

Arizona Citizen Review Panels 2019 Annual Report; Revised 6-18-2020

Annual Report submitted by the Citizen Review Panels has been compiled by the Arizona Department of Child Safety Office of Communications



ARIZONA
DEPARTMENT
of CHILD SAFETY

**ARIZONA CITIZEN REVIEW PANEL'S MISSION**

To facilitate citizen participation to evaluate and review the practices and policy of the Arizona Department of Child Safety to improve the lives of all children and families throughout the state.

ARIZONA CITIZEN REVIEW PANEL'S VISION

Children will be safe, families will be stable, and together they will have an opportunity for continuity of relationships and freedom from child abuse and neglect.

PURPOSE AND OBJECTIVES

The Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (CAPTA) (P.L. 114-22) requires each state receiving funding above \$175,000 under CAPTA to create three Citizen Review Panels (CRP). The purpose of a Citizen Review Panel is to facilitate citizen participation in the child welfare system through evaluation and public outreach. A Citizen Review Panel provides community members an opportunity to volunteer their time and to take an active role in helping influence, support, and advocate for children and families. The objective to mandating citizen involvement in child welfare, the intent of Congress was to:

- Promote transparency in child welfare
- Introduce new ideas amid a constructive perspective to child protection
- Arrange an opportunity for the community to have a voice, and to take an active role in the protection of its children
- Create an open and honest dialog between the community and child welfare leadership
- Establish accountability by the child welfare system to the community
- Promote community engagement and trust
- Make certain that policies, practices and institutions are effectively functioning to prevent child abuse and neglect

Therefore, the primary purpose of the Citizen Review Panel is to determine whether state and local agencies are meeting their federally mandated child protection responsibilities, and to make observations and recommendations for improvements in the state's child welfare system and human services system.

To accomplish this, the Citizen Review Panels evaluate the extent to which the State is fulfilling its child protection responsibilities in accordance with its CAPTA State plan and child protection standards set forth in law, by examining the policies, procedures and practices of the State and local child protection agencies, and reviewing specific cases, where appropriate. A panel may also examine other criteria that it considers important to ensuring the safety, permanency, and well-being of children.

“The purpose of a Citizen Review Panel is to facilitate citizen participation in the child welfare system through evaluation and public outreach.”

CAPTA mandates Citizen Review Panels meet the following requirements:

- Each panel must meet at least every three months.
- Panel members are to be volunteers broadly representative of the community in which the panel is established and include members who have expertise in the prevention and treatment of child abuse and neglect, and may include adult former victims of child abuse.
- Panels are to provide for public outreach and comment to assess the impact of current procedures and practices upon children and families in the community.
- Panels are bound by confidentiality.
- States are to provide panel members access to case information if such information is necessary for the panel to carry out its functions.
- States are to provide staff assistance to a panel if the panel requests assistance with performing its duties.
- Panels are required to prepare an annual report containing a summary of the activities and recommendations to improve the child protective services system and make the report available to the public.



The appropriate state agency shall submit a written response that describes whether or how the state will incorporate the recommendations of the panels to make measurable progress in improving the state and local child protective system.

States are to submit CRP reports to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) annually (Children's Bureau, 2016).

For citizens who serve on a Citizen Review Panel to be effective, they must have knowledge about the child welfare system and the interactions of the state agency with the community. The creation of Citizen Review Panels brings citizens from different backgrounds with varied knowledge and experience together to work collaboratively to identify, address, and propose recommendations that bring solutions into child welfare agencies. Citizens from outside DCS bring a fresh perspective not visible to those involved in managing the agency, and therefore offer benefits to the planning process, such as:

- the introduction of new ideas and expanded information;
- the identification of public priorities, values, concerns, and perceptions; and
- community engagement at the local level.

CAPTA allows states to designate an existing entity as a Citizen Review Panel. Arizona has elected to designate the Community Advisory Committee as a Citizen Review Panel. The Community Advisory Committee is established under Arizona Revised Statutes Title 8. Child Safety § 8-459. Community advisory committee; duties; membership:

1. To inform the department, analyze current law and policy and make recommendations to improve the ability of the department to increase the safety of children, respond to child maltreatment and ensure the well-being of and timely permanency for children who are referred to and involved in the child welfare system;
2. For collaboration among state, local, community, tribal, public and private stakeholders in child welfare programs and services that are administered by the department, and
3. To improve communication between mandatory reporters and the department.

When forming the two other Citizen Review Panels, an effort was made to combine knowledge with experience to create successful Citizen Review Panels that would produce well-researched and feasible recommendations. Twenty-one potential members were invited to participate in a half-day Strategic Planning Session in March 2019. High level presentations by senior management were given, reviewing the DCS Strategic Plan and current DCS programs and operations.

After the presentations, the potential members of the CRPs discussed and identified thirty-three topics of interest. Upon completion of the Strategic Planning Session, seventeen participants agreed to join a CRP. Two new CRPs were formed, and the initial meeting of each CRP was scheduled.

The 2019 Arizona Citizen Review Panels chose to:

- meet every other month;
- require members to commit to remain on the CRP for a minimum of two-years;
- view the topic under review as a two-year project;
- bring on additional members into the CRP as the need arises;
- communicate with the DCS leadership twice a year, when applicable; and
- maintain their independence as a review panel.



2019 ARIZONA CITIZEN REVIEW PANELS

During 2019, the DCS Office of Quality Improvement provided administrative and technical support to three Arizona Citizen Review Panels.

OUTCOME BASED COLLABORATION FOR YOUTH IN CARE**MEMBERSHIP AND MEETING DATES**

This panel consisted of nine members:

- Candice Liozu - Foster 360, Chairperson
- Michael Wydra - Arizona Children's Association, Co-Chairperson
- Carlin W. Dawson Ph.D – Pilgrim Relief Foundation
- Jacy Farkas, MA - Sonoran UCEDD, University of Arizona
- Marnie Green - Family Support Resources
- Kristen Self - Foster and Adoptive Parent
- Elena Steinbeiss - Valley of the Sun YMCA
- Charlotte Strum - Juvenile Probation
- Karen Wouters - Arizona Children's Association

The panel held formal meetings on the following dates:

- March 26, 2019
- May 7, 2019
- July 17, 2019
- September 18, 2019
- November 25, 2019
- February 19, 2020

ACTIVITIES AND DISCUSSION TOPICS

The members reviewed the sections of the DCS Policy and Procedure Manual pertaining to:

- Services and Supports to Prepare Youth for Adulthood
- Voluntary Extended Foster Care
- Discharge from Voluntary Extended Foster Care
- The Transitional Independent Living Program and Re-Entry into Voluntary Extended Foster Care

CRP members met with the Statewide Coordinator of Team Decision Making and were provided materials related to the transition from foster care to adulthood. These materials included information for the various programs available to youth who transition to independent living and Extended Foster Care. The members were also given a preview of the changes that are planned for Team Decision Making (TDM) meetings for youth transitioning to adulthood while in out-of-home care.

The Permanency & Youth Services team provided an explanation of the services associated with youth beginning at age 14, and the various programs that are available to assist youth in the transition to adulthood. Descriptions were provided for the Young Adult Program, Chafee Foster Care Independence Program, and measures that are being taken by the Department to closely monitor the progress of youth as they approach the age of majority.

Discussions ensued utilizing the information provided and the knowledge and experiences of the CRP members from their interactions with various providers, DCS and youth in transition, and beyond.



COORDINATION OF CARE

Coordination of care within a multi-disciplinary team is a consistent challenge for those who are working with young people transitioning to adulthood. The CRP members identified three reasons why they believe coordination of care is currently challenging.

1. Each organization has its own expectations and policies, which may conflict or not coincide with the expectations and policies of other organizations or agencies that are working with a young person.
2. Communication by team members between meetings is not documented in any one place where it can be monitored by other team members. The lack of communication prior to the meeting makes it less likely that a coordinated plan will occur. This results in unproductive meetings.
3. Most team members experience heavy workloads within their organizations, often preventing them from effectively communicating, even if the intention is there. Heavy workloads reduce the amount of time a team member can spend on a young person. Preparation is sacrificed.

KNOWLEDGE OF ACES

Members of a team who work with a youth have inconsistent levels of education regarding trauma. In the child-serving community, there is a heightened awareness of the impact of trauma on youth. Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) have long lasting effects on youth. Many team members are unaware of the three main categories of ACEs, and possess an incomplete understanding and knowledge of trauma. ACEs include:

Abuse

- Physical Abuse
- Emotional Abuse
- Sexual Abuse

Neglect

- Physical Neglect
- Emotional Neglect

Household Dysfunction

- Family mental illness
- Incarcerated household member
- Witness to domestic violence
- Parental separation/divorce
- Substance abuse in household

CHILD AND FAMILY TEAM MEETING FACILITATION

Team meeting facilitation requires trained facilitators. A trained facilitator conducts all DCS Team Decision Making meetings (TDM) according to a set protocol, but Child and Family Team (CFT) meetings generally do not have a trained facilitator. A CFT currently is facilitated by the Regional Behavioral Health Authority (RBHA), not DCS.

CRP members, drawing upon their own experiences attending CFTs, are concerned that frequently a CFT is not productive nor decisive, due to lack of consistent facilitation and poor attendance. Each RBHA facilitates the CFT using their own protocol, and there are numerous reasons for poor attendance. The members are concerned that youth may not perceive a CFT as helpful, and miss an opportunity for beneficial communications with team members.

NEXT ACTIONS

The CRP developed a survey to assist in the analysis of coordination of care and communication. The questions on the survey address communication and coordination within provider and government agencies, and other organizations that they interact with when supporting a youth. The results of the survey and its analysis will be provided to the Department.

The CRP will continue to review how to impact inconsistent knowledge among youth-serving team members about Adverse Childhood Experiences for youth in foster care.

The CRP will inquire into facilitation procedures to identify those that are most productive and support consistent attendance at meetings. Further analysis is needed to determine the preparation of DCS Specialists for a CFT, along with their coordination between the RBHA and service providers. Additionally, the CRP will seek to determine youth satisfaction with the CFT process.



CITIZENS REVIEW PANEL - SUCCESSFUL TRANSITION: PLANS FOR CHILDREN AGING OUT OF FOSTER CARE

MEMBERSHIP AND MEETING DATES

This panel consisted initially of eight members:

John Martin – Foster and Adoptive Parent, Chairperson

Rhonda Baldwin – Phoenix Children’s Hospital

Ann Carver - Interagency Pregnancy and Parenting Assistance Council (IPPAC), ASU

Teri Hollaway – Family Involvement Center

Sarah Kent – Maricopa Association of Government (MAG)

Pamela Morrison – Phoenix Rescue Mission

Bernadine Ramon – Tohono O’odham Nation

Linda Scott – Jewish Children and Family Services (JFCS)

Teri Vogel – Thrive AZ

Ruby Barraza - Arizona Coalition to End Sexual & Domestic Violence

Sarah Padilla - Fort McDowell Yavapai Nation

Betty Caratachea - Chicanos Por La Causa

Ryan Young – Youth Member Youth Empowerment Council

The panel held formal meetings on the following dates:

March 26, 2019

June 4, 2019

August 14, 2019

October 23, 2019

December 11, 2019

February 10, 2020

ACTIVITIES AND DISCUSSION TOPICS

The DCS Strategic Plan for 2019 included an objective to Increase successful transition to adulthood of all children 14+ while in foster care. Members of the CRP were personally concerned with the transition to adulthood. The group discussed youth brain development, effects on judgement and decision-making, and challenges faced by many youth who reach adulthood in foster care and leave during the critical years between age eighteen and twenty-one. Knowledge of brain development has brought an understanding that the brains of most young people do not completely develop until age twenty-five. Therefore, a transition phase that is limited to age twenty-one may not be sufficient.

With this knowledge, the CRP members were curious as to how they might be able to give youth a better chance at success. The members decided to focus on identifying the characteristics of a successful transition to adulthood.

The members reviewed the sections of the DCS Policy and Procedure Manual pertaining to:

- Services and Supports to Prepare Youth for Adulthood
- Voluntary Extended Foster Care
- Discharge from Voluntary Extended Foster Care
- The Transitional Independent Living Program and Re-Entry into Voluntary Extended Foster Care

CRP members met with the Statewide Coordinator of Team Decision Making and were provided materials related to the transition from foster care to adulthood. These materials included information for the various programs available to youth who transition to independent living and Extended Foster Care. The members were also given a preview of the changes that are planned for Team Decision Making (TDM) meetings for youth transitioning to adulthood while in out-of-home care.

The Permanency & Youth Services team provided an explanation of the services associated with youth beginning at age 14, and the various programs that are available to assist youth in the transition to adulthood. Descriptions were provided for the Young Adult Program, Chafee Foster Care Independence Program, and measures that are being taken by the Department to closely monitor the progress of youth as they approach the age of majority.

The CRP discussed the information they reviewed, and their knowledge and understanding of the programs and services of organizations that work with youth. Through these discussions, members identified the following characteristics that will enable a young person to have a successful transition to adulthood from foster care:

1. Safe and Stable Housing - Supportive housing that allows for the risk to learn while providing stability
2. Financial Independence to Support Self – employment and education have a role here, whether it is formal education or job skills training
3. Education – High School Diploma or GED at a minimum, college or vocational school
4. Health/Health Insurance – Knowledge of Young Adult Transitional Insurance (YATI), Knowledge of mental health and sexual health resources
5. Adult Connections and Confidantes - Who can they rely upon to answer the phone at 4 AM when they need to speak with someone?
6. Relationships – How do they cultivate healthy relationships with family, friends, mentors or roommates
7. What makes them happy - How do they fill their time - read, meditate, socialize or play games
8. On-going services – Counseling, ongoing training, peer groups, learning new things
9. Safety – How do they protect themselves from DV or bad influences
10. Spirituality – Where do they find hope and confidence, inspiration or prayer
11. Culture/Cultural Identity - Connection to Your roots, your group, traditions

In addition, the CRP members reviewed research and articles produced by child welfare experts, and identified a number of ways to influence the outcome for youth who transition to adulthood from foster care. The discussion identified housing and education as two of the most critical factors for success.

SERVICES FOR YOUNG PEOPLE AGE FOURTEEN TO EIGHTEEN

Currently, when a youth turns eighteen, an Age of Majority Team Decision Making (TDM) meeting is held to discuss the plans for the future. The youth is encouraged to sign a voluntary agreement, which enables the young person to enter into Extended Foster Care. Extended Foster Care is available until the age of twenty-one.

The CRP observed that there are many supports and services when a youth reaches eighteen years old, whether or not the young person enters Extended Foster Care. For example, a young person who voluntarily enters into an Extended Foster Care Agreement will receive a case review within six months of signing the voluntary agreement. The Extended Foster Care Quality Review (EFCQR) is conducted every six months thereafter, until the youth exists the program. The EFCQR is conducted by an Extended Foster Care Quality Review Specialist, independent of the assigned DCS Specialist. The role of the Extended Foster Care Quality Review Specialist is to coordinate with the youth's DCS Specialist to conduct the review within the required timeframes, provide advocacy on behalf of the youth while participating in the Extended Foster Care program, and provide regular contact to assure the youth has supportive adults and appropriate services in place to transition to adulthood.

EDUCATION

When discussing education, interest in the percentage of youth who reached the age of majority in out-of-home care with a high school diploma or a GED rose to the forefront, due to post-secondary educational programs like the Educational Training Voucher (ETV) and the Arizona Tuition Waiver program. Both are available to youth, but are subject to age constraints on how long a youth can continue to receive funding. For ETV a youth must receive the first funding prior to age 21, and program funding ends at age 23. Therefore, if a youth obtains a high school diploma or GED a year or two after reaching the age of majority, the period of time to receive funding for post-secondary education may be reduced.

The CRP discussed the various barriers that may prevent a youth from graduating high school “on time,” meaning around age 18, and the reasons why a youth would obtain a GED instead of a high school diploma. For instance, research suggests youth in foster care experience teen pregnancy at a rate 2.5 greater than their counterparts contributing to lower educational attainment.¹ The CRP recently became aware of the data kept on graduation rates by the Department. The CRP recognized that 100% accuracy of such information is not possible since many youth leave the care of the Department between the ages of fourteen and eighteen and there is no follow-up.

SAFE AND STABLE HOUSING

The CRP identified the Extended Foster Care program and/or participation in post-secondary educational opportunities via the Educational Training Voucher and Arizona Tuition Waiver program as ways to provide safe and stable housing for youth who reach adulthood in foster care. This is a natural solution that youth can use to create a successful transition.

The members of the CRP raised a concern regarding the preparation for reunification for teenagers between the ages fourteen and eighteen years old. Teenagers may not be prepared to reunite with a parent who has changed behaviors while they were separated. When last together the youth may have assumed parental responsibilities for the family, due to the parent's behavior. Now, the parent behavior has changed and conflict may arise with the youth. The conflict may cause a disruption or the youth may leave home. This in turn could prevent a healthy and successful transition to adulthood for that youth.

The CRP intends to explore the current availability of birth-family counseling and behavioral health and other services offered during the reunification process involving a youth and birth parent, and/or members of the family of origin. The CRP wishes to learn the percentage of families that receive counseling. The CRP is aware counseling may not be needed in all cases.

¹ Katie M. Combs et al., “Pregnancy and Childbearing Among Young Adults Who Experienced Foster Care”, *Child Maltreatment*, 23, no. 2 (2018): 166-174.

NEXT ACTIONS

The CRP will explore the current availability of birth-family counseling and behavioral health and other services offered during the reunification process involving a youth and birth parent, and/or members of the family of origin.

In the next year, the CRP members will:

- policies and practices preparing youth between ages fourteen and eighteen for successful transition to adulthood;
- meet with the DCS Educational Specialist;
- review data on high school graduation and GED rates among young people age eighteen to twenty-one who remain in Extended Foster Care;
- review actions taken to address the identified characteristics of a successful transition; and
- identify one action to be taken for each of the characteristics of a successful transition.

THE ARIZONA DEPARTMENT OF CHILD SAFETY COMMUNITY ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Membership and Meeting Dates

This CRP consists of fourteen members:

- Jacob Schmitt, MPA, President/CEO, Arizona's Children Association, representing a child welfare agencies that directly provide contracted services to children and their families.
- Bahney Dedolph, Deputy Director, Arizona Council of Human Service Providers representing a child advocacy organizations that deal with child welfare system policy issues.
- Jennifer Huber, PhD, former foster parent and adoptive parent representing current or former foster or adoptive parents.
- Cody Conklin-Aguilera, MD., FAAP, Medical Director, Department of Public Health Yavapai County, Pediatric Program Manager, Verde Valley represents medical providers, with a preference for pediatricians, who have experience in diagnosing and treating injuries related to abuse and neglect.
- Robin Pearson, Executive Director, Voices for CASA Children represents volunteers with the foster care review board or Court Appointed Special Advocate program.
- Judy Krysik, PhD., MSW, Associate Professor, Arizona State University School of Social Work, Director Center for Child Well-Being represents persons with an academic appointment to a state university who conduct research in child welfare services, child maltreatment or child abuse or neglect.
- Nicole Roskens, LPC, Clinical Director, Cradle to Crayons Program, Superior Court of Maricopa County Juvenile Division, and Independent Private Practice, Counselor represents the courts. The representative must be involved in child welfare issues.
- Rita Wright, LMSW, Assistant Clinical Professor, Child Welfare Training Project Coordinator, Department of Sociology and Social Work, Northern Arizona University represents a rural area in this state who has experience in the child welfare system.

- Elisa Manuel, President, Three Precious Miracles represents a Native American tribe or nation who has experience in the child welfare system.
- Peter Gentala, J.D., Chair, General Counsel and Vice President for Government Affairs and Public Policy with Childhelp represents a child advocacy organization that advocates for or represents children who are victims of crime.
- Soncerea Swift, foster parent, social worker represents persons who have experience with children with special needs and the child welfare system.
- Sergeant Matthew Lawes, Special Victim's Unit, Mesa Police Department represents a law enforcement agency. The representative must have experience with the Department on cases that involve criminal conduct allegations.
- Deborah Burdick, Ed.D, Superintendent, Cave Creek Unified School District represents schools. The representative must have experience in the child welfare system.
- Mark Upton, President/CEO Christian Family Care represents a faith-based organization. The representative must have experience in the child welfare system.

In 2019 the committee met on February 1st, April 5th, June 28th, August 16th, October 4th, and December 6th.

The Arizona DCS Community Advisory Committee produces an annual report in August, after the end of the state fiscal year. The annual report is made available to the public on the DCS website: <https://dcs.az.gov/about/community-advisory-committee>