Wyoming Citizen Review Panel 2020-2021

 Annual Report



**“At the end of the day, the most overwhelming key to a child’s success is the positive involvement of parents”-- *Jane D. Hull***

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***Letter from the Chair***

Dear Reader,

Thank you for taking the time to review the Wyoming Citizen Review Panel's 2020-21 Annual Report. The information presented here is a summary of the Panel's efforts to promote family well-being by building partnerships that connect people with available resources. I am grateful to have had the opportunity this year to help facilitate the recruitment of new additions to the Panel while preserving the excellence that existed.

The Panel's underpinning is its relationship with the Wyoming Department of Family Services (DFS). The Panel works with local and state DFS offices to provide opportunities for foster parents, youth in foster care and biological parents of youth in foster care to be heard. From those listening sessions come ideas, energy and enthusiasm for making Wyoming better at providing the means and opportunities for youth and families to succeed.

Parents As Teachers (PAT) continues to be the flagship program for the Citizen Review Panel, promoting optimal early development, learning and health of young children by supporting and engaging their parents and caregivers. This year, we became one of the nation’s Blue Ribbon PAT Affiliates after receiving a much sought-after Quality Endorsement.

In 2021, the Panel continued its partnership with Wyoming 2-1-1 to evaluate the first year of the Kinship Navigator Program in Cheyenne and Casper. Kinship Navigator programs offer information, referral, and follow-up services to grandparents and other relatives raising children to link them to the benefits and services that they or the children need. WyCRP and Wyoming 2-1-1 began collaborating in 2019 to bring the Kinship Connections initiative to our state and have found the service provided is utilized, valued and is making a difference in the lives of children and their families.

The Panel looks forward to another year of finding ways to bring people together around what needs to be done for the health of children and families. Our 2021-22 Strategic Plan is expanding on the tenets of the PAT and Kinship Navigator programs to extend helping hands to foster families, and foster youth transitioning to independent living. We plan to fill gaps by building bridges across them.

Sincerely,

Emily Quarterman Genoff , Chair

# ***Letter from the Executive Director***

Dear Wyoming Residents,

Serving in the capacity of Executive Director for the Wyoming Citizen Review Panel(WyCRP) is the most tremendous honor of my professional career. In fact, I am honored and humbled to have served in this capacity since July 2019. Truly hard to believe it has been almost two years! The Wyoming Citizen Review Panel serves a very important role in the lives of families throughout Wyoming. A hallmark of our organization is an unyielding dedication to advocacy for youth and families, which has been forged by staff members and volunteers over the life of our organization. This dedication has resulted in the cultivation of a peerless reputation for advocacy in Wyoming. The volunteers who comprise a portion of the membership of The Panel represent a broad range of Human Services disciplines. The children and families of Wyoming greatly benefit from the many decades of experience these professionals have advocating on their behalf. However, the heart of our organization is the citizens who choose to serve with us in order to improve the lives of Wyoming families.

Together, utilizing the unique expertise of Panel members, as well as that of many dedicated public, private, and not-for-profit partners, WyCRP continues to support both promising new techniques, as well as recognized best practices to assist in the improvement of the Wyoming Child Protection System. Our work helps ensure Wyoming children and families receive the resources and skills they need to thrive in safe and healthy environments.

Only through working together, will we continue making meaningful improvements in Wyoming’s Child Welfare System.

Respectfully,

Bryan M. Cook

Executive Director

# **Executive Summary**

The Wyoming Citizen Review Panel (WyCRP) actively partners with the Wyoming Department of Family Services (DFS), the Wyoming Department of Corrections(DOC), the Wyoming Department of Health (DOH), the Wyoming Children’s Trust Fund (WCTF), both state and local law enforcement, mental health and substance abuse professionals, educators, child advocates, attorneys and judges to promote the safety, permanency, and well-being of the children and families of Wyoming.

This annual report covers the period from July 1, 2020 to June 30, 2021, except where otherwise indicated. The purpose of this report is to provide an overview of substantive activities undertaken by WyCRP that have taken place during the past 12 months specific to child abuse and neglect in Wyoming and to identify strengths and opportunities for systemic improvement. Recommendations have been generated based on these activities and have been provided to DFS in order to assist with the development of the Child and Family Services Plan (CFSP; also known as the “5-year Plan”), which DFS begin crafting in February 2019. The purpose of the CFSP is to support the work being done with the PIP and establish the strategic priorities of the agency in the coming years. Over the past year, WyCRP staff acted as an independent third party to encourage candid feedback from birth parents, foster parents, foster youth and other stakeholders making up the Wyoming Child Welfare System. These efforts have taken many forms and are discussed in further detail elsewhere in this report. Moving forward, the WyCRP will continue to support the development and implementation of the CFSP.

**2020-2021 Annual Report**

The WyCRP continues to witness improvement in agency policy and process initiated through the CFSR and PIP implementation process. Even with ongoing organizational and environmental change, this trajectory carried to its conclusion through the combination of the PIP and the 5-year Plan will reduce or resolve issues challenging our state’s systems of care and justice for decades:

* Timeliness and permanency of placements,
* Consistency of processes between jurisdictions and offices,
* Fidelity to proven models.

During the time period covered by this report, the WyCRP staff and Panel members continued to support implementation of the PIP and development of the CFSP.

The major activities of the WyCRP as outlined in this report, are outlined in WyCRP’s yearly contract with DFS. Our programs and partnerships are undertaken in support of our mission and goals, which are identified through our yearly strategic planning process.

**Programs and Partnerships**

WyCRP cannot fulfill its mission without collaborations. This fact rang true especially during the COVID-19 Pandemic. DFS is an integral partner for WyCRP. In addition to DFS, WyCRP works with many other entities. These collaborations serve to maximize resources, while minimizing duplication of efforts. This year, the WyCRP again worked with the Wyoming Children’s Trust Fund (WCTF) to host Community Cafe’ meetings in every Judicial District throughout Wyoming. This was the first time Community Cafe’ meetings had been held since 2017. The WyCRP also partnered with Wyoming 2-1-1, the Wyoming Parent Information Center, and Magellan Healthcare/High Fidelity Wraparound in developing the Community Cafe’s. WyCRP’s partnerships with Parents As Teachers and Wyoming 2-1-1 for the Kinship Connections of Wyoming program are reducing gaps in resources and barriers to accessing existing resources.

**Parents *A*s Teachers**

The Parents as Teachers (PAT) model is an evidence-based early childhood home visiting model that builds strong communities, thriving families, and children who are healthy, safe and ready to learn. Parents as Teachers promotes the optimal early development, learning and health of children by supporting and engaging their parents and caregivers. The *W*YCRP PAT affiliate receives funding through MIECHV (Maternal, Infant, and Early Childhood Home Visitation).

WyCRP is one of two affiliates in Wyoming offering evidence-based home visiting services through the Parents as Teachers model. The WyCRP affiliate operates in Laramie, Albany, and Sweetwater Counties. PAT provides direct, in-home support to families facing a variety of stressors known to put children and families at risk for crisis. Home visiting in general, and PAT specifically, has been identified as one of the most promising methods for preventing children from coming into DFS custody and also for supporting families during reunification after being in care.

WYCRP-PAT is currently staffed with 6.5 Parent Educators amongst the three counties. The program is contracted to serve a minimum of 109 families within these three communities. Per MIECHV guidelines, one or more of the following criteria must be met to determine eligibility for enrollment of services:

* Income <*/*= 100% of the Federal Poverty Level for family size
* Prior history with Child Protective Services, prior history with abuse*/*neglect (as a child or adult)
* Child with a developmental delay
* History of substance or alcohol abuse
* Tobacco user in the home
* Military service
* Low student achievement*/*no high school diploma
* Pregnant/parent under age 21

Families with children ages prenatal to 36 months meeting any of these criteria can be enrolled and services delivered up to age 60 months, or until the child transitions to an appropriate early development center or Kindergarten.

Central to the PAT model are 21 model fidelity requirements, called Essential Requirements. , which cover affiliate leadership, staffing, services to families, and evaluation. In order to become a PAT affiliate, an organization must be designed to meet these Essential Requirements. Annually, affiliates report implementation and service data that address the Essential Requirements and this data is used to confirm that the affiliate is meeting or exceeding the minimum levels for each Essential Requirement.

In addition to the Essential Requirements, Parents as Teachers has 81 Quality Standards that provide a comprehensive blueprint for high quality PAT services.

Along with the Essential Requirements and Quality Standards, MIECHV requires each PAT affiliate to track 19 performance measures. An affiliate is required to demonstrate improvement in 5 of the 6 specific areas, which is assessed on an annual basis and compared to national benchmarks across all MIECHV programs.

Together, the Essential Requirements and Quality Standards form the basis for the Parents as Teachers Quality Endorsement and Improvement Process (QEIP) which confirms affiliate quality and facilitates continuous quality improvement.

In October 2020, WYCRP PAT earned the PAT Quality Endorsement Blue Ribbon. It is required that a minimum of 75 of the 100 Quality Standards are met. Our affiliate exceeded this, and completed the rigorous process demonstrating that 95/100 standards are continuously being met.

Being named a Blue Ribbon Affiliate affirms that the WYCRP PAT program is a high-quality provider in the home visiting field, implementing the evidence-based Parents as Teachers model with fidelity. The quality endorsement is earned for five years, until September 30, 2025, as long as the affiliate remains in good standing.

Through the recent pandemic, PAT was able to build on our resiliency and prove our dedication to families in our community. Parent Educators were able to pivot services and provide virtual visits, or telecommunication visits, in order to ensure families still had the support they needed. Through these continued visits we were able to maintain fidelity and families were connected to resources, received deliveries of basic essentials and materials, and given an outlet to turn to for support.

In addition to the services provided to individual families, PAT strives to stay actively involved in local communities through a variety of avenues. This includes building a cohesive resource and referral network with agencies in the three counties, participating in community events, and leading the Wyoming Home Visiting Network. These partnerships are important as we strive to build a connected community in order for families to thrive.

**Kinship Connections of Wyoming**

The first year of Kinship Connections of Wyoming (KCOW) was largely focused on building an evidenced-based kinship model. A lot of work has been put into establishing foundational elements of the kinship program including developing policies and procedures, available services, marketing platforms, and measurable data points. The overall outcomes of the program are to provide navigation services that include helping families access resources, decreasing interactions with child welfare programs, increasing child safety, permanency, and wellbeing for the caregiver and the children they are caring for. The kinship navigators worked tirelessly to build awareness of the program in Laramie and Natrona Counties among community partners and kinship caregivers. Most importantly, KCOW started providing navigation services to kinship caregivers, connecting them to community resources and support groups, providing advocacy efforts, and helping the kinship families meet their long-term goals.

As of the end of 2020, Kinship Connections of Wyoming (KCOW) has had the opportunity to assist thirty-five (35) families across Wyoming. Although KCOW has not yet marketed in counties outside of the pilot program areas of Natrona and Laramie County, the kinship navigators have been provided the opportunity to assist families in a few other counties. Those other counties include Albany, Crook, Lincoln and Sweetwater. Through our statewide expansion plan, Navigators will expand services into Sweetwater, Uinta, Campbell and Sheridan counties during the spring/summer of 2021.

Predominantly, the caregivers in our program are aunts/uncles, grandparents and great grandparents. How did caregivers find out about our program? The majority of our referrals came from DFS staff and through word of mouth. Referrals came from other social service agencies, the KCOW website and Facebook pages.

Pre and post surveys utilizing the Protective Factors Survey, 2nd Edition, are administered to the caregivers by the Navigators. The needs of kinship families remained relatively consistent during 2020. Food pantries, utility assistance, diapers, SNAP, guardianship assistance and legal aid remain the highest priority needs of caregivers.

During early 2021, KCOW began working with Casey Family Programs, as well as Kinship programs from other states to build a Kinship Navigator Cross Site Collaborative, with the hopes of creating a program model which will allow these states to be included in the federal Kinship Clearinghouse.

Goals for the Kinship Connections of Wyoming Program

* Provide caregivers with information, referrals and advocacy services.
* Improve family resources through linkage to services and supports.
* Provide linkages to needed legal assistance such as Legal Aid of Wyoming, etc.
* Ensure kinship families have access to benefits for which they are eligible.
* Assist caregivers in utilizing existing community resources and support systems, including educational, health, mental health systems and social support systems.
* Assist caregivers to remove barriers to receiving services.
* To increase better service to kinship families, provide training or information sessions between all partners to increase their knowledge of the needs of kinship care families and individuals who are willing and able to be foster parents.
* Develop strong collaborative working relationships with groups and agencies that work with kinship caregivers.
* Educate the community , including service providers and faith based organizations about the needs of kinship care families and available resources and services.
* Promote child safety, permanency and well-being.

**Community Outreach**

Under CAPTA, a core function of a Citizen Review Panel is community outreach. One way WyCRP fulfills this role is through utilizing its website and social media platforms to circulate child welfare related content to the citizens of Wyoming. Increased social media presence has been a focus of WyCRP in 2020-21. In addition, in an effort to engage stakeholders, WyCRP has created a Facebook Support Group for Wyoming Foster Families. The purpose of this support group is to assist DFS in supporting their foster families. In an attempt to make this a successful venture, WyCRP and DFS partnered to develop a survey for foster parents to complete. The purpose was to find out directly from foster parents the kinds of support and training they feel they need. 181 responses were received for this survey. These responses have already been shared with DFS staff. Another example of WyCRP engaging in community outreach is acting as an independent and neutral facilitator for focus groups and listening sessions for parents, foster parents, kinship caregivers, youth, and youth alumni involved with the child protection and juvenile services systems in Wyoming. These focus groups have been a powerful source of information and WyCRP acts as a conduit, providing this input to policy makers at all levels of the Wyoming Child Welfare System.

WyCRP has also been working to gather information from child welfare system stakeholders, through a variety of ways. Primarily, WyCRP staff have been invited to attend Child Protection Teams(CPT) throughout the state. This is a great opportunity for networking with service providers regarding the needs of our communities. These groups are doing amazing work and several of them report having strong relationships with DFS and other state agencies. Many promising practices are in place with these groups, including the establishment of very comprehensive resource manuals available throughWind River Family and Community Health Care and the First Stop Health Center in Lander. Law Enforcement officers in Natrona County carry a comprehensive Community Services card which is updated regularly by the Natrona County CPT. These efforts are particularly important as families repeatedly stated during the cafe’ meetings that they did not know where to look for available services. It should be noted that many families stated they access Parent Groups on Facebook in order to locate services and learn parenting tips. Parents and service providers alike touted their local schools as bright spots and “hubs” of their communities. For instance, in small, rural communities, the schools are the place people say they go to get their needs met. Service providers mentioned the need for more homeless shelters and it was stated that no CASA Program exists in Converse County. Close to 90 childcare providers have closed statewide with the onslaught of COVID. Religious organizations, county libraries and recreation centers remain sources of information, support and comfort for Wyoming families.

Although it has been mentioned elsewhere in this report, our partnership with the Wyoming Children’s Trust Fund has had a positive impact on our community outreach efforts. Together with WCTF and other agencies, WyCRP has been a part of the renewed efforts to bring Community Cafes to communities in all 9 DFS Districts for the first time since 2017. 30 virtual Birth Parent Community Cafes’ and 2 in-person Spanish-speaking Cafes’ were held. A total of 130 parents engaged in this opportunity. These parents identified many gaps in their everyday lives. These gaps include affordable transportation/childcare/housing, Disability Access, and access to basic medical care. Specifically in regard to transportation, many parents stated due to the poverty level in their community they were not able to afford a driver’s license. A need for support programs for single fathers was expressed, in addition to more services being available in rural areas. The most common barriers cited by participants were awareness of services, availability of needed services, finances and transportation. More importantly, in some communities, support services seem to be abundant, but they are only open during the traditional work hours of 8am-5pm. Working parents stated in this instance they choose their livelihood over getting services. Respondents did provide information on several common supports to include: DFS, telehealth providers, child development centers, home visiting programs and schools. Attendees were also asked to make suggestions for system improvement. Parent support programs were suggested, as well as support specifically geared toward single fathers. Family activities appropriate for all ages, appropriate programming for teenagers and development of community celebrations were requested. Lastly, additional suicide provention programs and life skills classes for all ages were cited as major needs. These meetings were a great way to interact with parents, as well as service providers in the various communities. An added benefit of these cafe’ meetings was two of the attendees joining the WyCRP as Panel members in order to assist with our mission. It should be noted that WCTF and WyCRP have been invited to virtually attend the Community Based Child Abuse Prevention (CBCAP) Conference on May 1, 2021 and present Community Cafe’ meetings as an innovative practice.

The suggestion was made during a few meetings to make efforts to hear the voices of Spanish-speaking residents in Wyoming. In response, our team located interpreters in Laramie and Natrona counties to assist us in providing Spanish Speaking Cafe’ meetings. These meetings were well attended. Participants mentioned the need to feel connected to their communities. They expressed the desire to obtain driver’s licenses, although many are not eligible to obtain them. The lack of translators was mentioned as a major concern. Respondents stated they would learn English as a second language but the classes are expensive and hard to access. The Spanish-speaking community requested more meetings and involvement moving forward.

Another effort engaged in by WyCRP is working with DFS, the Guardian Ad Litem (GAL) Program and other partners to increase youth engagement. It has been the goal of this group to establish a statewide Youth Advisory Council. A work group has been established and has met on a regular basis to develop this project. The group has engaged with the Youth Advisory Councils at the YES House to study the structure and functionality of the groups. WyCRP staff has been in contact with Foster Club for technical assistance on setting up this council. DFS staff has researched the possibility of incentivizing the participation of the youth. Nomination forms have recently been developed and will be circulated to DFS, GAL and IL staff. The initial participants in this council will be chosen by the Youth Engagement Work Group, with the hopes of beginning operation during the summer of 2021. In addition, the GAL Program has contracted with foster care alumni to assist with mentoring youth and strengthening the relationships between the youth and their GAL. WyCRP is supportive of these efforts. Although a formal meeting was not held in 2020 due to the COVID-19 Pandemic, WyCRP staff remains committed to partnering with DFS and participating in the annual Youth Involvement File Review in the future.

The final way in which WyCRP has worked to engage stakeholders is the work we have done to support the Wyoming Foster Care System. WyCRP staff has worked with DFS administrators, as well as directly with Foster Care Coordinators to determine the most effective ways to interact with and support foster families. A short survey was developed and circulated to foster parents through a variety of means. The focus of the survey was to find out directly from foster parents what supports they feel they need. This survey garnered 182 respondes and this information has been shared with DFS. In conjunction with this effort, WyCRP staff and Panel members have created a Facebook Support Group for foster parents to access. The purpose is to provide a vehicle where foster parents can access the information they are seeking on their own terms. 88.4% of respondents stated if live training was provided through Zoom or other social media platforms, they would participate. If the training was hosted on a website, Facebook page or YouTube channel, 92.9% stated they would access it there. The majority of foster parents who responded stated they would prefer their training to be held virtually or pre-recorded instead of in-person. Of the 165 responses to this particular question, 52.7% stated they access training through Foster Parent College, while many respondents stated they had no idea what Foster Parent College is. 111 responses were shared with us related to specific training topics families wish to see. Among the most popular responses were: behavioral disorders and trauma common in foster children, how to navigate the court and DFS “systems”, effectively building relationships with birth parents, ACES, RAD, navigating difficult discussions with foster children and trauma informed parenting. Other topics include age-specific disciplinary suggestions, dealing with sexual trauma, destructive behaviors, how to effectively advocate for foster children so the professionals involved with the case will listen, foster parent rights, and importance of sibling relationships. Additionally, what to expect as foster parents and the importance of self-care were also among the leading vote getters.

As stated previously in this report, WyCRP staff and DFS are working together to develop a plan to provide the support foster parents have asked for through the surveys. This will be an on-going focus of our work. Two zoom meetings have already been recorded focusing on some of these topics. This information has been shared with foster care coordinators, as well as on the WyCRP Facebook page and Foster Parent Support Group. WyCRP regularly searches for related content through other sources and provides this information through social media as well. WyCRP hopes to directly engage foster parents in focus groups and training in the form of Community Cafe’ meetings moving forward.

**Recommendations for Systemic Improvements in Wyoming’s Child Protection System**

These recommendations for Improvement to Wyoming’s Child Protective Services (CPS) system are offered with the understanding that the system is large and complex and includes more than just DFS. As previously stated, it is the intent of the WyCRP to work collaboratively to implement these recommendations. Further, these recommendations acknowledge the work currently being done as part of the PIP and development of the CFSP, which addresses building on strengths and acting on opportunities for improvement identified during the CFSR. These recommendations have also been developed with possible future implementation of the Families First Prevention Services Act in mind. All recommendations are intended to compliment past and present efforts within the state, by all stakeholders involved in the child protection system.

1. Increase support and engagement for foster parents.
	1. Action Step: Coordinate all of these efforts with DFS to ensure the target population is being reached and in an effort to avoid duplication of services.
	2. Action Step: Continue partnership with WCTF in holding Community Cafe/Focus Groups for foster families on specific topics, or offering short training sessions on responding to specific behavioral issues.
	3. Action Step: Incorporate foster parents into membership of the steering committee formed to work on this goal.
	4. Action Step: Continue using social media and other platforms to support foster families.
	5. Action Step: Partner with DFS to develop a Foster Family Mentorship Program. Specifically match newer families with more seasoned foster families as a means of supporting and retaining families.
	6. Action Step: Support DFS efforts in providing education to foster families.
	7. Action Step: Identify and pursue funding opportunities available to assist WyCRP in reaching this goal.
	8. Action Step: WyCRP staff will provide regular detailed updates on this work and provide suggestions how Panel Members can assist with completion of the work related to completing this goal.
2. Engage foster youth and identify gaps in communication with them and services for them.
	1. Action Step: Continue working with the Youth Engagement work group which currently includes DFS and the GAL program, to develop a statewide Wyoming Youth Advisory Council(WYAC), with the potential to also work with these groups to develop a yearly in-person Youth Summit.
	2. Action Step: Recruit foster youth to support the efforts of the Panel by sharing their experiences and stories, providing feedback, and participating in every activity and effort related to youth engagement.
	3. Action Step: Work together with existing youth advisory councils(YES House) and others to assess what foster youth feel they need in terms of support. Also use this as a learning opportunity to learn directly from the youth how to effectively “meet them where they are.”
	4. Action Step: Continue to partner with the GAL Program in their efforts to mentor youth and improve the relationships between GALs and the youth they serve.
	5. Action Step: Identify and pursue funding opportunities available to assist WyCRP in reaching this goal.
	6. Action Step: WyCRP staff will provide regular detailed updates on this work and provide suggestions how Panel members can assist with completion of the work related to completing this goal.
3. Build a stronger community through stakeholder identification and connection.
	1. Action Step: during the Strategic Planning process, the need for engagement of fathers was discussed. This group is a separate stakeholder group. WyCRP, dads, DFS and WCTF will develop a work group to develop a plan to engage and work with this group.
	2. Action Step: Inventory stakeholder groups to understand what is important to each group.
		1. Engage with stakeholders where they are, based on the best communication for them.
	3. Action Step: Develop a stakeholder engagement plan.
	4. Action Step: Review and update the stakeholder assessment survey. Once that is completed, circulate the survey. Leverage online methods (including social media) for circulating the survey and engaging stakeholders.
	5. Action Step: Identify and pursue funding opportunities available to assist WyCRP in reaching this goal.
	6. Action Step: WyCRP staff will provide regular detailed updates on this work and provide suggestions how Panel members can assist with completion of the work related to completing this goal.

**Children’s Justice Act Task Force**

**Child Maltreatment Fatality and Major Injury Review**

As part of the contract between WyCRP and DFS, WyCRP administers the activities of the Children’s Justice Act (CJA) Task Force. DFS is the recipient of federal funds for the Children’s Justice Act, under section 107 of CAPTA. These funds are intended to improve the investigation, prosecution, administration, and judicial handling of child abuse and neglect cases. The Task Force is mandated as part of the Children’s Justice Act, and has specific responsibilities. These responsibilities include conducting a data-driven 3-year assessment, which guides the activities and use of funds for the CJA grant. WyCRP staff, along with CJA Task Force members and both WyCRP and DFS staff completed the 3 year assessment together and submitted it in May 2020. As this report was written, WyCRP staff and Task Force Members had also assisted DFS staff in completing the CJA funding application due in May 2021. The Task Force has specific required membership, such as law enforcement, judges, defense and prosecuting attorneys, parent representatives, medical and mental health professionals, and child protection professionals, among others.

In Wyoming, one of the primary activities of the Task Force is to conduct file reviews of all cases of fatality and major injury as defined by DFS policy which are the result of substantiated abuse or neglect and those that occur while children are in the protective custody of the state. The Task Force reviews cases quarterly in order to make recommendations as part of the 3-year assessment to improve the investigation and prosecution of child abuse and neglect cases. The Task Force is a multidisciplinary team and as such, some members focus on primary and secondary prevention professionally. Risk factors and trends identified during reviews are shared with and used by prevention professionals to make decisions about prevention initiatives, though prevention, other than prevention of secondary trauma, is not a focus of the Task Force.

The COVID-19 Pandemic had an effect on the scheduling of File Review Meetings during 2020 and early 2021. In 2020, three (3) Task Force file review meetings were held in June, September and December. It is important to note that these meetings were all conducted virtually. During these meetings, a total of ten (10) cases of child fatality and major injury resulting from child maltreatment were reviewed, affecting Wyoming children ages 0-17. \*\*Please note that the data gathered from the Task Force follows the calendar year. The decision was made to cancel the meeting in March 2020 due to the COVID-19 Pandemic. Those cases were instead reviewed at the June 2020 meeting.

Each member of the Task Force maintains strict confidentiality regarding the identities and personal information of individuals involved with child maltreatment fatality and major injury cases.

**Recommendations Generated from the 2020 Child Maltreatment Fatality and Major Injury File Reviews**

The Children’s Justice Act requires the State Task Force to undertake a comprehensive review and evaluation of the investigative, administrative and judicial handling of cases of child abuse and neglect and toi make training and policy recommendations in each of the three categories. The Categories and associated recommendations are listed below.

1. Investigative, Administrative and judicial handling of cases of child abuse and neglect, particularly child sexual abuse and exploitation, as well as cases involving suspected child maltreatment-related fatalities, and cases involving a potential combination of jurisdictions, such as interstate, federal-state, and state-tribal, in a manner which reduces additional trauma to the child victim and the victim’s family and which also ensures precedural fairness to the accused.
	1. Recommendation: Ensure that all information regarding the adjudication of the criminal charges is included in the files to be reviewed.
	2. Recommendation: Encourage both cross-agency and cross-jurisdictional communication among stakeholders in the child welfare system. This will help in situations where the perpetrator has committed offenses in multiple states/jurisdictions.
	3. Recommendation: Updates to the WyCAPS case management system are imperative in order to ensure the quality of the Case Reviews, the standardization of the information is critical.
	4. Recommendation: The Task Force requests DFS agency policy be updated to ensure adequate law enforcement and medical information is included in the case files for all major injury and sexual abuse cases.
	5. Recommendation: How can the system do a better job of collaborating and sharing information to find out if young parents/parents in general have previous public health contact? Previous DFS contact?
2. Experimental, model and demonstration programs for testing innovative approaches and techniques which may improve the prompt and successful resolution of civil and criminal court proceedings, or enhance the effectiveness of judicial and administrative action in child abuse and neglect cases, particularly child abuse and exploitation cases, including enhancement of performance of court-appointed attorneys and guardians ad litem for children, and which also ensure procedural fairness to the accused.
	1. Recommendation: Whether it be for new or existing officers, a partnership should be formed with the Wyoming Law Enforcement Academy to ensure these officers receive more training regarding child physical and sexual abuse.
	2. Recommendation: Encourage the updating of Law Enforcement intake forms to ensure adequate information is being collected.
	3. Recommendation: The Task Force proposes engaging the Children’s Justice Project and the Judicial Branch in discussions and training regarding the dynamics of child abuse, and the role of the Task Force in improving the child welfare system.
	4. Recommendation: The Task Force urges continued support of the Wyoming Joint Symposium on Children and Youth. This is very comprehensive and cost effective training for child welfare professionals.
	5. Recommendation: Advocate that training for mental health professionals and their appropriate roles in Child Abuse cases be included in the Joint Symposium. What is the appropriate role for mental health providers? They are not investigators and they are not forensic interviewers, but their input is valued. However, if they overstep their role, they can have an inadvertent negative impact on the integrity of these cases.
3. Reform of state laws, ordinances, regulations, protocols and procedures to provide comprehensive protection for children from abuse, particularly sexual abuse and exploitation, while ensuring procedural fairness to the accused.
	1. Recommendation: The statutory definition of “Strangulation” needs to be augmented.
	2. Recommendation: The statutory definition of “Serious Bodily Injury” needs to be applied and used uniformly throughout the Wyoming Child Welfare System.
	3. Recommendation: “Identifying Child Abuse” training is provided to all medical providers to assist in ensuring more potential cases of abuse are brought to light. This is a potential partnership with the Hospital Association.
	4. Recommendation: DFS and other stakeholders tasked with involvement in child abuse investigations need to consider developing a “Multi-Disciplinary Apporach” to the investigation.
	5. Recommendation: With no exception, SANE Exams must be completed on every case where child sexual abuse is suspected.
	6. Recommendation: The Child Welfare System must work together to improve and enhance the quality of forensic interviewing throughout Wyoming. Specifically, since forensic interviewing is a nationally recognized best practice, we must work to ensure these interviews are conducted by trained individuals who participate in on-going certification/training and peer review.
	7. Recommendation: During the investigation of these cases, when drug use is suspected to have occurred around children, it is recommended that both social service and law enforcement representatives advocate for and complete hair follicle testing of the children involved.
	8. Recommendation: As a Task Force, we support the work of the Department of Health in developing a universal mechanism for drug screening for all pregnant and expecting mothers through C.A.R.A., using CAPTA funds.
	9. Recommendation: As a Task Force, we support efforts to enhance the criminal penalties for Incest, in order to bring them in line with those for Sexual Assault.
	10. Recommendation: As a Task Force we agree that ourselves, as well as other stakeholders in the child welfare system, and the general public need better awareness and understanding of the differences between victims of Sexual Assault and victims of Incest.
	11. Recommendation: A theme of moms leaving their children with inappropriate caregivers was again noticed during this review. The recommendation was made for the Wyoming Children’s Trust Fund and other prevention organizations to develop a Prevention Public Awareness Campaign geared towards moms and caregivers.
	12. Recommendation: One of Task Force members, who happens to be a County Coroner, recommended improved communication for coroners with DFS. He stated the reason for this would be to ensure that DFS is aware of all of the infant and child fatalities cases the coroners are involved in, whether DFS has an open case or not. This communication would provide a more accurate picture of the Child Fatality trends in our state.
	13. Recommendation: Throughout the majority of cases reviewed this year, abuse occurred in part due to the fact mothers lacked options for appropriate childcare, thus leaving the safety of their children at risk. The Task Force recommends advocacy for more licensed and cost effective child care options to be made available in Wyoming.

**Action Plan**

As part of the current contract with DFS, the WyCRP is required to develop and implement an action plan, based on needs, trends, and risk factors identified by the Children’s Justice Act (CJA) Task Force, which is the entity responsible for conducting child maltreatment fatality and major injury reviews. The CJA Task Force operates as a program of WyCRP and makes case-specific and systemic recommendations based on case file reviews.

The Children’s Justice Act Task Force recommendations contained in this report are geared toward systemic improvements. As a Task Force we will continue to support the Department of Health’s initiative to create a universal mechanism for drug screening for all pregnant and expecting mothers. The Task Force will continue to work with DFS to develop training centered on using a collaborative approach when investigating cases of child abuse and neglect. Next, the Task Force advocates for policy changes to enable the inclusion of law enforcement, medical, and coroner’s reports in the DFS case files used in the reviews. Inclusion of this comprehensive information is essential to the effectiveness of these file reviews, from which recommendations for systemic improvement are generated. Third, the CJA Task Force recognizes the importance of working with DFS on a standardized working definition of “Major Injury,” and to have this incorporated in the updates to WyCAPS to help ensure all qualifying cases are included in the Major Injury and Child Fatality Case Review. DFS is already engaged in efforts to ensure all eligible cases are included in the reviews. The Task Force will continue to advocate that the statutory definitions of “Serious Bodily Injury” and “Strangulation” be augmented if needed, and applied uniformly across the Wyoming Child Welfare System. SANE exams need to be completed in very case where child sexual abuse is suspected. “Identifying Child Abuse” training needs to be provided to all medical providers in Wyoming to ensure that more potential cases involving child abuse are brought to light. This could be a potential partnership with the Wyoming Hospital Association. The Task Force will continue to support cost-effective educational opportunities such as the Wyoming Joint Symposium on Child and Youth. Such opportunities are useful in providing education to Judges, Attorneys and other professionals regarding current trends and best practices related to child welfare.

**2020 Child Maltreatment Statistics**

Child maltreatment is the abuse and neglect that occurs in children under 18 years of age. It includes all types of physical and/or emotional ill-treatment, sexual abuse, neglect, negligence and commercial or other exploitation, which results in actual or potential harm to the child’s health, survival, development or dignity in the context of a relationship of responsibility, trust or power. There were 1,368 total substantiations of child maltreatment, affecting 844 children, age 18 yrs. and under at the time of allegation in 2020. At first glance, these numbers appear to be much lower than the totals reported in 2019. Based on that assumption, it could be suggested that the frequency of child maltreatment in Wyoming lessened in 2020. However, it is important to note that these reporting statistics are likely to be skewed due to the societal impacts of the COVID-19 Pandemic during much of 2020. At least one substantiated incident of child maltreatment occurred in all 23 Wyoming counties during 2020. Neglect made up 64% of the total substantiated allegations. The average age of the affected youth at the time allegations were made was 7 years old. Data Source: DFS WYCAPS data system. See addendums for tables containing these and other child maltreatment statistics..

**Conclusion**

Once again, the WyCRP believes it’s important to emphasize that improved outcomes for children and families involved in the Child Welfare System can only occur when all stakeholders in child welfare work together and take action to make improvements. While many of these recommendations focus on activities and projects currently taking place within DFS, all partners and stakeholders must coordinate resources and efforts to support meaningful, sustainable improvement.

This report focuses on systemic issues that affect the entire state, per federal mandate. Children and families stand to benefit most when systemic improvements translate to improvements in the essential functions of child protection in local communities. The WyCRP, WCTF, Prevent Child Abuse(PCA) of Wyoming, Wyoming Children’s Justice Project, and a host of state and local service providers will continue working to support local communities through coordinating efforts to empower families and protect children.

**About Citizen Review Panels**

Citizen Review Panels are mandated by the Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (CAPTA) - the key federal legislation addressing child abuse and neglect. CAPTA was originally enacted in P.L. 93-247 and was most recently reauthorized by S.2971-CAPTA Reauthorization Act of 2019. CAPTA provides Federal funding to States in support of prevention, assessment, investigation, prosecution, and treatment activities and also provides grants to public agencies and nonprofit organizations, including Indian Tribes and Tribal organizations, for demonstration programs and projects. CAPTA includes the following requirements, pertaining to Citizen Review Panels:

* States shall establish a minimum of three citizen review panels except those states receiving the minimum CAPTA allotment, which shall establish one citizen review panel.
* States may use existing panels established under state or federal law, such as child fatality panels or foster care review panels, if the existing panels can meet CAPTA requirements and states ensure the existing panels meet the requirements.
* Panel members shall be volunteers broadly representative of the community in which the panel is established and include members who have expertise in the prevention and treatment of child abuse and neglect, and may include adult former victims of child abuse or neglect.
* Panels shall meet not less than once every three months.
* Panels shall examine the policies, procedures, and practices of state and local child protection agencies and evaluate the extent to which the agencies are effectively discharging their child protection responsibilities in accordance with CAPTA.
* Panels may examine specific cases, including child fatalities and near fatalities, and review the extent to which the child protective services system is coordinated with the state’s foster care and adoption programs.
* Panels shall provide for public outreach and comment to assess the impact of current procedures and practices upon children and families in the community and to evaluate the extent to which agencies are effectively discharging their child protection responsibilities.
* Panels shall prepare an annual report containing a summary of the activities of the panel and make the report available to the public.
* Panels shall include recommendations to improve the child protective services system in the panel’s annual report.
* States shall provide panel members access to case information if such information is necessary for the panel to carry out its functions.
* States shall provide staff assistance to a panel if the panel requests assistance with performing its duties.
* The appropriate state agency shall submit a written response, no later than six months after receiving the panel’s recommendations, to the citizen review panel that describes whether or how the state will incorporate, where appropriate, panel recommendations.
* States shall submit citizen review panel reports to HHS annually (CAPTA).

# **Wyoming Citizen Review Panel Organization**

The Wyoming Citizen Review Panel is a federally mandated group of citizens who are responsible for determining whether state and local agencies are effectively meeting child protective requirements pursuant to the Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (CAPTA) and subsequent amendments.

Membership of the Panel is composed of volunteers who are broadly representative of the state. It includes members having expertise in the prevention and treatment of child abuse/neglect, the juvenile justice system, and advocacy and service provision to at risk families. The Panel currently consists of 14 members, one full time Executive Director, and liaisons from the Wyoming Department of Family Services, Wyoming Department of Education, and Wyoming Department of Health:

* Emily Quarterman Genoff, Chair, Casper
* Jana Conine, Cheyenne, Vice Chair, Cheyenne
* Jo Lee Schuler, Treasurer, Cheyenne
* Sheri England, Secretary, Gillette
* Lynn Huylar, Children’s Justice Act Task Force Chair, Cheyenne
* Carissa O’Malley, Casper
* Stacy Strasser, Lander, Incoming Chair June 23, 2021
* Sarah Urbanek, Cheyenne
* Rose Fry, Casper
* Dawn Sides, Cheyenne
* John Wright, Casper
* Elizabeth Ramirez-Ridgeway, Rawlins
* Sara Serelson, Wyoming Children’s Trust Fund, Cheyenne
* Laura Dobler, DFS Liaison, Cheyenne
* Ilaine Brown, WDE Liaison, Cheyenne
* Danielle Marks, DOH Liaison, Cheyenne
* Bryan M. Cook, Executive Director, Cheyenne

In addition to its work relative to CAPTA, the Wyoming Citizen Review Panel is organized as a 501(c)3 charitable organization and administers complementary programs such as Parents As Teachers and Kinship Connections of Wyoming. The Panel’s Executive Committee serves as the Board of Directors for the organization. The organizational structure is as follows:



**Wyoming Citizen Review Panel 2021-22 Strategic Plan**

**Executive Summary**

The Wyoming Citizen Review Panel, with the facilitation of Public Knowledge, worked to finalize a 2021-22 strategic plan for strengthening children and families and supporting the efforts of state agencies and nonprofits to promote family wellness in Wyoming.

The mission and vision statements were not updated during this year’s process.

Panel members assessed our strengths and compiled a lengthy list that boiled down to a primary, essential theme: We are a set of people dedicated to making a difference through collective and individual efforts, and building bridges through partnerships.

We assessed our needs and found them to be largely external - we want to use our strengths to identify and fill gaps in the youth and family services system that have persisted over time.

The threat to advancement of the Panel’s work is continued funding, and the availability of funding for new projects not tied to specific grant-driven outcomes.

We identified current partners in our efforts, and those the Panel would like to recruit. And we carved out a small set of achievable goals that we have already begun to work toward, believing that we can gather the resources required to build on the foundation we have. We want to mobilize people to advocate for themselves.

The Strategic Plan for 2020-21 was unanimously approved on May 6, 2021.

**Mission:**

To facilitate public outreach and provide opportunities for citizens to evaluate and make recommendations to state and local child protection systems to ensure that these systems promote safety, well-being and permanency to the children and families of Wyoming.

**Vision:**

WyCRP shall motivate citizen participation to meet the unmet needs of the child welfare system through positive change so Wyoming’s children and families have the opportunity to develop to their full potential.

**Purpose:**

The WyCRP is a federally mandated group of citizens who are responsible for evaluating state and local child protection agencies efficiencies by reviewing systems, policies and procedures. Through strong partnerships, WyCRP promotes safety, permanency and well-being for children and families.

**Organizational Strengths**

**Our People**

“A WyCRP strength is the people involved. There is a good mix of institutional knowledge and forward thinkers.”

“We have an active and engaged Panel and Director.”

**Our Relationships**

“The Executive Director and Panel Members have established partnerships at all levels of local government, as well as with Legislators and other policy makers.”

 “Building and maintaining partnerships is a strength we possess. Our Panel members have relationships and partnerships throughout the state.”

“We have established many partnerships through our affiliation with the Children’s Justice Act Task Force.”

“WyCRP has great partnerships with Parents as Teachers, Wyoming 2-1-1 and the Wyoming Department of Family Services (DFS), as our current funders.”

“Through experiencing COVID-19, we have proven adaptability by being able to continue providing services virtually.”

**The Expertise of Our Membership**

“I think we have the ability to engage personnel at the state level to determine what their priorities for the Panel should be going forward.”

“The Panel is an unbiased source of information and feedback for DFS and families.”

**Needs**

**Communication**

“The file reviews and reviews with parents, foster parents, and children are all good. However, we need to know what happens after they are done, where the information goes, who sees the reports, and what steps are taken after that? We need to be able to convey to these groups what happens to this information they have shared after it’s passed along to DFS.”

“We need to find ways to communicate with the foster and biological families to assure they are provided the best possible services within the context of available resources.”

“Aside from holding in person focus groups, sending out surveys and phone calls to target populations, “We continue to develop more effective ways to engage foster parents, foster youth and birth parents.”

**Internal infrastructure**

“The Panel needs to define and brand itself better going forward, find alternative supplemental funding streams.”

**Our Partners**

Funders:

* Wyoming Department of Family Services
* Wyoming 2-1-1
* MIECHV/Parents As Teachers

Panel Members:

* CASA (Chandra Ortiz)
* Education (Ilaine Brown, Carol Nicolarsen, Elizabeth Ridgeway)
* Corrections (Dawn Sides)
* Children’s Advocacy Project (Lynn Huylar)
* Youth residential services (Sheri England)
* Youth transitional services (Jana Conine, Sheri England, Stacy Strasser)
* Wraparound/diversion programs (Stacy Strasser)
* Foster youth/parents (Carissa O’Malley)
* Social work (Jo Lee Schuler)
* Healthcare/Mental Health (Emily Genoff)
* Children’s Trust Fund (Sara Serelson)

Potential new partners:

* Homelessness Coalitions
* Domestic Violence
* Public health
* More foster parents
* Birth Fathers (working with WCTF and other partners in developing this group).
* Wyoming Youth Advisory Council (working with DFS and other partners to develop this).

**Opportunities**

1. Continue the work with partners in developing a statewide Youth Advisory Council and work toward development of a yearly Youth Summit.
2. Engagement with Birth Fathers and partners to develop support services geared toward dads.
3. Continue working with DFS on developing supports for foster families in Wyoming.
4. Develop a strategy for effective engagement of stakeholders in the Child Welfare System.

**Action Plan**

Goal 1: Increase support and engagement for foster parents.

Goal 2: Engage foster youth and identify gaps in communication and services.

Goal 3: Build a stronger community through stakeholder identification and connection.

**Full Panel Meetings**

**Date Meeting Type Number of Attendees**

6/25/2020 Virtual/Conference Call 14

9/16/2020 Virtual/Conference Call 16

12/2/2020 Virtual/Conference Call 14

3/24/2021 Virtual/Conference Call 11

4/28/2021 Virtual/Conference Call 13

**Panel Membership**

The WyCRP usually elects new Officers on a yearly basis, but due to the Covid 19 Pandemic, Officer elections were postponed until 2021. There were several changes in the Panel’s leadership in the last 12 months. Sara Serelson joined the Panel as the liaison with the Wyoming Children’s Trust Fund. Sheri England was elected Secretary. Parent representative John Wright and Educator Elizabeth Ridgeway joined the Panel in March 2021. Danielle Marks joined the Panel as a Department of Health Liaison in March 2021. Panel Member Carol Tullio retired and was replaced on the Panel by Chandra Ortiz, the Executive Director from CASA of Natrona County.

**Attachment 1**

**Wyoming Citizen Review Panel Quarterly Meeting**

**Thursday June 25, 2020**

Attendance: Emily Genoff, Chair; Jana Conine, Co-Chair; Jo Lee Schuler, Treasurer; Stacy Strasser, Panel member; Lynn Huylar, CJA Liaison; Laura Dobler, Department of Family Services; Ilaine Brown, Department of Education; Dawn Sides, Department of Corrections; Josie Brittain, Parents As Teachers; Jena Monahan, Kinship Connections; Billie Underhill, Bookkeeper; Phyllis Sherard and Chandra Ortiz, CASA Natrona County Liaison, new Panel members.

Absent: Sherilyn England, Secretary, Carol Nicolarsen, Carissa O’Malley, excused.

1. Meeting called to order.
2. Program Updates
	1. Parents As Teachers – Josie reported PAT recently participated in a HRSA/MIECHV virtual site visit, looking at both Wyoming affiliates (WyCRP: Sweetwater, Albany, Laramie counties, NOWCAP: Natrona County). Surveyors are planning to share some of Wyoming’s strategies, such as the community of practice, with Colorado and Nebraska affiliates. The only finding was the MIECHV was not able to establish an MOU with the Laramie County public health office. Parent educators have returned to personal visits, outdoors, after the COVID-19 restrictions were reduced. Social distancing guidelines are being followed. PAT will be participating in the Family Promise Shared Resource Campus in some way, coordinating with shelter families and providing group facilitation and education. The campus is slated to open in January 2021. Tracking indicates 80% parent educator success, exceeding minimum expectations. The Blue Ribbon Award application is submitted – the feedback has been positive. Official notification will be received in October.
	2. Kinship Connections – Jena reported the year end program evaluation is about to be done. The Administration for Children and Families Evidence Building Academy has accepted Kinship Connections, which provides an in depth look at program evaluation. The monthly newsletter is being supplemented by a blog. A Facebook peer support group was initiated for families and five people immediately asked to participate. An online platform and then face to face groups are planned, resulting in statewide expansion of the program. Currently there are families in Natrona, Laramie, Albany and Crook counties receiving support from the Kinship Navigator program. Referrals have come from Laramie County DFS, Facebook and 2-1-1 Wyoming. 2-1-1 Wyoming and Kinship Navigator are going to partner on electronic billboards. A television commercial also is a possibility and posters are being distributed. Goals have been reviewed and are being met while services were limited by the pandemic. Policies were implemented around distribution of emergency funding for families during the pandemic. Discussion followed regarding opportunities for posting the posters and other means of letting people know about the program, including the CRP website.
3. March 2020 meeting minutes – motion to approve made by Dawn, seconded by Jo Lee. No discussion. Minutes approved unanimously.
4. Elections – the slate of candidates are Jana Conine, Vice Chair, Sherilyn England, Secretary, and Panel members Phyllis Sherard and Chandra Ortiz. Stacy moved for election of the four individuals - two to executive committee seats and two to the Panel, and Lynn seconded. No discussion. Motion approved unanimously.
5. Financial Report – Billie Underhill provided P&Ls by program. Kinship will not show revenue in May – two payments were received in April. She is working toward having an accountant come in to review accounting procedures, as requested by PAT. Billie has instituted some internal controls herself, because she has a background in auditing. Security software was purchased. There were no documented procedures for invoicing. She has implemented those. Year to date P&Ls will be provided at future meetings. The Executive Committee will be getting a monthly report. Billie will provide a menu of financial report options later in the year. She also has suggested some technology upgrades that will be expensive initially and cost effective in the long run. For example, pay stubs are being mailed when they could be emailed, to save money and increase efficiency. She also has suggested using the office address for mailing, rather than the PO Box. AFLAC is being offered to employees at no cost to CRP. The Wyoming Nonprofit Network membership will cost $175. Goodwill is donating the membership cost. A proposal for an emergency leave bank to be used in the event of a pandemic or other catastrophic event was discussed.
6. WYCRP Strategic Plan Committee Reports
	1. Fundraising – Lynn reported that meeting as a committee was impaired by the COVID-19 pandemic; the group will gather in July. She compiled a list of fundraising tiers with ideas for specific activities within each tier. There are many possibilities to be tapped, allowing different plans and levels of engagement. See attached report. All Panel members can be involved and are invited to attend fundraising committee meetings and participate in activities. The funds raised will be used to support the Panel’s activities.
	2. Foster Parents Association – Bryan reported that he, Jana, Carissa, Jo Lee, and Ilaine have met twice. The committee’s proposal is attached. Foster families reported in focus groups that they would benefit from more opportunities for networking, education on childhood mental health issues, and foster family recruitment. Bryan met with Tom Kennaugh (Wyoming DFS Foster Care Coordinator) and he seemed receptive to partnering with CRP. Using CRP’s website to share information, like podcasts or interactive question and answer sessions with mentor families. Local mental health professionals have been invited to participate. Foster families would drive the content. Laura said DFS is likely to have an interest in the Committee’s efforts. Bryan is researching foster family associations. Work will continue. Discussion followed regarding how the pandemic has increased interest and ability in connecting online and the potential for using the CRP website as a resource.
	3. Independent Living –Bryan will be meeting with the Guardians Ad Litem leadership to talk about ways to improve relationships with youth served by GALs. Carissa and Bryan will meet to discuss how the CRP can be supportive. Youth in need of IL opportunities can be identified through that effort. Laura reported that Annie E. Casey Foundation funding for a youth engagement summit was sought and approved – the event now will be virtual; youth, the GALs, DFS -- CRP also is invited to attend. The goal is to include youth in the process of system improvement. Youth alumni are encouraged to attend. Stacy said she has a few independent living alumni she may be able to connect to the dialogue.
7. WyCRP Program and Contract Updates
	1. DFS – Laura talked about the contract with CRP and the Agency’s goals in the 20-21 fiscal year. There were significant challenges to engaging biological and foster parents and foster youth to get their feedback during the last few months due to lack of interest and the inability to gather in person due to the pandemic. Ideas that might help the process moving forward include working with the Children’s Trust Fund to hold community cafes in the DFS Districts. Another possibility is surveying stakeholders – parents, foster parents, service providers, judges – in all areas specific to some of DFS’s federal requirements, using the Stakeholder Interview Guide. The annual report is complete – DFS has no feedback on the draft, and appreciated the strategic plan and goals included. The report is officially submitted to DFS at the end of June. Recommendations for systemic improvement were based on feedback from the focus groups. Phyllis asked where the outcomes of recommendations from the previous year’s report can be found; Emily suggested that the previous years’ recommendation outcomes should be included in the following year’s report. Phyllis moved for approval of the report as complete and ready for submission to DFS in its final form, and Dawn seconded. Dawn said the report was very well done and represents what the Panel does. Phyllis said it’s extraordinary. Motion passes unanimously.
	2. CJA – Lynn reviewed the CJA Task Force’s role and process. The Task Force recommendations are used by DFS to help direct funding to nonprofit groups to address child abuse and neglect. An RFP process is being developed to get funds out to communities. The three-year assessment will be distributed to the Panel. It has been submitted to the state for review. Bryan attended the national CJA conference. There are quarterly calls, as well, where states share information about how funds are used and assessments are done. A file review of 8 cases is scheduled for July 8.
8. Communication - Website/Social Media – Photos and bios needed for Phyllis and Chandra. Emily emailed a few updates/corrections. Suggestions for changes to the website and FB content are welcomed.
9. Agency updates
	1. WDE – Ilaine said a Department staff meeting was held today. Effort is under way to get schools reopened; WDE provides guidance and reviews district-level plans. Meetings are planned to discuss a 10% general fund cut; no RIFs in the first go round. Continuing to address service provision and agency staffing and operations under the pandemic restrictions.
	2. DOC – Dawn said the proposed initial budget cuts were presented to the Governor’s Office. Some programs will be affected. RIFs are expected in the first cut. Hopefully the economy will improve. Continuing to address service provision and agency staffing and operations under the pandemic restrictions
	3. DFS – Annual progress and services report on the five-year plan will be submitted to the federal government on June 30. There are opportunities through Family First to change practices. Bryan was able to attend a new family assessment tool training; the tool will be used to help understand families’ needs and inform case plans. Continuing to address service provision and agency staffing and operations under the pandemic restrictions.
10. September 2020 Panel/CJA Meeting date – Wednesday, Sept. 9 (Panel) and Thursday, Sept. 10 (CJA).
11. Meeting adjourned.

Minutes taken by Sheri England

**Wyoming Citizen Review Panel Meeting**

**Wednesday, September 16, 2020**

Attendance: Emily Genoff, Chair, Jana Conine, Vice Chair/Treasurer, JoLee Schuler, Sherilyn England, Secretary. Panel members: Carol Nicolarsen, Lynn Huylar, CJA Liaison; Laura Dobler, Department of Family Services; Ilaine Brown, Department of Education; Dawn Sides, Department of Corrections; Carissa O’Malley, Stacy Strasser, Chandra Ortiz; CASA Natrona County Liaison, Phyllis Sherard and Sara Serelson; Wyoming Children’s Trust Fund, new Panel Member.

Employees: Bryan Cook, Director, Billie Underhill, Bookkeeper

Meeting called to order at 11:30am.

1. **Introductions:** The meeting was called to order and introductions made.
2. **Agenda Review:** The agenda was reviewed, and Bryan requested that we move number 4 up and address it first since Sara has a meeting she must attend. Laura will go after Sara because Laura has another meeting to attend also.
3. **Introduction of Sara Serelson:** Sara Serelson is the Executive Director of the Wyoming Children’s Trust Fund. She was a case worker and supervisor for DFS. Sara believes there will be opportunities for WYCRP & WYCTF to collaborate and partner on future projects. Sara has been invited and would like to be a Panel Board Member and on the CJA Task Force.

**Nomination & Vote:** Phyllis Sherard made a motion to accept Sara Serelson as a Liaison on the WyCRP and the CJA Task Force. Stacy Strasser seconded the motion. There was a discussion about if Sara wanted to be a Panel Member or a Liaison. Liaisons cannot vote and since there may be opportunities to partner on future projects, Sara & the Panel decided she should be a Liaison. A vote was taken, and it passed unanimously. Sara stated that she is only 15 days into her new role, and she has a lot to learn. The WYCTF focuses on primary and secondary prevention in hopes that it does not lead to incidents of abuse/neglect. Sara works with the Child Protection Team on various projects, implements the Safe Sleep Project messaging, helping parents and the community be aware and make our state and communities stronger. Sara appreciates the welcome and is looking forward to working with WYCRP.

1. **WYCRP Program and Contract Updates:**

**DFS-Laura Dobler/Bryan:** Workers are not traveling because of COVID-19. Training and meetings are being done on an on-line platform and will continue through 2020. Next year (2021) will have to be assessed to determine if health and safety standards will be relaxed. DFS is seeing the impacts of the budget cuts with minor losses of positions to date. Impacts for the Phase III budget cuts remain to be seen. The budget cuts have not impacted WYCRP. The 2021 contract is progressing and is now with Director Schmidt waiting for her to review and sign it. The current contract ends September 30, 2020. The CQI process has continued virtually and has decreased WYCRP’s involvement. Bryan is talking with DFS about how WYCRP will continue to be involved in this process. Emily expressed her gratitude that WYCRP and DFS have such a great working relationship. Emily acknowledged that this has been a trying time due to the COVID-19 Pandemic.

1. **June 2020 Meeting Minutes:** Jo Lee Schuler made a motion to approve the June 25, 2020 Minutes. Lynn Huylar seconded the motion and vote was taken. There was no discussion and the motion unanimously carried.
2. **Director’s Report-Bryan:**
	1. The Foster Care Committee has met once in August and plans to meet again in September.
	2. Bryan has reached out to Stacy and Sheri and others to set a date to meet for the Independent Living Committee. The hope is that the Committee will meet by the end of September or the beginning of October.
	3. WYCRP received a formal response from DFS to the WYCRP Annual Report. WYCRP agrees with the statements and response. WYCRP will be reviewing our methodology to engage parents and youth.
	4. WYCRP Annual Report-On Friday, Bryan will provide copies of the report to the Governor’s Office, DOH, DOE, etc. as is customary.
	5. Bryan is working with DFS on updating the contract between DFW and WYCRP. Bryan is excited about the new directions this could take us. WYCRP will still have a hand in collecting information and feedback.
	6. Bryan continues to participate monthly in the Community Family Support Forum.
	7. Bryan is working with the Youth Involvement Work Group with DFS. The group is making sure youth voices are heard and youth have input in their case plans and other areas. Bryan has been communicating with Dan Wilde with GAL, Karissa O’Malley IL Coordinator, and others to gather information on what youth need, giving guidance and exploring roles.
3. **WYCRP Program and Contract Updates:**
	1. Addressed in 4) (a)
	2. PAT’s “Agreed Upon Procedures'' engagement we were required to complete through our contract with PAT was completed by RLR CPAs and submitted by the deadline. The one finding was that WYCRP overbilled PAT for employee fringe benefits. WYCRP has already paid PAT back and has corrected the process to prevent the error again. Billie Underhill has helped with this process and has helped improve/repair WYCRP’s relationship with PAT. Billie has written the Policies and Procedures for WYCRP Financial Policies. Lynn Huylar thanked Bryan and Billie for working really hard on the Policies. Bryan appreciates Billie’s persistence in completing the Financial Policies.
		1. WYCRP is still waiting for the formal Blue-Ribbon announcement. Bryan stated that WYCRP PAT has the best data and numbers of an Affiliate in the country. Bryan feels confident that WYCRP will receive the award especially since staff engagement is high and all outcomes continue to be met. The Staff do an excellent job and are the best in the country. JoLee Schuler wanted to know if PAT has any recommendations for meeting families in person when the weather turns colder. Bryan said he has been in conversations with Angela Ward, the program person for PAT, about JoLee’s question. He has been advised to proceed as they have, and PAT will be in touch to advise WYCRP further.
		2. PAT has been advised by the Federal Government that in 20-21 their budget will see a 10% budget cut. Bryan and staff were able to make purchases to carry over for the 20-21 grant year so those program materials and up grades in technology won’t have to be made in the 20-21 grant year. Bryan believes if we need additional financial support, we can make a request to PAT.
		3. The Community of Practice Training/Staff Training Retreat was held this month in Saratoga. Bryan attended the meeting virtually due to a family medical situation.
		4. The Annual PAT Conference will be held virtually in October 2020.
		5. PAT’s discussions to have an active role in the “Family Resource Campus”, being contemplated in Laramie County by Family process, has been put on hold due to a turnover in Leadership within Family Process.
		6. Even though we experienced the loss of one staff, we were able to hire another staff who started in August. Numbers have been consistent and never drop below 113. Heather, the staff who started in August, has a connection with the Air Force Base and has a lot of interested families. Emily appreciated the staff’s hard work on staying connected with their families especially during the COVID-19 pandemic.
	3. Kinship Navigator/Wyoming 2-1-1 updates: The Kinship Navigator Program continues to serve Natrona and Laramie Counties. Gabby Rodgers, the Kinship Navigator in Cheyenne has been filling in and keeping up while another staff is on leave.
		1. Bryan has been working with Wyoming 2-1-1 on our new contract for the budget year 2020-2021.
		2. WYCRP is partnering with Public Knowledge and 2-1-1 to assist with the Year One Evaluation. Wyoming 2-1-1 is contracting directly with Public Knowledge.
		3. The Kinship team continues to participate in the National Evidence Building Academy through the Urban Institute.
4. **Financial Report:** P & L was sent out to all Panel Members by email. Billie Underhill started her position as Bookkeeper for WYCRP at the end of April 2020. She is doing a great job. Billie and Bryan are checking into processes and making sure we are doing what needs to be done. There were no Financial Policies & Procedures, so Billie created them. The changes that Billie has suggested, and the Financial Policies will assure that WYCRP follows Standard Accounting Procedures. Emily expressed her thanks to Billie for all her hard work in this area. RLR needs documentation for personnel files which includes job descriptions, evaluations and anything related to an employee pay rate and changes made to their wages. This task needs to be assigned to someone and a deadline indicated. Jana Conine agreed to help Bryan in this task. After the meeting they will select a deadline.
5. **Review and Ratification of new WYCRP Financial Policies**: JoLee made a motion to adopt the Financial Policies as presented. Stacy Strasser seconded the motion. No discussion and the motion was unanimously approved.
6. **Review and Ratification of Personnel Policy re-write:** The personnel policies have not been updated since December 2016. The policies were cleaned-up and streamlined. Bryan will have all the employees sign off that they have read the policies and acknowledge that they have received them. This will be one of the steps when a new employee “on-boards”. Another statement will be signed by employees that they have received keys, equipment, technology, cell phone, credit card, etc. When they leave employment, they will sign a statement indicating that they have returned those items. Jana suggested to Bryan that employees sign a statement saying that they are “At Will” employees. This was advice given to Jana’s organization. Make sure the “At Will” is in bold letters. Chandra Ortiz made a motion to adopt a motion to accept the revisions to WYCRP Personnel Policies. Lynn Huylar seconded the motion. There was no discussion and the motion unanimously passed.
7. **Discussion and votes regarding Health Insurance and Aflac Plans-**Information provided by email: WYCRP offers health insurance to employees. Historically the BCBS Premium Only Plan has been operated as though it was a pre-tax premium only plan. There is no documentation that this plan was ever set up, but the deductions were still taken. We are not in compliance and will need to adopt the plan and fill out the documentation. If we adopt the plan now, we will be in compliance for 2020 but will have to review several years back and make corrections by correcting the payroll, W2’s & notifying employees that they will have to correct their taxes . This would affect 1 to 2 employees. Phyllis had reviewed the POP sent out by BCBS and her question related to flex spending. Do we have to provide employees with flex spending and the answer is no. Lynn Huylar had a question on whether WYCRP would be subject to a penalty and interest from the IRS. Bryan, Billie and RLR are working on this question. Stacy made a motion to adopt and implement the Premium Only Plan offered by BCBS. Phyllis seconded the motion. A vote was taken, and the motion passed. Stacy had a question – Are employees looking at fees and does WYCRP need to cover the fees? After discussion it was decided that WYCRP would pay any costs associated with the costs of not having the POP set up properly. Billie thinks that in 2019 it would be one employee and the cost would be around $200.00. Stacy made a motion to cover expenses caused by the absence of the POP plan. Phyllis seconded the motion and the motion carried.
8. **Sabrina Lane, Executive Director of Wyoming 2-1-1:** Wyoming 2-1-1 was designated as the Statewide Call Center for the State of Wyoming. They have implemented a webpage for COVID-19 information and have seen a dramatic rise in phone calls requesting information since March 16th, 2020. Calls centered around health-related issues & assistance for utilities and rent. Wyoming 2-1-1 has been busy making sure their data is correct and records up to date. The COVID-19 Pandemic has increased collaboration and networking. Wyoming 2-1-1 has helped over 20 aging adults since July. The next project involves a childhood survey to determine the well-being of children in Wyoming. Wyoming 2-1-1 has not experienced budget cuts. Wyoming 2-1-1 is making their website more user friendly. It’s still the access point to enroll in Health care. Wyoming 2-1-1 is listing all mental health services not just non-profit. Emily expressed her gratitude.
9. **Gabby Rodgers with Kinship Navigator:**  Kinship Navigation is going well, and they continue to have new clients inquire about services. Gabby has a plan to provide outreach in communities and counties. Public Knowledge is providing and evaluation of the Kinship Navigation and should have a report by the end of September. The ultimate goal is to have this program listed in the California Clearinghouse. Phyllis complimented Gabby on a job well done.
10. **Adding Aflac to WYCRP Benefits:** Bryan would like to offer supplemental health insurance through Aflac. WYCRP doesn’t contribute to this plan. JoLee made a motion to add Aflac to the WYCRP benefit plan. Carol Nicolarsen seconded the motion. A vote was taken, and the motion passed.
11. **Committee Reports:**
	1. **Foster Care:** The committee is working with DFSto improve Foster Careand has met once in August**.** The committee has discussed ways to engage foster parents through various social media and increased training opportunities. Bryan has been researching starting up the Foster Parent Association by having conversations with the National Foster Parent Organization. If a Foster Parent Association were to be created, it would need a 501c (3). There was discussion about conducting a survey to determine the need.
	2. **Independent Living:** This group has not scheduled a date to meet yet. I hope to have a meeting by the end of September or the beginning of October.
	3. **Fundraising:** The Committee has met a couple of times and has accomplished quite a bit. They worked on identifying tiers (goals) of fundraising. Tier 1 is about name recognition and generating Facebook followers. This fundraising effort might include a contest on Facebook that would end October 31, 2020. Tier 2 is Bryan signed WYCRP up for the Wyoming Nonprofit Network and uses the Grant Station to identify grants that WYCRP may apply for. The goal is to look at 3 new grants. Tier 3 would be the most labor intensive. Ideas include a raffle, on-line auctions, Thankful Thursdays, or some other event. The goal is to have unrestricted funds to assist when cash is needed when payments do not arrive on time or items that need to be purchased that the grants do not pay for. Emily expressed her gratitude for members giving of their time.
12. **CJA – Lynn:** CJA will be meeting tomorrow. CJA is looking at various ways to collect more data and identify trends. There are certain individuals that are identified to be on CJA, but they are difficult to recruit. CJA is looking for Judges and Attorneys.
13. **Next Quarterly Meeting date is December 2nd from 1pm-5pm. CJA will meet December 3rd.**
14. Emily thanked everyone for participating.
15. Meeting was Adjourned at 2:10pm.

Minutes taken by Sheri England

**Wyoming Citizen Review Panel Meeting**

**Wednesday, December 2, 2020**

Attendance: Emily Genoff, Chair, JoLee Schuler, Treasure, Sherilyn England, Secretary. Panel members: Carol Nicolarsen, Lynn Huylar, CJA Liaison; Laura Dobler, Department of Family Services; Ilaine Brown, Department of Education; Dawn Sides, Department of Corrections; Carissa O’Malley, Chandra Ortiz; CASA Natrona County Liaison, Phyllis Sherard and Sara Serelson; Wyoming Children’s Trust Fund, new Panel Member.

Members Absent: Jana Conine & Stacy Strasser

Employees: Bryan Cook, Director, Billie Underhill, Bookkeeper

1. **Introductions:** The meeting was called to order and introductions made.
2. **Agenda Review:** The agenda was reviewed, and Bryan requested that we move the PAT update (8.b.) after #4 and move Kinship Navigator (8.c.) after the PAT update.
3. **September 2020 Meeting Minutes:** Lynn Huylar made a motion to accept the minutes and JoLee seconded the motion. A vote was taken, and the motion passed.
4. **Introduction and Recognition of PAT Staff:** Bryanintroduced Josie Brittain, Program Coordinator and Heather K. the newest member of PAT. Josie presented on PAT. At a minimum the program serves 113 families. Staff continue to serve their clients in a combination of in-person and through telecommunication. Staff are thankful for our partnership with the Children’s Trust Fund which donated Pack N Plays to PAT’s clients. PAT received a Blue-Ribbon award for performing exceedingly well on their review. The team worked extremely hard through the rigorous process. The final report was sent to all Board Members and Bryan will help with the press releases. Bryan presented the Blue-Ribbon award to Josie and Heather. Everyone thanked the staff and showed their appreciation.
5. **Kinship Navigator/Wyoming 2-1-1 Update:** Jena Monahan, Program Coordinator for Kinship Navigator shared an update on her program. Jena is working on developing policy and procedures. The Annual Report has been shared with Board Members. Kinship Navigator has worked with 35 families across Wyoming but has focused on Natrona and Laramie Counties. The majority of the individuals working with Kinship Navigator are grandparents and great grandparents, the majority of referrals are from DFS and word of mouth. The top reasons for seeking assistance were substance abuse, DFS removal of children, abuse, neglect and abandonment. If you have any questions, please contact Jena and she would be happy to answer any questions or give you more information. The program evaluation completed by Public Knowledge has been completed and the program is Federally funded through the end of September 2021. There is still lots to accomplish to be able to have the Kinship Navigator Program be listed on the Clearinghouse site. The goal is to move the program throughout Wyoming and seek additional funding sources.
6. **Director’s Report:** Bryan reviewed his reports**.** He is working with DFS and others on gathering information from youth, foster parents, biological parents and service providers on how we can help our youth, foster parents and biological parents be successful. Bryan reported that a Facebook Foster Care Support Group has been created and will be inviting new members. Bryan reported that town hall meetings and a survey is being developed to elicit feedback from youth. A goal is to develop a statewide Youth Advisory Council. Bryan has been busy working with Sara Serelson on conducting Parent Community Cafes. Bryan has worked with DFS to gain information from Child Protection Teams. Bryan participated in the development of the Wyoming Early Childhood Strategic Plan over several months. Emily said there was good participation in the Community Café’s. Sara Serelson reported the Café’s went well and Bryan felt that having the individuals pre-register was very helpful. Laura and Chandra appreciated Bryan’s hard work and dedication.
7. **Financial Report:** P & L was sent out to all Panel Members by email. Billie Underhill stated that gave an overview of the financials. Emily thanked Billie for her report. Emily asked if Billie was working on any more financial items that might need to be addressed and Billie is reviewing fixed assets and keeping inventory up to date. Billie has been addressing any financial issues that have needed to be addressed since she started her position. Bryan says Billie has done a great job and we have been fortunate to hire her and is a good edition to our team. Billie also mentioned that WYCRP was reimbursed from the CARES funding for quarantine pay for staff that were not able to work due to COVID-19.
8. **Committee Reports:**
	1. **Fundraising:** Bryan and Lynn have been working hard on the two 5K Races that will be held in Casper and Cheyenne. They are working on the dates, locations, sponsorships, the budget, t-shirts, medals, etc. They are considering earmarking this fundraiser for the Kinship Navigator Program. Billie suggested a Facebook fundraiser. Lynn suggested a raffle. Bryan has sent a letter to Black Hills Energy to request funding. Bryan also discussed the Wyoming Public Radio Community Minute Highlights which spotlights non-profit agencies or programs. He has recorded his message but wants to review it before it is distributed or uploaded to the website. This would bring awareness to the program and there is no cost to participate.
	2. **Youth Involvement/Foster Care:** The Foster Care Committee is meeting monthly and developing a survey on figuring out the best way to engage Foster Parents. They will keep the survey short, maybe 7 or 8 questions. A new Facebook Foster Care Support Group was created, and new content will be posted as well as inviting members. This will drive improvements. There was discussion on drafting a job description for marketing and communication. Maybe looking at colleges for interns to help with Facebook and other social media needs. It could be a win-win situation. Bryan met with DFS and a GAL Program consultant, IL Coordinators, and youth to work on youth involvement activities.
9. **WyCRP Program and Contract Updates:**
	1. **DFS** – Laura Dobler, DFS Liaison/Bryan: Trying to engage focus populations to engage in Focus Groups, Town Halls, Community Café meetings and surveys. Laura and Bryan are asking for volunteers and wondering about interns to assist.
	2. **CJA** – Lynn: They plan on meeting tomorrow and review 4 cases including one from last time which was postponed due to insufficient information. They are looking at recruiting members, specifically a defense attorney and a judge. They also need to focus on retention of CJA members. Discussion was held on how to fill those positions and who could possibly be asked.
10. **Agency Update:**
	1. Sara Serelson with Children’s Trust Fund – It’s been a great partnership with CTF. CTF was able to provide PAT with Sleep Sacks and Pack N’ Plays for their families that needed those items. A diaper drive is happening and will also benefit families of PAT. CTF is able to provide Protective Factors training along with Mandatory Reporting Training that will be offered virtually.
	2. WDE – Ilaine Brown – There is an opportunity for youth and professionals to be involved in “Road Trip Nation”. It is a program funded by Perkins Funding which is targeting the Foster Care population. Young Adults ages 18 and up can apply to be “Road Trippers” and the professionals will be interviewed by the Road Trippers. PBS will provide a Red-Carpet event and show the videos these Young Adults will be making.
	3. Phyllis wanted everyone to be aware of the budget cuts that the legislators are working on including a bill on prioritizing mental health services.
	4. Emily wants to provide holiday gift cards to PAT & Kinship staff. She will collect the money from members and purchase the cards.
	5. Happy Birthday Bryan tomorrow!
	6. We celebrate the year ending as a healthy agency making a huge difference in the lives of families.
11. **Next Quarterly Meeting date is March 17th. CJA will meet on March 18th. Hours will be determined.**
12. Meeting was Adjourned.

Minutes taken by Sheri England

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**Wyoming Citizen Review Panel Meeting**

**Wednesday March 24, 2021**

In Attendance: Emily Genoff, Sara Serelson, Laura Dobler, Ilaine Brown, Chandra Ortiz, Jana Conine, John Wright, Carissa O’Malley, Lynn Huyler

Absent: Stacy Strasser, Phyllis Sherard, Sheri England, JoLee Schuler, Dawn Sides, Carol Nicolarsen

Staff: Bryan Cook, Billie Underhill

The meeting was called to order by Emily at 1:05pm.

1. **Introductions:** Panel members and staff in attendance were introduced for the meeting.
2. **Agenda Review:** The agenda was reviewed by the panel with no significant changes. Lynn will need to leave the meeting early so her information will be moved up in the agenda.
3. **December 2, 2021 meeting minutes:** Lynn Huyler made a motion to accept the December meeting minutes and Chandra Ortiz seconded the motion. The motion passed with a unanimous vote.
4. **Financial Report:** Billie Underhill presented the financials for the previous quarter. She stated that there is currently $50,000 in the savings account which she feels is a comfortable amount to assure continued business operation. She stated that in past years there had only been approximately $10,000 in the account and she would like to maintain $30,000 to $50,000 for operating expenses. Bryan Cook stated that he feels that the organization is in a much more stable situation than in the past and that accounting and business operations have been improved significantly. They are currently working on completing a personnel file review to assure that those documents are in order.
5. **Director’s report:** Bryan reviewed his most recent Directors report and shared the following information. There were 179+ responses received from the recent foster parent survey. This survey was completed for the purpose of hearing the voices of foster parents and obtaining their perspective on foster care. Additionally the information obtained will be used to inform the content for the Foster Parent support Group on Facebook. He has been working closely with the Children’s Trust Fund in their efforts to conduct Foster parent Cafes and the response has been very good. They have completed most virtually but some recently have been in person. Bryan has also begun to attend child protection team meetings in an effort to improve communication and collaboration between DFS and CRP and feels this is resulting in greater communication and understanding. He has also been working with YES House and statewide Independent Living Coordinators on developing a model for youth engagement that will be incorporated into the youth summit which is targeted for 2022. Sara Serelson suggested approaching Workforce Services to ask for assistance and perhaps financial assistance for the summit.
6. **WyCRP Program Reports**

**Kinship Connections**-Gabby Rogers, Jenna Monahan and Kimberly Berrettini joined the meeting to present their work with Kinship Connections. Kimberly was introduced as the newest staff joining the program, she will be working out of Sheridan Wyoming. Jenna shared year end data which included that the program had served 40 families and 65 children in kinship care during 2020. She also reported that they are excited to have begun a collaborative effort with the University of Wyoming to assist with evaluation of the program.

**PAT-** Bryan reported on the status of the program. Referrals and numbers are very good and indicative of a much needed and appreciated program. The panel discussed the recent information that the state of Wyoming may apply for the McVeigh funds which would likely have a significant effect on the PAT program. Emily has reached out to Jen Davis who will try and obtain additional information about the intentions of the state. Current McVeigh funds are secure for the PAY program until September 30, 2022. Sara Serelson informed the panel that there have been more funds allocated for McVeigh for the current funding period and feels that PAT should be eligible to receive additional funds. Bryan will monitor the situation and keep the panel informed.

**CJA-**Lynn reported that the CJA Task Force met in January to complete strategic planning and are working on training around the state to improve knowledge around utilizing a Multidisciplinary team approach to investigations. The taskforce is working to find facilitators and communities willing and able to implement this type of investigative technique. The Taskforce is also working on the grant reapplication with DFS. Deadline for the application is March 15, 2021. Lynn further reported that the Taskforce is close to fulfilling all the membership needs on the taskforce and she feels very good about the individuals who are serving on the taskforce. The next meeting of the CJA Task Force is April 14, 2021.

1. **Fundraising:** Lynn detailed the work that has been done on the upcoming 5K fundraiser to be held in Cheyenne May 22, 2021. Most of the costs of hosting the event have been covered by donations and the effort now is to promote the event to obtain more participants.

Bryan also reported that the CRP has submitted an application to the Wyoming Children’s Trust Fund to help provide home visitation programs. Sara Serelson reported that a decision on this funding should be made by the early part of April. CRP also submitted a grant request to the Wyoming Community Foundation which was funded for $5,000. Emily asked Bryan to prepare a budget for these funds that would be approved by the panel.

Emily asked if CRP had pursued any Cares Act funds. Bryan stated that this had not been done but he had recently been informed that additional funds may soon be available that nonprofits could apply to receive.

Bryan informed the Panel that TJMaxx had recently donated a large amount of PPE that was shared with Early Headstart and the Safehouse.

1. **WYCRP Personnel Policy Amendments and vote for approval –** this vote was postponed due to a lack of quorum at the time of this discussion. Following this decision there was a discussion as to whether or not there could be an email vote on these issues. Jana stated that the Goodwill attorney had informed that agency that before an email vote was legally binding the option of this type of vote needed to be included in the agency’s bylaws. Chandra Ortiz informed the panel that her husband who is an attorney suggested that if there was a 50% approval from the panel for this type of vote that it didn’t need to be included in the bylaws. Bryan will send an email to members requesting their approval of an email vote.
2. **Strategic Plan Discussion and updates:** The discussion of the strategic plan was postponed due to a lack of members on the call at the time of the discussion. The panel discussed the possibility of utilizing an outside consultant to update the strategic plan. Several options were discussed as well as a resource that might fund this work for the CRP. Emily will follow up with information concerning this initiative.
3. The vote to accept John Wright as a new CRP Panel member was postponed due to a lack of quorum.
4. **Agency Updates**

**DFS-** Laura Dobler reported that DFS is pleased with the work being done with Youth involvement and foster care parent engagement. These initiatives/collaborations are assisting DFS in areas that have been difficult to obtain information. DFS is currently working on federal reporting requirements and has been able to include information from the work of the CRP which has shown a lot of improvement. DFS is also working on requirements for Families First Initiatives.

**Children’s Trust Fund-**Sara Serelson- Sara shared that they have interacted with 130 parents through the parent Café’s. Most concerns involved lack of transportation, medical care, interpretive services, disability services access, services in rural areas, services for deaf parents, affordable housing and affordable childcare. Barriers identified included finances, transportation and awareness of available services. The parents also expressed interest in parent support programs, life skills classes for people of all ages, mentors for parents and suicide prevention services among others. Sara reported that the parents were paid with a $15 gift card to participate in the Café’s

**WDE Ilaine Brown-** Ilaine reported on the State’s progress on school procedures during Covid. She also informed the panel that the Department of Agriculture will extend the nutritious meals program through 9/21. She gave a brief summary of legislative action affecting education which highlighted the proposed cuts that are being considered. Finally Ilaine announced that there will be a new literacy program for 3-5 grade students and the program will be called WYBILT.

WDH- A discussion was conducted as to whether or not the panel should recruit a member from the Department of Health. It was the general consensus that this would be a good addition to the Panel.

1. **Communication**

Website/Social Media- Carissa reported to the Panel on the collaboration with Dr. Berry and others to provide online training for foster parents. Emily and Bryan discussed the increased traffic that is being seen on the CRP Facebook site. Bryan will try and find out the amount of traffic that the CRP website is receiving.

1. June 2021 Panel/CJA Meeting date- The date of the next meeting is pending

 The meeting was adjourned at 3:35pm. Minutes taken by Jana Conine.

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**Attachment 2**

2020 Wyoming Child Maltreatment Statistics(Source: DFS)

This report provides maltreatment stats for children 18 years and under during the 2020 calendar year. Child maltreatment is the abuse and neglect that occurs in children under 18 years of age. It includes all types of physical and/or emotional ill-treatment, sexual abuse, neglect, negligence and commercial or other exploitation, which results in actual or potential harm to the child’s health, survival, development or dignity in the context of a relationship of responsibility, trust or power. There are 13 maltreatment types in WYCAPS, ranging from neglect, sexual abuse, physical injury, to malnutrition.

In 2020, 844 children (18years and under) experienced 1,368 substantiated allegations of maltreatment. Neglect made up 64% of the total substantiated allegations, then abuse at 29%; together accounting for 93% of total allegations. The average age when the allegations were made is 7 years.

Please note that all numbers reported excludes tribal data (Northern Arapaho and Eastern Shoshone).

Table 1 shows the number of child (18 years and under) maltreatment stats during the 2020 calendar year.

Table. 1

| Allegation Type | Total Substantiated Allegation | % Total Substantiated Allegation | Number of Child(ren) | % Number of Child(ren) | Average Age at Allegation (Yrs) |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| NEGLECT | 872 | 64% | 555 | 66% | 7 |
| ABUSE | 401 | 29% | 227 | 27% | 7 |
| SEXUAL ABUSE | 33 | 2% | 25 | 3% | 11 |
| EDUCATIONAL NEGLECT | 22 | 2% | 14 | 2% | 13 |
| PHYSICAL ABUSE | 14 | 1% | 10 | 1% | 7 |
| MEDICAL NEGLECT | 8 | 1% | 2 | 0% | 1 |
| ABANDONMENT | 8 | 1% | 4 | 0% | 12 |
| PHYSICAL INJURY | 7 | 1% | 5 | 1% | 8 |
| EMOTIONAL ABUSE | 3 | 0% | 2 | 0% | 9 |
| Grand Total | **1368** | **100%** | **844** | **100%** | **7** |

Fig. 1 illustrates the number of child (18years and under) maltreatment stats by allegation type during the 2020 calendar year.

Fig. 1



Fig. 2 shows the number of child (18years and under) maltreatment stats by county during the 2020 calendar year.

Fig. 2



Fig. 3 further illustrates the number of child (18years and under) maltreatment stats by month during the 2020 calendar year.

Fig. 3



**Attachment 3**

**Source of this report is Public Knowledge**

Wyoming Citizen Review Panel Strategic Plan Updated for 2021-2022

Wyoming Citizen Review Panel (the Panel) contracted with Public Knowledge® (PK) to refresh the 2020-21 Strategic Plan. The work was made possible by a grant from the Tate Foundation. On April 27, 2021, the Panel met virtually with facilitators from PK to conduct an environmental analysis, review previous goals, and identify roadblocks preventing achievement of the Panel’s goals. The majority of the session was spent identifying tangible, actionable tasks to overcome those roadblocks. Mission, Vision, Purpose, SWOT, and Partners were not revised.

Environmental Scan

The Panel participated in a guided facilitation to consider factors and influences that impact the Panel’s work.

The Panel developed responses to each of the categories:

| HORIZON  | EMERGING  | ESTABLISHED  | DISAPPEARING  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Coordinated response to child abuse situations Children’s Justice Act | Economic situation in Wyoming has restricted funding | CRP/CJA as part of a well-established state partnership | Harder to hide from invisible conversations |

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| Group/Support for single dads | Learned things can be more virtual and adaptable | PAT-well established working program (would like to see that grow) | Fewer face to face interactions |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Service Provider/Stakeholder engagement opportunities | Social media and videos-want to get feedback and try some sort of in person Foster Care support group | Community Café’s (partnerships with Children’s Trust Fund) listening sessions to engage birth parents and service providers | Treatment plans are changing, family treatment plans |
| Budget/Funding  | Families First is still on the horizon, qualified treatment facility requirements for federal funding | A lot of well established partnerships that create a lot of benefits. | We’ve always done it this way |
| Kinship Programs  | Foster birth provider, engagement and participation are increasing, and including prevention | Identification of unaccompanied youth becoming more established | Wyoming is starting to accept (ACES) theory |
| Program or system that is geared toward men/single fathers | Continuing to engage the service providers | Child abuse and neglect still happening and needs to be addressed |  |
| Children’s justice act task force | Youth engagement partnership with DFS and others |  |  |
|  | Parent Café, virtual meetings |  |  |
|  | Early Childhood Development Grant |  |  |

WY CRP Strategic Plan 2021-22 May 2021 2



Goal Setting

Through the work completed in the facilitated session, the Panel updated the strategic plan goals and identified priority tasks as follows:

| Increase support and engagement for foster parents |
| --- |

1. Continue community café conversations with specific topics maybe offering a brief (15 to 20 minute) training on responding to behavioral issues, for example, to answer the "why go" question

2. Incorporate foster parents into the committee

3. Develop Social media posts for May (Foster Care Awareness Month) with content promoting DFS activities

4. Partner foster parents with a mentor

| Engage foster youth and identify gaps in communication and services |
| --- |

1. Recruit youth to support the Panel by sharing their experiences and stories, providing feedback, and participating in every activity and effort

2. Provide a Strategic Plan Progress Review at board meetings to share needs, acknowledge past participation, and encourage continued participation

3. Develop a strategy for Foster Youth communications to modernize and share the effort requirements

| Build a stronger community through stakeholder identification and connection |
| --- |

1. Inventory stakeholder groups to understand what is important to each group (build off of the mission, vision, and purpose).

2. Assess what information is accessible, available, and what is needed (gaps, successes, etc.).

3. Review and update the stakeholder assessment survey.

4. Develop a Stakeholder Engagement Plan.

5. Leverage online methods (including social media) for stakeholder survey and engagement.

6. Engage with stakeholders where they are, based on the best communication for them.

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