

CALIFORNIA CITIZEN REVIEW PANELS

October 1, 2009 – September 30, 2010

Background and Purpose:

The Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (CAPTA) was originally enacted in 1974 to provide annual grants to states. The purpose of the grant was to improve the state's child protective services system and was based on the population of children under 18. Since 1974, there have been additional amendments to CAPTA. In 1996, an amendment added a new eligibility requirement for states to establish Citizen Review Panels (CRPs) as oversight to the states' child protective services system. Under the legislation, each state is required to establish no less than three CRPs, with the exception of states that receive the minimum allotment under the statute. The panel members are to be volunteers who are broadly representative of the community at large to include concerned citizens, experts in child protection and prevention, advocacy, foster care, education, mental health, the court system, law enforcement, and children services. The mandate of the CRPs is to "evaluate the extent to which the agencies (state and local) are effectively discharging their child protection responsibilities." The panels are required to examine policies, procedures, and where appropriate, specific cases handled by the state and local agencies providing child protective services.

The federal statute broadly defines the function of CRPs. The panel must meet not less than once every three months and must produce an annual public report containing a summary of their activities. In June 2003, CAPTA was amended when the "Keeping Children and Families Safe Act" was signed by the President. This revised the CRP duties to include: 1) requiring each panel to examine the practices (in addition to policies and procedures) of the state and local child welfare agencies, 2) providing for public outreach and comment in order to assess the impact of current procedures and practices upon children and families in the community, and 3) requiring each panel to make recommendations to the state and public on improving the child protective services system. In addition, the appropriate state agency is required to respond in writing no later than six months after the panel recommendations are submitted. The state agency's response must include a description of whether or how the state will incorporate the recommendation of the panel (where appropriate) to make measurable progress in improving the state child protective services system.

Program Structure:

The California Department of Social Services' (CDSS) Office of Child Abuse Prevention (OCAP) administers California's CRPs. Currently there are panels in Calaveras, San Mateo, and Ventura counties and a statewide panel. These panels are reflective of the demographic, economic, social, and political climate

found in different areas throughout the state depicting the varied conditions of child protective services in California. Technical assistance, guidance and coordination are available through OCAP. Additionally, technical assistance via a sub-contract with a consultant is provided through Strategies, Region II. During this reporting period approximately 120 hours of technical assistance have been provided by the consultant to the county panels, state panel and to OCAP.

Overview of Current Activities at the State Oversight Level:

The OCAP staff, in conjunction with the CRP consultant and the CRPs, is focusing on building strong panels that are reflective of their communities and are able to partner with local and statewide child protective service systems, as well as each other, to enhance the safety and well being of children.

The following activities/goals were established by OCAP in response to these requests:

- Convening of representatives from each panel at one site to provide information sharing, technical assistance and networking opportunities. The meeting was held on June 15, 2010. OCAP with the help of the National Resource Center for Child Protection, was fortunate to be able to bring a nationally recognized expert on Citizen Review Panels to the meeting. It has proven to be a great opportunity for the panels to share successes and challenges and for OCAP staff to clarify guidelines and expectations. We expect the future outcome to be better functioning panels that have a clearer understanding of what is required by CAPTA, the Administration for Children and Families (ACF) and OCAP.
- Promote information sharing and networking within the four California panels as well as with panels in other states. Panels now have access to the national CRP website www.uky.edu/SocialWork/crp.
- Encourage panels to review the PIP developed in response to California's CFS. Promote their involvement in implementation and monitoring components of the plan impacting their communities.
- Continue to contract services with the CRP consultant. The consultant is a valuable source of information and is helping to train and provide technical assistance to the panels. Additionally, the CRPs have met with the national expert and now have another resource for technical assistance, networking and educational opportunities.

The CAPTA requirements are broadly defined. The OCAP is reviewing current guidelines and considering their value to the structure of California CRPs.

- Some modifications and deletions to these guidelines have been made.
- OCAP is planning to create regulations to formalize the CRP processes.

A new funding cycle for CRPs began July 1, 2009, and will end June 30, 2012.

- The selection process for the funding cycle began with the issuance of an All County Information Notice (ACIN) requesting applications from counties to operate a CRP. Existing participants were invited to continue with the possibility of having three to five panels in California. All three of the existing panels submitted letters of intent to continue. All three were extended through the funding cycle ending June 30, 2012.
- Applications were submitted and reviewed using a point system based on the responses to the questions outlined in the ACIN. Panels chosen will have funding available to assist in covering the cost associated with conducting a panel. Ventura County was selected and became the fourth CRP in California.

PANEL INFORMATION

Calaveras County

County Profile:

Calaveras County is located in the foothills of the Sierra Nevada Mountains – 133 miles east of San Francisco and 135 miles west of Lake Tahoe, midway along state Highway 49, which links the towns of the Gold Country.

The population for Calaveras County is approximately 46,844 residents of which 8,611 are children 18 years and younger. The breakdowns of the county racial demographics are as follows: 92.7 percent Caucasian, 10.6 percent Latino/Hispanic, 1.8 percent Native American Indian, 1.4 percent Asian, 1.2 percent Black and 2.8 percent reporting two or more races. The county child protection agency received 933 child abuse referrals of which 129 were substantiated cases. There are 73 children in placement.¹

Activities:

- All members have signed a statement of confidentiality regarding the security and privacy of information obtained. Each member received a binder with the reference manual for California CRPs and CRP Guidelines and Protocols. Members understand that the scope of work defines the goals to be achieved for the year and reviewed it for clarification.
- The Calaveras CRP maintained consistent membership throughout the year. Membership continues to be made up of the Prevent Child Abuse Council with additional members (representing Probation and the community). Members represent Child Welfare, Public Health, Behavioral Health-Substance Abuse, Early Education, Public Schools and foster parents.
- Members discussed and followed up on recruitment of specific community individuals with an interest in the CRP activities. These include foster

¹ Information provided by the Census Bureau and the Center for Social Research, University of California at Berkeley Needell, B., Webster, D., Armijo, M., Lee, S., Dawson, W., Magruder, J., Exel, M., Glasser, T., Williams, D., Zimmerman, K., Simon, V., Putnam-Hornstein, E., Frerer, K., Cuccaro-Alamin, S., Lou, C.

parents, high school Peer Mentor Program personnel, the local college, and the District Attorney's office. The outcome of the recruitment was presented to the Calaveras County Board of Supervisors and a new recruitment press release was issued.

- The Calaveras Works and Human Services Agency's (CWHSA) Services Program Manager, provides monthly feedback from the Children's Services unit including county statistics regarding maltreatment recurrence, reunification, adoption, and permanency. This has provided the panel with a greater understanding of local changes in child welfare and areas requiring the most improvement.

Recommendations:

The Calaveras Works and Human Services Agency (CWHSA) can designate responsibility to provide ongoing leadership to:

1. Assemble a short-term work group (a Reunification Support team) to decide how to best support mothers in the Perinatal Substance Abuse Treatment Program at reunification. This was sited as the most critical time for relapse and when the most support is needed.
2. Continue to monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of Multidisciplinary Team Meetings. A member of the CRP attends these weekly meetings and has seen the value in bringing together a diverse group of agency representatives to make recommendations on services for children and families.
3. Seek opportunities for collaboration with local agencies that provide parent education, family support, in-home parent education and services related to child welfare.
4. Utilize existing or new mechanisms to provide opportunities for the client or parent voice to be heard when policies or strategies are developed and implemented.

Future Direction:

The Calaveras Citizen Review Panel discussed a variety of possibilities for the objectives of this funding cycle. It was decided that the panel would evaluate and address the needs of the Independent Living Program (ILP). The ILP provides training, services and programs to assist current and former foster youth achieve self-sufficiency prior to and after leaving the foster care system. Youth are eligible ILP services up to the day before their twenty-first birthday provided certain criteria are met. Some of the services provided through ILP include: daily living skills, money management, decision making, building self-esteem, financial assistance with college or vocational schools, educational resources, transitional housing and employment.

Youth transitioning out of foster care face many challenges from a lack of a supportive person in their lives; reproductive health, parenting and pre-parenting skills; college readiness, toxic stress of domestic violence and abuse; and housing after they leave foster care. An initial meeting was held with the ILP Coordinator to identify some of the larger concerns.

Submitted to Calaveras Works and Human Services Agency on 11/11/09
Submitted to CDSS/OCAP on 11/11/09

**Calaveras Works and Human Services Agency
Response to the Citizen's Review Panel's
Annual & Recommendations Report
(2008/2009 Program Year)**

The Calaveras Works and Human Services Agency's (CWHSA) Children's Services staff sincerely appreciates the members of the Calaveras County Citizen's Review Panel (CRP) for their willingness to assist us in improving our Child Welfare Services. We were pleased that you again chose to focus your efforts on strategizing ways to reduce the number of children who re-enter foster care within twelve months of reunifying with their parents. It is heart-breaking to have families that we have worked with so closely fail, especially for the children who are removed yet again from the parents that had seemingly overcome the barriers that they were faced with. Our foster care re-entry rates were still not at the level we wished for them to be, and we welcomed your suggestions for improvement in this area.

Here are our responses to the findings and/or recommendations from the Annual & Recommendations Report (2008/2009 Program Year):

1. Assemble a short-term work group (a Reunification Support team) to decide how to best support mothers in the Perinatal Substance Abuse Treatment Program at reunification. This was sited as the most critical time for relapse and when the most support is needed.

In addition to our Multi-Disciplinary Team (see #2 below), our Children's Services staff has been invited to attend periodic Behavioral Health Services' Children's Case Management team meetings. Attendees at these meetings include the parents, the BHS staff (Substance Abuse Program staff as well as Mental Health staff, when applicable) and other interested service providers and support people that are identified by the parents. This gives our staff the opportunity to work with those who know the family best to help determine what available services will be the most helpful to the family in maintaining their sobriety as well as the safety of their children once they are reunited. These meetings occur as needed, but generally no less than once per month. We are committed to continuing to attend these periodic meetings to come up with strategies to best support reuniting families.

Additionally, we hold Team Decision Making (TDM) meetings whenever there are significant changes in a family's situation, including but not limited to: Case Plan development; relative placement decisions; 3-month reviews with "fast track" cases (children under 3 years of age at the time of removal); 7-day notices from substitute care providers; 90-day Transitional Independent Living Plans (for children about to emancipate from foster care). Parents are either mandated or strongly encouraged to attend, and can invite any support people that they wish to include.

2. Continue to monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of Multidisciplinary Team Meetings. A member of the CRP, Robin Davis, attends these weekly meetings and has seen the value in bringing together a diverse group of agency representatives to make recommendations on services for children and families.

Calaveras County has a strong Multi-Disciplinary Team (MDT), and the CRP's Robin Davis has been a valuable addition. MDT meetings are a crucial part of the Juvenile Court process. Although the Welfare and Institutions Code mandates that a MDT meeting is held prior to the Dispositional Hearings, the CWHSA and our Juvenile Court Judge believe so strongly in the MDT process that we have agreed to hold an MDT meeting just prior to every Dependency Hearing.

We agree that continued monitoring and evaluation of the effectiveness of the MDT will be a helpful piece in preventing foster care re-entry. Either the Children's Services Supervisor or Program Manager will continue to periodically attend MDT meetings whenever issues arise or to implement new changes. Additionally, the MDT Chairperson changes annually. The Children's Services Program Manager and Supervisor will meet with the out-going and in-coming Chairpersons just prior to the transition to discuss any concerns or notable trends.

3. Seek opportunities for collaboration with local agencies that provide parent education, family support, in-home parent education and services related to child welfare.

As noted above, the MDT is an ideal setting for collaboration with other agencies. In addition, the Children's Services staff has representatives on virtually every local board, commission, coalition, council and committee that focus on child protection and safety. We are committed to continuing our representation in these existing collaborative efforts, as well as those that are created in the future.

4. Utilize existing or new mechanisms to provide opportunities for the client or parent voice to be heard when policies or strategies are developed and implemented.

There have not been any new policies or strategies that have been developed or implemented in the recent past, but we will keep this recommendation in mind for future policy and strategy development. Until then, in addition to the BHS Children's Case Management team meetings and TDMs, the Children's Services social workers are mandated to meet with parents in-person at least once a month during Family

Reunification and Family Maintenance to review their case plan and discuss any questions, concerns or issues they may have.

To summarize, here are the commitments we have made in this Response report:

1. Continue attending BHS Children's Case Management team meetings;
2. Continue to mandate or encourage parents to attend all TDMs;
3. Attendance at periodic MDT meetings by the Children's Services Program Manager or Supervisor to resolve issues and implement changes;
4. Facilitate meetings between the Children's Services Program Manager and Supervisor and the out-going and in-coming MDT Chairpersons annually, just prior to the transition, to discuss any concerns or notable trends;
5. Continue to have representation on all local child protection and safety collaborative efforts;
6. Include parents in the development and implementation of future policies and strategies.

Again, thank you for your thoughtful review and recommendations. We appreciate your hard work and dedication in helping us reduce the foster care re-entry rate in Calaveras County, and in improving Calaveras County's Children's Services in general. We are pleased to report that the most recent Quarterly Data Report (dated April 6, 2010) reflects that 3 in 27 children (11.1%) re-entered foster care between October 1, 2007 and September 30, 2008. The statewide average was 11.6% for the same time period. This is already a reduction from our previous statistic of 12.5%, and a significant reduction from our baseline statistic of 27.8%. Although we just missed the National goal of 9.9% (2 in 27 children), we recognize that re-entry for even one child is a tragedy. It is our sincere hope and belief that through the above efforts, the foster care re-entry rate will decrease further in the future.

Submitted to CRP: 5/10/2010 at 11:38 am

Submitted to OCAP: 5/10/2010 at 12:25 p.m

San Mateo County

County Profile:

San Mateo County is located in the western portion of the San Francisco Bay Area, directly below the city and county of San Francisco. It is one of California's most affluent counties and part of the "Silicon Valley," home of many high-tech firms.

The population for San Mateo County is approximately 712,690 residents of which 171,843 are children 18 years and younger. The breakdown of the county racial demographics are as follows: 67.2 percent Caucasian, 23.4 percent Latino/Hispanic, 24.2 percent Asian, 3.3 percent Black, 1.4 percent Native Hawaiian and other Pacific Islanders, less than 1 percent Native American Indians, and 3.4 percent report two or more races. The county child protection

agency received 4,438 child abuse referrals of which 563 were substantiated cases. There are 299 children in placement.²

Activities:

- Working with a site developer, CRP planned and implemented an interactive website www.smcrcp.org. It is designed to be the cornerstone of CRP's outreach efforts providing information about the mission and goals of the group, products of past work, and an opportunity for members of the public to contact CRP with thoughts and input and also a restricted access section for CRP members.
- The CRP developed and printed an informational brochure to use in outreach efforts. The brochure corresponds with the web site, using the logo that exists on the web. A distribution plan is being developed and the brochure will be translated into Spanish.
- The CRP developed and implemented an outreach plan for 2008-09:
 1. Place an article in the Community Information Program (CIP) newsletter.
 2. Develop two-way links from the CRP website to related websites.
 3. Add CRP information to the CIP website.
 4. Place CRP brochures in areas where members of the public have access (libraries, schools, adult education, Youth and Family Enrichment Services Hotline).
 5. Use member connections to place articles about CRP in appropriate newsletters.
- The San Mateo CRP developed an orientation manual for new members and made it available to all Panel members. In addition, an orientation process was adopted. It calls for new members to meet one on one with the Panel Chair(s) for an orientation session. Members new to the Panel this year have all completed the first orientation session and commented in the meetings that they found it very helpful.
- For the third year, the CRP completed a self-evaluation process, using a scaled rating system and written comments.
- The CRP reviewed the recommendation related information it received during the past year and agreed to a "finding" for each recommendation.
- The CRP followed up on the prior year's annual report recommendation, including any county and state responses to the recommendations.

Recommendations:

² Information provided by the Census Bureau and the Center for Social Research, University of California at Berkeley Needell, B., Webster, D., Armijo, M., Lee, S., Dawson, W., Magruder, J., Exel, M., Glasser, T., Williams, D., Zimmerman, K., Simon, V., Putnam-Hornstein, E., Frerer, K., Cuccaro-Alamin, S., Lou, C.

1. Children and Family Services should develop a Team Decision Making (TDM) Advisory Committee to assess whether the current model is working as intended, to review and analyze evaluation data for both the “process” and the “outcomes” of TDM meetings and to make recommendations for improvements based on that data.
2. Children and Family Services should support families in the child welfare system by providing the following:
 - a. Information and education about how the system works,
 - b. Peer support from other parents who have experience with the system
 - c. Relevant resources to enable families to be full and successful participants in the reunification process.

Submitted to CDSS/OCAP: October 30, 2009

Submitted to Beverly Beasley Johnson, Director San Mateo County Human Services Agency and Gary Beasley, Interim Director, Children and Family Services: November 15, 2009

RESPONSE TO RECOMMENDATIONS GO HERE

Ventura County

County Profile:

The County of Ventura is located approximately 50 miles northwest of Los Angeles. Ventura has a diverse economic base from tourism to technology. Early Spanish settlers described the area as the “land of everlasting summers” and named the region “San Buenaventura”, which means “good fortune”.

The population for Ventura County is approximately 797,740 residents of which 217,670 are children 18 years and younger. The breakdown of the county racial demographics are as follows: 87.3 percent Caucasian, 38 percent Latino/Hispanic, 6.6 percent Asian, 2.2 percent Black, 0.3 percent Native Hawaiian and other Pacific Islanders, 1.3 percent Native American Indians, and 2.3 percent report two or more races. The county child protection agency received 9,747 child abuse referrals of which 796 were substantiated cases. There are 603 children in placement.³

Activities:

³ Information provided by the Census Bureau and the Center for Social Research, University of California at Berkeley Needell, B., Webster, D., Armijo, M., Lee, S., Dawson, W., Magruder, J., Exel, M., Glasser, T., Williams, D., Zimmerman, K., Simon, V., Putnam-Hornstein, E., Frerer, K., Cuccaro-Alamin, S., Lou, C.

- Ventura County is a newly formed Citizen Review Panel and has used these initial months to build the infrastructure of the panel including orientation procedures and by-law development.
- Ventura County meets monthly and has developed and refined a work plan.
- There are three work groups that are beginning review activities to meet their goals. They are currently reviewing the effectiveness of placement systems for clients placed in group homes, foster homes or Residential Treatment Centers regarding data management, outcome measures and effective programming that meet client's needs.
- Ventura County Citizen Review Panel will provide recommendations in the next annual report.

State CRP

Meetings:

In calendar year 2009, the CCRP met four times: January 14, June 30, September 3, and November 12.

Activities:

- The CCRP looked at the way that counties develop their case plans for reunification. The County of Los Angeles Department of Children and Family Services, Family Team Decision Making Staff shared how they were involved in case plan development. Mr. Ken Borelli, a leader in child welfare services and social work practice discussed with the panel the role of the service plan, current service plan issues in regard to Team Decision Making, how parents can be better supported in implementing their service plans and the importance and influence of common practice vocabulary.
- The CCRP created and implemented a set of by-laws for the infrastructure of the panel.

Recommendation:

The California Citizen's Review Panel recommends that Division 31 Regulations be amended to read:

"205.1(b)(1) Specifically how the social worker engaged both the parent(s)/guardian(s) and child, in order to solicit meaningful input from the parent(s)/guardian(s) and child about the apparent problems, and possible causes of those problems, which require intervention.

205.1(b)(2) The perceptions of the parent(s)/guardian(s) and child of: i) the apparent problems, and possible causes of those problems, which require intervention, and ii) what could aid in problem resolution."

Submitted to CDSS/OCAP: May 28, 2010
 Submitted to Lee Ann Kelly, Acting Chief, Office of Child Abuse Prevention,
 California Department of Social Services, May 28, 2010

RESPONSE TO RECOMMENDATIONS GO HERE

California Citizen Review Panel Reporting Requirements

Citizen Review Panel Quarterly Reports:

All completed reports shall be submitted to OCAP prior to or on the assigned date ***via*** the CRP consultant. The CRP consultant will review the reports and submit to OCAP.

Quarter	Date of Submission to Consultant (optional)	Date of Submission to OCAP
January 1-March 31	April 20	April 30th
April 1-June 30	July 16	July 31st
July 1- September 30	October 15	October 31
October 1-December 31	January 15	January 31 st

Citizen Review Panel Annual Report

All completed reports shall be submitted to OCAP prior to or on the assigned date ***via*** the CRP consultant. The CRP consultant will review the reports and submit to OCAP.

Annual Report Time Periods covered	Date of Submission to Consultant	Date of Submission to OCAP
<u>July 1-Sept 30</u> Broken down into the following: <u>July 1-June 30</u> CRP Activity Report with Recommendations <u>July 1-Sept 30</u> Projected CRP activities	October 25-30	November 15th

Citizen Review Panel Recommendation Response timeframe:

- ❖ Once an annual report has been submitted to OCAP both the local counties and State CRP has 6 months within which to respond to any or all recommendations.

Budget Reporting:

Quarterly reports include a line item budget report that shows expenditures for the quarter reporting period.

Annual reports will include a line item budget report for the year's expenditures.

CRP Work plans: Will be updated yearly and due with the annual report. Any modifications made to the work plan during the course of the year will be submitted in writing to the CRP Consultant.

Citizen Review Panel
Annual & Recommendations Report
(2008/2009 Program Year)

County: Calaveras

Contact Person for this Report: Robin Davis

Date Submitted to OCAP: 11/11/09

Date Submitted to at the local County Agency: 11/11/09

Person Submitted to at the local County Agency: Mikey Habbestad

Please report on the Citizen Review Panel's activities per the items below and submit your response to CDSS, Office of Child Abuse Prevention via the Strategies Consultant no later than November 15, 2009.

1. County Profile (OCAP will provide current data from current annual report)

General Demographics

Ethnic make-up of county

Household income

2. Panel Activities

A. Panel structure and development

I. Membership (**Work plan Goal #1**)

Have there been any changes in membership or panel composition during the reporting period? The CRP maintained consistent membership throughout the year.

Membership continues to be made up of the Prevent Child Abuse Council with two additions (representing Probation and a community member). Members represent

Child Welfare, Public Health, and Behavioral Health – Substance Abuse, Early Education, Public Schools, and foster parents. The roster is attached.

Please discuss any activities the panel has engaged in specific to the recruitment of panel members to reflect community demographics and support creating or maintaining a diverse panel.

In the last month, members discussed and will follow up on recruitment of specific community individuals with an interest in the CRP activities. These include foster parents, high school Peer Mentor Program personnel, the local college, and the District Attorney's office. This month, we will present outcomes to the Calaveras County Board of Supervisors and will issue a new recruitment press release.

II. Panel Training (**Work plan goal #2**)

Please elaborate on the on-going orientation trainings of new CRP members. In addition, please describe any training activities the CRP has engaged in this past year as a means of on-going panel development.

All members have signed a statement of confidentiality regarding the privacy of information obtained. Each member received a binder with the reference material for California CRPs and Guidelines & Protocols. Members understand the Scope of Work defines the goals to be achieved for the year, and review it for clarification.

Mikey Habbestad, CWHSA Services Program Manager, provides monthly feedback from the Children's Services unit including county statistics regarding maltreatment recurrence, reunification, adoption, and permanency. This has provided the panel with a greater understanding of local changes in child welfare and areas requiring the most improvement.

III. Panel self evaluation activities – (**Work plan Goal #6**)

Has the panel undertaken any activities to help it assess its own performance during the reporting period? If so briefly describe these activities and the findings. If not, please describe when and how the panel will assess its performance.

The panel assessed its performance at the end of 2008 with individual self-evaluations. We will conduct another assessment as this next year's objectives are further identified and provide results in a Quarterly report.

3. CRP objectives (**Work plan Goals #3 & 5**)

For **each objective identified** in your work plan please report on the following:

- ♦Any demographics related to the CRP objective(s)
- ♦Description of the review activities and any technical assistance provided (example = case review, focus group, data review, State (Strategies) CRP consultant) to support your review work.

- ♦ Findings based on review activities
- ♦ Formal Recommendations based on findings (for County and State)
- ♦ Follow-up on the prior years annual report recommendations, including any County and State responses to the recommendations
- ♦ Discuss how the CRP recommendations will be disseminated to county, state officials as well as the public and how the CRP will handle any comments made.
- ♦ Future Directions – Briefly discuss the activities that the panel expects to undertake during the 2009/2010 program year- with an emphasis on July-Sept 2009 activities. (Please attach an updated work plan for next year)

Results from Recommendations

The primary goal of the CRP has been to research and address the recurrence and re-entry of children into the Foster Care System. Formal recommendations and responses have been submitted in the last two years. Calaveras County's rate was reduced from 18% to 12%, although the National standard is 9.9% or less.

The CRP assessed the effectiveness of new policies and procedures of the CWHSA and consumer agencies regarding re-entry into foster care. These included:

- Adapting intake and the Parent Education program
- Considering ways to offer in-home parent support
- More Parent involvement in developing case plans, especially tied to reunification services.
- Training for Social Workers
- Coordinate the efforts of Drug and Alcohol Abuse and Mental Health to reduce the rate of foster care re-entry in Calaveras County.

This was presented to the Board of Supervisors by the CWHSA regarding Foster Care Re-entry:

“Although our most recent statistic in this area is slightly below the national standard/goal, we welcome the opportunity to continue to work on some of the recommendations that were made during our PQCR, and by the CRP. Further, we anticipate that our newly developed Family Preservation program, as well as implementing Wraparound Services, re-implementing FGDMITDM, and our Behavioral Health Services' newly developed perinatal drug treatment program, the number of children re-entering foster care will continue to decline.”

The CRP followed up by beginning an assessment of one of the panel's recommendations to utilize the Perinatal Treatment Program. The CRP conducted focus group meetings with members of Behavioral Health staff and then with women in the program to assess needs and reasons for failure to reunify. They reported their most

challenging issues and this raised more questions about after-care for women in the program and a possible reunification support team.

The following recommendations were made:

The Calaveras Works and Human Services Agency (CWHSA) can designate responsibility to provide ongoing leadership to:

1. Assemble a short-term work group (a Reunification Support team) to decide how to best support mothers in the Perinatal Substance Abuse Treatment Program at reunification. This was sited as the most critical time for relapse and when the most support is needed.

2. Continue to monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of Multidisciplinary Team Meetings. A member of the CRP, Robin Davis, attends these weekly meetings and has seen the value in bringing together a diverse group of agency representatives to make recommendations on services for children and families.

3. Seek opportunities for collaboration with local agencies that provide parent education, family support, in-home parent education and services related to child welfare.

4. Utilize existing or new mechanisms to provide opportunities for the client or parent voice to be heard when policies or strategies are developed and implemented.

Future Directions

In this last quarter, the panel discussed a variety of possibilities for objectives of the new grant. It was decided to evaluate and address the needs of the Independent Living Program (ILP). The ILP provides training, services and programs to assist current and former foster youth achieve self-sufficiency prior to and after leaving the foster care system. Youth are eligible for ILP services up to the day before their 21st birthday provided certain criteria are met. Some of the services provided through ILP include: daily living skills, money management, decision making, building self-esteem, financial assistance with college or vocational schools, educational resources, transitional housing, and employment.

Youth transitioning out of foster care face many challenges from a lack of a supportive person in their lives; reproductive health, parenting and pre-parenting skills; college readiness, toxic stress of domestic violence and abuse; and housing after they leave foster care. An initial meeting was held with the ILP Coordinator to identify some of the larger concerns.

4. Public in-put (Work plan Goal # 4)

Briefly describe any public input that the panel obtained during the reporting period and how this input was taken into consideration when making your final recommendations for this annual report.

If you will be obtaining public input after this annual reports recommendations are developed and published briefly describe your public input process and outline the time frames for this process.

The Panel's Final Report was reviewed by Calaveras Works and Human Services Agency (CWHSA). They responded and updates of findings were reported to the Board of Supervisors in April.

Calaveras County Citizen Review Panel Members 2008-09
(also members of the Prevent Child Abuse Council Calaveras)

<p>Representative of Calaveras County Public Health Department: Robin Bunch, PHN Chair Calaveras County Public Health Department</p>
<p>Representative of Prevention & Treatment: Tina Marler, Vice Chair Bikers Against Child Abuse – Mother Lode (BACA)</p>
<p>Representative of Public & Private Schools Kathryn Eustis, Council Member Calaveras Youth Mentoring Program</p>
<p>Representative of Community/Civic Organizations Jennifer Goerlitz, Council Member UC Extension, 4-H</p>
<p>Representative of Calaveras Works-Human Services Agency Children's Svcs Mikey Habbestad, Council Member</p>
<p>Representative of Community/Civic Organizations Lisa Steffes, Council Member</p>
<p>Representative of Community/Civic Organizations Tracy Young, Council Member</p>
<p>Representative of Community/Civic Organizations Tammie Lee-Smith, Alternate</p>
<p>Robin Davis, PCACC/Children's Services Coordinator</p>

**Citizen Review Panel
Annual & Recommendations Report
(2008/2009 Program Year)**

County: San Mateo

Name: Patricia Brown, CRP Facilitator

Date Submitted to OCAP: October 30, 2009

Date & Person Submitted to at the local County Agency:
Beverly Beasley Johnson, Director, San Mateo County Human Services Agency (HSA)
And Gary Beasley, Interim Director, Children and Family Services (CFS)
Date: November 15, 2009

Please report on the Citizen Review Panel’s activities per the items below and submit your response to CDSS, Office of Child Abuse Prevention no later than November 15, 2009. See page two for information regarding submission.

1. **County Profile** (OCAP will provide current data from current annual report)
General Demographics and check with AB 636 data on DSS external web site for consistency.
Ethnic make-up of county
Household income

2. Panel Activities

A. Panel structure and development

I. Membership (Work plan Goal #1)

Have there been any changes in membership or panel composition during the reporting period?

The following table reflects the membership changes for the past year. The goal of recruiting a member from the Probation Department was achieved.

Membership as of 7/08	Affiliation	Membership as of 10/09	Affiliation
Jan Baumel	Retired educator	Jan Baumel	Licensed Education Psychologist, Retired Educator
David Cherniss	SM County Superior	David	SM County Court –

	Court	Cherniss	Juvenile Mediation Program
		Eddie Estrada	Manager, Differential Response, Youth and Family Enrichment Services
Ben Loewy	Administrator, SM County Office of Education	Ben Loewy	Administrator, SM County Office of Education
Katharine McClure	Retired educator		
Bonnie Miller	Public Defender's Panel	Bonnie Miller	Public Defender's Panel
Bernie Plotnikoff	Retired Child Abuse Prevention Professional	Bernie Plotnikoff	Retired Child Abuse Prevention Professional
Caitie O'Shea	Retired Special Education Administrator	Caitie O'Shea	Retired Special Education Administrator
Jamila Pounds	Edgewood Kinship Center	Jamila Pounds	Edgewood Kinship Center
		John Ragosta	Manager, Court Appointed Special Advocates
Ginny Stewart	Licensed Clinical Social Worker	Ginny Stewart	Licensed Clinical Social Worker
Linda Symons	San Mateo County Juvenile Probation	Linda Symons	San Mateo County Juvenile Probation
Gary Beasley	CFS Liaison	Gary Beasley	CFS Liaison
Total Members: 10		Total Members: 11	

Jamila Pounds served as Chair for the SMCRP during this period.

Patricia Brown continues to serve as facilitator for the SMCRP.

Please discuss any activities the panel has engaged in specific to the recruitment of panel members to reflect community demographics and support creating or maintaining a diverse panel.

SMCRP has taken the following outreach steps during the past year:

- *Website development: working with a web site developer, CRP planned and implemented an interactive web site (www.smcrp.org) during the past year. It is*

designed to be the cornerstone of CRP's outreach efforts providing information about the mission and goals of the group, products of past work, an opportunity for members of the public to contact CRP with thoughts and input and a restricted access section for CRP members.

- Brochure and logo: CRP also developed and printed an informational brochure to use in outreach efforts. The brochure corresponds with the web site, utilizing the logo that exists on the web. A distribution plan is being developed and the brochure will be translated into Spanish in the next quarter.
- Outreach plan

San Mateo CRP Outreach Plan 2008-09

Outreach Idea	Who	When
1. Place an article in the Community Information Program (CIP) newsletter	Pat was asked by Bernie to prepare this article. A draft was circulated to CRP for review	Completed. Article will be useful for placement in newsletters
2. Develop two-way links from the CRP website to related websites	<p>The following issues need to be addressed as links are established:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the relationship between CRP and the mission of the group; are the missions compatible? • how we communicate to request a group post CRP's link; where the link will be located on the site (under other resources?) <p>Possible links and agency contact information.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ KidsCal.org ○ Parents Helping Parent ○ Children's Collaborative Action Team (CCAT) ○ Family Service Agency ○ Child Care Coordinating Council (4 C's) ○ Edgewood Center 	This goal was not fully implemented because of concerns that links with non-governmental providers might be perceived as endorsements of their services.
3. Add CRP information	David will follow up about	Done

to the CIP website	steps that need to be taken	
4. Place CRP brochures in areas where members of the public have access (libraries, schools, adult education, Youth and Family Enrichment Services Hotline)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Volunteer Center ○ Board of Supervisor's chambers ○ HSA lobby ○ San Mateo County Citizen's Academy ○ Legal Aid ○ Core Service Agencies ○ Probation Dept. Lobby 	Ongoing
5. Use member connections to place articles about CRP in appropriate newsletters.	Explore possible newsletter placements -	Pending

Outreach activities completed

- Presentation to CCAT
- Bernie and Ben attend CCAT meetings. There is a meeting following the CRP meeting on Dec. 15. They will ask CCAT for time on a future agenda to present CRP's annual report and recommendations.
- Brochures have been distributed.
- Website has been maintained
- Article about CRP was published in the Community Information Program e-newsletter and CRP is included on the CIP website.

II. Panel Training (Work plan goal #2)

Please elaborate on the on-going orientation trainings of new CRP members. In addition, please describe any training activities the CRP has engaged in this past year as a means of on-going panel development.

This year, SMCRP developed an orientation manual for new members and made it available to all Panel members. In addition, an orientation process was adopted. It calls for new members to meet one on one with the Panel Chair(s) for an orientation session. Members new to the Panel this year have all completed the first orientation session and commented in the meetings that they found it very helpful.

During each meeting, SMCRP reviews information provided by CFS or other sources to assist with monitoring recommendation areas.

III. Panel self-evaluation activities – (Goal #3)

Has the panel undertaken any activities to help it assess its own performance during the reporting period? If so briefly describe these activities and the findings. If not, please describe when and how the panel will assess its performance.

For the third consecutive year, the Panel completed a self-evaluation process, using a scaled rating and written comments. This process was completed in September 2009 and the results are included below.

**San Mateo County Citizen Review Panel
Annual Panel Self-Evaluation
Tally Sheet
September 2009**

The San Mateo Citizen Review Panel engages in a self-evaluation annually. To facilitate the process for FY 2008-09, this form has been developed.

8 responses tallied

Scale = 1 (disagree) to 5 (agree)

1. CRP members take their role seriously and conscientiously prepare for each meeting.	1	2	3	4	5	Average = 33.5/8= 4.2	
2. CRP members place a high priority on regular meeting attendance.		1	2	3	4	5	Average = 32.5/8= 4.1
3. CRP is working hard to address priority issues that relate to the safety and welfare of children involved with the child welfare system in San Mateo County.		1	2	3	4	5	Average = 37.5/8= 4.7
4. CRP members feel informed enough to participate in the discussion of agenda items.		1	2	3	4	5	Average = 38/8= 4.8
5. CRP receives the technical assistance support it needs to do its job well.	1	2	3	4	5	Average = 31/8= 3.9	
6. CRP receives the information it needs from the Human Services Agency in an understandable format.		1	2	3	4	5	Average = 27.5/8 = 3.4
7. CRP receives the facilitation support it needs to do its work in an efficient and inclusive manner.	1	2	3	4	5	Average = 38/8= 4.8	
8. CRP members feel satisfaction with the		1	2	3	4	5	

contribution they are making to improving the safety and well-being of children in this community

Average = $24/8 = 3.0$

Suggestions for improving the performance of CRP:

- a) I am doing the best I can to attend. I am really not sure of the impact to safety of children or HSA. Without looking at CPS reports to the hotline and outcome or case files, how do we know? I think there should be some random sampling done and some form of liaison with the schools and churches in the community and review of probation reports with extensive CPS histories of cases with no action, refer out.
- b) The new members bring a welcome energy and knowledge to the panel. I look forward to receiving timely information from HSA and hearing directly from department heads.
- c) I feel we are doing the best with the information and assistance provided, however don't always feel the information we need is available or in a format allowing the most knowledgeable analysis for discussion or recommendations – I'd like to have some discussion and direction in creating or acquiring better information.
- d) More timely and appropriate response from CFS; More general group participation from members; How to expect members who are financially connected to CFS and HSA to give an unbiased opinion? Need to know what and how the state is using this information – or is it? This affects performance. What is meant by technical assistance? If part of it is from CFS, then we are not receiving as much as we should. If it refers to the facilitator, then she is doing a good job.
- e) As always, facilitation for this group is efficient and effective. In comparison to last year, it feels like we had much more productive meetings. We seemed to have moved in some directions in regards to our research and a fuller understanding of CWS. Our CWS liaison has been helpful in bringing different personnel to discuss areas of the CRP recommendations and monitoring plan. However, the flow of information was not consistent, which made it challenging to keep informed discussions going throughout the year.

The Panel reviewed and discussed the compiled evaluation information on October 19 at its regular meeting. The Panel members noted that while the rating for member satisfaction with service on the CRP (Question #8) had improved from last year, it was still received the lowest score. There was agreement to take time for more discussion of this issue at a future meeting and to try to identify what members feel would make their service more satisfying.

3. CRP objectives (Goal #4)

For each objective identified in your work plan please report on the following:

- **Any demographics related to the CRP objective(s)**
The demographics that relate to these recommendations reflect the demographics of the clients served by Child Welfare Services in San Mateo County.
- **Description of the review activities and any technical assistance provided (example = case review, focus group, data review, State (Strategies) CRP consultant) to support your review work.**
- **Findings based on review activities**

At the September CRP meeting, the Panel reviewed the relevant information it received during the past year and agreed to “findings” for each recommendation.

Recommendation in 2007-08 Annual Report	Findings (in Bold)
<p>Team Decision Making <i>1. Children and Family Services (CFS) should explore the thoughtful use of collaborative decision-making models (Team Decision Making, Family/ Student Study Teams, Family Group Conferencing, Family Mediation, etc.) to engage families and caregivers in productive partnerships to benefit children. CFS should look for opportunities to maximize the use of these models, increase referrals between models and promote quality and consistency in the implementation of these models.</i></p> <p><u>Monitoring:</u> Reports to CRP by TDM Manager</p>	<p>Findings: Children and Family Services (CFS) has made progress in expanding the use of Team Decision Making Meetings (TDMs) for placement planning. CFS has not developed and used a tool to evaluate the TDM process. Based on observation and anecdotal information, CRP believes Improvement is needed to ensure that the process used in TDMs allows full participation by the family (and youth when appropriate) in the development of the plan. CFS has not explored the use of other models such as family group conferencing and family mediation to assist families to address issues and resolve problems.</p> <p><u>Excerpts from CRP notes:</u> To monitor implementation of TDMs, CRP members participated in TDMs, received reports from Dorothy Torres, Supervisor of TDM as well as Gary Beasley, interim Director of CFS.</p> <p>3/16/09 - Dorothy Torres In the past 6 months, there has been an average of 28 TDMs/ month and an average of 4-6 transitional conferences each month (dealing with issues such as housing, education, employment, documents,</p>

connections for support). CFS aims to provide two planning sessions for youth as they are nearing exit from the system – one session occurs when they are 17 and the second 90 days before emancipation

- a. The TDM team is facilitating non-placement meetings as well (ex. closing plan)
- b. TDM continues to use a strength-based approach – the use of cultural “brokers” is being considered to help CFS staff understand the families cultural values and help the families understand the CFS “culture”
- c. Very few children entering the system are receiving TDMs because of the difficulty of scheduling and location. Gary noted the need for available community locations around the county.
- d. There is a plan to use TDMs to address disproportionality with African American males – a model that does not require parent participation – TDMs would occur on entry
- e. TDM staff has received training on handling grief and loss

5/18/09 – Marissa Saludes, presented the Q3 recommendations in Q3 AB 636 report which echoed CRP recommendations included: “Evaluate the Team Decision Making (TDM) Program and its effectiveness in stabilizing placements. Analyze practices such as identifying whether emergency TDMs are fully utilized as a strategy to preserve placements. TDM can also potentially affect other AB636 measures such as reunification, re-entry, and permanency. Expanding the analysis to include these other qualitative outcomes and presenting them to Social Workers will help in getting staff buy-in that will lead to consistent practice of conducting TDM at every change of placement.”

7/20/09 – “Dorothy told CRP that she was working with Quality Assurance and the Policy Unit to design an outcome evaluation for TDMs that will address whether the product of the TDM, the action plan, has been (or is being) implemented two months after the meeting. The approach will be to contact social workers to see if the action plan is moving ahead

	<p>and ask them whether the process was helpful in managing the case.</p> <p>CRP continued to request information about how the TDM process is being evaluated. At the 8/17/09 meeting CRP received a draft process evaluation form to review – CFS also wants to assess the longer-term impact of TDMs– are they really ensuring better placements?</p> <p>CRP members had many questions for Dorothy, most relating to concerns about the preparation of all TDM participants and the effectiveness of the TDM process in enabling family members to contribute to the placement plan that is being developed. CRP raised the issue of lack of consistency in the way meetings were facilitated and Dorothy agreed that this was a problem. While facilitators receive consistent training in the basics of the TDM model, they do not get sufficient coaching and feedback to ensure its consistent implementation. CRP members felt that if family members are not full participants in developing the placement plan, they are not as likely to follow through on its implementation. CRP emphasized its interest in “how” the plan get developed and concern that many times the “professionals” come into the meeting with a plan they want to “sell” to the family. CRP emphasized the TDM should be the family’s meeting, not a CFS meeting. There were specific questions about how family members are prepared to participate and the need for a reiteration of the instructions as the TDM meeting is getting started.</p> <p>CRP urged Dorothy (1) to begin using a simple written feedback form for TDM participants (similar to the form being used by Orange County) and (2) ask facilitators to include instructions for participants in their opening remarks.</p>
<p>Re-Entry</p> <p>2. CFS should fully implement its System Improvement Plan (SIP) goal of using the case review process as a tool</p>	<p>Findings:</p> <p>CFS has implemented the case review process through quarterly sessions involving social workers. One area of review is re-entry; Two CRP members have participated in these reviews.</p> <p>The quality of the AB 636 reports has improved</p>

for improving practices in re-entry cases. CRP will participate in this case review approach when possible and may, in addition, utilize an independent case review process for re-entry cases.

Monitoring

- Twice yearly report to CRP from PQR case review committee
- Quarterly update on re-entry data from AB 636 report

greatly in the past year and the more understandable format provides timely and relevant information.

Excerpts from CRP notes:

11/08 – AB 636 report – “CFS met one of the four reunification standards –the re-entry rate for this quarter was the lowest since April 2003-March 2004. It improved by 16.4 percent from the last quarter.”

2/23/09 – The AB 636 Q2 2008 report was a combination of the AB 636 comparison of San Mateo’s performance with Federal standard and a 10 year review of CFC’s performance on all standard areas. SMC in Q2 2008 met the two safety standards, failed to meet all four reunification standards, met three of the five adoption standards, met one of three long term outcomes and none of the placement stability outcomes.

3/16/09 – Report on the Program Quality Case Review process used by the County as part of its System Improvement Plan. A draft summary of the recommendations of the team that recently visited San Mateo County was distributed to CRP and Panel members were asked to review the information and come to the next meeting prepared to discuss the recommendations that were submitted by the PQCR team. The PQCR team was impressed with the rich array of services available in San Mateo County and found that San Mateo County youth were familiar with their rights and with the resources available to them. This comment led to the discussion of the need for providers to be familiar with the rights of young people and with the resources available to them.

4/20/09 – “Ginny reported on her participation in the recent case review process conducted by CFS to monitor re-entry cases. She felt the process was effective and professional and that the social workers were very supportive of her involvement. Each worker sat at a computer with access to case files and had hard copy files.

	<p>They were each reviewing 5 or 6 cases in which they had not been involved. 25 cases are being reviewed during each review period. Cases are pulled from all stages of involvement with the system. As the review proceeds, notes are posted on each case file. After the review process, the manager who oversees PQR reviews the comments and when appropriate speaks with supervisors and workers to give feedback. This process is part of the continuous quality improvement efforts associated with accreditation.</p> <p>CRP was given the complete report on the Peer Quality Case Review conducted for Child Welfare and Juvenile Probation Services in February 2009.</p> <p>The Peer Quality Case Review (PQCR) is one of three activities mandated by the California-Children and Family Services Review (C-CFSR, 2004) that helps counties assess the effectiveness of child welfare practices across child safety, permanency and stability as well as family connections and well-being. San Mateo County Children and Family Services (CFS) and Probation's Juvenile Division partnered to study the rate of re-entry into the foster care system within 12 months of reunification. Children and Family Services focused on re-entry into foster care as their focus area for their initial PQCR in 2006. Although statistics have improved, the Human Services Agency continues to strive toward improvement in this area and in meeting the national standard. Findings may be used to inform improvement recommendations for child welfare practice, service capacity and training. Probation also focused on re-entry into foster care as their focus area for their initial PQCR in 2006.</p>
<p>Parenting Education</p> <p>3a. CFS should continue to implement its evidence-based parent</p>	<p>Findings 3a: CFS has continued to implement its evidence-based parent education program and has added curriculum relating to adolescents. CFS makes</p>

education program (addressing barriers such as transportation whenever possible) and explore expansion of this program to include parents of younger children and parents of teenagers.

Monitoring

CRP review report of program implementation at end of first year (Jan-Dec 08)

3b. CFS should continue to pursue collaboration with Juvenile Probation to promote consistency in parent education programs and maximize resources directed to parenting education.

Monitoring

CRP liaison and Probation representative update CRP twice during upcoming year: January and June 2009

transportation available to parents participating in the program. Materials for parents are available in English and Spanish. Not all parents participate in this program.

Excerpts from CRP notes:

1/26/09 – “Gary provided the Panel with an update on the implementation of the Parent Education Program, an evidence based curriculum developed by the Lutra Group and available in English and Spanish versions. He reported that one reason this curriculum was selected as that it involved parents and their children in joint sessions where parenting skills could be applied and coaching provided. Case aides from Children and Family Services attend the sessions and work directly with the families. They are able then to communicate with social workers about how to best support families.

Last year, there was no component addressing parent-teen interactions, but this new focus has been added this year, as of January. 13 families with teens, some with teens as parents themselves, are participating.

Findings 3b:

Through contacts made at SMCRP, CFS and Juvenile Probation have collaborated in providing training to both Probation and Child Welfare Families and to train staff members to teach the parent education program – four probation staff members have been trained, but implementation may be hampered by severe fiscal constraints.

Excerpts from CRP notes:

1/26/09 Gary reported that a number of families already involved with probation are in the parent education program. Their presence has required another look at curriculum, since part of the instruction relates to teaching parents how to navigate the “system” they are in. Gary noted that there is probably capacity to accept direct referrals from other sources. He will look into this idea and give CRP an update in February.

	<p>One other potential positive outcome of this parent education program is the development of a <i>parent as partner/advocate</i> program, since parents who successfully complete the program and exit the system could be very helpful as parenting instructors and/or participants in TDM and other settings.</p>
<p>Accessible information materials</p> <p>4a. CFS should continue efforts to ensure that all materials used to educate families, caregivers and members of the public about the child welfare system are understandable and accessible and implement a consistent process to ensure distribution of these materials to all parents involved with CFS.</p> <p><u>Monitoring</u> CRP review all current materials used to explain child welfare system to those outside of the system – February 2009 and provide feedback to CFS</p> <p>4b. CFS should seek feedback from those who use the materials to ensure their effectiveness.</p> <p><u>Monitoring</u> Report from CFS manager about efforts to obtain feedback from users of materials. April 2009</p>	<p>Findings 4a: CRP remains concerned that materials used to educate family members about the child welfare system are not fully understandable. CRP recognizes CFS efforts to provide workers with “cheat sheets” to help them explain the information to families</p> <p><u>Excerpts from CRP notes:</u> 8/17/09: Panel members continued to express concern about the need to ensure that written materials used to educate family members and youth are understandable for those recipients. There was support for CFS to begin using the updated education material available on the State Court website.</p> <p>Findings 4b: During the Council on Accreditation review, parents and caregivers were asked by CFS to provide feedback on materials, but CRP did not review this feedback. This process was associated with accreditation and it has not been used consistently and it is not clear whether the feedback given during the COA process was used.</p>

<p>4c. CFS should provide these materials to community partners so that they can assist parents to understand the child welfare system.</p> <p><u>Monitoring</u> Report from CFS manager about efforts to distribute materials to community partners and engage their help in explaining the child welfare system to parents, guardians, others. April 2009</p>	<p>Findings 4c: While materials are made available to community partners, it is not clear whether partners are asked to assist with explaining the CWS to family members.</p>
<p>Differential Response</p> <p>5. CFS should examine the impact of recent changes in the approach to differential response to determine if levels of family engagement have increased, and if participation in Path I has decreased the number of repeat referrals and entry into the child welfare system.</p> <p><u>Monitoring</u> Utilize data collected by CFS to monitor effectiveness of DR – receive and review regular implementation reports twice during 2009.</p>	<p>Findings: While CFS has received some information about the impact of Differential Response, indicated in the County Response to CRP recommendations, CRP has not seen the data used by CFS to monitor DR implementation. Current fiscal constraints may threaten the continuation of this program.</p>

During this reporting period, SMCRP requested and received extensive technical assistance in the form of information about how the effectiveness of team decision making is assessed in other communities implementing the Annie E. Casey Foundation

Model. This information was very helpful both to CRP and to San Mateo County Children and Family Services.

Formal Recommendations (for County and State)

Recommendations for 2009-10 [for the SMCRP 2008-09 Annual Report]
<p>1. Children and Family Services should develop a Team Decision Making (TDM) Advisory Committee to assess whether the current model is working as intended, to review and analyze evaluation data for both the "process" and the "outcomes" of TDM meetings and to make recommendations for improvements based on that data.</p> <p><u>Monitoring:</u> CRP will receive quarterly reports from the TDM Advisory Committee</p>
<p>2. Children and Family Services should support families in the child welfare system by providing the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">(a) information and education about how the system works,(b) peer support from other parents who have experience with the system(c) relevant resources to enable families to be full and successful participants in the reunification process. <p><u>Monitoring:</u> Review of information and education materials and processes, updates on development of a "parent as partner" program, review of resources available to families, input from families re. their understanding of and ability to participate in the child welfare system</p>

Note: This year SMCRP decided to limit itself to two recommendations, because of the severe fiscal constraints facing Children and Family Services (and other parts of the Child Welfare System) and to enable more in-depth review and monitoring of these two important areas of interest.

Follow-up on the prior years annual report recommendations, including any County and State responses to the recommendations:

CRP received the following written response to its recommendations in August 2009.

San Mateo County Human Services Agency
CHILDREN & FAMILY SERVICES (CFS)
 Response to
Citizens Review Panel (CRP)
2007-2008 Annual Report and
Recommendations for 2008-2009

County/State Child Welfare Agency	San Mateo County Human Services Agency, Children & Family Services
Name of Contact Person	Gary Beasley
Contact Person's Title	Interim Director, Children & Family Services

1. *CFS should explore the thoughtful use of collaborative decision-making models (Team Decision Making, Family/Student Study Teams, Family Group Conferencing, Family Mediation, etc.) to engage families and caregivers in productive partnerships to benefit children. CFS should look for opportunities to maximize the use of these models, increase referrals between models and promote quality and consistency in the implementation of these models.*

In the 2008-09 term, Children and Family Services expanded its use of Team Decision Making (TDM) meetings as part of its overall strategy to ensure families are engaged and participating in decisions involving youth in the child welfare system. Through the TDM process, a collaborative child support network consisting of HSA, Mental health, CBOs and family members is convened at each instance in which a child changes placement. The goal of these collaborative meetings is to allow families to select individuals with whom they feel comfortable to participate in discussions surrounding placements, who may then assist the parents in advocating for themselves. By encircling families in a network of support, TDM meetings empower families to take an active role in the design and implementation of an action plan, which leads to more cooperative participation and higher reunification rates.

CFS has taken steps toward working with County Counsel and the Private Defenders Office to educate them on the purpose and goals of TDMs, and to secure their support and participation, when necessary, in the process. It is expected this promising relationship will continue to grow in the coming year, as CFS and the legal team pursue cooperation in refining the TDM model.

In addition to engaging families in child welfare decisions and family plans, the TDM process has also been an important tool in CFS's commitment toward addressing disproportionate outcomes for children of color involved in the system. The TDM

meeting environment allows CFS to take a more thoughtful approach to considering cultural norms and how they affect families.

CFS continues to make progress towards ensuring that TDM meetings are a collaborative process, and that when appropriate, families are referred to other county and community resources that meet their needs. CFS has relationships with an expansive network of family engagement partners, allowing CFS to make referrals that reflect the dynamics of each family and their unique challenges. During the TDM meeting, families may be referred to providers for mental health services, intensive in-home services, differential response, mediation services, kinship support services, or to a regional Family Resource Center. Recommendations may be made during the TDM meeting that families participate in Family Self Sufficient Teams, or other types of Multi-Disciplinary Team meetings. Families may also be connected with community-based services such as the local YMCA or Boys & Girls Club. When appropriate, the Asian American Recovery Services is invited to TDM meetings, and for families involving children under the age of five, staff from the Pre-to-Three program are invited. The partners identified above are a representative, but not exhaustive, list of community resources families may be referred to.

In addition to serving as community resources that support families beyond the TDM meeting, many of these partners offer their buildings as locations in which TDM meetings can take place. The level of support offered to families by CFS and its partners during the TDM process contributes to the larger goals of reunification or other forms of placement stability.

2. CFS should fully implement its System Improvement Plan (SIP) goal of using the case review process as a tool for improving practices in re-entry cases. CRP will participate in this case review approach when possible and may, in addition, utilize an independent case review process for re-entry cases.

As part of the System Improvement Plan (SIP) CFS has been conducting quarterly Qualitative Internal Peer Case Record Reviews, wherein identified cases are reviewed using an evaluation tool developed in alignment with the Council on Accreditation (COA) standards. CRP members Ginny Stewart and Jamila Pounds have been participating in this quarterly review process. It is anticipated that one hundred case records will be reviewed during the fiscal years 2008-09 and 2009-10 term, of which approximately 13 percent are re-entry cases.

The SIP evaluation tool ensures a systematic approach is applied to each case record review, and allows CFS to ensure best practice models of service delivery are being implemented. Through this process, CFS is able to identify and address any deficiencies that are discovered. Data from the quarterly case record reviews is analyzed for trends on positive outcomes and areas for improvement, and incorporated in larger agency-wide self evaluation processes. Results from the analyses are disseminated to program managers and supervisors, and made available for all CFS staff to review.

3a. CFS should continue to implement its evidence-based parent education program (addressing barriers such as transportation whenever possible) and explore expansion of this program to include parents of younger children and parents of teenagers.

CFS has a contract with Lutra Group, which provides training to social workers and childhood education instructors in the Strengthening Families Program (SFP) curriculum. The Parent Education program was expanded in fiscal year 2008-09 to include an SFP curriculum component on parents of children ages 3-5 years. CFS also entered into a contract with Melissa Dulla to co-facilitate the new curriculum, along with Cañada College. The SFP curriculum is an evidence-based parent education series, and has been well received by participating families.

In December, 2009, CFS purchased the SFP teen curriculum component, and offered one session during the 2008-09 term. The addition of this component allowed CFS to expand its collaboration with Juvenile Probation, as many of the parents and families participating in the teen courses have engagement with the Juvenile Probation Department. CFS will be increasing its capacity in the upcoming year to offer more sessions on parents of teenagers.

In addition to offering more sessions for parents of young children and teenagers, the Parent Education classes have been held in regional locations in community buildings throughout the county to make them more accessible for families. While transportation is not provided, the goal is that by offering the classes in regional locations, transportation will be less of an obstacle for parents. CFS views these classes as an important service that provides families with the tools to implement positive parenting techniques and learn life skills that benefit the family as a whole, and serve as a potential deterrent to negative engagement with the child welfare system.

In the upcoming year, CFS will be exploring the development of a 'Parent Partnership Program', using graduates from the Parent Education program who have demonstrated leadership qualities as parent mentors. The Parent Education forum will be a great opportunity for CFS to work with potential parent mentors, and leverage their success to engage even more parents in family support.

3b. CFS should continue to pursue collaboration with Juvenile Probation to promote consistency in parent education programs and maximize resources directed to parenting education.

CFS is pleased to have been collaborating with Juvenile Probation with respect to the Parent Education program. Juvenile Probation families were invited to participate in the parent education classes, and their referrals represented approximately 2/3 of the parents present for the SFP teen curriculum class.

As well as being represented among the participating families, Juvenile Probation has collaborated with CFS in a significant way by having one of its Probation Officer staff

attend the 'Train the Trainer' program, qualifying the Officer to now team with CFS in teaching future courses. This partnership will strengthen the relationship between CFS and Juvenile Probation in moving forward with the parent education classes, and will contribute to ensuring consistent messages are disseminated to families.

4a. CFS should continue efforts to ensure that all materials used to educate families, caregivers and members of the public about the child welfare system are understandable and accessible and implement a consistent process to ensure distribution of these materials to all parents involved with CFS.

As part of the COA accreditation process, CFS undertook a review of all materials provided to families to ensure the documentation was consistent with best practices. A "Your Rights Documentation" form was developed that is issued to every parent at the point of initial contact, which confirms all materials related to client rights were received, and that the parent's preferred language choice is captured. The materials provided to parents during the initial contact include (1) A Parent's Guide to Child Protective Services Investigation, (2) Publication 13 *Rights and Responsibilities Publication*, (3) Parent's Guide to Foster Care, (4) Letter Regarding Shelter Care / Receiving Home, (5) Judicial Court Information Sheet (JV050), (6) Dependency Court: How It Works (JV055), (7) Child's Right (if applicable).

Materials given to families are available online, and in seven languages: English, Samoan, Simple Chinese, Spanish, Tagalog, Tongan, and Traditional Chinese.

4b. CFS should seek feedback from those who use the materials to ensure their effectiveness.

A parent review system, wherein a sampling of parents reviewed all documentation for content and ease of understanding, was conducted as part of the COA accreditation process. During this test review phase, parents were given the opportunity to comment on the forms and recommend changes. This feedback was incorporated into the final documentation that is now given to clients.

Materials developed by CFS have been shared with community and contracted partners, and a quality assurance review process, consistent with COA accreditation standards, is underway. This review process will ensure that feedback is solicited from staff, contracted and voluntary partners who interact with CFS clients. Furthermore, an internal survey on customer service is available to clients in each regional office.

4c. CFS should provide these materials to community partners so that they can assist parents to understand the child welfare system.

The forms and documentation given to parents regarding the child welfare system have been distributed and are available to community partners including the Family Resource Centers, contracted partners that are service providers to clients, and other county

entities that engage with CFS clients such as Prevention and Early Intervention, Juvenile Probation and Mental Health.

While the clarification of the forms that came out of the COA accreditation process has resulted in a more simplified dissemination of information, CFS will examine opportunities for outreach to community providers to make sure a clear and consistent message is conveyed.

5. *CFS should examine the impact of recent changes in the approach to differential response to determine if levels of family engagement have increased, and if participation in Path I has decreased the number of repeat referrals and entry into the child welfare system.*

Engagement rates for the Differential Response program have been between 75 and 80 percent, with Path I engagement comprising approximately 10 percent of all referrals. Currently the data suggests no correlation between Path I referrals and entry into the child welfare system, as families engaged through Path I are typically not likely candidates to have entered the system at the point of referral.

For Path II referrals, however, CFS is observing a trend towards less entry into the child welfare system for families engaged at this referral level. This decrease in referrals is particularly notable among families with children in the 0-5 age group population. The larger impact of this has been a decreasing caseload for CFS, suggesting the funds used to support differential response have resulted in an overall cost savings to the County. Secondly, diverting potentially at-risk families to community resources allows them to be proactively engaged in the early intervention supports required for positive family functioning, rather than having CFS respond once the family is experiencing dysfunction and crisis. In this capacity, differential response serves as a preventative measure against families entering the child welfare system. Further empirical analysis of the data surrounding differential response and entry cases is necessary to understand more fully how the two statistically correlate, but preliminary evidence suggests the program measurably benefits both families and CFS.

4. Public in-put (Work plan Goal # 4)

Briefly describe any public input that the panel obtained during the reporting period and how this input was taken into consideration when making your final recommendations for this annual report.

The only public input received by SMCRP during the past year related to concerns that were outside the scope of CRP. However, the Panel reviewed the concerns presented and took steps to ensure that they were referred to the appropriate oversight group.

If you will be obtaining public input after these annual reports and recommendations are developed and published, briefly describe your public input process and outline the time frames for this process.

Members of the public can provide input to SMCRP through the following routes:

- *Written communication*
- *Contact with any member of the Panel or the facilitator*
- *Through the CRP website*

Each year, SMCRP makes a formal presentation of its Annual Report and Recommendations to the Children's Collaborative Action Team, a group of government and community based organizations that meets regularly to coordinate and integrate services for children and families. This presentation is generally done in February or March, based on the CCAT agenda. At this time, CCAT members are asked for questions and feedback. Once input is received, it is reviewed by the Panel Chair (co-chairs) and placed on the next regular CRP agenda if appropriate.

Roster
San Mateo County Citizen Review Panel
November 2009

Name	Affiliation
Baumel, Jan	Licensed Educational Psychologist and Retired Special Educator
Cherniss, David	San Mateo County Courts - Juvenile Mediation Program
Estrada, Eddie	Manager, Differential Response Program, Youth and Family Enrichment Services
Loewy, Ben	Administrator, SM County Office of Education
Miller, Bonnie	Public Defenders Office
O'Shea, Kathleen (Caitie)	Special Education Administrator
Plotnikoff, Bernie	Community member, Retired Child Abuse Prevention Professional
Pounds, Jamila, Chair	Edgewood Center
Ragosta, John	Manager, Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA)
Stewart, Ginny, Vice Chair	Licensed Clinical Social Worker
Symons, Linda	Manager, Juvenile Probation Services San Mateo County Probation



California Citizen's Review Panel Meetings 2009

July 30, 2008

August 11, 2008

January 15, 2009

March 30, 2009

Introduction

The State of California Department of Social Services (CDSS) is mandated to have three Citizen Review Panels in order to draw down CAPTA funding from the Federal Government. Two of the Citizen Review Panels - San Mateo County and Calaveras County review and then make recommendations to their respective counties and the state. The California Citizen's Review Panel (CCRP) acts as the Citizen's Review Panel for the State of California Department of Social Services.

The California Citizen's Review Panel (CCRP) made the decision early in its creation to examine the California Child Welfare System sequentially. The panel began by evaluating the methodology used by California Counties to receive and respond to Child Abuse Hotline calls. The State Department of Social Services was in the process of implementing an assessment tool to better support child welfare workers in making an evaluation of Child Abuse hotline calls as well as providing child welfare workers with the best tools possible to help in making critical case assessments and decisions.

Although most California Counties had decided to use Standard Decision Making (SDM) a handful of counties decided that they didn't want to use SDM and set about creating another evaluative tool. They worked together to develop a new tool called the Comprehensive Assessment Tool (CAT). The CCRP found that the CAT was lacking and recommended that SDM should be used uniformly in all 58 counties.

Because California is a State run, County administered system it is difficult for the State Agency to mandate County practice to ensure some uniformity in the delivery of child welfare services. The CCRP found this to be a bit frustrating as any recommendations they might make could only turn into recommendations from the State Agency. There was much discussion over the sort of recommendations we could make that could be implemented by the Department.

For the past two years the CCRP has been looking at the way that Counties develop case plans for reunification. Our goal was to come up with recommendations that CDSS could implement through changing existing State Regulations. This was a two year project.

Our goals were two-fold:

- 1) Make recommendations to SDSS that they have control over and, if they are in agreement with the CCRP recommendations by making some regulation changes.
- 2) The CCRP's second goal was to develop and pass a set of by-laws for the Panel.

The panel was successful in completing both of these goals.

Case Plans and the California Child Welfare System

Initially the California Citizen's Review Panel discussed their perceptions and notions about current practice concerning Reunification Case Plans and the California Child Welfare System. Much discussion and debate followed and the following concerns were agreed upon:

- Case Plans look and sound difficult for families to navigate – is someone walking the family through the process?
- Are the services being mandated easily available?
- Some families are asked to partake of services that do not apply to the issues or concerns of the family.
- Prioritization - what is the most important part of the plan?
- Are the plans too generic and cookie cutter?
- What is the service array that is available?
- Who makes the Case Plan?
- What is the training of the child welfare worker who makes the plan?

- Who reviews the Case Plan?
- Has the child welfare worker's Supervisor met the family?
- Is the family involved in making the plans? Or are they told?
- Can we simplify plans?
- Are we setting families up for failure?
- How does the Family to Family initiative fit into the development of Case Plans?
- Is CWS/CMS driving the case plan or visa versa? Do the services build into the State's computer system limit case plan thinking?

CWS/CMS

Many CCRP members were concerned about the State's SAQUIS system CWS/CMS. It was felt by many that the computer program was limiting the thinking of child welfare workers. The Department is in the process of revamping the system and the CCRP felt strongly that the new program needed to allow child welfare workers more flexibility. The Panel devoted a good deal of time to the topic. The CCRP ultimately learned that the County Welfare Director's Association of California (CWDA) had already formed a workgroup to address specifically the Case Plans part of the new system. The Panel reviewed and felt comfortable with their recommendations.

Family to Family Initiative – Family Team Decision Making

The County of Los Angeles Department of Children and Family Services was kind enough to allow its Family Team Decision Making Staff share how they were involved in case plan development. The CCRP was extremely impressed with the enthusiasm and competence of the Los Angeles County Staff as well as their program.

There were concerns expressed by Panel members concerning the parent's role in these meetings as well as how the use of the Team Decision Making Meetings seemed to vary county to county. For the most part when parents are invited to the meetings they have no one there to support them and the rest of the table is staffed by professionals. There was a general feeling that if a case plan was being generated the parent might feel overwhelmed and unable to grasp or fully understand what was happening. The Panel felt that the use of a Parent Partner as a support for might help the parent better navigate these types of meetings.

The Panel invited Ken Borelli a local, state and national leader in child welfare services and social work practice, and recently retired after 36 with the Department of Family and Children's Services of Santa Clara County. Mr. Borelli discussed the role of the service plan; current service plan issues in regards to Team Decision Making and

comprehension and how we can better support our parents implement their service plans. Ken also discussed with the panel the importance and influence of common practice vocabulary.

Mr. Borelli believes that Case Plans also called "Service Plans" should be interactive and not a legal document. Mr. Borelli asked the panel at what level and for whom is the case plan written. He discussed with the panel a way where we could bring the families and the courts together. He suggested a tool that would be used for the courts or a summary tool used for the families to better help bridge the gap.

The discussion turned to how it would be nice to see case plans from the perspective of the child. Mr. Borelli also stressed how important the first initial meeting is with the family to discuss the case plans. Ideas to focus on would be a comprehensible case plan with correct/plain language, parent involvement and at a 3rd or 4th grade level. The panel discussed looking at the Core training for Case Planning.

Generally, it after many interviews and presentations the CCRP felt that Case Plan Development needed to involve the parent on a level that they could understand as well as include the child if age appropriate. It was also felt that the array of services available to Parents should be expanded as money becomes available.

The panel had many recommendations which would be excellent ideas for Counties but had decided to provide the State with recommendations that the Department of Social Services could implement.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

The California Citizen's Review Panel recommends that Division 31 Regulations be amended to read:

"205.1(b)(1) Specifically how the social worker engaged both the parent(s)/guardian(s) and child, in order to solicit meaningful input from the parent(s)/guardian(s) and child about the apparent problems, and possible causes of those problems, which require intervention.

205.1(b)(2) The perceptions of the parent(s)/guardian(s) and child of: i) the apparent problems, and possible causes of those problems, which require intervention, and ii) what could aid in problem resolution."

California Citizen's Review Panel

2009 Membership Roster

Name	Affiliation
Mara Bernstein	Center for Families, Children and the Courts, Judicial Council of CA Administrative Office of the Courts
Mary Butler	Chief Probation Officer - California
Mike Carll	California Parent Leadership Team (CPLT) Parent Leader, Parents Anonymous of California
Kate Cleary Chairperson, CCRP	Executive Director, Consortium for Children
Kelly Cleary	CCRP Coordinator
Nanette Gledhill Membership Secretary, CCRP	Cal-ICWA Director of Operations
Corene Kendrick	Youth Law Center
Pamela Maxwell	California Parent Leadership Team (CPLT) Parent Leader, Parents Anonymous of California
John Neiman	Attorney (Santa Cruz Co.), Assistant Director (Santa Clara Co) Juvenile Defenders
James Michael Owens, JD Vice Chairperson, CCRP	Assistant County Counsel, Training & Litigation Division, LA County, California County Counsel Association

