

POST ADJUDICATION REVIEW BOARD

2020

ANNUAL REPORT



OKLAHOMA  
COMMISSION ON  
CHILDREN AND YOUTH



## POST ADJUDICATION REVIEW BOARDS: THE JUVENILE COURT SYSTEM IMPACT

Following the removal a child from their home due to abuse or neglect, a group of informed local citizens, known as the Post Adjudication Review Board (PARB), begins reviewing their court case. PARBs function in an advisory capacity to the juvenile court system by providing detailed oversight of the each case including the identification of community resources.

During the review process, PARBs offer recommendations aimed at reducing trauma and removing identified barriers to permanency. They address systemic issues negatively affecting the best interests of all children involved in the process.



## THANK YOU PARB VOLUNTEERS AND COURT PARTNERS

In 2020, more than 300 PARB volunteers throughout Oklahoma contributed approximately 6,800 hours of their time to support, protect, and monitor Oklahoma’s juvenile court system. **For that we say, thank you.**

It takes a special kind of person to do the work of a PARB volunteer. The cases PARB volunteers review are complicated, and learning about the situations Oklahoma’s children are experiencing, can be a difficult process. It’s not easy work, but important work.

Many counties in Oklahoma are in need of a PARB. There are also many PARBs who need volunteers to join their teams. If you desire to help support, protect, and monitor via a PARB, learn how you can volunteer by visiting [ok.gov/occy](http://ok.gov/occy).

## PARBS IMPROVE OUTCOMES VIA REVIEWS OF LOCAL JUVENILE COURT CASES

More than 40 PARBs across the state of Oklahoma conduct interviews with those involved in juvenile court cases. They review court and child welfare documents to make informed recommendations to the assigned judge.

The recommendations provided remove barriers to services, call attention to delays in the court process, and work toward shortening the length of time until a child receives permanence. By putting their recommendations into practice, the expectation is the process will be less traumatic for the children and families involved.

This is an example of how each PARB supports, protects, and monitors Oklahoma’s juvenile court system.

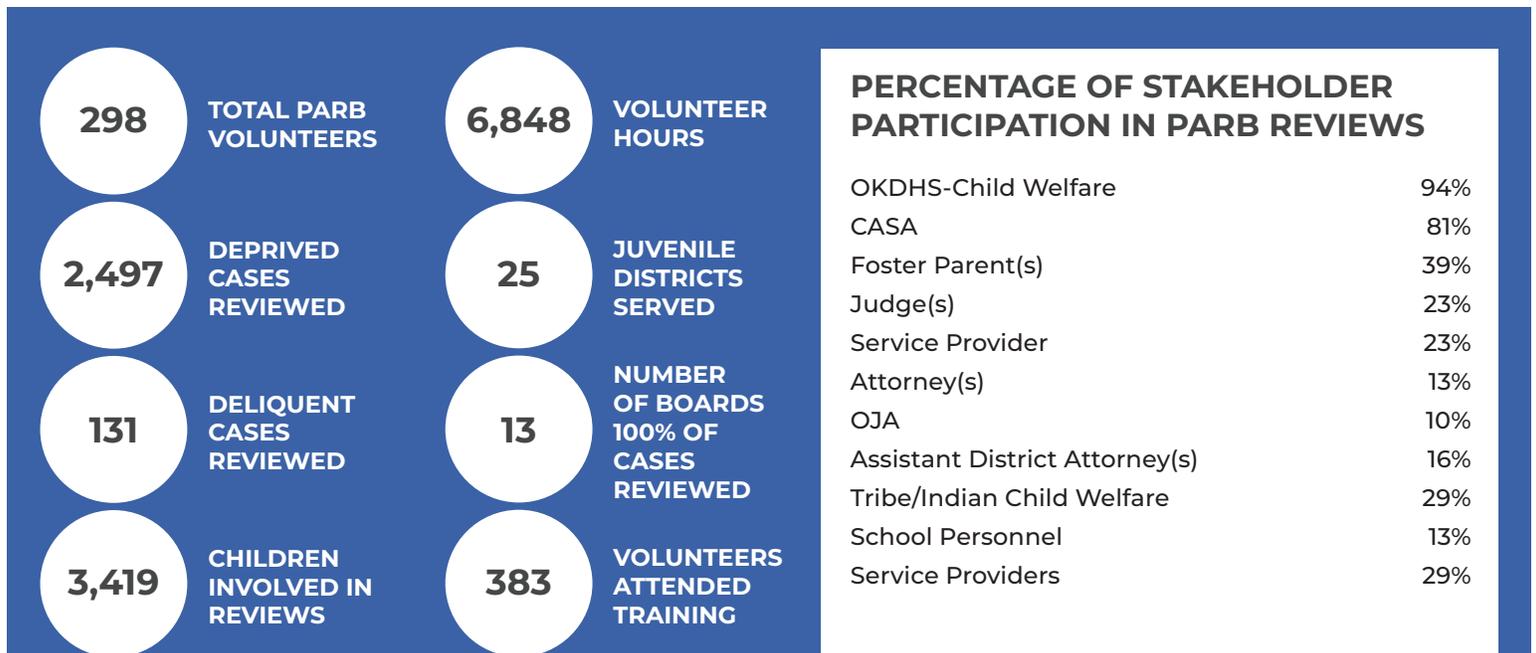
## CASE REVIEW GOALS FOR PARBS

1. Reduce the length of time children are in state custody before reaching permanency.
2. Identify and highlight case specific issues that delay child permanency.
3. Identify and address systemic issues within the juvenile court system that delay permanency.
4. Identify resources that will support reunification or adoption.



## SNAPSHOT: 2020 LOCAL PARB ACCOMPLISHMENTS AND DATA COLLECTED

Below are the results of the questionnaire that was sent to all local PARBs in December of 2020. The information provided gives a snapshot of their accomplishments as well as data to consider.



### ADDITIONAL INFORMATION TO CONSIDER: CHILDREN EXITING OKDHS CARE\*\*

SFY-2019 TOTAL CHILDREN: 4,354 AVERAGE LENGTH OF STAY: 670 DAYS MEDIAN LENGTH OF STAY: 571 DAYS  
 SFY-2020 TOTAL CHILDREN: 4,952 AVERAGE LENGTH OF STAY: 678 DAYS MEDIAN LENGTH OF STAY: 574 DAYS

\*\* Data Source: Oklahoma Department of Human Services (OKDHS) Pinnacle Plan Context Data SFY19 and SFY20



## PARB: SURVIVING AND THRIVING THROUGH THE PANDEMIC



Keith Pirtle  
PARB Program  
Manager

Due to the pandemic in 2020, judges scrambled to figure out ways to hold court while court houses closed. Child welfare caseworkers were sent home to work virtually as many county offices closed. Even state PARB staff went home to work virtually and support boards as best as they could while unable to travel. It was turning into a year of survival.

The same legislative requests that were made in the 2020 Legislative Session were again put forward this year and ultimately failed to pass. These included extending the PARB membership from three to five years and changing the name of PARB to Citizen's Review Board for Children and Youth.

The PARB and CASA Conference scheduled for April of 2020 was cancelled at the last minute due to safety concerns relating to the pandemic.

The impacts of COVID-19 have been hard on the local boards. Most PARBs meet face-to-face in court houses where the case files are kept, and the court partners are accustomed to meeting. Beginning in March of 2020, many courts were either closed or had very limited access. In addition, it was just not safe for many boards to meet. Some boards were able to keep meeting in 2020, by holding off-site meetings and by practicing social distancing. Boards in Oklahoma, Tulsa and Washington Counties began meeting virtually. About half of the boards stopped meeting for at least a few months during the peak of the COVID crisis. Most are slowly resuming their work but unfortunately a few have stopped meeting all

together. In 2021, attention and efforts will be made to help reestablish boards and to create new boards in areas not previously served.

In spite of the pandemic and these setbacks, 2020 was a year of accomplishments. The Oklahoma Commission on Children and Youth (OCCY) contracted with the University of Oklahoma's Educational Training, Evaluation, Assessment and Measurement (E-TEAM) in the fall of 2020. This contract was developed to create a web-based system to collect PARB recommendations and membership. In addition, the E-TEAM is completing an evaluation of the PARB Recommendations and Findings in Garfield and Oklahoma Counties during calendar year 2019. The E-TEAM evaluation will create categories based on the types of recommendations being made. This will be the first time PARB recommendations will be categorized in this way. A web-based PARB data entry system will be created for the PARB volunteers, and for the first time, allow for PARB recommendations statewide to be collected into a secure database. This report will assist PARB staff with identifying training needs and areas needed for further technical assistance.

In late March 2020, PARB staff started hosting virtual trainings almost every Tuesday. These trainings covered child permanency, mental health, child welfare, OKDHS True North goals, enhanced foster care, the Pinnacle plan, and domestic violence (just to name a few). By the first week in June, nine of these trainings had taken place. More PARB volunteers attended training in 2020 than had for several years in the past. Many of these trainings will be repeated on a regular basis and continue to be shared through virtual platforms.

**“As a foster parent, the role of PARBs were instrumental in moving our children’s case to permanency. The volunteers at our local PARB board spend tireless hours reviewing cases as a neutral third party and have the ability to give direct recommendations to the court regarding best interests of the children.”**

**-Dr. Kalie Kerth, OCCY Commissioner  
Representing PARB Boards**

## PARBS VOICE ISSUES REGARDING BARRIERS WITHIN AGENCIES AND SYSTEMS

This past year, the closing of local Oklahoma Department of Human Services (OKDHS) offices became an area of concern for local PARB boards. Issues such as OKDHS’s inability to print reports, a lack of knowledge regarding PARBs, as well as high turnover rates within the agency continues to create challenges. An additional issue expressed by some PARBs is that OKDHS may not be sharing information that is current or reliable.

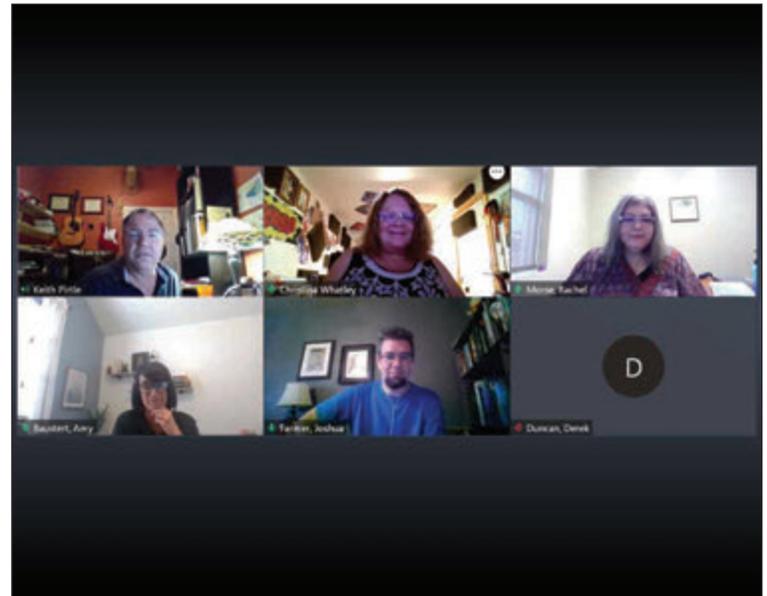
Local PARBs report there are concerns that biological parents have too many chances to address issues on their court-ordered service plans, and in return, a delay could occur in the stability and permanency of children within the system. Additionally, using jury trials for the termination of parental rights is an active concern for local PARB boards as it could affect the permanent placement of children.

They also expressed that Oklahoma is in need of additional juvenile mental health beds and treatment centers.

## LOCAL PARB FEEDBACK TO OCCY STAFF AND STATE PARB

Local PARBs expressed the positive changes they have experienced with the Oklahoma Commission on Children and Youth (OCCY) and the State PARB Board over the past two years have been amazing. The PARBs note the staff is extremely helpful and their support of local efforts, providing online training, as well as revising forms have been beneficial.

Boards would like to continue to receive updates on changes with OKDHS procedures and policies as well as reports from State PARB Meetings and OCCY meetings. Furthermore, local PARBs would like to see foster parents, and agencies that work with children, know more about PARBs and their roles within their respective systems.



## LOCAL PARB CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

Beginning in March of 2020, the impacts of the pandemic were a significant barrier to the local boards. All court hearings were significantly altered in some way, impacting all aspects of the juvenile court system. Local review boards were unable to enter courthouses and complete their reviews for much of the year. Many boards shared that additional board members are needed. The need for recruitment of new volunteers, across the state, was identified.

Tulsa County and Oklahoma County were able to conduct virtual meetings. The boards in those counties saw this as a beneficial way to conduct their work and they hope to continue this as long as the changes to the Oklahoma Open Meeting Act permits it. These boards also appreciated the secured electronic filing system that is available to them for conducting online cases reviews.

Virtual meetings and electronic cases were not available to most boards statewide and prevented them from meeting for much of the year.

**“The first time I heard of PARB’s purpose and goals, everything changed for me. It was the solution we were longing for; a team brought in with fresh eyes, fresh perspective, and a voice that could be heightened above the noise.”**

**Sarah Herrian, Executive Director  
Foster Care Association of Oklahoma, Inc.**

## STATE POST ADJUDICATION REVIEW ADVISORY BOARD RECOMMENDATIONS

The State PARB met four times in 2020. The State PARB had several guest speakers from child serving organizations to help members understand how to better partner with child welfare, foster care and the Indian child welfare systems. These discussions included strategies that will help local boards focus their efforts to be better partners with these groups.

In late 2020, the State PARB also identified several issues that needed further focus. These include efforts regarding kids that are at risk for continued abuse and neglect due to isolation from their community. The State PARB also raised concerns about Oklahoma being one of only five states that allow for jury trials in the termination of parental rights cases. The State PARB has also focused more on outcomes for PARB by looking at the OKDHS judicial dashboard and supporting the new PARB evaluation effort.

### STATE PARB RECOMMENDATIONS

1. To Be Determined



## THE STATE POST ADJUDICATION REVIEW ADVISORY BOARD

The State Post Adjudication Review Advisory Board consists of twenty-one members appointed by the governor. Five appointees must be judges, eight appointees must be active members of local PARBs, three appointees must represent the foster care community and five appointees are selected from the public at-large. The administrative heads of the divisions within the Oklahoma Department of Human Services and the Office of Juvenile Affairs having foster care responsibilities or their designees serve as ex-officio members of the board.

### 2020 STATE PARB ADVISORY BOARD MEMBERS

Christina Siemen

Dr. Gregory Parks

Lisa Buck

Melanie Johnson

David Ross

Dr. Carol Bridges

Lou Truitt-Flanagan

Jonette Dunlap

Tracy Otto

Cindy Nocton

Paula Cantrell

Deanna Chancellor

Sandra Brown

Honorable Ryan D. Reddick

Honorable Bill Baze

Honorable Pat VerSteege

Honorable Leah Edwards

Honorable Louis Duel

Lana Freeman

Sarah Herrian

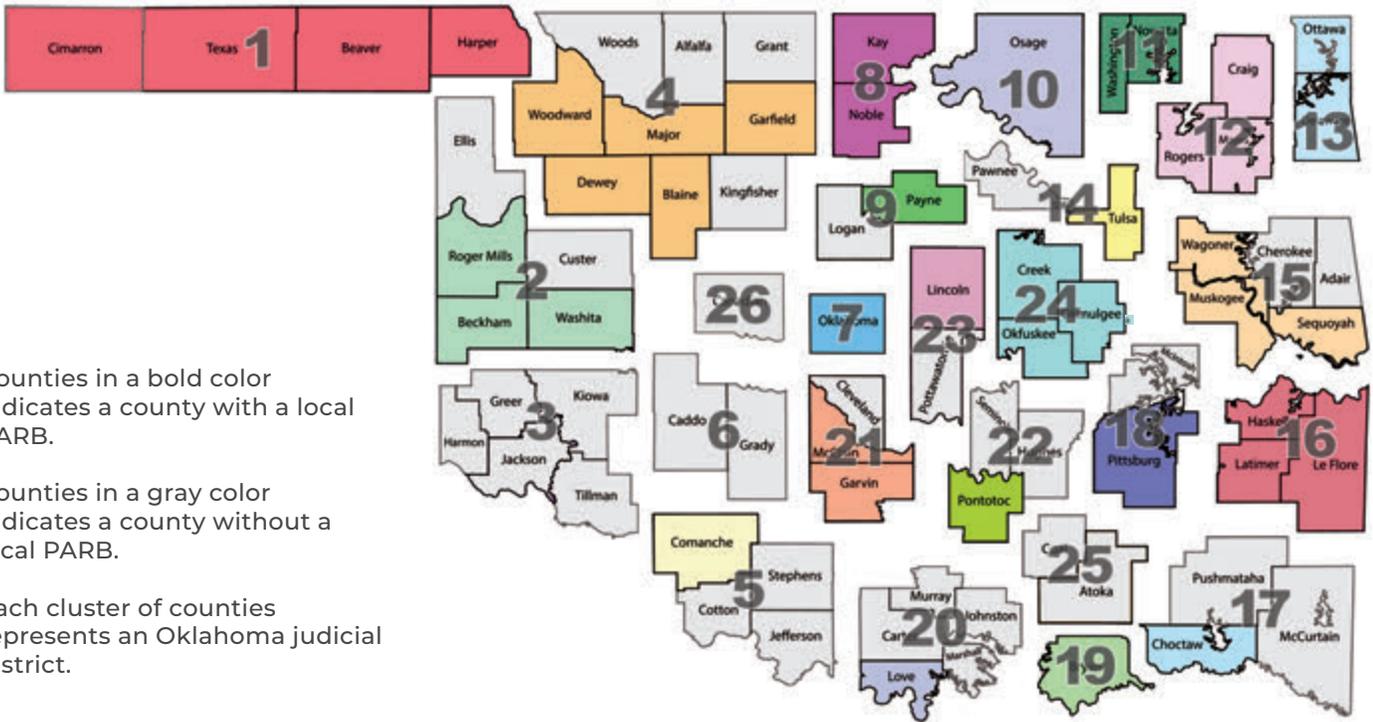
Randy Stewart

Dr. Kalie Kerth

Greg Delaney

Daniel Herring

## EXPLODED VIEW: PARB LOCATIONS WITHIN OKLAHOMA JUDICIAL DISTRICTS (2021)



- Counties in a bold color indicates a county with a local PARB.
- Counties in a gray color indicates a county without a local PARB.
- Each cluster of counties represents an Oklahoma judicial district.

District 1: Beaver, Cimarron, Harper, Texas	District 5: Comanche, Cotton, Jefferson, Stephens	District 15: Adair, Cherokee, Muskogee, Sequoyah, Wagoner	District 21: Cleveland, Garvin, McClain
District 2: Beckham, Custer, Ellis, Roger Mills, Washita	District 6: Caddo, Grady	District 16: Haskell, Latimer, LeFlore	District 22: Hughes, Pontotoc, Seminole
District 3: Greer, Harmon, Kiowa, Jackson, Tillman	District 7: Oklahoma	District 17: Choctaw, McCurtain, Pushmataha	District 23: Lincoln, Pottawatomie
District 4: Alfalfa, Blaine, Dewey, Garfield, Major, Woods, Woodward	District 8: Kay, Noble	District 18: McIntosh, Pittsburg	District 24: Okfuskee, Okmulgee, Creek
	District 9: Logan, Payne	District 19: Bryan	District 25: Atoka, Coal
	District 10: Osage	District 20: Carter, Johnston, Love, Marshall, Murray	District 26: Canadian
	District 11: Nowata, Washington		
	District 12: Craig, Mayes, Rogers		
	District 13: Delaware, Ottawa		
	District 14: Pawnee, Tulsa		

## PARB: THE ROAD AHEAD

PARB members are starting to come out of their homes and are reengaging in the supporting, protecting and monitoring of the juvenile court system. 2021 will be a time of healing and recovery for everyone. However, there is plenty of work ahead and there are several clear goals for 2021.

1. Continue (and when applicable enhance) the regular online PARB Tuesday trainings.
2. Increase the number of PARB members that attend trainings.
3. Increase the number of PARB members through the recruitment of volunteers.
4. Enhance the ongoing effort to partner with court involved staff and programs such as the judges, ICWA and OKDHS.
5. Enhance the effort to identify juvenile court issues on the state and local level and take steps to address the identified issues.





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