

2004 COLORADO CAPTA: CITIZEN REVIEW PANELS

- 1. Citizen Review Panel – Colorado’s Children’s Justice Task Force**
- 2. Citizen Review Panel - Institutional Abuse and Neglect Review Team**
- 3. Citizen Review Panel - Pueblo County Child Protection Team**

The Colorado Department of Human Services has designated the above 3 teams as the State's three Citizen Review Panels in order to meet the CAPTA requirement of June 20, 1999. The Children's Justice Task Force is in Federal Statute. The State Institutional Abuse Team and the Pueblo County Child Protection Team are in Colorado Statute.

Citizen Review Panel – Colorado’s Children’s Justice Task Force

The Colorado’s Children’s Justice Task Force (CJTF) is a designated citizen review panel that is currently comprised of 20 volunteers who represent professions or agencies that are involved with those children’s issues that are encompassed within the Colorado Children’s Code and Criminal Code.

The purpose of the Panel has been to review the current practice and statutes regarding the judicial and administrative handling of the investigation of child abuse and neglect particularly child sexual abuse and child fatalities as well as legislative reforms and model programs.

The 2003 CJTF 3 year findings and recommendation were reviewed at the CJTF’s Panel quarterly meetings; they serve to guide the Panel’s inquiry and discussion throughout the year of operation. Areas that the Colorado’s Children’s Justice Panel focus on include: interagency collaboration; the relationships and interaction among child fatalities, abuse and neglect, domestic violence and substance abuse; coordination of protective service programs with foster care and adoption programs; and comprehensive data collection to ensure that all agencies will be able to provide a more coordinated approach to service delivery to the families and children in Colorado’s child welfare system. The CJTF Panel provides valuable input and oversight to Colorado’s Child and Family Services Review (CFSR) and Performance Improvement Plan (PIP). During the 2004 legislative session members were utilized in seeking input on a number of legislative bills.

Citizen Review Panel – Institutional Abuse and Neglect Review Team

The Institutional Abuse and Neglect Review Team Panel is designated as a citizen review panel. The Panel consists of volunteers who are representative of the community at large as well as members who possess expertise in the prevention and treatment of child abuse and neglect. It reviews specific cases of alleged incidents of abuse and neglect, including child fatalities and near fatalities that occur in Department licensed or certified 24hr out-of-home care settings such as foster care and adoptive homes, Residential Child Care

Facilities (RCCF), Residential Treatment Centers (RTC), and juvenile detention centers/facilities under the State Department's Division of Youth Services.

The Panel meets monthly to review specific cases and to make recommendations to the state and county agencies in order to ensure that they are effectively discharging their child protection responsibilities in accordance with the State Plan and the child protection standards set forth in the Plan.

This Panel was specifically designated to focus on the extent to which the child protective service system is coordinated with the foster care and the adoption programs. All State and Federal statutes concerning confidentiality govern the Panel. State staff members have been designated to provide assistance to the Panel for the proper execution of their duties.

The Institutional Abuse and Neglect Review Panel reviews an average of 50 cases a month. 628 cases were reviewed from June 1, 2003 through May 31, 2004. Although team membership had been increased from 15 to 19, membership was reduced to 17 due to State budget cuts and the elimination of the Central Registry of Child Protection. Representative membership is still intact, especially in areas that need more specific expertise in order to make appropriate recommendations for identified policies and procedures that provide for the safety of children in State custody. These recommendations are sent to all involved state and county agencies.

Recommendations have been submitted in the areas of caseworker training, licensing changes, restraint limitations, foster parent training, foster parent qualifications and specialized foster care, etc. The State has provided assistance to the panel with training, secretarial support and administrative support.

Team Recommendations:

That CDHS provide training to county department staff who place and monitor placements so that they know how to assess safety in out-of-home care. They need to know about the mix of children in a home and how that can impact safety. This training is currently being provided and is available to all county department staff and is being provided by ACTION for Child Protection.

The Team also recommended that CDHS provide training to county staff that certify foster homes and study adoptive homes regarding how to study these homes in order to select appropriate persons to be foster parents. This training has also been implemented and has also been made available to Child Placement Agency staff that certify foster parents.

The Institutional Abuse Team is currently reviewing the issue of when restraining children in out-of-home placement is abusive and will soon make recommendations to CDHS regarding the development of policy.

The Institutional Abuse Team provides yearly training to county staff regarding the investigation of child abuse and neglect in out-of-home care. For 2004, focus will be on:

- Consistency and adequacy of investigations and the notification of individual(s) found to be responsible for the abuse or neglect
- Providers prospective
- Medical issues
- Utilization of physical restraints

Citizen Review Panel – Pueblo County Child Protection Team

The Pueblo County Citizen Review Panel meets weekly to review investigated reports of all cases of child abuse (physical and sexual), fatal child abuse, emotional abuse, neglect, abandonment and institutional abuse incidents made to the Pueblo County Department of Social Services. Recommendations are made addressing the investigation and the proposed treatment plan. The Pueblo County Citizen Review Panel evaluates as per statute the timeliness and appropriate response of the Department plus also functions as both a review and resource panel. Guidance and suggestions are provided to the reporting Intake or Ongoing worker by the members of the team made up of medical, mental health, educational, law enforcement and legal experts. The Pueblo County Child Protection Team reviews approximately 15-20 cases per week.

The membership panel is diverse in its make up of professional and dutiful individuals. Members consist of representatives from School District #60 and School District #70, CMHIP, Foster parents, a judicial liaison, Pueblo County Health Department, a medical doctor, the El Pueblo Boys and Girls Ranch (RTC), Spanish Peaks Mental Health Center, Pueblo Child Advocacy Center, 1 representative of the minority groups within the community, Deputy District Attorneys, Pueblo Police Department, Pueblo Sheriffs Department, and the Department of Social Services.

Each caseworker either Intake or Ongoing presents the cases they were assigned to investigate. The team reviews all the information available in regards to the outcome of the investigation. From the synopsis the team will make recommendations to include but not limited to filing a Dependency and Neglect (D&N) petition, seek additional medical or mental health information, whether to confirm an individual on the Trails Automated System, or list certain individuals as special respondents. On occasion the Team will request the ongoing worker and the Supervisor to attend the review so they can be available for questions or recommendations.

Because the Child Protection Team reviews a large number of cases they have become aware of the strengths and deficits in the system. So, in addition to the recommendations on specific cases the Child Protection Team consistently recommends:

- The involvement of the State's 24 hour monitoring team
- The improvement of the communication between the Pueblo Department of Social Services and the monitoring team(s).

- They have recommended the need for an enhancement to include a CPT report on TRAILS (the State Department's Automated System).

The Child Protection Team has seen various trends in our community that has had a major impact on the Dept. of Social Services in Pueblo County. The trends consist of the following:

- Current economic issues
- Increase in Mental Health issues of parents and children.
- Availability and use of drugs (increased use of methamphetamine, cocaine and alcohol is a paramount issue) that has led to increases in drug exposed newborns.

The community is growing with a large number of families moving into the Pueblo area.

Referrals reporting abuse and neglect in 2003 reflected more substance abuse by parents. Completed investigations resulted in a significant increase in the number of open cases of abuse and neglect due to the increase of cocaine and methamphetamine drug use by parents.