

**Children's Services Review Panel (CAC) Minutes**November 24<sup>th</sup>, 2025; 4:30 – 6:30 PM<https://zoom.us/j/98236935012?pwd=1aQdPvVuw8V310V5V3vYcJs7BcCem.1>

Members Present: Ankit Sood, Tonya Long, Casey Accord, Molly Evans, Beth Salzl, Kat Ruth-Leigh, Melissa DeBilzan

Ramsey County Staff: David Herrera

MN Dept. of Children, Youth, and Families: Laura Gapske (DCYF)

Guests: Jill Esch

**Reminder of Agreements:**

If you would like a copy of agreements, please reach out to Laura Gapske.

**Ice Breaker:** What is something that an elder shared for you?

For future meetings:

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**New Actions:**

- Approval of October minutes
  - Passes unanimously
- Approval of Melissa DeBilzan
  - Passes unanimously

**County Update:** David Herrera Santacruz

1. There has been barriers getting system access for members of this panel. The set up for new accounts takes about 3-6 weeks for new employees. It will probably take a little longer for panel members as we need to get creative on how we will grant access to SSIS.
  - a. Can we start the process of tech access for residents now?
    - i. Yes, we have started the process and will continue to see how we can make this possible.
  - b. What do reviews look like now?
    - i. They are done with an online tool that looks a bit like a survey. Individual reviewers will be assigned a case and answer questions with information that can be found in the SSIS.
  - c. Can access to SSIS be part of the onboarding process?
    - i. This is a great suggestion and we can see what the process can look like.
  - d. Office for Ombudsman does not have access to SSIS and must use MGA or reach out to DCYF to receive documents from SSIS.
  - e. Since we won't be able to have access to SSIS, can we have some training to how to use the system to be prepared?
    - i. Gapske will answer this in her update.
  - f. It seems like we have a statute that authorizes us to see information around child safety. Who do we go to have these further discussions?

- i. We need to be on the same page with the county and the county attorneys office. Perhaps it would be fruitful to have a conversation with some people from the attorneys office and social services to ensure we are all on the same page.

### **DCYF Update**

1. MN Child Welfare academy will need names of people who would like to go through some trainings the academy offers. These trainings will be some of the foundational trainings social workers need to go through when they start.
2. DCYF has a new office; the equity and inclusion office is now the office of system change and public engagement. This office oversees community engagement. They reached out to Gapske to see how they can be involved with CRPs across the state.
3. Gapske sent out a mandated reported survey. The results will take a while to be public.
4. Data collection in some rural areas through community meetings. Some of this data can help understand police removals, and child safety in rural areas.
5. Best practice guide will be collecting lived experience feedback and data to include in the guide. The goal is to better understand what is going well, what needs more support, and to include it all in the guide.
6. Collaborative Safety Case Mapping is currently being worked out for Hennepin County on how community can use and leverage community members. Gapske will update us on what Hennepin county does.

### **New Member Applications**

We have received two new applications. They have not responded to Gapske's email, but she will follow up to them. She usually follows up 3 times.

### **Annual Report**

Every year, the CRP panels need to submit an annual report of what they have done in the previous year. These are usually written by the chairs. This year, we hope to have the panel as a whole help fill this out. The questions below outline some questions we can answer together:

1. What did we accomplish?
  - a. Our county representative is knowledgeable and the relationship between county rep and council is strong
  - b. We have brought on knowledgeable guests that have helped the panel members know more about the Child Welfare and Child Protection system
  - c. We started the year with 3 members; we now have 8 members who represent various identities.
  - d. Members participated in the SDM restructuring
2. Where are systems improvements needed?
  - a. Develop a process for members to access county information
    - i. Discussions have started around this
  - b. Creating a better process for how DCYF, the County, and the panel can move towards shared goals.
  - c. Engage leadership earlier on in projects; understanding which leaders need to, want to be engaged in the project process
  - d. Organization structure of Ramsey County over the CRP
3. What did you learn from restructuring and rebuilding panel?
4. Other considerations:
  - a. Onboarding process improvements

- b. Concrete supports from DCYF
- c. Recruitment support and increase awareness
- d. Simplify appointment process?
- e. Increase funding due to stipend expenses?
- f. Retreat improvements, needs

We will create an online platform to review the questions and answer it on this platform.

All answers should be in by **Dec 12**.

The first draft chairs will **Dec 22**

Final draft done before January meeting and be approved on January meeting.

### **National Conference in 2026**

There has been a concern around the budget and the cost to send members to the conference. Gapske has discussed these concerns with her supervisors. The good news is that DCYF could allocate more money to the panel if there are funds needed for a project before June 2026.

Usually, the average cost is around \$2100, which includes registration, flights, stipend, and food.

### **Planning Projects; Items for 2026**

- a. Presentation: *MAAFCWDA, Oh My!* With Naomi Thyden, DCYF Research and Evaluation Division (45 min)
  - i. Could be in January
- b. National Conference
  - ii. Possible extra funds available

### **Announcements/ Updates**

- 1. The initial orientation foster care was amazing. Can this be available for members?
  - a. David will check with Bryan Theine