

Ramsey County Citizen Review Panel

In 2016, the Ramsey County Citizen Review Panel (CRP) requested and received a broad range of child protection-related presentations at many of its meetings. Information requested ranged from use of the Parent Support Outreach Program (PSOP) in Ramsey County to a presentation on the African-American Babies Coalition.

Panel members also attended many trainings and conferences. The panel sent one member to the national CRP conference in Alaska. It also rotated attendance at Child Mortality Review Panel meetings.

Panel members developed a consumer satisfaction surveys for children and youth in foster care, foster families and parents whose children are in out-of-home care due to child protection. After in-depth analysis and discussion, the panel decided to focus on the foster parent survey.

A survey for foster parents was developed and 200 were distributed to Ramsey County foster families in November 2017. The survey included topic questions with multiple follow-up questions for each topic. The topic areas were foster parent training, ongoing communication with county [agency staff], the adequacy of reimbursement, and social/emotional/informational support for foster parents. Fifty-seven surveys were returned. Some questions were skipped on many forms. A blank copy of the survey is attached.

The most striking response was that approximately 70 percent of respondents indicated that they had not received any training or information regarding the out-of-home placement plan. Minnesota Statutes require consultation on the plan with, among others, the child's foster parent. See partial statute below.

Minnesota Statute, section 260C.212 (b), an out-of-home placement plan means a written document which is prepared by the responsible social services agency jointly with the parent or parents or guardian of a child and in consultation with child's guardian ad litem; tribe, if an Indian child; **the child's foster parent** [emphasis added], or representative of a foster care facility; and, where appropriate, the child.

Training regarding the importance of the out-of-home placement plan and how to participate in development of the out-of-home placement plan were determined to be the top need for training. The other top training requests were for mental health issues, how to work with the biological parents of the children in their care and adolescent issues. They found the car seat training useful, but too long, and also wanted training on Fetal Alcohol Syndrome. Child care posed a barrier to attending training for 50 percent of respondents. In general, foster parents indicated that in most cases they received adequate funding, except for child care;

approximately 61 percent said that child care funding did not cover the expense. Seventeen out of 20 respondents indicated that they would like to belong to a foster parent support group.

Ramsey County Citizen Review Panel Recommendations

The panel's recommendations to Ramsey County staff and Board of Commissioners, based on the survey, are to address the following:

1. Begin and emphasize the foster parent role regarding consulting with county staff on the out-of-home placement plan for children in a foster placement.
2. Increase the foster parent's role in developing and modifying the out-of-home placement plan as a child grows and develops new needs and wants.
3. Initiate wide-spread access to foster parent support groups.

MN DHS Response

Minnesota Department of Human Services staff from the Minnesota Child Welfare Training Unit, attended a CRP meeting to discuss the foster family training offered by MN DHS.

MN DHS is currently re-structuring the Resource (foster) family training structure. Training Unit staff requested permission to provide MN Adopt with a copy of the foster parent survey and responses. MN Adopt is contracted to update the state Resource family training process and materials. Ramsey County [staff] also expressed interest in increasing coverage of foster parent training and support in its training materials.

Ramsey County invited the Casey Family Foundation to work with them on a review of the child protection system as a quality improvement effort. The county has included the Citizen Review Panel as a stakeholder group that would have input regarding some of the questions, themes and topic areas included in this process regarding children in the child welfare system. MN DHS supports the cooperative work between Casey Family Foundation and the Ramsey County Citizen Review Panel.

Regarding a recommendation from 2016, the panel also supports development of a round-table discussion with MN DHS and Ramsey County on strategies for strengthening permanent connections for youth transitioning out of foster care. Panel members would like to actively assist in this activity in the coming year.

MN DHS staff thanks panel members and staff for their work and time in the support of children and families in Ramsey County. Members attended project subcommittee meetings, child mortality review meetings, planned and worked with community staff regarding project completion and research on foster family satisfaction. They are actively engaged in discussing how to best leverage their time and expertise to contribute to improvement of the child

protection system in Ramsey County. Their work this year has led to positive impacts on the community and the child welfare system in Ramsey County.