

State of California Department of Social Services

Office of Child Abuse Prevention

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

**October 2002-September 2003**

**June 2004**

## STATE OF CALIFORNIA

### Priorities for the Second Funding Cycle

During the second funding cycle, October 2002 through September 2004, the priorities of the California Department of Social Services (CDSS) were to fund at least three Citizen Review Panels (CRPs) and to ensure panels receive training and technical support.

### Accomplishments

- The CDSS approved funding for the Napa, Placer, and San Mateo County panels for the second funding cycle. Kern's initial panel began during this cycle.
- Through its support of the Kern County panel, which is a private-public partnership, CDSS expanded the range of options for CRPs in terms of governance and operations.
- The CDSS continued the CRP training and technical assistance contract with Region 2 of Strategies, a CDSS funded statewide training and technical assistance program.
- The CDSS conducted two all panel meetings during FFY 2003. In October of 2002, the county liaisons and panel chair persons came to Sacramento for orientation. In September of 2003, an all county meeting/training was held for panel members and county liaisons.
- With CDSS' encouragement, all panels sent representatives to the CWS Redesign community forums during Spring 2003. The forums introduced local communities to the work of the CWS Stakeholders group and solicited input from local stakeholders.

### Challenges

There was a less than optimal response to the request for applications to operate Citizen Review Panels although the request for letters of interest went to all 58 county welfare directors. The CDSS planned to fund six panels (three new and three on-going). Kern was the only new county to respond to the request for applications. Possible reasons for the poor response are:

- Counties are focusing upon planning and implementing the changes necessary to ensure they will be in compliance with the changes brought

about by the Child and Family Services Review Program Improvement Plan, the California Child and Family Services Review (AB636) and the Child Welfare Services Improvement System.

- Coping with California's budget crisis has made counties put the implementation of new non-mandated programs on hold due to staff shortages and financial shortfalls.

Other challenges include:

- In early 2003, CDSS fielded questions about the function of citizen review panels after the publication of the Little Hoover Commission's report, "Still in Our Hands: A Review of Efforts to Reform Foster Care in California." The questions were whether citizen review panels could serve as oversight bodies at the county level and/or as the County's System Improvement Plan (SIP) team for the implementation of the Child Welfare Services Outcomes Accountability System. The CDSS' position is that citizen review panels are not oversight bodies, they are charged with examining the policies, practices, and procedures of child welfare services agencies and they should have the freedom of determining how they fulfill these functions rather than being compelled to provide oversight and to participate in a program implementation process.
- In February of 2003, Placer County withdrew from the Citizen Review Panel program because of budget cuts, which resulted in the County having no resources to provide staff support to its panel. This reduced the number of county panels from four to three.
- Budget constraints at the state level severely restricted and ultimately eliminated monitoring visits by CDSS, Office of Child Abuse Prevention which is responsible for oversight of the citizen review panels grants.
- Kern County CRP raised a concern related to communications and responses between the panel and county staff and State monitoring staff. The CDSS monitoring staff spoke with the coordinator of the Kern CRP to explore concerns and expectations in order to improve interactions in the future.

### **Future Directions 2005-2009**

During the 2005-2009 period CDSS will:

- Release a letter of interest and select panels for the funding cycle that begins October 1, 2004. CWS county applicants will be encouraged to partner with nonprofit organizations. One of the lessons learned in prior funding cycles is

that a non-profit partner can assure dedicated staff time to more fully support panel activities. .

- Work with panels to help them define their roles in light of the California – Child and Family Services Review System.
- Continue to provide training and technical assistance to local panels including use of evidence based practices.
- Work with local panels to include more tribal representation on the panel.
- Ensure that the local panels meet current federal mandates that require them to submit recommendations to the State and the public on improving the child protective services system at the State and local levels by requiring them to submit these recommendations with their annual reports which are due by September 30 of each year. Recommendations will be reviewed and forwarded to the State Citizen Review Panel for comment.
- Share information regarding confidentiality provisions in Section 106(c)(5)(A) and Section 106(c)(4)(B)(i) with counties that are implementing citizen review panels.

## KERN COUNTY

### **Kern Citizen Review Panel Annual Report October 2002 to September 2003**

#### **Introduction**

Kern County, which began its panel on October 1, 2002, is the first county to subcontract with a nonprofit organization, the Kern Network for Children, for the implementation and on-going support of a local panel

The Kern County Network for Children was established by the Kern County Board of Supervisors in 1992. One of its major responsibilities is to provide leadership and support to a system of twenty community collaboratives throughout Kern County that have created integrated service delivery systems designed to specifically meet the needs of their community's children and families.

#### **Composition of the Panel**

Panel membership is both broadly representative of the Kern community and it is particularly knowledgeable about the issues that challenge Kern's ability to protect and serve vulnerable children and families. The membership embraces former foster youth; foster parents; program directors, city council members, physicians, Child Abuse Prevention Council executives; attorneys, university professors, members of the Court Appointed Special Advocates program; representatives of court programs; tribal organizations; counseling centers; group homes; and the Kern County Network for Children

#### **Priorities for Kern County's CRP**

When Kern County submitted its application to the state, it elected to focus on three outcomes:

- procedures for the Independent Living Program and adolescents aging out of the foster care system
- coordination of services and the entire case planning mechanism across the entire child welfare system , and
- reorganization of the CWS system locally

As a result, the adopted work plan for Kern County proposed to address the following priority outcomes:

- Improving the safety of children and the well-being of children and families through improved case planning for children and families, with particular attention to incorporating all appropriate services, whether county or community based.
- Ensuring that these services are provided on an ongoing basis.
- Increasing permanency for, and promoting the well-being of older youth/young adults emancipating from the foster care system, with particular attention to increasing the number of children or young adults who leave foster care having successfully completed a foster care independent living program.

### **Accomplishments**

The following is a list of major milestones / accomplishments for Kern's CRP in 2002-2003:

- Adopted a structure and decision-making processes;
- Kern County Department of Human Services partnered with the Kern County Network for Children to oversee and staff the citizen review panel;
- Completed the recruitment of a 17-member CRP;
- Trained and provided orientation to Kern's CRP members;
- Kern's CRP members signed confidentiality agreements;
- Developed and approved CRP ground rules and norms,
- Held discussions regarding the focus of Kern's CRP work and spent time prioritizing our work;
- Participated in the official community release of the CWS re-design effort at the state and local levels. This meeting was held in the Board of Supervisors chambers with approximately 200 people in attendance. Kern's CRP was spotlighted at that time;
- Started the development of the official Kern County CRP work plan, which was subsequently adopted in October 2003; and
- Started discussion and exploration of best practices for case file reviews.

### **Challenges**

There were no significant challenges to Kern's CRP in 2002-2003, other than normal start-up delays due to recruitment of committed CRP members. Kern's CRP has expressed having some difficulty in accessing needed information and/or getting answers to some questions from the local Department of Human Services and CDSS Office of Child Abuse prevention. Kern County's CRP will work closely with these organizations to develop ways that both can improve

communications to meet the needs of the CRP.

### **Activities**

Kern's CRP training process has included overviews of the:

- Citizen Review Panel process
- Kern County Department of Human Services
- Law enforcement's role in child welfare
- CDSS funded training and technical assistance
- Out-of-home placement options
- CWS Redesign

Panel members also visited "Through the Eyes of a Child," an experimental training site that conveys the foster care experience.

### **Recommendations to State and County Governments**

Recommendations will be made in fiscal year 2003-2004 and sent forward with the annual report to CDSS which is due September 30, 2004.

### **Future Directions**

Kern's annual report for 2002-2003 will be presented to the Director of the Kern County Department of Human Services, the Kern County Network for Children's (KCNC) Governing Board and the Kern County Board of Supervisors, shared with local media if appropriate, and announced to more than 1,300 child advocates, key partner agencies and organizations, and community members that are on the KCNC's mailing list. A copy of the annual report will be made available to the public via the KCNC's web site.

Kern's CRP adopted its work plan in October 2003, which included the following priorities that will guide the work of Kern's CRP in 2003-2004. The CRP will be divided into five work teams to evaluate the extent to which the State and the local child protective services agency are effectively discharging their child protection responsibilities. The responsibilities of the five teams are as follows:

- **Team #1:** Intake and screening, investigation and assessment, and case disposition [first entries and re-entries]
- **Team #2:** Examining the decision making process regarding placement ; case service planning, implementation, and monitoring; crisis intervention/emergency placement/family stabilization; and case closure and discharge (Voluntary supervision and formal supervision)
- **Team #3:** Independent Living Program / emancipating foster youth;

- **Team #4:** Medical neglect assurances issues & coordination with child fatality and near fatality reviews;
- **Team #5:** Miscellaneous policy issues related to CWS Redesign.

All teams will complete the following in addition to their specific areas of focus:

- Examine the child protective service system's coordination with other systems
- Evaluate CPS staff qualifications, training and workloads
- Examine the degree to which State and local CPS agencies are meeting CFSR/ASFA outcome-based performance indicators

Kern's CRP will focus on the following if time permits:

- Examine the extent to which the State child protective service system is coordinated with IV-E foster care and adoptions
- Serve as one of the feedback mechanisms for the local CWS redesign effort
- Explore questions of differential CPS responses, treatment, and outcomes based on geography, ethnicity, culture, sibling group

The KCNC has started working with the Kern Child Abuse Prevention Council to increase the Council's role in advocating for the prevention of child abuse.

### **Future Challenges Facing the CWS System and Kern's CRP**

- The major challenge facing Kern County's CWS system and the Kern CRP is balancing the review of existing policies, practices and procedures in the midst of the CWS Redesign. Kern's CRP must remain focused on achieving this balance.
- Retaining the commitment and excitement of Kern's CRP members
- Anticipated budget reductions at the State and local levels will challenge Kern County's ability to successfully discharge its CWS responsibilities.

### **Future Activities**

In November of 2003, Cheryl Holsonbake, KCNC Research Associate, will present an overview of child abuse indicators and the UC Berkeley web site.

Kern's CRP will continue to meet monthly as an entire panel with on-going team meetings occurring on a regular basis. Case file review will begin soon.

Kern's CRP is partnering with the California State University – Bakersfield's Department of Social Work to secure one to two MSW interns to assist the panel

and sub-committees in their work.

Kern's CRP will conduct focus groups with those most affected by the CWS system.

## **NAPA COUNTY**

### **Napa Citizen Review Panel Annual Report October 2002 to September 2003**

#### **The Composition of the Panel in 2002-2003**

The Citizen Review Panel had 19 members in 2002-2003 including two parents and one foster parent. The Panel chaired by a parent member since its inception, includes members who are experienced in the delivery of social services to children through either personal or professional experience.

#### **Priorities in 2002-2003**

The Citizen Review Panel focused its efforts in the areas of prevention, community education, CWS Redesign and continued case/referral reviews. The Panel worked closely with the Napa County Child Abuse Council (CAPC) as well as the child welfare staff.

#### **Challenges**

- Training: Panel members were offered training, however, most panel members were not available to attend as the trainings were held during business hours. The Panel will explore ways to make training more accessible to members in FY 2003-2004.
- Panel diversity: During the 2002-2003 fiscal year, the panel worked to recruit new members in a manner that will establish and maintain ethnic and cultural diversity and that will ensure adequate parental participation.
- CWS Staff Changes: Two key CWS staff that met with and provided support to the Panel left their positions for other County appointments. This created a void in terms of CWS support to the Panel. The newly assigned person, Assistant Behavioral Health Manager, has now taken on that role.
- Budget: Due to the budget cuts at the State level, CDSS liaison to the Napa CRP was unable to visit the county. Relying on phone and email communications has not been as effective as face-to-face meetings.

#### **Accomplishments 2002-2003**

In 2002- 2003 the accomplishments of the Napa CRP included:

- Revision of its by-laws to facilitate the recruitment of new members.
- Participation in discussions with Strategies and the Child Abuse Prevention Council to assess the Panel's training and development needs.
- Participation in the Child Welfare Services Case Management System's (CWS/CMS) "Tune Up" program, which is offered by CDSS. The results of the tune up were shared with the Panel and the results confirmed the basic integrity of Napa's CWS/CMS system. The system will be used to establish baseline data regarding the CWS outcomes, which are at the core of the County's redesign process.
- Submission of the panel's annual report to the Board of Supervisors in March of 2003. Submission of the report was a means of introducing April as Child Abuse Prevention Month.
- The review and recommendation of outcomes for services funded through the Child Abuse Prevention, Intervention, and Treatment Act (CAPIT) and Family Preservation/Family Support (FPFS) funds.
- Development of a client rights brochure; a resource directory for middle and high school students in collaboration with a local school district; and a general education video on family resource centers which can also aid in fund raising endeavors.
- Outreach to the media community
- Co sponsoring Child Abuse Prevention Month activities.
- Strategic planning.

## **Recommendations**

The Panel recommends to the Board of Supervisors and the State that funds be provided for the support of child welfare in three ways:

- The SB2030 workload study, as issued by the legislature in April 2000, found that as a result of multiple changes in laws, policies and court decisions, the old funding standards in use at the time had resulted in the under funding of child welfare services. The state needs to develop a funding formula that comes close to covering the costs associated with child welfare services.
- Additional funding should be allocated to support the redesign efforts as AB636 essentially exists as an unfunded county mandate. Given that child welfare was documented as under funded prior to the passing of AB636, the additional workload requirements contained in the AB636 legislation add a

significant additional load that must be addressed in order for the redesign of the child welfare system to be effective.

- Continue to “overmatch” local child welfare services in support of continued accreditation of the county agency. Accreditation benefits the entire community, as it sets a high standard for the delivery of services to children and families.
- The Panel further recommends that the State consider acknowledgement of county accreditation status by showing its support in the form of “deemed status” for audit purposes or through direct funding in areas such as the CAPIT funds.

### **Priorities for the future**

- Develop formal memorandums of understanding with partnering agencies to solidify the commitments that these agencies have to the Panel.
- Develop focus groups and have them meet in the community, to gather input regarding child abuse prevention, while promoting awareness of child abuse, and increasing citizen awareness of the Panel itself.
- Identify data needed to review child welfare services.
- Improve the communication between CPS and the schools.
- Promote the Citizen Review Panel mission in the community while avoiding duplication of effort with the Child Abuse Prevention Council.
- Recruit a faith representative; recruit a representative for the Hispanic community.
- Review child welfare cases and referrals to monitor more effectively the delivery of services to clients of the child welfare system.

# **SAN MATEO COUNTY**

## **San Mateo Citizen Review Panel Annual Report October 2002 to September 2003**

### **Composition of the Panel**

The San Mateo County Citizen Review Panel (SMCCRP) is a permanent subcommittee of the Children's Collaborative Action Team (CCAT), which is the San Mateo Child Abuse Prevention Council. The CCAT is an independent organization within San Mateo County government. It provides leadership in the area of child abuse prevention through advocacy, coordinating resources, and raising community awareness through education and training.

In fiscal year 2002-2003, the 13 member San Mateo County Citizen Review Panel was comprised of four parents, members of the Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA) project, community based organizations, staff from the Public Defender's Office and staff from the Human Services Agency (HSA)..

### **Priorities in 2002-2003**

San Mateo chose to have the panel assist the Human Services Agency (HSA) with the planning and implementation of the Family to Family Initiative (F2F). The HSA viewed the F2F Initiative positively as it has four tools that assist child welfare programs develop a much more responsive and integrated approach to working with the community.

### **Challenges**

- Community members who are employed elsewhere are challenged by the daytime hours of the CRP meetings. Some are required to use vacation time to participate and the stipends given to such members may not completely cover their expenses.
- Ensuring independent participation: Often each person brings an agenda based upon professional ties or biases. The common goal of the panel must be reiterated and constantly supported.
- The CRP is actively engaged in learning about the CWS Redesign, however, its participation in the process is yet to be determined.
- The panel is deliberating as to whether or not it will review individual cases. The membership has not yet decided. This is due in part to a situation in

San Mateo County in which a child died as a result of violence while he was a dependent of the court. The role of CRP in such a high profile case is controversial due to confidentiality issues. While all members have signed a confidentiality statement, this area needs to be further explored.

As mentioned above, during the 2002-2003 fiscal year, San Mateo County suffered the death of a child while he was under the supervision of the court. As a result of the child death, several things happened that affected the work of the panel:

- The San Mateo County Grand Jury issued a report with recommendations that HHS and the Court needed to act on.
- A blue ribbon Panel was created. It was comprised of department heads, judicial representatives and other decision-makers. They reviewed HSAs operational procedures. CRP is a recommending body, not a decision-making nor an oversight body. How the CRP fits into this design was not clear and its role in such an instance needs to be defined.

### **Accomplishments**

- The Panel, after reviewing and evaluating the composition of its membership, and looking at one of the recommendations from the San Mateo County Grand Jury, decided to increase and expand its membership to include a much broader representation of the county's population. The membership was expanded to include representatives from probation, the Court Mediation Program, the Fatherhood Collaborative, the County Department of Education, law enforcement, and the Kinship Support Program.
- Based on the CWS Redesign vision, the CRP adopted its own: "Every child in San Mateo County will live in a safe, stable, permanent home, nurtured by healthy families and strong communities."
- The panel created a mission statement "The mission of the San Mateo Citizen Review Panel is to assess the child welfare system in the county and make data driven recommendations for continuous improvement that will help to ensure the safety and well-being of San Mateo County children and their families."
- The Panel developed and signed a member's confidentiality agreement.

### **Activities**

- Training: Panel members participated in five training sessions during 2002-2003; topics included leadership, CWS Redesign, Children and Family

Services, Family to Family, Team Decision-Making, and Panel review processes.

- General Activities: The San Mateo CRP worked on engaging the community, recruiting and selecting panel members, agreeing upon reviewing principles, and assessing knowledge of the system of services for the safety and protection of children.
- Several parent members of the CRP and FCAC serve on the Family to Family Oversight Committee for the implementation of the “Team Decision Making”, which began pilot operations in February 2003 and was fully implemented in September 200

### **Recommendations**

The CRP has not yet presented any recommendations to the county and State yet and no annual report has been presented or released to the public. However, the Panel will do a press release when the CRP report is ready, and will work with CCAT on the distribution of the report during the Child Abuse Prevention Campaign in the month of April 2004.

### **Future Directions**

An evaluation of CRP’s activities is leading the panel to change its scope of work. The panel will decide at its January 2004 meeting its new focus in the review of the system of services that is working on the safety and protection of children. The panel’s decision will be driven by statistics and it will take into consideration the County and the State’s PIP and SB636 outcomes and accountabilities.

CRP priorities for next fiscal year will include:

- A report with recommendations for improvement (if any) that will include community input; present report to the county and state government.
- Recruiting a member from the health/mental health field.
- Further outreach through the Child Abuse Council website and Newsletter that describes and promotes the action of CRP at the local level and informs the community that this body exists.
- Release article about new Panel members and the Panel’s new focus to be publicized in the “Child’s Advocate” quarterly newsletter during the 2003-2004 fiscal year. Distribution is to more than 750 individuals and agencies in San Mateo County that work on children and family issues.

## CHILD WELFARE SERVICES STAKEHOLDERS GROUP

### Introduction

In the third year, the Stakeholders built upon the framework that had been established in the first and second years of operation by expanding the four workgroups that were established in year two. These workgroups which address community and prevention, the new intake structure, permanency, and the workforce met regionally and in Sacramento to discuss the issues which fell into the domain of their respective workgroups. They addressed the integration of CWS with Alcohol and Drug Agencies and the courts; outcomes and accountability, safety assessments; and organizational culture and fairness and equity issues.

During Spring 2003, the CWS Redesign Stakeholders conducted five community forums which covered all areas of the State. Local and community partners throughout the state were invited to attend these forums so that the Stakeholders could present an overview of the CWS Redesign and gather input from local residents, CWS consumers, local public agencies and community-based organizations regarding the broader community's role and responsibility for child protection and child and family well-being. Another purpose of the forums was to engage a broad group of local stakeholders in understanding and supporting the recommendations for the CWS Redesign.

On March 12, a video conference was held to promote partnerships and community investment in the Redesign. This videoconference, called "*Bold Changes: A Shared Responsibility for Children and Families*," was attended by over 150 people at five sites and fostered dialogue and inspired new partnerships around the mission of the Redesign. It was sponsored by the Foundation Consortium for California's Children and Youth, the Northern California Grantmakers, San Diego Grantmakers and the Southern California Association for Philanthropy, in collaboration with CDSS, Casey Family programs and First 5/prop 10, and funded by Casey Family programs, the Stuart Foundation and the California Endowment.

This three-year project concluded on June 30, 2003 with the publication of its final report, *CWS Redesign: The Future of California's Child Welfare Services* (September 2003) This report is available on the Department of Social Services website at ([www.cwsredesign.ca.gov](http://www.cwsredesign.ca.gov))

### Future Directions

- The State Interagency Child Welfare Team was convened by the Director of the Department of Social Services who requested that the Directors of the

State Departments of Health Services, Mental Health, Alcohol and Drug Programs, Developmental Services, education, and the Office of the Attorney General, appoint appropriate Deputy Directors to serve on the team. In addition some CDSS Deputy Directors and members of the Consortium for Children and Families serve on the team. The function of this team is to align vital systems, roles, structures and policies to support the child and family outcomes that are common to these agencies. The Team has been meeting monthly since May, 2003.

- The Department of Social Services and the Foundation Consortium for California's Children and Youth have formed an innovative public-private partnership to support the aims and implementation of Redesign. This group has come together to identify the most pressing needs of implementation and how private sector support can leverage the substantial public investment that is being made in improving child welfare services in the state. This group has been meeting monthly since February, 2003.
- In order to assist counties in integrating the Redesign, CDSS issued a Request for Application (RFA) to all 58 counties in April 2003. This RFA was designed to support counties and to assist them with self-assessing and identifying their readiness to participate and implement the Redesign. As a result of this RFA, A total of \$2.6 million in CDSS incentive funds was provided to 51 counties to assist them with planning, assessing and developing implementation strategies. Eleven counties were selected to be the initial counties to implement the former Redesign, now know as the Child Welfare Services (CWS) System Improvements and began implementing their county plans in January 2004.
- Ten fiscal strategies were developed to expand and restructure child welfare financing. They are: reconfiguring the CWS allocation; obtaining permanent waiver authority; implementing flexible funding and performance based contracting; maintaining the Title IV-E Training Waiver; utilizing contracted administrative support; funding Multi-disciplinary teams; reinvesting foster care savings; establishing interagency coordination; and funding child care for employed foster parents.
- The CWS System Improvements call for a child welfare workforce that is dedicated to improving outcomes for all children and families, requiring both systemic and practice-level changes and the availability of appropriate tools and support in order to move beyond good intentions to improve fairness and equity. A fairness and equity matrix is a tool, that can assist counties with this improvement process and it is available on CDSS website.
- The Stakeholder Group, which finalized its activities in June of 2003, served as the state level CRP. One of the CWS System Improvements implementation strategies includes convening an advisory group comprised of a broad and

diverse membership that represents the State. This group, the Champions for Children, met in October of 2003 and was to continue as the Statewide Citizen Review Panel. With the November elections and the transition to a new administration, changes in management and the need to orient a new administration to CWS reform led to a need to evaluate the panel's role and membership. Presently a list of prospective members has been developed and the organizations that will nominate panel members have been identified. It is anticipated that the members will be selected by mid-September and the new panel will meet in October of 2004.