



**STATE OF WEST VIRGINIA
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN RESOURCES**

**Bureau for Social Services
Commissioner's Office**

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**Jeffrey H. Coben, MD
Interim Cabinet Secretary**

**Jeffrey M. Pack
Commissioner**

May 2, 2023

To the Members of the Citizen Review Panel:

I have reviewed the Citizen Review Panel Annual Report for 2022 and the recommendations you have made. I first would like to thank you for your continued support of the child welfare system and especially to the children and families of West Virginia. In response to your recommendations:

- Continued yearly contact with the Commissioner or Deputy Commissioner and the Citizen Review Panel.

The Bureau for Social Services (BSS) Commissioner agrees that continued and open yearly communication with the Citizen Review Panel should occur, and I look forward to attending a meeting in 2023.

- Researching and adopting an evidence-based case planning model in child welfare.

The BSS is currently taking steps to include evidence-based processes throughout all stages of child welfare involvement for families. The BSS is in the process of many changes within the child welfare system to improve our practice and outcomes with children, youth, and families. The well-being of West Virginia's most vulnerable individuals continues to be the top priority of the BSS.

I look forward to attending a future meeting.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Jeff Pack".

Jeff Pack
Commissioner
Bureau for Social Services



West Virginia Citizen Review Panel

Annual Summary Report

December 2022

For More Information Contact:

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Citizen Review Panel Focus Areas – 2022

Rebuilding the Panel

The Citizen Review Panel (CRP) met on:

- January 19, 2022
- February 16, 2022
- March 16, 2022
- May 18, 2022
- July 20, 2022
- August 17, 2022
- September 21, 2022
- October 19, 2022
- November 16, 2022
- December 14, 2022

The meetings were held via Zoom until May 2022 when they were held using Google Meet. Meetings were scheduled from 9:00 am to 11:00 am but usually ended early. The CRP worked together to update the Structures and Processes and the Goals and Objectives. A CRP Coordinator was not hired until fall 2022 and was present for the December 2022 meeting.

Case Planning

The Citizen Review Panel reviewed and discussed information from the Annie E. Casey Foundation regarding [Four Approaches to Family Team Meetings](#). The Commissioner, Jeffrey Pack, and Deputy Commissioner, Michelle Dean, were invited to a meeting to discuss how the CRP could support the West Virginia Department of Health and Human Resources (WVDHHR). Currently WVDHHR does not use a specific, evidence-based case planning model in Child Protective Services. Members of the panel discussed issues regarding case planning in child welfare cases such as:

- Socially necessary services providers are required to have copies of the case plans for their files and do not receive them from child welfare staff. This becomes a significant issue when prevention services recognized in the state's IV-E plan for Federal Family Prevention Services Act are referred as the service cannot be authorized to begin without the case plan being completed.
- The Foster Care Ombudsman office has received several complaints including concerns regarding case plans, as the Bills of Rights make reference to them, and case plans are not provided.
- Case planning in foster care cases is an issue as some courts order services that families do not need.
- When case plans are developed at multidisciplinary treatment team meetings, not all members are invited, specifically foster/kinship/relative resource families.

The CRP further discussed advantages to having a case planning model as some of the models listed on the Casey website are evidence-based practice models. By incorporating an evidence-based case planning model, vast improvements could be made regarding case planning within the child welfare system.

The CRP also discussed some barriers, including the current culture of child welfare within the state. Using a case planning model would require a shift in child welfare staff and stakeholders learning to trust families in making the decisions regarding the goals for their family in the case

plans. Other barriers could include funding for significant changes and training in a new practice model for case planning, as well as staffing to support the changes.

Recommendations to the West Virginia Department of Health and Human Resources

- The CRP would like to continue to support efforts, but not duplicate existing efforts, of the West Virginia Department of Health and Human Resources. The CRP recommends that continued yearly contact with the Commissioner or Deputy Commissioner.
- The CRP recommends that the WVDHHR adopt an evidence-based case planning model. It is further recommended that either WVDHHR research an evidence-based case planning model, possibly with the assistance of Casey Foundation, or request that the CRP further research evidence-based case planning models and provide recommendations that support child welfare staff in working effectively with children and families.
- If the WVDHHR accepts the recommendation of researching case planning models, the CRP would also recommend that the WVDHHR research whether having a facilitator contracted through another agency or positions allocated/designated within WVDHHR to facilitate the family team meetings would work in the best interest of children and families and help ensure fidelity to an evidence-based case planning model.