



Ending Child Abuse and Neglect.

# CITIZEN CONNECTIONS

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### STATE UPDATES

## Alaska

While hosting the 16th National CRP Conference consumed its share of Alaska CRP's resources (see *Reflections on the 16th National Conference* on p. 7), the panel continued its work. The panel completed two of the five planned site visits and a survey, and presented to a variety of stakeholders. We continue to improve documentation of the panel's work by identifying each task under at least one of the three primary functions of a CRP—evaluation, outreach, and advocacy.

**Evaluation:** We are examining the grievance process of Alaska's child protective services (CPS) system, and are awaiting data on current grievances to examine efficiency and outcomes of the process. We also continue to examine relationships between Alaska Native tribal CPS workers and state CPS frontline workers. Most significantly, a grand jury assembled

“Remember that the happiest people are not those getting more, but those giving more.”

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H. JACKSON BROWN JR.



to investigate allegations against Alaska's state CPS agency noted that the investigation is the statutory responsibility of the Alaska CRP. The panel is examining ways and means to conduct such an investigation.

This year saw a significant increase in the panel's efforts to improve its visibility and reach out to a multitude of stakeholders. Alaska CRP presented at 10 different forums including the legislature, CPS senior leadership, foster parents, judges, professional conferences, and Alaska Native tribal groups. The National Conference provided a significant opportunity to improve the panel's reach and engage youth formerly in foster care.

**Advocacy:** Alaska CRP is gradually identifying a clear advocacy role for itself. Our efforts were focused on reorienting the CRP enterprise from a focus on review to a focus on public participation. In addition, we also advocated for all stakeholders to engage in the panel's work and hold the panel accountable for its functions.

## Arizona

Arizona CRP members are well versed in ongoing changes, challenges, and the heavy demands placed on the Arizona Department of Child Safety (DCS). These local challenges have sparked opportunities to strengthen partnerships and collaborative efforts between the CRP, DCS, and other child welfare community partners, with the understanding that we share responsibility for child protection and well-being of children and families.

To reinforce the CRP's commitment to its vision, mission, and values, a statewide convening was hosted by Arizona State University Center for Child Well-Being (CCWB) in January 2017. Participants included CRP members, DCS representatives, DCS Community Advisory Board, and other key community stakeholders. The meeting allowed CRP co-chairs to share information about their panel and topic of review. DCS provided an overview of key initiatives and goals, and CCWB presented on the CRP and systems of care in Arizona. The greatest gains occurred during sessions in which participants divided into groups to answer questions that focused on each entity's mandated roles/responsibilities, expectations of other partners, and definition of effective collaboration. Participants reported that

"The true meaning of life is to plant trees  
under whose shade you do not  
expect to sit."

.....  
NELSON HENDERSON



this effort led to a better understanding about other entities' roles, expectations, and the importance of building strong and authentic collaboration between the state and CRP.

The CRP members have also continued to work on strengthening their internal and external infrastructure which has resulted in new protocols, operational procedures, and enhanced communication with DCS. Some of the outcomes realized to date include:

- ▶ Identifying strategies to improve communication and collaboration between senior DCS leadership and CRP co-chairs for all three Arizona regional panels, including the Liaison and Program Coordinator.
- ▶ Establishing an annual work-plan review where DCS and the CRP will collectively discuss strategies and implementation plans for the upcoming year to ensure relevance and effectiveness.
- ▶ Scheduling quarterly in-person meetings between CRP co-chairs and DCS to assess progress and potential barriers to success.
- ▶ Establishing a partnership agreement between DCS, CRP, and CCWB that outlines the commitment to

roles, responsibilities, collaboration, and information sharing and acknowledges the importance of independent functions of DCS, CRP, and CCWB.

Another promising effort involves using a newly adopted framework for conducting CRP reviews and developing a consistent method for creating and implementing work plans. This approach is a significant shift in how the CRPs carry out their work, and it requires a greater investment of time for the volunteer members. However, the time spent has been worthwhile, as it allows the CRPs to identify and explore problems in more detail and over a longer time span (multi-year projects). Using this method, the CRPs are establishing issue statements, goals, and activities to ensure they are gathering information necessary to contribute well-informed recommendations. The CRPs have selected topics of local/state relevance that align with Arizona DCS's Strategic Plan. Current areas of focus for CRP review in 2017–2018 are as follows:

- ▶ Parent-child visitation for children (birth through 3 years) in the foster care system and its impact on child well-being (Southern CRP)
- ▶ Substance-Exposed Newborns who come to the attention of DCS (Northern CRP)
- ▶ Hotline reports and investigations involving medical neglect or medically complex children (Central CRP)

After attending the 2017 CRP National conference, panel members shared that “those panels with well-documented processes and procedures appeared to experience some greater success.” The measures undertaken by the CRP to strengthen our partnerships and internal infrastructure are viewed as vital to the CRP's effectiveness. They have also been instrumental in creating a foundation for ongoing collaborative work that can positively affect the lives of children and families in Arizona.

## Georgia

Georgia's Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (CAPTA) panels recently wrapped up their 2016 annual report. The report reflected both 2016 activities and recommendations and interests and priorities for 2017. In April, panel members met with Georgia's child welfare director and his leadership team to discuss the recommendations included in the annual report.

Action on several of the recommendations is under way, and opportunities to collaborate on shared priorities have been identified. These priorities include:

- ▶ Revision of foster parent training curriculum
- ▶ Supports and services for relative caregivers
- ▶ Child fatality investigation protocols
- ▶ Review of protocols and analysis of child fatalities data
- ▶ Assessment of neglect in investigations of reports
- ▶ Mandated reporter training standards for state agencies
- ▶ Panel members look forward to another productive year.



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

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OSCAR WILDE

## Idaho

The Idaho CRP statewide spring meeting consisted of reviewing recommendations and state responses. The CRP is reviewing the structure of the report. In addition, panel members have been participating in child fatality reviews, permanency staffing, and Program Improvement Plan development.



## Kentucky

**Southern Bluegrass CRP**—The panel hosted the Annual Conversation on Collaboration, in which Trauma-Informed Care was discussed. This event was multi-purpose, and allowed the panel to bridge the gaps between the public and the Department for Community-Based Services (DCBS), provide an educational component to the community during Child Abuse Prevention month, improve DCBS employee morale, and provide a youth engagement component. Each year during Child Abuse Prevention Month, the “Conversation on Conversation” is held in an effort to provide information to the public about the child welfare system. Its purpose is to challenge participants to gain more insight into incorporating best practices into their own policies and procedures.

**Statewide CRP**—The panel held its annual one-day conference designed to showcase new and successful topics in the child welfare arena across the state



“Our generation has the ability and the responsibility to make our ever-more connected world a more hopeful, stable and peaceful place.”

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NATALIE PORTMAN

and nation. Topics included child welfare worker recognition; the importance of retention and morale within protection and permanency; educational neglect/truancy prevention and family engagement; children exposed to batterers; evidence-based strategies to empower families; and “Handle with Care,” a school/community partnership around children’s trauma exposure. The panel, with the assistance from the University of Kentucky’s College of Social Work, sought presenters who are experts in their respective fields. For the first time, the panel presented awards to DCBS front-line workers and supervisors from the service regions across the state. Employees were nominated by colleagues, and everyone nominated was recognized at the conference. However, seven individuals were chosen by the panel for a special award. These were presented with the assistance of the DCBS Commissioner, Adria Johnson. The panel hopes to continue hosting this event in future years, as well as continuing the recognition awards.

**Jefferson CRP**—To foster a commitment to volunteerism and an awareness of the functioning of the child welfare system, the Jefferson County CRP sought students interested in developing a student-led CRP. A panel developed and created by students would encompass the framework of the existing panels, but the functions and tasks of the panel would be determined by the student members. The panel recruited members from Spalding University, the University of Louisville, Indiana University–Southeast, and Bellarmine University. Students were actively recruited from the schools of social work, psychology, medicine, and law. The students were vetted through an application process and then contacted for the introductory meeting. The first meeting of the student CRP was held March 30, 2017, and was attended by nine students as well as the DCBS liaison, CRP staff, and Jefferson County panel chair. The students were oriented to CRPs and agreed to meet in April and May of 2017. In May, they determined their projects for the coming year.

## Louisiana

The Louisiana CRPs continue to actively meet and focus on the safety and well-being of our children. The Lafayette panel has been focusing on youth transitioning out of foster care, identifying the need for mentoring

programs for this group. Because the panel identified barriers in completing this task, they submitted a referral to the state office via the Regional Program Quality Improvement (QPI) process to address the issues pending a status. Our Monroe office is focusing on the challenge involving recruitment and retention of the Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) employees. The panel identified preparation and training as two critical areas regarding employee retention. The Monroe panel also identified another critical area of concern in their region—the need for new foster homes. Additional foster homes in the Monroe region would provide the foster children/families the opportunity to maintain family bonds. The Beauregard Panel is also working on identifying methods to increase the number of foster homes in their parish. The panel recommended continuing their work with DCFS staff, the local media, and community in hopes to obtain an increase in foster homes.

## Maryland

In Maryland, the Citizens Review Board for Children (CRBC) conducted four regional in-service trainings and volunteer appreciation events around the State of Maryland, bringing members together from all 23 counties and Baltimore City during March–April 2017 in recognition of Child Abuse Prevention Month and National Volunteer Appreciation Week. Eighty-six CRBC members participated, and the training topic was “Permanency: It's Not Just a Catch Phrase.” The training was facilitated by Debbie Ramelmeier, LCSW-C, JD, CRBC Director of Child Welfare Policy, and CEUs were offered.

## Michigan

Michigan's Fatality Review Panel conducts full case reviews on the cases that fit the criteria—initially about 300. This is an extremely laborious process for the local CPS office, which gathers the entire case history, redacts information according to the CPL, and sends it on to the State CPS Program Office. That office ensures the cases are redacted appropriately and then arranges for our office to retrieve the physical files. This year, we conducted a data analysis to create sampling criteria to pare down the initial list

“Volunteers are love in motion!”

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AUTHOR UNKNOWN



of nearly 300 to roughly 100. This process was well received by the local CPS staff and the CPS Program Office. While this took some work at the front end, the result should be a more thorough review of fewer cases. Michigan is excited and honored to host the 2018 National CRP Conference. With our new case criteria for reviewing and obtaining cases freeing up some much-needed resources, we are able to shift our efforts to the planning of the conference. We hope to see you all in Detroit!

## New York

The New York State CRPs continue to explore ways to improve child abuse protection services in New York State. The panels have been busy meeting with key partner organizations, state legislators, and executive staff to identify means for reducing child abuse and maltreatment. The panels are particularly interested in expanding the use of home visiting programs and increasing funds for preventive services. The panels have also been discussing the impact of the opioid abuse epidemic on the child welfare system.

## Oregon

Oregon selects three sites to form multi-disciplinary panels that choose a local systemic issue within child welfare. The panels review the issue and make recommendations to improve related policies, practices, and procedures. Each panel meets monthly and is composed of local citizen review board (CRB) volunteers and staff, court-appointed special advocates, child welfare staff, attorneys, and other community partners. This past year, Benton, Multnomah, and Umatilla and Morrow counties were selected as panel sites. The Benton County panel focused on increasing and improving parent-child visitation, the Multnomah County panel selected transition planning for foster youth, and the Umatilla/Morrow County panel selected DHS staffing issues that may affect early engagement of families in services. The panels' final report, including their recommendations, has been submitted to DHS, and is available on the Oregon CRB website under "Reports." DHS is required to include the report in its federal reporting and has 6 months to provide a written response describing whether or how the state will incorporate the panels' recommendations to make measurable progress in improving the state and local child protective systems.

## Pennsylvania

Pennsylvania's CRPs continue to work within their focus areas for 2017. The South Central CRP invited caseworkers in their region to join their April meeting. Caseworkers discussed their concerns around "care for caseworkers," which included safety in the field, preparation/training for the work, and support within the workplace. The South Central Panel will use the information gained during this meeting when creating their recommendations for the year. The Northeast Panel meets in June to continue their work on older youth issues, specifically related to youth in care obtaining their driver's license/insurance. The panel is also considering the topic of financial aid for youth currently and previously in care to attend state universities. The Spring All-Panel Meeting was held in March. The panels met with the Department of Human Services Office of Children, Youth and Families to hear updates on child welfare in Pennsylvania and to discuss the panels' individual areas of focus for the year. The meeting included focused discussions regarding CRP structure and strategic planning efforts for the upcoming year. Plans are currently under way for another All-Panel Meeting this summer to continue these discussions.

## South Carolina

**Low Country CRP:** The panel is continuing its project on Domestic Violence. We had child abuse prevention training in several counties, including Colleton and Beaufort, and invited DSS, the public, foster parents, and reporters. We had many volunteers at Colleton County. The panel is trying to get someone from SCCADVASA (South Carolina Coalition Against Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault) to present, hopefully in July.

**Upstate CRP:** The panel is focusing on foster home licensing. We have a lot of people with the knowledge of what the barriers are to getting licensed. We are looking at the processes—are they the same for CPAs as for DSS? Connie Maxwell Children's Home has extra forms that are not included in the scope. We are looking for redundancy; for example, DSS takes 3 months to process ABC (daycare) vouchers. In addition, we are looking at caseworker retention—what makes caseworkers stay? They don't leave because of the work, it's always been a supervision issue, which is fixable. One idea the panel is exploring is to develop training for the supervisors on coping skills—not to make them counselors, but to give them the tools to counsel and coach caseworkers after a bad visit. The Medical University of South Carolina has a 10-hour "coping with trauma" training that is free.

**Midlands CRP:** We have focused on foster parent recruitment and retention—looking at the fire department coming in. Richland County has only one day a month set aside for this. We had our Summit on April 20; DSS served on the panel. We also held a small group roundtable discussion. We are starting kinship care support groups at the Main Library.

## Wyoming

The Wyoming Citizen Review Panel (WYCRP) has grown in the last year to 13 panel members and 2 representatives from state agencies—the Wyoming Department of Family Services (DFS) and Wyoming Department of Corrections. These 15 members represent child welfare and juvenile justice matters at a statewide level and have taken part in several activities and opportunities for group learning and training. The Executive Director continues efforts in collaborating and supporting the Department of Family Services on Drug Endangered Children (DEC). The Carbon County DEC Alliance recently was formed,



and the WYCRP had the opportunity to participate in efforts and strides being made within that alliance.

WYCRP continues to discuss with DFS how our supportive efforts can be implemented throughout the state. WYCRP, in partnership with DFS, the Wyoming Children's Trust Fund, Wyoming 211, and Wyoming Quality Counts, has conducted community needs assessments in 8 counties, with plans to include an additional 11 counties by September 2017. Once all intended counties have been reached, results will be compiled and continued efforts will be made to address improved access to services and identified barriers and needs.

Since receiving the Child and Family Services Review report, WYCRP has been participating in community stakeholder interviews to develop goals and strategies for improving statewide services. WYCRP has been tasked with reviewing the preliminary Program

Improvement Plan (PIP) to determine in which areas the panel may be of assistance. These opportunities include providing support to DFS through policy review/change, case file reviews, Continuous Quality Improvement system (CQI) efforts, surveys of training needs, others.

WYCRP continues to collaborate with DFS to assure quality services across Wyoming. WYCRP has been an integral part of the DFS case file reviews around certified foster care, non-certified foster care, youth involvement, and initial safety assessment. WYCRP participates in quarterly meetings regarding foster and adoptive parent licensing, recruitment, and retention. WYCRP also leads the Wyoming Child Death Review and Prevention Team to review files and provide recommendations to DFS and other local and state agencies regarding children who suffered a major injury or fatality.

## REFLECTIONS FROM THE 16TH NATIONAL CRP CONFERENCE

By Diwakar Vadapalli

More than 150 individuals from 22 states traveled to the beautiful state of Alaska to discuss and share best practices and consider some challenging questions facing CRPs. For two and half days, we examined various facets of CRP's mandate, diverse ways CRPs are organized, and numerous things CRPs do.

This year's conference focused on the challenging relationship between most CRPs and their respective CPS agencies. Much of this can be attributed to vagueness in the mandate. For over two decades, as a community of practitioners, we interpreted and implemented the mandate across the country in ways that fit our respective contexts. There is no common set of core functions, norms, and standards of operation for a CRP.





Conference participants were encouraged to think critically about such questions as:

1. What are the mutual roles and responsibilities of a CRP and CPS agency? How does this relationship work?
2. What are the roles and responsibilities of a CRP member, CRP coordinator, and CPS liaison?
3. What is the role of the Children's Bureau's Office on Child Abuse and Neglect (CB/OCAN)?
4. What are the core functions of a CRP?
5. What constituencies should CRPs be engaging?
6. What does it mean for a CRP to advocate?
7. How is accountability of a CRP enforced?

For the first time in conference history, all plenaries were streamed live. More than 100 individuals from across the country watched them. Recordings of plenaries will be available in the next few weeks. While none of the breakout sessions were recorded, we are compiling those presentations for later access. A conference proceedings document is also in the works. All these materials will be available as soon as we find an appropriate platform to host them for easy access.

A quick review of participant evaluations shows that the conference was well received, and most sessions were meaningful to the audience. Breakout sessions were greatly appreciated. An event of this scale cannot happen without the contributions of multiple people. The Conference Organizing Committee has worked hard. Beyond that, our many sponsors donated a total of \$23,000 in cash and \$41,000 worth of in-kind support.

The rest of the total \$98,000 was paid by registration fees. Alaska CRP is proud to have hosted you all, and we look forward to seeing you in Detroit next year.

## NATIONAL CRP ADVISORY BOARD

The National CRP Advisory Board met quarterly over the last year. With a renewed commitment since our annual meeting in Phoenix in 2016, the board reviewed its goals and objectives and identified many important questions pertaining to its purpose, identity, functions, and composition. Despite a common federal mandate, CRPs across the nation are quite diverse in their structures, functions, and available resources. Panels have developed many innovative approaches to accomplish their goals. The board recognizes the need for a robust mechanism for panels to communicate, share these innovations, and facilitate the evolution of common norms, standards, and best practices among CRPs.

To that end, the board began a mentorship program. CRPs that need technical assistance or other specific support, as appropriate, were connected to a board member for continued conversation and assistance. In the past, the board has provided guidance or connected CRPs with appropriate resources. An example of this was the Building Expertise through Experience (BEE) webinars last year. CRP coordinators, members, or CPS liaisons are invited to present an innovative practice, new directions in their work, or critical challenges facing their CRP. Recorded versions of these webinars are available online at [www.cantasd.org/crp.html](http://www.cantasd.org/crp.html). Finally, the Board actively participated in organizing the 16th National CRP Conference in Anchorage. In addition to compiling the "History of the Conference" and "Hosting the CRP National Conference: FAQs" to assist with the continuity of the conference over the years, the board actively participated in defining and structuring the conference.

The Board can play many other instrumental roles. As noted at the 16th National CRP Conference, the board is in transition and needs additional support. Many of you expressed interest in joining the board, or otherwise contributing to its work. Diverse perspectives from across the nation will strengthen it. Please contact Dr. Diwakar Vadapalli for ways to get involved. He can be reached at [diwakarvk@alaska.edu](mailto:diwakarvk@alaska.edu). He is coordinating board meetings until a new leadership structure is established.