

Ramsey County Children's Citizens Review Panel  
Minutes  
12 January 2023

<https://zoom.us/j/94343538622?pwd=MVhNYlhCV09SZkEyYW5JekRzSUh6dz09>

Meeting ID 943 4353 8622 Passcode 375369

Meeting Call to Order: 4:31 Co-Chair Tonya Long

**Attendance**

Members: Tonya Long, Jill Esch  
Past Members: Jill Gunderson-Gernes, Jackie Thomas  
Guest: Darla Holland, Minnesota Prison Doula Project  
Ramsey Staff: Brian Theine, Falon Hunyh, Bobbi Jo Potter and Cassaundra Adler  
DHS:

**Welcome:** Tonya welcomed everyone. She recognized the land and water; Ramsey County is on Dakota land and the Mississippi River sustained the Dakota and Ojibwe. She cited the 1805 treaty which was never ratified that ceded Hennepin County, Ramsey County, the airport and Fort Snelling. Tonya asked everyone to think about the coming year and what they wished to accomplish in 2023. Attendees introduced themselves. Some of the goals or resolutions were: lose 30 COVID lbs., practice self-care, strive for work-life balance, find footing in a new position, finish projects begun in the community, start new projects in the community, continue to work with families, populate CAC committees, hope not to have "Us vs. Them" mentality, resume visiting Shakopee Women's prison to educate women about their rights, being pono (be in balance), build Panel membership, go on road trips and choose to have bright outlook. Tonya made a motion to adopt December's meeting minutes with the changes that Jill Esch made and Jill Esch seconded the motion. The motion carried.

**Minutes:** Tonya made a motion to adopt December's meeting minutes with the changes that Jill Esch made and Jill Esch seconded the motion. The motion carried.

**Agenda:** Tonya asked for a motion to approve the agenda. Jill Esch made the motion and Tonya seconded the motion. The motion carried. Because Darla is a guest for the first time, Tonya gave a brief overview of CAPTA, federal legislation that guides Panel work, and the Panel. She mentioned CJJ, Child Mortality Review Panel and the Citizen Review Panels (CRP) as part of the federal land state efforts related to CAPTA. There are currently 4 CRPs in Minnesota: Hennepin County, Ramsey County, Chisago and Winona. The Panel gives citizens the opportunity to weigh in on policies, practices and procedures in Child Welfare. Tonya cited some examples of past Panel work: non-custodial parent project (the Fathers' project), Independent Living Plan review project, Safe Sleep and Foster Care Parent survey. Recommendations from the Panel to the County re: foster parents based on the Foster Care Parent survey were made and the County adopted these recommendations. Tonya stated that we are partners with the County. She mentioned the Foster Youth Survey that did not go forward in 2022 as possible project. Tonya asked Falon to check out the 2 organizations that Michelle Seymour mentioned in December's meeting: [Partnerships for Permanence](#) and [Home -](#)

[Quality Parenting Initiative \(qpi4kids.org\)](http://qpi4kids.org). She suggested that one of these organizations may be able to partner with the Panel on getting the Foster Care Youth Survey done. Jill Gunderson-Gernes wondered if we could get a speaker from one or both of these organizations for February's meeting or perhaps, it is too early in the County's work with these orgs to do this. Tonya mentioned that a Safe Sleep project has been motioned because of former Panel member Tony Porter's participation in these reviews. Also, the Panel could repeat the Foster Care Parent Survey as it yielded good information and resulted in recommendations. This time we would include bio parents if possible. This could include parents whose child protection cases have been closed 1 or 2 months to get their perspective. Tonya brought up the Fostering Connections program which includes covering transportation of a youth placed in care to their school, no matter where the youth is currently living. If the youth is out of Ramsey County and attending a school in Ramsey County, the County covers the cost. If the youth is in Ramsey County, Saint Paul Public Schools makes arrangements for the youth to remain in same school. It was mentioned that the Panel has \$5000 to use by the end of June. Funds need to be allocated by first week in May. Truancy was mentioned and a Tonya related a story re: the police coming to the school where her son attended and taking away a child. This is no longer the practice. Tonya mentioned that Child Protection calls decreased dramatically during COVID. Schools heavily involved in CP process due to mandated reporting. Bobbi Jo stated the County does mandated reporter training in school and as of last summer (2022), the policy changed so that kids are no longer removed from school due to Director Windy Ross. Jill Esch mentioned that kids were often bullied after being removed from school by their classmates. Darla asked what kind of services are available to foster youth of incarcerated parents. Discussion ensued re: visitation to the incarcerated parent and whether we are able to identify foster youth whose parents are incarcerated. The social worker would know but it is not a data point and is only available in a narrative. ACES and trauma-informed care for foster youth is important and a peer to peer (shared lived experiences) would be beneficial to youth whose parents were incarcerated or in a long-term treatment facility. Visitation could be a possible project. Jill Esch mentioned that she would like to see additional CRPS in Duluth and Bemidji.

**Membership:** Cassaundra said that she had met with Sarah Bello and did not feel she should address membership because Sarah was not able to attend today's meeting due to illness. Tonya updated the Panel as to the work that Transforming Systems Together (TST). TST picked Child Protection to focus on first. There will be reports from all 5 ad hoc work groups and these will be evaluated before making recommendations. All 5 reports contain recommendations for legislative action

#### **DHS Report:**

#### **County Report:**

Brian Theine said that the County is hiring several individuals and that is unusual to be hiring in January. These positions include: case aides, Child Protection workers and clerks and a supervisor for the Kinship unit. Brian talked about how Kinship Support Workers are trying to get resources to potential foster parents quickly and are being proactive in providing things like CO2 detectors, flashlights, etc. These are things that may prevent a Foster Parent from getting

licensed. Also, the County is making wider kinship searches in order to have contingency plans if the first plan falls through. This is in hopes of the least disruption possible and to anticipate and act quickly after TPR. "Building the circle, strengthening the circle," says Jill Esch. Bobbi Jo said we need to do better to support relatives who are providing care and that the County is trying to focus more on preventative work. Child care is a major issue. Tonya wondered if a foster parent who is already licensed and currently doesn't have a placement could do child care. They would receive payment but this payment should not be considered income (just like when you are a foster parent and receive money for care of a foster youth). Tonya urged everyone to think outside the box to solve these issues.

#### **Announcements:**

Jill Esch reported that legislative committees have begun meeting on Tuesdays and Thursdays at 8:30am. HG 150 provides child care. The Tribe and DHS may end with dueling bills; she is unsure about this. I didn't catch what this was related to. Please insert. Jill Esch also stated that studies have shown that early childhood intervention is more important than the first year in college. Tonya updated the Panel as to the work that Transforming Systems Together (TST). TST picked Child Protection to focus on first. There will be reports from all 5 ad hoc work groups and these will be evaluated before making recommendations. All 5 reports contain recommendation for legislative action. There will be grant awards forthcoming. Tonya is anxious to get \$ into families' hands.

Meeting Adjourned at 6:05pm.