



Citizen Review Panel
District of Columbia

ANNUAL REPORT

MAY 1, 2023 TO APRIL 30, 2024

GRANT#S

DCRL-2022-U-0092 - FY 2022-2023

DCRL-2022-U-0093 - FY 2023-2024

SUBMITTED BY :

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DATE :

May 7, 2024

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Grant# DCRL-2022-U-0092

Citizen Review Panel Final Annual Report

Period of Report: May 1, 2023 – April 30, 2024

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 the semi-annual report that will constitute half of the annual reporting period.

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
- Panel membership and recruitment
- Workgroups
- Meetings
- Relationship with CFSA
- Updates on meetings with representatives from the Mayor's office and the Council

- Deliverable and Accomplishments
- Challenges, hurdles, and opportunities.

II. Grant expenditures to date and remaining budget

For this reporting period, this financial report includes the fourth quarter of the previous grant year (May, June 2023), DCRL-2022-U-0093 - FY 2022-2023 and the first, second and third quarters, (July, August, September 2023) (October, November, and December 2023) and (January February and March 2024) and April 2024 of our current grant year, DCRL-2022-U0093 - FY 2023-2024.

Previous grant year: DCRL-2022-U-0093 - FY 2022-2023 (May, June 2023)

The initial amount of \$50,000 was awarded for this grant year. Full payment has been received using the DC Vendor portal. The first invoice in the amount of \$37,192.65 was received on July 31, 2022, and the second and final invoice for this period was received on November 8, 2022, in the amount of \$12,807.35. At the beginning of this quarter, there was a remaining balance of \$19,368.49 for the fourth and final quarter of this contract. The total for May and June 2023 was \$8,492.80.

May 2023 - The total cost for personnel salaries: \$3,333.33 which include fringe benefits. The cost for Website/Update and Maintenance totaled \$12.57. The cost for Meeting and Retreat costs totaled \$0.00. The cost for Transportation and Childcare totaled \$0.00, as there were no meetings/childcare during this contract. The cost for Community Forum totaled \$0.00, as there was not a community forum held during this contract. The cost for the CRP National Conference totaled \$0.00, as the meeting was canceled during this contract. The cost for Other Working Group Activities totaled \$0.00. The cost of Indirect Cost totaled \$535.00 for

reimbursement to Margie Chalofsky for tax accountant hired for CRP accounting purposes and \$55.00 moved from supplies to indirect cost. Total: \$3,935.90.

June 2023 - The total cost for personnel salaries: \$3,333.33 which include fringe benefits. The cost for Website/Update and Maintenance totaled \$12.57. The cost for Other Working Group Activities totaled \$1042.00 and \$169.00 (Supplies overflow). Total: \$4556.90

A balance of \$7,424.42 remained at the end of this final quarter which we had to spend out: \$5,000 Additional Salary, \$1610.00 Gift cards to use for workgroup for the next contract year: \$381.00 Business cards for panel members, \$126.00 for stamps, \$46.06 for supplies and Constant Contact, \$150.00 Website Update (Reformation), \$45.00 and \$110.80 on other supplies and website.

Current grant year:

The budget for this grant is \$50,000 and payments have been received. Funds in the amount of \$37,192.65 were submitted on July 18,2023, and the second and final funds received for this period was March 29, 2024, in the amount of \$12,807.35. Fiscal accounting for the first quarter, second quarter and third quarter were reviewed and approved by the CRP Treasurer, and financial reports were sent to the CFSA Grant Monitor

For the first quarter of this reporting period (July – September) \$10,749.99 was used for personnel salaries, which includes fringe benefits. The cost of supplies was \$231.38. The cost for Website/Update and Maintenance totaled \$201.10. The total amount for the first quarter was \$11,182.47 with a balance of \$38,817.53.

For the second quarter of this reporting period (October – December) \$10,749.99 was used for personnel salaries, which includes fringe benefits. The cost of supplies was \$122.71. The cost for Website/Update and Maintenance totaled \$90.00. The cost of meetings and supplies was \$140.00. This was reimbursement for transportation to members who attended our CRP Meet and Greet on November 14th. Funds for the Meet and Greet were used from the previous fiscal year of unspent money in the form of gift cards. There was no other cost for this reporting period. The total amount for the second quarter was \$11,103.28 with a balance of \$27,714.25.

For the third quarter of this reporting period (January – March) \$10,749.99 was used for personnel salaries, which includes fringe benefits. The cost of supplies was \$177.71. We have one panel member attending the National CRP Conference May 20-22, 2024, and the cost to date is \$1058.13. This cost includes conference registration in the amount of \$395.00 and airflight transportation in the amount of 663.13. The hotel fee in the amount of \$582.00 excluding tax and/or additional fees will be paid at the end of her stay, May 22, 2024, and is not included in this report. The total amount for the third quarter was \$11,985.83 with a balance of \$15,728.42

For the fourth quarter of this reported period (April) \$3,583.33 was used for personnel salaries, which includes fringe benefits. The cost for supplies was \$15.07. The cost of \$45.00 for Constant Contact was taken out of Meeting and Retreat costs as there was a zero balance in Website and management. The total amount thus far for the fourth quarter is \$3,643.40

The total expenditures for the first, second, and third quarter and April 2024 of this grant is \$37,914.98 with a remaining balance of \$12,085.02.

III. Panel membership and recruitment

Currently, there are nine appointed CRP panel members, five from Mayoral appointment and four from Council appointment. There are (three) openings on each side, coming to a total of (fifteen) possible members. We maintain an official roster 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. Panel Leadership consists of:

- Chair- Pierrea Wallace
- Vice-Chair- Shana Bartley
- Treasurer- Patrick Foley

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.

Membership has remained stable since this facilitator started in July 2022. There are, however, changes in the pipeline. Patrick Foley is not going forward for reappointment, as he is planning to move out of the District in months to come. As a long-time and valuable member, however, he has committed to continue to participate with the working group he is currently a part of.

We have submitted four recommendations for new members to Christian Washington Special Counsel in the Office of Chairman Phil Mendelson. These would fill the three vacancies on the Council side as well as Patrick Foley's seat. When the Council completes the confirmation process, all vacancies on the Council side will be filled.

The four submitted names are:

- Carolyn Woods (CFSA Adoptive parent and Retired Social Worker)
- Whitney Miller (CFSA adoptive parent and Director of Human Resources)
- Andy Miller (CFSA Adoptive Parent and Out of School Time Programs Coordinator with DC Public Schools)
- Tyra Moore- Tyra is a social worker in private practice with many years of experience as a child welfare social worker.

Additionally, Shana Bartley and Elizabeth Mohler are due for reappointments from the Council side. A hearing was set in November 2023 but unfortunately Ms. Mohler and Ms. Bartley were not given enough notice and couldn't attend. We are still waiting for that hearing to be rescheduled.

The potential members in the pipeline will be attending panel and workgroup meetings in community member status until their confirmations are official.

Now that names have been submitted for the Council appointments we will begin to recruit for the three vacancies on the Mayoral side. The facilitator has been having conversations with current and past members about the disconnect between the high level of work and commitment required and the volunteer composition of the panel. From these conversations, we have

identified that we need to recruit some members who have a current working connection to the workgroup projects so that they may have more time to give, especially in the areas of research and data. We therefore will be looking for new members who might be able to fill this gap.

We have requested both MOTA and Council 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 we had during the previous process.

IV. Workgroups

The panel has three workgroups. They are:

Family Time: Family Visitation after CFSA involvement

This work group seeks to better understand CFSA's Family Time policies compared to those in other places. It also seeks to understand better how CFSA uses family time as a vehicle towards reunification and whether those efforts are helping keep District of Columbia families together. For the comparative analysis, they will look at other jurisdictions' family time policies and compare those policies to CFSA's Visitation Policy, reviewing various jurisdictions' decision models for increasing family time for children in out-of-home care. The Family Time Work Group will conduct a comprehensive case review involving approximately 200 samples, analyzing the evolution of family time throughout neglect cases and investigating potential correlations between family time, permanency goals, and the mitigation of neglect.

Initially, it was anticipated that the workgroup would be able to access CFSA's database directly to conduct the research, but CFSA's counsel later advised that the CRP would not be permitted to access the system but instead review specific files compiled by CFSA. On April 12, the Family Time Work Group had its second meeting with CFSA to confirm the parameters of the sample size, encompassing 187 children from cases spanning a 12-month period. At the conclusion of that meeting, CFSA shared that it

would follow up with the Workgroup once they identified a manner for organizing the case files and a plan for how they would be accessed and reviewed. Once the workgroup receives further instruction from CFSA, they will begin the case review at CFSA's headquarters.

A chart has been developed to facilitate the case file research, capturing essential data points such as the race and age of children and parents, family time allocation for each parent, current permanency goals, and reasons for the cases' involvement with the agency.

Panel members of this committee are:

- Dr. Wanda Thompson
- Pierrea Wallace

Youth Aging Out and Homelessness

The Youth Aging out (YAO) work group acknowledges that there are many issues facing older youth aging out of foster care, both nationally and in DC. The last report on older youth that was done by this panel in 2021 was focused upon preparing youth for independence and studied financial management programs and vocational preparation. Unfortunately, members of that workgroup felt like they put a lot of time into their report and were disappointed that CFSA did not engage them in timely or robust conversations about their recommendations, and therefore that the report didn't lead to systemic change.

The current work group has spent concentrated time discussing how to land on the "sweet spot" for their project that is both doable (with this small group of volunteers) as well as likely to be utilized by CFSA in a productive manner. It is with this hope of a project that will do more than sit on a shelf that this group has landed on looking at building a comprehensive approach to enhance homeless prevention efforts for youth transitioning out of foster care.

YAO plans to determine national best practices utilized by other jurisdictions to prevent homelessness among youth aging out of foster care and to

examine CFSA's approach to homeless prevention services for YAO as it relates to those best practices. They will focus their research on youth ages 17-21 and will compare the identification of the programs offered by CFSA (and other organizations as relevant) with the extent to which these programs are known by the older youth community being served as well as by their resource parents and community providers. Surveys for youth, resource parents and community providers are in the development stage.

YAO submitted its preliminary abstract to CFSA in March 2024 and is currently working on integrating their feedback into a final proposal. They are hoping to build on the recommendations from this meeting while simultaneously holding themselves to both the mandate/scope of the CRP as they see it and to ensure a project that is reasonable and "doable" in their current capacity. We hope to recruit more community members to help support the research of this group.

Panel members of this workgroup are:

- Theresa Gibson, Chair
- Mattie Cheek
- Shana Bartley

Community members:

- Carolyn Wood and Andy Miller (potential new members in the pipeline)
- Rick Bardach (former CRP member)

Prevention (Secondary)

The current focus of CFSA is to keep families together, with separations of children and families minimized. Although keeping families together is a very positive goal that the workgroup supports, In some cases, children who are being screened out from investigation may remain vulnerable to abuse and/or neglect that may or may not be addressed by services offered when cases are not opened.

The prevention workgroup plans to look at those situations in the triage process in which a call to the CFSA hotline has been made, but no case is

opened. They will study the data of where clusters of calls originate from (schools? hospitals? general public?) as well as times of the year when calls are most prevalent.

They will look to answer these questions:

1. Where are the hotline calls coming from?
2. What percentage of hotline calls reflect repeated calls of suspected abuse/neglect and is there a tipping point for calls that would automatically necessitate opening a case?
3. What constitutes a report being screened out?
4. What constitutes a report being screened in?
5. What happens to those families who are screened out entirely? What services are they offered and how does that connect to the Warm Line?

They will look at these data points:

1. Triage policy and procedures
2. Incoming call reports with their dispositions
 - type of calls
 - where the calls originate from
 - reasons/ stated criteria and categorizing for screening out
3. Data on repeat calls and relationship if any to triage determination
4. A list of resources available to families when “screened out
5. A list of Warmline services related to child protection and any gaps in such services determined so far

Based upon this data, the work group plans to conduct Interviews and/ or surveys with staff who make the determination of whether to open an investigation and/or removal to assess consistency of CFSA’s guidelines; with staff who provide families the resources needed to

keep the family out of the system; and with stakeholders from whom the largest cluster of calls originate.

The workgroup has had their initial meeting with CFSA which went very positively. They are in the process of integrating the recommendations from the meeting into a final proposal.

The Prevention panel workgroup members are:

- Elizabeth Mohler
- Dr. Meghan Schott
- Patrick Foley
- Emily Bloomfield

Community member is:

Whitney Miller (potential new member in pipeline)

This workgroup will be anticipating changes in its membership as both Patrick Foley and Dr. Meghan Schott plan to move out of the District in months to come. Although both have indicated interest in continuing on the workgroup as community members to the extent that they are able, it is clear that we will need to recruit more community members for this group. This will be a priority for the facilitator.

V. Meetings

Meetings have remained virtual. Last November we were able to host a successful in-person dinner with the purpose of bringing members together. We are hoping to be able to have another in the summer or fall. We also facilitate members getting to know each other in the virtual world, by including 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. Other than in May 2023, we have continued to meet quorum and have not had to cancel any meetings. Outside presentations this year have included:

- Updates from the Office of the Ombudsperson for Children
- CFSA presentations
 - 1) The Warm Line
 - 2) CFSA Public Dashboard
 - 3) CFSA Policy Development Process
 - 4) CFSA Child and Family Services Reviews

In May we are scheduled to have a presentation from the Policy team at Children’s Law Center about the POCKETT Act as well as about the Mayor’s budget for CFSA and the Office of the Ombudsperson.

VI. Relationship with CFSA

At this writing every workgroup has had their meeting with CFSA to present their abstracts and get feedback. We have been pleased that every meeting has gone very collaboratively and although we know there were some challenges in the past, members are feeling positively about their working relationships. We are aware that many of those challenges arose around the relationships of the workgroups regarding requests for data, so we are hopeful that the setting of the ground- work for collaboration from the beginning of each group’s project will have set a better path.

We are grateful for the partnership with our CFSA liaison, Roni Seabrook, who works very well with this facilitator and panel members and understands the need for the duality of the independence of the CRP with the need for collaboration with CFSA.

VII. Meetings with MOTA and Council

The facilitator remains in contact with our liaisons from both MOTA and the DC Council Chairman's office. We have three vacancies and one impending vacancy on the Council side (the vacancy anticipated by Patrick Foley's impending move). Christian Washington is our contact in Council Chairman Mendelson's office. It has been a positive point that he has been our constant contact since this facilitator began, unlike at MOTA where we are on our fourth liaison. We are hopeful that we will be able to move the delayed reappointments of two members forward soon as well as the new appointments of the four names submitted as new members (see section III on recruitment)

As stated, on the Mayor's side we have seen a lot of turn-over but are finally seeing some consistency through the current MOTA liaison, Tiera Williams. Ms. Williams has been checking in with us on the three vacancies on their side. We have identified skills and experiences we could use to build the panel's capacity and asked her to consider giving the panel more input on new members than the process allowed in the past. We are working on collaboratively building that reality.

VIII. Deliverables and Accomplishments

The facilitator team is very pleased with the progress being made by the panel members as exhibited by their workgroup choices. 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 work together to make the most positive impact they can on the lives of DC's children and families.

The initial adjustment period to the new facilitator team was accompanied by a “reset” period for members to review their goals, their interests and the District’s current landscape. Strategic conversations were held which led to the identification of topic areas which then were narrowed to land on doable projects for three workgroups. As stated in previous reports, we realized that we were taking on a lot by initiating three topic areas. The reason for this was the facilitator’s interest in keeping the group’s motivation high by encouraging each member to pick what they felt most excited to work on. However, for months we are realizing that in order to keep momentum going we do need to build the capacity of the group by additional panel and community members.

The panel has had many accomplishments this year. They include

- Workgroup abstracts submitted; meetings with CFSA held; final proposals and data requests in progress
- Pierrea Wallace confirmed as Panel Chair; Shana Bartley moved to Vice-Chair
- Stable membership except for members moving out of the District
- Four new members recruited
- New website
- Member business cards
- Member portal
- MOA with CFSA updated and completed
- Building of more positive relationship with CFSA
- Member Meet and Greet in person
- Member representation confirmed for National Conference in May
- Multiple presentations to inform members about DC programs, legislation, processes and updates.

IX. Challenges and Recommendations for Improvements

The previous 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.) This facilitator agrees with that stated challenge and also has the opinion that embedded in this challenge was the constant turn-over at MOTAs, as mentioned above and which is hopefully stabilizing. Newer members who have joined have also stated that it can be discouraging how long the appointment process takes once an application has been submitted. So far the Council liaison seems to be moving forward with the four new recruited members so we will have to keep eyes on how long it takes. We are, however, waiting on two very belated reappointments on that side.

One other significant challenge is that the volunteer nature of the group means that all our members have a lot of other things on their plates and work thus moves more slowly than we would like it to. The facilitator has had conversations about this with current and former members who have shared that in the past, it appeared that it was those members who were in related work in their "day jobs" that were most able to take leadership to move research and reports forward. It sounds like bringing on some new members whose current daily work is more integrated into this work could be a good recommendation and we will look into that possibility. It will also help when the group brings on its new members so that capacity starts to grow. Right now, the combination of the decision to go forward with three groups plus the small size of the panel plus the busy nature of all our members as well as CFSA staff makes progress in the groups slower than anticipated.

We are still working on the marketing strategy to better inform the community about the CRP and as of yet we have not had the member capacity to work on increasing our social media presence as planned. This will be a goal for the following year. We also have the need to find a new Treasurer since Patrick Foley plans to be moving from the District in these next month.

In closing this section, it is important to reiterate from past reports that this facilitator still faces challenges from 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, not individuals, 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. The most significant of these examples is that the District cannot provide a 990 specific to the facilitator's salary and instead provides one that inaccurately includes the entire grant funding in the accounting. Thus, the facilitator has to hire a private tax accountant to separate the expenditures so that she can pay taxes accurately.

The hurdles for independent contractors coupled with the significant limitation of qualifying/eligible organizations that could take on the CRP makes the future of finding future facilitators for DC's CRP very challenging when the time comes for this facilitator team to end their contract.

X. Summary and Next Steps

We are very pleased with the direction of the CRP at the time of the writing of this report. Current membership has stabilized, members are engaged, and as far as we know it is only those members who are moving out of the area who are planning to leave the panel (fingers crossed this continues!)

Workgroups are moving forward, new members have been recruited and submitted to the Council, and the working relationship with CFSA seems strong. The most important priority for this coming year is to support and build the capacity of the workgroups and the collaboration with CFSA so that projects can both stay on path and move forward on a bit of a faster track. It will be a priority to fill the vacant spots on the Mayoral side with new members who can help to build this capacity and to meet with Council and MOTA about the appointment and reappointment process. Another priority will be to build public awareness of the panel through a community forum, social media, and other marketing tools.

Submitted by

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