



West Virginia Citizen Review Panel

Annual Summary Report

December 2020

For More Information:

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Citizen Review Panel Focus Areas – 2020

Rebuilding the Panel

The Citizen Review Panel (CRP) met on 3/17/20, 6/16/20, 9/15/20 and 12/15/20. Due to restrictions on face to face meetings because of COVID-19, the meetings were held via Zoom. It was decided during the December 2020 meeting to have the CRP continue to focus on rebuilding membership. Membership during 2020 has not been consistent. CRP members continue to suggest possible members and an email is sent asking each of these people if they would like to become a member of the CRP as well as explaining the purpose of the Panel. The members discussed their recommendations for new members including a law enforcement officer, a member from the Department of Education, a foster/adoptive parent, a representative from Legal Aid, and a member from the WVDHHR Bureau of Behavioral Health. The Panel scheduled the following meetings for 2021: 3/16/21, 6/15/21, 9/21/21, and 12/21/21. The meetings will be held via Zoom until it is safe to gather in a group.

The Panel will also focus on electing a chairperson in 2021.

Foster Care

The Citizen Review Panel continued to have concerns about the number of children coming into foster care and the lack of foster homes throughout the state. The CRP knew that several agencies were actively involved in recruitment, so the focus was shifted to helping potential foster parents and kinship/relatives to navigate the system and become certified in a more efficient manner. The CRP also focused on retention of foster homes and ensuring foster families were more aware of “reasonable and prudent parenting” as it appeared to be poorly communicated to the certified foster/adoptive families.

During 2021, the CRP will continue to focus on issues with foster care, specifically regarding concerns about communication between Child Protective Services (CPS) staff and kinship/relative and foster homes as well as ensuring that foster homes and kinship/relative homes are aware of supports and resources in their communities and throughout the state. The CRP will be looking at doing a survey regarding these issues or partnering with stakeholders who may have already done such surveys, to help guide the CRP in making further recommendations regarding these issues. West Virginia Department of Health and Human Resources currently has a kinship letter that is given when children are placed with kinship/relatives and the CRP is interested in reviewing this document.

CPS Cases Not Involving the Court System

The Citizen Review Panel (CRP) was unable to focus on the periodic review of Child Protective Services (CPS) cases, where children remained in the home with their parents/caregivers, due to being unable to meet face to face. However, the CRP continued to focus on CPS cases where the court system was not involved and discussed the following:

- The CRP would like to know if Socially Necessary Services (SNS) providers are trained in motivational interviewing?

- During CRP meetings, it was discussed and decided to also invite members from agencies that provide SNS to join.
- Is the training for SNS providers consistent across the state or done by individual agencies? The CRP would recommend consistent trainings be done with providers as they are spending more time with families and may not be as well trained or consistently trained. What sort of foundation training are the providers being given prior to assuming a caseload?
 - During the September 2020 CRP Meeting, it was decided to invite members from agencies that provide SNS to join the panel.
 - It appears that each organization that provides SNS conduct their own types of training with their staff.
- While the CRP recognizes that CPS workers are receiving some training regarding Human Trafficking, the CRP would recommend more training for CPS workers and field staff.
 - The CRP continues to recommend that CPS workers be provided more training regarding Human Trafficking.

During meetings of the CRP in 2021, the CRP will focus specifically on how to provide CPS staff and frontline providers from SNS agencies with information about available resources and supports for children and families. The CRP will also focus on looking at ways to help CPS staff and frontline providers from SNS agencies help their clients access these resources and supports.

Children and Family Services Review Performance Improvement Plan

Members of the Panel asked to review the Children and Family Services Review Performance Improvement Plan. A copy of this was sent to the current members for review.

Recommendations to the West Virginia Department of Health and Human Resources

- The CRP is focused on rebuilding. Any suggestions for members would be appreciated.
- The CRP recommends that relative/kinship and foster parents be made aware of "reasonable and prudent parenting."
- The CRP recommends consistency in trainings across all Socially Necessary Services providers as each provider is currently doing their own training with their staff. This training should include motivational interviewing.
- The CRP recommends that CPS workers and field staff receive more training regarding human trafficking.