

CAPTA CITIZEN REVIEW PANELS 101



Ending Child Abuse and Neglect.

Establishment and Purpose

Citizen Review Panels were developed in response to a requirement set forth in the 1996 reauthorization for the Child Abuse and Prevention Treatment Act (CAPTA), section 106 (c). The CRPs are directed to evaluate state child welfare agencies and make recommendations for improvement in child protective services. In doing so, they are to assess how well the state is coordinating adoption and foster care programs and how child fatalities are reviewed.

The panels are to be composed of volunteer citizens who are broadly representative of their community. States are to give special attention to the qualifications of the panelists to review complex cases of child maltreatment, including a balance among children's attorneys, child advocates, and CASA volunteers who are familiar with the difficulties of the child protection system. Citizen Review Panels should be broadly representative of the community in which the panel is established and include members with expertise in the prevention and treatment of child abuse and neglect.

A key requirement for the CRP is to submit an annual report which details its work for the year and makes recommendations for improvement or changes in child protective services. The state child welfare agency is required to respond to this report within six months.

Composition and Function

There are a total of 348 CRPs in all 50 states as well as the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico.¹ States implement this requirement in a variety of ways. Some states (e.g., Kentucky, Tennessee, Minnesota) started their panels "from scratch" while others (e.g., Idaho, Colorado, Connecticut) used existing panels to fulfill the federal mandate.

Panels are very diverse in terms of the support they receive, how membership is appointed, and the composition of the annual report. Some panels are completely unfunded while others receive funding through CAPTA and other sources. Members may be elected or appointed by state child welfare systems or legislative bodies. The CRP annual report

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Panels have found success in engaging in public outreach efforts (e.g., forums, surveys, focus groups) which allow them to reach out to the broader community.

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may be written by group members or a designee, and responses to the report from the state vary widely around the nation.

It is required that the majority of states establish a minimum of three citizen review panels. (Exceptions to this requirement are states receiving the minimum allotment of \$175,000 under Title II of CAPTA, which must establish no less than one citizen review panel.) Some states—such as North Carolina and Alabama—have many more CRPs than required. States with smaller populations—Alaska, Hawaii, Wyoming—have one Citizen Review Panel. CRPs are typically made up of private citizens, parents and child advocates, social workers, teachers, mental health providers, researchers, and a myriad of other professions.

Children’s Bureau guidance directs CRPs to evaluate the extent to which the state is fulfilling its child protection responsibilities in accordance with its CAPTA state plan by: (1) examining the policies, procedures and practices of state and local child protection agencies; and (2) reviewing specific cases, where appropriate. A panel may examine other factors that it considers important to ensuring the protection of children. Citizen Review Panels must provide for public outreach and comment as noted above. Panels must prepare an annual report that summarizes its activities and makes recommendations to improve the CPS system at the state and local levels, and submit it to both the state and the public (Section 106(c)(6) of CAPTA).

Impact on Child Welfare

Citizen Review Panels have furthered efforts to promote positive child welfare outcomes in several areas in state child welfare systems. Panels have reviewed issues such as mandatory reporting, father engagement in child welfare, child fatality review, and employee retention. Some panels (e.g., Wyoming) have been active participants in the federal Child and Family Services Reviews.

Examples of CRP Work

- ▶ In **Maine**, the Citizen Review Panel has hosted a well-attended child welfare conference for several years which promotes the exchange of information and cutting-edge strategies to address key issues facing the state’s child welfare system.
- ▶ In **Oregon**, the work of the CRPs helped create a systems-wide issues survey which was completed on every case over a six month period.
- ▶ The work of **Kentucky’s** CRPs led to changes in the way frontline workers are trained to respond to drug-endangered children.
- ▶ The **Tennessee** CRP was instrumental in developing a Memorandum of Understanding between the school system in a large county and the state child welfare agency.

STATE SPOTLIGHT

GEORGIA



Georgia uses the Child Protective Services Advisory Committee, the Children’s Justice Act Task Force, and the Georgia Child Fatality Review Panel to meet the CRP requirements.

All three panels have a statewide approach to examining systemic issues that impact the effectiveness of the state’s child protection system (i.e., youth in foster care, children ages 0-5, and CPS workforce development and morale). Their overlapping interests address the full child welfare continuum, from prevention and investigation to treatment and prosecution of cases of child abuse and neglect and maltreatment-related fatalities.

Deb Farrell, Program Coordinator of the panels, says, “I love working with citizens to impact the lives of children and families in Georgia. Their unique community perspective on child welfare is important, and the passion that they bring to the table is so refreshing.”

In Wisconsin, the CRP held a “bus tour” that highlighted community involvement in child protection, the court system, drug endangered children, and a foster care youth panel.

Tips for CRP Operation

Implementation of Citizen Review Panels should be done with much care and planning. The challenges citizen volunteers face in fulfilling the large mandate of CRPs can be daunting. Research suggests that CRPs should be:

- ▶ Given access to information;
- ▶ Consulted early in the policy development process;
- ▶ Given feedback about their recommendations;
- ▶ Provided staff and other logistical support; and
- ▶ *Connected* to the child welfare agency but not *controlled* by it.

For More Information

For specific information on your state’s efforts, visit the National CRP Virtual Community at <http://www.uky.edu/socialwork/crp>.

The Children’s Bureau’s response to inquiries on CRPs can be found within the Child Welfare Program Manual (Child Welfare Policy Manual, Children’s Bureau: http://www.acf.hhs.gov/cwpm/programs/cb/laws_policies/laws/cwpm/index.jsp)

ENDNOTE

¹ Report to Congress on Effectiveness of Citizen Review Panels, August 2, 2013, <http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cb/resource/crp-report-to-congress>

Additional Resources

- ▶ Administration for Children and Families. Establishment of the Citizen Review Panel Requirement Under the Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act. January 7, 1998. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.
- ▶ Bryan, V., Collins-Camargo, C., & Jones, B. (2011). Reflections on citizen-state child welfare partnerships: Listening to citizen review panel volunteers and agency liaisons. *Children and Youth Services Review*, 32, 1, 986-1010.
- ▶ Bryan, V., Jones, B.L. & Lawson, E. (2010). Key features of effective citizen–state child welfare partnerships: Findings from a national study of citizen review panels. *Children and Youth Services Review*, 32, 4, 595-603.
- ▶ Collins-Camargo, C., Jones, B.L. & Krusich, S. (2009). The “Spinach” of Citizen Participation in Public Child Welfare: Strategies for Involving Citizens in Public Child Welfare. *Journal of Public Child Welfare*, 3, 287-304.
- ▶ Jones, B.L. & Royse, D. (2008) Citizen review panels: The connection between training and perceived effectiveness. *Child Abuse & Neglect: The International Journal*, 32, 1-2.
- ▶ Jones, B.L. & Royse, D. (2008) Citizen review panels for child protective services: A national profile. *Child Welfare*, (87), 3, 143-162.
- ▶ Bryan, V., Jones, B.L., Allen, E. & Collins-Camargo, C. (2007) Civic Engagement or Token Participation? Perceived Impact of the Citizen Review Panel Initiative in Kentucky. *Child and Youth Services Review*, 29, 1286–1300
- ▶ Jones, B. L. (2004) Variables Impacting the Effectiveness of Citizens Review Panels For Child Protective Services: A Multi-state Study. *Children and Youth Services Review*, (26) 12, 1117-1127.