

State of California Department of Social Services

Office of Child Abuse Prevention

**FIFTH REPORT OF THE CALIFORNIA
CITIZEN REVIEW PANELS**

October 2003-MARCH 2005

June 2005

State of California

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

This report covers the activities of California's panels for FFY 2004 and for the first six months of FFY 2005. The report contains discussions of future directions that address that last six months of FFY 2005 and FFY2006.

State and County Citizen Review Panels

During the 2003/2004 legislative session, the California Department of Social Services (CDSS) drafted legislation (AB 2873) to bring California into compliance with Section 5106a(c)(B) of the United States Code that states:

- That staff and members of a panel shall not disclosed to any person or government official any identifying information about any specific child protection case with respect to which the panel is provide information,
- That panels shall not make public other information unless authorized by State statute and,
- That each State that establishes a panel shall establish civil sanctions for a violation of the confidentiality provisions above.

AB 2873 was passed and chaptered as Section 18973 of the Welfare and Institutions Code.

County Citizen Review Panels

Objective: Ensure that there are a minimum of three County Citizen Review Panels in operation at all times.

Kern, Napa, and San Mateo Counties completed the second Citizen Review Panel (CRP) funding cycle which began on October 1, 2002 and ended on September 30, 2004. The Request for letters of interest to operate a county CRP for the third funding cycle (October 1, 2004 to September 30, 2006) was issued twice. Four counties applied and three were funded. These three counties are Alameda, Kern, and San

Mateo. A fourth county is receiving technical assistance that is designed to refine and clarify its proposed work plan so that it reflects activities that comprise a focused review process. Funding of this fourth panel is contingent upon the successful outcome of this refinement process.

For Kern, Napa and San Mateo Counties, a report on their activities, findings and recommendations along with a discussion of their future directions for FFY 2005, can be found under the specific county section that can be found below.

Objective: Provide training and on-going technical assistance to the three county Citizen Review Panels

Strategies Region II, which is implemented by Interface Children Family Services Family Resource Center in Venture County, is retained by CDSS/OCAP to provide technical assistance to the county CRPs. One of CDSS/OCAPs' requirements was that the new consultant, for the third funding cycle, have experience with Child Welfare Services System Improvement at the county level. This is important as county panels are beginning to review the effectiveness of their child welfare service departments in implementing policies, practices, and procedures that support these departments in meeting the goals and objectives of the System Improvement Plans that are being prepared as part of Child Welfare Services System Improvement.

A procedure for obtaining technical assistance was presented to the new panels at an orientation/training meeting held in January of 2005. CDSS/OCAP is formalizing this procedure to address some of the situations that occurred in the past. Specifically it is CDSS/OCAPs' desire to resolve a situation in which informal requests for feedback on technical assistance went unanswered only to be addressed at a much later date in the annual report. This made it impossible to ensure that appropriate assistance was provided in a timely manner. The new procedure, which requires requests for technical assistance to be in writing, should facilitate the provision of timely and effective technical assistance.

Objective: To review and respond to panel recommendations.

The recommendations that are contained in the annual reports of the three county panels will be reviewed for comment by the Statewide Citizen Review Panel in April of 2005. CDSS will respond to the recommendations and if indicated forward recommendations to relevant State agencies.

The Statewide Citizen Review Panel

Objective: To ensure that there is a review body that examines the State level Child Welfare Services System.

The new Statewide Citizen Review Panel, which grew out of the Child Welfare Services Stakeholders' Group, was convened by two teleconferences in November of 2004. It will have its first face to face meeting April of 2005.

Background

In 2000, the California State legislature passed AB1740 which established the Child Welfare Services Stakeholders Group and charged them with reviewing the existing child welfare services system and making recommendations for its improvement and future design. The group was comprised of individuals with expertise, experience, and first hand knowledge of the child welfare services system and they examined its policies, procedures, and practices.

The Stakeholders convened from May of 2000 to the fall of 2003. Their findings and recommendations are contained in a series of reports and these findings and recommendations have been incorporated into the Child and Family Services Title IV-B plan and the State's Program Improvement Plan which was developed in response to the findings of the Federal Child and Family Services Review.

While the Stakeholders were in existence, they functioned as the Statewide Citizen Review Panel. Since the Stakeholders were to perform specific functions and disband when their mission was complete, there was a need to continue the functions of a statewide panel once they had fulfilled their responsibilities.

The Stakeholders themselves had a desire to continue their advisory function to the California Department of Social Services upon the completion of their mission. They wanted to continue to examine the policies, procedures and practices of the current CWS system, and they wanted to generate support for the changes in the system that are being brought about by their recommendations. To this end, they joined with other CDSS partners to form the Champions for Children.

The Champions for Children met for the first time in September of 2003 to continue their on-going dialogue around the State CWS system and to expand the support for the reform and improvement of child welfare services in California. However, in November of 2003, there was a change of administrations which resulted in the departure of the Director of the Department of Social Services and some key managers whose responsibilities had a direct impact upon child welfare services and the plans and initiatives that had been designed to improve them. As a result of these changes, the Champions for Children went into a holding pattern.

In summer and fall of 2004, the Department began the process of convening a new Statewide Citizen Review Panel that could support the functions of Champions for Children. Drawing upon the membership of the Stakeholders and others, persons with expertise in child welfare services were asked to serve on the panel, while some organizations with such expertise were asked to recommend persons for membership on the Panel. Panel membership (see Appendix A) includes representatives from Court Appointed Special Advocates, Parents, Tribal Governments, foster youth, the associations that represent mental health directors, county superintendents of schools,

county counsels, foster parents, county alcohol and drug directors, chief probation officers, and social workers. Also, represented are the Foundation Consortium and several foundations, the Youth Law Center, and the Judicial Council of California.

Future Directions:

At the April 2005 meeting, the Statewide Citizen Review Panel will begin its review of California's Child and Family Services Title IV-B Plan and the recommendations from the County CRPs. Also, it will begin the development of its work plan for the remainder of FFY 2005 and FFY 2006

In keeping with the Stakeholders' recommendation that prevention be incorporated into all aspects of the Child Welfare Services System, the Statewide CRP is now the Prevention Advisory Council (PAC). A combined CRP/PAC fulfills the Stakeholder finding that prevention must be the foundation of Child Welfare Services System Improvement and not stand on its own. The PAC is charged, as the result of the requirements of the Community-Based Child Abuse Prevention Program, with providing input to the CDSS on community-based, prevention-focused family resource and support programs. The focus of the PAC has been on the development and expansion of family resource and family support collaboratives and networks comprised of community-based, county and state level organizations and agencies serving children and families. In its role as the PAC the Statewide CRP can integrate a primary prevention/early intervention perspective to its review of Statewide CWS policies, practices, and procedures.

Kern County

County Information

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

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

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

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

Panel Activities

The death of a child, who was under CPS' jurisdiction, at the hands of his birth parent and a State Senator's recommendation that the State of California undertake the operation of Kern County's child welfare services system led the Board of Supervisors to ask the Kern County Panel to review Kern's County's CPS system with an emphasis upon child deaths. This was the focus of the Kern County Panel in FFY 2004.

The Panel was asked to address the child welfare system and the various county agencies and committees that impact this system to determine whether there can be:

- Increased collaboration among these entities,
- Timely and consistent reporting to the Board of Supervisors on the part of these agencies and committees,
- Immediate feedback on causes and corrective measures when there is a child death,
- An ombudsman who can intervene in specific cases,
- An expanded CRP that includes representatives from law enforcement and education,
- Analysis of the impact of the child welfare services confidentiality laws on the reporting of information on specific cases to the Board of Supervisor and the public,
- The adaptation of a proactive, prevention oriented approach to child deaths.

The Panel's review of the County's response to the death of the CPS child at the hands of a parent, led to recommendations that:

- Outlined an approach to child deaths that involved Department of Human Services' Internal Audit Division, the county's Child Death Review Team; the Board of Supervisors, the County Coroner, and the Child Abuse Prevention Council,
- Encouraged the Department of Human Services to develop and implement a "formal, consistent grievance process/procedure that is shared with clients up front." and encouraged the field staff for elected officials and the staff of the Board of Supervisors to continue to act in an ombudsman role,

- Committed the Citizen Review Panel to work to include among its membership representatives from law enforcement and education who are knowledgeable about CPS
- Addressed the need for the County to explore confidentiality laws that govern child welfare as they impact the
 - Information that can be released about specific cases,
 - Role of an ombudsmen,
 - Information that can be released by the media, such as identifying information about a specific case, when governmental bodies are prohibited from doing so,
 - Relationship between the County and Community Care Licensing (the Branch of CDSS that licenses and monitors group homes, foster family agencies and if there is no arrangement with the county, foster homes),
 - Law that requires counties to release to the public information on near fatalities.

The approach to child deaths as outlined above and the statement regarding the need for more analysis and development of confidentiality provisions will form the basis of recommendations that will be presented to the Statewide CRP in April of 2005 for its review and comment. They will be forwarded by CDSS to the California State Child Death Review Council and any other State Department or organization that the Panel considers to be relevant for review and comment. Kern's approach to child deaths may have implications for child death review protocols so that the Council can assess the implications that these recommendations may have for state and county child death review teams. The Attorney General's Office or the County Counsel's Association may take the lead with regard to questions of confidentiality.

Future Directions:

In FFYs 2005 and 2006 The Kern County Panel will utilize a team approach to evaluate the effectiveness of the local child welfare service agency in terms of its efforts to:

- Secure the safety of children identified through CPS referrals as at risk or abuse, neglect, or abandonment. The Panel's Team 1 will examine how the CWS system is handling those cases involving a substantiated allegation of maltreatment within 12 months after an earlier allegation of abuse or neglect has been substantiated.
- Improve safety and permanency outcomes for abused, neglected, or abandoned children through improved (1) case planning, monitoring, implementation and (2) decision-making with respect to reunification and case discharge. The Panel's Team 2 will examine how the CWS system is handling those cases involving children who re-enter foster care within 12-24 months after the child had been reunified with his/her parent. Team 2 may narrow its focus to children ages 0 to 5.
- Improve well-being and permanency outcomes for older dependents emancipating from child welfare supervised foster care, with particular

attention to increasing the number of youth/young adults who leave foster care prepared to transition to adulthood. The Panel's Team 3 will examine how the CWS system handled and is handling those dependent youth who were/are eligible for independent living services from 2000 to 2005.

- Employ effective policies, practices and procedures that can be used to audit its own responses in those cases where a child who was previously the subject of a local CPS referral dies or suffers substantial trauma possibly as the result of caretaker abuse, neglect or abandonment. The Panel's Team 4 will examine this issue and it may also examine cases involving local dependent child whose circumstances allegedly involve serious mismanagement of their cases by the local public child welfare service system.

NAPA COUNTY

Panel Activities

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

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

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

During FFY 2004, the county focused upon the recruitment of Hispanic panel members. Panel members also focused upon Child Welfare System Improvement and addressed child abuse prevention issues at the meetings that were held to facilitate this process.

The Napa County Citizen Review Panel made the following recommendations to its Board of Supervisors and to the State:

- the State should allocate funding to County Child Welfare Services Agencies in accordance with the budgetary methodology established in the Child Welfare Service (SB 2030) Study which was completed in April of 2000
- the State should provide funding to support the "Redesign" of the CWS system
- There should be continued funding for Napa's Accreditation (The Napa CWS agency is accredited by the Child Welfare League of America)

These recommendations will be presented to the Statewide Citizen Review Panel at its April 2005 meeting for its review and consideration.

Future Directions

It is possible that the Napa panel will receive funding the last three months of FFY 2005 and through FFY 2006.

SAN MATEO COUNTY

County Profile

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

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

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

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

In FFY 2004, the San Mateo County Panel experienced a period of change and flux with the retirement of the Child and Family Services Director. Upon his retirement, the county restructured the position. The new Director is responsible only for Child and Family Services while the previous director had been responsible as well for the Self-Sufficiency and Employment Programs in the Northern Part of the County.

CRP members participated in Family to Family Team Decision Making meetings. The Family to Family initiative, which is funded by the Annie E Casey Foundation, is intended to facilitate a more responsive and integrated approach to working with the community on the part of San Mateo County's child welfare services system.

Team Decision making refers to a process by which birth families and community members participate in formulating placement decisions for dependent children. CRP members collaborated with staff of the Human Services Agency and other community members to develop policies and procedures for the implementation of Team Decision Making sessions. They participated in the process that made Team Decision Making

mandatory for all families who have children removed from their homes and for all placement changes.

The San Mateo County Panel recommends that:

- Team decision making meetings be made mandatory every time children are removed from their homes, every time they change homes in which they have been placed and every time they are reunified with their families.

The Panel considers team decision making to be a means of providing a holistic approach to the needs of families that enables its members to better handle family reunification and thus decrease the chances of re-entry. This recommendation will be presented to the Statewide Citizen Review Panel at its April 2005 meeting.

Future Directions

During the FFY 2005, the panel will investigate all re-entries into foster care in the County during 2003 and identify gaps in services and ways to improve the system.

ALAMEDA COUNTY

County Profile

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

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

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

The Department of Children and Family Services/Child Abuse Prevention of the Alameda County Social Services Agency and the Interagency Children's Policy Council (ICPC) of Alameda County are working in partnership to convene and staff the citizen

review panel. The ICPC is a county sponsored collaborative of public and private agencies that was established in 1994 to improve outcomes for low income and vulnerable children and families through major interagency systems reform. A prior project of the ICPC has been implementation of the AB 1741 Youth Pilot Project that has focused on reducing out-of-home placements and the planning, development and implementation of child welfare reform activities. The membership of the ICPC includes two members of the Board of Supervisors, executives from the County Office of Education, the County's Health Care Services Agency, the Juvenile County, Social Services and community based organizations such as CASA and those that represent foster parents and youth advocates. Law enforcement agencies are also represented on the ICPC.

Future Directions

During the 2004-2006 funding cycle, The Alameda County Panel will examine the county's policies, practices and procedures in regard to the:

- improvement of safety outcomes for children;
- improvement of permanency outcomes;
- the promotion of well-being for children and families; and
- the provision of family centered-services.

**APPENDIX A
Membership Roster
Statewide Citizen Review Panel**

Statewide Citizen Review Panel Member List

NAME	TITLE and ORGANIZATION
Robin Allen	Executive Director, California Court Appointed Special Advocates
Nancy Antoon, LCSW	Deputy Director for Child & Family Services, Trinity County Behavioral Health, California Mental Health Directors Association rep.
Bill Bettencourt	Site Leader and Consultant, Family to Family, Annie E. Casey Foundation
Mike Carll	California Parent Leadership Team (CPLT) Parent Leader, Parents Anonymous of California
Ellin Chariton	Executive Director, Orange County Dept. of Education, Division of School & Community Services, California County Superintendents Educational Services Assn.
Miryam Choca	Director, California State Strategies San Diego Division Casey Family Programs
Judith Chynoweth	Executive Director, Foundation Consortium

Kate Cleary	Executive Director, Consortium for Children
Terri Kook	Program Officer, Stuart Foundation
Pamela Maxwell	California Parent Leadership Team (CPLT) Parent Leader, Parents Anonymous of California
Francine McKinley	ICWA/Social Services Director, Mooretown Rancheria
Michelle Neumann-Ribner, LCSW, JD	Senior Deputy San Diego County Counsel, Juvenile Division, San Diego County Office of County Counsel
James Michael Owen, JD	Assistant County Counsel, Training & Litigation Division, LA County, California County Counsel Association
Cora Pearson Alternate: Velma J. Moore	California Foster Parent Association, Inc. { <i>Velma: 3900 Moran #B, Ceres, CA 95307 (209) 541-3819</i> vel4fos@aol.com }
John Phillips, MA	Program Supervisor, AOD Services, Mariposa County Behavioral Health and Recovery Services, County Alcohol and Drug Program Administrators Assn. of CA (CADPAAC) rep.
Jennifer Rodriguez	Former foster youth, California Youth Connection
Jerry Rose	Director, Yolo County Dept. of Employment and Social Services, County Welfare Directors Association
Carroll Schroeder	California Alliance of Child and Family Services
Carole Shauffer, JD, MEd	Youth Law Center
Norma Suzuki	Chief Probation Officers of California
Susan A. Taylor, PhD	National Association of Social Workers, CA Chapter
Christopher Wu, JD	Supervising Attorney, Center for Families, Children and the Courts, Judicial Council of CA-- Administrative Office of the Courts