

The Power of Community Ending Child Abuse and Neglect

Minnesota Citizen Review Panels Application Tool Kit

For more information or a copy of this tool kit contact:

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Minnesota Department of **Human Services**



Minnesota Department of Human Services - Job Description

Title: Volunteer Citizen Review Panel Member

General Function:

Volunteer community members analyze trends, provide independent insights and outside validation of the child protection system, recommend and advocate for needed changes and resources, promote cooperation among community resources and child protection service agencies and increase community understanding and investment in protecting all children. They examine child protection policies, procedures and practices of the state and county child protection agencies. They evaluate the extent to which the agencies are discharging their child protection responsibilities. Panel members gather information through interviews and observations, and review records, case files and reports. The members prepare and make available to the public an annual report containing a summary of the panel's activities and recommendations to improve the child protection system.

What the Volunteer Experience Can Offer You:

- An opportunity to actively participate on the behalf of abused and neglected children.
- An opportunity to put your interests, talents and expertise to good use for a worthy cause.
- Initial orientation regarding the child protection system that includes: child abuse and neglect issues, case plans and efforts to reunite families, foster care, alternatives to family reunification, the best interests of children, child development and attachment issues, cultural considerations including the Indian Child Welfare Act and heritage preservation, the disparities of the numbers of children and families of color involved in the child protection system, the dynamics of domestic violence, and the court process.
- An opportunity to have a positive impact by addressing the disparities of the numbers of children and families of color involved in the child protection system.
- In-service training on topics such as cultural diversity, chemical and mental health, education and community resources.
- Ongoing professional support and consultation.
- Access to a wide variety of community resources and people.
- A meaningful, important volunteer experience that will add skills, provide insights, interests and challenges.
- An opportunity to update and add to your resume.
- Access to and an understanding of the child protection system and Juvenile Court proceedings.
- Reimbursement for mileage, parking and other approved out of pocket expenses.
- An opportunity to promote and affect positive changes for the well-being of children.

(over)

Qualifications and Skills:

- Genuine concern and compassion for those involved in the child protection service system.
- Desire to have a positive impact on the child protection service system and those involved.
- Desire to learn about the current child protection service system.
- Desire to promote needed changes in the child protection system as identified by the panels.
- Ability to articulate ideas, concerns and thoughts.
- Ability to listen, be open minded, non judgmental and constructive.
- Ability to work as part of a team.
- Willingness to make an initial commitment of two years.
- Sensitivity to cultural, ethnic and economic diversity.
- Common sense and maturity.
- May not currently be involved in a child protection, child custody dispute or criminal matter.
- May not be a current county attorney's office, district court, social or court services employee, a foster care provider or a paid guardian *ad litem* of a county in which a panel operates.
- Must maintain confidentiality.
- Must sign releases authorizing a criminal records check and a child maltreatment records check.

Duties and Responsibilities:

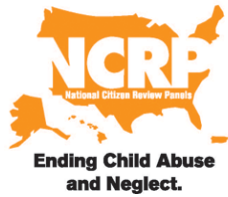
- Maintain confidentiality.
- Complete initial orientation.
- Attend and participate in all meetings. (Panels meet monthly.)
- Submit reimbursement claims and other requested records in a timely manner.
- Gather information by conducting interviews, reviewing files, records and reports.
- Participate in educational activities to better understand the child protection system.
- Review the child protection service agency's consistency of practice and compliance with stated policies, laws and procedures.
- Assist in the analysis of the information gathered.
- Assist in the compilation of an annual report summarizing the activities of the panel.
- Provide feedback on what is working well.
- Make recommendations for needed policy changes and suggest corrective actions.
- Promote cooperation among community resources and child protection service agencies.
- Increase community understanding, ownership and investment in child protection.
- Advocate for needed resources to protect children from abuse and neglect and to ensure permanent homes for children in a timely manner.

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Updated 08/09



Application Volunteer Citizen Review Panel Member

The Minnesota Department of Human Services' policy and federal law prohibits discrimination based on race, creed, sex, religion, mental or physical disabilities, age or marital status. Questions of this nature are asked for general background purposes only. **You are not obligated to supply this information.* If you do not answer these questions it will not affect consideration given to your application.

Name: _____

Address: _____ City/State: _____ Zip: _____

Home Phone: _____ Work Phone: _____

E-mail: _____

*Male: _____ *Female: _____ *Birth date: _____

Person To Notify In Case of Emergency: _____

Home Phone: _____ Work Phone: _____

Additional Information

Relevant Training, Degrees, Certificates and Licenses:

Where did you hear about the Citizen Review Panel?

Please list special skills, interests or relevant experiences.

What strengths do you have that would be beneficial to the Panel?

Have you been convicted of a crime, other than minor traffic violations?

If yes, please explain. Yes _____ No _____

Have you or has anyone in your family been involved with the Social Services or Court systems? If yes, please explain. Yes _____ No _____

If yes, did you feel you were treated fairly? Yes _____ No _____ Explain:

Are you willing to serve an initial term of two years on the panel? Yes _____ No _____ (over)

Narrative Questions

Why do you want to become a citizen review panel member?

What do you hope to get out of this experience?

Do you have any reservations about serving as a volunteer panel member?

In order to promote the integrity of the citizen review panel, ensure confidentiality is maintained, to protect the safety of the volunteer panel members and those involved with the agencies and cases reviewed, we use many methods of screening, including criminal and child maltreatment records checks. Are you willing to allow us to conduct a thorough background check on you? Yes_____ No_____

References

Please list the names, **complete addresses, including the zip code**, and daytime phone numbers of three references.

1.

2.

3.

I submit the statements on this application are true, complete and correct to the best of my knowledge. I understand that falsification on this application can disqualify me from consideration or can result in dismissal at a later time.

Signature: _____ **Date:** _____

Thank you for taking the time to fill out this application. Return the completed application to:

Sample Cover-Letter for Application Packet

Citizen Review Panels

Date:

Dear Concerned Citizen:

Enclosed for your information and consideration is a volunteer job description, and an application for the Citizen Review Panel for child protection services in your county.

After an initial six hours of orientation, monthly two hour meetings are held. An additional one to two hours a month may be required to gather information for the monthly meetings and an annual report. The times and location of the panel meetings are determined by the members. **Meetings for the rest of this year are scheduled for:**

Reimbursement for transportation and child care expenses incurred due to the work of the panel is available.

If you are interested in being considered for panel membership please complete and **return the application in one week to:**

After we receive your application we will contact you. Applicants that best meet the needs described in the volunteer job description and ensure that the panel is broadly representative of the community will be considered. In the mean time if you have any questions, please contact us at the numbers below. We hope to hear from you.

Sincerely,

County Social Services Agency
Telephone and E-mail:

Chair of the Citizen Review Panel
Telephone and E-mail:

Citizen Review Panel

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Date:

Dear Concerned Citizen:

Thank you for your interest in serving as a volunteer on your County's Citizen Review Panel for the child protection system. Enclosed are a volunteer job description and an application.

We would like to invite you to be a guest at the _____ Citizen Review Panel meeting. It is from ____ p.m. to ____ p.m. at _____

We estimate the following time-commitment: After an initial orientation training of four hours, monthly meetings of two to four hours are held. An additional one to two hours a month may be required to gather information for committee reports, the monthly meetings and an annual report. We ask panel members to make an initial two year commitment, agree to participate on a Panel committee and attend the Panel meetings. Reimbursement for Panel-related, out-of-pocket expenses and child care expenses is available.

Applicants that best meet the needs described in the volunteer job description and ensure that the Panel is broadly representative of the community will be considered. In the mean time, if you have any questions, please contact me.

Sincerely,

County Citizen Review Panel Member

Progress of Minnesota's Citizen Review Panels

Jackie Sinykin, Facilitator, Steering Committee



Common knowledge is that initiatives take at least three years to begin to produce the desired results. Minnesota Citizen Review Panels have been working to keep children safe from abuse and neglect for the past nine years. The results conform to that adage.

Whether we're measuring the influence panel members have as ambassadors in the community, as advocates for resources or as voluntary citizens just adding another perspective, there is little doubt the work of the Citizen Review Panels has a positive impact on child protection services. Activities of the Chisago, Ramsey, Washington and Winona Counties' Citizen Review Panels include:

- Review requests for reconsideration of determinations of maltreatment
- Assist with foster care provider recruitment and retention
- Participate in administrative reviews of children in long-term foster care
- Work to standardize and increase access to mandated reporter training
- Study and evaluate educational neglect and truancy
- Design and implement a pilot program of Ongoing Quality Assurance and case reviews
- Shadow child protection workers
- Analyze trends and provide insight by identifying and studying issues unique to their community
- Increase community understanding, ownership and investment in our children and the child protection system
 - Distribute child protection and child abuse prevention information
 - Play It Safe bookmarks
 - It's Not Safe for Kids Under Eight fliers

As a charter member of the Ramsey County Children's Services Review Panel, I am proud of the work that has been accomplished over the past nine years. I am grateful I had the opportunity to work with citizens whose commitment to the safety of children and their communities produces action oriented results.

For more information about Minnesota's four Citizen Review Panels contact Anita Keyes, Minnesota Department of Human Services, (651) 430-4704 or anita.keyes@state.mn.us.

