DEPARTMENT FOR COMMUNITY BASED SERVICES

RESPONSE TO CITIZEN REVIEW PANEL ANNUAL REPORT

SEPTEMBER 30, 2018
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INTRODUCTION

As required by the Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act, Kentucky maintains three (3) citizen review panels (CRP), comprised of volunteers from around the state, who review aspects of the state’s child welfare system and submit an annual report to the federal Administration for Children and Families (ACF). Their report is also submitted to the Commissioner of the Department for Community Based Services (DCBS) and the state’s Legislative Research Commission (LRC). The report is submitted in July each year.

At this time, DCBS is submitting its required response to LRC. A copy of this response will also be provided to the ACF as part of its next Title IV-B annual report.

SUMMARY of KENTUCKY CITIZEN REVIEW PANELS

In state fiscal year 2018, the original three (3) panels expanded to include a student panel and Eastern Mountain Service Region. This expansion results in five (5) panels and include existing CRP’s in Southern Bluegrass, Two Rivers and Jefferson service regions.

RESPONSE to PANEL ACTIVITIES FOR SFY 2018

The expansion to two (2) new panels is a time and task-oriented process that requires collaboration with current and new stakeholders in the specific geographical areas. DCBS appreciates the efforts to ensure expanded representation across the Commonwealth. The agency recognizes the panels’ efforts to contribute to the value of services provided and the families served each year.
DCBS is committed to fulfilling its obligations set forth in the memorandum of understanding and supporting the panels and their mission. The DCBS Commissioner will continue to meet with the panel chairs on a quarterly basis to ensure they are provided with timely information on agency initiatives and areas of interest.

**SUMMARY of the EASTERN MOUNTAIN PANEL**

The panel held their first meeting in March 2018 and continued to meet monthly through the end of SFY. The panel decided to assist in the implementation of Handle with Care and Safe Sleep programs within the region.

**RESPONSES to the EASTERN MOUNTAIN PANEL**

The agency is appreciative of the expansion into the Eastern Mountain Service Region and how quickly programs were identified that could be implemented to serve families in the community. It is very important for families to receive expanded services in their own communities. The agency looks forward to the implementation of these programs and learning of their impact upon the families within the region.

**SUMMARY of the JEFFERSON PANEL**

In SFY 2018, the Jefferson panel identified two areas of focus: how to optimally provide resource information to consumers and DCBS worker appreciation. Worker appreciation has been a previous goal and was chosen again due to workload size, worker turnover and vacancy rates within the region. In previous conversations with the commissioner, panel members identified that reaching families who are at risk before they become involved in an active investigation/open case could be impactful.

Panel members feel it is critical to understand how people receive
information about services when their need is critical. It is also important to understand how organizations communicate information on their available services. Surveys were developed to ascertain information from consumers and organizations, but then the panel learned that Louisville Metro Government was conducting a needs assessment that would provide the results needed. Survey results showed that 35% of respondents have dependent children, 80% of recipients of services have internet access and the top three (3) needs for the community are mental health, substance abuse and food availability.

The panel conducted worker appreciation on a quarterly basis this year. Nominations were elicited from peers and voted upon by the panel members, with the chosen employee receiving a certificate of recognition and small gift that was donated by a local business.

**RESPONSE to the JEFFERSON PANEL**

The agency recognizes the need to intervene before the needs of a family become critical and meet the standards for child protective services intervention. Understanding how people seek out assistance and gain their information about community resources can highlight areas of need for the community as a whole. The agency looks forward to further exploration of the infrastructure, in the Jefferson region, for families and children. It will be beneficial to use the results of Louisville Metro Government’s needs assessment to identify ways to close gaps in access and availability of services.

The agency recognizes the important need of a stable work force and appreciates the efforts of this panel, as well as the others, for worker recognition.
SUMMARY of the STUDENT PANEL

The student panel set out to gather and analyze factors that contribute to multiple foster care placements through a judicial perspective. The panel specifically set out to gather the perceptions of Jefferson County Family Court judges, however after they were unable to obtain judges willing to be interviewed their focus shifted to guardian ad litems. The panel’s key tasks were: conduct a literature review, develop protocol for data collection, draft and submit protocol for IRB approval, and conduct and analyze data from interviews.

RESPONSE to the STUDENT PANEL

While the panel was unable to fully actualize their project, the cabinet appreciates the efforts and ideas. The children in out-of-home care could benefit from the results of such a study, especially if the judicial partners who represent them appreciated results and implications.

The agency is appreciative of the topic undertaken by the student panel and understands how challenging it could be to interview elected judicial staff for a research project.

SUMMARY of the SOUTHERN BLUEGRASS PANEL

The Southern Bluegrass CRP focused on two areas this year: educating the community about services and resources that aid in the decrease of abuse and neglect, and promoting DCBS in healthy manner to increase employee morale and retention. The panel accomplished their goals by first presenting a free training about Narcan, which was open to the community. They also conducted a community forum on substance misuse. The panel contributed to worker morale and retention by providing educational activities on self-care and worker recognition during “Conversation on Collaboration.” This year the conversation was titled "A Conversation on
Collaboration in Child Welfare Substance Abuse: The Impact on our Community." After a presentation by a certified alcohol/drug counselor on engaging teens and families in treatment, the conversation continued by sharing information about the implementation of Handle with Care (HWC) throughout Fayette County Public Schools.

HWC promotes safe and supportive schools, through school-community partnerships, to help traumatized children heal and thrive by providing additional support in the school setting.

The primary premise of HWC is to ensure that if a child is present during a law enforcement call that the child’s school be notified before the next day. Law enforcement will send a notification to that child’s school that simply states the child’s name and HANDLE WITH CARE. The child is then monitored for any changes in behavior or performance, and if warranted, the appointed school personnel will ensure that child has an opportunity to access additional services to meet his/her needs. All Fayette County school personnel have had trauma-sensitive training so that children are handled with care and hopefully are not further traumatized. The program was implemented the last week of April and by the end of the school year three (3) children had been provided services.

The program was in place the last five (5) weeks of the school year. The panel anticipates greater results and participation in the coming school year.

**RESPONSE to the SOUTHERN BLUEGRASS PANEL**

DCBS continues to recognize the panel on their efforts to ensure the community is engaged in discourse, especially the relevant issues highlighted by this year’s mini conference. The panel has worked diligently to provide relevant and beneficial trainings and learning opportunities for
the community they represent. The agency is impressed with the full implementation of Handle with Care throughout the entire Fayette County Public School System. This community collaboration to reduce trauma in children is impressive and the agency looks forward to hearing more about how this program is working during the 2018-19 academic year.

DCBS appreciates the panel’s efforts to recognize worker’s efforts, provide opportunities to learn, and creative ways to perform self-care. This panel has served their region well.

**SUMMARY of the TWO RIVERS PANEL**

This was the first full fiscal year of the panel. The work goals for the panel were membership, human trafficking and the “What Works in Child Welfare” conference. The panel continues their efforts to recruit new members. Human trafficking is a multifaceted, complex issue so it was decided that the What Works conference would allow an opportunity to highlight this topic.

Members were struggling with the panel’s purpose, so an “area of interest” survey was distributed in an effort to get to know one another and determine how the panel will move forward. Survey results indicated that worker advocacy was the leading topic, which includes retention/morale, hazardous pay and retirement. There were also four (4) secondary areas identified: substance abuse, foster parent recruitment, supports for children aging out of care, and community needs assessment. Foster parent recruitment focused specifically on siblings and children of color. This information will be vital to the future work of this panel.

Panel members advocated for DCBS employees during the legislative session, and also contacted legislators supporting bills that improve services to children in foster care.
The “What Works in Child Welfare” conference had two keynote presenters on human trafficking and issues of LGBTQ youth. Frontline workers were recognized through peer nominations, which were presented during the morning session. The conference concluded with mini presentations on linking policies and services within child welfare, healing children of parents with substance abuse issues, and developing trust and sparking hope in the helping relationship. Participants, primarily frontline DCBS staff, completed a community needs assessment prior to the conclusion of the conference. The results of this survey will be shared during the annual retreat in August, and will assist in the development of the panel’s approach to further activities.

**RESPONSE to the TWO RIVERS PANEL**

DCBS recognizes the commitment and intention behind the activities of the panel. The agency recognizes and appreciates the time and efforts put into understanding and making purposeful decisions in the panel’s efforts to promote the needs of the agency, staff and individuals served by DCBS.

The agency looks forward to continued collaboration with all panels to promote the agency and the services it provides to Kentucky families.