



West Virginia Citizen Review Panel

Annual Summary Report

December 2021

For More Information:

Amanda Spencer, CPS Policy Specialist/CRP Liaison
West Virginia Department of Health and Human Resources
69 16th Street
Wheeling, WV 26003
Amanda.J.Spencer@wv.gov

Citizen Review Panel Focus Areas – 2021

Rebuilding the Panel

The Citizen Review Panel (CRP) met on 3/16/21, 6/15/21 and 12/21/21. The meetings were held via Zoom. The meeting for 9/21/21 had to be cancelled last minute and due to scheduling conflicts, another meeting could not be arranged for the CRP.

It was decided during the December 2020 meeting to have the CRP continue to focus on rebuilding membership. During the March 2021 meeting, the panel discussed developing a one-page sheet to onboard new members. Diversification was discussed regarding recruitment efforts. The panel reviewed previous documents such as the 2017 “CRP Structures Process” and discussed focusing recruiting efforts from law enforcement, education, parents with lived experience, adults who were former foster children with lived experience, prosecuting attorneys, child advocacy staff, foster/resource parents, kinship/relative foster care caregivers, disabilities rights advocates, mental health staff, a member from the Children’s Justice Task Force, a member from the Court Improvement Board, and representation from the Family Resource Networks. The panel also reviewed the “CRP Objectives and Goals” from 2017 and discussed updating the objectives and goals during future meetings.

Cydney Fields accepted the position of Chair for the meetings in 2021 and a new Chair will be nominated and elected in January 2022 for the CRP.

Foster Care

The Citizen Review Panel discussed support for resource (foster) families and kinship relative families as well as communication. While Mission WV has kinship navigators that help link families with resources they may need, the panel asked if there is something the CPR could do to support to this need. The panel would like to explore ways to ensure child welfare and front-line workers from socially necessary service providers understand community resources and are able to link families with those resources. The panel also discussed reviewing a letter that is sent by child welfare to kinship/relative families when a child is placed with them. The panel is interested in doing a survey of needs or gathering data from previous surveys to help narrow a focus of what the CRP can do. The panel discussed also focusing on how to strengthen communication between child welfare staff and kinship/relative and foster resource families.

During the June 2021 meeting, panel members narrowed the focus regarding communication between child welfare staff and foster parents regarding concurrent permanency planning. The panel also suggested consistent communication within DHHR Bureau of Social Services, such as from the West Virginia Department of Health and Human Resources (DHHR) leadership to child welfare staff, DHHR with parents, DHHR with foster/kinship/relative families, and ensuring everyone is invited to multidisciplinary treatment team meetings. The panel also discussed transition support for teens aging out of foster care.

Other Areas of Discussion:

During the June 2021 meeting, panel members voted on other areas and topics in which they would like more information:

- Socially necessary services, child welfare policy, and safety planning;
- Communication issues; and,
- Youth transitioning out of foster care.

Recommendations to the West Virginia Department of Health and Human Resources

- The CRP is continuously focused on rebuilding. The hiring of a CRP Coordinator would be a huge benefit to getting meetings scheduled and on track for the 2022 year.
- The CRP would request transparency regarding data from the child welfare system such as: placement stability; length of service of foster parents; services provided to caregivers and children; reasons for entry into foster care; number of youth who age out of foster care; number of youth/young adults experiencing homelessness; number of babies born substance exposed; number of children achieving permanency by judge and if permanency is achieved through reunification, adoption, or guardianship. The CRP further recommends this data be placed on the DHHR website where dashboards can be seen (similar to the dashboards for child welfare in [Wisconsin](#), [Ohio](#), [Minnesota](#), and [Florida](#) that show data by topic and can be seen for each county as well as statewide).
- The CRP recommends that DHHR fully participate in the study from [House Concurrent Resolution 35](#). The CRP recommends that the DHHR be held accountable to following the recommendations of the findings of the study.