

CITIZENS REVIEW PANEL ANNUAL REPORT

Calendar Year 2020

Submitted by

Child Death Review Executive Committee

Children's Justice Act Task Force

*Clark County Department of Family Services Citizens Advisory
Committee*

To

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 (CAC) 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 2020, the Executive Committee to Review the Death of Children was reorganized to ensure the committee was accomplishing their duties as outlined in NRS statutes. New committee members were brought onboard, and the Committee has made recommendations and offered to collaborate with various State Agencies such as the State Board of Pharmacy, the Nevada Insurance Commissioner, and the Bureau of Health Care Quality and Compliance in an effort to prevent further child fatalities. The Executive Committee has also closely monitored the child deaths by suicide over the past year, as there has been a concern of an increase in youth suicide due to the COVID-19 pandemic and distance learning.

In 2003, Nevada passed a law placing 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 \$130,000 for SFY 2021 targeting prevention activities identified as the leading causes of death in Nevada over the past year. The following projects were funded:

Activities

- **Baby's Bounty:**

This program provided safe sleep classes along with cribs and safe sleep kits. As a result of the COVID-19 Pandemic, Babies Bounty responded by moving most of their services online, with the use of a free app on mobile devices. Additionally, they also established a diaper bank, similar to food banks.

- **Crisis Support Services of Nevada:**

In 2011, Crisis Call Center established the Text4life campaign which allows clients to text the crisis call center. This is especially helpful to youth who are more comfortable texting than talking on the phone. This grant allowed expansion of this service.

- **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.

- **Renown Children’s Health Initiative:**

Renown extended their work with the Children’s Cabinet and Marriage and 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 more education personnel and incorporated a counseling approach called Living Ideation, developed by Dr. Nicholas, which encourages the cessation of a suicidal ideation by interrupting the emotionally driven feedback loops with present-minded and future-oriented comprehensions.

- **Nevada Medical Center:**

Nevada Medical Center’s “Hope Mean Nevada” initiative and “#ask5” campaign were designed as a statewide effort to share digital and in-person mental health and wellness resources to raise awareness around mental health and child/adolescent (teen) suicide prevention.

- **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 drowning, unsafe sleep methods, and suicide.

Children's Justice Act Task Force (CJA)

Purpose

The Nevada Children's Justice Act Task Force was established in 1994 as a requirement of Section 107(a) of the Child Abuse and Protection Treatment Act (P.L. 111-320) to receive an annual grant to improve child protection services in the State. The CJA is a multidisciplinary team with 14 unique disciplines represented.

The CJA is charged with developing, establishing, and operating programs designed to improve the assessment and investigation of suspected child abuse and neglect cases with a special emphasis on sexual abuse and exploitation, child fatalities, and cases involving children with disabilities or serious health-related problems who are suspected victims of child abuse or neglect. The CJA grant funds multidisciplinary training, policy development, and pilot programs.

Activities

- **Maintenance of the Nevada Children's Justice Task Force:**

Support and maintain the full multidisciplinary Task Force through member recruitment and attendance of meetings, including the CJA Annual Grantees meeting. Task Force members monitored the implementation of objectives for training and policy through approved activities. The Task Force completed the CJA Three-Year Assessment during this reporting period. They supported interagency collaboration, implementing the intent of the CJA grant and serving as a feedback loop for the Court Improvement Program (CIP) and Program Improvement Plan (PIP) and are able to make recommendations in their dual role as a Citizens Review Panel (CRP).

- **Professional Training:**

Multiple trainings were provided to professionals that are involved with the continuum of child abuse investigation and prosecution. This included training on best practices to improve investigations and prosecutorial outcomes while supporting safety and well-being for all children and forensic interview training.

- **Support Use of Latest Technology:**

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.

- **Support Domestic Violence Training for Child Welfare Staff:**

Domestic violence training addressing risk and protective factors for families developed and provided by the Nevada Coalition to End Domestic and Sexual Violence (NCESDV). Training has been provided to child welfare staff in two child welfare jurisdictions, with the last jurisdiction scheduled to receive the training in June 2021.

- **Support Implementation of New Legislation and Identify New or Needed Changes to Legislation:**

The legislation that governs child protection in Nevada, specifically addressing the "front-end" of the child welfare system (NRS432B) was reviewed and assessed for needed changes. Legislation has been

drafted to update NRS 432B and provided necessary clarifications for child welfare staff and stakeholders in Nevada.

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

Purpose

The Citizen Advisory Committee serves as a liaison between the community and Clark County Department of Family Services (DFS). The purpose of the Citizens 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

- **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 Safe At Home program.

- **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. CAC participated in a stakeholder's survey which was developed to assess external stakeholder's input as it relates to the DFS's staff's interaction and accountability with stakeholders. Of the 50 responses received, the survey confirmed that there are ongoing concerns from stakeholders regarding internal and external communication between workers and community partners. The CAC expressed particular interest in how DFS is helping staff to understand that with culture also comes accountability. Workgroups continue to meet and the CAC is expecting another update in June/July 2021.

- **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 is receiving reports on providing emergency funds for those aged-out youth who haven't paid their rent due to the Covid19 moratorium.

- **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.

- **Ombudsman's Report:**

The Clark County Ombudsman has presented to the CAC and provides its monthly reports to the CAC for review and discussion. Regularly review monthly reports provides an overview of the types of complaints that are being received to determine if there are systematic and ongoing issues, that may need to be addressed by management staff. The reporting will also encompass 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.

- **Legislation**

The CAC receives monthly report outs and tracking on bills of interest during each legislative session. Additionally, members of CAC report on any bills of interest which they are tracking, so that others may also follow those bills.

- **Mental Health**

The CAC has recently identified children's mental health crisis, related to children impacted by the foster care system and the lack of services that are available in the community as a priority issue. DFS currently has a large gap in the middle of specialized foster care. Clark County needs more mental health care facilities in general and facilities that can treat young children specifically. We also need faster/easier approvals from Medicaid and a step-down process that fills the gaps. There are also disruption concerns with children in care who are not receiving the treatment they need and concerns over an increase in prescribed medication for young children.

- **Policies and Procedures**

DFS has been updating their policies and procedures, making them available on their website. We are currently tracking the Case Transfer policy, the Commercially Sexually Exploited Children policy as updated by the state, and the School Stability determination policy.

CRP Recommendations

- It is recommended that the DCFS identify ways in which wraparound services can be provided to families who have a youth that may have suicidal ideation. Additionally, best practice would be to refer a family, and the services started as soon as possible to prevent more youth from dying by suicide.
- It is recommended that the DCFS partner with sister agencies to provide education to parents/caregivers on how to look for signs of suicidal ideation and keep their child safe once suicidal ideation/signs have been identified. This includes, but is not limited to, appropriate firearm safety/storage, medication safety/storage, and other potential means.
- It is recommended that the DCFS partner with sister agencies and other community providers as appropriate to increase evidence based public awareness around Safe Sleep and Water Safety in an effort to prevent unsafe sleep and drowning deaths.
- It is recommended that the DCFS continue to prioritize training that will improve the investigative process of handling of cases of child abuse and neglect, including, but not limited to child protection model assessments, domestic violence, mandatory reporting, and trauma-informed practices.

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. In Nevada, this was completed with the passage of Assembly Bill (AB) 158 during the 1999 legislative session. 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	AFFILIATION
Michelle Sandoval	Division of Public and Behavioral Health
Misty Vaughan Allen	Office of Suicide Prevention
Stephanie Herrera, Co-Chair	Department of Health and Human Services- Vital Statistics
Sharon Benson	State Attorney General's Office
Jessica Rogers	Detective, Las Vegas Metropolitan Police Department
Ross Armstrong	Division of Child and Family Services
Tim Burch	Clark County Department of Family Services
Margarite DeSantos, Co-Chair	Southern Nevada Health District; Clark County CDR Team Member
Linda Kalekas	Clark County School District; Clark County CDR Team Member
Amber Howell	Washoe County Human Services Agency
Christine Eckles	Washoe County Juvenile Justice; Washoe County CDR Team Member
Vickie Ives	Division of Public and Behavioral Health
Breanna Jenkins	Washoe County CDR Team Member
Kathie McKenna	Rural Region CDR Team Member

Children's Justice Act Task Force

MEMBER NAME	MEMBERSHIP DESIGNATION
Desiree Mattice	Law Enforcement
Gabrielle Carr, Chair	Criminal Court Judge
David Gibson	Civil Court Judge
Sharon Benson	Prosecuting Attorney
Jennifer Rains	Defense Attorney
Janice Wolf	Child Advocate/Attorney for Children
Sheila Parks	Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA)
Rebecca Gebhardt	Health Professional
Jennifer McCombs / Jamie Wong	Mental Health Professional
Mari Parlade	Child Protective Services
Fran Maldonado	Individual Experienced in Working with Children with Disabilities
Allison Stephens	Parent/Representative of Parent Group
Kimberly Mull	Adult Former Victim of Child Abuse and Neglect
Salli Kerr, Vice Chair	Individual Experienced in Working with Homeless Children and Youth

Clark County Citizens Advisory Committee

MEMBER NAME	AFFILIATION
Donna Smith, Chair	Foster and Adoptive Parents
Brian Adams	Clark County School District
Ron Harris	Parent Adovcate
Matthew Cox	Child Welfare Advocates
Andre Bailey, Deputy Chair	General Public
Judge Frank Sullivan	Local Juvenile Probation Services
Dashun Jackson, Vice Chair	Youth with Foster Care Experience
Crystal Bomar	General Public
Sheila Parks	Court Appointed Special Advocate
Rhiannon Foreman	Child Welfare Advocates
Carly Aldis	Private Providers of Mental Health