

# ***Tennessee Citizen Review Panels Annual Report***

***June 2006***

***PREPARED FOR THE***

***Tennessee Department of Children's Services***



***THE UNIVERSITY OF TENNESSEE  
COLLEGE OF SOCIAL WORK  
OFFICE OF RESEARCH AND PUBLIC SERVICE***

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***BY***

***SUSAN STEPPE***



***THE UNIVERSITY OF TENNESSEE  
COLLEGE OF SOCIAL WORK  
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***The University of Tennessee  
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Project # 06057



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## ***Introduction***

Child welfare programs all over the country are currently in the process of examining their practices to meet the federal goals related to safety, permanency, and well-being of children. The mission of the Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (CAPTA) is consistent with the current trends to develop strong families that can provide safety, nurturance, and stability for children. Child welfare agencies cannot achieve these goals by themselves and must look to other professionals and concerned citizens to work collaboratively on these same issues. In an effort to formalize the collaboration on child safety issues, CAPTA requires each state to establish at least three panels of citizens who share a commitment to children and can review the system that purports to protect them. These groups are referred to as Citizens Review Panels (CRPs).

CAPTA mandates that CRPs report on their activities each year. This report provides an update of Tennessee's Child Protective Services (CPS) program, a description of the Tennessee CRPs, and their individual reports and activities for the 2005–2006 fiscal year.

The University of Tennessee College of Social Work Office of Research and Public Service (SWORPS) contracts with the Tennessee Department of Children's Services (TDCS) to coordinate, facilitate, and provide technical assistance to the CRPs in order to meet the federal requirements. SWORPS also provides coordination and technical assistance for the Children's Justice Task Force (another component of the CAPTA legislation) and the Child Sexual Abuse Task Force.



## ***Update on the Child Protective Services Program in Tennessee***

The previous report listed several initiatives for TDCS's Child Protective Services program, including

- ◆ organization structural changes,
- ◆ development of a training consortium for child welfare staff,
- ◆ significant increase in staff compensation,
- ◆ implementation of structured decision making at intake and investigation phases,
- ◆ implementation of the functional assessment process,
- ◆ statewide implementation of CPS Central Intake,
- ◆ CPS case closure project,
- ◆ implementation of child and family team meetings at significant decision points,
- ◆ demonstration of a Multiple Response System, and
- ◆ re-vamping the delivery of prevention or home-based services to children and families.

TDCS is continuing to implement these projects with renewed focus on the following areas:

### **CHILD PROTECTIVE SERVICES TEAM EXCELLENCE**

TDCS developed “Team Excellence,” which is a means to gain field staff input into critical issues of policy and practice. The team is composed of local CPS experts from each region who meet on a regular basis with central office CPS program staff to consider the challenges in implementing effective child protective services practice across the state. Team Excellence members bring issues of concern to this group in order to identify solutions and strategies to implement in the field. The group takes an active role in making policy recommendations and reviewing draft policies prior to finalization. Additionally, Team Excellence focuses on the preservice training program for CPS staff and makes suggestions to enhance the training experience for newly hired case managers. Team Excellence members have volunteered to serve as co-trainers with the professional training staff, offering information on CPS policy and providing information from the frontline perspective.

### **MULTIPLE RESPONSE SYSTEM (MRS)**

In spring 2005, Tennessee’s General Assembly passed a law to allow TDCS to establish a Multiple Response System in three demonstration sites, one in each grand division of the state. In Tennessee’s MRS system, if a child is considered to be at risk for maltreatment, TDCS can respond in one of the following ways:

- ◆ Investigation of the allegations,
- ◆ Assessment of the child and family’s needs and referral to services,
- ◆ Referral for services without investigation or assessment, or
- ◆ No further action

This new system will allow TDCS to approach troubled families in a new way, in many instances offering services and support rather than investigations.

A critical piece of the MRS system is the requirement for each of the demonstration sites to have an independent, local advisory board composed of representatives from the community. The role of each board is to bring together TDCS, families, and resource providers within the community and assist in the development of community services.

TDCS has selected Dyer County in West Tennessee, Bradley County in Southeast Tennessee, and Warren County in Middle Tennessee to implement the MRS program.

The community partnership aspect of the MRS program highlights the interest of TDCS and stakeholders in building connections with community partners to provide for the safety and well-being of children. With this same spirit TDCS has provided much encouragement and support for the Citizen Review Panels in their quest to define their mission and role in the child welfare system.



## **Tennessee's Citizen Review Panels**

### **Location**

Tennessee has three CRPs located in Montgomery County (Clarksville), Memphis, and the Northwest Region of Tennessee (including nine rural counties). The locations for the three CRPs were determined by specific characteristics or concerns in the particular areas of the state.

The Montgomery County CRP is located in Clarksville, Tennessee, a city that has a large military base within the city limits and borders the state of Kentucky. The unique population of military personnel, both active and retired, and the ethnic diversity and transient patterns in the population represent unique challenges in child protection. TDCS in Clarksville investigates a large number of military personnel who are living great distances from extended family and support systems. Many of the soldiers and their families are quite young and are struggling with new relationships and stresses associated with deployment. CPS staff members face the challenge of conducting CPS investigations within the context of the military base and its imposing structure.

The CRP in Memphis, Tennessee, the largest urban area in Tennessee, was chosen to reflect issues specific to urban areas. TDCS offices in this area of the state suffer from frequent staff turnover and higher than average caseloads. Memphis has the highest caseload of TANF (Temporary Assistance for Needy Families) families in Tennessee, a factor that contributes to family stress and issues that bring children and families to the attention of TDCS.

The Northwest Region of Tennessee was chosen to have a CRP because it serves a rural population in a relatively large geographical area. While the TDCS staff in this region is stable and turnover is minimal, there are very

limited resources to offer to families or to assist TDCS in its efforts to reduce risk and provide safety to children and families. Providing CPS in this sparsely populated area poses special challenges in reaching isolated families who cannot easily access resources.

## ***Member Selection***

Each CRP has a TDCS liaison that serves as an advisor to the panel on various policies and procedures of the department. CRP members were selected for the panel by the local region. Membership was based on the specific guidelines included in the *Citizen Review Panels for the Child Protective Services System Guidelines and Protocols*. Members are diverse, both personally and professionally; are representative of their communities, both demographically and geographically; and have committed to a 2-year term of service on their local CRPs.

## ***CRP Activities and Recommendations for 2005–2006***

Tennessee's Citizen Review Panels have met regularly this year and made great strides in efforts to fulfill the mission and goal of the CRP movement as stated in the federal law. In the past year these three diverse groups of people joined together in activities to find a common mission and to establish the role they can play in the improvement of child welfare services in the state. The following key events have helped Tennessee's CRPs to build momentum and find their mission:

- ◆ On October 24, 2005, the Citizen Review Panel Chairpersons Nancy Williams, Judy Covington, Maria Carrier, and Dana Cobb along with SWORPS staff member Susan Steppe met with Commissioner Viola Miller, Deputy Commissioner Bonnie Hommrich, and Audrey Corder, Executive Director of Child Well-Being for TDCS. The purpose of this meeting was to establish a working relationship between the Commissioner and CRP chairs and to seek the Commissioner's support on proposed CRP projects. As a result of this meeting the Commissioner approved use of CAPTA funds to complete a child abuse reporting project initiated by the Shelby County CRP. She also encouraged CRP members to attend national events and to obtain technical assistance from the National Resource Center on Child Abuse and Neglect. The Commissioner encouraged the three panels to work independently but to come together on a common focus for statewide recommendations. She also indicated that she would like to "check in" with CRP chairs on some regular basis, perhaps quarterly.
- ◆ In December 2005, TDCS completed the application for Technical Assistance from the National Resource Center on Child Protective

Services. As a result of this approved request, Commissioner Viola Miller convened a telephone conference with CRP co-chairs, Susan Steppe and Pamela Bond of the National Resource Center on Child Protective Services to discuss next steps in the process.

- ◆ In January 2006, Sandra Allen, Shelby County CRP chair; Judy Covington and Maria Carrier, Montgomery County co-chairs; Susan Steppe of SWORPS; and Debbie Waddell of TDCS attended the Region IV Citizen Review Panel Conference in Charleston, South Carolina. During this event, the Tennessee delegation further consulted with Pamela Bond and developed a plan to conduct a statewide CPR conference in Tennessee in order to revisit the goals of the CRP movement and to establish a uniform direction for CRPs in Tennessee. The Statewide Citizen Review Panel plan is Attachment A.
- ◆ On February 6, 2006, the CRP Co-chairs and Susan Steppe met with Commissioner Miller, Deputy Commissioner Bonnie Hommrich, Shalonda Cawthon, Executive Director of Child Safety, and Marjahna Hart, Program Coordinator for CPS. The purpose of this meeting was to continue the dialogue and relationship with the TDCS leadership, ask for approval for the statewide CRP conference, encourage DCS staff attendance at the conference, and ask for a means to obtain data as needed for CPS review. Commissioner Miller approved the conference and offered support to CRPs in the area of data collection.
- ◆ On April 6, 2006, the Statewide CRP Conference was held in Jackson, Tennessee. Pamela Bond of the National Resource Center on Child Protective Services and the co-chairs of each CRP facilitated this one-day event. The focus of the conference was to identify areas for CRP exploration and strategies for CRPs to do their work. A total of 23 Citizen Review Panel members attended. Additionally, there was one Regional Administrator, three members of CPS Team Excellence, and five CPS Central Office program staff in attendance. The total group established a statewide focus on follow-up services to families. Materials related to the conference agenda, activities, and statewide focus for the coming year appear in Appendix B.
- ◆ Sandra Allen, Shelby County CRP chair; Maria Carrier and Judy Covington, Montgomery County co-chairs; and Marilyn Goodman, Northwest Tennessee CRP member, will attend the National CRP Conference in Louisville, Kentucky, on May 25–26, 2006, in Louisville, Kentucky.

## **Reports/Recommendations from Citizen Review Panels**

### **Montgomery County Citizen Review Panel**

#### **MEMBERSHIP**

**Judy Covington**, Executive Director, Montgomery County Child Advocacy Center, Co-chair

**Maria Carrier, LCSW**, Blanchfield Army Community Hospital, Co-chair

**Gary Ellis**, Pastor

**Kathy Martin**, Nursing Instructor

**Susan Jones**, Director of Human Resources, Clarksville-Montgomery County Schools

**Beverly Rucker**, Emanuel Outreach Service Organization

**Tamara Flaherty**, Parent/Advocate, Shaken Baby Syndrome

**Mayme Stephenson**, Premier Pediatric Services (newly recruited)

**Amelia Wallace**, Team Coordinator, Tennessee Department of Children's Services

#### **ACTIVITIES**

The Montgomery County CRP convened seven meetings in the 2005–2006 fiscal year. Additionally, seven members attended the Statewide CRP Conference in Jackson. In meetings held during fall 2005, this group was struggling to establish a stable membership and sense of direction. The panel

co-chairs attended the Region IV Conference, two meetings with Commissioner Viola Miller, the Statewide CRP Conference in Jackson, and the National Convention in Louisville. With renewed energy these leaders have taken responsibility for local meeting agendas and membership development. This committee is exploring the statewide focus issue of provision of follow-up services to families.

### **FUTURE INITIATIVES**

At the statewide conference, this group decided to focus solely on the statewide issue of follow-up services and did not identify additional concerns. Their next steps include:

1. Reviewing pertinent policies on services from the TDCS Web site.
2. The CRP would like to conduct a focus group with Marion Biggs and her unit of Family Support Services case managers.
3. After reviewing policies, the CRP would like to review some cases of families referred to follow-up services to determine what was successful and what was not successful.

## ***Shelby County Citizen Review Panel***

### ***MEMBERSHIP***

**Sandra Allen**, Executive Director, LeBonheur Center for Children and Parents, Chair

**Lisa Aitken**, Director, Technology Support Services/CASA Volunteer

**Joree Brownlow**, Attorney

**Dr. Gregory Washington**, The University of Tennessee, College of Social Work

**Dr. Patricia Toarmina**, Director, Division of Exceptional Children and Health Services, Memphis City Schools

**Dr. Randy Schnell**, Coordinator of Mental Health Services, Memphis City Schools

**Katie Stanton**, Shelby Co. Board of Education

**Daphni Ishak**, Court Appointed Special Advocate Program

**Gail Tarpy**, Case Coordinator/ Supervisor, CASA of Memphis and Shelby County

**Nancy Williams**, Executive Director, Memphis Child Advocacy Center

**Jean McIvor**, Lowenburg School of Nursing

**Dr. Cindy Jordan**, Psychologist

**Mary Ann Waddell**, Director of Child Protective Services, Shelby County TDCS

**Jeanette Boyd**, CPS Team Coordinator, Shelby County DCS

### ***ACTIVITIES***

The Shelby County CRP met five times in the 2005–2006 fiscal year and eight panel members attended the Statewide Conference in Jackson on April 6. Nancy Williams, former CPR chair and Sandra Allen, current chairperson, attended the October 2005 meeting with Commissioner Miller. Sandra Allen also attended the Region IV Conference in Charleston, South Carolina, the subsequent meeting with Commissioner Miller, the statewide conference, and the national conference.

The Shelby County panel followed up on a previous project to provide information to area professionals, particularly teachers, on the topic of child

abuse reporting. The choice of this topic was particularly timely given the 2005 changes in Tennessee child abuse reporting law. This change affected those institutions that are responsible for the care of children including hospitals, schools, clinics, childcare centers, and residential care facilities. The panel provided oversight and input into a process that involved:

- ◆ collaborating with TDCS to develop a succinct message about the new law and child abuse reporting
- ◆ gathering input from other professionals including Tennessee's Joint Task Force on Children's Justice/Child Sexual Abuse
- ◆ refining the message and content of a "script" for a computer-based training (CBT) program
- ◆ partnering with Memphis City Schools Information Resources Division to provide the voice/sound for the CBT and with SWORPS to produce the CBT

This computer-based training program was completed in March 2006, and has already been placed on the Department of Education and the Memphis Child Advocacy Center Web sites. Through the SWORPS representative, the Shelby County Panel has requested that the Departments of Human Services, Health, Mental Health, and numerous other child-serving agencies place this product on their Web sites. The Shelby County CRP has provided the impetus and motivation to develop this important piece of training material along with the support of TDCS.

### ***FUTURE INITIATIVES***

The Shelby County CRP will focus on the statewide issue of follow-up services to children and families. Specifically, the panel will focus on the question "Are clients' needs accurately assessed?" They will explore the following:

1. Standards of Practice
2. Is policy being followed?
3. What does a good assessment look like?
4. How are appropriate resources determined?
5. Is there a match between need and service referral?
6. Do the assessment tools match policy?

The panel will employ a variety of strategies in this exploration including policy review and review of specific case assessments.

## ***Northwest Region Citizen Review Panel***

### ***MEMBERSHIP***

**Dana Cobb**, TCCY

**Judge Danny Goodman**

**Marilyn Goodman**, School Social Worker, Milan High School

**Ann Minton**, Day Care Licensing

**Ellarine Moses**, Retired Guidance Counselor

**Sharon Wenz**, The University of Tennessee at Martin

**Joetta Yarbro**, Northwest Tennessee Family Resource Center, Dyer County Schools

**Ron Green**, Executive Director, Boys Club and Girls Club of Northwest Tennessee

**Chanesia Dixon**, Northwest Tennessee Headstart Program

### ***ACTIVITIES***

The Northwest Citizen Review Panel has met six times in the 2005–2006 fiscal year. Additionally, eight members attended the Statewide Conference. In meetings in July and September 2005, the group primarily searched for a focus and on attempting to build membership and attendance. In late fall 2005, this group gave serious consideration to focusing their efforts on serving as the Community Advisory Committee for the region's Multiple Response System (MRS) demonstration project in Dyer County. Three meetings (October 2005, November 2005, and January 2006) were devoted to this topic, but the group decided to serve as adjunct members on the Dyer County Advisory Board and maintain separate status as the Northwest Citizen Review Panel. This decision was based on the desire to broaden the group's focus to the total 9-county Northwest area and to allow time to focus on other issues of concern.

### ***FUTURE INITIATIVES***

The Northwest CRP will focus on the statewide issue of follow-up services but would like to give their region some time to begin their implementation of the MRS program. While that program will begin in only one county, there is a plan to rapidly spread MRS to all counties in the region. The Panel established these action steps at the conference:

1. The Northwest CRP will add new members to better represent the entire region.
2. Regional TDCS staff members will provide an overview of TDCS programs and orientation to new members of the CRP.
3. Evaluation tools/strategies will be discussed at the next meeting (in June).
4. Proposed new members were identified.
5. The Northwest Regional Administrator identified new TDCS liaisons to serve on the panel.

## **Conclusion**

Tennessee's Citizen Review Panels have a renewed sense of energy and mission. This is largely due to CRP representatives attending the Region IV planning conference in January and the enthusiasm generated at the Statewide Conference in Jackson. TDCS Commissioner Viola Miller and her staff have been supportive of the panels, making it possible for them to travel to meetings and complete important projects. In the coming year, the CRPs will embark on their projects to learn more about child welfare practice and to provide constructive and useful feedback to the stakeholders in the child welfare system. While the CRPs have no formal recommendation for specific action at this juncture, they do recommend that TDCS look closely at the quality and types of services that are provided to families who have identified needs. In the coming year, the CRPs will explore this matter in their respective areas and offer recommendations based on their findings.



***Appendix A: CRP Statewide Plan,  
January 2006***





how to explore these areas, 3) establish constructive dialogue with key stakeholders in the child welfare system, and 4) develop thoughtful recommendations for improvements and changes	representatives		
	III.B. Meet with Commissioner Viola Miller to elicit her support for the planning forum and to encourage attendance of DCS stakeholders	Meet with Commissioner Miller by 2/14/06	Susan will set this up.
	III. C. Use the planning forum as a means to develop recommendations for the upcoming report and to plan activities for the next fiscal year	Forum to occur in April and recommendations to DCS will be submitted by June 1, 2006.	All CRP members will contribute to process. Susan will support them in this process and submit the formal report.

### **Other notes and thoughts on the Forum/Planning Event**

The major aspects of the Session could likely fall into these three areas:

- 1) *Identification of areas for exploration*—Panels can talk about existing concerns and also how to really get an inside look at the functioning of the child welfare system through activities such as CRP brainstorming groups, focus groups with citizens and stakeholders, discussion with DCS employs and leadership, surveys, and review of relevant child welfare data. Work product from this section will include a list of concerns for CRP exploration and possibly activities to learn of more concerns.
- 2) *Establishing ways to explore an issue*—This discussion can include the pros and cons of activities such as policy review, data review, and case review in the process of exploring the scope of identified areas of concern. Included in this section we would like to develop a protocol for how to review/consider a policy. Some thoughts already discussed include:

- Understanding the original intent of the policy: Is it based on law, settlement agreement, or desired practice standard?
  - What types of casework activity or decision-making does the policy require?
  - What do the frontline staff and their supervisors say about their efforts to comply with this policy?
  - What do community stakeholders and families say about how this policy “plays out”?
  - Does the policy appear to accomplish the desired outcome?
  - What are the unintended consequences of the policy? Both the negative and positive?
  - Case reviews linked to policies: How does the implementation of this policy affect the children and families?
- 3) *Communication with the Department*—One section of the planning session must establish a means for CRP members, DCS staff, and community stakeholders to actually talk about areas of mutual concern and areas where there is divergence of opinion. This section falls under the category of managing the “uneasy alliance”. There can be some presentation of skills and tips for communication, and there needs to be individual CRP/County small group work on establishing guidelines for working together.
- 4) And finally, we discussed the need to utilize the same “strengths based approach” professionals strive to use when working with children and families.



## ***Appendix B: Statewide CRP Conference Materials***



**Tennessee Citizens Review Panel Conference  
Thursday, April 6, 2006**

University of Tennessee  
West Tennessee Research and Evaluation Center  
605 Airways Blvd.  
Jackson, TN. 38301

9:00 – 9:25	Hello and Welcome	CRP Chairs: Sandra Allen, Shelby County Judy Covington and Maria Carrier, Montgomery County Dana Cobb, Northwest TN
9:25- 9:45	What is a CRP and what does it do?	Susan Steppe, UT-SWORPS
9:45 – 10:15	The Challenges of Collaboration	Pamela Bond, Consultant, National Resource Center on Child Protective Services, and Director of the Center for Child and Family Studies, University of South Carolina College of Social Work
10:15-10:30	Break	
10:30-11:30	Talking about “the issues” – Results of the survey and identifying the issue for all CRP’s to address	Sandra Allen, Judy Covington, Maria, and Dana
11:30 -12:00	Example of “issue exploration”	Pam Bond
Noon-12:45	Lunch	
12:45 – 1:30	How to Explore an Issue	Pam Bond
1:30-1:45	Break	
1:45-2:45	Local Plan Development	Small Groups
2:45-3:30	Report Back, Wrap-up, and Goodbye	Pam Bond and Co-chairs



Tennessee Citizens Review Panel  
Statewide Conference

April 6, 2006  
Madison County Agricultural Extension  
Jackson, Tennessee

Persons Present:

Facilitator: Pamela Bond, Consultant, National Resource Center on Child Protective Services (also, Director for the Center for Child and Family Studies, University of South Carolina, College of Social Work

Shelby County CRP

Sandra Allen, CRP Chair, LeBonheur Center for Children and Parents  
Nancy Williams, Memphis Child Advocacy Center  
Katie Stanton, Shelby County Schools  
Randy Schnell, Memphis City Schools  
Gregory Washington, UT College of Social Work  
Gail Tarp, Department of Human Services, Child Care  
Mary Anne Waddell, DCS, Director of Child Protective Services, Shelby County  
Jeanette Boyd, DCS, Team Coordinator, CPS, Shelby County

Montgomery County

Judy Covington, Co-Chair, Montgomery County Child Advocacy Center  
Maria Carrier, Co-Chair, Fort Campbell  
Mayme Stephenson, Premier Health  
Amelia Wallace, DSC, Team Coordinator, Montgomery County  
Susan P. Jones, Clarksville/Montgomery County Schools  
Kathy Martin, Nursing Instructor  
Tamara Flaherty, Nurse and Child Advocate

Northwest Region

Dana Cobb, Chair, Tennessee Commission on Children and Youth  
Sharon Wenz, UT-Martin  
Ann Minton, Department of Human Services, Child Care  
Marilyn Goodman, Milan High School  
Joetta Yarbrow, Northwest TN Family Resource Center, Dyer County Schools  
Qiana Pickens, Northwest TN Head Start Program  
Kitty Oliver, DCS, Regional Administrator, NW Region

DCS Staff Persons from the Child Protective Services Program

Marjahna Hart, Central Office  
Bridget Bandy, Central Office  
Emmaline Palmer, Central Office

D'Anna Gipson, Central Office  
Wanda L. Mott, Team Coordinator, Shelby County  
Phyllis Webb, Team Coordinator, NW Region  
Gayle James, Team Leader  
Frankie Cowan, Central Office

University of Tennessee, Social Work Office of Research and Public Services Staff

Susan C. Steppe, Consultant  
Rory Alley, Specialist

### **Outcomes of the Conference**

The group facilitator and the CRP chairs and co-chairs led the group through a series of discussion and presentations geared toward developing a focus or mission for all Citizens Review Panels to explore in the coming year. A portion of the day's training was devoted to discussion of how each panel would go about exploring a topic and forming a recommendation on the topic. In the course of the day the group looked at these possible topic areas:

### **Survey of Child Welfare Concerns**

- 1. Sixty-day Policy**
- 2. CPIT (Child Protection Investigative Teams) Functions**
- 3. CPS Training**
- 4. Prevention, including Shaken Baby Syndrome**
- 5. Public Awareness**
- 6. Relationship between DCS and Schools**
- 7. DCS Connection to Community Partners**
- 8. Informing Referent of Investigation Results**
- 9. DCS Screening Decisions**
- 10. Siblings Split Up in Foster Care**
- 11. Policies Concerning Drug Addicted Newborns**







## Tools for Evaluating

Prior to selecting the measurement tool, answer these questions:

- What** do we want to find out?
- Why** do we want to find that out?
- When** do we need the information?
- How** can we get the information we need?
- How** will the information be used?
- Where** should we gather the information?
- For whom** is the information?
- From whom** should we collect the information that we need?

### Surveys/Questionnaires/Checklists

Advantages	Challenges
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Efficient, fairly inexpensive</li> <li>• Various ways to conduct: mail, in person, telephone, during event</li> <li>• Can be anonymous</li> <li>• Easy to give statistical count</li> <li>• Can be used on an ongoing basis to measure change</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Do not give opinions</li> <li>• Do not allow for in-depth responses</li> </ul>

Examples: Worker satisfaction surveys to measure experience, training, or other key information. Foster parent surveys or foster youth surveys to determine the interaction between the agency and foster parent and/or youth.

### Interviews

Advantages	Challenges
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Yield in-depth information on a specific activity, services, or entire program</li> <li>• Useful with families, community representations, or other respondents with language difficulties, inability to read, or cultural differences</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Interviewers should be trained to ask same questions in same way each time</li> <li>• Time-intensive</li> <li>• Requires considerable effort to set up database for analysis and interpretation</li> </ul>

Examples: Random selection of case workers, community representatives, foster parents or others to give more in depth information about an emerging issue from survey or questionnaire findings.

### Focus Groups

Advantages	Challenges
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Combine elements of group dynamics with structured interview format to ask probing questions.</li> <li>• Can gather data from 8-10 participants at one time</li> <li>• Maximize the time for participants and interviewers if scheduling personal interviews is difficult</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Train the group leaders well to facilitate group process</li> <li>• Questions need to be consistently asked and recorded to make comparisons with other groups</li> <li>• Require immediate processing of responses for accuracy</li> <li>• How to state findings in a succinct way</li> </ul>

Examples: Conduct focus groups with mandated reporters to learn how the system responds to reports from his or her organization or agency, conduct focus groups with parents from closed cases to learn about the responsiveness of the agency.

### Observations

Advantages	Challenges
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Give firsthand information of interactions</li> <li>• Give extent of changes in behavior</li> <li>• Good for obtaining information from persons who cannot report for themselves such as young children</li> <li>• Help to formulate questions for subsequent interviews, surveys, or other forms of measurement</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Can be intrusive</li> <li>• Observers need extensive training to follow detailed guide</li> <li>• Observers taking notes can be intimidating</li> <li>• What is witnessed may not be in its “natural” state</li> </ul>

Examples: Observe Intake staff taking a CPS report, observe visitation between a parent and child in foster care.

### Case Reviews

Advantages	Challenges
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide evidence about how decision-making is or is not documented, how policy and procedures are followed, services provided, and referrals made.</li> <li>• If complemented with personal interviews with staff, families, foster parents, etc., provides insight into impressions and experiences of those involved</li> <li>• Reviews may help to identify subsequent questions for study</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Information critical to the evaluation may not be documented</li> <li>• Sampling cases for review must be sufficient in numbers to draw conclusions</li> <li>• Sampling cases for review may also include other program in the child welfare process, i.e. foster care cases, adoption cases, independent living.</li> </ul>

Examples: Case reviews of cases open for a specific period of time, case reviews of reports not accepted for intake and CPS investigation, or case reviews of child deaths.

**Data Bases**

<b>Advantages</b>	<b>Challenges</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide quantitative data that easily measures numbers and outputs</li> <li>• Often the databases reflect information that is provided to federal, state, or local reports</li> <li>• Measure changes and trends</li> <li>• Provide measurement at a particular point in time</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Accuracy and integrity of data input</li> <li>• Do not provide explanation and interpretation data</li> <li>• Specific data needed may not always be available in timely manner</li> <li>• Data not always available for specific population, geographical area, or for the specific issue studied</li> <li>• Data may not be release because of privacy issues</li> </ul>

Examples: Data for number of CPS reports accepted for investigation, the number of children in foster care, the number of CPS intakes screened out for investigation. National databases and clearinghouses are important for looking at state comparisons by regions and nationally.

**Internal documents, manuals, or other official records**

<b>Advantages</b>	<b>Challenges</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Explain the policies, procedures, and protocols that guide agency implementation and practice</li> <li>• Should be readily available</li> <li>• Can give a picture of change over time in how agency has addressed local, state, and national mandates and best practices</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Availability could be hampered if the manuals are in revision</li> <li>• Different interpretations of the intent and implementation of the policies and other guidelines</li> <li>• Unwritten policy and practice interferes with the written</li> </ul>

Examples: Federal mandates and state statutes that govern agency policy and practice, specific protocols, training manuals, program policy manuals, quality assurance review protocols and reports.