
Rowan County Community Child Protection Team

Annual Report 2021

I. Authority

Community Child Protection Teams (CCPT) were established as a way for state and local communities to form partnerships that strengthen child protection efforts. The teams were established in response to Executive Order 142 in May 1991. CCPT duties and responsibilities were adopted as North Carolina Administrative Code 411.0400. The original purpose and composition of the teams were further formalized and expanded by G.S.7B.1408, effective July 1, 1993.

II. Responsibilities and Purpose

Federal and State laws require that a citizen review panel be established to review certain cases receiving child welfare services. In North Carolina, the CCPT has been designated as the citizen review panel. The CCPT is an interdisciplinary group of community representatives who meet regularly to review child welfare cases. Case reviews are conducted to:

- Identify gaps and deficiencies in the community child protection system which impact the incidence of abuse, neglect, dependency, or child fatalities;
- Increase public awareness about conditions that have an impact on child protection within the community;
- Advocate for system changes by promoting collaboration among agencies in the creation or improvement of resources for children;
- Assist the DSS in the protection of children living in the family whose case is being reviewed;
- Inform the Board of Commissioners about actions needed to address gaps and deficiencies in services.

III. Members

Membership is mandated by law and mandated positions are listed below. Membership is not limited to mandated positions.

- Community Representatives
- County Department of Social Services Director
- County Board of Social Services Member
- County Health Department Director
- Health Care Provider
- Local Community Action Agency Executive Director
- School Superintendent
- Attorney for the District Attorney's Office
- Guardian ad Litem Representative
- Law Enforcement Officer
- Mental Health Professional
- Parent Consumer

IV. Local Operational Procedures

In Rowan County, the CCPT has elected to serve also as the Child Fatality Prevention Team (CFPT), which includes additional functions related to child fatality reviews and formulating necessary recommendations from findings. The combined CCPT/CFPT group meets every other month, with additional called meetings as needed.

In 2021, CCPT/CFPT meetings were held on the third Tuesday of every other month, at 12:30 p.m. Due to COVID the meetings were held virtually on Zoom with the last one in November as hybrid, hosting some participants in person. The November meeting was held in the large conference room at Rowan County Department of Social Services.

Membership in 2021

- Alyssa Harris, Rowan County Health Department Director (effective February 2021)
- Amy Brown, Smart Start **(CCPT Chair effective 11/15/21)**
- Amy Wagoner, Rowan County DSS
- Beth Dixon, District Court Judge
- Brandy Cook, District Attorney
- Carol Ann Houpe, Rowan-Salisbury School System
- Cynthia Dry, Rowan County Department of Social Services Child Welfare Attorney **(CCPT Chair until 3/16/21)**
- Dee Dee Wright, Rowan County Social Services Board (until June 2021)
- Kevin Auten, Rowan County Sheriff
- Lennie Cooper, Emergency Medical Services (until September 2021)
- Lisa Berger, Rowan County DSS Deputy Director (effective May 2021)
- Lisa Davis, Rowan County Social Services Board (effective July 2021)
- Lissa Pence, Guardian ad litem (until February 2021)
- Lori Yang, Parent Consumer (effective November 2021)
- Micah Ennis, Rowan County DSS Director
- Nina Oliver, Rowan Health Department Director (until February 2021)
- Renee Bradshaw, Family Crisis Council
- Roxie Cashwell, Rowan County DSS (effective July 2021)
- Shawn Edman, Terrie Hess House Child Advocacy Center Director (effective January 2021)
- Tiffany Clark, North Carolina Department of Public Safety/Juvenile Justice (until December 2021)
- Tressy McLean-Hickey, Cardinal Innovations Healthcare MCO **(CCPT Chair 3/16/21-11/15/21)**
- Yuvongala Howell, Novant Health Rowan Medical Center

Cases reviewed by the CCPT/CFPT are based on local need and include children deemed to be at higher risk of injury or death as a result of child abuse, neglect, or dependency and child fatalities occurring in the calendar year. Any team member may bring a case for review. Guidance for selecting cases for review includes:

- Substantiated cases of abuse, including sexual abuse;
- Cases of neglect, especially when referral is made by a medical provider;
- Cases in which DSS has substantiated two reports within a specific period, regardless of the type of report or referral source;
- Other cases where there are indications that a child has been impacted by a deficiency in community services or resources;
- Cases where there has been a child fatality.

V. 2021 Reviews and Actions

CCPT/CFPT reviewed a total of 5 fatality cases in 2021.

- prenatal issues/perinatal conditions (2)
- unique health conditions/illness (e.g. genetic disorders) (2)
- suffocation/strangulation in bed (1)

Total Number of Cases Reviewed	Fatalities	Active Child Welfare Cases			Other Cases
6	5	1			0
For non-fatality cases give the number of cases reviewed in each category from January 1 through December 31, 2021		Abuse	Neglect	Dependency	Other
				1	

The needs identified through these case reviews included safe sleeping and co-sleeping information, early prenatal care, smoking cessation for expecting parents, and grief counseling and support group identification for parents who lose children. The needs identified through these case reviews included recognition of addictions, timely and effective substance use treatment services, mental health services, preventative parenting education (including dangers of cigarette smoking, opioid use and consumption of alcohol during pregnancy) and needed regular and early prenatal care.

Additional community concerns identified by the team during case reviews included the need for safe sleeping campaigns, psychological evaluations for parents who exhibit cognitive delays during assessments by DSS, the possibility of review by DSS of the parent's exception children's or therapeutic records so as to better serve the parent, and adequate resources to refer the parent to services such as occupational therapy, life coaching, ARC services, and parenting education.

The Rowan County Community Child Protection Team focused on a Safe Sleep campaign in 2021.

VI. Context and Community Factors

Community factors that impact the well-being of children in Rowan County include:

- The Rowan Board of Commissioners annually proclaims April as Child Abuse Prevention Month.
- The Rowan County Community Protocol for Child Abuse Prevention is a living document that provides clear expectations of DSS, law enforcement, the Child Advocacy Center, the school system, the hospital, and all residents in making reports of child abuse and neglect. It further provides guidelines for conducting investigations of alleged child abuse and neglect and for collaboration between agencies. Roles and responsibilities of community agencies are clearly identified. The Community Protocol is accessible to the community through the DSS website.
- Any changes to the Community Protocol are referred to the CCPT/CFPT for review and approval to assure there is close adherence to procedures and to maintain the integrity and spirit of collaboration set forth by the original protocol.
- There are regular meetings among community partners in which child protection is addressed. These meetings include (1) Quarterly meetings of the Law Enforcement Protocol Committee, (2) Bi-monthly meetings of the Community

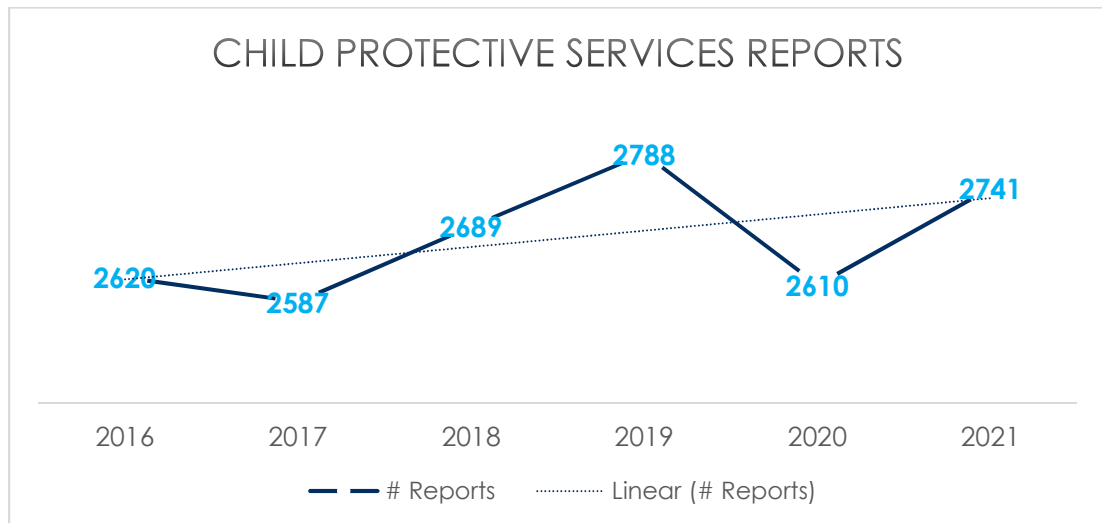
Child Protection and Fatality Prevention Team, (3) Rowan County System of Care Collaborative meetings, (4) Meetings between the Department of Juvenile Justice/Delinquency Prevention and DSS, and (5) Multi-disciplinary team meetings at CAC.

- Training is provided by DSS to many organizations, the school system, hospital staff, and the general public related to recognizing and reporting abuse and neglect, accessing services that support families and children and Trauma 101.
- Early in April, our community celebrates the Week of the Young Child.
- Prevent Child Abuse Rowan organizes community activities that bring the community's awareness to children who are abused and neglected.
- An annual Child Abuse Prevention events is held by various stakeholders in April each year to raise awareness of child abuse prevention.

Relevant Data

The estimated population for Rowan County in 2020 according to the United States Census Bureau was 146,875. Children make up approximately 22% of the population.

From January through December 2021, DSS received 2,676 child protective services reports and completed assessments on 1,824 cases. The majority of these reports alleged neglect of the victim children. There remains ongoing concern that child abuse and neglect may have been under-reported in 2020 because many children were not in school settings during COVID-19. Despite the lower number of reports in 2020, CPS reporting is trending upwards from 2016 through 2021.



For calendar year 2021, an average of 65 children per month received in-home (mandatory) services to address safety and risk factors while keeping the families together. There were a total of 111 families served by In-Home Family services in 2021. Eighty-seven (87) children entered foster care as a result of abuse, neglect, or dependency in 2021. A total of 255 children were served in 2021, with an average of 169 children in DSS custody each month. On average, around 85% of children in care were placed in family-like settings and over 11% in group settings. Rowan County provided training and oversight for an average of 32 licensed foster homes on a monthly basis in the calendar year of 2021, licensing 7 new foster homes during the year.

VII. General Recommendations

The team recommends the following to community agencies and policy makers through the submission of the fatality reports to the Department of Health and Human Services:

- Enhanced community training on the dangers of smoking during pregnancy and in the presence of children
- Safe Sleeping

The team recommends the following training for community members and the team:

- Opioid crisis and Federal Response
- Human Trafficking
- Operations and effectiveness of Methadone and Suboxone clinics
- Prematurity and perinatal issues
- Child death scene investigations
- Child suicide prevention
- Safe Sleeping

VIII. Recommendations to Rowan County Board of Commission

- a. Issue a Proclamation declaring the month of April as Child Abuse Prevention and Awareness month.
- b. Accept and approve this annual report presented in order to keep the Board informed of activities to date.
- c. Appoint new members of the CCPT/CFPT for mandated member positions as vacancies occur and include at-large appointments to ensure that members of the community continue to be involved in the important work of protecting our children.
- d. Encourage use of Evidence-Based Practice models for agencies receiving county funding.
- e. Provide ongoing leadership efforts to prevent child abuse and neglect by urging local agency collaboration and support of the Community Protocol for Child Abuse Prevention and of the Multi-Disciplinary Team staffing at the Child Advocacy Center
- f. Support the recommendation from the Rowan County Child Abuse Prevention Task Force, by consensus, that the annual meeting of the task force be held in conjunction with the Community Child Protection and Child Fatality Prevention Team meeting in March of each year. Annually, the Protocol will be reviewed and any changes to the document would be voted upon and signatures of involved agencies would be obtained.