# CITIZENS REVIEW PANEL ANNUAL REPORT

Calendar Year 2022

## Submitted by

Child Death Review Executive Committee

Children's Justice Act Task Force

Clark County Department of Family Services Citizens Advisory Committee

## То

Nevada Division of Child and Family Services

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## **Executive Summary**

Public Law 104-234, Title I, Section 106, the Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (CAPTA) provides for a state grant program for the support and improvement of state Child Protective Systems (CPS). CAPTA requires that Nevada have at least three (3) Citizen Review Panels (CRP) to receive funding for child protection efforts. Citizen Review Panels are to review various aspects of the child protection system at the state and local levels and make recommendations for improvements. (See Appendix A).

Panels include members with expertise in the prevention and treatment of child abuse and neglect and have diverse membership, including but not limited to, representatives from:

- Community Advocacy and Non-Profit Organizations
- Public Child Serving Agencies
- Law Enforcement
- Parent and Youth Leaders
- Court Systems including Attorneys and Judges
- Mental and Physical Health
- Education
- Public Health

A list of each panel's members and their affiliations are provided in Appendix B.

Nevada has designated three (3) standing committees to serve as CRP's. All Nevada CRP's meet at least quarterly and meetings adhere to Open Meeting Law. Panels may make recommendations for training, policy or system improvements. Nevada CRPs include the:

- Child Death Review Executive Committee (CDR) which provides coordination and oversight of local child death review teams;
- Children's Justice Act Task Force (CJA), which is charged with developing, establishing, and operating programs designed to improve the assessment, investigation and prosecution of suspected child abuse and neglect;
- Clark County Department of Family Services Citizens Advisory Committee which identifies and communicates perspectives on services provided and how to best meet the needs of families that utilize the Clark County Department of Family Services; and

## **Panel Purpose and Activities**

## Executive Committee to Review the Death of Children (CDR)

#### Purpose

Nevada makes every effort to reduce the number of preventable child fatalities and near fatalities through prevention messaging, training, and other initiatives. Nevada's child fatality review process includes local multidisciplinary teams reviewing most of the child fatalities, between ages 0-17 years of age, within their own communities and making recommendations to the Executive Committee to Review the Death of Children. The Executive Committee is established through NRS 432B.403-NRS 432B.4095. It is a multidisciplinary team, which provides coordination and oversight of local child death review teams. The committee meets quarterly, adopts statewide protocols for the review of child deaths and distributes a statewide annual report that includes statistics and recommendations to prevent child deaths as well as regulatory and policy changes. The multidisciplinary team is comprised of representatives from local child death review teams, law enforcement, mental health, child welfare, vital statistics, and the office of the attorney general.

In 2022, the Executive Committee to Review the Death of Children continued to collaborate with the Regional Child Death Review Teams, as well as other State Agencies, such as the Bureau of Health Care Quality and Compliance, Division of Public and Behavioral Health, Department of Health and Human Services, in an effort to prevent further child deaths. The Executive Committee has continued to closely monitor the child deaths by suicide and unsafe sleep environments and data in an effort to make a meaningful recommendation for this report. The Executive Committee encouraged hospitals throughout the state of Nevada to include testing for fentanyl as part as their standard drug testing as a result of the increased accidental ingestion of fentanyl by children. This recommendation received positive media attention and the Executive Committee continues to find ways to advance this recommendation.

Pursuant to NRS 432B.409, there is a one-dollar tax on death certificates, which is used to fund prevention campaigns around the top four (4) causes and manner of deaths in Nevada. The Executive Committee awarded \$300,000.00 for SFY 2022 targeting prevention activities that focused on safe sleep practices and suicide prevention. The following projects were funded:

### Activities

### • Community Chest:

This agency provided an opportunity for children in their community to participate in the Community Chest's Comstock Kids program twice weekly for a year. This goal of the program is to increase children's protective factors and reduce the probability of participation in risk behaviors while lessening risk factors such as depression and suicide. The agency also provided the Cribs for Kids program to families in their rural area as well as the home visitors program to aide in injury prevention.

### • Washoe County Human Services Agency:

Washoe County Human Services Agency proposed to launch a multi-faceted Infant Safe Sleep Awareness Community Outreach campaign that was designed to educate the public about best practices when it comes to putting a baby safely to sleep, as well as to aid in connecting community members to resources for additional information and support. The campaign utilized outdoor media, digital media and television to create targeted messaging year-round, with an emphasis on Safe Sleep Awareness Month in October. Efforts focused on the greater Reno/Sparks region; however, through the use of local television and radio, as well as social media, messaging reached throughout Washoe County and beyond.

## • Children's Cabinet:

Children's Cabinet and Marriage have partnered with Family Therapist, Dr. Steven Nicholas to access and train for living constructs of youth, with a focus on their emotional affect, energy, self-perception, and future-orientation prior to asking about specific suicidal intentions. This year, the grant expanded the training to include parents and expanded the program to the Native American community by collaborating with Reno/Sparks Tribal Health Center.

## • NyE Communities Coalition:

NyE Communities Coalition partnered with Nye County School District, other partners, and local businesses to prevent the death of children in Nye, Esmeralda, and Lincoln Counties from unsafe sleep methods, and suicide.

### • Suicide Prevention Network:

This agency aimed to reduce child deaths by suicide by using an upstream prevention approach that focused on reducing risk factors and increasing protective factors through town hall sessions.

### • Clark County Department of Family Services:

Clark County Department of Family Services delivered a media campaign regarding unsafe sleep situations. This program provided parents/caregivers the appropriate training and guidance to create a safe sleep area for babies by learning current infant safe sleep recommendations.

### • Babies Bounty:

This agency is in Clark County. This agency provides a baby bundle program and a diaper bank. The baby bundle program includes necessities for a new infant as well as a crib for new parents as well.

## CDR Recommendations:

## Recommendations from CDR were provided to DCFS April 2023

## DCFS Responses to Recommendations provided to CDR June 2023

- It is recommended that DCFS, via the Executive Committee to Review the Death of Children, continue to collaborate with statewide organizations, including but not limited to, DPBH, Nevada Hospital Association, and the Statewide Overdose Data to Action Team, to address the ongoing concerns of fentanyl related overdoses & accidental ingestions by:
  - Providing education to the families we serve about the dangers of fentanyl;
  - Staying informed about the resources provided by the Statewide Overdose Data to Action Team.
- It is recommended that DCFS, via the Executive Committee to Review the Death of Children, continue to collaborate with statewide organizations, to include but not limited to, DPBH, and Nevada Off-Road Association, to address the ongoing concerns of off-road vehicle accidents involving minors by:
  - Providing education to the families we serve about the Importance of proper off-road vehicle safety;
  - Partnering with the Nevada Outdoor School to facilitate safety training.
- It is recommended that DCFS provide training to the child welfare workforce and partner agencies, including, but not limited to, CASA, CAP Attorneys, and other court professionals on:
  - Understanding the impacts of childhood trauma and adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) on parental behavior; and
  - Understanding how childhood trauma and ACEs may negatively affect parent's ability to safely care for their child(ren).
  - o Incorporate conversations about protective factors as ways to mitigate risk and safety concerns.

## Purpose

The Nevada Children's Justice Act (CJA)Task Force was established in 1994 per the requirements set forth in the Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (PL 111-320) (CAPTA). The mission of the Task Force is to review and assess how the Nevada child protection systems handle child maltreatment cases (including abuse, neglect, fatalities, with a special emphasis on sexual abuse and exploitation and children with disabilities and serious health related problems who may have been abused or neglected) and to make recommendations for improving interventions with the goal of limiting additional trauma to children and their families.

The CJA is a multidisciplinary team with fourteen unique disciplines represented and the CJA grant funds multidisciplinary training, policy development, and pilot programs.

## Annually the CJA Task Force focuses on five goals:

- Goal 1: Provide child protection workers and stakeholders "front end" specialty, discipline specific and advanced training. Training should be prioritized, but not limited to, child protection model assessments, Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA), sexual abuse, domestic violence, forensic interviewing, mandatory reporting, trauma-informed practices, substance use and co-occurring mental health disorders and training needs identified in collaboration with Court Improvement Program.
  - > Activities:
    - The CJA provided funding for child welfare staff and stakeholders to attend the following trainings:
      - Clark County Department of Family Services contracted with National Children's Advocacy Center (NCAC) to provide multiple four-day trainings on the forensic interviewing of children to participants who primarily work in the investigation, law enforcement and prosecution of suspected child abuse cases.
      - Washoe County Child Advocacy Center (WCCAC) invited local MDT members, case managers and child welfare staff from the local Child Advocacy Center (CAC) to attend:
        - Crimes Against Children's Conference (8 members of MDT attended)
        - Child Welfare League of America's Annual Conference (4 child welfare CPS staff attended)
      - The Division of Child and Family Services provided 17 MDT members to the annual Handle with Care Conference.
    - Maintenance of the Nevada Children's Justice Task Force:
      - To support and maintain the full multidisciplinary Task Force through member recruitment, training and provision of technical assistance/consultation and travel to attend meetings. Task Force members will develop and monitor the implementation of objectives for training and policy through approved activities. The Task Force will support interagency collaboration and Court Improvement Program (CIP) collaboration implementing the intent of the CJA grant.
    - Collaboration with CIP Coordinator:
      - The CIP Coordinator presented to the CJA Task Force in the July 2022 meeting. She discussed the CIP's 5-year strategic plan and their current goals. DCFS, Health Management Services and the CIP coordinator have been collaborating together to discuss a "round table" training for our courts regarding domestic violence and best practices.

- Goal 2: Support the implementation of the Commercially Sexually Exploited Child (CSEC) Model Coordinated Response Protocol and provide training and support for the formation of Multidisciplinary Teams (MDT) and Task Forces.
  - > Activity:
    - Support CSEC protocol implementation in Nevada through collaboration with Nevada CSEC Coordinator. Efforts include the development of a statewide database that will track CSEC victims across multiple agencies and to establish a baseline dataset of this population and training for stakeholders to identify CSEC victims. This project started in this grant cycle; however, it is a multiple year project, and the funding will be covered during multiple grant cycles.
      - From June 2022 until December 2022, approximately 10,957 children ages 11 and older were screened for CSEC. Out of the 10,957 children screened, 115 children were identified as confirmed victims of CSEC.
- Goal 3: Support the establishment of new Children's Advocacy Centers (CACs) and/or other multidisciplinary team approaches. Improve the capacity of existing CACs to provide a multidisciplinary response for victims of child sex abuse and exploitation, physical abuse, and child victims with disabilities. Activities may include the development of a strategic action plan for project implementation, identification of rural health care providers, investigation of funding opportunities for infrastructure and operating costs, and the use of telehealth and telemedicine statewide.
  - > Activity:
    - Multiple trainings were provided to CAC members and stakeholders which were included in goal 1. Clark County Department of Family Services furnished a conference room at the Southern Nevada Child Advocacy Center (SNCAC) which will be used for the collaboration of all disciplines involved in a child's case. Great Basin Children's Advocacy Center (GBCAC) was able to purchase training supplies and materials for their new building. GBCAC went through a Virtual Site Review for National Children's Alliance Accreditation on October 19, 2022, and the reviewers put in a recommendation for them to be fully accredited and this was formally approval in January 2023. In addition, construction for their permanent building should be completed in June 2023
- Goal 4: Fund technology requests to improve the investigation, assessment and prosecution of child abuse and neglect through use of the latest technology and to support use of new and existing training technologies.

## > Activity:

- Provided funding for technology requests to improve the investigation, assessment and prosecution of child abuse and neglect through use of latest technology and to support use of new and existing training technologies. CJA purchases Enhanced technology that included 5 laptop computers and 6 external CD/DVD players for Washoe County Children's Advocacy Center (WCCAC).
  - The DVD drives allows workers to review forensic interviews and suspect interviews during their assessment and documentation and have become a key component to completing assessments. The laptops provided have been used daily and allow for caseworkers to be mobile and work from police stations, forensic interviews, and other places in the field necessary for them to remain an active part of the MDT. For example, when interviews are taking place at a police

station, caseworkers can bring their laptops to assist in live-time documentation and information sharing.

## CJA Recommendations:

## Recommendations from CJA were provided to DCFS January 2023

## DCFS Responses to Recommendations provided to CJA June 2023

- The Children's Justice Act Task Force (CJA) recommends the Division of Child and Family Services (DCFS) continues to prioritize training for all child welfare staff and stakeholders in the State of Nevada to improve the investigation and handling of child abuse, neglect, or cases involving both, particularly child sexual abuse and exploitation. This training recommendation includes, but is not limited to, child protection assessment and system of care models, family and interpersonal violence, mandatory reporting, medical forensic interventions, trauma-informed practices, and cultural responsiveness.
- The Children's Justice Act Task Force (CJA) recommends the Division of Child and Family Services (DCFS) support efforts to translate best practices and support community-specific needs to coordinate the multidisciplinary response to child abuse, neglect, or cases involving both, particularly child sexual abuse and exploitation. This Multidisciplinary Team (MDT) support recommendation includes introducing and establishing Children's Advocacy Centers (CACs), as appropriate.

## Clark County Department of Family Services Citizens Advisory Committee (CAC)

## Purpose

The Citizen's Advisory Committee (CAC) serves as a liaison between the community and Clark County Department of Family Services (DFS). The purpose of the Citizen's Advisory Committee is to identify and communicate to the DFS important social service issues and service requirements regarding client services. This committee offers perspective on services provided and how to best meet the needs of families that utilize the DFS. The Advisory Committee examines areas of focus along the full continuum of child welfare and initiates recommendations forwarded to DFS Administration.

## Activities

## **Mental Health**

The CAC has identified the Children's Mental Health Crisis in Nevada as a priority that necessitates the active participation of both DFS (Monthly) and the Nevada Department of Children & Family Services Administrator (Quarterly) to report out to the CAC on what the State and County are doing to address the lack of an effective trauma informed, evidence-based mental health service array for children across the State, especially our most vulnerable population of abused and neglected children.

Nevada has a large gap for mental health services between Residential Treatment Centers and specialized foster care; there needs to be a step down of services to fill this gap. Clark County needs more mental health care facilities in general and facilities that can treat young children (under the age of 12) specifically. Over the last year DFS has developed an Intermediate Care Facility for the developmentally and intellectually delayed population and has contracted to open the state's first Qualified Residential Treatment Program. Both of these programs are needed and first of their kind programs in Clark County.

There remain disruption concerns with children in care and post-care who are not receiving the treatment they need. Recognizing that these concerns are not limited to Clark County, and that the state of mental health lies in the hands of the Nevada Department of Children and Families Services (DCFS, aka the State), the CAC is requesting a monthly update from DCFS regarding the status of:

- The number of residential treatment beds available and filled.
- The timeline for making more beds available.
- The implementation plan for step-down/step-up programs for post-residential care and preventative residential care.
- The status of trauma informed community-based mental health services, to include the expansion of Mobile Mental Health Response teams and local, short-term facility beds and outpatient facilities to include therapeutic day-schools.

### Prevention

The CAC identified Prevention as one of its initiatives, especially as it relates to the new federal Families First Prevention Services Act. One of the interventions DFS is evaluating and reporting on is the Thrive By Five program monthly.

### Intervention and Accountability

The CAC identified Intervention and Accountability as it relates to improved communication within DFS as another initiative. The CAC assesses DFS's internal and external communication strategies so as to ensure that the DFS is open, inclusive and transparent. The CAC expressed particular interest in how DFS is helping staff to understand that with culture also comes accountability. DFS Culture Workgroups continue to meet, and the CAC is provided with monthly updates on their progress.

## Transitional and Aging Out Youth (TAY) Supports

The CAC identified TAY supports as an initiative especially as it relates to what DFS is doing to support youth transitioning out of care. We are tracking the implementation of Public Law 116 which extends Foster Care to age 26. The CAC continues to receive reports on providing emergency funds for those aged-out youth who haven't paid their rent due to the Covid 19 moratorium. The CAC is also receiving monthly reports out on the status of LifeSet program and how many youths have successfully completed the program.

### Education

The CAC identified Education as an initiative especially as it relates to children in care. Particular points of interest during the Covid Pandemic were distance learning/access, the Lifeline program and the status of SB347. The mental health of our students remains a concern and a priority for the CAC and to that end we have requested monthly reporting of the Education Stakeholder Meeting that DFS convenes with CCSD Administration, System Partners, Care Providers and Child Advocates to address the ongoing educational needs of our children in care.

#### **Ombudsman's Report**

The Clark County Ombudsman has presented to the CAC and provides its monthly reports to the CAC for review and discussion. The Ombudsman provides an overview of the types of complaints that are being received to determine if there are systematic and ongoing issues that necessitate management intervention. The reporting also encompasses complaints that are received internally by DFS Supervisors/Managers, as well as complaints that are made directly to the Ombudsman. Currently, there is a high number of foster parents expressing concerns about calls and emails not being returned.

#### **Policies and Procedures**

DFS will continue to update their policies and procedures, making them available on their website and will continue to update the CAC monthly on any changes or impending changes to policies and the communication plans.

## CAC Recommendations:

## Recommendations from CAC were provided to DCFS April 2023

## DCFS Responses to Recommendations provided to CAC June 2023

The Clark County Citizen's Advisory Committee (CAC) serving as a Citizen's Review Panel (CRP) for the State of Nevada respectfully submits this Report and Recommendation for publication in the Statewide CRP with particular emphasis on the *Children's Mental Health Crisis in Foster Care* as a high priority item that necessitates official action and response from the DCFS Administrator &/or Designee.

The CAC herein incorporates the Recommendations that it submitted to DCFS in 2022, which were not published in the official CRP Report:

The CAC is evaluating and will be voting on recommendations for the DFS in the coming months. Recommendations will likely focus on children and youth receiving adequate services to meet their wellbeing needs (mental health, physical health, and educational needs) with corresponding benchmarks to:

- Increase quality engagement of children to assess their wellbeing.
- Increase quality engagement of caregivers to assess their wellbeing needs.
- Increase mental health screenings and assessments for children
- Increase EPSDT's completed timely
- Increase the number of NEIS referrals for children age 3 and under.
- Increase placement stability outside of RTC placements for SED youth.

In addition to what was submitted in 2022, the CAC respectfully recommends that DCFS attend the CAC Monthly Meetings on the 3<sup>rd</sup> Thursday of every month at 8:30am via WebEx to report out on what DCFS is doing to address the *Children's Mental Health Crisis in Foster Care*; specifically:

- Present a Data Dashboard establishing the baseline of Mental Health Services offered across the State to include: 1) Qualified Residential Treatment Programs QRTP (i.e. number of fully staffed beds that are being utilized versus the number of fully staffed beds that are available and accessible), 2) Step Down Services from QRTP, 3) Community-Based Mental Health Services, 4) Mobile Mental Health Crisis Response, and 5) any other data points delineating the availability and accessibility of evidence-based, trauma informed, mental health services for all children (including those under 12).
- Establish and expand an effective evidence-based Mental Health Service Array for all children ranging from Mobile Mental Health Crisis Response to Community based mental health services to Qualified Residential Treatment Programs (QRTP) to step down services for children.
- Expedite Medicaid Approval for mental health services.

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- Eliminate barriers to wrapping children (including those under the age of 12) in effective mental health interventions and services.
- Develop Innovative mechanisms to increase availability and accessibility to the mental health service array via data platforms and dashboards on the DCFS website so that providers can readily access and secure services for children (i.e. number of available fully staffed beds at a QRTP)

## APPENDIX A: OVERVIEW OF NEVADA CITIZEN REVIEW PANELS

#### **Federal Requirements**

As outlined in Public Law 104-235, Title I, Section 106, the Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (CAPTA) provides for a state grant program for the support and improvement of state child protective services (CPS) systems. This law sets forth a variety of eligibility requirements, including the establishment of citizen review panels. The purpose of the panels is "to provide new opportunities for citizens to play an integral role in ensuring that states are meeting their goals of protecting children from abuse and neglect."

The citizen review panel (CRP) system within a given state must meet certain operational requirements and meet a scope of responsibilities within the function of the panel. These are outlined as follows:

## • Scope of Responsibilities

Each CRP is required to review the compliance of State and local CPS agencies in the fulfillment of their responsibilities with respect to the following:

- Work in accordance with the CAPTA State Plan;
- Examine state and local policies and procedures;
- Review specific cases, when appropriate; and
- Review other criteria the panel determines important to the protection of children, including the extent to which the state CPS system is coordinated with the Title IV-E foster care and adoption assistance programs and the review of child fatalities and near fatalities.

### • State Requirements

As Part of the CAPTA requirements, states are required to codify CRPs through state law. During 2001, NRS 432B.396 was amended as a result of AB 248 to establish civil sanctions for violations of confidentiality on the part of the CRP members. This amendment includes additional language highlighted in subsection two as follows:

- Establish a panel comprise of volunteer members to evaluate the extent to which agencies which provide child welfare services are effectively discharging their responsibilities for the protection of children.
- Adopt regulations to carry out the provisions of subsection1, which must include, without limitation, the imposition of appropriate restrictions on the disclosure of information obtained by the panel and civil sanctions for the violation of those restrictions. The civil sanctions may provide for the imposition in appropriate cases of a civil penalty of not more than \$500. The Division may bring an action to recover any civil penalty imposed and shall deposit any money recovered with the State Treasurer for credit to the State General Fund.

## APPENDIX B: PANEL MEMBERS

## Child Death Review Executive Committee

MEMBER NAME	AFFLIATION
Melinda Rhoades, Chair	SAFY
Sheri McPartlin	Clark County School District
Christine Eckles	Washoe County Juvenile Justice
Denise Tyre	Washoe County Human Services Agency
Kathie McKenna	Pioneer Territory CASA
Brian Shoaf	Elko County Sheriff's Office
Stephanie Herrera, Chair	Department of Health and Human Services- Vital
	Statistics
Sgt. Laura Conklin	Reno Police Dept
Vicki Ives	Department of Public Behavioral Health – Maternal
	Child Health
Misty Vaughn Allen	Department of Public Behavioral Health - Suicide
	Prevention
Jennifer Spencer	Office of Attorney General
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Cindy Pitlock	Division of Child and Family Services
Jill Marano	Clark County Department of Family Services
Amber Howell	Washoe County Human Service Agency
Cody Phinney	Department Public Behavioral Health
	Mental/Behavioral Health
Desiree Mattice	Department of Public Safety
Nancy Saitta	Children's Commission
Marla McDade Williams	Department of Health and Human Services
Michelle Sandoval	Department Public Behavioral Health -Rural Clinics
Vacant	Division of Child and Family Services
Amanda Haboush	Prevent Child Abuse Nevada
Jorge Montano-Figueroa	SAFE KIDS

## Children's Justice Act Task Force

MEMBER NAME	MEMBERSHIP DESIGNATION
Desiree Mattice	Law Enforcement
Magistrate Michelle Rodriguez	Criminal Court Judge
Judge Margaret Pickard	Civil Court Judge
Magistrate Wendy Maddox	Civil Court Judge
Jennifer Spencer	Prosecuting Attorney
Christine Sullivan	Defense Attorney
Janice Wolf	Child Advocate/Attorney for Children
Jane Saint, Vice-Chair	Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA)
Rachell Ekross	Health Professional
Jamie Wong	Mental Health Professional
Fran Maldonado	Individual Experienced in Working with Children with
	Disabilities
Kendra Gipson/Char Frost	Parent/Representative of Parent Group
Angelina Blare	Adult Former Victim of Child Abuse and Neglect
Wonswayla Mackey	CPS Agency/Clark County Department of Family
	Services
Laurie Jackson & Betsey Crumrine	CPS Agency/DCFS-Rural Region
Tammi Williamson	CPS Agency/Washoe County Health and Human
	Services
Salli Kerr, Chair	Individual Experienced in Working with Homeless
	Children and Youth

## Clark County Citizens Advisory Committee

MEMBER NAME	AFFILIATION
Dashun Jackson (Chair)	Youth with Foster Care Experience
Andre Bailey (Vice Chair)	General Public
Matthew Cox (Deputy Chair)	Child Welfare Advocates
Judge Stephanie Charter	Local Juvenile Probation Services
Donna Smith	Foster and Adoptive Parents
Pamela Roberts	Private Provider of Mental Health
Shelia Parks	Court Appointed Special Advocate
Alison Caliendo	Foster and Adoptive Parent/ Kinship Advocate