

# Involving Citizens in the Child Protection System



# Working with the Citizen Review Panels

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Why Chisago and  
Washington Counties?

# You must have "buy-in".

- ✓ Administrators
- ✓ County Board
- ✓ Staff



# Staff Role

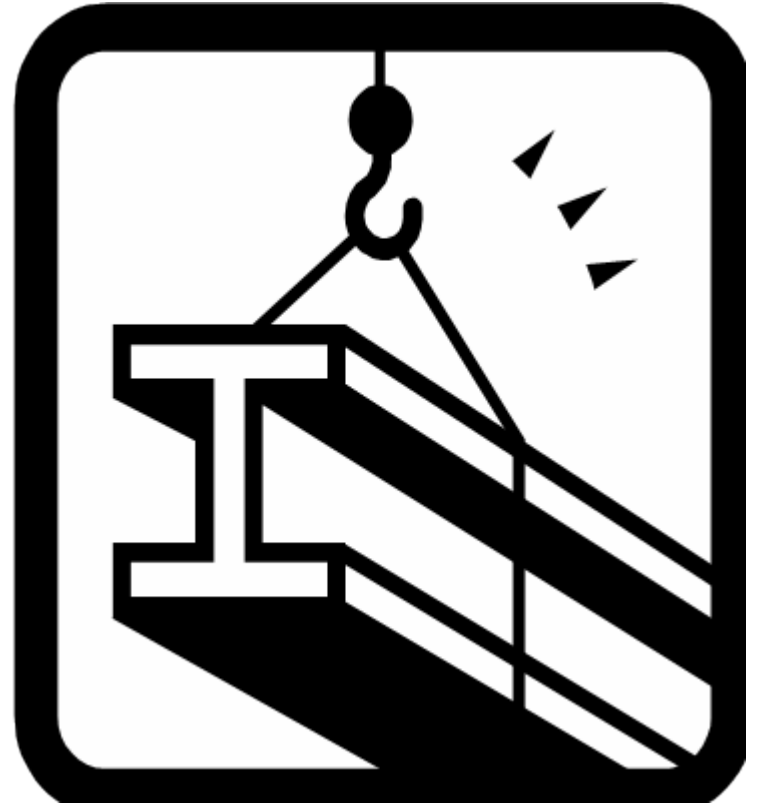
- **Visible**
- **Accessible**
- **Informed**
- **Responsive**

– Anna M. Shafor



# State Role

- The State provides administrative support
- Facilitates multi-panel training, steering workgroup, member recognition, etc.
- Keeps the Panels going!



# Community Involvement

**“...is essential to responsive planning and policy making, and making decisions that are understood and supported by the public are crucial to implementation.”**

# **Four essential ingredients to community involvement:**

- **Communication**
- **Relevance**
- **Immediacy of Response**
- **Demonstration of Change**

# **Citizen Participation**

In the child protection system:

**“Agents for Change”**

# **Why Involve Citizens?**

**“The safety and well-being of all children will be achieved when everyday citizens invest themselves in community services and child protection.”**

# Citizen Review Panel Activities

- Mandated reporter survey
- Participate in Administrative Reviews
- Review requests for reconsideration of findings of maltreatment
- Study financing child safety in Minnesota and make recommendations to county commissioners and state legislators
- Review cases to determine assessments and services provided
- Conduct focus groups to get community feedback on CPS
- Shadow workers

# **Citizen Review Panel Activities**

## **cont.**

- Provide formal recognition to child protection workers
- Conduct public awareness campaigns (It's Not Safe Under 8)
- Participate in Child and Family Service Reviews (federal and state) and monitor county Program Improvement Plans
- Form committees that are relevant to the county CPS
- Help define community standards. For example, guidelines for intervening when young children are left unattended.
- Coordinate with local CJI, etc.
- Present annual reports to county boards and DHS.

# What keeps a citizen engaged?

- It's Voluntary – is this the best use of the volunteer's time?
- It's not easy to describe the work of the Panel – as one member says... “ this is not an easy volunteering gig.”
- Make a difference in their community.
- Want to be more informed.
- Professionals who have been a position of reporting child maltreatment.

# Working with Citizen Review Panels

- What has been most difficult in working with the Citizen Review Panel?
- What has been most rewarding?
- What is (are) the most significant contribution(s) your panel has made?
- Would you recommend Citizen Review Panels to other counties? Why or why not?

# **What has been most difficult in working with the Citizen Review Panel?**

- Making it a priority
- Keeping it Relevant
- Defining boundaries and roles
- Recruitment
- Led by the members
- Media issues

# What has been most rewarding?

- Make a Difference
- Ready access to a community perspective
- Support of the Panel has encouraged staff
- Increasing awareness of local child protection issues
- Seeing members develop leadership skills
- Annual Report to the Board

# What are some significant contributions of the panels?

- Community Education
- “Under 8” campaign
- Supervision Bookmarks
- Community Panel presentation
- Youth aging out of foster care focus groups and report
- Reconsideration of maltreatment determinations

# Would you recommend Citizen Review Panels to other counties?

## Why or why not?

- Yes, if organization values citizen input.
- Yes, if management staff will make this a priority.
- Yes, if there is buy in by top management, elected officials and state department.
- No, if none of the above.
- No, if not willing/able to share private information.

# Questions?

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