

State of California Department of Social Services

Office of Child Abuse Prevention

**SIXTH ANNUAL REPORT OF THE CALIFORNIA
CITIZEN REVIEW PANELS**

October 1, 2004-September 30, 2005

June 2006

State of California

Since 1999, California has been required to have at least three Citizen Review Panels (CRPs) in operation, in order to receive its grant for child abuse and neglect prevention and treatment programs under the Federal Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (CAPTA). Since that time, the California Department of Social Services' Office of Child Abuse Prevention (CDSS/OCAP) has provided the funding and technical support necessary to ensure that at least three counties operate CRPs and that there is a body that functions as a Statewide CRP by reviewing the policies, practices and procedures of California's Child Welfare Services System.

This report covers the activities of California's panels for Federal Fiscal Year 2005 which began on October 1, 2004 and ended on September 30, 2005. Future directions will address Federal Fiscal Years 2006 and 2007.

County Citizen Review Panels

Objective

To ensure that there are a minimum of three county level citizen review panels in operation at all times.

Activities

Alameda, Kern, Napa, and San Mateo Counties received funding to operate panels during the reporting period. A report on their activities, findings and recommendations along with a discussion of their future directions for FFY 2006 and FFY 2007 can be found under the specific county section below.

Future Directions

The fourth citizen review panel funding cycle will begin on October 1, 2006 and end on September 30, 2008. The selection process for the fourth funding cycle will begin in March of 2006, with the issuance of an All County Information Notice (ACIN) requesting applications to operate a CRP.

In previous funding cycles, letters addressing the availability of funds and the application process were sent directly to all county welfare directors. For the 2006-2008 funding cycle, counties encouraged the use of an All County Information Notice (ACIN) to solicit applications for CRP funding. In their input to the County Welfare Director's Association (CWDA), counties recommended an ACIN since they are a common means of advising county staff regarding matters that impact counties. By giving county staff direct access to this funding information, CDSS/OCAP could facilitate a "bottom up" process in which staff and managers recommend to the county welfare director that the

county apply for this funding. It is anticipated that the ACIN process, by facilitating a “bottom up” process will result in more applications than can be funded. CDSS/OCAP will comply with the wishes of counties by giving priority to counties that have not been funded before. In this way, the CAPTA funding will be used to “seed” and expand the CRP program. Counties that will operate panels for the first time in 2006 will receive start up funds of \$2,500 to facilitate panel organization and development so that they begin their activities on or around October 1, 2006.

It is possible that some or all of the existing panels will not be funded.

Objective

Provide training and on-going technical assistance to the three county level citizen review panels.

Activities

Strategies, Region II, implemented by Interface Children Family Services, is retained by CDSS/OCAP to provide technical assistance to the county CRPs. One of CDSS/OCAP's requirements when the technical assistance consultant, was hired for the October 1, 2004 to September 30, 2006 funding cycle, was that the consultant have experience with Child Welfare Services System Improvement at the county level. This is important as county panels are beginning to review the effectiveness of their child welfare service departments in implementing policies, practices, and procedures that support these departments in meeting the goals and objectives of county System Improvement Plans that are being prepared as part of Child Welfare Services System Improvement. The consultant that was hired, Ms. Louanne Shahandeh, brings to the county CRPs her knowledge of program and staff development, children's residential facilities, and CWS management.

Objective

To review and respond to panel recommendations.

Activities

Kern and Napa counties submitted recommendations to both the state and their respective counties. San Mateo County had recommendations to the County Government only. The majority of Kern County's recommendations were addressed to the County; 90 of the 113 were for the County Government. The majority of the recommendations from Kern County addressed Independent Living although there were recommendations for improving the emergency response unit and recommendations to the State for improving the way that panels conduct their reviews.

The Napa County recommendations addressed independent living. The San Mateo County recommendations addressed team decision making. See the county reports below for more information.

CDSS will respond to the recommendations that have been addressed by May 1, 2006. The Statewide Citizen Review Panel will review the recommendations made by the counties and make comments to the State regarding these recommendations prior to any response to the local panels by the CDSS/OCAP. County CWS agencies will be notified of their obligation to review and respond by May 1, 2006 to recommendations from their panels.

The Statewide Citizen Review Panel

Objective

To ensure that there is a review body that examines the state-level Child Welfare Services System.

Activities

The new state Citizen Review Panel, which grew out of the Child Welfare Services Stakeholders' Group, was convened by two teleconferences in November of 2004. The panel met in April, June, and September of 2005.

The state panel reviewed and provided input into the Annual Progress and Services Report (APSR). Panel members expressed interest in child safety, equalization of services across counties, and in the training of CWS staff.

CDSS staff made presentations to the panel on the role of a CRP, on the APSR that was submitted to Region IX in June of 2005, and on resources for national, state and local child maltreatment data (extensive handouts were given).

Future Directions

The meetings scheduled for FFY 2006 will take place on December 12, 2005, on March 2006, and on May 15, 2006. An additional meeting will be scheduled at a later date. The December meeting includes a conference call with the county panels to discuss their recommendations. The APSR that is being developed for submission in June of 2006 will be discussed at the meetings on December 12, 2005 and March 20, 2006.

In keeping with the Stakeholders' recommendation that prevention be incorporated into all aspects of the Child Welfare Services System, the statewide CRP serves as the Prevention Advisory Council (PAC). A combined CRP/PAC fulfills the Stakeholder findings that prevention must be the foundation of Child Welfare Services System improvement and not stand on its own. The PAC is charged, as the result of the requirements of the Community-Based Child Abuse Prevention Program, with providing

input to the CDSS on community-based, prevention-focused family resource and support programs. The focus of the PAC has been on the development and expansion of family resource and family support collaboratives and networks comprised of community-based, county and state level organizations and agencies serving children and families. In its role as the PAC the statewide CRP can integrate a primary prevention/early-intervention perspective to its review of statewide CWS policies, practices, and procedures.

Kern County

County Information

Kern County is located in California's Central Valley. While its 2003 population was approximately 713,087, about 32 percent is under the age of 18. In the State Fiscal Year 2003/2004, there were 24,304 emergency response referrals. In August of 2004, there were approximately 3857 children in foster care.

White persons (non-Hispanic/Latino) comprise roughly 50 percent of the Kern County population, while persons of Hispanic/Latino background represented about 33 percent of the population. People who reported being "some other race" were 23.2 percent of the population, while Blacks/African Americans represented six percent. Persons who reported being "two or more races" were 4.1 percent of the population, Asians were 3.4, American Indians and Alaska Natives were 1.5 percent and Native Hawaiians and other Pacific Islanders were less than one percent.

In 2000, foreign born persons accounted for 16.9 percent of the population, and 33.4 percent spoke a language other than English at home. Of the population 25 and older, 68 percent have graduated from high school and 13.5 percent have bachelor's degrees.

Kern's population is at an economic disadvantage relative to the state as a whole. Kern's median household income is \$35,446 compared to \$47,493 for California. The per capita income for Kern is \$15,760 and the percentage of persons below the poverty line is approximately 20.8 percent. The figures for the State of California are \$22,711 and 14.2 percent.

Panel Activities

At the end of FFY 2005, the Kern County panel made twenty-three recommendations to the state and ninety recommendations to Kern County based on the work of two of its teams. The panel made general recommendations to the state which addressed proposed changes in policy, practice, and legislation and in the state's implementation of the assurances that are required by the Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (CAPTA). Also, there were recommendations on the state's Independent Living Program as a result of the work of Team Three.

Ninety of the recommendations were addressed to the Kern County Human Services Agency. Team One, which focuses upon evaluations of the Kern County Department of Human Services' (KCDHS) efforts to secure the safety of children through effective case disposition at the emergency response level, examined the Emergency Response and Court Intake Units. As part of this evaluation, the team's and ultimately the panel's recommendations address:

- Documentation of casework.

- Training of Kern County Human Services Agency staff.
- Relationships with Community Partners such as school districts and law enforcement agencies.
- Risk assessment and the use of Structured Decision Making.
- Utilization of and the resources available to social workers.
- Community resources for families and family support.

Some of the recommendations were the result of the review of the county's Independent Living Program (ILP) that was completed by Team Three. The recommendations would have the county address:

- Ways to increase youth participation in ILP on the part of foster youth and those who have been emancipated.
- Monitoring and tracking of program participants.
- Existing and needed services for foster care and ILP youth.
- Educational and vocational resources for foster/ILP youth.
- Transitional housing.
- Networking opportunities for ILP youth.
- Collaboration among all local agencies, including the local community college district, that serve foster and ILP youth.

The Kern County annual report with its recommendations is on file at the CDSS/OCAP.

Future Directions

Given the number and magnitude of the Kern County recommendations, the panel will decide whether it should continue to have all teams focus on the development of findings and recommendations or whether the panel should develop mechanisms to address the implementation of its recommendations.

Napa County

Panel Activities

Napa County, which is world-famous for its wines, is a rural county with a population of approximately 131,607 people. Population is concentrated in the Cities of Napa, American Canyon, St. Helena and Calistoga which have many of the commercial features of larger cities; hotels, restaurants, and upscale shops that accommodate the tourist industry that has been spawned by the wineries. The wine industry employs many Hispanic farm workers.

Whites (non Hispanic/Latino) comprise roughly 69.1 percent of the population. Hispanic/Latinos are approximately 23.7 percent. Asians comprise approximately 3 percent of the population; Black or African Americans are roughly 1.3 percent; American Indians/Alaska Natives are approximately 0.8 percent and Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islanders are 0.2 percent.

Approximately 80.4 percent of the population aged 25 or older is comprised of high school graduates. About 26.4 percent hold bachelor's degrees. Median household income in 2000 was higher than that of the state as a whole, \$51,738 compared to the state's \$47,493. Per capital income was also higher: Napa's was \$26,395 as compared to \$22,711 for California. Persons in Napa living below the poverty line comprise roughly 8.3 percent of the population compared to 14.2 percent for the state as a whole.

Activities

In FFY 2005, the panel developed a work plan that focused on the Independent Living Program (ILP), engaging and referring families to services, and safety and risk assessment measures. The recommendations of the Napa County Panel to both the CDSS and the county centered around the ILP. The recommendations to the CDSS are:

- Develop a statewide policy regarding the billing for out-of-county youth participating in local independent living programs.
- Update and revise the transitional independent living plan to make the steps for goal-setting more accessible and understandable to youth.
- Include probation youth in the CWS/CMS data base for aggregate tracking of all ILP youth.
- Improve tracking elements of the ILP in the CWS/CMS database to allow for archiving.

Recommendations for Napa County:

- Complete the Napa County ILP policies and procedures by March 2006 for review by the panel.
- Increase the FTE of the ILP coordinator to full-time.
- Continue to provide funding for ILP client transportation (e.g., taxi script, bus passes, and gas vouchers).
- Expand ILP workshops to year-round as requested by ILP youth in a recent ILP "youth-needs assessment."

Future Directions

In FFY 2006, the panel will develop a process to query CPS clients and mandated reporters to determine how well CPS is providing services and where improvements can be made.

San Mateo County

County Profile

San Mateo County is located in the Western portion of the San Francisco Bay Area, directly below the City/County of San Francisco. It is one of California's most affluent counties and as part of "Silicon Valley" is home to many high-tech firms. Many of its foreign-born are highly educated professionals who are proficient in English. However, service industries employ both Americans and the foreign-born who have limited skills.

San Mateo's population is approximately 697,456 people, of whom approximately 23 percent are under 18. In State Fiscal Year 2003-2004 there were 366 emergency response referrals and 266 children in foster care.

White persons (non-Hispanic/Latino) make up roughly 50 percent of the population, while persons of Hispanic/Latino origin make up 22 percent. Asians are 20 percent of the population, persons who reported being "some other race" are 10 percent, persons who reported being "two or more races" are 5.0, Blacks or African Americans are 3.5 percent, Native Hawaiian and other Pacific Islanders are 1.3 percent, and American Indians and Alaska Natives are less than 1 percent of the population.

The median household income for the county is \$70,819, per capita income is \$36,045 and the percentage of persons below the poverty line is 5.8 percent. The median household income for California is \$47,493 and the state's per capita income is \$22,711. In the State of California approximately 14.2 percent of the population is below the poverty line.

Activities

The San Mateo panel continued its interest in Team Decision Making (TDM) by reviewing a report prepared by the manager of the county's TDM unit. In addition to statistics on TDM, the panel was advised of the issues that impact the discrepancy between the numbers of TDMs conducted (248) and the number_of cases eligible (518). The panel was advised of the factors that impact TDM including:

- Social worker turnover.
- Parents who were not able or willing to attend.
- Need for training about when TDMs are required.
- Need to change the organizational culture to accept the role of parents and family members as experts.

The panel asked the TDM unit about the impact that TDMs have had on re-entry, and how the Human Services Agency (HSA) monitors the implementation of plans developed in the TDM setting. The panel was encouraged to observe the TDM process

and it will be supplied with the annual report on TDM implementation that is being prepared for the Stuart Foundation.

The San Mateo County panel undertook a case review process to assess the specific factors that influence re-entry into the system. The goal of the review was to enable the CRP to make recommendations about policy and procedural changes within Children and Family Services that would mitigate against the factors that facilitate re-entry. The results of these efforts will be monitored through the California Child and Family Service Review (based on a federally mandated quality-assurance review) quarterly reports.

The panel found also that there is a need for better coordination of services for families. It found that the factors that seem to contribute to re-entry are:

- Lack of parental skills.
- Substance abuse.
- Incarceration.
- Family violence.
- Lack of mental health services.
- Level of cultural/linguistic competency of the services.
- Difficulty in accessing available services by people who are struggling financially and often feel overwhelmed.

The panel identified things that can be done differently to promote the use of services which include:

- Location: Services decentralized and conveniently available.
- Transportation: Can be a barrier and often public transportation not available.
- Impact: May be better to prioritize services over the term of the case so that it is not a “full time job” to be in the system.

Other findings of the panel were that time constraints impact families (the time available to access and use referred services) and the system (timeframes may be too short to allow services to have the intended impact) and are a practical factor in family maintenance cases. Standards promote closure of cases which means that the Human Service Agency (HSA) loses leverage for promoting participation in services. The panel concluded that a more thorough risk assessment will help the HSA and the families develop a more effective focus with regard to needed services.

Formal Recommendations

The San Mateo panel made the following formal recommendations:

- The Human Services Agency should follow up on the plans developed in team decision making meetings to see if they are implemented and to assess the effectiveness of team decision making for children and families.

- The Human Services Agency should explore the reasons why some families are not accessing the services that are being offered to them during the reunification process. The following factors should be considered.
 - Best practices in providing support to families as they make a connection with the service.
 - The impact on families of trying to access multiple services at one time.
 - The possible need to prioritize the services being offered, in view of the reunification timeline.

As the result of a self-assessment process conducted earlier in the year, the panel engaged the Peninsula Conflict Resolution Center (PCRC) in March 2005 to provide administrative support to the panel and to facilitate its monthly meetings.

Future Directions

The CRP will be addressing the following priorities in the upcoming year:

- Assessing its current status re: membership and recruiting new members.
- Developing operational guidelines for the panel (terms, committee structure, group agreements, self-evaluation).
- Assessing its need for training and technical assistance and accessing that support.
- Observing team decision making meetings.
- Tracking implementation of the Safety Assessment System in San Mateo County through regular reports from Judy Knowlton, HSA Program Manager.
- Monitoring team decision making implementation by receiving and reviewing quarterly reports that are submitted to the Stuart Foundation by the Human Services Agency and requesting additional information as appropriate (i.e., results of participant evaluations).
- Receiving a joint report from Sphere Institute and HSA on factors that are impacting re-entry.
- Continuing to monitor quarterly performance reports (AB 636) on system improvement.

Alameda County

County Profile

Alameda County received funding to operate a citizen review panel for the 2004-2006 funding cycle. This is the first time that the county has applied and received funding for a panel.

Alameda County is an urban county in the San Francisco Bay Area. The county seat is Oakland. Its population is approximately 1,461,030. Roughly twenty-five percent of the population is under the age of 18. For State Fiscal Year 2003-2004, there were roughly 13,766 emergency response referrals. The foster care caseload can be in the 5200 range.

Whites (non-Hispanic/Latino) comprise approximately 41 percent of the population, while Asians make up 20 percent. Hispanics/Latinos and Blacks make up 19 and 15 percent respectively of the county's population and 8.9 percent are those who report being "of some other race." Those who are of two or more races represent 5.6 percent. American Indians and Alaska Natives make up less than one percent of the county's population. Twenty-seven percent of the population is foreign born. Eighty-two percent of those age 25 or older are high school graduates, while 35 percent have bachelors' degrees. Median household income is roughly \$55,946, per capita income is \$26,680 and 11 percent of the people live below the poverty line.

Activities

The Department of Children and Family Services/Child Abuse Prevention of the Alameda County Social Services Agency and the Interagency Children's Policy Council (ICPC) of Alameda County are working in partnership to convene and staff the citizen review panel. The ICPC is a county sponsored collaborative of public and private agencies that was established in 1994 to improve outcomes for low income and vulnerable children and families through major interagency systems reform. The membership of the ICPC includes two members of the Board of Supervisors, executives from the County Office of Education, the county's Health Care Services Agency, the Juvenile Court, Law Enforcement, Social Services and community based organizations such as CASA and those that represent foster parents and youth advocates.

During FFY 2005 the County and the ICPC reported the completion of the following activities:

- Developed a recruitment process for panel members.
- Assessed the orientation, training, and technical assistance that are needed to train and orient the panel.

- Developed a “review tool” that will be used by members when they review case files.
- Developed an outline for a protocol by which the panel will solicit, evaluate and utilize public input.
- Developed a process by which recommendations will be disseminated to county and state officials.
- Developed an outline of self-evaluation plans.

The panel was expected to convene for the first time in October of 2005. However, due to the absence of two key staff members who were touched by personal tragedy, the first meeting was postponed until FFY 2006. The prospective membership includes representatives from First Five, Alameda County; the Alameda County Foster Care Youth Alliance; Alameda County Court Appointed Special Advocates; the Casey Family Programs Field Office; the Court Investigators Office; the therapeutic unit of the Hayward Police Department; a retired educator; a former foster child; a retired district attorney; and a retired coach.

Future Directions

The CDSS/OCAP has entered into discussions with the county regarding the need for the county to convene its panel and begin the review process. These discussions will continue into FFY 2006. The county has been offered the services of the technical assistance consultant.

During FFY 2006, The Alameda County panel will convene and examine the county’s policies, practices and procedures in regard to the:

- Improvement of safety outcomes for children.
- Improvement of permanency outcomes.
- Promotion of well-being for children and families.
- Provision of family-centered services.

APPENDIX A

Membership Roster Statewide Citizen Review Panel

NAME	TITLE and ORGANIZATION
Robin Allen	Executive Director, California Court Appointed Special Advocates
Nancy Antoon, LCSW	Deputy Director for Child & Family Services, Trinity County Behavioral Health, California Mental Health Directors Association rep.
Bill Bettencourt	Site Leader and Consultant, Family to Family, Annie E. Casey Foundation
Diana Kalcic	County Welfare Directors Association
Mike Carll	California Parent Leadership Team (CPLT) Parent Leader, Parents Anonymous of California
Ellin Chariton	Executive Director, Orange County Dept. of Education, Division of School & Community Services, California County Superintendents Educational Services Assn.
Miryam J. Choca	Director, California State Strategies, Casey Family Programs
Kate Cleary	Executive Director, Consortium for Children
Judy Knowlton	County Welfare Directors Association
Terri Kook	Program Officer, Stuart Foundation
Pamela Maxwell	California Parent Leadership Team (CPLT) Parent Leader, Parents Anonymous of California
Francine McKinley	ICWA/Social Services Director, Mooretown Rancheria
Michelle Neumann-Ribner, LCSW, JD	Senior Deputy San Diego County Counsel, Juvenile Division, San Diego County Office of County Counsel
James Michael Owen, JD	Assistant County Counsel, Training & Litigation Division, LA County, California County Counsel Association
Cora Pearson Alternate: Velma J. Moore	California Foster Parent Association, Inc.
John Phillips, MA	Program Supervisor, AOD Services, Mariposa County Behavioral Health and Recovery Services, County Alcohol and Drug Program Administrators Assn. of CA (CADPAAC) rep.
Jennifer Rodriguez	Legislative Policy Coordinator, California Youth Connection, Former Foster Youth
Jerry Rose	Director, Yolo County Dept. of Employment and Social Services, County Welfare Directors Association
Carroll Schroeder	Executive Director, California Alliance of Child and Family Services
Carole Shauffer, JD, ME	Executive Director, Youth Law Center
Norma Suzuki	Chief Probation Officers of California
Susan A. Taylor, PhD	National Association of Social Workers, CA Chapter
Christopher Wu, JD	Supervising Attorney, Center for Families, Children and the Courts, Judicial Council of CA-- Administrative Office of the Courts

DURING FFY 2005, Judith Chynoweth, Executive Director of the Foundation Consortium and Jerry Rose, the Representative from CWDA resigned from the Panel. Mr. Rose was replaced by Diana Kalcic and Judy Knowlton. Mr. Wu was replaced by Don Wills.

**Chafee Foster Care Independence Program/Education and
Training Vouchers Program**