



Tennessee  
Citizen Review Panels  
Annual Report &  
Recommendations  
July 1, 2017 - June 30, 2018

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by



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## Introduction

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The 1974 federal Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (CAPTA) requires states that receive funding through this legislation to comply with specific requirements related to developing and maintaining a system for responding to child abuse and neglect. The 1996 CAPTA Reauthorization required most states, Tennessee included, to establish three (3) Citizen Review Panels (CRPs) by 1999. The CRPs with expertise in child abuse and neglect prevention and treatment are charged with reviewing Child Protective Services (CPS) state policies, current practices, pertinent data, and case files, and with evaluating the extent to which CPS is fulfilling its child protection responsibilities, including coordination with foster care and adoption programs.

As required by CAPTA, the CRPs are composed of community volunteers who are broadly representative of their communities. The CRPs are also required to prepare an annual report of activities, goals, and recommendations for overall system improvement for the state and general public. The state child welfare agency responds on how the agency will incorporate the recommendations within 6 months.

## Purpose of this Report

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The report describes the work and accomplishments of each of Tennessee's four CRPs during fiscal year 2018 (July 1, 2017, to June 30, 2018). Specifically, the report includes the following:

- An executive summary of Tennessee's four CRPs' work focus, activities, and recommendations;
- A summary of the 2018 annual statewide CRP meeting;

- A description of the four panels' work activities, including their current goals and outcomes for system changes and improvements; and
- New goals and action steps to improve the child protection system.

For more information on CRPs and CAPTA, please visit the Child Abuse and Neglect Technical Assistance and Strategic Dissemination Center website at <http://www.cantasd.org/crp>.



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*"Every 47 seconds a child is confirmed abused or neglected."*

(<http://www.childrendefense.org/library/misc/moments-in-america-for-children.html>)

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## Executive Summary of Tennessee’s Citizen Review Panel (CRP) Work for FY 2018

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Tennessee has four panels, which operate in Hamilton, Montgomery, and Shelby counties and in the Northwest Region. Each panel is diverse, both demographically and professionally, and each panel’s activities reflect its community’s interests, state and federal priorities, and needs. Additionally, they meet quarterly and convene for an annual statewide meeting each spring.

In addition, each CRP receives assistance and staff support from the Tennessee Department of Children’s Services (DCS), the lead state agency for overseeing CPS and child welfare reform. These staff persons who attend the panels’ meetings share departmental updates and assist with case reviews, data collection, collaboration, and overall capacity-building in order to meet federal and state standards and requirements for improving child welfare practice.

As required by law, all but one of Tennessee’s CRPs met four times this year; one panel met five times. Their work focus and activities were driven by both state and local child welfare concerns expressed by panel members, the DCS Office of Child Safety, and state and federal data the panels reviewed.

In addition to their quarterly meetings, the CRPs held a joint meeting this year to discuss and review the work each panel focused on and completed; to participate in a discussion with DCS about its recent work and initiatives and to share the progress they made and public concerns; and to draft their goals for the upcoming year.

For FY 2018, each of the four CRPs agreed to continue to examine the impact of parental substance abuse on children’s safety and overall

well-being as they had done in FY 2017. Their focus on this issue also continued to be a learning opportunity—to help them as well as the child protection system and key stakeholders better understand the major opioid epidemic in our state.

In addition, the panels examined educational and normalcy experiences for children and youth in foster care with a particular focus on youth ages 13 and older.

For more details about each of the panels, including their work, activities, and outcomes, please refer to the section, “2018 CRP Detailed Activities.”

### *Concern 1: Assessing Safety and Overall Well-Being of Children Impacted by Parental Substance Abuse*

Tennessee has been impacted severely by the opioid crisis, experiencing some of the nation’s highest opioid prescription and overdose rates, and for many victims of the crisis, their opioids were prescribed legally. For example, a report featured in the *Tennessean* newspaper on September 19, 2016 showed that in 2015 more than 7.8 million patients received opioid prescriptions.<sup>1</sup>

#### *What CRPs Examined*

The panels’ study of the problem included looking at prevention, intervention, and treatment approaches to address child protection for families in which substance abuse is an issue. While unable to accomplish all they set out to do for the year on this issue, the panels made the following progress:

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<sup>1</sup> The *Tennessean* Newspaper, September 19, 2016

1. Collected and analyzed state and national data for infants and children exposed to drugs;
2. Reviewed DCS child welfare cases and drug abuse policies and practice;
3. Identified resources available for awareness, prevention, intervention, and treatment of substance use and abuse for children and adults;
4. Hosted meetings with substance abuse service providers; and
5. Attended conferences and events related to the prevention, intervention, and treatment of opioids and heroin.

#### *What CRPs Learned*

Each of the panels learned how dire the problem is for children nationwide and in Tennessee.

- Among women who struggle with opioid abuse, 86% of pregnancies are unintended, compared with 56% of all pregnancies, noting that these children are more likely to receive insufficient or delayed prenatal care and are at risk of low birthweight.<sup>2</sup>
- Between 14% and 22% of women nationwide fill an opioid medication prescription during pregnancy, putting thousands of infants at risk of neonatal abstinence syndrome (NAS).<sup>3</sup>
- **By 2012, an infant was born with NAS on average every 25 minutes in the United States.** Across 28 states, the NAS rate increased by almost 300% between 1999 and 2013.<sup>4</sup>

- **NAS costs \$93,400 per infant in hospital charges on average, and the average hospital stay for an infant with NAS is 23 days.** Medicaid covered about 80% of the estimated \$1.5 billion tab for NAS-related hospital charges in 2012.<sup>5</sup>
- Opioid poisonings in toddlers and preschoolers 1 to 4 years old increased 205% between 1997 and 2012, and increased 165% among all youth under 19, with younger children and older adolescents most at risk.<sup>6</sup>
- Nearly a third of children entering foster care in 2015 were from, in part, families with parental drug abuse—an increase of nearly 50% since 2005.<sup>7</sup>
- In 2016, more than 11.5 million Americans ages 12 and older reported misuse of prescription opioids in the past year, and nearly 950,000 Americans reported heroin use in the past year.<sup>8</sup>

The panels also found that the unimaginable is occurring to children because of opioids and heroin:

- More than 1,000 infants in Tennessee are born dependent on drugs each year.
- Prescription medications are the main source of neonatal abstinence syndrome (NAS) in Tennessee for babies in both rural and urban areas.
- From 2002 to 2013, Tennessee's rate of NAS has increased 1,000%, while the rate

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<sup>2</sup> Children's Defense Fund, Child Watch Column. October 2017

<sup>3</sup> Ibid

<sup>4</sup> Ibid

<sup>5</sup> Ibid

<sup>6</sup> Ibid

<sup>7</sup> Ibid

<sup>8</sup> The White House, October 26, 2017.

<https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefings-statements/president-donald-j-trump-taking-action-drug-addiction-opioid-crisis/>

for the U.S. was 300% for the same period.<sup>9</sup>

- From March 1, 2017 to March 1, 2018, the drug abuse team in East Tennessee was assigned 380 cases; of that number, 142 resulted in removal.<sup>10</sup>
- Toddlers as young as 2 have overdosed from stumbling upon their parents' drugs.
- Parents have trafficked their children to feed their addiction.
- Children of all ages have witnessed their parent abuse and/or misuse drugs.

During their work, the CRPs also learned about promising practices for addressing the needs of children and families impacted by substance abuse. One such intervention that is getting good reviews is Families Facing the Future, an evidence-based practice designed for families with parents who are addicted to drugs. It aims to prevent parents' relapse and reduce the likelihood of substance abuse among their children. This program targets parents enrolled in methadone treatment who have children ages 3 to 14. Evaluation conducted on this program revealed that parents in the treatment group had significantly higher scores than those in the control group in parenting skills, parent drug use, deviant peers, and family engagement. For more information on this program, please visit <http://www.sdr.org/ffsummary.asp>.

#### *What CRPs Recommend*

While Tennessee has enacted a number of policies and practices for addressing the opioid crisis in the state, the panels recommend that DCS continue to dedicate efforts to preventing child abuse and repeat child abuse. The CRPs urge DCS to develop and implement a statewide prevention plan for addressing

children who are at risk or who have been abused, neglected, or witnessed domestic violence and substance abuse.

Additionally, the panels recommend that all DCS staff who work with parents who abuse or misuse drugs receive training on the various substances of abuse—how to ask the “right” questions of families and to assess thoroughly the developmental, emotional, and behavioral needs of these children.

#### *Concern 2: Examining Educational and Normalcy Experiences for Children and Youth in Foster Care*

Each year, an estimated 20,000 to 25,000 young people leave foster care at age 18 or 19 without returning to their families. These young people often did not complete high school, are ill-prepared for the job market, and lack health coverage, housing, and other supports they need to succeed in the real world. The problems associated with youth aging out of or leaving foster care are of concern to each of the CRPs, which is why each chose to examine this issue.

#### *What CRPs Examined*

The work conducted by the panels included the following:

1. Reviewed the 2017 Child and Family Service Review (CFSR) federal report.
2. Met with DCS staff persons and community partners to identify strategies to best support foster children's educational and life skills experiences.
3. Surveyed youth about their foster care experiences.
4. Met with DCS education consultant to discuss the department's guidelines and

<sup>9</sup> Blue Cross Blue Shield of Tennessee. Retrieved June 2018. <https://bettertennessee.com/health-brief-neonatal-abstinence-syndrome/>

<sup>10</sup> TDCS, Office of Child Safety



practice for addressing the educational needs of foster children and youth.

### *What CRPs Learned*

The CRPs found that:

- Many former or foster youth are dropping out of college by the end of the first year.
- Many youth leave foster care facing issues in relation to their physical and mental health, such as unexpected pregnancies, unstable housing, limited life skills, and inadequate supports.
- Foster youth feel that foster parents need more training on navigating the child welfare system and a support group.<sup>11</sup>
- Foster youth want to experience normal and age-appropriate activities like other kids, such as being able to obtain a driver's license, participate in social activities, and have their friends over for visits.

During their work, the CRPs also learned about promising practices for addressing the educational needs of foster children and youth. According to the Casey Foundation, the only way to combat the problems foster children/youth face is through an integrated approach that includes individuals and families, churches, corporations, nonprofits, and the government, which is critical for creating change.<sup>12</sup> It also requires the creation of high-quality pathways that help foster children/youth become ready for college and/or employment and navigate adulthood.

### *What CRPs Recommend*

The panels recommend that DCS connect foster youth to the University of Tennessee Extension program, which has an office in every county in the state. The program delivers educational programs and research-based

information to citizens throughout the state and offers activities on financial literacy, health and nutrition education, career placement and job training, and college preparation.

Additionally, the panels recommend that DCS consider establishing a partnership with workforce development governmental agencies, Tennessee Board of Regents technical schools and community colleges, and 4-year colleges and universities about opportunities for enhancing foster children and youth programming activities.

Tennessee Citizen Review Panels remain committed to working with DCS, the courts, schools, other key stakeholders, and communities on efforts to ensure that the child protection system works for every child in Tennessee. In the upcoming year, each of the panels will assess the needs, gaps, and strengths of child-serving agencies/organizations and the communities they serve and will continue to collaborate with DCS to improve outcomes for foster children and youth.



<sup>11</sup> U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Children's Bureau, 2017 Child and Family Service Review Report

<sup>12</sup> Children's Defense Fund, Child Watch Column, October 2017

## 2018 Citizen Review Panel Detailed Activities

### *Statewide CRP Meeting*

The annual statewide CRP meeting was held on Tuesday, April 24, in Jackson at DCS Madison County's office. Twenty-nine representatives from the four CRPs, including DCS CRP liaisons, along with Commissioner Bonnie Hommrich and Deputy Commissioner Dimple Dudley, participated in the meeting.

Dr. Nancy Kelley, counseling and intervention supervisor for Collierville Schools and CRP member, was the keynote speaker. Her presentation titled "Don't Lose Your Stripes: Stress Management 101," covered the following: 1) What is Stress; 2) Recognizing the Signs and Symptoms of Stress; and 3) Coping Strategies and Tips for Managing Stress.

DCS Commissioner Hommrich and DCS Deputy Commissioner Dudley updated the panels on the state's efforts to address the growing substance abuse problem in Tennessee. They shared information about the three drug abuse teams in East Tennessee and noted that their partnership with UT Medical Center and East Tennessee Hospital was garnering some success.

Commissioner Hommrich also reported that in June 2017, DCS exited the Brian A. lawsuit filed in 2000 by Children's Rights, a national organization that advocates on behalf of abused and neglected children. The lawsuit was brought on behalf of a class of all children in Tennessee's foster care system. Deputy Commissioner Dudley reported that improving quality in CPS is a primary focus for the department and that they are partnering with the Casey Foundation.

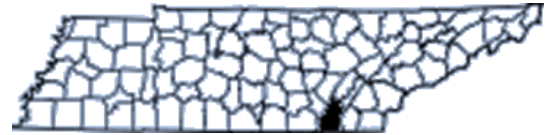
Other updates included the following:

- Tennessee's Foster Care Program is working with communities and faith-based organizations across the state to

strengthen and embrace the foster community. These volunteers provide non-formal supports for the children and families served by DCS.

- Much of the department's efforts have been devoted to addressing parental substance abuse issues and the increase in children entering foster care from the East Region.
- DCS currently has seven Safe Babies Courts in the state—two are in the Eastern Region, in Knox and Johnson counties. The other five are in Coffee, Madison, Stewart, Grundy, and Davidson counties. This project is modeled after the Zero to Three Safe Babies Court Team approach and addresses the unique needs of infants, toddlers, and their families with court involvement. DCS provides training for this program in partnership with the Tennessee Administrative Office of the Courts.
- DCS has made several changes to its juvenile justice program's policies and practice, including placing more emphasis on preventing children from entering adult jails. The department is also working with the Tennessee Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse to address these youth mental health needs.
- In FY 2017, DCS handled 134,157 calls with 126,447 calls resulting in intake referrals. From July 2017 to April 2018, DCS has handled 97,916 calls.

Following the presentations and discussions, each of the panels' chairs or designee updated DCS and guests on their current work focus, successes, and challenges.



## Hamilton County Citizen Review Panel

The Hamilton County CRP is located in the Southeast Region of Tennessee. Chattanooga is the city seat of Hamilton County and the fourth most populous county in the state after Shelby (Memphis), Davidson (Nashville), and Knox (Knoxville). The area boasts close proximity to three major cities—Atlanta, Georgia, Birmingham, Alabama, and Nashville—all within a 2 to 3 hour drive.

The DCS staff in Hamilton County is one of nine counties administered by the Tennessee Valley Region of the Department of Children’s Services (DCS). More than 130 employees work in this county to keep children safe and healthy.

This panel meets at the Hamilton County Chattanooga Family Justice Center and has 10 members. In FY 2018, the CRP welcomed five (5) new members with expertise in advocacy, community outreach, prevention, research, family engagement, and juvenile justice. They are *Denise Cook*, Hamilton County Juvenile Court supervisor; *Sarah Elghalban*, Partnership for Families, Children and Adults assistant director; *Candace Henry*, Partnership for Families, Children and Adults program manager; *Kristen P. McCallie*, Children’s Advocacy Center of Hamilton County executive director; and *Rosalyn Leavell-Rice*, Tennessee Commission on Children and Youth regional coordinator.

### Goals for FY 2018

During FY 2018, the Hamilton County CRP focused on the following goals:

1. Continue to study the impact of parental substance abuse on children’s safety, health, and other aspects of well-being by continuing to engage key stakeholders, review cases involving infants and children

exposed to drugs, and review DCS policies and procedures regarding this issue.

2. Continue to collaborate with DCS and community partners on activities that promote positive development for children and youth in foster care.

### Outcomes Achieved

1. Identified ways that DCS and key stakeholders can partner to achieve positive outcomes for youth in foster care.
2. Identified programs and services for addressing adult and youth substance abuse problems.
3. Increased CRP members’ knowledge of strategies and action steps taken by DCS to address allegations of infants’ and children’s exposure to drugs.
4. Examined DCS policy and procedures for responding to allegations of drug-exposed referrals.
5. Examined local law enforcement protocol for responding to incidents involving foster youth with a history of mental illness.
6. Enhanced CRP members’ and DCS staff’s knowledge of assessment and intervention with families.
7. Five individuals representing the community were recruited from Children’s Advocacy Center of Hamilton County; Juvenile Court; Partnership for Families, Children and Adults; and Tennessee Commission on Children and Youth.

## Meetings and Activities

The Hamilton County CRP met four times during FY 2018. The work the panel completed at these meetings is summarized below.

**August 3, 2017**—Lori Harris-Hammond, local DCS CRP liaison, reported that the region had recently undergone its third round of Child and Family Service Review (CFSR) by the U.S. Health and Human Services Children’s Bureau. The reviews are structured to help states identify strengths and areas needing improvement within their agencies and programs. Ms. Harris-Hammond reported that the region was advised to make improvements in the areas of case documentation and father engagement.

In addition, the panel reviewed their FY 2018 goals and discussed action plans for achieving the goals. After discussing their two goals, the panel determined the following action steps:

1. Invite regional community partners to the CRP’s next meeting to discuss the goal of supporting youth aging out of care.
2. Follow up on youth who participated in the first Reality Check, a simulation life skills activity that exposes youth to real-world experiences (have they achieved successful education and employment outcomes?).
3. Identify an intern to assist with studying the impact of parental substance abuse on children’s safety, health, and well-being.

**October 26, 2017**—At this meeting, Lori Harris-Hammond shared a concern related to local police officers who were called to a scene involving a foster youth with a history of mental illness. According to Ms. Harris-Hammond, several DCS staff persons observed the officers appearing to be ill-equipped to handle the crisis. The officers allegedly told the DCS staff persons that their tactics for de-escalating the matter might harm the child so they left the scene. Ms. Harris-Hammond went on to state that

paramedics responded shortly after the officers left and effectively intervened in the highly stressful situation.

While these encounters may be relatively infrequent, this incident prompted several questions and served as an opportunity for the panel to explore other systems that fall under the CAPTA mandate.

- Do law enforcement staff receive training on how to employ effective crisis intervention and de-escalation techniques?
- Do the county/regional law enforcement agencies have a Crisis Intervention Team?
- Does law enforcement have protocols for responding to mental health issues involving children and youth?

Chair Jerry Redman agreed to follow up with his colleagues who work in law enforcement agencies about the panel’s concerns.

Also, at this meeting, the panel reviewed and discussed the CFSR findings involving youth and followed up on the request for information on youth who participated in the first Reality Check activity, which was held in April 2013. The panel made a request to DCS for information about their high school graduation rates, employment/armed services and postsecondary entries, and other information DCS deemed important.

**January 25, 2018**—At this meeting, updates were shared by panel members for the goal involving studying the impact of parental substance abuse. Denise Cook of Juvenile Court reported on Governor’s Children’s Cabinet, an initiative aimed to improve coordination among state child-serving agencies (DCS, Human Services, Education, Health, Mental Health, and Substance Abuse and TennCare) for delivering services to Tennessee’s children. This multiagency collaboration, “Single Team/Single Plan,” approach’s current focus involves cases where a baby has been born with Neonatal Abstinence Syndrome (NAS) or has been drug-

exposed. Several of the CRP members serve on the Governor’s Children’s Cabinet.

Haroon Iqbal, DCS OCS director of Community Partnerships, reported that the Infant Court programs in Davidson and Grundy counties were up and running smoothly. Mr. Iqbal noted that DCS plans to implement additional infant courts in 2018, including one in the East Region. Mr. Iqbal also noted that the program is modeled after the Zero to Three Safe Babies Court Team approach and addresses the unique needs of infants, toddlers, and their families with court involvement.

In addition, the panel reviewed DCS Policy 14.21, which provides guidelines for DCS caseworkers’ response to allegations involving drug-exposed children. The panel found the policy to be clear and concise, having no concerns or suggestions for improving it.

**May 17, 2018**—At this meeting, Officer Bales of the Sheriff’s Department provided an overview of the Crisis Intervention Team program and responded to the panel’s concerns raised at the October 2017 meeting regarding how law enforcement handled a matter involving a youth in foster care with a history of mental illness. Officer Bales’s responses are listed in quotations below.

1. Do law enforcement agencies receive training on how to employ effective crisis intervention and de-escalation techniques? *“Not every officer/deputy is trained in de-escalation techniques—of the 500 or more officers, only about 60 to 80 have received training.”*
2. Do the county/region law enforcement agencies have a Crisis Intervention Team (CIT)? *“Not all of them in the region. Every agency in Hamilton County has a minimum of one trained officer/deputy who has successfully completed the 40 hour CIT training curriculum.”*

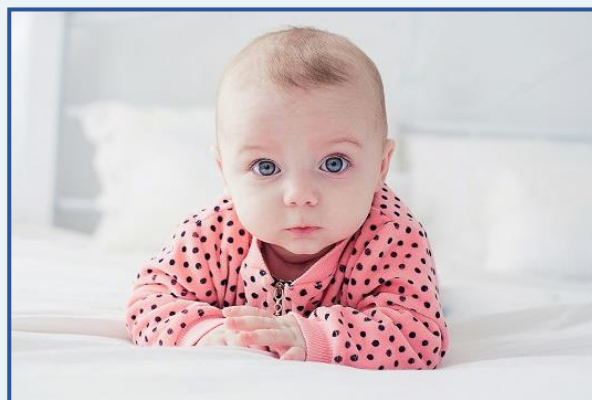
3. Do law enforcement agencies have protocols for responding to mental health issues involving children and youth? *“There is not a specific protocol for youth.”*

Also, at this meeting, Sarah Elghalban, Partnership for Adults, Children and Families’ assistant director and CRP member, along with other Partnership staff, gave a presentation to the panel on the agency, describing program services such as the victim support services for individuals and families who have experienced trauma as a result of sexual assault, domestic violence, and human trafficking. They also talked about the youth services program, which provides not only services to foster youth but also to foster parents.

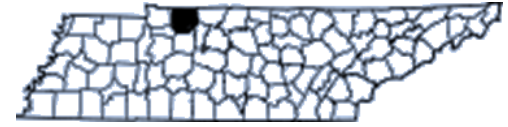
### **Goals for FY 2019**

At the statewide CRP meeting in April 2018, the Hamilton County CRP agreed to focus on the following goals in the upcoming fiscal year:

1. Assist, partner, or volunteer at events related to child welfare prevention and foster care intervention.
2. Assess the needs, gaps, and strengths of child-serving agencies/organizations and the communities they serve.



## Montgomery County Citizen Review Panel



The Montgomery County CRP meets in Clarksville, which is the fifth largest city in the state and was named the ninth fastest growing city in the nation by the U.S. Census Bureau in 2013.

Clarksville is neighbor to the Fort Campbell U.S. Army base, home of the 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division, which is located approximately 10 miles from downtown Clarksville. The area also boasts close proximity to the state's capital, approximately 45 miles to downtown Nashville.

The DCS staff in Montgomery County is one of eight counties administered by the Mid-Cumberland Region of the Department of Children's Services (DCS). More than 75 employees work in this county to improve outcomes for children and families.

In addition, this panel has 10 members, and two DCS representatives serve as departmental liaisons.

### *Goals for FY 2018*

During FY 2018, the Montgomery County CRP focused on the following goals:

1. Continue to study the impact of parental substance abuse on children's safety, health, and other aspects of well-being by continuing to engage key stakeholders, reviewing cases involving infants and children exposed to drugs, and reviewing DCS policies and procedures regarding this issue.
2. Continue to collaborate with DCS and community partners on activities that promote positive development for children and youth in foster care.

### *Outcomes Achieved*

1. Conducted a survey to assess if youth were experiencing "normalcy" in their foster care placements.
2. Identified ways that DCS and key stakeholders can partner to achieve positive outcomes for youth in foster care.
3. Identified programs and services for addressing adult and youth substance abuse problems.
4. Increased CRP members' knowledge of strategies and action steps taken by DCS to address allegations involving drug-exposed infants and children.
5. Examined DCS policy and procedures for responding to allegations of drug-exposed referrals.
6. Enhanced CRP members' and DCS staff's knowledge and understanding of problems and issues facing children and youth involved with the juvenile court system.

In addition, over the past year, Montgomery County DCS staff have devoted much time to community outreach. They have provided presentations to area community partners, including local faculty and students at Austin Peay State University about the department's roles, responsibilities, and priorities. They have also trained community partners on topics related to human sex trafficking/commercial sexual exploitation of minors, and reporting child abuse and neglect. They have also trained key stakeholders, such as hospitals and medical professionals, on the new reporting procedures for the federal Comprehensive Addiction Recovery Act legislation.

## Meetings and Activities

The Montgomery County CRP met five times during FY 2018. The work the panel completed at these meetings is summarized below.

**July 13, 2017**—Dave Aguzzi, DCS Independent Living (IL) assistant director, provided an overview of the DCS IL program. He and his colleague, Jorresha Tinker, also described ways that the panel could support youth in foster care, including youth who have aged out of care. They reported that one of the greatest needs for foster youth is life skills training that focuses on financial literacy. Mr. Aguzzi also said there was a need to support youth enrolled in postsecondary education, noting that most of the young students drop out by the end of their first year.

Following their presentation, the panel brainstormed ways they could help DCS improve outcomes for foster youth. The panel also suggested DCS invest in an effective mentoring program and engage *Big Brothers/Big Sisters*, a nationally recognized mentoring program about how best to provide mentoring opportunities for children and youth in foster care. Another mentoring program that has been showing positive outcomes for youth in the child welfare and juvenile justice systems is called *Friends for Youth*. This program includes a component designed to help youth succeed once they leave their support systems.

**September 27, 2017**—At this meeting, the panel followed up on the discussion from the last CRP meeting concerning how to support youth in foster care. The panel also reviewed and discussed the findings from the 2017 Child and Family Service Review (CFSR) report, which examines whether children, youth, and families involved in the child welfare system were experiencing positive outcomes. The panel primarily focused on sections involving interviews with foster youth about the following topics—*family, being in foster care, foster homes and foster parents, caseworkers, services, and*

*independent living services*. Following the discussion, the panel determined their next step, which is to survey youth about their foster care experiences in an effort to assess if “normalcy” is occurring. A subcommittee was identified to develop the survey instrument.

**January 30, 2018**—CRP coordinator Toni Lawal provided an overview of CAPTA/CRP to Juvenile Court probation officers and leadership staff. At this meeting, two social work students from Austin Peay State University who are interning at Juvenile Court also heard the presentation, which covered the following:

- CRP charge/mandate per the Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (CAPTA).
- The four CRP locations in Tennessee and their work focus.
- CRP accomplishments such as the development of a comprehensive handbook to empower Tennessee youth in their transition from foster care.

Following the presentation, the Juvenile Court staff asked the panel if they would be willing to review a Foster Care Review Board case in the future.

Also, at this meeting, Haroon Iqbal, DCS OCS Special Assistant to the Deputy Commissioner and Director of Community Partnerships, provided the following updates:

- **Human Trafficking 101** training is being required for all CPS caseworkers.
- The **Safe Babies Court** pilot program is currently in seven counties and stated that it address the unique needs of infants, toddlers, and their families with court involvement.

- The **CPS Academy** is offering a new training, “**Simulation Lab,**” to CPS caseworkers. This simulated, interactive training provides caseworkers an experiment in situations they might encounter when they knock on the door of a home where a child is alleged to be a victim of abuse or neglect.

In addition, the panel reviewed DCS Policy 14.21, which provides guidelines for how DCS will respond to allegations involving drug-exposed children.

**April 26, 2018**—Panel members attended the Middle Tennessee Mini Conference at Juvenile Court in Clarksville to learn more about the court’s CPS responsibilities. Workshop topics included, but were not limited to, the following: 1) Common trends in youth drug use; 2) Pedophilia and how children are lured into sex trafficking; 3) Interviewing victims of sex crimes; 4) Purpose of school resource officers; and 5) Legislative and the Second Look Commission updates.

**May 5, 2018**—The CRP surveyed five youth residing in Montgomery County between the ages of 13 and 18 about their foster care experiences. The survey found that all youth were part of a caring and supportive foster family, allowed to make decisions concerning their case plans and goals and to have friends over for visits. The survey also found that none of the youth were involved in after-school or extracurricular activities at their respective schools. When asked about their educational learning experiences related to the following topics—**healthy relationships, substance abuse, financial literacy, foster care resources and services, and legal rights and the CPS system**—only one youth reported receiving education about healthy relationships and substance abuse.

### *Goals for FY 2019*

At the statewide CRP meeting in April 2018, the Montgomery County CRP agreed to focus on the following goals in the upcoming fiscal year:

1. Continue to partner with DCS and other community partners to improve outcomes for foster children and youth.
2. Review child welfare cases that involve removal of a child/children.
3. Assess the needs, gaps, and strengths of child-serving agencies/organizations and the communities they serve.



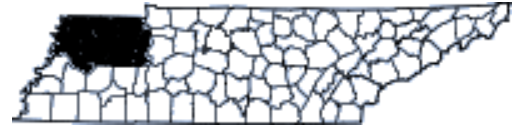
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*“More than 1000 infants in Tennessee are born dependent on drugs each year”*

[\(https://bettertennessee.com/health-brief-neonatal-abstinence-syndrome/\)](https://bettertennessee.com/health-brief-neonatal-abstinence-syndrome/)

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## Northwest Region Citizen Review Panel

The Northwest Region is a nine-county rural region composed of Benton, Carroll, Crockett, Dyer, Gibson, Henry, Lake, Obion, and Weakley counties. This fiscal year, panel members met in Milan and Trenton (both in Gibson County). The nearest metropolitan city in Gibson County is Jackson, approximately 25 miles southwest of both Milan and Trenton. Jackson is the county seat of Madison and the largest city, which boasts a population close to 70,000. Due to the limited resources and services for families in the Northwest Region, DCS often refers families to programs in Jackson, which offers a variety of health care and social services programs for ensuring children’s safety. For example, in 2017, Le Bonheur’s Children Hospital of Memphis opened a new outpatient center in Jackson to provide families with a wide range of pediatric subspecialists care.

The DCS staff in the Northwest Region also serves four other counties that are not located in the region: Dickson, Houston, Humphreys, and Stewart. This DCS regional office has more than 195 employees who play an integral role in protecting the safety and well-being of children and youth in these counties.

This region has 10 CRP members and two (2) DCS representatives who serve as departmental liaisons.

### Goals for FY 2018

During FY 2018, the Northwest Region CRP focused on the following goals:

1. Continue to study the impact of parental substance abuse on children’s safety, health, and other aspects of well-being by continuing to engage key stakeholders,

review cases involving infants and children exposed to drugs, and review DCS policies and procedures regarding this issue.

2. Continue to collaborate with DCS and community partners on activities that promote positive development for children and youth in foster care.

### Outcomes Achieved

1. Identified ways that DCS and key stakeholders can partner to achieve positive outcomes for youth in foster care.
2. Increased CRP members’ knowledge of strategies and action steps taken by DCS to address allegations of infants and children exposed to drugs.
3. Examined DCS policy and procedures for responding to allegations of drug-exposed referrals.
4. Enhanced CRP members’ and DCS staff’s knowledge and understanding of problems and issues facing children and youth impacted by opioids.
5. Expanded its membership by recruiting Jack Searcy, outreach specialist for Tennessee Voices for Children in West Tennessee.

### Meetings and Activities

The Northwest (NW) Region CRP met four times during FY 2018. The work the panel completed at these meetings is summarized below.

**July 17, 2017**—At this meeting, the panel addressed concerns regarding youth in foster care. Panel members shared stories and concerns they have heard from foster children

about their experiences with the child welfare system. For example, youth expressed the need to have regularly scheduled support meetings with their peers and life skills training. Following the discussion, the panel thought it would be helpful to hear from organizations that work with foster youth about their experiences in serving this group, including the organizations' successes, challenges, and concerns. The panel identified several groups and organizations to contact that included representatives from CASA, NW Foster Care Review Board, Tennessee Voices for Children, and DCS Independent Living program.

**November 3, 2017**—At this meeting, the panel brainstormed ways they could help DCS better serve and support children and youth in foster care. They were as follows:

- Identify successful mentoring programs and/or opportunities that will help foster children/youth navigate challenges in the most basic areas of life—such as education, healthy relationships, etc.
- Raise awareness of the unique challenges that foster children/youth in the system face.
- Raise public awareness of the foster parent program, including rebutting some of the misconceptions about being a foster parent.
- Collaborate with community partners, such as Tennessee Voices for Children and Youth Villages, to provide foster children/youth with positive development opportunities.

Following the discussion, the panel determined the following next steps:

- Invite a representative from Youth Villages, Life Set Program, to speak at the next CRP meeting on Thursday, January 11 at 10:00 am.

- Contact Jack Searcy, West Tennessee Voices for Victims representative, about participating in future meeting discussions regarding opportunities to improve outcomes for children and youth in foster care.
- Obtain data on the number of older youth (14 and over) in foster care residing in the Northwest Region.

**January 11, 2018**—Rob Brown, Youth Villages Life Set Program clinical supervisor, shared the following information with the panel:

- In 2017, the organization served approximately 95 youth in rural Jackson, Dyersburg, and Paris, Tennessee, and noted that the majority of these children were between the ages of 17-22.
- Youth participation in the program typically lasts 6 to 12 months, based on individual needs.
- Youth Villages also serves youth who are not in foster care.

Mr. Brown highlighted some of the program's successes. They are as follows:

- Since 2000, 90% of the youth indicated they were satisfied with the program, and of that number, 80% had stable housing, 85% had met educational/employment goals, and 82% had no legal issues.
- Since 1999, the program has helped more than 9,000 youth aging out of state custody or other care arrangements successfully transition to independence.
- The program model received recognition from The American Youth Policy Forum and the Federal Advisory Committee on Juvenile Justice.

Following the presentation, the panel asked Mr. Brown to offer some ways the CRP could support these youth. He reported there was a need for individuals or groups to provide

presentations on topics such as high demand jobs, leadership programs, and financial management. He also reported there was a need to assist youth involved in the Youth Villages' scholars program with college preparation, including mentoring. Additionally, Mr. Brown noted that for the few youth who leave foster care and enroll in college, they often do not have the funds to purchase textbooks and laptops, have no place to go over holiday breaks when their school closes, and find the college system difficult to navigate.

In addition, DCS staff provided the panel with data for youth ages 14 and older in foster care in the Northwest Region and Madison County.

**April 25, 2018**—Panel members attended an all-day conference in Jackson, Tennessee, at Union University on the nation's opioid epidemic. The conference topics included the following: 1) Budgeting— Putting Opioid Abuse Policies on Track; 2) Pathophysiology of Addiction and Treatment Options; 3) Tracking through the Legal System; 4) Maternal Opioid and Neonatal Abstinence Syndrome; and 5) How Communities Can Make a Difference.

### **Goals for FY 2019**

At the statewide CRP meeting in April 2018, the Northwest Region CRP agreed to focus on the following goals in the upcoming fiscal year:

1. Partner with DCS and other community partners, such as UT Extension Program and Youth Villages to deliver life skills and educational workshops to foster youth in grades eight or higher.
2. Review drug-exposed cases involving infants and children.
3. Assess the needs, gaps, and strengths of child-serving agencies/organizations and the communities they serve.



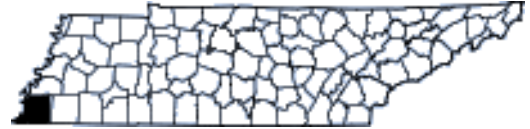
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*"Child abuse and neglect cost our nation \$220 million every day."*

<http://preventchildabuse.org/resource/estimated-cost-of-child-abuse-and-neglect/>

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## Shelby County Citizen Review Panel



The Shelby County CRP meets in Memphis, the county seat, which is located in the extreme southwestern area of the state. This metropolitan area also has close proximity to Arkansas, Mississippi, Fayette, and Madison counties, and other small West Tennessee counties, making it an area that has easy access to resources and services for abused and neglected children and their families.

More than 350 employees work in this county to ensure that children are safe and further protected from abuse or neglect. They also promote the permanency and well-being of these children and their families.

In addition, this CRP has 10 members and 3 DCS staff persons who serve as CRP liaisons. The DCS liaisons represent three program areas: CPS, Foster Care, and Juvenile Justice.

### **Goals for FY 2018**

During FY 2018 the Shelby County CRP focused on the following goals:

1. Continue to study the impact of parental substance abuse on children's safety, health, and other aspects of well-being by continuing to engage key stakeholders, reviewing cases involving infants and children exposed to drugs, and reviewing DCS policies and procedures regarding this issue.
2. Continue to assess resources and services in the Shelby County area on substance use and abuse for both children and adults.

### **Outcomes Achieved**

1. Increased CRP members' and DCS staff's knowledge of programs available for

children and youth impacted by domestic violence and drugs.

2. Increased CRP members' knowledge of strategies and action steps taken by DCS to address allegations of infants and children exposed to drugs.
3. Examined DCS policy and procedures for responding to allegations of drug-exposed referrals.
4. Examined DCS's practice for investigating and assessing allegations of child abuse involving substance abuse.
5. Identified programs and services for addressing adult and youth substance abuse problems.
6. Identified an organization that provides residential and nonresidential services for youth impacted by drugs.

In addition, having multiple school representatives and DCS staff persons serving on the CRP has been instrumental in bridging the information gap and building partnerships between the two agencies regarding CPS matters. For example, in early 2018, an incident involving DCS and the Achievement School District (ASD) occurred where ASD staff refused to allow a CPS caseworker access to children at one of its schools. Dr. Angela Hargrave, SCS director and CRP member, intervened, which resulted in the regional DCS and ASD agreeing to a shared commitment to ensure children's safety and successful education outcomes. Additionally, in an effort to improve cross-agency relationships, DCS staff in this region trained the ASD staff on the DCS/CPS process.

## Meetings and Activities

The Shelby County Region CRP met four times during FY 2018. The work the panel completed at these meetings is summarized below.

**July 18, 2017**—Dr. Theresa Okwumabua, mental health consultant for the Benjamin Hooks Job Corps Center, led a presentation on the substance abuse prevention program at the center. Kenneth Richardson, a drug counselor at the center, accompanied Dr. Okwumabua. They described both general and substance abuse services offered by the Job Corps Center. The general services are as follows:

- The center primarily serves youth ages 16-24 and accepts older youth if they have a disability.
- Services to the youth or their family are free and covered by the U.S. Department of Labor.
- The center offers both residential and nonresidential services.
- The educational program component includes GED, high school diploma, tutoring/academic support, postsecondary training, and driver's education.
- The soft skills program component includes employment, social development, and life skills training.
- The trades program includes certification in accounting, carpentry, clinical medical assistant, computer technician, medical office support, and material and distribution operations.

The **substance abuse prevention program** services include the following: 1) education on suicide, substance use, and violence; 2) participation in Town Hall meetings on substance use prevention; 3) drama-based education and theater to address general mental health; 4) Rites of Passage component; and 5) individual and prevention groups for

addressing conflict resolution, anger management, and grief support.

In addition, Mr. Richardson noted that many of the youth that the center serve either use or have used marijuana and/or Kush cannabis and opioids, and that *“when youth leave the center, most return to the environment where their parents or guardians are also using.”* This message parallels what Hamilton County Juvenile Court Drug Court Program staff shared with the Hamilton County CRP in 2016.

**October 16, 2017**—Olliette Murry-Drobot, CRP member and Family Safety Center (FSC) executive director, updated the panel on the Camp Hope program, which was provided to children impacted by domestic violence this past summer. She reported that approximately 25 youth participated and that FSC plans to offer the camp again next summer.

DeShawn Harris, DCS CPSI coordinator, provided the following child welfare updates:

- **Comprehensive Addiction Recovery Act (CARA)**—This new federal legislation requires DCS to develop a plan of safe care for drug-affected infants and their mothers, as well as a plan for health care professionals to report when an infant is identified as being affected by substance abuse.
- **DCS Drug Abuse Team**—The department is seeing much success with its drug team in Knoxville and its partnership with UT Medical Center. This effort is expanding to East Tennessee Hospital with plans to offer these drug teams in areas such as in the Smoky and Northeast Regions.

Nakeisha Griffin, DCS education consultant, shared helpful information with the panel on federal legislation that guides DCS's work in addressing the educational needs of foster children, such as the **Every Student Succeeds** and **Fostering Connection Acts**.

She also shared information about the **Best Interest Decisions-Making practice**, a federal law requiring that children and youth entering foster care remain in the same school unless it is determined to be in the child's best interest to transfer them to a different school.

Also, at this meeting, the panel reviewed an open case involving allegations of lack of supervision, possible sexual abuse, and past history of drug exposure. The alleged child victim's (ACV) mother lost custody in 2016 due to her chronic substance abuse problem, which resulted in the father receiving primary custody of their daughter. The caseworker was present at this meeting and described tasks that she had completed, including interviews with the father's parents and school staff. She also reported the child was two years behind in school.

Following the case review, the caseworker described next steps, which included follow-up interviews with the father and child, grandparents, and collateral witnesses.

The panel also made three (3) recommendations: 1) Interview the child's teacher and other school staff to assess why child is 2 years behind in school; 2) Offer the child and father counseling; and 3) Assist the father with specific issues to lessen the safety concerns identified by the referent and collateral witnesses.

**January 22, 2018**—At this meeting, the panel received an update from the DCS caseworker about the case reviewed at the October 16 meeting.

- Throughout the case, there was no disclosure of sexual abuse.
- The ACV's mother still resides in Georgia, living with her parents and working.
- The ACV's school counselor and teacher expressed no concerns for the child's safety. School staff reported that although the ACV's grades have improved, they still

feel like she needs tutoring (father did not follow through with the recommendation).

- The ACV is in the first grade rather than kindergarten as previously reported.
- The father also refused counseling, stating he did not feel it was necessary at this time.
- The father's family, including stepmother and siblings, assist the father with caring for the ACV when father is at work and include the child in activities with other family members' children.
- The case was closed in January 2018 with a classification of "no services needed."

Following the update, the panel expressed concerns about the father refusing to accept services and resources necessary to meet the child's needs, which might be a risk factor for repeated maltreatment.

In addition, at this meeting, the panel, along with guest representatives from Shelby County Schools (SCS)—Kevin McCarthy, director of operations, and Jennifer Ervin, attorney—updated the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU). The MOU was developed in 2012 by the panel and local DCS staff to promote a plan of coordination of services for children and youth safety and to ensure that they receive adequate interagency supports. The revisions to the document included updating information to reflect DCS current policies, such as the child abuse reporting and tracking system procedures and the Memphis and Shelby County Schools merger.

While discussing the MOU, Mr. McCarthy shared a concern that Shelby County Schools is experiencing in regard to elementary school-age children's parents or caregivers dropping them off 60 to 90 minutes before the school doors open. He stated the problem was pervasive throughout the school district (approximately 100 schools). Mr. McCarthy sought suggestions from the panel for addressing the concern. The

panel asked the school representatives the following questions:

1. What actions have been taken by the school district to address the problem?
2. Have students’ parents been engaged about the issue?
3. Are before- and after-school care programs available at all schools?

Due to time constraints and the need to discuss other agenda items, the panel decided to return to the issue another time.

In addition, DeShawn Harris, DCS CPSI coordinator, provided the panel with the county’s last quarter data for drug-exposed infants/NAS cases. They are as follows:

(2017) Month	Screened In
October	47
November	40
December	51

Mr. Harris also talked about the custody episodes for these cases, noting that 17 removals took place for that period, and that the number would have been much higher if relatives had not agreed to care for these infants.

**May 7, 2018**—At this meeting, the panel reviewed an open case involving an infant with neonatal abstinence syndrome. Some of the other concerns in this case included one parent with cultural differences (born and grew up in another country) and the other parent having been in foster care in another state. A Child Family Team Meeting (CFTM) was held prior to the case review, and the CPS worker was given other tasks to complete involving the other four children in the household, who all were under the age of 6. Due to the seriousness of

the allegations and other risk factors, ongoing services are required. Upon the CPS worker’s completion of the tasks recommended at the CFTM, the case will be transferred to the Family Support Services unit.

### Goals for FY 2019

At the statewide CRP meeting in April 2018, the Shelby County CRP agreed to focus on the following goals in the upcoming fiscal year:

1. Complete MOU for SCS and Municipal School Districts.
  - a. Use SCS example and present to the other municipals.
    - i. Collierville, Bartlett, Arlington, Millington, Germantown
2. Explore and understand the policy, planning, and procedures of DCS and preparing youth to transition to independent living in Shelby County.
  - a. Review policy.
  - b. Review case studies.
  - c. Review permanency plans.
  - d. Review data around foster care youth that is available for Shelby County.
    - i. What age are they?
    - ii. How long do they stay in foster care?
    - iii. Do they have mentors?
    - iv. Postsecondary opportunities

## 17<sup>th</sup> Annual National CRP Conference

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Sandra Smith-Williams, Montgomery County CRP co-chair, and Toni Lawal, UT SWORPS CRP coordinator, represented Tennessee at the 2018 National CRP Conference in Mackinac Island, Michigan, on June 4-7. This annual conference brings together a diverse group of stakeholders from across the country to engage in a dialogue about Citizen Review Panel mandates, to discuss concerns and opportunities, and to exchange information about best practices.

This year's conference featured presentations and discussions on the following topics:

- Maximizing CRPs' Participation and Accountability of CRPs
- Developing Best Practice Protocols for the MDT Response
- When Trauma Looks Like Bad Behavior—the Impact of Trauma on the Developing Brain and Understanding the Child Within
- Creating a Multi-Agency Collaborative State-Wide System of Child Abuse Prevention
- Engaging Community Partners for Prevention through Collaboration
- Enhancing Strengths-Based Supervision in Child Welfare Agencies
- Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children Training for Mental Health Professionals
- Drug Exposed Infants
- Secondary Traumatic Stress and the Role of CRPs in Mitigating Its Effects on Child Welfare Staff



## Appendix A: Citizen Review Panel Members

### *Hamilton County Citizen Review Panel: Member Directory*

<b>Name</b>	<b>Agency</b>	<b>Address</b>	<b>Email address</b>	<b>Phone number</b>
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#### **Local Department of Children's Services Liaison**

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Tennessee Citizen Review Panels Annual Report and Recommendations, 2017-2018

**Montgomery County Citizen Review Panel: Member Directory**

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**Northwest Region Citizen Review Panel: Member Directory**

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***Shelby County Citizen Review Panel: Member Directory***

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