

**HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES  
Children, Youth and Families Division**

**MEMORANDUM**

DATE: March 29, 2019

TO: Citizen Review Panel of Outagamie County Co-Chairs Pastor Larry Creamer and  
Connie Raether

FROM: Melissa Blom

RE: State CAPTA compliance at Outagamie County Department of Health and Human  
Services

Dear Pastor Larry and Connie Raether,

I was asked to submit a report to add as an addendum to the Wisconsin Citizen Review Panel annual report for 2018 regarding local compliance with CAPTA and the Wisconsin Child Welfare Standards.

Section 1.

Local A: Extent to which local Child Protection Agencies are effectively carrying out the Child Protection responsibilities assigned to them under the state CAPTA plan, and Wisconsin Child Standards.

Outagamie County does comply with the Wisconsin Child Welfare Standards. Outagamie County does comply with the requirements of CAPTA by providing mandated Child Protective Services in Outagamie County. This Manager read the Wisconsin Annual Progress and Service Report for Wisconsin's CAPTA plan dated June 30, 2018. This plan addresses numerous Governor's executive orders as they relate to opiate abuse, especially drug endangered children and the impact on child welfare systems. Wisconsin did make changes to eWISACWIS to allow better data collection both to the initial assessment section and to the removal documentation for children in eWISACWIS affected by a parent's substance abuse disorder. .

On a quarterly basis, I utilize the out-of-home placements summary and removal reasons chart. This data from eWISACWIS about our local data is extremely relevant in understanding why children are being removed. In 2018, 125 children were removed as compared to 110 the year

previous. The total number of children in out-of-home at the end of December 2018 was 205 as compared to the end of 2017 at 178. The number one reason children are removed is for neglect. One of the major underlying factors of those neglect removals is a caretaker's drug abuse or a caretaker's alcohol abuse. In 2017, there were 36 reported removals due to a parent's drug abuse and 8 for their alcohol abuse. In 2018, there were 37 removals due to drug abuse and 16 due to alcohol abuse. There has been a significant rise since 2014 in the number of removals due to substance use disorders. Our county has done analysis of the data in 2018 specifically looking at what children of this cohort is due to a parent's opiate addiction. That data has been collected and given to the Director and Corporation Counsel along with data around the social work time and financial impact of this increase in our community. Our county has recognized a high level of addiction issues in child welfare and many years ago, ended up contracting with Theda Care to provide an AODA Specialist to be housed in Children, Youth and Families. Alicia Cook currently is our AODA specialist. Social workers are able to refer clients directly to her for AODA assessments and they are able to, if they have the right insurance, access treatment quicker.

Another CAPTA activity is Alternative Response. Our county has been doing Alternative Response since 2015. We use Alternative Response as a better way of engagement at the initial assessment stage to allow for social workers to make contact first with the parents to let them know that we received a report of abuse or neglect and inquire if we can meet with them to understand what is happening in their family. We increased our Alternative Response percentage by 10%. From 2016 to 2018 from 20% to 30%.

Wisconsin Act 78 and the new system change review replaces the old way of conducting state reviews for egregious or serious incident of child abuse and neglect. Outagamie has had 19 reports to the State for child death, egregious or serious incident since public reporting began in 2010. We made one report on 10/15/2018 that actually met the definition and criteria of a State System Review process. This process will commence in April of 2019

In 2017, there were 3 egregious and serious incidents. It is anticipated, and this manager advocates for the Citizen Review Panel of Outagamie County to be involved in this review process. It is this manager's recommendation that the panel member's form a sub-committee and familiarize themselves with the new systems change process.

The opiate addiction is real in Outagamie County and might very well be a variable or positive influence on the rising removal of children in out-of-home care. The panel may want to get involved at the local level in understanding how the opiate crisis has impacted removals and educate themselves about the state wide efforts at addressing the crisis. The Wisconsin Governor Walker advocated for the State to do more in the prevention, recognition, assessment, treatment and developing of evidence-based model to address the issue. The Wisconsin CAPTA report has 8 priority recommendations that might be a helpful framework for getting involved. At our local level, our District Attorney applied for a grant and initiated and formed an overdose fatality review committee. This manager, as well as Dr. Brian Bezier the Director of our Outpatient Clinic, and Mary Dorn, the Manager of our Public Health Division are actively involved in the startup of that overdose fatality review. In addition, there has been discussion in Outagamie County Circuit Court of developing a treatment court for families involved in the

juvenile justice system to address addictions in a more engaging new way. Our Department of Health and Human Services is not willing to be at the table unless there is funding and sustainability in the project.

Wisconsin DCF continues to be a member of the Wisconsin Alliance for Drug Endangered Children (WIDEC) and the DEC Steering Committee. At the local level, Assistant District Attorney Lacey Coonen is working to develop a DEC policy and staff are involved in that process.

The Together for Children Conference is a conference put on using CAPTA funding in Wisconsin. Every year, Child Protection social workers from our division attend that conference. This year, they are attending on scholarship.

Local B: *The extent to which local Child Protection Agencies are effectively complying with any other criteria that the panel considers important to ensure the protection of children.*

The hiring and retaining of Child Protective social workers is critical to doing the mandated job of Child Protection in our community. Since 2017, two members of the Citizen Review Panel have participated in a work group entitled Retention and Resiliency through the Children, Youth and Families Division. This work group is run and facilitated by two social workers actively doing Child Protection. Outagamie County contracts with Blue Spiral Consulting to provide guidance and consultation in arranging agendas and supporting the facilitators in this difficult work. The aim is to improve the relationship between staff and supervisors and create a culture of courageousness where staff are able to have crucial conversations with their supervisors. The intent is to openly discuss issues faced by CPS workers in doing the work.

It should also be mentioned that the Outagamie County Department of Health and Human Services has adopted a Critical Incident and Peer Debriefing policy. Every month, a group of workers from the agency who are basic and advanced trained meet to educate themselves and prepare themselves for providing peer debriefing within the agency after a critical incident, not only in child welfare but across all service division within the agency.

Three Children, Youth, and Families staff are Citizen Review Panel members. They include this Manager, Rebecca Spulak (Ongoing) and Jennifer Sailer (Foster Care Supervisor). In addition there have been numerous staff that have been invited to do case presentations. Outagamie County Department of Health and Human Services Children, Youth and Families has a solid working relationship with the Citizen review Panel of Outagamie County. The hope is this prevails in many years to come!

Respectfully submitted,



Melissa Blom