



Citizen Review Panel

District of Columbia

ANNUAL REPORT

JULY 1, 2022 - APRIL 23, 2023

Submitted by Margie Chalofsky
May 9, 2023

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Grant# DCRL-2022-U-0092

Citizen Review Panel Annual report

Period of Report: July 2022 to April 30, 2023

Submitted by Margie Chalofsky, CRP Facilitator

I. Introduction/Overview

DC's Citizen Review Panel was established through the Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (CAPTA), and DC Code: § 4-1303.51 established the DC-CRP. This report is to be prepared annually and sent to DC Child and Family Services Agency, who then sends it to the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS), the DC Mayor of the District of Columbia, the Council of the District of Columbia, and community stakeholders as relevant. This report will also be posted on the DC CRP website.

In July, facilitation of the DC-CRP transferred to a new facilitation team. Previously, the grant was awarded to the Center for Child Protection and Family Support (CCPFS), a community-based non-profit agency in the District of Columbia. For the first time, the current facilitation team- Margie Chalofsky (Facilitator) and Toni Carr (Administrative Support) - are independent contractors. Grant funds are distributed to Margie Chalofsky who put them into a separate bank account strictly for CRP funds. This account is managed by Toni Carr who provides bi-monthly updates to Patrick Foley, the panel Treasurer.

This report will discuss, among other things,

- Current financial status
- Facilitator transition process
- Strategic steps the panel embarked upon to determine their current scope.
- The current relationship with CFSA
- Panel membership and recruitment
- Newly determined workgroups
- Updates on meetings with representatives from the Mayor's office and the Council
- Meetings and Information/Education sessions
- Challenges, hurdles, and opportunities.

II. Grant expenditures to date and remaining budget

The budget for this grant is \$50,000 and payments have been received on time using the DC vendor portal online. The first invoice in the amount of \$37,192.65 was submitted on July 31, 2022, and the second and final invoice for this period was submitted on November 8, 2022, in the amount of \$12,807.35. Fiscal accounting for the first quarter and second quarter were reviewed and approved by the CRP Treasurer, and financial reports were sent to the CFSA Grant Monitor. A 6-month report documenting expenditures for the first two quarters, July through September, and October through December 2022 was submitted to the Grant Facilitator on January 5, 2023. The third quarter report (January – March) was submitted to the CRP Treasurer and Grant Monitor April 2023 and will be presented at the next CRP meeting, scheduled for July 2023. The meeting scheduled for May 9th was canceled due to the availability of panel members.

For the first quarter of this reporting period (July – September) \$9,999.00 was used for personnel salaries, which includes fringe benefits. The cost of supplies was \$208.89 which included a reimbursement of \$158.59 to Joyce Thomas for CRP’s Zoom account and a reimbursement of \$50.00 to Margie Chalofsky to open the CRP’s bank account. The cost for Website/Update and Maintenance totaled \$31.71 which includes a reimbursement of \$10.57 to Joyce Thomas for the CRP’s website. The total amount for the first quarter was \$10,240.59 with a balance of \$39,759.41.

For the second quarter of this reporting period (October – December) \$9,999.00 was used for personnel salaries, which includes fringe benefits. The cost for Website/Update and Maintenance totaled \$31.71. During this period, the website was shut down due to the card that it was billed to was hacked and therefore canceled. In response to the cancelation, the website host charged an additional fee of \$80.00 to reinstate the website; however, the facilitator paid this fee personally and it did not come out of CRP funds. The facilitator team is planning to transfer hosting to another company in the near future. There was no other cost for this reporting period. The total amount for the second quarter was \$10,031.70. The total cost to date is \$20,272.29 with a balance of \$29,727.71.

For the third quarter of this reporting period (January – March) \$9,999.99 was used for personnel salaries, which include fringe benefits. The total cost for supplies was \$120.00. This includes \$30.00 for Zoom Cloud account and \$90.00 for CRP’s Constant Contact account. The cost for Website/Update and Maintenance totaled \$239.93. This included the annual fee of \$203.52 for the design of a new website expected to launch May 2023 and our current website monthly fee of \$12.57. As mentioned in the second quarter, there was an additional fee of \$80.00 paid to our current website host to reinstate the CRP

website due to an error. The facilitator paid this fee personally. In March 2023, the CPR treasurer approved that the \$80.00 be reimbursed to the facilitator. The total amount for the third quarter was \$10,359.22. The total cost to date is \$30,631.51 with a remaining balance of \$19,368.49.

The remaining balance of \$19,368.49 for the fourth quarter will be used for CRP's current expenses and expenses incurred from workgroups/ meetings/training.

III. Facilitator Transition Process

The new facilitator team began in July. Although the contract for the previous facilitator had previously ended, the current facilitator team was grateful for the opportunities given so that critical information could be discussed. Meetings between the past and current facilitator team occurred by phone and zoom and were completed by August. In addition, the previous team transferred documents they felt were important for continuity. During this time the facilitator team completed Ethics and Open Meeting training as mandated by the District of Columbia.

IV. Strategic steps, current scopes, and workgroups

The new facilitator team is grateful for all the work done previously by the last facilitator to build the CRP infrastructure. Starting as a new team having the bylaws and MOA with CFSA already in place was a great help. To onboard a new facilitator team as well as newer panel members, the panel set the next stage as a "Reset" stage, giving time for internal group processes to occur before jumping into new workgroups. The facilitator communicated this plan to CFSA and received support for this plan.

In August, the new facilitator met individually with each panel member to determine their individual interests as well as their goals for the CRP. Aggregated recommendations from the individual meetings were in the 6-month report. [See Report Here.](#)

There were a few critical decisions that were made through this process:

- a) To raise the profile of the CRP through community engagement and social media
- b) To encourage holding off on new members until the panel figures out the other skills needed to build group capacity.
- c) To set clear expectations when we the panel is ready to bring in new members.
- d) To build the voice of people affected by the system through community outreach as well as new members.
- e) To create clearer entry points for people to engage with the panel.
- f) To learn about the current landscape to determine the potential scope unique to the panel.
- g) To create a summary of what was looked at by the CRP in the past- what threads there are still to pull, what happened and what needs completing.
- h) To create a rubric for the workgroup process so as to pick topics that don't overlap with what is already being done elsewhere.
- i) To open the door to a re-imagining of the CRP role.

At the September meeting, the panel members discussed the Strategic Planning that had been held prior to this facilitator team joining the panel. Panel members who had been there at that time shared that the session was more around what do others around the country look like and how they determine their work, and that although strategic planning specific to DC-CRP was recommended, it had not yet begun. We thus decided that internal CRP sub-committees were needed to decide on strategic processes regarding the approach to choosing new workgroups.

In October, members divided into these sub-committee/workgroups to prepare the panel to move forward into the heart of the panel's work. The

sub-committees examined two areas; they were Structure and Scope, and Review of Past materials. The Structure and Scope sub-committee looked at CAPTA legislation, CPR local legislation, DC CRP bylaws, and the DC CRP MOA with CFSA in order to determine any limitations or guidelines or past work on our scope as it would impact the choice of workgroups. This sub-committee also researched public outreach: the requirements as stated, and how other jurisdictions interpret and handle the outreach. The sub-committee looked as well at strategic marketing and recruitment. The second sub-committee reviewed CRP past reports and projects to determine if there were any threads we want to continue on from prior CRP work or if past reports and projects were "one and done" and we are ready to move on to completely new things. The recommendations of these sub-committees were presented at the November meeting and formed a basis for next steps in targeting our work ahead.

After having the scope and guidelines clarified by the sub-committee, the question became whether members were ready to move forward to the discussion of work groups or if they still needed more of a Strategic Planning or Project Planning process. Two planning sub-committees met in December to address these questions. In January they presented their positions. Summing up, both workgroups felt that they needed an internal process to collect information and help choose topics but did not need to take the time to have a separate and independent strategic planning process. They asked to revisit workgroups previously identified to give people time to add additional topics, to see which groups panel members might be interested in, and then to identify where there are clusters of at least three or four people interested. Once we had those clusters, we would then ask people to rank the groups that they would be interested in and then we would identify the top three to four groups. Thus, members landed upon creating a survey for members based upon the topics that had already been suggested in prior

sessions with the opportunity to add new ones that had arisen since the time of that initial list.

In February, the facilitator team developed and distributed this survey and results were shared at the March meeting. ([See Survey Here](#))

Based upon the ranked survey, the two top choices from panel members were: Prevention and Older youth, with a close next third of "Once in CFSA Custody" (family visitation, reunification efforts) Racial disparity also received a lot of interest; however, it was discussed that this issue/screen should be incorporated into all the workgroups. It was also discussed that although Public Outreach should be done by each workgroup and did not need to be its own workgroup, social media does need to be developed, and one panel member volunteered for that task. It was suggested that Workgroups can also look at multi-year projects with yearly goals. Since when members ranked their choices there were multiple options, individual assignments still needed to be finalized.

The members discussed the parameters for each of the top workgroup choices, Prevention and Older Youth. It was suggested that prevention could be broken down into two different focuses, primary and secondary. In our conversations, we defined primary prevention as directed at the general population/universal to prevent CFSA involvement before it occurs. We defined secondary prevention as targeted to families who have been identified as requiring some level of child welfare involvement.

Acknowledging that prevention is very broad, the first priority of the group will be to identify their specific focus area.

Following this meeting, the facilitator called each panel member to finalize their workgroup assignment based upon the choices that had been further narrowed down since the survey.

In April, final assignments were identified for the following workgroups.

- **Older Youth:** Whether to be one year or multi-year (with yearly goals/outcomes) will be decided by members of the group. Chair identified
- **Prevention:** Whether to be one year or multi-year (with yearly goals/outcomes) will be decided by members of the group. Chair still pending.

The panel will also have a targeted special one-year project that two members will be taking on. This will be the "**Once in CFSA care**" group which will be singularly focused on Family Visitation after CFSA involvement.

Each workgroup will soon meet to narrow to their specific areas of focus inside of the more general topic areas and will prepare proposals for review by the full panel and CFSA.

It should be noted that members agree that holding another Town Hall would be an important part of Community Outreach and are interested in planning it at another year in the near future.

V. Meetings and Information/Education sessions

Meetings have remained virtual. Although we have broached the conversation about meeting in-person, there is no consensus to do so. Some members feel that the virtual platform has given them the opportunity to participate in more professional activities than if they were required to be at meetings in person. Additionally, not everyone is in the same place about in-person meetings post pandemic. There is interest from members to have a

meet-and greet in the summer to connect in person. In order to facilitate members getting to know each other in the virtual world, we have recently added a portion of the agenda for “member sharing” where one person per meeting has the chance to share individually.

The panel has continued to meet on its existing schedule of the second Tuesday of every other month as set by the panel members and former facilitator. Additionally, as there are many members who were relatively new to the panel, the facilitator team arranged Information Sessions for members on most of the alternate months. This new process was to respond to members’ interest in learning about other key players in the DC child welfare arena in order to assess the landscape to help to identify the scope and role most suited for the CRP. Feedback from panel members about the information sessions was very positive.

The meeting schedule was as follows:

July 2022 Open business meeting

August 2022 Individual meetings with members

September 2022 Open business meeting

October 2022 Information session:

- a. CFSA presentation/update on the recommendations from the 2021 CRP Older Youth report
- b. Child Fatality Review Committee Presentation- Jenna Beebe-Aryee, Fatality Review Program Manager, D.C. Office of the Chief Medical Examiner
- c. Mayor’s Advisory Committee on Child Abuse and Neglect (MACCAN) presentation-Dr. Cheryl Boyce, Chair

November 2022 Open business meeting- Guest presentation, Shalonda Hawthorn, DCs Ombudsperson for Children

December 2022 Information Session

- Children’s Justice Act Task Force presentation (CJA)- Erin Cullen (CJA) - Erin Cullen, Deputy Attorney General (OAG) Family Services Division
- Neglect Statute Reform- Erin Cullen
- The Life Cycle of a Neglect Case- Pierrea Wallace- Panel member and GAL Training Coordinator at Children’s Law Center (CLC)

January 2023 Open business meeting

February 2023 Information Session

- Family Success Centers Presentation: Smart from the Start- Jamila Green and Paul Thomas; Martha’s Table- Tiffany Williams and Angela Draughn; Benning Road/Minnesota Ave- Terrance Davis and Irwin Royster; Clay Terrace/ Sasha Bruce-Donnell Potts and Oliver Carter; Mayfair/Paradise/North Capitol Collaborative-Aleesha Cade

March 2023 Open business meeting

April 2023 No session scheduled to give time for workgroup planning

May meeting Canceled due to member time conflicts

On an Education-related note, we recently learned that the National CRP conference would not be held again this year

VI. Relationship with CFSA

Although there were some challenges in the past between CFSA and the CRP, the facilitator team is pleased with the positive relationship the panel currently has with CFSA. We are aware that many of those challenges arose

around the relationships of the workgroups regarding requests for data, and as such, we have not yet had to face that situation. However, this facilitator believes that the MOA put in place before we got here will be very helpful to resolve that situation and clarify processes moving forward. We have found our CFSA liaison, Roni Seabrook, to be a valued partner, who balances very well her acknowledgement of the independence of the CRP while simultaneously supporting our efforts and requests for information and participation.

VII. Panel membership and recruitment

Currently, there are nine appointed CRP panel members, five from Mayoral appointment and four from Council appointment. An official roster is maintained to document and track the demographic status of CRP members. Information is available by request on the names, email addresses, city wards, and dates of approval by either MOTA or resolution by the DC City Council.

Demographic data documents the following:

Gender: There are nine (9) females and one (1) male member.

Ward Distribution: One member from Ward (2); One member from Ward (3); Two members from Ward (5); One member from Ward (6); One member from Ward (7); and Three members from Ward (8).

There is one member who was a DC foster parent and is currently an adoptive foster parent and one member who identifies as a former foster youth.

There has been no change in membership since this facilitator started in July 2022. However, the panel has been waiting for the Mayoral appointment of Pierrea Wallace as Chair and reappointments from the Council for Shana Bartley, Patrick Foley, and Elizabeth Mohler. Shana Bartley has been serving as Interim Chair but due to legislation she could not become Chair as her appointment was on the Council side.

In April, this facilitator was informed that Pierrea Wallace's appointment as Chair was approved in October 2022; however, despite being in regular contact with the Mayor's Office on Talent and Appointment (MOTA), we had not been informed and we are awaiting the paperwork to confirm this verbal information. This example brings up one of the major long-time challenges for the DC-CRP that will be discussed in the Challenges section.

We have requested of both MOTA and the representative from Council to allow us time to identify the needs of the panel as it relates to membership before actively recruiting new members. We have also requested that should applicants come directly to either point of entry, that the panel be given the opportunity to have more input on potential new members than during the previous process.

As in the past, the panel members plan to identify volunteers to join their small workgroups. From those volunteers, as well as from other community outreach, we hope to recruit new members who have the specific skills, experiences, interest, and time to balance the strengths already brought by current members so as to build the capacity of the full panel.

VIII. Deliverables and Accomplishments

This facilitator is very pleased with the transition into our roles and the tremendous progress the panel has made to assess and plan their launch

into workgroups. Since July, members have held conversations both at general meetings and in small groups to strategically plan how to move forward. It has been exciting to work with this group of members, each of whom has so much to offer, and to see how everyone has been engaged in the process and eager to begin to work together to make the most positive impact they can on the lives of DC's children and families.

During the process of building our information base and planning next steps, the panel members have had rich and meaningful conversations about the state and trends of child welfare, both in DC and more generally. Because of the diversity of experiences, age, race/culture and backgrounds of members, discussions have approached issues from varying viewpoints, which has made meetings not only productive but also stimulating and thought provoking.

The facilitator team has been working on other deliverables as well. As we write this, we are almost ready to release our newly designed website. Additionally, we are excited to have identified a site where we will be setting up a panel member portal to share resources, educational opportunities, etc. in a more cohesive manner than can be accomplished through email.

It is important to note that although this is an Annual report, the current team has only been in place for ten months.

IX. Meetings with MOTA and Council

As mentioned in previous sections, the facilitator has been meeting with our liaisons from both MOTA and the DC Council Chairman's office. We have been pleased that our Council liaison, Christian Washington, has remained constant since we started in this role, and has been very responsive, helpful, and easy to work with. Unfortunately, our liaison on the Mayor's side has

changed three times since we started in July, and conversations about the pipeline as well as processes moving forward have had to restart each time. Significantly, we have been informed by others that this is not unusual and is actually the norm at MOTA, which is discouraging from the perspective of needing the office to get new members through the pipeline.

We are, however, encouraged by our first meeting with our new liaison, Vida Rangel, who seemed genuinely interested in working to move things forward with us. It was at this meeting that we learned the surprising information that Pierrea Wallace's appointment as Chair had gone through as far back as October, and thus the disturbing point that past liaisons either were not aware or did not share that information with us when we asked about that status. We are hoping that our liaison will remain constant for a while, and we are looking to continuing to build a more productive relationship with MOTA moving forward.

X. Challenges and Recommendations for Improvements

The former CRP facilitator identified the cumbersome and bifurcated process of member appointment as a challenge and barrier. (We have learned that we are only one of two jurisdictions in the county who have such a process.) As well as supporting this position, this facilitator has the opinion that there is also another process issue. Currently, members of the community apply directly to the Mayor's office or the Council who then make recommendations "top down" with very minimal involvement of the CRP facilitator. It would be best for the CRP if new members could be identified and recommended by the panel itself and recommended "up," as the Mayor and Council have limited information about the skill gaps within the panel and who would best meet our needs. Embedded in this challenge is also the constant turn-over at MOTA, as mentioned above. Building the relationship

with MOTA and addressing the process for new members will be a future priority for this facilitator.

Another challenge this facilitator is facing rests in the complexities of working with the District though the status of an Independent Contractor. From the very beginning of the RFP and contract process, it has been clear that the District's experience is in working with organizations and that transferring their processes to acknowledge the facilitator as an independent contractor has been a hurdle to climb. Because of this, the facilitator has spent extra hours and finances to accommodate requirements that should have been amended from the start to meet the expectations for independent contracting. Added to this issue specific to the CRP is the fact that if CFSA wanted to limit applications to organizations and thus eliminate the option for an Independent Contractor as Facilitator, there are actually a very limited number of organizations who could meet the standards to apply, as restrictions on types of organization and relationships with CFSA narrow that door quite a bit.

The hurdles for independent contractors coupled with the paradox related to the significant limitation of qualifying organizations makes the future of continuing to find facilitators for DC's CRP very challenging and thus worth highlighting in this report.

XI. Challenges and Recommendations from last facilitator

In this last section, we will review and provide a status update on some of the challenges stated in reports by the former facilitator.

- a) Stated challenge: selection and stability of a new Chairperson
 - o Status update: Achieved

- b) Stated challenge: the need for an in- depth strategic plan/full day retreat
 - Status update: Strategic planning ongoing through other process
- c) Stated challenge: the need to create a marketing strategy to better inform the community and potential panel members about the mandate of the CRP
 - Status update: In process
- d) Stated challenges the need to finalize and obtain approval for the MOA with CFSA
 - Status update: Achieved by last facilitator
- e) Stated challenge: creating an open-ended recruitment plan to secure new members
 - Status update: In process
- f) Stated challenge: the need to investigate and rethink the current structure of the bifurcated appointment approach between MOTA and DC Council and relationship between this structure and
 - Status update: Still an active challenge
- g) Stated challenge: the challenge in maintaining stable leadership for the CRP Chairperson
 - Status update: To be determined

XII. Summary and Next Steps

It has been a highly productive “reset” period since this facilitator team began in July 2022. We are grateful to the former facilitator, the current panel members, CFSA and other community organizations for helping to bring us onboard effectively through information, recommendations, and support. With this phase of internal work completed, the panel is now ready to focus on the next steps to meet in their workgroups to narrow down their scopes into realistic proposals for review by the full panel and CFSA.