



CITIZEN REVIEW PANEL

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submitted by

The Children's Justice Act Task Force
Nevada Citizen Review Panel Subcommittee

to

The Division of Child and Family Services

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The State of Nevada Citizen Review Panel (CRP) was established in 1999 under Nevada Revised Statutes (NRS) 432B.396 and has federally mandated responsibilities under Title I, Section 106, of the Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (CAPTA). The Panel has the following primary mission:

To ensure the protection and safety of children through an evaluation of the Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act State Plan by examining State and local agencies' policies and procedures and specific cases where appropriate.

The Panel consists of members appointed by the Administrator of the Division of Child and Family Services (DCFS), whose designee also serves on the Panel. The group includes representation from a variety of State and County agencies, community organizations, and professional backgrounds related to child protective services (CPS), child advocacy, children's mental health, and foster parenting.

The Panel works toward fulfilling the following three primary goals:

1. Review the CAPTA state plan and updates on an annual basis.
2. Review at least one policy area from the Governor's assurances.
3. Follow up on previous recommendations.

In essence, the Panel's work consists of the review of internal policies and procedures within the CPS system, accomplished through individual CPS case reviews. Each year, the Panel's findings are summarized in an Annual Report submitted to the federal government as part of the CAPTA requirements.

Primary goals set by the Panel for 2005 included the following:

1. Continue to review CPS cases as part of the annual workplan.
2. Incorporate the CPS case review process into the development of the DCFS Quality Improvement system.
3. Integrate policy and procedure review into common areas of focus examined in conjunction with the CJA Task Force.
4. Review the CAPTA state plan.
5. Follow up on 2004 recommendations.

During 2005, the Panel began to successfully incorporate its CPS case review process into the DCFS Quality Improvement (QI) system, based on recommendations made last year in the 2004 Annual Report. The Panel members participated in the newly implemented QI system regional case reviews, and members will now regularly serve as external stakeholders for this case review process.

Integration with the CJA Task Force continued with a joint meeting held in December, where the Panel members provided their observations, findings, and recommendations resulting from the QI system regional case reviews. Primary Panel recommendations for 2005 focus on the need for additional CPS caseworker training surrounding child welfare practice and data entry for case records.

PANEL RECOMMENDATIONS AND ACTIVITIES

Introduction

During 2004, the Panel was positioned to become directly involved with the action items outlined in the DCFS Program Improvement Plan (PIP) developed in response to the Nevada Child and Family Services Review (CFSR). Item 31 of the PIP sets a goal to develop a Quality Improvement (QI) system that evaluates the quality of services and improvements within programs administered by DCFS.

Development of the QI system was completed in 2005 and focuses on six major processes:

1. **Measuring Child and Family Services Review (CFSR) outcomes:** DCFS is in the process of implementing a web-based information management system called Solution for Online Activity Reporting (SOAR), which will report on required CFSR measures including safety, permanency, and wellbeing. Data for the SOAR system will be downloaded from the existing Adoption and Foster Care Analysis and Reporting System (AFCARS). SOAR enables users to view how the child welfare system in Nevada compares with national standards. This will help support improvements in case management practice.
2. **Supervisory review:** A review instrument has been developed to monitor CPS case workers' performance. Quarterly reviews will be conducted by CPS supervisors and include examining one case per worker, per quarter, to ensure compliance with CFSR outcomes and the QI system. The supervisory reviews are intended to serve as an educational framework to help improve case workers overall job performance.
3. **Case review process:** Statewide QI teams will conduct on-site case reviews in the three primary service areas (north, south, rural) on a quarterly basis, with one review per area each quarter. The instrument used for these reviews is an abbreviated version of the federal CFSR instrument, developed in conjunction with the National Resource Center for Organizational Improvement. QI teams will include State and County staff along with external stakeholders
4. **Communication plan:** QI information and reports will be sent to child welfare agency staff so they are continuously informed of system progress in relation to national standards.
5. **Feedback loop to the DCFS Decision-Making Group:** A Policy Approval Review Team (PART) has been established to review data reports, discuss policy change, and make recommendations to the DCFS Decision-Making Group (DMG) for practice improvement and better outcomes. The DMG was established as part of the CFSR process and includes representatives from Washoe County, Clark County, and the rural regions.
6. **Oversight of QI system:** The DMG will have accountability for oversight of the PIP process and federal reporting. Operation of the QI system will be the responsibility of the QI Team, mandated as part of the PIP, which has the following roles and responsibilities:

- Adoption of the QI process.
- Creation and ongoing revision of QI instruments.
- Input on systemic changes.
- Participation in data cleanup and reporting groups.
- Creating bylaws for the team's governance.

The Panel became directly involved in the QI system by serving as external stakeholders in the regional case review process described under item three. Panel members were also invited to participate in the QI Team described under item six. Panel members took part in the first QI system case reviews during October, 2005, which were focused on services provided in the southern region of the state through the Clark County Department of Family Services (CCDFS).

Additionally, the Panel received a proposal in December, 2005, to expand the number of CRPs from one to three in order to come into compliance with the federal Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (CAPTA) requirements, as result of an increase in Nevada's allocation from the Basic State Child Abuse and Neglect State Grant.

The Panel's recommendations for 2005 were developed as a result of participation in the QI system case review process, and focus on the need for additional CPS caseworker training surrounding child welfare practice and data entry for case records. The Panel has also made a recommendation in response to the proposal to expand the number of CRPs in the state.

2005 Recommendations

CPS Caseworker Training

Recommendation 1: CPS caseworker training needs to include and/or reinforce consistent definitions of the standard elements of child welfare practice. [Freese, Moorehead]

Discussion: During the southern region case reviews, Panel members observed the lack of a uniform definition for *parental custody*. The problem surrounds child placements with relatives being considered an in-home placement by Clark County staff, which the Panel believes is incorrect. Additionally, the Panel members observed caseworker confusion between *safety* and *risk* apparent in case documentation. Caseworkers need to be trained to consistently use the statewide safety assessment tool as appropriate to the case, which clearly defines both safety and risk factors. Overall, there needs to be statewide uniformity in the conceptualization and implementation of child welfare practice definitions.

Recommendation 2: CPS caseworker training needs to include and/or reinforce appropriate actions to promote safety, permanency, and wellbeing through child welfare practice. [Appell]

Discussion: During the southern region case reviews, Panel members noted that some cases reflected a lack of understanding surrounding basic child protection concepts such as reasonable efforts, identifying and reaching out to non-custodial parents, the need to provide strengths-based outreach and services, and the importance of sibling relationships. Caseworkers need to be trained to incorporate necessary and appropriate actions as part of every case, and utilize a consistent approach to promote safety, permanency, and wellbeing for children in the system of care.

Recommendation 3: CPS caseworker training needs to reinforce the importance of data entry so that the contents of case files are consistent and complete. [Moorehead]

Discussion: In the past, Panel members have frequently noted that consistent CPS case documentation is necessary statewide. This not only helps to ensure that required steps are taken in investigations, but also helps to ensure that outside reviewers understand the actions that have been taken for quality assurance and case compliance reviews. During the southern region case reviews, Panel members noted that interviews with caseworkers sometimes showed that additional steps were taken by staff which led directly to positive outcomes for children and families, but were not included in the case documentation.

Proposed CRP Expansion for 2006

Recommendation 4: DCFS Administration should invite the existing Child Welfare Citizen Advisory Committees to participate as CRPs as part of the proposed CRP expansion for 2006.

Discussion: During the Panel's joint meeting with the Children's Justice Act (CJA) Task force in December, 2005, the members reviewed the proposed plan for Nevada CRP expansion in 2006, which is detailed below in this report. The proposal recommends establishing additional CRP Subcommittees within the CJA Task Force and Executive Committee to Review the Death of Children, while maintaining the existing Statewide CRP. The Panel agreed that the areas of focus outlined for the CRP Subcommittee of the Executive Committee to Review the Death of Children were appropriate, but did not believe a second subcommittee of the Task Force was necessary. Instead, they support exploring the participation of existing Child Welfare Citizen Advisory Committees that are already active in the north, south, and rural regions of the state.

Follow-Up on 2004 Recommendations

Follow-up on the 2004 Panel recommendations was based on specific actions in response to each recommendation as follows:

Recommendation 1: The Panel should continue to review CPS cases as part of its annual workplan.

–AND–

Recommendation 2: The Panel should incorporate its case review process into the development of the DCFS Quality Improvement system.

Action: As recommended in 2004, the Panel has continued its review of CPS cases by becoming involved in the DCFS QI system. Based on item 31 of the PIP, the Panel members now serve as external stakeholders to the regional case review process, discussed above in the introduction to this report. As noted in the 2004 Annual Report, the Panel's work surrounding policy and procedure review, case reviews, and data review is consistent with the federal mandate, national CRP guidelines, and the work of other CRPs considered model groups in the U.S.

Recommendation 3: The Panel should incorporate its case review and policy review process into areas of focus reviewed in conjunction with the CJA Task Force.

Action: The Panel participated in its annual joint meeting with the CJA Task Force, and reported its findings and preliminary recommendations for 2005 to the Task Force members. The Panel members recognize that more work is needed to create a constructive relationship between the two groups so that information and recommendations derived from the Panel's case review process is transmitted to the CJA Task Force in order to help them make more effective training and funding decisions.

Summary: Proposed CRP Expansion for 2006

Nevada Citizen Review Panels

Proposed 2006 Work Plan

Background: Required Expansion of Nevada Citizen Review Panels

The Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (CAPTA) requires each state that receives the Basic State Child Abuse and Neglect State Grant in excess of \$200,000 to have a minimum of three citizen review panels. Nevada has received more than this amount in previous years through grant adjustments, and will probably continue to receive more than this amount in the future. Therefore, it is necessary that Nevada expand the number of citizen review panels to three in order to come into compliance with the federal requirements. According to CAPTA, Section 106, citizen review panels may function as part of other committees already in existence. The Children's Justice Act (CJA) Task Force and the Executive Committee to Review the Death of Children have both expressed an interest in participating as citizen review panels through working subcommittees established as part of their respective groups.

Existing CRP: Statewide Citizen Review Panel

Nevada's existing group, the Statewide Citizen Review Panel (CRP), has been established since 1999. It is federally mandated under CAPTA Section 106, and organized under Nevada Revised Statutes (NRS) Chapter 432B.396. The Statewide CRP is currently focused on the Division of Child and Family Services (DCFS) Program Improvement Plan (PIP) and the Quality Improvement (QI) process.

The Statewide CRP is focused on how well Nevada's child welfare agencies are performing their duties to protect children, through a review of the QI system that monitors the statewide implementation of the PIP policies and procedures at the case work level. The Statewide CRP has previously reviewed the DCFS child welfare data collection system, Unified Nevada Information Technology for Youth (UNITY), and its importance in tracking QI activities outlined in the PIP. The Statewide CRP also participates in case reviews to observe the implementation of policy and practice at the case work level, and to make recommendations for systemic improvements.

Each year the panel completes the following primary duties:

1. Reviews the State's implementation of previous CRP recommendations.
2. Reviews ongoing QI and PIP projects and participates in case reviews.
3. Considers a new area of subject review within the CAPTA Assurances, Section 106.

The Statewide CRP will maintain these duties and areas of focus as part of its continuing function under CAPTA and NRS requirements.

Proposed New CRPs: CRP Subcommittees Formed Through the CJA Task Force and the Executive Committee to Review the Death of Children

Children's Justice Act (CJA) Task Force – Citizen Review Panel Subcommittee

The CJA Task Force is federally mandated under CAPTA Sections 106 and 107, and focuses on front-end child protection and/or prosecution activities. The following topics are being proposed by DCFS as a possible work plan for the CRP Subcommittee, with the State's PIP and QI process as an overarching theme:

- Child welfare agencies: What forms are used, what information or data is collected, and what policies and procedures guide regional practices? What could be improved? How is trauma reduced for the child during this process? How is this reflected in the QI process? Case reviews focused on this subject area may be appropriate.
- Intake procedures.
- Investigative procedures.
- Court procedures.
- Risk assessment procedures.
- Guardian ad litem requirements.
- Medical neglect.
- Legal information and training of staff.

Additional topics have been previously proposed by the CJA Task Force members, including:

- Training surrounding methamphetamine abuse in relationship to child protection, worker safety, and family drug courts.
- Addressing the needs of infants who are born drug-affected.
- Updating the UNITY system to track drug-affected babies and follow up with appropriate referrals.
- Increasing the capacity of medical professionals to recognize and report abuse, neglect, and children with healthcare needs.
- Developing a statewide initiative to support the enhancement of attorney competence, and the adoption of standards, for training surrounding cases of child abuse and neglect.
- Monitoring of the State's compliance with CAPTA requirements that children be represented by attorneys or Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASAs).
- Monitoring of the State's compliance with rules on expediting Supreme Court decisions surrounding the termination of parental rights (TPR).
- Monitoring of the State's compliance with CAPTA requirements for children under age three with substantiated abuse to be given a developmental screening.
- Addressing the psychiatric needs of children in Nevada who are removed from their homes, including consideration of the automatic assignment of a caseworker.

- Reviewing and expanding the collaboration and coordination of CPS investigations that occur on reservations between DCFS and local tribes.

Executive Committee to Review the Death of Children – Citizen Review Panel Subcommittee

The Executive Committee to Review the Death of Children is State mandated under NRS Chapter 432B.409, and focuses on the review of child fatalities and prevention efforts surrounding child maltreatment and death. The following topics are being proposed by DCFS as a possible work plan for the CRP Subcommittee, with the State's PIP and QI process as an overarching theme:

- Child Death data collection: Which State or other agencies have child fatality data? Are these data collected and coordinated? What data is collected? When and how? What data is collected by county child welfare agencies? Are there gaps in this data and why? What related data is collected by law enforcement agencies and is this data entered into the UNITY system? How can this data system be improved? How does the QI process address child fatality data?
- Child welfare agency child death case reviews: What forms are used? What information or data is collected? What policies and procedures guide regional practices? What could be improved? How is this reflected in the QI process? Case reviews focused on this subject area may be appropriate.
- Selected child welfare agency policy review from previous case review findings and/or recommendations.
- Policies and practices for home visitation.
- Premature case closure.
- Repeat maltreatment indicators: What are the policies, procedures, and practices that could improve child protection? Can these be identified by the QI process?

Meeting Dates and Activities

During 2005, the Panel met four times and participated in one series of case reviews as follows:

<i>Meeting Date</i>	<i>Topics</i>
April 22, 2005 <i>Panel Meeting</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Review and discuss Panel involvement in DCFS Quality Improvement process.• Update on CAPTA grant renewal.
September 27, 2005 <i>Panel Meeting</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Update on DCFS Quality Improvement process and timeline.• Schedule Panel involvement in October 2005 case reviews.• Update on proposed plan for Nevada CRP expansion in 2006.
October 10 – 13, 2005 <i>On-site Case Reviews</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Panel participation in Clark County CPS case reviews.
December 13, 2005 <i>Joint Meeting with CJA Task Force</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• DCFS Program Improvement Plan (PIP) review.• Update on DCFS Quality Improvement system process and timeline.• Member feedback on recommendations from Clark County case reviews.• Review and approve proposed plan for Nevada CRP expansion in 2006.
December 28, 2005 <i>Panel Meeting</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Review and finalize 2005 Annual Report.• Update on proposed plan for Nevada CRP expansion in 2006.

APPENDIX A: OVERVIEW OF THE NEVADA CITIZEN REVIEW PANEL

Federal Requirements

As outlined in Public Law 104-235, Title I, Section 106, the Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (CAPTA) provides for a state grant program for the support and improvement of state child protective services (CPS) systems. This law sets forth a variety of eligibility requirements, including the establishment of citizen review panels. The purpose of the panels is “to provide new opportunities for citizens to play an integral role in ensuring that states are meeting their goals of protecting children from abuse and neglect.”

The citizen review panel system within a given state must meet certain operational requirements and meet a scope of responsibilities within the function of the panel. These are outlined as follows:

Scope of Responsibilities

Each citizen review panel is required to review the compliance of State and local CPS agencies in the fulfillment of their responsibilities with respect to the following:

- Work in accordance with the CAPTA State Plan.
- Examine State and local policies and procedures.
- Review specific cases, when appropriate.
- Review other criteria the panel determines important to the protection of children, including the following:
 1. Review of the extent to which the State CPS system is coordinated with the Title IV-E foster care and adoption assistance programs.
 2. Review of child fatalities and near fatalities.

State Requirements

As part of the CAPTA requirements, states are required to codify citizen review panels through state law. In Nevada, this was completed with the passage of Assembly Bill (AB) 158 during the 1999 legislative session. The relevant text of AB 158 was incorporated into Nevada Revised Statutes (NRS) under Chapter 432B.396. This law reads as follows:

The Division of Child and Family Services shall:

1. Establish a panel comprised of volunteer members to evaluate the extent to which agencies which provide protective services are effectively discharging their responsibilities for the protection of children.
2. Adopt regulations to carry out the provisions of subsection 1 which must include, without limitation, the imposition of appropriate restrictions on the disclosure of information obtained by the panel and civil sanctions for the violation of those restrictions.

During 2001, NRS 432B.396 was amended as a result of AB 248 to establish civil sanctions for violations of confidentiality on the part of citizen review panel members. This amendment includes additional language highlighted in subsection two as follows:

1. Establish a panel comprised of volunteer members to evaluate the extent to which agencies which provide protective services are effectively discharging their responsibilities for the protection of children.
2. Adopt regulations to carry out the provisions of subsection 1 which must include, without limitation, the imposition of appropriate restrictions on the disclosure of information obtained by the panel and civil sanctions for the violation of those restrictions. **The civil sanctions may provide for the imposition in appropriate cases of a civil penalty of not more than \$500. The Division may bring an action to recover any civil penalty imposed and shall deposit any money recovered with the State Treasurer for credit to the State General Fund.**

Nevada Citizen Review Panel

The State of Nevada Citizen Review Panel (CRP) operates with the following mission:

To ensure the protection and safety of children through an evaluation of the Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act State Plan by examining State and local agencies' policies and procedures and specific cases where appropriate.

Prior to 2004, the Panel consisted of a maximum of 12 members appointed by the Administrator of the Division of Child and Family Services (DCFS), who also serves on the Panel. The group included representation from a variety of State and County agencies, community organizations, and professional backgrounds. Membership categories for the Panel are not federally mandated. However, they were originally based on the membership categories mandated under CAPTA for the Children's Justice Act (CJA) Task Force. The CJA Task Force functions in a complementary manner with the CRP, and therefore the membership was mirrored accordingly.

Recently, both the Panel and DCFS Administration have placed more emphasis on recruiting community members who are not directly affiliated with the child welfare service system, but still have a professional interest in the wellbeing of children. This includes recruitment from sectors including school districts, child care providers, nonprofit advocacy and service

organizations, and professional medicine. As a result, Panel members from State and County agencies were asked to begin serving in an advisory capacity to the group. This change was made just prior to the beginning of the case record review process initiated by the Panel, so that members representing other disciplines would be able to provide more objective feedback on cases reviewed at that State and County level.

During 2004, the Panel underwent a major structural change and was reorganized as a subcommittee of the Children's Justice Act (CJA) Task Force. This was done for two primary reasons: 1) To increase the effectiveness of the Panel's work by joining with a larger advisory group whose work is most directly related to that of the Panel; and 2) to meet the requirements of new statewide advisory board restructuring being done by the Division of Child and Family Services (DCFS) in order to reduce the amount of staff time and resources expended on the business completed by such groups. Prior to this restructuring, DCFS had a considerable number of advisory groups and other statewide committees, and it has become necessary to increase efficiency in the area of stakeholder contribution to the work of the Division.

Concurrent with this change, membership on the Panel has decreased as a result of member turnover. Some new members will be recruited to offset this turnover, and the participation of existing CJA Task Force members in the work of the Panel subcommittee will be encouraged in order to draw on the expertise of current members of the Task Force.

The Panel works toward fulfilling the following three primary goals:

1. Review the CAPTA State Plan and updates on an annual basis.
2. Review at least one policy area from the Governor's assurances.
3. Follow up on previous recommendations.

In essence, the Panel's work consists of the review of internal policies and procedures within the CPS system. Each year, the Panel's findings are summarized in an Annual Report submitted to the federal government as part of the CAPTA requirements.

Appendix B of this report includes a detailed overview of the State child welfare system, which describes the key components of the system of care reviewed by the Panel. Appendix C of this report includes a list of the current CRP members, along with their respective affiliations and areas of representation.

APPENDIX B: OVERVIEW OF THE STATE CHILD WELFARE SYSTEM

Prior to 2001, the child welfare system in Nevada was bifurcated between State and County agencies as a result of State law. Under Nevada Revised Statute (NRS) 432B.325, the law required that counties in which the “population is 100,000 or more shall provide protective services for the children in that county and pay the cost of all those services.” In Nevada there are two counties that meet this criterion: Washoe County in northern Nevada and Clark County in southern Nevada. As a result, there are three separate agencies that provide child welfare and child protective services (CPS):

1. State of Nevada Division of Child and Family Services (DCFS)
2. Washoe County Department of Social Services (WCDSS)
3. Clark County Department of Family Services (CCDFS)

These agencies work together through the CPS Statewide Managers Team, also known as the Nevada Child Protection and Permanency Planning Team. This team collaborates on pertinent law, regulation, and policy issues necessary to maintain statewide consistency for investigative and casework practices. The CPS Statewide Managers Team assists with the development and oversight of the Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (CAPTA) Basic State Grant.

The child protection agencies conduct child abuse investigations and may take children into protective custody and place them in licensed foster homes. Bifurcation occurred when the County child protection agencies transferred long term or other foster care or potential adoption cases to the State via DCFS. Children were transferred from their initial CPS placement in the County to the State agency’s licensed foster care home. The transfer included changes in social workers, court process, and service delivery systems.

However, during 2001, the Nevada State Legislature passed Assembly Bill (AB) 1 of the 17th Special Session, which provides for the integration of State and local child welfare services. This bill was intended to end the practice of transferring cases from the Counties to the State, thereby reducing the number of changes in placement for a child in protective custody. Integration means that the two larger Counties will incorporate the previously separate child welfare functions of foster care and adoptions into one continuous system of child protection. The following are directives of AB 1:

- Transfers certain duties of the Division of Child and Family Services (DCFS), under the Department of Human Resources (DHR), to agencies of Washoe and Clark Counties.
- Establishes a Legislative Committee on Children, Youth, and Families to oversee the system transition.
- Makes appropriations to fund the transition between State and County agencies.

The implementation of this transition was completed in 2004. WCDSS began implementation in April, 2002, and completed its transition in January, 2003. CCDFS began implementation in

October, 2003, and completed its transition in October, 2004. DCFS remains responsible for supervising and administering child protective and child welfare services in the remaining 15 rural counties. The integration of child welfare services in the two urban counties is intended to accomplish the following:

- Begin to eliminate the inefficiencies of the current system by reducing the number of placements of children in foster homes.
- Decrease the length of time that children remain in out-of-home care and ensure that children are placed in permanent homes as soon as possible.
- Establish rates for foster care reimbursement at a level that enables a provider of foster care to care for a child adequately. Rates should be standardized within each county and structured in a manner that avoids any unnecessary interruptions in foster home placements because of changing levels of reimbursements.
- Establish as a priority the fairness to employees affected by the integration of the child welfare system.
- Establish that DCFS and counties whose population is 100,000 or more have a shared fiscal responsibility for the costs of providing child welfare services, must be committed to ensuring through negotiation in good faith future maintenance of their efforts in providing these services, and must equitably share future costs for providing these services.
- Establish that integration of the child welfare system in Nevada will allow the placement of children in a child welfare system that is adequately funded and structured to avoid unnecessary interruptions in placement and will ensure that permanency is achieved for children in accordance with federal and state laws.

Subsequent to the integration of child welfare services within Washoe and Clark Counties, DCFS has moved into a new supervisory role for county-administered child protective and child welfare services. Supervision within the larger counties is being accomplished in a number of ways, including the development of a Decision-Making Group comprised of the DCFS Administrator, DCFS Deputy Administrators, and the Counties' Child Welfare Agency Directors. This group was originally formed to address the findings of the CFSR, which include the determination that Nevada lacks standardized statewide policies.

Historically, each of the state's three regional service areas (north, south, and rural) operated independently and were allowed to develop and implement region based policies. Additionally, during the integration process, Nevada had not previously clarified the roles of the State and Counties, and so the State has not been viewed as the accountable supervisory authority for child welfare service delivery.

Based on this, a collaborative Policy Development and Approval Process will be established under the PIP. Collaborative Policy Teams will be established and comprised of representatives from each regional service area, along with select internal and external stakeholders as needed. Each Policy Team may include subject matter experts, consumers, managers, supervisors, trainers, and community partners. The role of the Policy Team members will be to conduct research, provide content expertise, and develop draft policies that will be provided to the Decision-Making Group for final policy approval.

The Policy Teams will be assigned specific activities in order to provide structure for the policy development process. Specific activities of the teams will include the following:

- Review existing policies and procedures, comparing them to applicable federal regulations, Nevada Revised Statutes (NRS), and Nevada Administrative Codes (NAC); identify how the policies can be standardized and reflective of nationally recognized best practices.
- Develop new policies and where appropriate and include practice guidelines (field guides or practice manuals) to accompany each new policy developed. Streamlining documentation will be analyzed with each new policy developed.
- Present each new policy to the Decision-Making Group for approval. The Decision-Making Group will review all drafts submitted by the Policy Teams and will make recommendations for revision, or finalize and approve each new policy. The Decision-Making Group will provide oversight for the direction and implementation of the approved policies, and relevant procedures and practice guidelines linked to new policies.
- The Decision-Making Group will direct the Policy Teams to respond to any policy refinement needs discovered through the continuous quality assurance and improvement process.

Stakeholder involvement in policy development will also be promoted as part of the four plan strategies developed as part of the PIP and the new five-year plan: 1) Safety strategies, 2) engagement strategies, 3) case planning and management strategies, and 4) collaboration strategies. The fourth strategy was added in order to promote collaborative involvement in implementing changes within the first three areas. This will include collaboration with internal and external stakeholders across all program areas in the development of statewide policies, in order to improve safety, permanency, and wellbeing outcomes for children in Nevada.

Child Death Review Teams

The State of Nevada Division of Child and Family Services (DCFS) established the Children's Justice Act (CJA) Task Force in 1994, based on a federal mandate through the Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (CAPTA). The Statewide Child Death Review (CDR) Subcommittee, operating as part of the CJA Task Force, was formed as a partnership of professionals, organizations, and agencies in order to coordinate the statewide activities of child welfare agencies involved in the review of child death. Prior to 2003, the Statewide CDR Subcommittee engaged in several core activities:

- Reviewing cases of child fatalities to gain a better understanding of the causes of child death
- Identifying patterns of abuse, neglect, and other causal factors of child death that may respond to intervention
- Data collection and trends analysis surrounding child death
- Reviewing laws, policies, and practices

- Addressing statewide staff training needs
- Addressing public awareness and education needs

The primary goal of the Statewide CDR Subcommittee was to prevent future child maltreatment and deaths in Nevada by making recommendations for law, policy, and practice changes; staff training; and public education based on data from child death reviews.

While the Statewide CDR Team reviewed select cases of child death statewide in order to meet its goals, five regional CDR teams are required to review local child deaths throughout the State of Nevada as follows:

1. Clark County Team
2. Washoe County Team
3. Carson City Team: covers Carson City, Douglas, Lyon, and Storey Counties
4. Elko Team: covers Elko, Eureka, Humboldt, Lander, Lincoln, Pershing, and White Pine Counties
5. Fallon Team: covers Churchill, Esmeralda, Mineral, and Nye Counties

The purpose, organization, and functions of the regional CDR teams are mandated by Nevada Revised Statute (NRS) Chapter 432B, sections 403 through 407. Each of the teams reviews all child deaths within their region with the exception of the Clark County Team, which reviews State-mandated cases along with a selection of additional cases because of high caseload. Clark County accounts for approximately 71% of the state's population, and it is not feasible for the Clark County Team to review all child deaths in the area.

Regional CDR teams currently operate in the following manner:

- All autopsy reports sent for review from the coroner's office in the north are sent to WCDSS where they are disseminated to the appropriate regional CDR team. Likewise in the south, all autopsy reports sent for review from the coroner's office are sent to CCDFS where they are disseminated to the appropriate CDR team.
- Each CDR team meets to discuss these reports and each has a set of review forms that they keep for determinations by the team.
- At the end of the calendar year, data is processed and an annual report is generated.

Although there are some variations, the death review process is similar within each county. The general model tends to follow a six-step process, outlined as follows:

1. The coroner identifies the modes of death prior to any analysis or involvement by a Child Death Review Team. The coroner lists one of four modes of death on the death certificate: 1) accidental, 2) homicidal, 3) natural, or 4) undetermined.
2. The health district or a county health office forwards all child death information to the coroner, who then forwards it to the CDR team Coordinator. This is done the first of every month in counties where a death has occurred. In other counties, it occurs only on an as-needed basis.

3. The Coordinator sends out notification to all team members listing the children who will be reviewed at the next meeting.
4. Team members review each case from the perspective of their representative agencies or professional backgrounds to determine the necessity of further review.
5. The team meets on a monthly basis, or as needed, to discuss the facts surrounding the death and the involvement of various agencies. It then draws conclusions from these facts to assist responsible parties to take necessary actions. Verbal exchange of information at team meetings is informal and confidential. No minutes are kept. Data on number, type of cases, and recommendations are logged. Notes on protocol and policy issues are also recorded.
6. The team's review may be cursory or in-depth, depending upon the available information and the perceived need and basis of several risk factors including drug ingestion, undetermined cause of death, head trauma, malnutrition, bathtub drowning, suffocation, fractures, sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS), blunt force trauma, homicide, child abuse, neglect, burns, sexual abuse, gunshot wounds, stillborn or fetal death that may be drug related, and poisoning.

During 2002, the Statewide CDR Subcommittee developed recommendations for new laws relating to child death review. A primary goal was to give the five regional teams a mechanism to channel recommendations to appropriate agencies and maximize community resources so that future child deaths can be prevented.

These efforts resulted in a bill draft request supported by State Assemblywoman Sheila Leslie, who sponsored Assembly Bill (AB) 381 during the 2003 Nevada State Legislature. This landmark legislation was passed by the Legislature and allows for the implementation of significant changes in the child death review process. This legislation creates a clear purpose for the regional teams to review child death and make recommendations for the improvement of laws, policies, and practices; support the safety of children; and prevent future deaths. Other provisions of the legislation establish the confidentiality of information obtained and reviewed by the regional teams, including protection from disclosure, subpoena, discovery, and introduction into evidence for civil or criminal proceedings.

Additionally, this bill established two statewide oversight committees: 1) the Administrative Team and 2) the Executive Committee to Review the Death of Children. The Administrative Team reviews reports and recommendations from the regional CDR teams and makes decisions regarding the recommendations for improvements to laws, policies, and practices. The Administrative Team also makes recommendations about funding for improvements, initiatives, and public education requiring expenditures.

The Executive Committee, in turn, makes decisions about the funding recommendations from the Administrative Team. Additionally, per NRS, the Executive Committee adopts statewide protocols for the review of the death of children; designates the members of the Administrative Team; oversees training and development for the regional CDR teams; and compiles and distributes a statewide annual report, which includes statistics and recommendations for regulatory and policy changes. Funding for the work of the Committee was also established as a result of AB 381, and is derived from a \$1 fee collected from death certificates issued by the

State. The funds are intended to be used for prevention efforts and training of the regional CDR teams.

In essence, the Administrative Team and the Executive Committee have taken over the functions of the original Statewide CDR Team, and now work together to prevent future child deaths in Nevada.

Substitute Care – Foster Care

The authority for the substitute care program is delegated to the Division of Child and Family Services (DCFS) by Nevada Revised Statute (NRS) 432.020, which establishes the Division's responsibility to support and maintain children placed in its custody, and NRS 432.032, which provides authority to adopt program regulations. NRS 432B.180 establishes the duties of DCFS including the requirement to plan, coordinate, and monitor the delivery of child welfare services provided throughout the State. NRS 432B.190 requires the Division to adopt regulations for the provision of child welfare services, including the following:

- Protection of the legal rights of parents and children.
- Emergency shelter for a child.
- The prevention, identification, and correction of abuse or neglect of a child in residential institutions.
- Evaluating the development and contents of plans submitted for approval under NRS 432B.395, which pertains to efforts to prevent or eliminate the need for removal of children from their homes, and to facilitate a safe return to homes where removal is necessary.

Substitute care is a family-focused service that provides for the temporary care of children in need of protection. Its services are aimed at changing behaviors in parents that have resulted in child maltreatment leading to out-of-home placement. The Division returns children who have been removed and may be safely restored to their families through the provision of services to the child and family. When reunification is not possible, the Division seeks alternative permanency options which best suit the child's needs. Specifically, the Division provides assessment and comprehensive case management services that support the child, the parents, and the caregivers.

The continuum of out-of-home care services includes emergency shelter care, foster family care (including placements with relatives), group home care, therapeutic foster care, respite care, residential treatment care both in and out of state, and independent living services. The Division emphasizes the safety and wellbeing of children, recognizes the family as the fundamental foundation of child rearing, and acknowledges the importance of a comprehensive, community-based, child-centered, family-focused, and culturally competent teamwork approach.

The Division believes families offer children and young adults opportunities for permanency and family relationships that are intended to last a lifetime. Permanency affords the stability and security that children must have for building competency and self-reliance and for maximizing

their cultural and spiritual growth. The Division supports collaborative efforts in every community to help assure permanence in the lives of all children.

DCFS began major child welfare reform in 1992 with the commitment to move from a protective authority to a family-centered approach in casework. The first phase was the adoption of a training series for social workers that incorporates the philosophy and principles of family-centered practice in the four major casework areas:

1. Child protective services (CPS)
2. Adoption
3. Foster care
4. Child welfare

In 1994, the second phase of this initiative included the creation of the Foster Care Statewide Steering Committee to address professionalization, training, and retention of foster caregivers. The goal was to improve the quality of foster care by means of a family-centered approach with foster caregivers. The yearlong efforts of this task force and its three subcommittees resulted in a number of improvements within foster care. These included the following:

- Implementation of a 36-hour pre-service foster parent training curriculum
- Involvement of foster care providers in case planning
- Promotion of the development of a Foster Parent Bill of Rights

To continue the efforts of this initiative and to address the quality of care standards required by the Adoption and Safe Families Act (ASFA), DCFS formed a Quality of Care Standards (QCS) Statewide Task Force. The Task Force reviewed current standards and suggested additional standards to improve services and practices. The QCS Task Force was composed of child welfare managers, supervisors, social workers, specialists, foster care providers, and representatives from County social services. The Task Force represented Nevada's three geographic regions: north, south, and rural. Five areas were addressed by the Task Force:

1. Foster care licensing
2. Training
3. Retention and support
4. Quality of care for foster children
5. Professionalization of foster caregivers

After an initial review and recommendation report was developed, the QCS Task Force membership was dissolved into other groups that continue to evaluate the five areas outlined above and to recommend ways to improve the delivery of services and quality of care for children in foster care.

Specific to the training implemented by the Task Force, Nevada adopted a 36-hour pre-service training curriculum in 1997, which is required of all potential foster and adoptive families. The training is designed to provide families with knowledge and skills that can greatly contribute to their success. Some families will decide that foster care and/or adoption is not for them, while

others will begin to gain an understanding of the role of their family and how additional children can enhance their family life.

The northern and southern regions have trainers on staff who provide the 36-hour pre-service training. The rural region contracts out to a local provider to recruit and train foster homes, using the same pre-service curriculum. This is an established curriculum developed by the Institute for Human Services in Columbus, Ohio, which is widely considered to be state-of-the-art training.

Beginning in 2002, since the implementation of the integration of child welfare services in Washoe and Clark Counties, the training now varies by region in terms of hours required and curriculum content, ranging from approximately 22 to 36 hours. However, since only eight hours are required by law, the regional training requirements significantly exceed the minimum established requirements.

APPENDIX C: PANEL MEMBERS

Current Members

<i>Member</i>	<i>Affiliation</i>	<i>Representation</i>
Appell, Annette	University of Nevada, Las Vegas – School of Law	Children’s Attorney – southern region
Freese, Maggie	Division of Child and Family Services (DCFS)	Mental Health – southern region
Herzik, Mary	Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA) of Washoe County	CASA – northern region
Legier, Barbara	Division of Child and Family Services (DCFS)	Designated Representative for Division Administrator – northern region
Moorehead, Larry	Foster Parent	Foster Parent – northern region

Advisory Staff

<i>Member</i>	<i>Affiliation</i>	<i>Representation</i>
Durand, Jim	Washoe County Department of Social Services (WCDSS)	Child Protective Services – northern region
Rubin, Ann	Clark County Department of Family Services (CCDFS)	Child Protective Services – southern region
Thomas, Caroline	DCFS – Family Programs Office	Social Services – northern region
Walker, Marji	DCFS – Family Programs Office	Social Services – northern region