

**Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act
Report of the Governor's Advisory Board on Child
Abuse and Neglect
Citizen Review Panel
June 2008**

Background:

The Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (CAPTA) mandated the establishment of citizen review panels in 1999. The purpose of the panels is to provide opportunities for citizens to help ensure that States are meeting their goals of protecting children from abuse and neglect. The role of the citizen review panel is to examine child protective services' policies and procedures, and where applicable, specific child protective services cases in order to evaluate the following:

- CPS programs' compliance with the State Plan;
- Coordination with Title IV-E foster care and adoption programs;
- Review of child fatalities and near fatalities
- Other criteria the panel considers important to the CPS program.

The Commonwealth of Virginia has three citizen review panels:

- Governor's Advisory Board on Child Abuse and Neglect (GAB)
- State Child Fatality Review Team
- Children's Justice Act/Court Appointed Special Advocate Committee (CJA/CASA)

Governor's Advisory Board on Child Abuse and Neglect

Section 63.2-1528 of the Code of Virginia establishes the Advisory Board on Child Abuse and Neglect. The Board meets quarterly and advises the Department of Social Services, Board of Social Services, and the Governor on matters concerning programs for the treatment and prevention of abused and neglected children and their families. The Board is composed of nine citizen members appointed by the Governor, and permanent representatives from the Departments of Mental Health, Mental Retardation and Substance Abuse; Health; Criminal Justice Services; Juvenile Justice; Education, and the Office of the Attorney General. A listing of the members of the Board is attached in Appendix 1.

Governor's Advisory Board on Child Abuse and Neglect

The main objective of the GAB as a citizen review panel has been to develop, strengthen, and support child abuse and neglect prevention, treatment and research programs in the public and private sectors. The Board met on the following dates:

- August 3, 2007
- November 2, 2007
- February 1, 2008
- May 2, 2008

Since 2004, the Board has committed itself to work on the development and implementation of a statewide Child and Neglect Prevention Plan. The GAB has partnered with the Department of Social Services, Prevent Child Abuse Virginia and with public and private sector organizations and citizens to develop a state plan for the prevention of child abuse and neglect. A copy of the Plan is included as Appendix 2.

The Child Abuse Prevention Committee (CAPC), under the auspices of the Governor's Advisory Board on Child Abuse and Neglect (GAB) has been meeting bi-monthly to support and monitor the nine strategies of the Blue Ribbon Plan. The committee operates in partnership with the Virginia Department of Social Services and Prevent Child Abuse Virginia.

Some of the highlights include:

- 2008 Conference focused on child sexual abuse and exploitation highlighting the latest research and promising approaches as well as a discussion about the sexualization of young girls in today's society and the impact of technology. (Strategy 5).
- Collaboration and involvement with other state level committees to work on strategies which intersect with those of the Blue Ribbon Plan (Strategy 3).
- Parent Education work group meeting co-convened with the Virginia Department of Health to assess evidenced-based and promising new prevention approaches and programs (Strategies 3 and 5).
- Speakers from Northern Virginia, Tidewater and Richmond brought in to provide technical assistance on special topics to CAPC members (Strategy 1).
- Marketing, Advocacy and Training Subcommittees working on assessing needs. (Strategy 7)
- Collaboration with the National Shaken Baby Alliance, Prevent Child Abuse Massachusetts, CAPC, and Children's Hospital of the King's Daughters to develop a Shaken Baby Syndrome campaign. (Strategy 3 and 5)

On April 7, 2008 the GAB sponsored, in conjunction with the Department of Social Services and Prevent Child Abuse Virginia, a one-day conference entitled, "Prevention Works: Yesterday, Today & Tomorrow". The conference highlighted the 25th anniversary performance of "Hugs & Kisses", a sexual abuse prevention play produced by Theatre IV of Richmond. The keynote speaker was Cordelia Anderson who addressed the issue of society's normalization of sexualization of children today and the impact of technology. Dr. Joann Grayson, James Madison University presented the latest research findings and four promising programs were highlighted in the afternoon by a panel of service providers. The programs included Darkness to Light, P.S. Happy Bear, and Stop It Now. . The conference attracted approximately 200 people. The program announcement and agenda is attached as Appendix 3.

As part of the Prevention Conference, The GAB also hosted an awards ceremony. Nominations were solicited and awards were made to outstanding child advocates. The GAB regularly recognizes professionals in the private and public sectors, volunteers, and organizations sponsoring or presenting special projects for the protection of children. In addition, The Anthony Shaw Award, established in 1992 in honor of the Board's first chairperson, recognizes distinguished Child Protective Services Professionals for their contribution to child abuse and neglect prevention and treatment and to the field of child protective services. Attached are a copy of the program and a description of those honored this year. (Appendix 4)

The GAB Citizen Review Panel has continued to support with First Lady, Anne Holton in her "For Keeps" foster care initiative. This initiative is directed at reforming children's services in Virginia particularly strengthening the foster care system for older children in foster care. The main objectives are:

- to strengthen the voices of youth in foster care and of foster parents;
- to find permanent families and family connections for children in foster care or at risk of coming into care; and
- to champion efforts to improve family and community supports for all children.

The First Lady's effort to address the well being of children in care, spawned partnerships with many local and national foundations and organizations to include child Trends and The Casey Strategic Consulting Group. A CORE group of 13 local departments of social services have been tasked with developing a statewide philosophy of care; establishing a practice model and training, increasing family-based placements and improving the performance monitoring/quality assurance system. The GAB remains involved and supportive of this work.

The GAB continues to stay involved in the development and review of CPS regulations. The Board reviewed legislative proposals and provided comments to the Department as well as to the Governor. A member of the Board serves on the Child Welfare Advisory Committee that oversees the Department's Program Improvement Plan and Child & Family Services Plan.

Overall, this year, the GAB made the following recommendations:

1. The Board reviewed a study conducted by the Department on Expediting Adoption and expressed their concerns about reunifying families when some families are clearly not amenable to reunification. In those cases, the Board recommended that local agencies should seek termination of parental rights (TPR) as soon as possible in order to give the child the best chance for adoption. Another Board member voiced concerns that TPR is often used too quickly with immigrant and minority families. While the Board recognizes that there is no one formula for all cases, they continue to be concerned about children who are reunified and continue to be at risk.
2. The GAB endorsed the Integrated Early Childhood Plan developed by the Governor's Work Group on Early Childhood Initiatives. The plan focuses on the comprehensive needs for growth and development of children to achieve school readiness. Home visiting is an important component of this plan. The GAB supports the expansion of Healthy Families or similar home visiting programs.
3. The Board closely followed the work of Governor Kaine's Commission on Sexual Violence. The Commission focused its efforts on promoting appropriate criminal justice responses to sexual violence; providing comprehensive services to victims; and ensuring that effective prevention initiatives are in place. The Commission held regional stakeholder input sessions to gather information of issues regarding the prevention, intervention and treatment of sexual violence. A member of the GAB provided recommendations regarding child victims to the Commission staff. The GAB was disappointed that more children's issues were not highlighted in the final report.
4. The Board provided input into the proposed CPS regulations, 22VAC40-705. The regulations have not yet been officially posted for public comment. The GAB expressed some concern over the proposed definitions to medical neglect and terminally ill children. The Board supported the expansion of physical neglect to include a parent who knowingly leaves a child with a person convicted of a crime requiring him to register as a violent offender. They also support the expansion of the types of recordings that can be used interviewing victim children and alleged abusers to include electronic taping. The

GAB supports the proposed regulation to expand the CPS training requirements to include supervisors and to include additional courses for both workers and supervisors. The Board will provide detailed comments during the appropriate time.

5. The Board reviewed the Annual Report on Child Fatalities prepared by the Department. They are particularly concerned about the number of child deaths in unregulated and unlicensed child care. The chair of the Board worked with a legislator to propose a bill to establish a child care provider registry. While the bill passed, it was contingent upon funds being appropriated for the registry; there were no funds appropriated this fiscal year.

6. The GAB endorsed CAPC's plan to work with Children's Hospital of the King's Daughters in initiating a Shaken Baby Syndrome public awareness campaign.

7. The GAB also supported bills that made EMS and animal control officers to be mandated reporters.

8. The Board supported legislation to mandate training for foster care and adoption workers and to allow for video taped statements from victims to be used in criminal trials under certain circumstances.

9. The GAB took an active role in advocating for and reviewing and editing the new Mandated Reporter online curriculum that was developed by Department staff and VISSTA, Virginia Commonwealth University School of Social Work.