



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 community-based organizations and professionals with 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. Reviews the State's implementation of previous CRP recommendations.
2. Reviews ongoing Quality Improvement (QI) and Program Improvement Plan (PIP) projects and participates in case reviews.
3. Considers new areas of subject review within the CAPTA Assurances, Section 106.

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 (this document) submitted to the federal government as part of the CAPTA requirements.

Primary Panel goals for 2006 included the following:

1. Continue to review CPS cases as part of the DCFS QI system.
2. Implement CRP expansion in Nevada by incorporating the Northern and Southern Citizens Advisory Committees (CACs) into the CRP process, with each to serve as the second and third CRPs for Nevada, respectively.
3. Follow up on 2005 CRP recommendations.
4. Integrate policy and procedure review into common areas of focus examined in conjunction with the CJA Task Force.
5. Review the CAPTA state plan.

During 2006, the Panel members continued to serve as regular, external stakeholders in quarterly case reviews implemented as part of the DCFS Quality Improvement (QI) system. Panel recommendations for 2006 focus on CPS staff training, CPS practices, CRP involvement in the DCFS QI case review process, and ongoing CRP expansion.

Both the Northern and Southern CACs were invited into the CRP process in 2006, which included a formal invitation letter from the DCFS Administrator and a special meeting with staff to provide a logistical overview. Approval to join as a CRP was given by the Northern CAC Chair, and in 2007 this group will begin to examine specific areas of focus defined for CRPs by CAPTA, and provide system improvement recommendations for the next Annual Report. Approval to join as a CRP was postponed by the Southern CAC because of a change in leadership for the group with the election of a new Chair, as well as structural and work-focus changes based on increased child welfare activities in Clark County resulting from Nevada's Program Improvement Plan (PIP).

The CRP received feedback from DCFS in response to its 2005 recommendations, which is summarized in this report. Unfortunately, no work was done with the CJA Task Force during 2006 because the Task Force was focused on the completion of its required State Study to develop and finalize a new set of policy and training recommendations for the 2006 – 2008 triennium. Also, the CRP did not provide specific feedback on the CAPTA state plan in 2006.

PANEL RECOMMENDATIONS AND ACTIVITIES

Introduction

The DCFS Quality Improvement (QI) system evaluates the quality of services and improvements within programs administered by DCFS, encompassing six major processes:

1. **Measuring Child and Family Services Review (CFSR) outcomes:** DCFS has implemented a web-based information management system called Solution for Online Activity Reporting (SOAR), which reports on required CFSR measures including safety, permanency, and wellbeing. Data for the SOAR system is 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 helps to support improvements in case management practice.
2. **Supervisory review:** A review instrument is used to monitor CPS case workers' performance. Quarterly reviews are 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 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 include State and County staff along with external stakeholders.
4. **Communication plan:** QI information and reports are 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), comprised of mid-level managers, reviews data reports, discusses policy change, and makes recommendations to the DCFS Decision-Making Group (DMG) for practice improvement and better outcomes. The DMG, comprised of DCFS administrators and County directors, 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 has accountability for oversight of the PIP process and federal reporting. Operation of the QI system is 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 is directly involved in the QI system and its members serve as external stakeholders in the regional case review process described under item three. Panel members are also invited to participate in the QI Team activities described under item six. Panel members took part in the first QI system case reviews in late 2005, and 2006 was the first full year of its inclusion in the QI process.

The Panel's recommendations for 2006 were developed as a result of participation in the QI system case review process, and focus on CPS staff training, CPS practices, CRP involvement in the DCFS QI case review process, and ongoing CRP expansion.

2006 Recommendations

CPS Staff Training

Recommendation 1: CPS staff training needs to include and/or reinforce consistent, statewide definitions of the standard elements of child welfare practice.

Discussion: This is a re-recommendation from the prior year. During the 2006 case reviews, Panel members continued to observe a lack of uniform definitions and consistency in the use of terms reflected in case documentation. The Panel is concerned that different procedures and practices used by child welfare agencies in each of the three regions of the state lead to inconsistent approaches to CPS investigations. The Panel believes that better investigations are conducted when common terms are defined and applied using a consistent, statewide approach to enforcing State and federal responsibilities related to child welfare. Overall, there needs to be statewide uniformity in the conceptualization and implementation of child welfare practice definitions.

Recommendation 2: CPS staff training needs to improve caseworkers' understanding of the safety and risk assessment tool and statewide consistency in its use.

Discussion: The Panel believes that caseworkers need to be trained to consistently use the statewide safety and risk assessment tool (Family Risk Assessment Protocol – FRAP) as appropriate to the case, which clearly defines both safety and risk factors. Panel members noted that the primary problem is under-use of the assessment tool during initial investigations, and under-use during critical transitions for children, such as placement with relatives.

Recommendation 3: CPS staff training needs to reinforce the importance of data entry and case documentation so that the contents of case files are consistent and complete.

Discussion: This is a re-recommendation from the prior year. During the 2006 case reviews, the Panel members continued to find that inconsistent approaches to CPS investigations, noted above in recommendation one, lead to inconsistent case documentation and data entry into case files and the State's UNITY system. Several specific problem areas were identified as follows:

- Documentation of supervisory input into cases is lacking. In many cases, it is not clear at what point supervisors become involved in a case. The Panel is concerned whether this is a reporting issue, or a practice issue they may require additional steps to correct.
- There is a lack of case file documentation regarding the change between assigned case workers. Panel members pointed out that case notes from different case workers are difficult to follow without understanding changes in staff assignments.

- Per recommendation two above, there is no evidence that the safety and risk assessment is being used at critical points in a given case.
- Specific to the northern region, the use of *Human Services Support Specialists*, which are paraprofessionals who provide services in the home, is not well documented when they provide services for a given case.
- Some entries into case notes were up to nine months old for certain open cases. This lack of documentation across such a long period is a serious problem.
- In some cases reviewed, there was no closing memo or summary. Therefore, Panel members were unable to determine whether the case was actually closed.

The reinforcement of consistent CPS case documentation is still 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.

CPS Practices

Recommendation 4: CPS practices need to incorporate appropriate actions to promote safety, permanency, and wellbeing that are individualized based on the child and family’s needs.

Discussion: The Panel believes that responses to the safety assessment are often a “cookie-cutter” approach, with a lack of case-specific assessments to address the needs of the children and families involved, and a lack of focus on the individualized services they need. This may include making reasonable efforts, identifying and reaching out to non-custodial parents, providing strengths-based outreach and services, and the emphasizing the importance of sibling relationships. On the one hand, caseworkers need to consistently incorporate necessary and appropriate actions required as a part of every case, and on the other hand, they need to individualize solutions for children and families based on their uniquely identified needs.

CRP Involvement in QI Case Reviews

Recommendation 5: The Panel believes that an over-sampling of cases should always be done for quarterly scheduled QI case reviews.

Discussion: The Panel understands that over-sampling is currently optional and may or may not be done during QI case reviews. The Panel believes that an over-sampling of cases should always be done to ensure that the allotted reviewers’ time is used fully during quarterly reviews. The Panel is also concerned that the current QI process is seen more as a retrospective review rather than a corrective tool. The Panel would like to emphasize that QI is intended to be an improvement process through which policy and practice changes are made and implemented.

Ongoing CRP Expansion for 2007

Recommendation 6: An existing rural oversight group should be invited to serve as a fourth CRP for Nevada.

Discussion: In addition to the new northern and southern CRPs, which are tied into the Child Welfare Citizens Advisory Committees (CACs) for Washoe and Clark County, the Panel believes that an existing rural oversight group should be invited to participate as a fourth CRP through the ongoing expansion of the CRP process in 2007. The existing statewide CRP will continue with its broader focus, while the new regional CRPs will be better positioned to take a deeper look at local issues related to child welfare. Because this is being done in the two largest populations centers in the state, the Panel believes that more localized rural representation should be incorporated as well, in order to promote geographic equity in the ongoing expansion of Nevada's CRP process.

Follow-Up on 2005 CRP Recommendations

Follow-up on the 2005 Panel recommendations was based on formal responses from the DCFS Administrator, as follows:

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

DCFS Response: This recommendation was incorporated by the State during the implementation of the Program Improvement Plan (PIP) that resulted from the Federal Child and Family Service Reviews in 2004. Policies, procedures, and practice guidelines were revised and standardized throughout the State to embody a uniform set of terminology and definitions used in child welfare practice. This included discussion and definition of “parental custody” and “in-home” placement in relevant policies. Training on these policy changes was required for all child welfare staff and supervisors. The PIP Policy and Training Plan and Schedules were provided to the Panel in the Five-Year Child and Family Services Statewide Plan for FFY 2005-2009, the Nevada Program Improvement Plan, and Quarterly Reports that are available at the DCFS website, http://www.dcf.state.nv.us/DCFS_reports.htm. Instructional Memoranda were also provided to staff on specific topics, such as Safety Assessment, Child Fatality, and Near Fatality screens in the Unified Nevada Information System for Youth (UNITY) computer system.

Policies on Assessment, the Family Risk Assessment Protocol (FRAP), Intake Response, Substantiation, and Safety Instructional Memorandum, were developed by a statewide team that included representatives from each public child welfare agency and the Nevada Training Partnership (University of Nevada, Reno and Las Vegas campus), Court Improvement Project, Information Management System, and other stakeholders. This process was facilitated by a consultant from the National Resource Center for Child Protective Services in an effort to incorporate “Best Practice” elements. Throughout the policy development process, ongoing efforts continue to ensure standardized definitions across all policies. This policy teams will begin reviewing and refining these policies in July 2006.

Conducting Risk Assessment (a two-day training), which included emphasis on distinguishing between risk and safety, was offered from June 6, 2005, through August 5, 2005. There were a total of 19 classes, 10 in Las Vegas, 5 in Reno (including a make-up session in December, for new employees or those who missed it before), and 4 classes in the Rural Region (two in Carson, one in Fallon, and one in Elko). In all, 422 employees attended this training.

Intake Response and Decision Making (a two day training), which emphasized the distinction between present and foreseeable danger, began on January 5, 2006 and was completed in all Regions by February 28, 2006.

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

DCFS Response: This recommendation was incorporated by the State during the implementation of the Program Improvement Plan (PIP) that resulted from the Federal Child and Family Service Reviews in 2004. Policies, procedures, and practice guidelines were revised and standardized throughout the State to embody best practice and a strength-based approach for child welfare practice. Training on these policy changes was required for all child welfare staff and supervisors.

Collaborative Case Management Training was offered from June 20, 2005, through August 25, 2005, with a total of 409 workers having been trained statewide. This course highlighted collaborative development of an individualized plan of care that focuses on the strengths, challenges, and needs of the child and family. This training included reasonable efforts and identifying and reaching out to non-custodial parents as part of the planning efforts.

A mandatory web-based training on *Diligent Search*, offered throughout the month of March 2006, focuses workers on an ongoing process in which maternal and paternal family members (with an emphasis on non-custodial parents), fictive kin, friends, and/or other significant persons are continuously identified and engaged in the child's life and the case planning process in order to minimize placement moves, implement permanency plans, and ensure lifelong connections. A *Diligent Search Handbook* was also developed to give caseworkers the tools and guidance to conduct successful searches.

As a follow-up to these trainings, a statewide Quality Improvement process has been implemented to measure improvement in outcomes and to make recommendations for future enhancements to training. Additional curriculum specific to supervision issues is being developed and piloted in the Rural Region.

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

DCFS Response: This recommendation is being incorporated by the State during the implementation of the Program Improvement Plan (PIP) that resulted from the Federal Child and Family Service Reviews in 2004. New policies on documentation are being developed using the same statewide collaborative process noted above. In addition to specific policies on documentation of medical and educational services to children and families, training will include instruction on writing accurate (descriptive) and objective case notes, closing, and transfer summaries. Training will be delivered according to the Statewide Training Plan, prior to September 30, 2006.

The Quality Improvement Unit (QI) will be working closely with the Information Management Systems (IMS) during standing bi-weekly meetings, regarding the progress on the data improvement plan for the Adoption and Foster Care Reporting System (AFCARS). QI will be

using AFCARS monthly and semi-annual reports in conjunction with quarterly Solutions for Online Activity (SOAR) reports for analysis of current trends and areas needing improvement.

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.

DCFS Response: This recommendation has been incorporated by the State. The chairs of these committees were approached with this proposal and upon meeting with their committee members, were agreeable to act as a Citizen Review Panels. Formal notification was sent in May 2006 to the Chairs of the Northern and Southern Child Welfare Citizen Advisory Committees. They will convene as Citizen Review Panels by July 2006.

Update on CRP Expansion for 2006

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.

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 new areas 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 Northern and Southern Child Welfare Citizens Advisory Committees (CACs)

The Children's Justice Act (CJA) Task Force is federally mandated under CAPTA Sections 106 and 107, and focuses on front-end child protection and/or prosecution activities. The CJA Task Force met in December, 2005, to review and approve a proposal from DCFS for the expansion of CRPs in 2006. Upon review, the Task Force recommended that DCFS invite the existing Northern and Southern Child Welfare Citizens Advisory Committees (CACs) to serve as the second and third CRPs. The CACs currently operate at the County government level in Washoe and Clark Counties.

During the first half of 2006, staff conducted preliminary discussions with the Chairs of these two groups, and a formal letter was issued by the DCFS Administrator in May, 2006, inviting each of the CACs to serve as CRPs. A meeting was held between staff and the CAC Chairs in August, 2006, to formalize the plan for inclusion of the Northern and Southern CACs in Nevada's CRP process. The Northern CAC Chair has approved participation as a CRP on behalf of the Committee. The Southern CAC had set approval of participation in the CRP process on their agendas for meetings scheduled on September and October, 2006, but structural changes within the Committee and the election of a new Chair required that the final decision be postponed until early 2007. Similarly, the Northern CAC is undergoing some structural changes as well.

Each of the CACs plans to re-focus some of its goals and workplans to begin developing recommendations for system change that can be incorporated into the statewide CRP process. Both CACs currently review areas of focus mandated for CRPs through CAPTA, which is a primary reason the CJA Task Force recommended their inclusion. Because the CACs are more closely tied to the CPS agencies in the north and south, which are the state's two largest population centers, they are ideally positioned to provide additional recommendations for system improvement in Washoe and Clark Counties. The Statewide CRP will maintain its broader focus, continuing to examine CPS across the entire state, while the CACs will be able to provide a deeper look at the CPS system through their respective ties to the County child welfare agencies. This will present new opportunities to make recommendations for more locally-focused system change that will rise up to the State level. This will also increase State and regional collaboration so that necessary changes can be actively addressed.

The Statewide CRP expects that in 2007, the two new CRPs will be able to join the Statewide Panel in developing recommendations for improvement to the State and County child protection system.

Meeting Dates and Activities

During 2006, the Panel members participated in three of the four quarterly QI case review sessions, and met two times to discuss and finalize annual recommendations. Preliminary work with the two new CRPs is also noted:

<i>Meeting/Activity Date</i>	<i>Topics</i>
April 3 – 6, 2006 <i>On-site Case Reviews</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Panel participation in Carson City CPS case reviews.
May 10, 2006 <i>CRP Expansion</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Invitation letters sent to Northern and Southern CAC Chairs to participate in statewide CRP process.
June 26 – 29, 2006 <i>On-site Case Reviews</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Panel participation in Las Vegas CPS case reviews.
August 14, 2006 <i>CRP Expansion</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Meeting between staff and CAC Chairs to discuss logistics of CRP involvement and request formal approval by Northern and Southern CACs.
September 25 – 29, 2006 <i>On-site Case Reviews</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Panel participation in Reno CPS case reviews.
October 30, 2006 <i>Panel Meeting</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Update on and approval of revised plan for Nevada CRP expansion in 2006.• Member feedback on recommendations from Carson City, Las Vegas, and Reno case reviews.
December 18, 2006 <i>Panel Meeting</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Review and finalize 2006 Annual Report.• Update on continued CRP expansion in 2007.

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 in 2003 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 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. Reviews the State's implementation of previous CRP recommendations.
2. Reviews ongoing Quality Improvement (QI) and Program Improvement Plan (PIP) projects and participates in case reviews.
3. Considers new areas of subject review within the CAPTA Assurances, Section 106.

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.

During 2006, the Panel began undertaking expansion from one to three groups in order to come into compliance with the CAPTA CRP mandate based on the State's increased grant funding level. The CJA Task Force recommended that the existing Statewide CRP recruit the Northern and Southern Citizens Advisory Committees (CACs) to participate as new CRPs. Formal invitations were extended to these groups, with follow-up education about the purpose of the CRP process in Nevada and direct staff support to complete their inclusion. The Northern CAC has formally agreed to participate. Final approval for the Southern CAC is pending for January, 2007. Both groups are expected to become active in 2007 and contribute system improvement recommendations in the Annual Report.

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. District 1 – North (Elko Team): covers Elko, Eureka, Humboldt, Lander, Lincoln, and White Pine Counties
4. District 2 – West (Carson City Team): covers Carson City, Douglas, and Storey Counties
5. District 3 – East (Fallon Team): covers Churchill, Lyon, Mineral, and Pershing
6. District 4 – South (Pahrump Team): covers Esmeralda 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

Statewide CRP 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 – statewide, DCFS Central Office
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 – statewide, DCFS Central Office
Walker, Marji	DCFS – Family Programs Office	Social Services – statewide, DCFS Central Office

Northern CAC Members

<i>Member</i>	<i>Affiliation</i>	<i>Representation</i>
Armstrong, Deborah	Safe Embrace	Social Work
Capello, Mike <i>Chair</i>	Washoe County Department of Social Services (WCDSS)	CPS
Fralick, Lori	Reno Police Department	Victims of Domestic Violence
Piechocki, Kelsey	United Way	Indigents in the Community at Large
Sanderfer, Michael	-	Senior Citizens
VACANT	-	Indigents in the Community at Large
VACANT	-	Children and Youth

Southern CAC Members

<i>Member</i>	<i>Affiliation</i>	<i>Representation</i>
Bevacqua, Jennifer	Olive Crest	Private Providers of Mental Health Services
Biggerstaff, Jan	Clark County School District (CCSD) Board of Trustees	Child Welfare Advocate
Borders, Robert J.	Clark County School District (CCSD)	Local School District
Brooks, Chris	-	Youth with Foster Care Experience
Harris, Jacqueline <i>Chair</i>	Bridge Counseling Associates	Substance Abuse Services Agencies
Kennedy, Pauline	-	Foster and Adoptive Parents
Merrifield, Patty	DCFS	Children's Mental Health Services
Miller, Patty	Nevada Medicaid	Nevada Health Care Financing and Policy Agency
Muscari, Carolyn	Safe House	Domestic violence service agencies

<i>Member</i>	<i>Affiliation</i>	<i>Representation</i>
Parks, Sheila S.	CASA	Court Appointed Special Advocate – CASA
Reese, Fritz	Clark County Department of Juvenile Justice Services	Local Juvenile Probation Services
Sullivan, Frank	Clark County Family Court	Family Division of District Court
Taycher, Karen	Nevada PEP	Parent Advocates
Westrom, Hilary	Children’s Advocacy Alliance	Child Welfare Advocate
VACANT	-	Participant in the Child Welfare System