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This newsletter is written by Blake Jones and produced by the National Resource Center for Child Protective Services, a service of the Children's Bureau.

Welcome!

I am delighted to welcome you to our first edition of "Citizen Connections," the National Citizen Review Panel newsletter. Ten years in the making, this newsletter will, I hope, connect all of us throughout the nation who are trying to improve our state's child welfare systems. I thank you, my fellow citizens, for giving your time to ensure that our community's children and families are well, and safe.

This is YOUR newsletter, so please send your submissions to me at Bljone00@uky.edu We intend to publish this newsletter quarterly, so we need your help. Thanks again for all of your work....

Blake Jones
National CRP Advisory Panel Coordinator

"There are no seven wonders of the world in the eyes of a child. There are seven million."
~Walt Streightiff

Bright Idea...

Try to recruit the spouse of a state legislator to serve on your Citizen Review Panel. They tend to have more free time than the legislator themselves, and they have the "ear" of the legislator if your recommendations have legislative implications.

SAVE THE DATE!

Ninth Annual National Citizen
Review Panel Conference

May 26-28, 2010
Lexington, Kentucky



State Updates

The **Nebraska** Citizen Review Panel is studying the processes, protocols, and effectiveness regarding how child abuse reports are shared between law enforcement and child protective services across the state.

The following update comes from **Michigan**:

CRP on Child Fatalities - reviews child fatality cases in an effort to make multidisciplinary policy and practice recommendations to prevent future child deaths in Michigan.

CRP on Prevention - currently reviewing DHS prevention policies and practices to identify gaps in service array/delivery and to improve services for families

CRP on CPS/FC/Adoption - focusing on mandated reporter education/awareness efforts, and functioning as a stakeholder for MI's CFSR/PIP efforts.

Mississippi is currently expanding to three Citizen Review Panels. These panels will focus on reviewing the Mississippi Centralized Intake system that will be implemented on November 1, 2009.

The state of **Louisiana's** Citizen Review Panel in the Monroe Region is in the final phase of planning a weekend "Game of Life Camp" for the independent living youth (ages 16-18) to be held at camp "Seeker Springs" in Monroe, LA this coming weekend. Each participant will be required to complete a registration form and include his or her career field of interest. A volunteer from the high interest fields will set up a booth at the camp and provide information to the participants regarding their business. Some of the activities will include learning how to prepare a resume' and complete a job application, as well as learning about checking and savings accounts.

Update from **Wisconsin**: In 2009, a new panel was formed in Pierce County, bringing the total of Wisconsin panels to 5. Also, the panels identified a statewide issue, child death reviews, to be tackled by all of the panels in 2010 in addition to their local activities.



State Updates

Georgia's citizen review panels' had their annual retreat in September to develop action plans to guide their activities for the coming year. Each of Georgia's panels has an interest that focuses on a different area of the child welfare continuum and their priorities for 2010 reflect these differences. A significant accomplishment for Georgia's panels in 2009 was their participation in the state's development of a Program Improvement Plan (PIP) to address the three CAPTA areas where Georgia is non-compliant. These include: the appointment of Guardian ad Litem in all deprivations cases, public disclosure of serious injuries as a result of child maltreatment and the referral of children ages 0-3 in substantiated cases of maltreatment to *Babies Can't Wait*. The PIP was approved in September and CRP members on the CAPTA PIP work groups will monitor the state's implementation of its PIP.

"It is better to light one candle than to curse the darkness."

~Confucius

Wyoming is currently working with state counterparts to finalize their CFSR PIP. The state was very pleased with the meaningful input in this process, from the selection of reviewers, to stakeholder meetings, though the actual PIP development. In early 2010 Wyoming will take the data from the Federal CFSR and the state's Mini CFSRs to the communities and local DFS offices, one at a time, and instituting a Mini PIP process at the local level involving a collaboration with community stakeholders. This project is called "small changes that make a big difference; taking the data back to the communities. Wyoming has been working very closely with their partner, the Northern Arapaho Tribe, as they change directors of their department of family services. In April of 2010, Wyoming will conduct a Mini CFSR of their program work; additionally they are hoping to help the Northern Arapaho create their own citizen review panel. Finally, Wyoming has been providing technical assistance for counties and tribes on conduct community assessments to apply for community juvenile service board funding from the state. It is the hope that this program will ultimately provide better assessments, among other things, to identify what is happening in the family and home rather than just assuming all juveniles "acting out" are because of bad behavior.



State Updates

Delaware's Child Protection Accountability Commission (CPAC) has a multitude of initiatives for Fiscal Year 2010, which include: (1) implementing the CPAC recommendations for improving mental health services for children in and adopted out of foster care; (2) analyzing and making recommendations for change to Delaware's risk assessment tool; (3) convening the 2nd Protecting Delaware's Children conference in March of 2010; (4) rolling out CPAC's basic training curricula for education, child welfare, mental health and public health and providing these trainings in a variety of mediums; (5) securing passage of Senate Bill 113, which provides for extended jurisdiction by Family Court over children aging out of foster care; (6) developing performance measures for improving educational outcomes for children in foster care; (7) training the medical community, via in-office presentations, on identifying and reporting child abuse and neglect; and (8) training and implementing the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between law enforcement and child welfare for the investigation of physical and sexual abuse cases.

Kansas will welcome Blake Jones on November 19. He will present to a combined meeting of all three Citizen Review Panels—the Child Safety and Permanency Review Panel, the Kansas Child Welfare Quality Improvement Council and the Child Death Review Board.

Maine recently celebrated the end of its first year as a free-standing Citizen Review Panel. Previously Maine's Child Death Review Panel served as their CRP. To begin their second year, they invited Blake Jones to the University of Maine Campus to facilitate a very productive strategic planning day. The Panel chose three challenging topics to pursue over the next year: 1) educational stability for children in foster care, 2) repeat maltreatment, and 3) resources for multi-challenged older children in the child welfare system.

Florida's Citizen Review Panels are looking at the coordination of mental health, substance abuse and child welfare services for children in out-of-home care and the effectiveness of independent living and transitional support services.



State Updates

The NJ Child Welfare Citizen Review Panel is in the process of analyzing the data from two statewide surveys developed by the panel and distributed to youth aging out of foster care and some of the volunteers and professionals that work with them. The surveys were designed to capture the perceptions and experiences of the youth and those working with them.

The NJ Child Fatality and Near Fatality Review Board has recently received approval to conduct research titled "Suspicious Fractures among Infants Sent Home from the Emergency Room." The study will determine among infants seen in the emergency department (ED) for suspicious fractures the rates of reporting, investigating and confirming child abuse. This project will document the number of cases of bone fractures suspicious for physical abuse in infants that are seen in the ED of New Jersey hospitals and discharged home. Examining the reporting rates of specific fractures seen among infants in EDs to child protective services will identify which fracture types and patient risk factors are associated with child abuse. The goal of the project is to improve the reporting and investigation of these suspicious fractures to prevent and reduce child abuse.

The NJ Child Fatality and Near Fatality Review Board is also partnering with their State's Department of Health and Senior Services to pilot the Sudden Unexpected Infant Death Case Registry (SUID-CR). NJ was one of five states awarded funding by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention to participate in the SUID-CR. The registry will provide information for informing prevention activities and improving the investigation of sudden infant deaths that will eventually form the basis for a national SUID case registry.

Minnesota's Citizen Review Panels completed their Involving Non-Custodial Fathers in Child Protection Cases Project. A final report has been completed and will be included in the Panels' 2009 Annual Report. Twenty-six new panel members participated in a CRP orientation on October 15. In addition to Chisago, Ramsey, Washington and Winona Counties, Minnesota now has a new panel, the Hennepin County Citizen Review Panel.

*"You give
but little
when you
give of your
possessions.
It is when
you give of
yourself that
you truly
give."*

~Kahlil Gibran



State Updates

The Citizen Review Panels in **Illinois** are meeting regularly and staying very active. The Child Death Review Team (CDRT) Executive Council has set up a regular meeting schedule with Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) Director Erwin McEwen to discuss recommendations made by the 9 regional CDRTs. The CDRT Council is looking closely at children who die as a result of co-sleeping and they are working with DCFS to better assess the risks to young children. The Statewide Citizens' Committee on Child Abuse and Neglect (SCAN) is looking at ways to streamline the grant process for child abuse prevention projects receiving state tax-checkoff funds. The Children's Justice Task Force (CJTF) continues to work towards establishing Children's Advocacy Centers in the 17 Illinois counties that are currently unserved. In addition, the CJTF hopes to develop a directory of mental health providers who specialize in treating children who have been sexually abused. Each of the CRP panels has a DCFS Coordinator and a Panel Chairperson and Vice-Chairperson. To contact them, please direct inquiries by email to: Sherry Barr, CDRT. Sherry.Barr@illinois.gov

Gail Jackson, SCAN. Gail.E.Jackson@illinois.gov

Cheryl Peterson, CJTF. Cheryl.Peterson@illinois.gov.

New Research Published on Citizen Participation

A recent article published in the *Journal of Public Child Welfare* discusses citizen participation in the forms of Citizen Review Panels, Court Appointed Special Advocates, and Foster Care Review Boards. The authors—Crystal Collins-Camargo, Blake Jones and Seth Krusich—give “helpful hints” for involving citizens in public child welfare. They note that the process of citizen participation is a two way street with state agencies providing training, support and information to the citizen groups and citizens taking responsibility for remaining unbiased and fair in their evaluation. The full article may be obtained by emailing Blake Jones at Bljone00@uky.edu

Source: Collins-Camargo, C., Jones, B.L, & Krusich, S. (2009). The “Spinach” of Citizen Participation in Public Child Welfare: Strategies for Involving Citizens in Public Child Welfare. *Journal of Public Child Welfare*, 3, 287-304.



Success Stories from New Mexico

The NM Children, Youth, and Families Department (CYFD) is currently adding to their data base the Citizen Review Board (CRB) document "Case Summary" that documents information from the case worker for the review board. The document will pull some data directly out of the department's data system to provide correct and complete information and to help lessen the burden on the case worker. CRB's dual mandates are (1) reviewing the individual cases for case recommendations to the judge and other parties but most importantly and uniquely (2) reviewing systemic issues. This is a HUGE step forward for both CYFD and CRB! CYFD is also having conversations about doing "companion data" (and possibly focus groups on certain hot issues) to help present data-based information to the legislature. CRB provides independent, objective, and statewide data and perspective that the legislature values.

- All thirteen judicial districts are convening Child Welfare Improvement Plan meetings, in collaboration with the NM Court Improvement Program, starting in September '09 and concluding in December '09. The goal is to improve legal timelines and outcomes in cases. The CRB representative will be attending all of the meetings and the volunteers and field staff will be attending their district meetings. Specific Judicial District Data Profiles will be provided at each meeting including department, court, and CRB data to inform these meetings. Meetings will result, with the help of facilitators, in local Improvement Plans with distinct action steps.

- o CRB Data included is reported by county within each judicial district:
 1. Anecdotal information from the local boards in the form of Community Successes and Challenges.
 2. Four foster children's well-being factors (collected at reviews): behavioral or emotional problems, educational or developmental problems, physical or medical problems, and prior custodies due to abuse and neglect.

Four parent factors (collected at reviews): history of substance abuse, history of domestic violence, homelessness or inadequate housing, and existence of mental or emotional illness.

- CRB reports and publications making a difference! *Both publications are on the national website.*
 - o CRB Preview Report includes recommendations for use by legislative committees and others to help set priorities and draft legislation. These recommendations will then go into the CRB Annual Report. This Preview Report caught the attention of the Casey facilitated National Working Group on Education and Foster Care. New Mexico is collecting data, with other foster care review boards, on education progress and stability.
 - o The CRB put data together in a legislative / public awareness publication, entitled *Remember Me*. Together with the CRB Annual Report, *Remember Me* was distributed to the office of each legislator during the legislative session.

National CRP Advisory Board

Meet your new National Citizen Review Panel Advisory Board! Our task will be to keep everyone connected through the use of this newsletter, free teleconferences, and webinars. We will also help plan the national CRP conference in May, 2010.

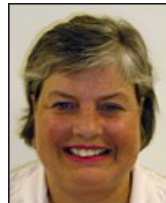


Blake L. Jones, Ph.D. is a leading national authority on Citizen Review Panels (CRP). Based at the University of Kentucky, Dr. Jones has published several peer-reviewed articles on CRPs and has provided technical assistance and support to nearly twenty-five states. He has hosted five national Citizen

"If we don't stand up for children, then we don't stand for much."

~Marian Wright

Review Panel conferences and maintained a national web site for CRPs. Dr. Jones is the Program Coordinator for Kentucky's Citizen Review Panels, and a husband and father of two young sons.



Anita Keyes has been involved with volunteer facilitation and citizen participation throughout her career. She has worked at the Minnesota Department of Human Services with the Citizen Review Panels since their inception ten years ago. Before that, Anita spent many

years working in a county court system, the last eight of those years managing a county volunteer guardian ad litem program. Anita enjoys her job and the fresh, innovative perspectives community members bring to the child protection system.



Diane Mastin is a Senior Policy Associate at the Schuyler Center for Analysis and Advocacy (SCAA), principally involved with implementation of SCAA's Children's Policy Agenda and the New York Children's Action Network or New York CAN, a broad-based coalition that advocates on behalf of children.

She has been the panel coordinator for the New York State Citizen Review Panels for five years. Previously, Diane served as Executive Director for Success By 6, United Way of Central New York, the YWCA of Syracuse and Onondaga County, and Big Brothers/Big Sisters of Auburn and Cayuga County. She has a BS degree in Secondary Education from the University of Cincinnati and MS degree in Counseling from Syracuse University.



Catherine Luby is a Child Welfare Program Specialist in the Office on Child Abuse and Neglect in the Children's Bureau (ACF/HHS). She serves as the Federal Project Officer for the Children's Justice Act grantees, for a cluster of Substance Exposed Newborn (SEN) Grants, and for a set of the Regional Partnership Grants focused on Drug Courts. Catherine has a BA in Social Work from the Catholic University of America and a MSW from Columbia University. Catherine and her husband are the proud parents of one year old Bobby.



Deb Farrell assumed the role of Project Coordinator for Georgia's Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (CAPTA) citizen review panel program in 2006. Her unique skills and leadership qualities have helped to foster more collaborative working relationships and improved communications between the state's child welfare system and its external partners. She has also consulted on or contributed to several other child welfare related projects during her tenure. Deb is married and has lived in Atlanta with her husband, George, since 1996. They have only recently become "empty-nesters" with both Andrew, 21 and Emma, 18, away at college. Several years ago, Deb took up the sport of rowing and now competes at regattas in the southeast.



Phyllis Banks Fulton, MA, is a licensed social worker who has worked in the social work field for thirty-five years. As a military spouse of an Air Force Officer, Phyllis practiced social work in North Carolina, Idaho, England, Germany, and South Carolina. In England she was a volunteer social worker with the American Red Cross. At the other locations she worked as a federal social worker with the US Army's Exceptional Children Program and as a social worker in adult and children's services. Phyllis is currently a Program Coordinator for the North Carolina Division of Social Services.



Kelly Hamilton is the executive director of the Wyoming Citizen Review Panel which is the only citizen review panel in the state. He joined the organization after retiring from state government in 2005, Kelly has been with the organization since then. Kelly's years in government at the municipal, county and state levels have provided him with a great deal of knowledge and ability to collaborate with other organizations and government agencies that serve children and family. After almost 25 years in government he finds the last 4 years at the citizen review panel to be the most fulfilling. Kelly is married to Cindy who works for Casey Family Programs. Kelly and Cindy have three children: Rick, Hayden and Vanessa and are also foster parents. Kelly has a masters degree in public administration.



Theresa E. Costello, MA, is the Deputy Director of ACTION for Child Protection and the Director of the National Resource Center for Child Protective Services (NRCCPS). Ms. Costello has over 20 years of experience in the field of child welfare and is a nationally recognized expert on safety and risk decision-making approaches for Child Protective Services. Theresa lives in Albuquerque, New Mexico and is married and has a 13 year old daughter.



Pat Briggs is Project Director of the New Mexico Child Abuse and Neglect Citizen Review Board and the New Mexico Citizen Review Panel. She has been involved in this work for 25 years. Pat actively participates in many collaborative groups to improve the child welfare system using the projects' data, research, and anecdotal information. She participates in: the New Mexico Court Improvement Project and its many subcommittees and the Corrine Wolfe Children's Law Center at the University of New Mexico. Pat is also involved nationally with the National Citizen Review Panel Advisory Committee and the National Foster Care Review Coalition.