



**2026 Annual Progress and Services Report**  
(Update to the 2025-2029 Child and Family Services Plan)  
**Citizen Review Panels Annual Report**  
**FISCAL YEAR 2025**

**STATE OF ILLINOIS  
DEPARTMENT OF CHILDREN AND FAMILY SERVICES  
CITIZEN REVIEW PANELS REPORT  
STATE FISCAL YEAR 2025**

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## **THE CHILD ABUSE PREVENTION AND TREATMENT ACT CITIZEN REVIEW PANELS**

### **Introduction**

In 1974, The Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (CAPTA) was signed into law. The CAPTA federal legislation guides child protection and is elaborated in U.S. Code (42 U.S.C. 5101 et seq; 42 U.S.C. 5116 et. seq.). It was reauthorized with significant amendments and additions in 1978, 1984, 1988, 1992, 1996, 2003, and 2010. The Citizen Review Panels were first introduced in the CAPTA amendments of 1996, were further delineated in the Keeping Children and Families Safe Act of 2003 and were modified by some additions in the CAPTA Reauthorization Act of 2010, P.L. 111-320.

The Illinois Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) is the state agency designated to implement the provisions of CAPTA and meet federal law requirements. Currently within DCFS, the Office of Grant Management & Accountability administers many of the programs and funds under CAPTA, including the Citizen Review Panels.

### **Purpose**

Citizen Review Panels (CRPs) were established pursuant to Section 106 (c) of CAPTA. The function of each CRP is to examine the policies, procedures, and practices of state and local agencies to evaluate whether state and local child protection agencies are effectively discharging their child protection responsibilities. CRP duties are to evaluate:

- The Illinois State CAPTA Plan and the specific areas of the child protective system which are addressed therein;
- The state's compliance with federal child protection standards and assurances set forth in the CAPTA law;
- Any other criteria that the CRPs consider important to ensure the protection of children, including:
  - Review of the extent to which the state and local child protective services system is coordinated with the foster care and adoption programs; and
  - Review of child fatalities and near fatalities.

### **Development of Illinois Citizen Review Panels**

DCFS established CRPs to examine the policies and procedures of state and local child protective service agencies. Authorizing legislation for the Illinois CRPs amended the Illinois Children and Family Services Act (20 ILCS 505/5) effective June 1999. According to the provisions of CAPTA, the individual states may: 1) designate one or more existing entities to satisfy the citizen review requirements; and 2) appoint volunteer members who are broadly representative of the community, including members who have expertise in the prevention and treatment of child abuse and neglect.

In forming the panels, DCFS invited existing advisory committees to take on CRP activities in addition to their other interests and statutory responsibilities. Currently, there are three Illinois CRPs:

1. Child Death Review Team Executive Council (CDRT)
2. Children's Justice Task Force (CJTF)
3. Statewide Citizens' Committee on Child Abuse and Neglect (SCAN)

The current panels are comprised of a variety of members who have experience working with children and families. The SCAN Committee has members who represent professional organizations, child welfare agencies, volunteer associations, and concerned citizens. CJTF and CDRT Executive Council's memberships are inclusive of members from numerous disciplines including medicine, medical examiners and coroners, mental health, law, criminal justice, public health, education, social work, child abuse prevention, parent and child advocacy as result of previous foster care involvement.

The executive officers of each CRP, the CAPTA Project Director, the Supervisor of the Grant Management Unit, and the DCFS Associate Deputy Director of External Communications and Advisory Groups have come together to form the CRP Steering Committee, which meets to explore options for collaboration, communication and panel development. The CRP Steering Committee shares information, provides panel updates, and assesses the progress of the recommendations of the CRPs to the DCFS Director. The Steering Committee seeks participation from various divisions within the Department such as Office of Policy, Child Protection and the Division of Quality Assurance, to gain knowledge and real time information regarding current policies and practices guiding child welfare and child protection.

#### **Citizen Review Panels' Report Process**

According to Section 106 of CAPTA, each CRP shall prepare and make available to the State and the public, on an annual basis, a report containing a summary of the activities of the CRP and recommendations to improve the child protection services system at the state and local levels. Not later than six months following the submission of CRP recommendations to the DCFS Director, the Director shall provide a written response to the recommendations, indicating whether or not or how the State will incorporate the recommendations of each CRP to make measurable progress in improving the State and local child protection system.

For purposes of this report, the CRP meeting schedules, documents and activities are based upon the state fiscal year, which runs from July 1 through June 30. This report period is July 1, 2024 through June 30, 2025.

#### **Collaboration and Strategic Planning Implementation**

The CRPs are three of many advisory boards, committees and councils that have been given charge of making recommendations to DCFS to aid in systematic practice improvement. To help eliminate silo work efforts, improve and increase communication and collaboration across all the various entities, DCFS has continued with monthly Stakeholder Collaborative Update meetings.

The Stakeholder Collaborative's primary objectives are to:

- improve communication and increase awareness regarding initiatives across divisions

- achieve consistent messaging of efforts and improve communication amongst stakeholder groups.
- decrease duplication of efforts through strategic planning and communication
- ensure stakeholders are engaged in collaboration on recommendations for system and/or practice changes
- ensure stakeholders are informed timely of recommendation dispositions and track and archive responses to recommendations to keep a historical record for reference.

The CAPTA Project Director, DCFS liaisons to the CRPs, and officers of the CRPs represent the CRPs in monthly Stakeholder Collaborative meetings. The overall objective of the Stakeholder Collaborative is to support DCFS efforts to achieve data-driven decision-making and to improve the agency's continuous quality improvement and strategic planning through intentional solicitation of internal and external stakeholder input.

**RESPONSE FROM THE ILLINOIS DEPARTMENT OF CHILDREN AND FAMILY SERVICES  
TO THE ILLINOIS CITIZEN REVIEW PANELS**

**Children's Justice Task Force  
2024 Recommendations and Director's Responses**

The Children's Justice Task Force (CJTF) has established an operating plan for the upcoming plan year, and it has been provided in conjunction with the Three-Year Assessment Recommendations. The recommendations offered below are a part of the Three-Year Assessment which is a part of the Children's Justice Act (CJA) Report and Application.

**RECOMMENDATION 1:**

DCFS shall cooperate and collaborate with the CJTF to establish statewide standards for the consistent creation and use of multidisciplinary teams (MDTs) as is required by Illinois law.

**Rationale/Background:**

- The effective use of the MDT model has proven to be successful in combating child abuse and/or neglect. Yet too many Illinois counties do not have an MDT team that is effectively utilized. If we can augment the effectively utilized MDTs currently operating across Illinois, CJTF and DCFS will have accomplished a great and necessary goal.
- Statewide buy-in to the establishment and operation of MDTs with consistent standards and operational best practices will improve child abuse and neglect response services by DCFS and its stakeholders.
- CJTF Action Plan:
  - CJTF shall discuss detailed standards with the DCFS liaison on a quarterly basis and request a status report quarterly on whether those recommendations have been accepted or rejected.
  - CJTF will schedule a special working session with appropriate DCFS representatives to finalize the implementation of the statewide standards on or before the Task Force's May 2025 meeting.

**DCFS RESPONSE:** The DCFS Department of Child Protection (DCP) is committed to having a staff member attend CJTF meetings to further collaborate on establishing statewide standards for consistent creation and use of MDTs.

**RECOMMENDATION 2:**

DCFS shall support and facilitate the integration of child protection data with a case management system that allows child advocacy centers access to real time data.

**Rationale/Background:**

- This will provide essential streamlining of child abuse cases.
- Integration will significantly improve support for child abuse victims by enhancing coordination, communication, and the quality of service provided by Illinois child advocacy centers.
- The result will be improved services to children and their families in navigating the journey through complex abuse cases and ensuring their safety.
- DCFS and its stakeholders need a digital central nervous system wherein data can be assessed quickly and effectively. This recommendation will improve child protection service operations.
- **CJTF Action Plan:**
  - The representations made at the Task Force's February 2024 meeting demonstrate that DCFS is already actively implementing a new case management system. The key will be to creating appropriate access for child advocacy centers.
  - CJTF requests a quarterly update from DCFS on the status of the new case management system and a response on whether DCFS will agree to Illinois child advocacy centers having access to the same and to what extent that access shall be allowed on or before the Task Force's February 2025 meeting.

**DCFS RESPONSE: A separate Power BI section can be created to pull the requested information at will. This reporting system keeps client information confidential and enables the user to work with only the raw data.**

**DCFS generates annual reports of this nature. Additionally, there is a system in place for field supervisors to generate this type of report. These systems will be integrated through IllinoisConnect. DCFS will continue to provide updates to the CJTF on progress and milestones as it relates to IllinoisConnect.**

**RECOMMENDATION 3:**

DCFS shall create a practical and effective policy and protocol that addresses the gap between sexual abuse and severe physical abuse cases referred to local child advocacy centers by DCFS and the number of children eligible for services under the Illinois Abused and Neglected Child Reporting Act, 325 ILCS 5/1.

**Rationale/Background:**

- This recommendation is essential to DCFS improving its performance under the Illinois Abused and Neglected Child Reporting Act.
- CJTF Action Plan:

- CJTF requests a response from DCFS on this recommendation on or before the Task Force's August 2024 meeting.
- Further dates and action on this recommendation will be addressed after receiving DCFS's response.

**DCFS RESPONSE: The criteria for eligible cases, and ultimately the number of cases eligible, will be built into the new IllinoisConnect case management system to generate a report. However, it should be noted that referrals are also made to providers other than the Child Advocacy Centers according to the specific needs of children and their families. This is based on the caseworker's engagement with the family and any pertinent orders by the court.**

#### **RECOMMENDATION 4:**

DCFS shall develop and disseminate a statewide best practice procedure for reporting 'information only reports' to both child advocacy centers and law enforcement agencies.

#### **Rationale/Background:**

- This practice is integral to safeguard a comprehensive response by streamlining communication and enhancing confidentiality.
- All 'information only referrals' that meet the criteria for an MDT response should be reported to the appropriate law enforcement agency and child advocacy center.
- This approach will enhance accountability and provide a safety net against human error by drastically reducing child abuse reports that go without investigation.
- CJTF is making this recommendation to establish the safety net and protect against human error. Without this safety net, too many cases will continue to be overlooked and unattended.
- CJTF Action Plan:
  - CJTF requests a response from DCFS on this recommendation on or before the Task Force's August 2024 meeting.
  - CJTF shall include in every quarterly agenda a discussion on the status of implementation of this recommendation until it is operational.

**DCFS RESPONSE: A separate Power BMI section can be created to pull the requested information at will. This reporting system can keep client information confidential and work on raw frequencies alone.**

- This function can be used to generate reports for review on a quarterly basis by the DCFS liaison and Child Advocacy Centers.
- Confidentiality must be considered and referred by DCFS legal before sharing and proposing dual reporting system to the Child Advocacy Centers.

**DCFS generates annual reports of this nature. There is currently a system in place for field supervisors to generate this type of report. These systems should be integrated through Illinois Connect.**



**RECOMMENDATION 5:**

DCFS shall require MDT training for all employees responsible for child abuse investigations that emphasizes the imperative of a comprehensive approach to child protection through the MDT model.

**Rationale/Background:**

- The training should be facilitated by Illinois child advocacy centers.
- This training should stress inclusivity and accessibility to all children regardless of their ability to participate in forensic interviews.
- The training should advocate a child-centric approach and promote holistic care that extends beyond investigative priorities while encompassing medical, therapeutic, and social services.
- There is a lack of consistent training and functioning of MDTs across Illinois. Without the required standards of training demanded by DCFS for its employees, DCFS will not meet the recommendations that have been presented previously without satisfactory progress.
- CJTF Action Plan:
  - CJTF requests a quarterly update on DCFS' progress on implementing this recommendation until it is operational.
  - The operation of this recommendation shall be annually reviewed by CJTF.
- CJTF requests a meeting with DCFS to discuss the budget, its allocation, and the CJTF autonomy on the same.

**DCFS RESPONSE: DCFS is committed to our long-standing relationship with the Children's Advocacy Center of Illinois (CACI) to continue discussions on developing trainings. DCFS will collaborate with CJTF and update them on progress.**

**RECOMMENDATION 6:**

DCFS shall comply with all recommendations made by the 2022 Illinois Inspector General's report.

**Rationale/Background:**

1. In 2019, the Chapin Hall Research Center at the University of Chicago conducted a six (6) week review of an embattled DCFS Intact services division in response to the Illinois Governor's order for independent review. The research team applied an MDT systems approach, grounded in safety science, to reviewing critical incidents among families receiving intact services. The review used four approaches to understanding the systemic factors contributing to these incidents: (1) analysis of contributing factors in a review of Child Death and Serious Injury Investigation (DSII) reports produced by the Illinois Office of the Inspector General (OIG); (2) systems analysis of three recent child death cases; (3) document reviews of policies, transmittals, protocols, forms, and evaluations concerning Intact; and (4) stakeholder interviews with administrators, leaders, providers, monitors, and advocates. See Weinger, Dana; Stiehl, Mike; Cull, Michael; Lindsey, Tiffany; Farrell, Amber,

**“Systemic Challenges at Illinois DCFS Contribute to Oversight Lapses in Child Fatality Cases”** (2019), [www.chapinhall.org/research/dcfs-child-fatality-cases/](http://www.chapinhall.org/research/dcfs-child-fatality-cases/).

- The 2019 Chapin Hall report noted that nationally, 1,750 children died of abuse or neglect in 2016, a 7.4% increase over the 2012 rate of child maltreatment deaths. The national rate of death due to child maltreatment was 2.36 among 100,000 children in the population in 2016. In Illinois, this rate was 2.16 per 100,000.
  - The number of child maltreatment deaths in Illinois has decreased every year since 2014, while the number of child abuse or neglect victims has increased. Over the last five years, Intact cases represented 15% of the 41 deaths included in the OIG’s Death and Serious Injury Investigations.
  - Chapin Hall identified six priorities for improvement including: avoidance of removals, supervisory misalignment, ineffective checks and balances, role ambiguity, information gaps, and protocols for closing high risk cases.
    - Chapin Hall generated nine recommendations to address these and other issues:
    - Develop and refine a protocol for closing Intact cases.
    - Clarify goals and expectations across staff roles.
    - Utilize evidence-based approaches to preventive case work.
    - Improve the quality of supervision.
    - Adjust the preventive service array to meet the needs of the population.
    - Restructure preventive services, including Intact.
    - Work with Courts and State’s Attorneys to refine criteria for removal in complex and chronic family cases.
- Redesign assessment and intake processes; and
- Direct attention to cases at greatest risk of severe harm.
- In response to the research team’s findings, the Illinois Governor ordered a review of 1,100 cases to ensure that proper steps were taken.
- In addition, the Governor pledged to create a “crisis intervention team” to immediately intervene when a child has died to review and recommend changes to prevent future deaths.
  - In 2021, the University of Illinois Children and Family Research Center (School of Social Work) prepared a report entitled, “Conditions of Children in or at Risk of Foster Care in Illinois.
  - In 2023, the Illinois Auditor General released its 2022 Inspector General’s Report on DCFS for the previous two (2) years.
    - The Auditor General documented that DCFS did not comply with several sections of the Abused and Neglected Children Reporting Act from July 2020 to June 2022.
    - The list of missteps by DCFS in the Auditor General’s report demonstrates an increase from the prior two (2) year report. Many of these issues go back twenty-five (25) years.
    - DCFS accepted the recommendations.
  - CJTF Action Plan:

- CJTF is requesting a quarterly update from DCFS on the progress of DCFS' handling of implementing the recommendations from the 2022 Illinois Inspector General's Report. [2022 Annual Report \(pdf\)](#)
- CJTF will offer a grade of satisfactory or unsatisfactory with respect to DCFS' progress on this matter with accompanying comments and notes as appropriate.
- Explore the creation of a Statewide best practice for the expedient response to nontraditional child abuse cases including, but not limited to human trafficking, missing children, and child maltreatment.
- CJTF Action Plan
  - CJTF requests an initial response from DCFS regarding this recommendation on or before the Task Force's August 2024 meeting.
  - CJTF will continue to monitor the progress of this recommendation by requesting quarterly updates.

**DCFS RESPONSE: DCFS is committed to engaging with CJTF and communicating important updates in compliance with the OIG report.**

#### **CHILD DEATH REVIEW TEAMS EXECUTIVE COUNCIL 2024 Recommendations and Director's Responses**

See report in the **Office of the Inspector General – Illinois Department of Children and Family Services Annual Report to the Governor & the General Assembly** [oig-annual-report-2024.pdf](#).

#### **STATEWIDE CITIZENS' COMMITTEE ON CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT 2024 Recommendations and Director's Responses**

##### **RECOMMENDATION 1 – FAMILY FIRST**

SCAN recommends that DCFS use the term "Family Support Plan" or "Family Care Plan" instead of "Plan of Safe Care" because of the potential associated stigma and increased involvement of child welfare agencies in families' lives.

SCAN further recommends that DCFS regularly communicate Family First's progress, challenges, and opportunities to DCFS' Boards, Committees, and the community at large is essential. (i.e., sharing the Family First Newsletters).

**Rationale/Background:** The plan should be developed in collaboration with new mothers, fathers, and parents to ensure that they have access to critical services like substance use disorder treatment, mental healthcare, and other medical services. This plan should also consider how access to needed community resources and services can occur when they are not located in the parent or family's lived community.

**DCFS RESPONSE: DCFS fully supports efforts to reduce the stigma of child welfare system involvement and of substance misuse and recognizes that language is an important piece of that effort. In the past year, DCFS has shifted to primarily using the term "Family Care Plan" in**

public and internal communications and messaging. DCFS is obligated to use the term “Plan of Safe Care” in all federal reporting, including the annual APSR, CAPTA and CFSP reports, as that is the federal language. Due to the use of “Plan of Safe Care” in the federal legislation and continued use of this term by some states and organizations, DCFS may occasionally use this term in some communications and settings to facilitate discussion or avoid confusion.

The Family Care Plan form and process are being developed with active involvement of individuals with lived experience in substance use, recovery and child welfare system involvement. DCFS is always interested in onboarding additional individuals with lived experience who are interested in contributing to the work. Lived experience experts are compensated for their time. The DCFS workgroup has also actively reached out to community organizations that provide or support direct care services for feedback and advice.

Referrals to services will be a critical component of Family Care Plans. DCFS is collaborating with DHS – SUPR and IDPH to identify and address resource deserts around the state that are lacking in substance use treatment services for pregnant/parenting individuals. Access to existing resources and increasing resources in underserved areas are core goals of the effort.

DCFS publishes the quarterly Family First Newsletter on its website, <https://dcfs.illinois.gov/about-us/ffpsa.html> for public access. This newsletter reports on implementation data, successes, challenges, and opportunities.

## **RECOMMENDATION 2 – HOME VISITATION**

SCAN recommends that DCFS regularly assess community needs and gaps to guide increased funding of home-visiting programs.

**Rationale/Background:** Illinois has a solid and supportive evidence-based statewide Home Visiting system. These programs have significantly improved the lives of expectant mothers and new families in Illinois. Essential services are available to families at risk for poor health, education, economic, and social outcomes.

SCAN applauds this invaluable program and recommends that the Department continue collaborating with stakeholders to ensure more Home-visiting programs are accessible to moms and families in Illinois.

**DCFS RESPONSE:** In Illinois, home visiting services and supports are primarily offered and funded by other state agencies (ISBE and DHS). While DCFS facilitates access to these services for families involved with the child welfare system, the capacity to directly provide home visiting services through DCFS is extremely limited. In contrast, ISBE and DHS offer home visiting programs that reach a significantly larger number of families across the state.

DCFS collaborates closely with the Department of Human Services’ (DHS) Bureau of Home Visiting and Illinois State Board of Educations (ISBE’s) Home Visiting programs through the Erikson Institute DCFS Early Childhood Project. This partnership ensures that all DCFS involved

families with young children have access to home visiting services when needed. A comprehensive referral system and established procedures are in place to support these families in connecting with appropriate services.

DCFS will continue to actively engage with ISBE, DHS, the Erikson Institute, Illinois' new Early Childhood Agency, other community partners and individuals with lived experience to evaluate the existing needs assessment process and explore how DCFS data might inform where additional home visiting services are most needed.

### **RECOMMENDATION 3 – COURT SYSTEMS PROCESS**

SCAN recommends enhancing the DCFS Placement Clearance Process to reduce the risk of inappropriate placement and avoidable permanency placement delays.

**Rationale/Background:** SCAN requests that DCFS require Child Protective Services to (1) Continue to research SACWIS for indicated reports of potential placements that pass "placement clearance" and (2) collaborate to improve the timely data sharing of indicated report information to the State and the Guardian ad Litem before or during the temporary custody hearing.

If Child Protective Service, the Prosecutor, and the Guardian ad Litem had access to the same information, the Court could act as it intended:

- In the child's best interest.
- Ensure checks and balances of administrative decisions.
- Reduce some cases of Pre-trial hearing extensions to acquire needed placement information.

**DCFS RESPONSE:** In the event that placement clearance is *conditionally* provided, prior to the shelter care hearing, DCFS is already aware of indicated reports related to the foster parents and would have considered them or given waivers if needed at the time of placement. Child Abuse and Neglect Tracking System (CANTS) is reviewed, then placement clearance granted, whether through the DCFS placement clearance desk or another waiver process such as a Director's Waiver.

DCFS has the authority to make placement decisions; courts, Guardian Ad Litem (GALs) and Assistant States Attorney (ASA) do not have such authority. DCFS is not permitted to release a foster parent's confidential information to anyone without the foster parent's consent. If safety concerns arise, the court has authority to determine whether a current or planned placement is necessary and appropriate. The parties in the proceedings would need to follow applicable statutes with seeking to obtain confidential information from DCFS.

### **RECOMMENDATION 4 – STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT COMMUNICATION**

SCAN recommends that DCFS enhance its health and well-being outreach and engagement with local communities and the media.

SCAN further recommends that DCFS improve stakeholder engagement by developing separate information-communications tracks for families/parents, youth, and Service Providers.

**Rationale/Background:** Recommended enhancements to provide a better understanding of the meaningful work being done include:

- **Sharing Innovation in Action:** Child protection has had two critical mandates over the years: safety and permanency for children. Recently, there has been a greater emphasis on child health and well-being. Safety and permanency are well-defined and easily measured, but child health and well-being are more complex and challenging to define and evaluate. Invest time to craft messages around child health and well-being.
- **Building Support:** Expand reach within communities because everyone who understands what DCFS does can become an advocate (e.g., health and well-being stakeholders, peer networks, and community-based organizations).
- **Changing Perceptions:** Develop creative health and well-being material for all media (i.e., social media, billboards, and community resource fairs.)
- **Improving Partnerships:** Create a digital toolkit with child welfare partners, including those with lived experience, to help families, parents, and youth navigate the child welfare system. This toolkit will offer comprehensive child welfare resources and guidance in one location.

**DCFS RESPONSE:** A greater emphasis has recently been placed on engaging our families, youth, and those with lived experience. DCFS is also working on developing and promoting communication tools for youth in care and caregivers.

DCFS plans to expand outreach and engagement efforts to enhance understanding of DCFS' work within diverse communities, increasing public awareness and advocacy for child welfare services. DCFS will leverage existing partnerships by engaging advisory groups and local organizations to help organize and host informational sessions and community forums, including adapting existing DCFS materials into community friendly formats for distribution through partner organizations, churches, schools, etc. DCFS is committed to partnering with our advisory groups, child welfare partners and specifically those with lived experience to develop informational materials and coordinate community outreach.

DCFS will continue to utilize digital platforms to push information out to the public. DCFS welcomes any ideas for social media/digital content creation. The DCFS Office of Communications is receptive of ideas from our advisory groups and looks forward to future collaboration.

DCFS is committed to continuing our Partnership for Progress, formerly the Joint Stakeholder meetings, consisting of staff, Child Welfare Contributing Agencies, youth in care, foster parents, adoptive parents, those with lived experience and our advisory group members.

## **RECOMMENDATION 5 – MONITORING AND COMPLIANCE RECOMMENDATION**

**SCAN suggests a collaborative effort between required partners, DCFS and the Illinois Department of Human Services (DHS), to improve childcare program compliance with the Emergency Preparedness and Response Manual.**

**Rationale/Background:** The Emergency Preparedness and Response Manual ensures that a childcare and education program center or home is safe before, during and after an emergency or disaster. It guides staff in responding quickly and appropriately to their program center or home emergencies. DCFS Licensing Representatives have found that providers need to complete the required Manual as stated in both DCFS Licensing regulations and the DHS Preparedness Plan. DCFS Licensing and DHS mandate that childcare and education providers have a written plan for emergencies or disasters.

**DCFS RESPONSE: This collaboration has already taken place. DCFS has worked extensively with DHS and other partners and the applicable rules have been reviewed and updated accordingly and will be posted for Proposed Policy Review.**

SCAN also requests the following additions to the DCFS Sunshine Report Website. These three steps improve compliance monitoring and transparency. Each step is critical in establishing accountability and building trust with families and community partners.

- Current Emergency Preparedness and Response Manual Status.

**DCFS RESPONSE: At this time, DCFS cannot agree to this as the system would need to be recoded to account for only a status of Emergency Preparedness and Response Manual. The day care licensing representative's site visit covers all requirements as well as the items that licensing is still awaiting to be included in the rules that are awaiting public posting and approval.**

- Emergency Preparedness and Response Manual Violations. All violations and corrective action approval dates shall be listed.

**DCFS RESPONSE: DCFS cannot agree to this as this would require an overhaul of the system/recoding which we are not at liberty to do. At this time the website does reflect corrective Visit Date, Citation, Visit Address, Actions Taken, Status, Corrective Plan- Begin, End & Failed, Protective Plan Begin, End, Failed & weight of violation.**

- A DCFS Licensing Representative will update the Emergency Preparedness and Response Manual Status.

**DCFS RESPONSE: DCFS licensing staff do not have the ability to update the system however during inspection, compliance with rules are reviewed and reflected accordingly.**

## **FY25 REPORT CHILDREN'S JUSTICE TASK FORCE**

**CJTF** is a multidisciplinary, legislatively mandated advisory group that makes recommendations to Illinois DCFS for improving the investigative, administrative, and judicial handling of child abuse cases, particularly cases of child sexual abuse/exploitation and cases involving a combination of jurisdictions. The Task Force was organized in 1989 according to CAPTA guidelines, and it became one of the Illinois CRPs in 1999. Recommendations from this panel are focused on reducing child trauma, enhancing the effectiveness of judicial and administrative actions in child abuse cases, and reforming state laws and regulations for child protection and child welfare while ensuring fairness to all affected persons.

CJTF members represent professionals in the fields of child protection, law enforcement, medical and mental health, attorneys for the prosecution and defense, criminal and civil court judges, education, children with disabilities, child advocates, and parent advocates. The Task Force members are appointed by DCFS to staggered four-year terms. The Task Force meets quarterly at various locations throughout the state for general meetings and between quarterly meetings the subcommittees meet to bring reports back to the body. Since the COVID pandemic has subsided, virtual meetings have returned to face-to-face meetings.

Information on the Task Force is available to the public on the DCFS website: [Children's Justice Task Force](#)

### **FY25 Quarterly Meeting Dates**

Q1: 08/19/24

Q2: 11/18/24

Q3: 02/24/25

Q4: 05/19/25

### **New CJTF Members**

The CJTF continues to expand its reach in Illinois by accepting individuals who specialize in Child Welfare Services. New to the Task Force this year:

#### **Bunn, Courtney (MSW, LCSW)**

Human Trafficking Therapist  
Chicago Children's Advocacy Center

#### **Burns, Michael**

MDT Coordinator  
Children's Advocacy Centers of Illinois

#### **Clayborne, Amber P.**

Founder/Exec. Director  
Kerengende Foundation



**Fahrenkamp, David M.**

Managing Attorney

Law Office of David M. Fahrenkamp

**Matsen, Lisa**

IL Business Line Leader

GAST Manufacturing

**CRP Annual Meeting**

The annual National Citizen Review Panel Conference brings together a diverse group of stakeholders from across the nation to share child welfare best practices and to engage in solution focused discussions to meet Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act mandates. Following the COVID hiatus, the annual meeting has become a biannual meeting – there was no meeting this year.

**Grantees Annual Meeting**

The 2025 Children’s Justice Act Grantees and State Liaison Officers Annual Meeting was cancelled by the White House Administration.

This meeting provides information on Federal updates that impact programming, best practices and procedures, guidance on existing program requirements, and, most importantly, engagement in peer learning opportunities.

**Special Guest Director Heidi Mueller**

The DCFS Director joined the November 18, 2024 meeting and spoke to the CJTF. Director Mueller articulated the vision for DCFS: ***"All children can grow and thrive in a family environment."*** She indicated that the advisory councils of DCFS should be focused on identifying and communicating core values to guide DCFS operations.

Director Mueller addressed questions posed by Task Force members, providing clarity and further insights into DCFS’s strategies and future plans.

**Current/Ongoing Projects for the Upcoming Plan Year**

- The Task Force welcomes the consultative and assessment skills and subject-matter expertise to be offered by Dr. Aram Perry. Dr. Perry is the DCFS Deputy Directory of Child Protection, and he will be attending Task Force meetings.
- The Task Force plans to create additional subcommittees to address areas of need, opportunities, and new ideas and will establish those committees by the FY26 Q1 meeting.
- The Task Force will review and analyze the impact of the Illinois KIND Act upon DCFS operations.
- The Task Force intends to review and analyze the impact of DCFS operational changes regarding investigation scope, time standards, and identifying an allegation as

“unfounded” when a DCFS investigator is unavailable to contact the child or child’s family following a hotline complaint.

- The Task Force will discuss and analyze, through a SWOT<sup>1</sup> analysis, a future recommendation that DCFS implement an investigative operational procedure wherein investigators are required to contact local law enforcement to coordinate investigative strategy on complaints prior to contacting suspects of abuse.
- The Task Force would like to offer quarterly suggestions for implementation to improve monitoring the efforts statewide to combat Human Trafficking.

## **FY25 REPORT CHILD DEATH REVIEW TEAMS EXECUTIVE COUNCIL**

Illinois established multidisciplinary and multi-agency child death review teams throughout the state with the Illinois Child Death Review Team Act (P.A. 88-614), which was signed into law on September 7, 1994. The Child Death Review Team Act has been amended several times since 1994 including August 2001, June and August 2008, August 2009, June and July 2010 and November 2018. The primary goals of the Child Death Review Team (CDRT) are to:

- Review the circumstances of child fatalities in order to gain a better understanding of their causes; and,
- Recommend changes in practice and policy that will prevent future injuries and deaths.

The Child Death Review Team Executive Council is the coordinating and oversight body for the child death review teams’ activities in Illinois.

Pursuant to the Act, child death review teams are to be made up of at least one member from the following disciplines:

- Pediatrician or other physician knowledgeable about child abuse and neglect;
- Representative of the DCFS;
- State’s Attorney or State’s Attorney’s representative;
- Representative of a local law enforcement agency;
- Psychologist or psychiatrist;
- Representative of a local health department;
- Representative of a school district or other education or childcare interests;
- Coroner or forensic pathologist;
- Representative of a child welfare agency or child advocacy organization;
- Representative of a local hospital, trauma center, or provider of emergency medical services; and
- Representative of the Illinois State Police.

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<sup>1</sup> Strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats

Each child death review team elects a chairperson and vice chairperson to represent the team on the CDRT Executive Council. The CDRT Executive Council includes these 18 members and the Inspector General of DCFS as an Ex-Officio member for a total of nineteen members.

The CDRT Executive Council operates according to the following objectives:

- To serve as the voice of child death review teams in Illinois;
- To oversee the regional teams in order to ensure that the teams' work is coordinated and in compliance with the statutes and operating protocol and best practices;
- To ensure that the data, results, findings, and recommendations of the teams are adequately used to make changes in policies, procedures, and statutes to protect children in a timely manner;
- To collaborate with the General Assembly, DCFS, and others to develop legislation needed to prevent child fatalities and to protect children;
- To ensure that the review process for the regional teams is standardized in order to convey data, findings, and recommendations in a usable format;
- To serve as a link with CDRT's throughout the country and participate in the National Child Death Review Team activities;
- To develop an annual statewide training symposium to update knowledge and skills of CDRT members and promote the exchange of information between teams;
- To provide the teams with the most current information and practices concerning child death review and related topics; and
- To perform any other functions necessary to enhance the capability of CDRT to reduce and prevent child injuries and fatalities.

Information on the CDRTs is available to the public on the DCFS website: [Child Death Review Team](#)

### **FY25 Meeting Schedule**

Each Death Review Team meets monthly or bi-monthly. Additionally, the Executive Council meets with the DCFS Director on the 1<sup>st</sup> Thursday of even months:

<b>TEAM</b>	<b>DAY OF MONTH</b>	<b>TIME</b>
Aurora	4 <sup>th</sup> Friday	10am
Champaign	4 <sup>th</sup> Tuesday	1:30pm
Cook A	3 <sup>rd</sup> Tuesday	12:30pm
Cook B	3 <sup>rd</sup> Wednesday	12:30pm
ESL	4 <sup>th</sup> Wednesday	12:30pm
Peoria	4 <sup>th</sup> Thursday (odd months)	10am
Marion	2 <sup>nd</sup> Wednesday (even months)	1:30pm
Rockford	1 <sup>st</sup> Tuesday (even months)	1pm
Springfield	1 <sup>st</sup> Tuesday (odd months)	9am
Executive Council	3 <sup>rd</sup> Friday	10am
Dir/Exec Council	1 <sup>st</sup> Thursday (even months)	1:00pm

**Focus Areas of Interest:** The following areas are being addressed in greater depth: Safe Sleep, Unfounded Reports, Administrative Subpoenas and expansion of the Child Death Investigation Task Force.

**Annual Symposium Training:** The Illinois Child Death Review Teams Executive Council and the DCFS host a symposium every year for all team members. The Symposium updates the knowledge and the skills of all members.

## **FY25 REPORT**

### **STATEWIDE CITIZENS' COMMITTEE ON CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT**

SCAN “is created with the object of advising and consulting with the Director of the department on setting priorities for the administration of child abuse prevention, shelter and service programs in Illinois.” SCAN is a legislative statutory advisory group established under the Abuse and Neglect Child Reporting Act (ANCRA, 325 ILCS 5/11.7). SCAN advises the Department on child abuse and neglect prevention services that promote the health, safety, and well-being of the children throughout the state. The SCAN members are approved by the Director for three-year terms. SCAN member’s experience and subject-matter expertise varies across numerous disciplines impacting child welfare including law, social work, mental health, law enforcement, education, criminal and juvenile court, family assessments, well-being of children and families. SCAN is charged to submit recommendations to ensure the Department is operating as the statute requires. The SCAN committee continues to meet bi-monthly via videoconferences and teleconference.

Information on SCAN is available to the public on the DCFS website: [Statewide Citizens Committee on Abuse/Neglect](#)

#### **FY25 Meeting Dates**

08/21/24  
10/16/24 (transition – no meeting held)  
12/18/24 (transition – no meeting held)  
2/19/25 (meeting commenced with new executive leadership)  
4/16/25  
6/18/25

The fiscal year has been one of transition and the end result has been a new executive board. SCAN resumed regular meeting dates in 2025 and will be voting in June to approve the FY25 recommendations to the Director referenced in this report.

#### **New SCAN Members**

**Baber, Suzanne**

Director of Program Operations

Teen Parent Connection

**Bernard, Mandy - Chair**

Executive Director  
Spero Family Services

**Cade, Dasheka**

CEO  
MooreLuv LLC

**Kendal, Amy – Vice-Chair**

Admin., Community Based Family Service  
Maryville Academy

**Ragan, Megan - Secretary**

Executive Director  
Southern IL Resource and Advocacy Center

**The Federal Child & Family Services Review (CFSR4)**

The Chair and Liaison attended the Kickoff on April 10, 2025. SCAN will become a partner to the CFSR team, providing feedback and input and recommendations based upon the experiences of the SCAN members. CFSR:

- The Children’s Bureau is required to evaluate every state periodically – Illinois is currently prepared for Round 4, which officially launched 10/1/25
- The meeting (1) provided IL child welfare stakeholders with an overview of the CFSR Round 4 phases; (2) explored current data and underlying systemic barriers; (3) reviewed Illinois’ timeline for completing CFSR Round 4 phases; and (4) identified partners who will participate in various teams needed to complete CFSR phases
- The CFSR (1) aligns with and support the mission and vision of DCFS; (2) helps identify strengths and weaknesses in child welfare systems; (3) encourages continuous improvement in services for children and families; (4) aligns state practices with federal standards and best practices; and (5) ensures that children in the child welfare system are receiving the services they need to thrive.

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**2025 RECOMMENDATIONS**

This document shall serve as CJTF 2025/2026 operating year action plan ("action plan"). The action plan is written with the mandate and spirit to implement the Task Force's 2024 Three Year Assessment Recommendations while holding itself and DCFS accountable for those recommendations.

**RECOMMENDATION #1:** DCFS should propose and provide the Illinois Judiciary with training by outside partners on topics relevant to child abuse, neglect, and dependency that is trauma informed and incorporates the "child first" model. This training shall include but not be limited to the biannual Judicial Education Conference ("EdCon").

- The Illinois Judiciary will greatly benefit from a modified training of the "child first" model to introduce and educate Illinois Judges of this nationally recognized protocol for interviewing children and investigating child abuse and neglect.
- Consequently, Illinois children will be better served.
- **CJTF ACTION PLAN:**
  - The Task Force plans to propose a program to the Illinois Judicial Education Division of the Administrative Office of the Illinois Courts.

**RECOMMENDATION #2 (Recommendation #3 of the CJA 3-Year Assessment):** DCFS should support and facilitate the integration of child protection data with a case management system that allows child advocacy centers to access real time data.

- This will provide essential streamlining of child abuse cases.

- Integration will significantly improve support for child abuse victims by enhancing coordination, communication, and the quality of service provided by Illinois child advocacy centers.
- The result will be improved services to children and their families in navigating the journey through complex abuse cases and ensuring their safety.
- DCFS and its stakeholders need a central data access system wherein data can be assessed quickly and effectively. The Task Force knows this recommendation will improve child protection service operations.
- CJTF ACTION PLAN:
  - DCFS employees presented at the Task Force’s February 2024 meeting demonstrating that DCFS is already actively implementing a new case management system. The key will be to create appropriate access for child advocacy centers.
  - The Task Force will continue to inquire about the development of the new case management system and software. In addition, the Task Force plans to provide recommendations to be implemented in the case management system.

**RECOMMENDATION #3 (Recommendation #7 of the CJA 3-Year Assessment):** DCFS should develop and disseminate a statewide best practice procedure for reporting “information only reports” to both child advocacy centers and law enforcement agencies.

- This practice is integral to safeguard a comprehensive response by streamlining communication and enhancing confidentiality.
- All “information only referrals” that meet the criteria for a multidisciplinary response should be reported to the appropriate law enforcement agency and child advocacy center.
- This approach will enhance accountability and provide a safety net against human error by drastically reducing child abuse reports that go without investigation.
- The Task Force is making this recommendation to establish a safety net and protect against human error. Without this safety net, too many cases will continue to be overlooked and unattended.
- CJTF ACTION PLAN:
  - The Task Force plans to inquire with DCFS no less than biannually regarding progress on this recommendation.

**RECOMMENDATION #4 (Recommendation #8 of the CJA 3-Year Assessment):** DCFS should establish and support the creation of a central coordinator of multi-disciplinary teams throughout Illinois.

- This position should facilitate effective and efficient collaboration among Illinois multidisciplinary teams.
- The responsibilities of the position should include training multidisciplinary teams, policy development, monitoring investigation quality control, promote interagency cooperation, recommending resource allocation, and promote awareness for child advocacy and protection.

- The Task Force proposes that a central coordinator will provide an accountable position to monitor the operation and execution of child abuse and neglect multidisciplinary teams across the State. Without someone accountable and proactive in monitoring and assisting the operation of multidisciplinary teams, Illinois children will not receive sufficient services.
- **CJTF ACTION PLAN:**
  - The Task Force plans to engage with DCFS to explore if this recommendation is feasible.

**RECOMMENDATION #5 (Recommendation #9 of the CJA 3-Year Assessment):** DCFS should comply with all recommendations made by the 2022 Illinois Inspector General’s report.

- In 2019, the Chapin Hall Research Center at the University of Chicago conducted a six (6) week review of an embattled DCFS Intact services division in response to the Illinois Governor’s order for independent review. The research team applied a multidisciplinary systems approach, grounded in safety science, to reviewing critical incidents among families receiving intact services. The review used four approaches to understanding the systemic factors contributing to these incidents: (1) analysis of contributing factors in a review of Child Death and Serious Injury Investigation (DSII) reports produced by the Illinois Office of the Inspector General (OIG); (2) systems analysis of three recent child death cases; (3) document reviews of policies, transmittals, protocols, forms, and evaluations concerning Intact; and (4) stakeholder interviews with administrators, leaders, providers, monitors, and advocates. See Weinger, Dana; Stiehl, Mike; Cull, Michael; Lindsey, Tiffany; Farrell, Amber, “Systemic Challenges at Illinois DCFS Contribute to Oversight Lapses in Child Fatality Cases” (2019).
  - The 2019 Chapin Hall report noted that nationally, 1,750 children died of abuse or neglect in 2016, a 7.4% increase over the 2012 rate of child maltreatment deaths. The national rate of death due to child maltreatment was 2.36 among 100,000 children in the population in 2016. In Illinois, this rate was 2.16 per 100,000.
  - The number of child maltreatment deaths in Illinois has decreased every year since 2014, while the number of child abuse or neglect victims has increased. Over the last five years, Intact cases represented 15% of the 41 deaths included in the OIG’s Death and Serious Injury Investigations.
  - Chapin Hall identified six priorities for improvement including: avoidance of removals, supervisory misalignment, ineffective checks and balances, role ambiguity, information gaps, and protocols for closing high risk cases.
  - Chapin Hall generated nine recommendations to address these and other issues:
    - Develop and refine a protocol for closing Intact cases.
    - Clarify goals and expectations across staff roles.
    - Utilize evidence-based approaches to preventive case work.
    - Improve the quality of supervision.
    - Adjust the preventive service array to meet the needs of the population.
    - Restructure preventive services, including Intact.
    - Work with Courts and State’s Attorneys to refine criteria for removal in complex and chronic family cases.

- Redesign assessment and intake processes; and
  - Direct attention to cases at greatest risk of severe harm.
- In response to the research team’s findings, the Illinois Governor ordered a review of 1,100 cases to ensure that proper steps were taken.
- In addition, our Governor pledged to create a “crisis intervention team” to immediately intervene when a child has died to review and recommend changes to prevent future deaths.
- In 2021, the University of Illinois Children and Family Research Center (School of Social Work) prepared a report entitled, “Conditions of Children in or at Risk of Foster Care in Illinois.
- In 2023, the Illinois Auditor General released its 2022 Inspector General’s Report on DCFS for the previous two (2) years.
  - The Auditor General documented that DECFS did not comply with several sections of the Abused and Neglected Children Reporting Act from July 2020 to June 2022.
  - The list of missteps by DCFS in the Auditor General’s report demonstrates an increase from the prior two (2) year report. Many of these issues go back twenty-five (25) years.
  - DCFS accepted the recommendations, but the organization has done that in the past. It is time that DCFS put some follow-up and documented action behind its promises.
- CJTF ACTION PLAN:
  - The Task Force plans to inquire about DCFS’ progress regarding this recommendation on a quarterly basis.

### **CHILD DEATH REVIEW TEAMS EXECUTIVE COUNCIL** **2025 RECOMMENDATIONS**

CDRT recommendations are contained in the Annual Report and in the **Office of the Inspector General Annual Report to the Governor and General Assembly Fiscal Year 2024**. Also, see **Annual Report on Child Deaths that Occurred in Calendar Year 2021** (submitted February 2025 to the Illinois Governor and Illinois General Assembly) :

- [oig-annual-report-2025.pdf](#)
- [cdrt-2021.pdf](#)

### **STATEWIDE CITIZENS’ COMMITTEE ON CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT** **2025 RECOMMENDATIONS**

#### **RECOMMENDATION 1 – FAMILY FIRST**

In follow-up to the FY24 response to SCAN’s Family First Recommendation, SCAN recommends that DCFS (1) include a dialog box on the Family First page that identifies publication dates of the quarterly newsletter; and (2) provide a quarterly update to the Partnership for Progress (formerly the Stakeholder Collaborative), notifying of the posting of the Newsletters and other useful information.

**Rationale/Background:** SCAN is very impressed with the progress made to date regarding Plans of Safe Care and it is clear that within the past plan year, major strides have been made to be inclusive of statewide partners.

It is SCAN's hope that there are implemented institutionalized, routine communications to partners so that all may continue to be approved of the most current information, developments, and accomplishments. The FY24 Response to this recommendation noted that "DCFS publishes the quarterly Family First Newsletter on its website, <https://dcfs.illinois.gov/about-us/ffpsa.html> for public access. This newsletter reports on implementation data, successes, challenges, and opportunities."

To date, this website has no publications posted beyond December, 2024.

SCAN believes much has occurred in the first six months of this year and we look forward to seeing that information posted. Moving forward, we'd like to recommend a timeline for publications, and that the timeline be posted so that all partners are aware.

## **RECOMMENDATION 2 – PARTNERSHIP FOR PROGRESS (FORMERLY STAKEHOLDER COLLABORATIVE) ENGAGEMENT COMMUNICATION**

In follow-up to the FY24 response to SCAN's Stakeholder Communication Recommendation, SCAN recommends that DCFS provide quarterly updates to the Stakeholder Collaborative on the information tracks produced, available, and where located for all partners to access and be informed.

**Rationale/Background:** DCFS indicated in the FY24 response that "a greater emphasis has recently been placed on engaging our families, youth, and those with lived experience. DCFS is also working on developing and promoting communication tools for youth in care and caregivers."

This recommendation is in support of the DCFS response and is a request to update the Partnership for Progress (Stakeholder Collaborative) on the work done to date in the development of these communication tools for youth in care and caregivers.

The Response also indicated that "DCFS plans to expand outreach and engagement efforts to enhance understanding of DCFS' work within diverse communities, increasing public awareness and advocacy for child welfare services. DCFS will leverage existing partnerships by engaging advisory groups and local organizations to help organize and host informational sessions and community forums, including adapting existing DCFS materials into community friendly formats for distribution through partner organizations, churches, schools, etc. DCFS is committed to partnering with our advisory groups, child welfare partners and specifically those with lived experience to develop informational materials and coordinate community outreach."

SCAN's recommendation also include an update on the status of this work, especially the hosting of community forums and the distribution of materials through partner organizations, churches, and schools.