



# CITIZEN CONNECTIONS

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### STATE UPDATES

## Arizona

Arizona is in the process of forming two new panels. A Strategic Planning Session will be held in March.

## California

California has three statewide citizen review panels: one on the prevention of child abuse and neglect, one on children and family services, and one on critical incidents. The Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect CRP is passionate about lending an ongoing voice to the support, funding, and implementation of Family Resource Centers statewide. The panel is currently supporting the Office of Child Abuse Prevention's efforts assisting counties to develop and implement local prevention plans.

The Children and Family Services CRP focuses on issues affecting children and families involved in the child welfare system. The panel is currently focused on decision-making when children are removed from their homes, placed in foster care, and reunified with their families. At our next meeting, the panel will determine how to study on-the-ground decision-making.



### LEARN MORE

State information and resources are available at [cantasd.acf.hhs.gov/crp](http://cantasd.acf.hhs.gov/crp)

The Critical Incidents CRP has identified four priority areas of interest: mandated child abuse reporting, failure to conduct child welfare investigations when child abuse or neglect is alleged, failure to complete an investigation, and re-abuse resulting in a child fatality in families who had previous contact with child welfare. In California, a large percentage of the child abuse or neglect fatalities occur in families who have had previous contact with the child welfare system. This year, the panel will focus on the processes by which county child welfare agencies determine the level of intervention they will initiate with a family, including the use of safety assessments and predictive analytics.

## District of Columbia

The DC CRP is pleased to announce that Justin Stephens was recently appointed as the new CRP Chairperson. He is the senior director of coaching for a nonprofit organization in DC, and he has a strong background as an educator. Currently, he works to develop teams of school partnership coaches to strengthen family engagement with a special focus on issues of race, equity, and bias. In addition, he has extensive experience with DC child welfare system as a foster parent.

Currently, there are thirteen members of the DC CRP who are involved in two working groups that focus on in-home services and youth aging out of the foster care system. Members of the In-home Care Working Group are seeking to evaluate the effectiveness of services. This will involve focus group discussions with parents involved in in-home care services and social workers who deliver services to these families. A proposal was submitted to Child and Family Service Agency (CFSA) to document strategies for conducting qualitative research in the form of focus groups and conducting an analysis of CFSA administrative data and a cohort group. The final report of the study will be available in June 2019.

The Task Force on Youth Aging Out of Foster Care was organized in response to a persistent problem in the District's child welfare system: far too many youths aging out of foster care are unprepared for adult life and self-sufficiency. This task force was established to play an active role in stakeholder forums and providing input into the redesign of CFSA aftercare contract. A DC nonprofit was awarded a grant to support the transition of youth aging out of the foster care system and

to support teen leaders so that they can improve their lives and transform their communities. The goal of this nonprofit is to guide young women and men through a process of personal transformation so they can become leaders in their peer groups, schools, families, and communities. Program activities are designed to help youth gain skills to analyze problems, identify solutions, and advocate for positive change.

The Youth Aging Out working group is focused on evaluation of program activities provided to young people who are leaving the foster care system. Focus group sessions were conducted by the CRP members to gather direct input from the youth who are engaged in this community-based project for transition. Specifically, information was gathered from youth (ages 19 to 24 years old) known to the Young Women's Project and CFSA's Office of Youth Employment (OYE.)



“The smallest act of kindness is worth more than the grandest intention.”

OSCAR WILDE

## Georgia

The Director for Georgia's child welfare agency, Division of Family and Children Services, met recently with CAPTA Panel members to discuss their draft recommendations for the 2018 annual report. Recommendations touched on worker safety, special unit investigations, child fatality review protocols, and training related to improving multidisciplinary investigations.

Unit Directors from the Division also provided updates on progress toward addressing recommendations from the 2017 annual report. These included changes in safety resources, kinship placements, and foster parent training. Panels were able to share information on the priorities for 2019 that will be the focus of their work. This includes revisiting worker retention issues, improving the identification of maltreatment in child fatalities, and developing training standards for mandated reporters at other state agencies.

## Hawaii

Hawaii's CRP needed a few months to regroup due to changes to their Child Welfare Services representative and department personnel as well as changes in their panel members. Monica Ka'auwai continues to chair the panel and welcomes Crystal Chong-Wong as co-chair. Crystal came aboard about two years ago and was able to attend their conference last June.



“Allow the way to your great work to be guided by your service to others.”

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MOLLIE MARTI

## Kansas

The Kansas Citizen Review Panels (Intake to Petition and Custody to Transition) have been researching the need for Kansas educators and school professionals to receive mandated reporter training, which is currently not a required course for educators in the state. The CRPs will endorse recommendations to require this training with quality and standardized delivery starting with the 2019–2020 school year.

Once membership has been established, each panel will begin working on their strategic plan for the fiscal year.

Panel members also have been working on better equipping social work students on child welfare practices. Several state universities with social work degree programs have been invited into the collaborative discussion as we work to assist the state agency with their child welfare training curriculum.

This fall, the Intake to Petition panel awarded a grant to pilot Handle with Care in Reno County. We are excited for the opportunities this program can bring to Kansas and are looking for ways the work can expand statewide. The Custody to Transition panel is exploring potential causes for the disproportionality and disparity of minority children/families in our foster care system. They are also collaborating with the Kansas Youth Advisory Council (KYAC) on efforts to better assist youth transitioning out of the foster care system. Both panels have undergone concentrated recruitment efforts over the last 6 months, increasing capacity to serve with recent additions of former foster youth, substance abuse counselors, law enforcement and child abuse pediatricians. Annual report preparations for both panels are underway and will be submitted in May.

The State Child Death Review Board released its annual report of recommendations in October 2018. This multi-agency, multi-disciplinary volunteer board meets monthly to examine circumstances surrounding the deaths of Kansas children (birth through 17 years old). Members bring a wide variety of experience and perspective on children's health, safety and maltreatment issues, which strengthen the decision-making of this body. By understanding how children are dying, the Board is able to propose ways of reducing the number of preventable death. Their [annual report](#) can be found online.

## Kentucky

Kentucky's CRPs have been working actively towards implementing their strategic plans for this fiscal year. Specifically, Southern Bluegrass Panel plans to continue the Handle with Care project and will assist other communities in rolling out that program. They are currently in the planning phase for this year's Conversation in Collaboration, which will be held on March 22, 2019 at the Success Academy in Lexington, Kentucky.

They will collaborate with community agencies and partners to sponsor a resource fair that will be held simultaneously with the Conversation on Collaboration. This is a free event for Department of Community-Based Services (DCBS) Cabinet employees.

Jefferson CRP is in the process of planning its first CEU/CLE Conference, which will be held in Louisville on May 17, 2019. The focus of the conference will be Hope and Healing Within the Community. Specific topics include Jefferson Recovery Court, SOS for Addiction, Sex Trafficking, and Handle with Care. The Jefferson Panel will also recognize DCBS workers during this event.

Two Rivers is in the process of creating video clips highlighting DCBS workers/thanking workers. They are also in the planning process of their annual What Works in Child Welfare conference, recruiting more diverse panel members, as well as exploring the Family First Prevention and Services Act and support efforts.

The Eastern Mountain Panel is working on a safe sleep project consisting of a short informational video. This video will be played throughout the Eastern Mountain region via donated mobile ad time. The panel is also in the process of recruiting more diverse panel members. The Lakes, Northern Bluegrass, Northeastern, Cumberland, and Salt River CRPs are currently in the panel development process. The state coordinator has been working with DCBS Liaisons to recruit diverse members in each of these service regions.

## Michigan

This year the Michigan Prevention CRP will focus on seeking input from the public and from professionals working with children and families to answer the

question: "How can the prevention community (both social services and public health) better address the ongoing epidemic of substance abuse that endangers Michigan's children?"

The Committee is partnering with Michigan's Children, an advocacy organization, to coordinate and hold a minimum of 4–6 hearings at various locations around Michigan over the next two years beginning in April 2019.

Additionally, local Child Abuse and Neglect Councils, under the Michigan Children's Trust Fund, will provide connections to families and programs that, as presenters at the hearings, will highlight what is needed and what is working in the fight against the opioid crisis. Other youth and family serving organizations will be recruited and in-depth consideration given to what legislative, administrative, and policy leaders in the community to invite to the hearings.

The CRP's intentions are that these hearings will produce outcomes along the following continuum:

- ▶ Identify important issues raised by citizens and professionals in the field, which provide a basis for this year's CRP's recommendations to the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services.
- ▶ Inform legislators and policymakers about local efforts to address opioid-related issues, such as those of local CAN Councils and other services organizations, to highlight areas in need of support and policy development.
- ▶ Provide facts and insights as a starting point for creating changes in our community values that would support families and children during this crisis and address the lack of social equity in the access to substance abuse treatment.

For Michigan's CRP on fatalities, the workgroup just wrapped up the 2017 case reviews (we review retrospectively). The panel noted that the domestic violence (DV) protocol in Michigan needs more support in order to be fully implemented. There are some discussions in the works for possibly expanding the DV model and involving not just child welfare professionals but any discipline that may touch a family (e.g., law enforcement, the court, prosecutors). The hope is that the burden of appropriately and effectively addressing DV within a family does not just fall on the CPS worker. Michigan is looking forward to a great conference in New Mexico!

## Missouri

The Child Abuse and Neglect Review Board continues with their six panels scattered across the state. Given the amount of new members, senior members of the panel are conducting training during the lunch hour regarding protocol and medical investigation. The Boards are currently discussing recommendations and trends they have observed in the last year to assist investigators in conducting more thorough and complete investigations.

The Missouri Children's Justice Act Task Force is planning its second annual conference, *Show Me a Helping Hand*, highlighting male sexual abuse. Sexual abuse of males is often misunderstood, not discussed, and survivors are underserved. The conference is directed toward child protection workers, law enforcement, attorneys, juvenile officers, and the general public.



“Children are likely to live up to what you believe of them.”

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LADY BIRD JOHNSON

This two-day event on June 27 and 28, 2019, is free to all attendees and located in Missouri's capitol, Jefferson City. We hope to attract even more attendees this year from across the country. Several national speakers have already been secured for the conference. The conference is currently on Eventbrite, and we encourage our

colleagues from across the country to join us. If you have questions, please contact Cari Pointer directly at [Cari.A.Pointer@dss.mo.gov](mailto:Cari.A.Pointer@dss.mo.gov). We hope to see you there!

The Missouri Child Fatality Review Program Panel completed its year-long review of all child abuse and neglect related deaths in 2014. Data was compiled and a completed report will be presented to the Missouri Child Fatality Review Panel at the next quarterly meeting. The report has to be approved by the Missouri Department of Social Services before it can become public. We are excited to share our recommendations once the report has been approved. The panel plans to continue its review of cases this year to assist in identifying trends to assist in the investigation of child abuse and neglect fatalities in Missouri.

## Nebraska

Nebraska's adult Citizen Review Panel is gearing up for a new year of topics. The group was reformed in the fall and has been meeting monthly to develop its rules and identity. They will start working on issues to provide feedback to the Department of Health and Human Services in March. The Family and Caregivers CRP has developed a Bill of Rights for pregnant and parenting youth. They started this project with the foster youth Bill of Rights and added more rights necessary for dual generation parenting, but retaining rights to raise their children. During the next few months, we will be transitioning to a more community/region-based Family and Caregivers CRP.

## Nevada

The Nevada Coalition to Prevent the Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children (CSEC Coalition) was established by Governor's Executive Order 2016-14. The executive order directed the CSEC Coalition to mobilize resources to provide a coordinated response to stopping commercial sexual exploitation of children, aiding its victims and bringing perpetrators of this crime to justice; and to support the implementation of PL 113-183. It also required the development of a statewide strategic plan to address these mandates. The strategic plan was completed in October 2018.

The CSEC Coalition's strategic plan is the culmination of more than two years of effort by a broad cross-section of individuals representing child welfare, juvenile justice, the courts, service providers, advocates, survivors, and other entities that work to end the commercial sexual exploitation of children.

The CSEC Coalition and its working subcommittees outlined actions they would take to meet the mandates of the executive order, with the subcommittees' work plans supporting the CSEC Coalition's overarching work plan.

The subcommittees' recommendations were synthesized to create the following:

- ▶ CSEC Model Coordinated Response Protocol and Toolkit (CSEC Protocol) to aid in identifying CSEC and those at risk of CSEC, and the provision of timely and effective services.
- ▶ CSEC Prevention Resource Guide (CSEC Prevention Guide) to provide a public health framework for prevention, along with strategies and resources that can be used to implement efforts that can be used to prevent the trafficking of children.

The CSEC Protocol and Prevention Guide provide the foundation upon which the CSEC Coalition's strategic plan is built. A group of survivor advisors reviewed drafts and provided thoughtful and insightful feedback. In addition, they shared their stories, providing real-life experiences which are quoted throughout the CSEC Protocol and Prevention Guide. The strategic plan can be accessed at: <http://dcfs.nv.gov/Programs/CWS/CSEC/CSEC/>.

*"I am beyond honored to be a part of [providing feedback]. I never thought I would find a tribe of so many passionate people wanting to help others like myself! I cannot say thank you enough for allowing my voice to be heard through this process." -Jessica Kay, CSEC Survivor*

## New Mexico

The New Mexico Substitute Care Advisory Council is the entity in New Mexico that is mandated to meet the state statute and federal mandates for citizen review panels. We are pleased to host the annual national conference, which will be held in Albuquerque on June

6-8, 2019. Our theme this year is *Rising to Meet the Challenge: Improving Child Protection Response Systems*. Registration for the conference and lodging is now open, as is the call for proposals for 90-minute workshops. Visit <http://www.scacnm.org/2019nationalcrpconference/> for more information.



"If you want others to be happy, practice compassion. If you want to be happy, practice compassion."

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DALAI LAMA

## Ohio

In Ohio, the three CRPs are moving into the final stages of their work for the 2018-19 year. They will be discussing their recommendations at their April meeting and submitting their annual report in May 2019.

The Safety Panel, located in central Ohio, will be reviewing the results of a survey distributed to each county child welfare agency in Ohio at its April meeting. The results will help the panel finalize its recommendations regarding concerns about the turnover rates of child welfare workers in Ohio.

The Permanency Panel, located in Southeast Ohio, has been taking a closer look at the opiate crisis to understand the process county child protection agencies go through in working these cases. The panel will

be reviewing the results of a survey distributed to all county child welfare agencies as well judges and magistrates in Ohio.

Finally, the Well-Being Panel is wrapping up its work around child welfare funding. The panel met with state representatives and local county child welfare agency directors to understand the challenges of funding child protection services in Ohio. The panel also had the opportunity to participate in a webinar with a lobbyist at the American Academy of Pediatrics to understand how the Family First Prevention Services Act will change child welfare funding.

The Ohio CRPs took some time in January and February to review the response from the state child welfare agency to its first annual report since the CRP redesign, to understand which recommendations were well received and how they can craft recommendations for future reports to be more successful. Each of the three panels had some great ideas for improvement in Ohio's CRP processes.

A final update from Ohio includes some exciting news! Ohio is adding two new CRPs in the northwest and northeast regions of the state. The new panels will meet for the first time in March 2019 and will submit their first reports with the existing panels in May 2020. We are hopeful that the chairpersons from the new panels will join us at the national conference this year!

## Oregon

Oregon's three Citizen Review Panels are composed of foster youth, parents, citizen foster care review board volunteers and staff, court appointed special advocates, and child welfare managers. One of the panels is in Multnomah County, the state's most populous county. This panel selected meeting Adoption and Safe Families Act (ASFA) timelines as its area of focus.

The panel has reviewed statistical reports and developed a data collection tool for a retrospective longitudinal study of children who entered foster care in Multnomah County in January 2016. The study will examine how delays in jurisdiction and the way allegations are resolved impact the bases of jurisdiction, parental engagement, and case outcomes. In the coming months, the panel will complete the study and interview three subject

matter experts from the parent mentor program, court, and district attorney's office.

Another panel is located in Linn County, a mid-sized county in terms of population compared to the rest of the state. They selected timeliness of mental health services for children as their area of focus. The panel has reviewed child welfare policies and local mental health statistics, heard from two subject matter experts from the child welfare agency and county mental health department, and developed a data collection tool for a file review of selected children in foster care in Linn County. The file review will examine timeliness of mental health assessments for children, timeliness of referrals for recommended services, and timeliness of service start dates.

The third panel is located in Baker County, a rural county in eastern Oregon with a population of about 16,000. They selected worker engagement of parents as their area of focus and developed a survey of parent satisfaction with child welfare services. The panel hopes to implement the satisfaction survey within the year. In the coming months, the panel will hear from subject matter experts including a trainer/mentor of new child welfare workers and former parent clients. Each panel has been meeting monthly for one hour over lunch or dinner. Attendance remains high and Oregon panels do an excellent job of sticking to the agenda!

## Pennsylvania

The last few months have been exciting for Pennsylvania's CRPs. In addition to submitting the annual report, which included information from all three of Regional CRPs and the Statewide Youth Advisory Board, the Regional CRPs have increased their connections with state and local child welfare system improvement efforts.

First and foremost, the Regional CRPs met with Pennsylvania's Department of Human Services (DHS) to learn more about the proposed strategies for the state's Program Improvement Plan and to provide input on priority areas to be included in the upcoming Child and Family Service Plan. On a local level, the Southwest CRP, our newest regional panel, was invited to join county children and youth administrators at their quarterly meeting. The stated purpose of the meeting was to explore ways in which both entities could partner to

identify resources and strategies to improve child welfare outcomes in Pennsylvania.

Finally, in February, a significant action was taken as a direct result of the Regional CRPs' participation in the 2016 National Citizen Review Panel conference. After learning about Arizona's comprehensive approach to supporting post-secondary education for youth in the foster care system, the Northeast CRP has been providing recommendations to DHS regarding practice and policy changes to better support the education goals of older youth in Pennsylvania's foster care system. This year, in addition to submitting recommendations in this area, the panel also sent a letter to Pennsylvania lawmakers encouraging them to pass legislation and fund a program akin to what is done in Arizona. The letter also addressed the issue of youth obtaining a driver's license and advocated that Pennsylvania lawmakers provide funding to support a pilot program similar to Florida's Keys to Independence pilot program.

### NATIONAL ADVISORY BOARD

Thank you to the CRP community for your interest in the advisory board. Your advisory board of 10 includes:

- ▶ Deb Farrell, Georgia
- ▶ Shelly Bucher, New Mexico
- ▶ Valinda Bolton, Texas
- ▶ Nicole DeWitt, Michigan
- ▶ Linda Helm, Ohio
- ▶ Toni Lawal, Tennessee
- ▶ Justin Miller, Kentucky
- ▶ Tammi Stoos, Minnesota
- ▶ Denise Wheeler, Maryland
- ▶ Robin Van Ausdall, Wyoming

Blake Jones will remain as an external advisory to the board. The advisory has held monthly conference calls since October and, based on input received from the community, has clarified its purpose, prioritized objectives, and developed a tentative plan for moving forward. The



Is your state's information up to date? Please visit the CRP web page at <https://cantasd.acf.hhs.gov/crp/> and send any updates to [cmatriccino@impaqint.com](mailto:cmatriccino@impaqint.com).

top priority for advisory board, based on your feedback, is to build a resource base for the CRP community. The plan is to start by restarting the mentoring program in which state CRP coordinators wanting assistance are paired with an advisory board member who can help them navigate through challenges they are experiencing and/or identify additional resource needs. This will be particularly helpful to new CRP coordinators.

At the national conference, we will be discussing other resource needs that the advisory board may be able to facilitate.

Advisory board operating procedures were also updated. This includes guidelines for circulating new members on and off the board and ensuring that states hosting the most recent and upcoming national conference are represented on the advisory board.

There are plans for a general session at the national conference in June, where there will be an opportunity for the CRP community to comment on the plan, provide input on its implementation, and identify future opportunities to get involved. Most advisory board members are planning to attend the national conference, and they look forward to meeting and speaking with you in June.