



## What Is The Citizen Review Board...

The Citizen Review Board has over 180 volunteers staffing 34 local review boards statewide. It is an independent project legislatively created by the State of New Mexico with a two part mandate.

- To review the cases of children in the custody of the State and make recommendations to the Judge who presides over the case.
- To make recommendations to the New Mexico Legislature, the Children, Youth and Families Department, and the courts regarding the statutes, policies and procedures relating to substitute care..

The volunteers who make up the New Mexico Citizen Review Board (CRB) have one goal "to make New Mexico's foster care system the best it can be". In light of this goal, the volunteers who review the cases of children in the Children, Youth and Families Department's custody are aware that many people and agencies are involved in the complex foster care system.

We believe that the children who are abused and neglected deserve the best possible services and should be in a permanent home that provides love, nurturing and protection as quickly as possible.

Each local review board meeting provides an opportunity for the parties involved in a case to present information pertinent to the child's progress toward a permanent loving and safe home. The information gathered at these meetings form the basis for a written report with recommendations that the local board sends to the presiding Judge. Additionally, the statewide compilation of the statistical data gleaned from these meetings, provide the basis for CRB's recommendations to the legislature, the Children, Youth and Families Department and the courts.

## For More Information...

- Contact the New Mexico Citizen Review Board office in Albuquerque (505) 217-0227 or toll free at (866) 857-2976
- Visit the CRB website at [www.nmcrb.org](http://www.nmcrb.org) for up-to-date information on what is happening with the abused and neglected children the CRB boards review.
- See the CRB Annual Report for additional recommendations and information (reported by state and county) on the abused and neglected children of New Mexico.

If you would like a copy of our Annual Report and Interim Reports highlighting other important issues in the abuse and neglect system, please contact us.



### New Mexico Friends of Foster Children Fund

While basic life necessities are provided to children in foster care, there are many unique needs which are not funded by State programs. With assistance of our friends and supporters, New Mexico Friends of Foster Children Fund can help those children in ways that shape the course of their lives. For more information on the application process or how you can donate, please call our office at (505) 217-0227 or toll free at (866) 857-2976. Your help and support are needed!

The Citizen Review Boards meet in the following locations:

Alamogordo

Albuquerque

Bernalillo

Carlsbad

Clovis

Deming

Espanola

Estancia

Farmington

Gallup

Grants

Hobbs

Las Cruces

Las Vegas

Los Lunas

Raton

Roswell

Santa Fe

Silver City

Socorro

Taos

Truth or Consequences

Tucumcari

# New Mexico Child Abuse & Neglect Citizen Review Board

## CRB Interim Report on Foster Parenting In New Mexico

### AUGUST 2005



To report abuse or neglect, please call CYFD Statewide Central Intake at 1-800-797-3260



Albuquerque: 505-217-0226  
Statewide: 866-857-2976  
Web: nmcrb.org

Mailing Address:  
P.O. Box 30228  
Albuquerque, NM 87190-0228



In late 2003, the Research and Investigation Subcommittee of the Statewide Advisory Committee of the New Mexico Child Abuse and Neglect Citizen Review Board (CRB) began a research project to identify recommendations that would enable foster parents to better support the children entrusted to their care. The child abuse and neglect system as a whole needs an in-depth understanding of foster parenting issues in order to plan for the safety and wellbeing of each child.

The CRB project developed a survey of 20 questions and distributed it to a list of 850 foster parents all around New Mexico. A total of 135 completed surveys were returned, from 26 of the 33 New Mexico counties. Of the respondents to the survey, 75 identified themselves as regular foster parents (FP), while 46 identified as treatment foster parents. (TFP). The remaining 14 respondents reported as being both. The difference between FP and TFP, aside from training, is that all TFP's are under the auspices of a treatment agency as well as Children, Youth and Families Department (CYFD), when a child is in state custody. A wide range of experience was reflected in the survey responses:

Provider Type	Range of years experience	Average years experience	Range of children served	Average number served
Regular	6 mo. – 36 yrs.	4.3 years	1 to 90	12.2
Treatment	1 yr. – 9 yrs.	4.8 years	1 to 45	6.3
Both	1 yr. – 17 yrs.	6.1 years	1 to 66	20.4

## Results of Data Analysis

### Frequency of contact with workers in the system:

#### Number of CYFD social workers assigned to current foster children during their time in care:

- 88 Parents reported 1-2 (72 %)
- 26 Parents reported 3-4 (21 %)
- 9 Parents reported 5 or more (7 %)

#### Number of times children have seen a CYFD social worker in the past year:

- 70 Parents reported at least monthly (53 %)
- 47 Parents reported every 2 months or less often (36 %)

#### Number of children who had Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA)

- 72 Parents reported having CASA volunteers (59 %)
- Of the families with CASA volunteer, 12 children had contact at least monthly (10 %) in the past year.

#### Number of times children had visited their Guardian Ad Litem (GAL) in the past year:

- 61 Families reported never having seen their (GAL) in the past year (51 %)
- 6 Families reported seeing their GAL monthly or more often (5 %)

### Notification of events:

#### CYFD Staffings:

- 63 reported never being notified of CYFD staffings (52 %)
- 23 families said they were always notified (19 %)

#### Court Hearings:

- 28 reported never being notified for court hearings (29 %)
- 48 families said they were always notified (50 %)

#### CRB Case Reviews:

- 20 reported never being notified of CRB case reviews (17 %)
- 45 families said they were always notified (37 %)



Foster parents live with the abused and neglected children in state's custody; they often know the children best and are often most aware of the children's immediate and long-term needs. Foster parents enhance the system that cares for abused and neglected children. Foster parents are a precious resource to the children and to the system itself. In the course of the research, CRB often heard from the foster parents that the system could do a better job of recognizing them as professionals and as critical members of the child's permanency and treatment teams. Another prominent suggestion was that CYFD improve its ability to implement and consistently apply its existing policies and procedures regarding foster care statewide. Hopefully, continuing partnership between CYFD the foster parents and the other interested organizations can result in the implementation of these suggestions with little or no financial impact. Finally, the input collected suggests a number of potential systemic improvements that would certainly require a new investment of dollars and human resources.

### Foster Parents' Recommendations for continued improvement of established policy

- Continue to minimize the amount of traumatic separations for the child (and for the foster parents) by focusing on the goal of children staying in a placement for as long as possible until permanency is achieved.
- Be sensitive to the loss both the foster parent and child are experiencing when a child is removed from the home; give adequate time and respect to the separation and grieving process.
- Consistently notify foster parents, in a timely manner regarding: Court hearings, treatment team meetings, staffings, medical appointments, visitations, CRB reviews, etc.
- Provide complete "traveling files" (in treatment foster care, "respite files") when the children are first placed in the foster home, including each child's Medicaid card, necessary identifying information, and information that includes all aspects of each child: personal history of each child, medical, educational, psychological, etc.
- Pay monthly foster care payments and reimbursements in full and when payment is due.
- Consistently follow CYFD policies and procedures in all areas of the state.
- Continue to improve timeliness of placement agreements and foster home licensing renewals.
- Continue including foster parents in training with the appropriate CYFD personnel, particularly when implementing new policies or modifying existing ones.

### Foster Parents' Recommended statewide investments for systemic improvements

- Increase reimbursement rates for foster parents. The state needs to realistically pay for the necessities for these children, as well as the "extras" that help each child develop into a productive adult.
- Increase appropriate foster parent training – initial and on-going. Particular training areas requested include reactive attachment disorder and the purpose and techniques of visitation between the foster child, siblings, and/or biological parents.
- Decrease social worker turnover, hire more social workers, and reduce caseloads. Turnover and heavy social worker caseload negatively impacts foster children and foster homes.
- Fund the positions of Foster Parent Liaisons in each county office around the state.

Foster care for these abused and neglected children who have needs above and beyond the "average child". CRB data collected during 2003 – 2004 from the reviews completed on 1,665 foster children show just some of their special needs:

- 778 children were diagnosed with behavioral and/or emotional problems.
- 559 children had educational and/or developmental delays.
- 256 children had physical and/or medical problems.

Increasing reimbursement rates to a more realistic level given the inflation that has taken place in the last 10 years and the increasing complexity and needs of these vulnerable children would help the children and foster parents. An increase would also help CYFD meet their performance standards of recruiting and retaining quality foster parents.

### How much do foster parents currently receive?

Children's Ages	Reimbursement
0 – 5 Years	\$ 13.60 per day
6 – 2 Years	\$ 14.70 per day
13 Years or older	\$ 15.57 per day

Foster parents must be available 24 hours a day to these special needs children. Included in the rates are: room and board, clothing, hair care/personal, diapers, school expenses, mileage to children's appointments, activity fees, and babysitting.