

PREPARING YOUR ANNUAL REPORT



Ending Child Abuse and Neglect.

The annual report is the main “product” of a Citizen Review Panel (CRP). The Child Abuse and Prevention Treatment Act (CAPTA), section 106-(c), directs CRPs to prepare an annual report which outlines their activities for the year as well as any recommendations they have for improvement in state and local child protective services. CRPs should give special attention to creating this public document and disseminating it widely. There is no template for writing the report, so CRPs should craft a report that fits their needs.

Here are some tips about writing the annual report.

- ▶ **Make sure the annual report is based on the CAPTA mandate.** [Tip Sheet #1: CAPTA Citizen Review Panels 101](#) outlined the federal mandate of Citizen Review Panels. In short, CRPs are required to evaluate how well the state child welfare agency is complying with state and local child protective services policy, procedure, and practice. Panels should always link the contents
- of the report back to this mandate. You may want to start your report by explicitly and concisely referencing it.
- ▶ **Make the report visually appealing.** Your report is a public document that will potentially be widely read. Use pictures, bright colors, or other eye-catching elements to make it stand out from all the other reports that child welfare administrators and others must read. Including a brief executive summary is also a good way to increase its appeal and readability.
- ▶ **Consider adapting your report to the needs of different audiences.** Your annual report should be widely disseminated to child welfare advocates, the media, legislators, and the broader community. Consider developing different versions of the report for each of these different audiences. For example, the version for legislators might be very brief and spell out law-making implications. The version for fellow child advocates might feature how they can support the work of the CRPs; the one for child welfare administrators would include information about possible fiscal impacts of Panel recommendations.
- ▶ **When making recommendations in the report, ensure that they are related to some form of evaluation.** Research has shown that there is a natural defensiveness between governmental agencies and citizen panels (Bingham L, Nabatchi T, & O’Leary, 2005; Blome, W.W. & Steib, B. 2007; Bryan, V, Collins-Camargo, C., & Jones, B.L., 2011). Citizen Review Panels should take care to ensure that the recommendations in their reports are defensible and not easily dismissed. Including information about whatever evaluation methodology was used to inform your recommendations will help with that. (The CRP’s strategic plan identifying the topics it will focus on and outlining how the issues will be evaluated provide the basis for the information to be included in the report.)



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► **Ask your child welfare agency to look over the report before it goes public.** It is clear from the CAPTA mandate that CRPs are to be independent from the child welfare agency, and that they may put whatever they like in an annual report. However, it is equally clear that the *relationship* between the child welfare agency and the Panels is also important (see [Tip Sheet #2: Working Successfully with Child Welfare Agencies](#)). If child welfare administrators are able to see the CRP report before it goes public, they are—at a minimum—able to prepare themselves to respond to it. Additionally, they can correct any mis information the report might include such as faulty data on which recommendations are based, providing the Panel with an opportunity to make corrections before the report goes public.

Additional Resources

- Bingham L, Nabatchi T, O’Leary R (2005) New governance: Practices and processes for stakeholder and citizen participation in the work of government. *Public Administration Review*, 65(5), 547-558.
- Blome, W. W., & Steib, S. (2007). An examination of oversight and review in the child welfare system: the many watch the few serve the many. *Journal of Public Child Welfare*, 1(3), 3–26.
- 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*, 33(5), 612-621.
- Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (CAPTA), as amended (42 U.S.C. 5101 et seq.).
- Charity Village Tips on Writing Reports. https://charityvillage.com/Content.aspx?topic=Best_practices_in_charity_annual_reporting_Top_ten_tips#.Vh1-nvlVhBe.

STATE SPOTLIGHT

NEW YORK



The state of New York has developed a CRP report that is visually pleasing, contains easily-readable charts, and includes an Executive Summary that makes its key content easily accessible. In addition, the report includes stories of children, families and child protective services workers to humanize the data presented. For example, the 2013 report highlights the story of Wales Brown, a Clinical Case Manager. More information about New York’s CRPs can be found at <http://www.citizenreviewpanelsny.org/>.

