

Arizona Citizen Review Panels

FY23 Report

Annual Report submitted by the Citizen Review Panels has been
compiled by the Arizona Department of Child Safety Office of Communications
CSO-3531 Revised 9-2023



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.

The CRP on Prevention met nine times from May 2022 – April 2023 to craft this year’s recommendations. The Prevention CRP’s goal is to elicit unique perspectives of members by facilitating parallel learning processes. In other words, the group identifies guest speakers to increase the group’s understanding of DCS policies, processes, and intentions. While group learning takes place, the unique backgrounds and experiences of CRP members provide feedback on opportunities for DCS. The meetings had the following topics and guest speakers:

DATE	TOPIC/GUEST SPEAKER
May 11, 2022	Review submitted 2022 recommendations and target one of the two focus areas previously identified
June 1, 2022	Review the Caseworker Burnout Prevention article highlighting the New Jersey Children and Family Services
August 3, 2022	Presentation from the DCS Workforce Resilience program
September 7, 2022	Debrief meeting with New Jersey Children and Family Services leadership team, discussing their success in employee retention and reduction in caseloads
October 5, 2022	Organize ideas in a High Impact/High-Cost versus High Impact/Low-Cost template
December 7, 2022	Review main takeaways from September and October meetings and recruitment strategies; identify desired topics for 2023
January 12, 2023	Discussing workforce experiences with a caseworker supervisor
March 8, 2023	Presentation from Chuck Price, child protection consultant, on trauma-informed workplaces for employee retention and reduced placement in group homes
April 12, 2023	Presentation from DCS about the CORE Training curriculum

This year, the Prevention CRP focused solely on caseworker burnout and retention as a prevention strategy. Discussions with the New Jersey Department of Children and Families and Wisconsin’s former director of child protection revealed that focusing on workforce retention and support can benefit the families that caseworkers serve. For example, when caseworkers carry a normal caseload, they have more time to serve their families. Additionally, when caseworkers feel supported and motivated to stay in the department, they deepen their experience and knowledge, further increasing their efficacy and positively influencing their peers via their example and mentorship.

CRP representation includes citizen perspectives of Arizona child welfare and well-being:

MEMBER NAME	PLACE OF WORK
Ken Dailey	Maricopa County Attorney’s Office
Judge Kathleen Quigley	Pima County Superior Court
Molly Peterson	Prevent Child Abuse Arizona
Priscilla Salas	Southwest Human Development
Crystal Garduna	Family Involvement Center
Shirley Butler	Phoenix Head Start (retired)
Samara Vaught	Family Involvement Center
Tene’ Marion	DCS
Todd Nikoles	Phoenix Children’s Hospital

RECOMMENDATIONS FY 2023:

Federal Grants

Federal Agencies such as the Children’s Bureau have released several requests for grant proposals that align with the challenges the Department of Child Safety faces regarding caseworker retention and well-being. These releases have revealed the nationwide struggles faced by many child protection agencies and an understanding that these significant challenges will require funding and technical assistance to face. Thus, we recommend that DCS keep a close eye on grant funding released by the Children’s Bureau and other federal agencies and request federal funding and technical assistance. Further, this opportunity would provide support through other state CPS agencies facing similar challenges.

Caseloads and Caseworker Well-Being

The CRP recommends that, as caseworker retention increases and caseloads per worker decreases, the Department emphasizes using additional time for learning and development within the Department. To encourage and incentivize learning amongst caseworker staff, the Department can offer the flexibility to allow employees to train on their own schedule, so as to lessen any stress that may be affiliated with participating in training opportunities while managing the various needs of staff caseloads. Additionally, it is recommended that the Department provide a menu of various development opportunities for employees to be able to choose areas of learning that are tailored to their specific needs and skill levels.



Supervision

The CRP recommends that the Department make modifications to the supervisor onboarding program. This includes enhancing the supervision coaching program to include reflective supervision, communication skills, psychological safety, and how to improve well-being at work. The emphasis should be on personalized coaching and not training; supervisors need to help their caseworkers develop judgment around cases. Judgment cannot be taught via training, but needs coaching support to build individual capacity to apply principles in unique situations via personal judgment.

Training

The CRP recommends prioritizing the Protective Factors and strengths-based approach to training new DCS specialist employees earlier into the onboarding process and identifying simple and effective ways both new employees and supervisors can reinforce the application of these principles in their interactions with families.

- a. Example: Internal campaign with all teams or show-and-tell during team meetings to submit examples of families showcasing different protective factors (a. encouraging employees to look for those behaviors and acknowledging it to the parent directly, b. build team unity and prioritizing taking time to celebrate the good they are seeing in their clients, maybe have a team lunch as a reward c. create a 'bank' of dozens of examples of things families have done to build a specific protective factor that clients and/or staff can refer to if looking for strategies or out of the box ideas to help families)

“ The CRP recommends that the Department of Child Safety provide a job shadowing program for employees.. ”

The CRP recommends creating a strategy and executing on how they will intentionally incorporate people with lived experience into the program design, training, and development at the Department of Child Safety. <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/opre/report/family-input-knowledge-development-summary-brief>

- a. Ex. Create a Parent Council to assess with the Learning and Development team, existing training material for new DCS Specialists to identify opportunities where a video interview (recorded or Zoom), quote, case study, etc could be incorporated from families with lived experience to enhance the new employee experience in 'seeing' the real families behind the work they are doing and the impact/implications.

Mentorship

The CRP recommends that the Department of Child Safety provide a job shadowing program for employees to follow internal positions, such as those at Central Office, to see the career mobility they have within the department. Similarly, we recommend that the Department extend this job shadowing experience to external partners, such as court days with a judge and ride-alongs with law enforcement to deepen understanding of partner work to better impact families.

The CRP recommends developing a cohort-style peer support system for new employees, providing a platform that would be monitored to submit questions, get advice, and encourage their fellow newbies to build community, collaboration, and a system of support.

- a. Ex. Slack or a private FB page or Band app or monthly loosely facilitated check-ins with cohorts.

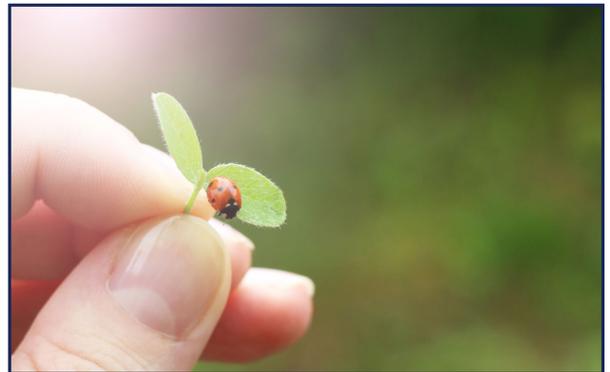
Similarly, we recommend reinstating the peer-mentor program to help onboarding new employees. DCS should incentivize a mentorship program, because currently, time to mentor falls outside the scope of heavy caseloads.

- a. Ex. A peer-mentor program being reintroduced as a professional development opportunity to grow your career, grow leadership, and exposure to leaders and different aspects of the Department of Child Safety. The recommendation includes full branding of program to elevate its status, an application and/or interview/selection process to emphasize the honor (and not just ANYONE gets accepted) and in addition to the potential pay bump, highlighting the opportunity for exposure, education, and experience in group meetings with other peer-mentors once a month or bi-monthly. Peer mentors will be able to hear about and possibly provide influence/feedback into organizational strategy and have facetime with leaders.

COMMUNITY ADVISORY COMMITTEE REPORT - BACKGROUND

The Community Advisory Committee was established June 2015 by A.R.S. §8-459, to provide a community forum with the following purpose:

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.



Additionally, the Community Advisory Committee serves as one of several Citizen Review Panels for the Department, as required by the Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (CAPTA). The full list of Citizen Review Panels can be found at <https://dcs.az.gov/about/community-advisory-committee>.

The Community Advisory Committee includes one representative from each of fourteen stakeholder groups. The Committee’s membership includes:

ARIZONA DCS COMMUNITY ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP	
SECTOR	NAME / AFFILIATION OF REPRESENTATIVE
Child welfare agencies that directly provide contracted services to children and their families	Jacob Schmitt, MPA, President/CEO, Arizona’s Children Association
Child advocacy organizations that deal with child welfare system policy issues	Candy Espino, MBA President and CEO of the Arizona Council of Human Service Providers
Current or former foster or adoptive parent	Jennifer Huber, PhD, former foster parent and adoptive parent
Medical providers, with a preference for pediatricians, who have experience in diagnosing and treating injuries related to abuse and neglect	Cody Conklin-Aguilera, MD., FAAP, Medical Director, Department of Public Health Yavapai County, Pediatric Program Manager, Verde Valley
Volunteers with the foster care review board or Court Appointed Special Advocate program	Robin Pearson, Executive Director, Voices for CASA Children
Persons with an academic appointment to a state university who conduct research in child welfare services, child maltreatment or child abuse or neglect	Vacant
The courts, the representative must be involved in child welfare issues	Nicole Roskens, LPC, Clinical Director, Cradle to Crayons Program, Superior Court of Maricopa County Juvenile Division, and Independent Private Practice, Counselor
A rural area in this state who has experience in the child welfare system	Rita Stageman, MSW, Assistant Clinical Professor, Child Welfare Training Project Coordinator, Department of Sociology and Social Work, Northern Arizona University
A Native American tribe or nation who has experience in the child welfare system	Elisia Manuel, President, Three Precious Miracles
A child advocacy organization that advocates for or represents children who are victims of crime.	Vacant
Persons who have experience with children with special needs and the child welfare system	Soncerea Swift, foster parent, social worker
A law enforcement agency. The representative must have experience with the Department on cases that involve criminal conduct allegations	Commander Matthew Siekmann Phoenix Police Department, Family Investigations Bureau



Schools. The representative must have experience in the child welfare system	Jennifer Garland Social worker, Phoenix Union High School District
A faith-based organization. The representative must have experience in the child welfare system	Mark Upton, President/CEO Christian Family Care

As required by A.R.S. §8-459, representatives are appointed by the Director of the Department of Child Safety and did not receive compensation for their service on the Committee. The statutory requirements of the Committee are to meet at least quarterly and produce a report of Committee activities and recommendations each fiscal year. A.R.S. § 8-459(D).

SUMMARY OF ACTIVITIES, ACTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The Committee met in SFY 2023 to receive information about current laws and policies as well as the call to public and an option for executive session. An archive of the Committee meetings, including material presented at the meetings can be accessed at the following web page: <https://dcs.az.gov/about/community-advisory-committee>. Due to scheduling conflicts and a change in DCS leadership, the Committee held two meeting ins SFY 2023. In accordance with A.R.S. §8-459(D), the Committee has summarized several activities and recommendations that came from the meetings held in SFY 2023.

MEETING #1: SEPTEMBER 9, 2022

Activities and Actions

- Community Advisory Committee Composition-

The Committee discussed the upcoming November elections and what impact that could have on the Committee. Chairman Peter Gentala announced his resignation from the Committee. The Committee elected Jacob Schmitt as the new chair.

- Legislative review-

DCS Legislative Liaison Melissa Compian discussed bills that increased the foster care daily rate, the monthly kinship stipend and the independent living stipend. Compian also covered the expansion of the Healthy Families Program and a bill that allows the Department to waive the fingerprint requirement for kinship families under certain circumstances.

- Call for Public Comments -

Members of the public were able to email comments into the Committee with the comments read into the minutes of the meeting by the Committee Chair. There were no comments from the public for the August meeting.

MEETING #2: DECEMBER 2, 2022

A meeting could not be held because the committee did not have a quorum.

MEETING #3: JUNE 9, 2023

Activities and Actions

- Legislation/Policy-

DCS Legislative Liaison Melissa Compian presented on the 2023 Legislative session. She highlighted bills that added funds for fleet vehicle replacement, the Positive Parenting Program, the Extended Foster Care Program, and a bill that increased the number of DCS visitation aides.

The Committee discussed the legislative session, but did not take any action.

- Director Introduction-

DCS Director David Lujan introduced himself to the Committee and discussed his background and goals for the Department. Lujan told the Committee that DCS field staff levels have been the highest in years and employee turnover is down. Lujan stated one of his goals is to partner with providers, other state agencies, and the community to help families thrive. Lujan stated that he intends to decrease disparity and rebuild trust with communities across the state. He said he wants to expand DCS’s prevention efforts to strengthen families and mitigate the need for out-of-home care.

- Call for Public Comment –

Members of the public were able to email comments into the Committee with the comments read into the minutes of the meeting by the Committee Chair. There were no public comments during the June meeting.

COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATIONS FOR DCS FOR STATE FISCAL YEAR 2023:

1. Regarding trauma-informed and responsive training: The Committee recommends that the Department provide training to staff that comprehends the significance of adverse childhood experiences in the lives of children, which promotes positive outcomes for increased resiliency, safety and social-emotional wellbeing while promoting effective non-traumatic methods for reducing negative reactions to trauma. The Committee acknowledges this was recommended last report and reaffirms this recommendation because of the amount of time it takes to implement such a training and because of the increased number of new employees at the Department.
2. Regarding foster home licensure for kinship families: The Committee acknowledges the upcoming departmental contract to provide services and supports for kinship families as a strength in supporting kin who are caring for children involved with the Department. The Committee continues to recommend the Department do all it can to streamline licensing requirements, increase availability of waivers, and review training requirements for the licensure of kinship families to expedite and increase kinship care placements in all communities, particularly in Native American communities.
3. Regarding support for youth who are dually involved: The Committee recommends that the Department create a workgroup to address the delay in assignment of DCS staff for those youth who are temporarily assigned to a safe environment (i.e. incarcerated, detained, or hospitalized) to improve the timely receipt of services for dually involved youth and families.

4. Regarding meeting the educational needs of children in the care of the Department: The Committee recommends that a workgroup be developed to make policy recommendations for the ongoing educational needs of children in the care of the Department. The Committee recognizes that SB 1205 is a helpful tool in determining initially the best interests for students involved with the Department, but more is needed for a reassessment of those plans later, after there has been a transition between the investigation and ongoing staff at the Department. It is further recommended that the workgroup include members of local school districts, caregivers and foster caregivers, young adults, as well line staff from the Department.
5. Regarding the training of Native American culture for Departmental staff: The Committee recommends that Departmental staff receive additional Native American cultural training as part of their training requirements. With 22 federally recognized tribes in Arizona and disparate rates of removal for Arizona’s Native American communities, the need for enhanced training and resources for Departmental staff is highly recommended.
6. Regarding contracting for services with DCS: The Committee recommends that the Department do more to work with procurement on the selection criteria of contracted agencies with a higher emphasis on quality of service delivery versus having the lowest rate. Additionally, it is further recommended that the Department revisit its Request for Proposal (RFP) culture to strategically partner to create a collegial culture between the department and the provider community.
7. Regarding the disproportionate number of black and indigenous children who come to the attention of the Department. The Committee recommends that the Department continue to work with those with lived experience and community stakeholders to address issues of disproportionality in Arizona’s black and indigenous communities.

DCS CITIZENS REVIEW PANEL ON SUCCESSFUL TRANSITION INTO ADULthood

Co-Chair(s): Ann Carver & Ryan Young

Roster June 27 2023

MEMBER NAME	PLACE OF WORK
Linda Scott	JFCS
Dr. Kathleen Downey	GCU College of Humanities and Social Science
Pamela Morrison	Phoenix Rescue Mission
Ann Carver MSW ABD, Co-Chair	ASU School of Social Work
Maritza Valenzuela (inactive)	Opportunities for Youth (OFY)
Teri Hollaway	Family Involvement Center
Betty Caratachea	Chicanos Por La Causa
Ryan Young, Co-Chair	Adult - Lived Experience from Foster Care
Sarah Padilla	Fort McDowell Yavapai Nation
Ken Dailey	Superior Court of Arizona in Maricopa County
Tracy Pedrotti	Arizona Family Health Partnership



Eshawn Peterson	Onward Hope
Jacy Farkas, MA ABD	U of A Sonoran Center for Excellence in Disabilities
Diane Daily	Arizona Friends of Foster Children
Cordero Holmes	

CITIZEN REVIEW PANEL MET:

- August 19 2023
- September 23, 2022
- October 14, 2022
- November 7 2022
- February 17, 2023
- June 2, 2023

Members of the Citizens Review Panel - Successful transitions to Adulthood met throughout SFY2022 which resulted in organizational adjustments to increase effectiveness of CRP-STA and recommendations to improve support and advocate for young people with current or past child welfare involvement.

In keeping with the mission of CRP, panel meetings provided designated space and time for community members to raise questions and explore the practices and policies in place that impact the lives and well-being of young people. When requested, the Department brought speakers, such as program staff and community partners, to share updates on the DCS strategic plan, strategies to address housing shortages, educational opportunities, internal efforts to discuss disparities, age of majority Team Decision Making (TDM), as well as transitional and extended support services. Panel members were encouraged to raise questions, exchange concerns, share observations and provide anecdotes on individual and systemic issues, and organizational and program changes, affecting young people.

Actions were taken to improve the effectiveness of CRP-STA over the SFY, such as, 1) inviting new members; 2) better aligning the CRP-STA with the Department’s Permanency and Youth Services unit; and establishing greater communication and coordination between the two CRP chairpersons.

- 1) To increase our effectiveness the, panel invited the following individuals to join CRP-STA
 - Eshawn Peterson, Founder and CEO of Onward Hope, Inc
 - Tiffani Wright, MCCCDC Districtwide Coordinator for Bridging Success Program
 - Jacy Farkas, Assistant Director of University of Arizona’s Sonoran Center for Excellence in Disabilities
 - Diane Daily, Arizona Friends of Foster Children Foundation, Keys to Success Program Director’

Additionally, two members of the CRP-STA presented a workshop on Fostering Successful Outcomes for Youth with Disabilities at the African American Conference on Disabilities in June 2023 where workshop attendees were encouraged to seek membership on an Arizona CRP.

2) Upon the request of CRP-STA, coordination of this panel is now conducted by Permanency and Youth Services versus Prevention services. As a result, CRP members benefited from greater engagement in DCS programs and policies related to young people. More specifically, this afforded CRP -STA panel members the opportunity to routinely converse with Youth Advocate staff and gain a far richer understanding of how policy is impacting young people and where current gaps in services and supports remain.

3) To increase CRP overall impact, the chairpersons for each CRP met to discuss ways to enhance consistency, share resources for coordination, and exchange ideas on how to engage diverse community members, especially those with lived experiences, without overtaxing them. As an outgrowth of this collaboration, mechanisms, such as shared folders, were put in place to sustain the increased information sharing between panels.

AS A RESULT OF THESE MEETINGS, THE CRP-STA RECOMMENDS THE FOLLOWING:

The Department provides clarity on how allowances, outlined in Policy Manual, Ch. 4, Section 10. Ch. 4, Section 10 are made available and whether they are accessible and sufficient.

- The Department provides clarity on how intermittent and or individual educational needs are being addressed such as field trips, tutoring, and class performance monitoring (typically done by parents, caretakers but perhaps not group homes).
- The Department provides advocacy and engagement training for young people, to enhance their understanding of CFT and TDMs (much like Mercy Care is doing for behavioral health providers) and how to effectively self-advocate and engage in their planning.
- The Department implements cross-systems training and development opportunities for providers and adjacent systems. More specifically, CRP-STA recommends that the Department host the following:
 - * A Foster Care Summit, much like the summit held on May 2022, which heavily focused on 501(c)(3) foster care providers, with three areas of focus: Kinship Care, Community Foster Care, and Extended Foster Care.
 - * Interagency Collaboration event much like the event held in June 2019 which included presentations from foster care, Vocational Rehabilitation, WIOA, Pre-ETS, Behavioral Health, and service coordination.
- The Department addresses the mechanisms in place to foster connectedness among peers (cultivating friendships), healthy social, cultural and intersectional identities, and normal developmental experiences (recreation, employment, friendships) especially for young people in group care.
- The Department provides status updates on past recommendations adopted in FY2021, upon request.