

South Dakota Citizen Review Panel Report
Fiscal Year 2004

The purpose of establishing a Citizen Review Team in South Dakota was to determine whether the Department of Social Services/Child Protection Services is effectively discharging their child protection responsibilities. Goals of the Citizen Review Team include clarifying expectations for the system and reviewing the consistency of practice with the state's policy and procedures as well as recognizing the importance of the responsibility of the community for child protection. Additionally, the Citizen Review Panel is expected to work on strengthening communication and coordination within the Child Protection Services system. The panel attempts to promote Child Protection Services systems in order to enhance the protection and safety of children in South Dakota.

The Citizen Review Panel Team members were appointed by the Governors Office in 2000. There are currently five members who come from various professions relating to families and children. Included in the membership are a psychologist, nurse practitioner, early childhood expert, domestic violence advocate, and a foster/adoptive parent. The members are:

Mark Hedges, psychologist
Deborah Kuehn, nurse practitioner
Colleen Springer, early childhood expert
Krista Heeran-Graber, domestic violence advocate
Sharon Ratzlaff, foster/adoptive parent

During the prior fiscal year, one panel member resigned. A request has been submitted to the Governors Office to replace that individual. The police officer who was an original member of the panel is no longer listed as a member because he did not come to meetings.

During FY 2003, the Citizen Review Panel developed a plan to visit Child Protection Services offices across the state. The group decided they would like to visit the offices in a positive light and offer assistance to workers and supervisors. The visits were held in FY 2004. During the visits the group members spent time with two or three workers/supervisors. These were the four questions/issues used for discussion during the visits:

- What are the strengths of Child Protection Services?
- What are the weaknesses of Child Protection Services?

- How well is the partnership with the family in the development of the Case Service Plan? Does the family have a trusting and partnership relationship with the worker?
- Any ideas and/or suggestions for the future CPS.

In addition to the discussion on the above issues, the Citizen Review Panel members scheduled to go with the social workers on home visits to clients, interviews with children, observe visitations with parents and birth children, watched and listened to an intake worker taking a report of child maltreatment and observed team meetings. The purpose of the visits were for the Citizen Review Panel members to develop an understanding of the type of daily work that the front line social workers do. The panel members have had a concern about the retention of staff and therefore the visits allowed them to develop ideas about recommendations that might be made to the agency. The following offices were visited by the Citizen Review Panel Members:

Aberdeen

Yankton

Sioux Falls

Mission

Lake Andes

Chamberlain

Vermillion

The Citizen Review Panel members conducted the visits in the first two quarters of FY 2004. These visits were held in lieu of having Citizen Review Panel meetings during this time. In addition to the office visits in FY 2004, the Citizen Review Panel met on January 28, 2004 and March 18, 2004.

Following is a summary of the January 28, 2004 meeting:

A FACIS overview was provided for the CRP by one of the FACIS Program Specialist.

The Protective Services Program Specialist provided an overview of the new in-home service provision policy and informed the CRP of the no longer using the indicated finding. Also given to the group was a blank copy of the Initial Family

Assessment document so that the group could review the safety influences since they were noted in the service provision policy.

Also provided to the group was an overview of the intake specialized offices which are: Huron, Brookings, Pierre/Chamberlain, Mobridge,/EButte, Winner/Mission, PRidge/Martin, RCity/ Hot Springs and Custer, Sturgis/Northern Hills, and Yankton/Vermillion. It was explained that Mitchell would be starting the intake specializing later in the fiscal year which will cover Lake Andes.

The foster parent representative on the Citizen Review Panel presented concerns shared with her from other foster parents from the Yankton and Vermillion area regarding the Foster Parent Monthly Report Form. Each member of the CRP recd a copy of the new form. A Program Specialist came to the meeting and listened to what Sharon shared regarding the concerns. Following is a list of the concerns:

- some doesn't apply to infants
- workers are saying they were more comfortable with the old form and feel they got just as much info from the foster parents
- some fps said, "what do they want us to take care of their kids or do their paperwork?"
- if you have 3-4 foster kids, it does take an afternoon to complete the form
- why does training need to be listed on the form when we share that with the licensing worker anyway?
- could we take some info out on the life book
- Sharon has had only one of the foster children's workers bring the form on monthly home visits

The CRP members reviewed each of their visits to the CPS offices last fall.

The March 18, 2004 meeting was held with the Citizen Review Panel members developing their recommendations for Child Protection Services based on the office visits that each of them completed earlier in the year. Please see attachment which includes the report from them and their recommendations.