

Alaska Citizen Review Panel Annual Report

The Citizen Review Panel (CRP) for the State of Alaska was formed in May of 2002. Current CRP members are:

Ann Dennis-Choi, Anchorage – Ms. Dennis-Choi is a mental health clinician and supervisor at Southcentral Counseling, a community mental health center in Anchorage.

Le Florendo, Juneau – Ms. Florendo is employed at Central Council Tlingit & Haida as the ICWA Coordinator

Joanne Gibbens, Juneau – Ms. Gibbens is Program Administrator with the Division of Family and Youth Services, and provides staff support for the panel.

Lois Hildenbrand, Fairbanks – Ms. Hildebrand is a former nurse and former University of Alaska, Fairbanks, faculty member. For the past two years, he has volunteered as a citizen reviewer for 6 month administrative reviews of out of home placements.

Kay Love, Palmer – Ms. Love worked for Indian Health Services for many years. For the past five years she has volunteered as a citizen reviewer for 6-month administrative reviews of out of home placements.

Janine Reep, Juneau – Ms. Reep is a former Assistant Attorney General who currently serves as the attorney for Guardians Ad Litem and is an Assistant Public Advocate for the Office of Public Advocacy.

Virginia Walters, Kenai – Ms. Walters is a retired Special Education teacher and is currently a volunteer citizen reviewer for 6-month administrative reviews of out of home placements.

Sallye Werner, Anchorage – Ms. Werner is a former educator, and currently serves as a Court Appointed Special Advocate for children.

The initial meeting of the CRP took place telephonically on Wednesday, May 8, 2002, and included all panel members except Ms. Dennis-Choi. In addition to the CRP members, Kathy Admire and Lois Ward from the Administration for Children and Families, Region X office, also participated.

Ms. Admire provided an overview of the Child Abuse Prevention & Treatment Act (CAPTA) which establishes the CRP as a requirement for states. Some of the main points discussed were:

- CAPTA establishes a basic grant program, designed to strengthen child protection programs in the state.

- One of its purposes is to provide a community perspective to the state child protection agency.
- It does not focus only on children in foster care, but on the larger population of children in Alaska.
- Another of its purposes is to identify and support ways to strengthen the child protection system.
- The CRP has a lot of latitude and is independent of the State but must:
 - Convene quarterly (4 times a year)
 - Elect a chairperson
 - Develop a written work plan
 - Make recommendations to the State and submit a written report by June 30th each year, to be included in the Annual Progress and Services Report, submitted to the federal government.

A second meeting of the CRP was held in Anchorage on Tuesday, May 28, 2002. Ms. Dennis-Choi was unable to attend, Ms Hildenbrand attended telephonically, and all other members were present. The CRP conducted an in-depth look at CAPTA requirements, not only in terms of CRP requirements, but also CAPTA requirements for the prevention and treatment of child abuse; reviewed the 2001 Annual Progress and Services Report; and reviewed the Child and Family Services Review Statewide Assessment submitted April, 2002, as part of the federal Review process.

At that meeting, the following action was taken:

1) The CRP determined that additional membership should be pursued. The panel would like to add at least one additional member from a rural area that has expertise in child abuse prevention. This will be pursued prior to its next meeting.

2) The CRP scheduled its meetings for the upcoming state fiscal year as follows:

August 19, 2002
 November 25, 2002
 February, 2003 (telephonic meeting)
 March 24, 2003
 May, 2003

3) The CRP elected Sallye Werner as chair.

4) A draft Work Plan was developed for the following year. After a brainstorming session, the CRP identified five major areas of focus. Those five areas are:

- Appropriate Placements for Children Independent Living Services for Children and Youth
- The need for more comprehensive relative searches and more complete family, social and medical histories
- High caseloads/ low salaries for social workers and the need for more support staff
- The need for accurate, centralized information regarding Residential Child Care programs both in and out of state

Two of the above areas were identified as priority items to receive the panel's immediate attention:

- The need for accurate, centralized information regarding Residential Child Care programs both in and out of state.
- Appropriate Placements for Children – this includes concerns about lack of therapeutic foster homes for children; lack of residential homes for children of all ages; the need to develop and support such homes; lack of tribal/native foster homes; the need for improved recruitment and support for all foster homes.
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5) The CRP requests the Division of Family and Youth Services to request Technical Assistance by the National Resource Center for our next scheduled meeting in August 2002.

Sallye Werner
Chair