



West Virginia Citizen Review Panel

Annual Summary Report

December 2024

For More Information:

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Citizen Review Panel Focus Areas – 2024

The Child Abuse Prevention Treatment Act (CAPTA) requires that states receiving funding establish a minimum of three citizen review panels. This Citizen Review Panel for West Virginia specifically focuses on child welfare, including child protective services, youth services, and foster care. Other panels in the state focus on the review of child fatalities.

Each panel must evaluate the extent to which the state is fulfilling its child protection responsibilities in accordance with its CAPTA State plan by: (1) examining the policies, procedures and practices of state and local child protection agencies, and (2) reviewing specific cases, where appropriate. In addition, a panel may examine other criteria that it considers important to ensure the protection of children, including the extent to which the state and local CPS system is coordinated with the title IV-E foster care and adoption assistance programs of the Social Security Act.

Each panel must prepare an annual report that summarizes the activities of the panel and makes recommendations to improve the child protective system at the state and local levels and submit it to the state and the public.

The Citizen Review Panel (CRP) met on:

- January 17, 2024
- February 21, 2024
- March 20, 2024
- April 17, 2024
- May 15, 2024
- June 19, 2024
- August 21, 2024
- September 18, 2024
- October 16, 2024
- November 20, 2024
- December 18, 2024

The meetings were held via 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 of the CRP.

Activities of the CRP during 2024 include review of information and deliberation of issues relating to the effectiveness of the comprehensive child welfare system and formulation that include recommendations for improvement where needed. During the meetings in 2024, the panel discussed:

- Lack of data regarding transparency
- How to keep children from entering in the foster system
- Data on safety plan and visitation issues
- Information on the JANIS system
- Bills in the House and Senate
- Safety plans in domestic violence cases
- Data on Socially Necessary Service providers
- Resources who provide prevention services for mental health disorders in children

- Reference guide on safety planning and visitation to share with judges and others involved in the child welfare system.

The following was evaluated by the Panel.

- Quick reference guide for judges and others involved in the child welfare system on safety planning and visitation.

Websites that have been shared to help during the meetings include:

- <https://evidentchange.org/analytics/safemeasures/>
- <https://www.signsofsafety.net/what-is-sofs/>
- <https://www.ntdcportal.org>
- <https://leanonmewv.org/>

Rebuilding the Panel

Composition of the CRP - There has been an abundance of interest in joining the CRP. There has been a subcommittee organized to recommend membership to the CRP. It is important to build upon existing organizations and group contacts in recruiting panel members. People are most likely to volunteer if they are asked by someone they know and trust. Potential members can be nominated by current members or by completing the application form with information related to their field of expertise and sending it to the CRP Coordinator.

Recommendations to the West Virginia Department of Human Services

- The CRP would like to continue to support the efforts, but not duplicate existing efforts, of the West Virginia Department of Human Services. The CRP recommends that there is continued yearly contact with the Commissioner or Deputy Commissioner.
- The CRP will create a quick reference guide on safety planning and visitation and send it to the WV Department of Human Services for review. Members can then distribute the one-page (front and back) reference guide to judges and other professionals within the child welfare system. The CRP will gather the information for the reference guide from the policies of the West Virginia Department of Human Services and the assistance of the West Virginia Coalition Against Domestic Violence to ensure that the information is accurate.