



CITIZEN CONNECTIONS

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State information and resources are available at <https://www.childwelfare.gov/topics/management/administration/partnerships/oversight/citizen/>

Welcome to the Winter/Spring 2022 edition of the National Citizen Review Panel (CRP) community e-newsletter, Citizen Connections! We are excited to share news from around the nation about groups of citizens who are making a difference in the lives of children and families. The Capacity Building Center for States (Center) is pleased to support the work of CRPs and bring you information on recent federal updates, upcoming events, and a spotlight on Maryland’s panels.

Updates From the Children’s Bureau

Efforts to Advance Equity

As called for by the [Executive Order On Advancing Racial Equity and Support for Underserved Communities Through the Federal Government](#), the Administration for Children and Families is pursuing a robust approach to advancing equity across programs and processes, with a focus on people of color and others who have been historically underserved, marginalized, and adversely affected by persistent poverty and inequality (definitions for equity, focus populations, and additional terms are detailed in the Executive Order). A cross-system collaborative approach attuned to and actively addressing institutional inequities in services and differences among populations is necessary to meet the complex needs of children and families.

Efforts to promote advancing equity are reflected throughout the Children’s Bureau’s work; specific information on these efforts is available on the following websites:

- ▶ <https://www.childwelfare.gov/topics/systemwide/diverse-populations/racialequity-systems/>
- ▶ <https://cblcc.acf.hhs.gov/topic-areas/child-abuse-prevention/race-equity-within-our-prevention-work/>
- ▶ <https://capacity.childwelfare.gov/states/resources/change-implementation-focusing-on-race-equity>

22nd National Conference on Child Abuse and Neglect

On July 27–29, 2021, the Children’s Bureau (virtually) hosted the 22nd National Conference on Child Abuse and Neglect. This important convening brought together more than 1,200 people to participate in sessions that addressed advancing equity, prioritizing prevention, focusing on well-being, reshaping foster care as a support for families, building community capacity, and supporting the workforce.

The conference theme, “Thriving Children and Families: Prevention with Purpose,” reflected the Children’s Bureau’s resolve to be more proactive and intentional in making sure that every family is safe and secure; keeping families together and strong; and supporting families in getting the help they need before a breakdown occurs.

For additional information and recorded sessions please visit the following websites:

- ▶ <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/blog/2021/08/nccan-goes-virtual-first-time>
- ▶ <https://nccan.acf.hhs.gov/about.html>

“There can be no keener revelation of a society’s soul than the way in which it treats its children.”

.....
Nelson Mandela, human rights activist and former President of South Africa

Grant Awards

The Children’s Bureau discretionary grants awarded in fiscal year 2021 are now posted online. Award information may include a link and description of the expired Notice of Funding Opportunity, a list of the grant recipients, and a link to project abstracts. Information on new awards is available at <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/cb/fy-2021-childrens-bureau-discretionary-grant-awards>.

Future grants are forecasted and posted at <https://www.grants.gov/>.

Child Maltreatment Report

The Children’s Bureau develops the annual Child Maltreatment reports, which include data provided by states to the [National Child Abuse and Neglect Data Systems \(NCANDS\)](#), a voluntary national data collection and analysis program of state child abuse and neglect information based upon data received from the 50 states, the District of Columbia, and the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico. The 2020 Child Maltreatment report and previous reports can be found at <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/cb/data-research/child-maltreatment>.

Child Welfare Information Gateway

Child Welfare Information Gateway (Information Gateway), a service of the [Children’s Bureau](#), provides access to print and electronic publications, webinars, infograph-

ics, websites, databases, and online learning tools for improving child welfare practice, including resources that can be shared with families. Searches can be conducted by topic, and online librarians and a real-time chat feature can assist users in navigation. More information about Information Gateway can be found at <https://www.childwelfare.gov/>.

Information Gateway also supports the Children’s Bureau in recognizing the National Child Abuse Prevention Month every April. This includes the dedication of a specific [website](#) that contains valuable information and resources to help professionals, parents, and community advocates learn how to prevent child maltreatment and promote well-being in families and communities. Information Gateway produces the annual [Prevention Resource Guide](#) and links users to other resources that increase awareness of critical supports to help families to prevent child maltreatment.

“If we don’t stand up for children, then we don’t stand for much.”

Marian Wright Edelman, children’s rights activist

Children’s Bureau Laws and Policy Updates

The Children’s Bureau routinely posts guidance, updates, and responses to public inquiries online. Information on legislative and program updates as well as a series of FAQs are posted and continuously updated at <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/cb/laws-policies/whats-new>.

One of the main ways CRPs communicate with each other is through listservs and a shared space on Microsoft SharePoint. To officially

be added to the Center’s CRP CapSHARE space, please click on the following link to provide your contact information at the [CRP Request Form](#). Please note that to be offered access to the CapSHARE platform, you will have to respond yes to number 5 on the request form, which will open option number 6 to indicate your interest in joining the CapSHARE platform. After submitting the request form, you will receive an email confirming you as a member and providing instructions on accessing CapSHARE.

Join the National CRP Listserv and CapShare Platform



Conversation With Denise Wheeler, Administrator of the Maryland CRPs and National CRP Advisory Board

By Blake Jones

Please tell us a little about yourself, particularly about your role and history with CRPs:

I have spent most of my professional life involved in public and human services. Before joining the Citizens Review Board for Children (CRBC), I was a Public Health Advisor with the New York Department of Health, a Child Protective Diagnostic Investigator with the Administration for Children's Services in New York, a Family Consultant for Kidspace National Centers, and a Director of Equinox House for Youth in Albany New York. I was actively involved in community service for child abuse and neglect prevention and to support families in need. I was a foster parent trainer and trainer for mandated reporters, and I conducted adoption home studies in addition to facilitating mediation and family team meetings.

I joined the CRBC in 2008 as a supervisor. At CRBC, I supervised a unit of Department of Human Services (DHS) staff that supported the work of several local out-of-home placement review boards that conducted individual case reviews in Baltimore City and various counties.

In 2015, I became the administrator for CRBC. I am responsible for ensuring that I and other paid staff provide the necessary professional support services to the state board and local citizen review boards so that the agency mission can be fulfilled in accordance with guidelines, Code Of Maryland Regulations, CRBC policy, and goals established by the state board.

I am part of a team that is dedicated and committed to helping others. Without a team, it would be impossible to do the very important work that CRBC does on behalf of Maryland's most vulnerable children and youth. I oversee the recruitment and training of local review board members. CRBC currently has approximately 160 members who review out-of-home placement cases, make individual recommendations, and provide individual case advocacy and child welfare systemic improvement advocacy.

I supervise drafting of the Annual Report to the Maryland General Assembly on children in out-of-home placement and child protection, which provides a statistical evaluation of Maryland's DHS child welfare programs and includes recommendations for improving the child welfare system.

I encourage support for CRBC policy recommendations by contacting the public, child advocates, legislators, judges and court personnel, and Executive Department officials as needed and by providing information.

"Children make your life important."

Erma Bombeck, author

Please tell us about the structure of Maryland's CRPs:

Maryland's statewide CRPs were formed from two citizen panels that predated the Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (CAPTA) and one newly-created entity, the State Foster Care Review Board and the Governor's Council on Child Abuse and Neglect. The State Child Fatality Review Team (SCFRT), a third team, was created and also designated a CAPTA panel via the 1999 legislation.

The State Council on Child Abuse and Neglect is charged by the Maryland State legislature to "report and make recommendations annually to the Governor and the General Assembly on matters relating to the prevention, detection, prosecution, and treatment of child abuse and neglect, including policy and training needs." The purpose of the SCFRT is to prevent child deaths by developing an understanding of the causes and incidence of child deaths; developing plans for and implementing changes within the agencies represented on the SCFRT to prevent child deaths; and advising the Governor, General Assembly, and the public on changes to law, policy, and practice to prevent child death. Some recent work/focus includes:

- ▶ Increasing family preservation and kinship services
- ▶ Improving permanency outcomes for children in out-of-home placement
- ▶ Recommending that the Governor and his Children's Cabinet, along with legislative and judicial leadership, endorse the development of a comprehensive statewide Maryland Child Maltreatment Prevention Plan
- ▶ Creating an annual report that details frequency and causes of childhood death
- ▶ Responding to local teams' investigation of child deaths
- ▶ Defining investigation protocols for child near-fatality
- ▶ Implementing national database for child fatality and near-fatality reviews
- ▶ Educating and training local child fatality review teams

Please visit our websites for more information:

- ▶ SCFRT (<https://health.maryland.gov/phpa/mch/Pages/cfr-home.aspx>)
- ▶ CRBC (<https://dhs.maryland.gov/citizens-review-board-for-children/>)

What advice would you give CRPs in terms of connecting with other advocacy groups in the state?

CRPs could start with their own resources and respective members' agencies and affiliations to identify and connect with advocacy groups. Opportunities to connect with other advocacy groups often occur at child welfare information sessions, public forums, and workgroup sessions facilitated by the state or local child welfare department when they are engaging child welfare stakeholders and advocates about an initiative, plan, or goal. Child welfare related conferences, webinars, and trainings offer opportunities to network and share about your CRP, so individuals should have an elevator speech or brief overview of their CRP, a one-pager about their CRP, or business card to exchange. Even in the virtual environment, dropping information in a chat or asking to follow up or discuss a particular topic further can lead to a connection and potential collaborative efforts.

Identifying advocate groups and reaching out via email or calling to share your CRP's goals, focus, findings, strengths, and

Follow the [Maryland CRBC Facebook page](#) to see recent updates and information

challenges or just to ask about getting started from a group that is well established or getting established may be helpful. Look for coalitions and others groups that engage in advocacy, including legislative advocacy. Contact CRPs in other states, especially in states that have similar statutes, requirements, or guidelines that currently exist in your state or that your CRP would like to have. Connect with foster parent associations, local and state youth advisory boards, legislators, Court Appointed Special Advocates, or lawyers representing children and youth involved with child welfare. Contact the National CRP Advisory Board. There are representatives from various states, and the board is a source of a wealth of knowledge and experience.

"Anyone who does anything to help a child is a hero to me."

Fred Rogers, tv personality

State Update

Ohio

The Ohio CRPs are continuing another year of work (virtually). In 2021, each panel met in August, October, and December via Zoom conference to begin the work of gathering and reviewing the latest research and updates related to their topics. Each of Ohio's five panels is making plans for rigorous data collection with help from partnering individuals from the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services, local public child welfare agencies, the Public Children Services Association of Ohio, The Ohio State University, and the University of Michigan School of Social Work.

The continued use of a virtual platform for CRP meetings has enhanced member retention and has not hindered members' passion for the advocacy of children and families in Ohio. The panels are working on a wide range of topics dealing with the child welfare workforce, best practices in case planning with families who experience domestic violence, and educational experiences of youth in residential facilities.

National CRP 2022 Conference: All Together Now—Citizens Making a Difference for Children and Families

California's CRPs are excited to welcome their colleagues from across the country to the first in-person National

CRP Conference in 2 years! We are hoping that state teams will join us in celebrating our ability to learn from one another about the great work that is taking place in their states. We welcome participation from CRP members and facilitators, as well as from partners and colleagues who support the work of these dedicated volunteers who are committed to evaluating the extent to which state and local agencies are effectively discharging their child protection responsibilities.

The conference will take place at the Asilomar Conference Center in Monterey, CA. The conference site has a rich history that dates back to its origins as a YWCA Leadership Camp built in 1913. Known as Monterey's "Refuge by the Sea," the state park is located on 107 acres and was designed by the renowned architect Julia Morgan. It sits within walking distance of the coast. The facility allows you time to unwind and gather as a group in a relaxed, back-to-nature environment. Meals are served family style in the main dining room, allowing you to connect with other attendees over great food in a casual environment.

More information about conference registration, lodging, and meals can be found on the conference website at <https://www.thinkreg.com/reg/site/8a94a8b47d07d508017d725b61fe0ead/>.

Please use the following emails for any questions:

- ▶ Program questions: stuart.oppenheim@cfpic.org
- ▶ Logistics questions: cathy@mwmanagementgroup.com

National CRP Support Through the Center For States

The Center, part of the Children's Bureau's Child Welfare Capacity Building Collaborative, helps public child welfare agencies build their capacity to improve child welfare practice and achieve safety, permanency, and well-being for children, youth, and families.

Under the leadership of Dr. Blake Jones from the University of Kentucky, the Center will be facilitating several national knowledge and skills events for CRPs in the coming year. Dr. Jones has been a leader in the field for the past 20 years, and he will be available to assist states in leveraging their CRPs to develop best practices.

The Center hosts a listserv for the general CRP population, as well as a specific listserv for CRP coordinators. To join either listserv, please email Blake Jones at blake.jones@uky.edu or Kathy Simms at kathy.simms@icf.com.

The next page features a schedule of interactive discussions and webinars planned for 2022. More information regarding registration will be sent out on the listserv. All dates and events are subject to change.

"A person's a person, no matter how small."

Dr. Seuss, author

May



National CRP Conference
May 23–May 25, 2022

June



CRP Coordinators Meeting
(Focus: Highlights from the CRP National Conference and action planning from the conference, as well as a working session with small group breakouts)
June 1, 2022, 3 p.m. EDT

August



CRP Coordinators Meeting
(Focus: CRP state showcase)
August 3, 2022, 3 p.m. EDT