

## Chisago County Citizen Review Panel 2018 Annual Report

### Mission Statement

To provide an opportunity for citizens to play a role in insuring children are protected from abuse and neglect, and to encourage and help build nurturing homes for children in our communities.

### Panel Members

Traci Besch  
Bethany Kozel  
Cheryl Jelinek  
Janet Peterson, resigned in 2018  
Sara Smit

### Meetings

The Citizen Review Panel met eight times for the year of 2018; one meeting was cancelled due to weather and two were cancelled due to scheduling conflicts. Most meetings were held at the Chisago County Public Health building, in North Branch, Minnesota. One meeting was held at the Chisago Lakes Area Library, Chisago City, Minnesota.

### Activities

- January 2018 – A presentation on Child Protection Screen Guidelines took place during the meeting
- February 2018 – Three new panel members participated in New Member Training
- April 2018 – Foster Care licensing presentation was planned, but presenter needed to cancel
- May 2018 – Pursued planning a listening session with active foster care providers
- June 2018 – Executed a listening session with active foster care providers; purchased Abusive Head Trauma written materials to replenish and supplement those for the project completed in 2017.
- August 2018 – Report from Chisago County Public Health on use of the Abusive Head Trauma materials; Reviewed feedback received during the listening session
- October 2018 –Continued work on Foster Care project
- November 2018 – Volunteer panel members met (without DHS or county representation) to gain familiarity with the DHS Data Dashboard and annual especially related to the Foster Care project
- We participated in 8 redeterminations
- Traci Besch and Bethany Kozel attended an ACEs training presented by a therapist from Therapeutic Services Agency, a school counselor and a school social worker
- Sara Smit attended the webinar: Slow and Steady Wins the RACE of Child Welfare Equity on February 21, 2019 read two memoirs regarding foster care: Three Little Words by Ashley Rhodes-Courter and Another Place at the Table by Kathy Harrison

## 2018 Project

In the spring of 2018, the Chisago County Citizen Review Panel began pursuing a focus on foster care, more specifically on non-relative foster care providers. The panel gathered information regarding the topic by consulting with Chisago County staff, soliciting feedback from foster care providers, and review of the statewide and local data.

Grant funding was used to execute the foster parent listening session. Specifically, funds were spent on providing a meal during the meeting and providing gift cards to the participants to offset the cost of childcare.

Panel members specifically reviewed data available through the DHS Data Dashboard as well as recent Annual Maltreatment and Out of Home and Permanency Reports. County level data is still being gathered.

After all data is compiled and reviewed, findings which will be presented to the Chisago County Board include:

- Increased numbers of children in care between 2015-2017
    - 2015: 101      2016: 126      2017: 140
    - This is further represented by changes in the number of days of care provided for each year. Days of care provided each year were  
2015: 19,194    2016: 20,377    2017: 28,023
- Numbers of staff and foster care providers should reflect this increase. Further, the increase requires that prevention and early intervention services should be reviewed.
- Need for additional foster care providers, especially located within certain areas of the county. Sufficient providers throughout the county benefit children by enabling them to remain living in their school district and general familiarity. Currently, the Rush City school district has only one non-relative foster care provider within the district.
  - Need for more local training/continuing education opportunities for foster care providers. Foster care providers and county staff have both identified this as an area of focus. Accessible trainings on relevant topics allow providers to be more informed on the needs of the children in their care and thus provide better care.
  - Need for greater judicial understanding of foster child needs especially with regard to visitation and permanency. Foster care providers and county staff have both identified this as an area of focus. County supervisory staff members have recently had a productive meeting with judges and hope that can continue on a regular basis.

## Looking Ahead

One focus will include panel recruitment. Additional project ideas will be explored in the coming months.