuring consistent application of policy, and program initiatives. Because of the variance in county practice, it is often challenging to identify statewide solutions that would have the most impact on improving county outcomes.



Citizen Review Panels & the Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act

The Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (CAPTA) ([Public Law \(P.L.\) 93-247](#)), originally enacted in 1974, is the primary federal legislation addressing child abuse and neglect. CAPTA provides federal funding to states in support of prevention, assessment, investigation, prosecution, and treatment activities, as well as sets forth a minimum definition of child abuse and neglect.

Citizen Review Panels (CRPs) were developed in response to a requirement set forth in the 1996 reauthorization of CAPTA, [section 106 \(c\)](#). As such, CAPTA requires each State to establish a minimum of three CRPs. States, however, have the flexibility to implement the CAPTA requirements in ways that best meet their needs, so long as the panels meet the requirements. Panel members must be volunteers and include those who have expertise in the prevention and treatment of child abuse and neglect. Panel members may include adult former victims of child abuse or neglect. Panels are charged with the review of policies, procedures, and practices. They are required to meet once every three months, at a minimum.

Nationally, CRPs vary in design, function, and child welfare system impact. CRPs serve to promote positive child welfare outcomes at the local, state, and national levels. Panels are very diverse in terms of the support received, how membership is appointed, and the composition of the annual report. Some panels do not receive public funding, while others receive funding via the CAPTA dollars that are received by a state. Members may be elected or appointed by state child welfare systems or legislative bodies. The CRP annual report may be written by group members or a designee, and responses to the report from the state vary widely around the nation.

CRP Functions

The primary purpose of Citizen Review Panels is to assist state and local child protection systems in improving services through evaluation, public outreach, and advocacy. CRPs may also examine other factors that it considers important to ensuring the protection of children.

Specific CRP functions include:

- Examining state and local child welfare agency policies to evaluate the extent to which agencies are effectively fulfilling child protection responsibilities.
- Reviewing specific cases, including child fatalities and near fatalities, where appropriate.
- Making policy and practice recommendations for system improvement.
- Advocating for relevant actions that help improve the child protective services system.
- Providing opportunities for public outreach and comment, as necessary.
- Prepare and submit an annual report summarizing the activities of the panel, including recommendations to improve the CPS system. The state child welfare agency is required to respond to this report within six months.

Panels are comprised of volunteer community members broadly representative of the community in which the panel is established. Panels represent a partnership among community members, local child protection agencies, and the state child welfare agency.



In Wisconsin, CRPs represent a partnership among community members, local child welfare agencies, and DCF. Wisconsin first established panels beginning in 2001. Currently, there are eight panels operating across the state:

1. Jefferson County Citizen Review Panel
2. Langlade County Citizen Review Panel
3. Marathon County Citizen Review Panel
4. Milwaukee Child Welfare Partnership Council
5. Citizen Review Panel Serving Outagamie County
6. Polk County Citizen Review Panel
7. St. Croix County Citizen Review Panel
8. Youth Advisory Council



Each panel functions autonomously and independent of DCF. Panels have their own CRP chairs and coordinator. They recruit and select their own members. Additionally, panels determine their own activities and efforts based on the needs of the communities and people they serve.

DCF provides oversight and technical assistance to Wisconsin’s panels. This includes regular communication, such as facilitating quarterly meetings with the panel coordinators and chairs. The DCF CRP coordinator is also responsible for planning the Statewide CRP Meeting each year. This meeting is open to all CRP members throughout the state. The DCF CRP coordinator assists CRPs in recognizing how, where and when recommendations are connected to the DCF Putting Families First Framework, which is described in further detail below.

Citizen Review Panel Reporting Process



Each panel is required to prepare an annual report summarizing their activities throughout the year and provide recommendations to improve the child protection system at both the state and local level. Upon receiving the reports, DCF drafts and submits written responses to the recommendations to describe whether or how the Department will incorporate the recommendations of the panels.

In prior years, reports have been completed on a calendar year basis. However, beginning in 2022, the reporting period shifted to align with the fiscal year and panel contracts.

The following report covers an 18-month timeframe from January 1, 2022, through June 30, 2023. Following years reports will cover only 12 months aligning with the fiscal year (July 1 – June 30).

Wisconsin Legislation

In 2022, the Wisconsin state legislature passed [Wisconsin Act 147](#), a new statute requiring the transmission of the CRP annual reports and DCF responses to the appropriate standing committees of the legislature. This requirement took effect on January 1, 2023.



Wisconsin Mission and Vision

Since 2018, Wisconsin has been working toward transforming the child welfare system to become more family-focused, collaborative and to support children and families in their homes. These efforts to Put Families First were bolstered by federal legislation such as the Family First Prevention Services Act.

Vision

All Wisconsin children and youth are safe loved members of thriving families and communities.



Putting Families First aims to dramatically reduce the proportion of child protective services (CPS) and youth justice (YJ) children and youth who are placed into out-of-home care, especially those that are served outside of their community or in congregate care settings. This shift in the system began when research indicated that children and families served by both the youth justice and child protection system have better results when supported in their family homes. This transformation is focused on keeping families and children together by serving them in-home with resources and services. Consider watching this video, which outlines the key goals of Putting Families First in Wisconsin.

Four Transformation Priorities

- 1 Strengthening local communities + build services to support families in their homes.
- 2 Keeping children in family settings whenever possible.
- 3 Improving our group care system.
- 4 Supporting our workforce with solutions and improvements.

Wisconsin CRPs are Putting Families First

In 2022, DCF began working with Wisconsin's Citizen Review Panels to align each panel's efforts with the statewide Putting Families First initiative. These efforts include advocating for the needs of their communities, assisting in meeting those needs, incorporating and elevating lived experience voices, and serving as a connection point between families and services, as well as communities and agencies. In serving as this connection point, Wisconsin's CRPs are working to spread awareness of Putting Families First, removal trauma, and the importance of children remaining with their families. Some panels have also worked to support Wisconsin's child welfare workforce.



Jefferson County Citizen Review Panel

The Jefferson County Citizen Review Panel is in the southeastern part of the state in Jefferson County.

Key Activities

Public Outreach

The panel provides for public outreach via the distribution of brochures and through sponsoring local events and initiatives. The panel is planning on creating a 1-page handout about the panel's mission, projects sponsored, as well as who to contact to provide feedback.

Case Reviews

The panel did not conduct any case reviews.

Other Panel Activities

- Supporting events for the Children in Crisis MDT team including training for CPS and YJ staff by the Drug Task Force Unit; sponsoring officers to attend the Children in Crisis (DE) National Conference.
- Purchasing training curricula in the areas of Truancy, Vaping, Social Media, Sexting, Healthy Relationships and Life Skills for CPS and YJ staff.
- Sponsoring staff networking, goal celebration and staff appreciation events.
- Community education and awareness efforts: Talk Read Play-Scape; Born Learning Trail; Child Abuse Prevention Month Pinwheels/Banners; CAP Month Clothing for CRP Members; Foster Parent Appreciation Month Bench, Plaque, Banners, and Banner Stand.



Panel Recommendations

1

The Jefferson County Citizen Review Panel did not advance any state-level CPS system recommendations for the department's consideration.

DCF Response

Thank you for your timely submission of the Jefferson County Citizen Review Panel 2022/2023 annual report in compliance with the Federal Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (CAPTA). The panel did not submit any specific recommendations for the Department of Children and Families (DCF) Division of Safety and Permanence (DSP), so please accept this written response as acknowledgement that we have received and reviewed your report.

[Click here to read the Jefferson County Citizens Review Panel Report](#)



Langlade County Citizen Review Panel

The Langlade County Citizen Review Panel is in the northeastern part of the state in Langlade County.

Key Activities

Public Outreach

The panel provided public outreach by creating a Facebook page, sharing resources/information to help those in the community. The panel posts flyers around town (coffee shops, gas stations, restaurants) and shares the flyer online to recruit others to join the panel. Information about the panel was also shared to the Langlade County Treatment, Alternatives and Diversion Committee.



Case Reviews

The panel conducted two case reviews.

Other Panel Activities

- Hosted a staff development day, including training and lunch, for the Langlade County Children & Families Unit; the panel also provides limited financial incentives for child welfare professionals who go above and beyond.
- Provided lunch, cake, cards, and gift cards to social work staff during Social Work Appreciation Month (March).
- Media release submitted to local newspapers along with pinwheels and signage posted at the local fairgrounds to recognize Child Abuse & Prevention Month (April).
- Provided funds for the Langlade County Foster Care Coordinator to recognize foster parents during Foster Care Appreciation Month (May).
- Provided funding directly and indirectly to families. Examples of this funding include:
 - Prevention services to keep children with their families,
 - Implementation of a parenting course to support parent education, and
 - Improvements to the county's family visitation space in order to make it more inviting, comfortable and accommodating for families.



Panel Recommendations

1

The review of and monitoring of certain prescribed controlled substances could enhance both the investigation and ongoing monitoring of CPS cases, especially if controlled substances are being prescribed to those within the household. This is an available resource for government workers in Wisconsin. It is respectfully recommended Wisconsin Dept. of Children & Families discuss CPS staff having access to and utilizing the Wisconsin Electronic Prescription Monitoring Program (ePDMP) with Wisconsin Dept. of Justice and then potentially implement the utilization of this resource in standards and train staff.

DCF Response

There are many complex needs that are identified when CPS is involved with families where substance use is a concern. This can create unique challenges throughout the child welfare intervention process. These situations are often difficult for child welfare professionals for many reasons, and it is often challenging for agencies to develop protective or safety plans when the substance use impacts child safety due to unknown or unpredictable situations that present when there are concerns with caregiver substance misuse.

DCF has been exploring ways that we can develop closer partnerships with the Department of Health Services (DHS) specific to the topic of substance misuse by parents and caregivers to identify other programming or training that may be beneficial for child welfare professionals and the families that are served by local CPS agencies.

CPS professionals currently have a variety of tools available to them to assess the use of controlled substances, including drug testing, collaboration with medical professionals and law enforcement, interviews with parents and caregivers, household members and other collateral contacts.

2

Unfortunately, due to lack of financial resources, some services (assistance with cleaning up the residence in a safe manner so children could return) cannot be provided by the county post CHIPS order due to limitations on the use of Targeted Safety Support Funds (TSSF). TSSF funds are also limited to one time use per year and only on a voluntary basis. It is respectfully recommended the allocation of funds (whether TSSF funds or other) be reviewed to provide more financial means for direct services to families post CHIPS order to assist in expediting the safe return of children in out of home care. The utilization of TSSF funds more than once a year on a voluntary basis could also help more children remain in home (or return home sooner) under a protective plan if caregivers are agreeable.

DCF Response

DCF recognizes the importance of and appreciates the efforts local child welfare agencies are doing to keep children safely in their homes and how Targeted Safety Support Funds (TSSF) can help support that work. TSSF is intended to support CPS intervention that is already required and is not expected to be the singular funding source reimbursing costs in safety planning with families. Agencies are encouraged to creatively utilize other funding sources in tandem with TSSF to help support families. This may include additional sources from DCF such as Promoting Safe and Stable Families (PSSF) funding, or general county funding.



As agencies broaden their approaches to serve children staying safely at home, there may be opportunities to connect with other local agencies outside of the child welfare system to support families. DCF supports collaboration between local child welfare agencies and local programs or system partners, including with the agency's economic support program, to meet the basic needs of children and their families within their community.

3

With so many screenings and investigations without any substantiations, it is respectfully recommended a thorough review at the state level should regularly occur to ensure compliance and thoroughness with standards throughout the state (not just for egregious incidents or child death reviews). Example: After 10 reports/screen outs within a five-year period, the state would review the reports/screen out decisions. After 5 screen-ins and investigations and no substantiations, the state would review. The audits/reviews should also ensure Power of Attorneys are utilized appropriately and not used to close the investigation despite current or impending safety concerns. This may require clearer guidance on the use of Power of Attorneys in the CPS standards.

DCF Response

Wisconsin is committed to the Child Welfare [Continuous Quality Improvement \(CQI\)](#) system. This supports the assessment and improvement of child welfare practice, process, and outcomes at the state and local level. Several complementary mechanisms are used by the state to gather information regarding families being served. The state works with local agencies and the DCF Bureau of Regional Operations to review, assess, and monitor performance with both internal and publicly-available reports and dashboards.

DCF has initiatives that systemically and comprehensively support a feedback loop with counties and other stakeholders. One of the methods utilized is through the Child Welfare CQI Advisory Committee. This committee is used to formulate guidance related to data and information from a variety of sources to identify and understand performance, to evaluate and support efforts to improve performance and to guide system improvement efforts. This committee is routinely brought into discussions about areas of DCF practice to ensure a strong feedback loop with local child welfare agencies. For example, this committee provided feedback on the initial assessment case review process and assisted in determining which key outcomes to review.

In addition to qualitative and operational reporting data that are available, a wide range of child welfare dashboards provide information as a key component of DCF's child welfare CQI system. In 2020, new [dashboards](#) were launched by DCF. These dashboards are updated daily and allow for real-time reporting. Local child welfare agency staff are encouraged to regularly review performance in all areas of child welfare practice.

With respect to Powers of Attorney, the process and requirements for a Power of Attorney for a child are governed by statute in [Wis. Stat. § 48.979](#) (delegation of power by parent). Statute provides that a delegation of powers does not prevent or supersede an agency from receiving and investigating a report of suspected or threatened abuse or neglect under [Wis. Stat. § 48.981](#), the child being taken into custody, an intake worker conducting an intake inquiry, or a court exercising jurisdiction. See [Wis. Stat. § 48.979\(1\)\(d\)](#). In addition, statute prohibits a parent from doing a delegation of power when their child is the subject of the jurisdiction of the court under certain provisions of Chapter 48 and Chapter 938 unless the court approves the delegation.



Guidance regarding the use of delegation of power under [Wis. Stat. § 48.979](#) is outside of the scope of DCF's Safety Intervention Standards. DCF's Safety Intervention Standards provide the policy and principles of practice relating to safety intervention, including assessment of danger threats, collecting information, evaluating protective capacities, determining if a child is safe or unsafe, and taking necessary action to control for safety. DCF's [CPS Safety Intervention Standards](#) do not provide guidance on specific court or legal processes.

[Click here to read the Langelde County Citizen Review Panel Report](#)



Marathon County Citizen Review Panel

The Marathon County Citizen Review Panel is in the central part of the state in Marathon County.

Key Activities

Public Outreach

The panel participated in an array of activities, including hands around the courthouse, foster care presentations, Community Fest, and a Rise Up project within the Department of Social Services. At community festivities, the CRP panel displayed a message board providing information about the CRP. Pinwheels were shared with children, and CRP approved written materials about keeping children safe were shared with families.



Case Reviews

The panel did not conduct any case reviews.

Other Panel Activities

- Recognition of Marathon County Department of Social Services child welfare social workers during Social Work appreciation month with a cookie and thank you card.
- Panel members reached out to 211 to determine if there were areas of support the CRP could provide in the community.
- Supported Marathon County in moving forward with a Court Appointment Special Advocate (CASA) program.
- Supported Marathon County in pursuing the Family Keys grant.
- Continued to brainstormed ways to further get involved and bring awareness to the resources, agencies, and organizations in Marathon County.

Panel Recommendations

1

The Marathon County Citizen Review Panel did not advance any state-level CPS system recommendations for the department's consideration.

DCF Response

Thank you for your timely submission of the Marathon County Citizen Review Panel 2022/2023 annual report in compliance with the Federal Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (CAPTA). The panel did not submit any specific recommendations for the Department of Children and Families (DCF) Division of Safety and Permanence (DSP), so please accept this written response as acknowledgement that we have received and reviewed your report.

[Click here to read the Marathon County Citizen Review Panel Report](#)

The Marathon County Citizen Review Panel made the difficult decision to dissolve their panel in December 2022.



Milwaukee Child Welfare Partnership Council

The Milwaukee Child Welfare Partnership Council (MCWPC) is in the southeastern part of the state in Milwaukee County. MCWPC functions slightly differently than other CRPs in Wisconsin. MCWPC was designated as a CRP for Milwaukee County under [Wis. Stat. § 48.562](#).



Key Activities

Public Outreach

The panel provides for public outreach via the distribution of brochures and through sponsoring local events and initiatives. The panel is considering creating a 1-page handout about the panel’s mission, projects sponsored, as well as who to contact to provide feedback.

Case Reviews

The panel did not conduct any case reviews.

Other Panel Activities

- Supporting events for the Children in Crisis MDT team including training for CPS and YJ staff by the Drug Task Force Unit; sponsoring officers to attend the Children in Crisis (DE) National Conference.
- Purchasing training curricula in areas of Truancy, Vaping, Social Media, Sexting, Healthy Relationships and Life Skills for CPS and YJ staff.
- Sponsoring staff networking, goal celebration and staff appreciation events.
- Community education and awareness efforts: Talk Read Play-Scape; Born Learning Trail; Child Abuse Prevention Month Pinwheels/Banners; CAP Month Clothing for CRP Members; Foster Parent Appreciation Month Bench, Plaque, Banners, and Banner Stand.

Panel Recommendations

1

The Milwaukee Child Welfare Partnership Council did not advance any state-level CPS system recommendations for the department’s consideration.

DCF Response

Thank you for your timely submission of the Milwaukee Child Welfare Partnership Council 2022/2023 annual report in compliance with the Federal Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (CAPTA). The panel did not submit any specific recommendations for the Department of Children and Families (DCF) Division of Safety and Permanence (DSP), so please accept this written response as acknowledgement that we have received and reviewed your report.

[Click here to read the Milwaukee Child Welfare Partnership Council Report](#)



Citizen Review Panel Serving Outagamie County

The Citizen Review Panel serving Outagamie County is in the northeastern part of the state in Outagamie County.

Key Activities

Public Outreach

The panel provides for public outreach via a public Facebook page. The panel posts regularly to help the community learn about issues facing children and families and about events that are held. The panel also participated in the Pinwheels for Prevention campaign in 2022 and in 2023.



Case Reviews

The panel conducted two case reviews.

Other Panel Activities

- The panel has been working with the Youth Advisory Council to develop an “Advocating for Myself” packet focusing on kids ages 12+; they hope to have it completed by the end of 2023.
- The panel has been supporting the County Retention and Resiliency (R and R) workgroup by funding a consultant to work on the issues that arose out of focus groups with county staff in 2020; two CRP members are participating on the R and R workgroup.
- Some panel members attended an event in March of 2023 that focused on the importance of understanding Black hair. The panel hopes to work with a local barber shop to do either a resource list or an event for parents and foster parents.
- The panel spent several meetings brainstorming ways to take action on one or more of the big issues impacting kids and families in the county. After presentations, it was decided that a task group would work on recruitment of foster homes. They worked on verbiage for ads, ideas for places to publicize the need, collaborating with the schools and other local agencies and faith communities.
- The Judicial Engagement Team (JET) met regularly, focusing on permanency and quicker dispositions. The group has made some changes in scheduling cases and numbers are improving. Outagamie County had a pilot project making sure parents have lawyers that was about to end due to lack of funding.
- Each year the panel supports the County staff during Social Work Appreciation month by providing food for their Social Work Appreciation Day, the co-chair hosts meetings at his church and provides a welcoming message. In 2022, treats were provided to CPS staff at their office.

Panel Recommendations

1

Based on our case review, more training for workers is needed on eliminating bias against bio parents and on improving relations between bio parents and foster parents in order to facilitate reunification. More training is also needed to help workers understand how implicit bias may be impacting placement decisions, especially regarding race and substance use disorder.



DCF Response

DCF is currently collaborating with the Wisconsin Child Welfare Professional Developmental System (WCWPDS) to update the current foster parent training curriculum, commonly referred to as the "Foundation Training Curriculum." It is a priority that the updated curriculum includes topics on how foster parents can support biological parents and family connections, with additional focus on topics related to reunification as the primary permanency goal and supporting racially and culturally diverse families.

In 2021, DCF revised the foster parent pre-placement training and the "Building Forever Families" training which is provided to pre-adoptive parents who are licensed by a local child welfare agency or public adoption agency. This revision changed language referring to birth families and relatives to be more inclusive and encourage partnerships between birth families, foster and adoptive families.

In July 2023, DCF merged its contracts for the Foster Care and Adoption Resource Center (FCARC) and Wisconsin Adoption and Permanency Support Program (WiAPS) into one statewide permanency support program, the [Wisconsin Family Connections Center \(WiFCC\)](#). The WiFCC expands upon the services previously offered by FCARC and WiAPS, with a notable emphasis on increasing services for birth parents. For example, services include trainings for foster parents about co-parenting with birth parents and trainings for child welfare professionals on supporting these co-parent relationships.

2

There is a lack of treatment facilities within Wisconsin and the ones that we have are not willing to take high acuity needs children because of the lack of necessary providers as well as all of the "red tape" providers that serve youth need to go through. Staff work with parents who have had severe and persistent untreated mental health and AODA needs since pre-teen and teen years; some start using as young as 8 or 9 years old. There are a few AODA treatment facilities available for teens. We know there is a connection between untreated mental health and teen drug usage. We need level 2 foster homes, treatment level homes, and we need local residential treatment facilities, and we need children to have treatment right away to work on positive coping skills so that children can stay in their communities, in their schools, and can stay in a Level 2 foster home. It is their best chance at reunification and if reunification cannot work, it is their best chance at a guardianship with a family member or adoption. More training requires funding as does developing more level 2 foster homes, treatment level homes and residential treatment facilities. State agencies need to advocate for increased funding with our legislature.

DCF Response

DCF is aware of and empathetic toward the difficulties local agencies have in finding appropriate placements for children and recognizes the importance of building infrastructure that can support as many children being placed in their communities as possible. Professional and treatment foster parenting is an important part of achieving this goal and DCF continues to explore concrete ways in which to expand and support local implementation of professional foster parenting to address the needs of foster parents and continues to adjust foster parent training to better support their needs. DCF is looking at ways to improve both sets of efforts at the state and local levels. Furthermore, the Governor and Wisconsin legislature made an important investment in supporting foster parents through increased rates in the 2023-2025 biennial budget.



Kinship care is also an important component of DCF's [Putting Families First](#) initiative. DCF is committed to providing supports to kin and like-kin providers, as research supports that children have better outcomes when placed with people they know and who know them. To this end, an increase in kinship care rates was included in [Wisconsin's 2023-2025 biennial budget](#). This increase raised the monthly rates for kinship care providers from \$300 per month to \$375 per month. Like-kin are often recognized by children and their families as an informal extension of family. DCF feels like-kin relationships should be included in the family structure. DCF will continue to elevate this important philosophical orientation when evaluating and implementing policy and practice.

Another key DCF priority is to keep children whose needs require residential placement close to home in the least restrictive setting that meets the child's needs. Multiple efforts are underway at the local, and state levels to address the complex needs of children and youth with high acuity needs. The Governor allocated American Rescue Plan Act dollars to support DCF in meeting some of these needs. Those funds have been used in the following ways to support children who need high levels of care:

- [Chileda](#) and [Genesee Lake School](#) have opened new programs focused on children with high acuity that have not historically been served by these facilities. These children often present with intellectual or developmental disabilities along with very significant behavioral and health needs.
- DCF implemented a new portal that will support seamless referral and communication between group care providers and child welfare professionals. This system will also allow DCF to track, in real time, system capacity and reasons for denials of referrals. This will support DCF in further articulating the needs of children that are not being met.
- DCF awarded grants to local agencies who were implementing innovative ways to support the high acuity population in the community.

DCF is working closely with counties in the northeast and southwest parts of Wisconsin to implement a pilot program called Intercept, by Youth Villages. The target population for this intervention will be children and families who need additional behavioral health support to either keep children in their home or achieve reunification. An RFP is anticipated be released for interested providers in Q1 of 2024.

While the Governor proposed funding for the implementation of Psychiatric Residential Treatment Facilities (PRTF) that could provide additional inpatient psychiatric treatment resources in Wisconsin to address the mental health needs of children this proposal was not moved forward by the legislature as part of the 2023-2025 biennial budget. DCF will continue to advocate for increased funding for children with mental health needs.

Lastly, DCF has implemented centralized training for Wisconsin's group care professionals. This package of trainings includes information on brain development and related interventions. DCF and the Wisconsin Child Welfare Professional Development System (WCWPDS) also offers Think Trauma training to all congregate care providers, a program focused on trauma's impact on development, coping strategies, vicarious trauma, organizational stress, and self-care.

[Click here to read the Citizen Review Panel Serving Outagamie County](#)



Polk County Citizen Review Panel

The Polk County Citizen Review Panel is in the western part of the state in Polk County.



Key Activities

Public Outreach

The panel conducts public outreach through multiple projects that benefit the foster care families throughout the county, as well as local nonprofits and school districts. The panel worked with the local child welfare agency to create and distribute a brochure about the CRP.

Case Reviews

The panel, in collaboration with the local child welfare agency, completed one case review. Panel members invited those involved in the case to the table for a discussion. No significant findings were discovered in this case review. The review did result in panel members gaining a better understanding of processes and procedures.

Other Panel Activities

- The panel provided funding to the local child welfare agency to support several local needs and initiatives, including gas cards to support families involved in CPS services, providing parent partners to support individuals in recovery (Recovery Cafés in Polk County), social work appreciation gifts, child abuse and prevention awareness activities for the child welfare agency and local school districts.
- The panel also supported several efforts related to substance use, including helping to fund a parent partner position for the county’s Recovering Together Cafes, purchasing supplies for Recovering Together Cafes (conversation decks, books, and activity packets), and sending several panel members to the Drug Endangered Children National Conference.

Panel Recommendations

1

The Polk County Citizen Review Panel did not advance any state-level CPS system recommendations for the department’s consideration.

DCF Response

Thank you for your timely submission of the Polk County Citizen Review Panel 2022/2023 annual report in compliance with the Federal Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (CAPTA). The panel did not submit any specific recommendations for the Department of Children and Families (DCF) Division of Safety and Permanence (DSP), so please accept this written response as acknowledgement that we have received and reviewed your report.

[Click here to read the Polk County Citizen Review Panel Report](#)



St. Croix County Citizen Review Panel

The St. Croix County Citizen Review Panel is in the western part of the state in St. Croix County.



Key Activities

Public Outreach

For Family Strengthening Month, the panel purchased banners, yard signs and pinwheels. They supported a local press release aimed at helping to educate the community and emphasize the need for foster families. The panel also purchased safe sleep books, as well as books to encourage parent-child interaction that are given out at local hospitals.

Case Reviews

The panel did not conduct any case reviews.

Other Panel Activities

- The panel is working on hosting an educational seminar for law enforcement, DHS, CPS, medical professionals, and other professionals working with children and families. This seminar will focus on educating these professionals on the different types of abuse, neglect, and emotional trauma and the best ways to work with the families who have experienced it.

Panel Recommendations

1

Staff should be provided the opportunity to receive a type of reflective supervision through a therapist/counselor/clinical psychologist.

DCF Response

DCF recognizes the important, and differing, roles that child welfare supervisors play. As such, supervisors have unique training needs to adequately and effectively support the child welfare professionals they supervise. The Wisconsin Child Welfare Professional Development System (WCWPDS), which is responsible for providing training to child welfare professionals and their supervisors on behalf of DCF, offers a series of trainings focused on providing information and skill development specifically for supervisors. [Admin rule, Ch. DCF 43](#), establishes pre-service, foundation, and ongoing training standards and requirements for child welfare professionals and supervisors. New child welfare supervisors are required to comply with the DCF 43 training requirements. Supervisors also have the opportunity to participate in WCWPDS supervisor trainings including [Supervisor Orientation and Supervisor Foundation series](#). In addition, a “Reflective Supervision for Child and Family Services” training is offered through the [Home Visiting and Early Childhood Family Support Development program](#) at the WCWPDS-Milwaukee campus. Local child welfare supervisors can register for trainings using [PDS Online](#).

While WCWPDS offers a variety of supervisor trainings, local child welfare agencies can invest in other training opportunities they feel are unique to their staff and community needs. These opportunities may include local agencies sending their staff to state or national trainings and conferences or bringing in experts to provide specialized training within their agency.

[Click here to read the St. Croix Citizen Review Panel Report](#)



Youth Advisory Council

The [Wisconsin Youth Advisory Council \(YAC\)](#) began in 2005 and consists of former and current youth in the foster care system who provide a voice for all foster care youth in Wisconsin. Youth generally begin their involvement in advisory work by serving in regional councils and have the ability to become members of the Statewide Youth Advisory Council.



Key Activities

Public Outreach

Every year the State YAC engages in opportunities to strategically share information. This helps the members of local and state YACs to effectively speak on their life stories to panels state-wide and locally in an effective manner. They have had DCF join their meetings various times throughout the 2022 year for input gatherings that are then taken back to DCF in Madison. One of those input gatherings was about the use of video recording in Residential Care Centers. By allowing DCF representatives to come to their meetings the panel can provide them with real insight from former youth who have experienced both in and out of-home care. The YAC was involved in a variety of efforts. This included completing a legislative 101 training, participating in the DCF budget process, and providing input related to supporting a Kin-First Culture.

Case Reviews

The panel did not conduct any case reviews.

Other Panel Activities

- The state YAC has been spreading awareness for Foster Care Awareness month virtually on the panel's Facebook page.
- The state YAC went to Mount Olympus in July for an annual bonding trip. This helps with individual well-being and allows the YAC to come together in a friendly setting.
- For Foster Care Awareness month in 2023, the state YAC held a Legislative Day. This focused on bringing a few State YAC members to the Capitol to speak with Legislators who are passionate about making change in the foster care system. The YAC members met with various people in 10-minute breakout sessions. Areas for discussion included the state budget and funding for independent living services to serve young adults under the age of 23.

Panel Recommendations

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At the state level we welcome all agencies to come to our meetings. Whether it be for trainings, input gatherings or panel discussions. We recommend that all agencies do this to better themselves and their team.

DCF Response

DCF is very appreciative of the time and attention the Youth Advisory Council spends on helping to improve the Child Welfare system. We value the partnership and rely on the Youth Advisory Council for critical input. We appreciate the dedication of the members and the willingness to open your meetings to agencies in the community. The Division of Safety and Permanence (DSP) leadership team is interested in attending a future meeting and will be in contact with the panel regarding scheduling.

[Click here to read the Youth Advisory Council Report](#)



Wisconsin Department of Children and Families

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