

**PROCEDURES for the  
Alaska Citizen Review Panel**

**Mission:**

The Alaska Citizens' Review Panel (CRP) is committed to reviewing and evaluating the practices and procedures of the Office of Children's Services (OCS) and in making recommendations relative to their findings to insure the safety and the appropriate placement of children in need of aide.

The CRP will achieve this commitment by examining the policies and procedures of State and local agencies; examining, where appropriate, specific cases; evaluating the extent to which agencies are carrying out their child protection responsibilities; and preparing and making available to the public, an annual report.

**Objectives:**

In consultation with state child protection staff, review policies to ensure the protection of children.

Review the consistency of social work practice and compliance state policies.

Advocate for resources and make recommendations to resolve the disparity of the number of native children involved in the child protection system.

Analyze trends, provide valuable insights that those working within the system may miss, and provide feedback on what is or is not working.

Make recommendations for policy changes.

Provide outside validation of the successes of the system and the efforts of the staff.

Increase community understanding, ownership and investment in child protection services.

Advocate for needed resources to achieve the protection of children from abuse and neglect and ensure permanent homes for children in a timely manner.

Prepare and make public an annual report containing a summary of the activities of the panel.

As required by the federal Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (CAPTA), monitor the extent to which the Alaska Office of Children's Services is fulfilling child protection responsibilities in accordance with its Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (CAPTA) Five-Year Plan.

### **Composition of the Citizen Review Panel**

Membership of the Alaska Citizen Review Panel must strive to be representative of the state.

The goal is to have a minimum of seven or more panel members.

The panel must include individuals with sensitivity to cultural, ethnic and economic diversity, and must include members who have expertise in the prevention and treatment of child abuse and neglect.

Panel membership may include but is not limited to the following:

- Concerned community members
- Community leaders/activists
- Parent/consumer representatives
- Clergy and representatives from communities of faith
- Business/corporate representatives
- Children's/parents' attorneys
- Child advocates/guardians ad litem
- Health, chemical health and mental health professionals
- Indian Child Welfare Act advocates
- Foster parents
- Law enforcement representatives
- Teacher and school administrators
- Mentally or physically disabled person representatives or advocates

### **Alaska Citizen Review Panel Operating Procedures**

#### **Appointment**

Members are appointed by the majority of the Citizen Review Panel members after completing an application and interview process.

#### **Terms**

There are no term limits on membership, but members, once selected, are expected to serve a minimum of two years.

#### **Resignation**

Resignations will be noted in the annual report.

Members who fail to attend two consecutive meetings without notice may be considered to have resigned.

### **Meetings**

The panel will meet a minimum of once every three months.

Written notice of the place, date and time of the regularly scheduled meetings will be sent to the panel members prior to the meeting.

Meeting agendas will be sent in a timely fashion before the meeting.

### **Voting**

All members are voting members.

Those with agency or advocacy group affiliation vote as individuals and are not presumed to speak for their agencies.

A quorum will consist of a majority of members present and voting.

Decisions of the panel will be approved by a simple majority of members present and voting.

### **Chair**

The panel will elect its own chair who will preside over all meetings.

The chair will oversee the preparation and make available on an annual basis a report containing a summary of the activities of the panel.

The chair will serve a two year term.

### **Vice Chair**

The panel will elect its own vice chair who will preside over meetings in the chair's absence.

A vice chair will serve a two year term.

### **Attendance**

Regular attendance at the panel meetings is expected. If a member cannot attend a meeting he or she should notify the CRP staff person or the panel chair.

### **Reimbursement of Members' Expenses**

Panel members will be reimbursed for expenses reasonably incurred in the performance of their duties on the panel.

Reimbursement expenses must have prior approval of the OCS liaison. This may include travel, ongoing training opportunities, copies of records, postage, long distance phone calls, meals and lodging.

### **Access to Data**

The Citizen Review Panel has access to data for specific case reviews per AS 47.14.215 Duties of the state panel (b) In carrying out the responsibilities under (a) of this section, the state panel shall examine the policies, procedures, and practices of the department, and, where appropriate, evaluate specific cases of child abuse or neglect.

#### **Availability:**

A state agency, statewide system, or political subdivision shall provide the panel access to information on cases that the panel desires to review. Confidential data may be shared with CRP members in connection with an individual case.

#### **Confidentiality of Meetings:**

The CRP has the right to close access to the meetings if confidential information may be discussed.

A person attending a meeting of the state panel or a member or staff of the state panel may not make any disclosure related to information obtained during a review by the state panel unless authorized under AS 47.10.092 or 47.10.093 (AS 47.14.235)

#### **Confidentiality of Records:**

The proceedings and records of the review panel are protected confidential data and are not subject to discovery or introduction into evidence in a civil or criminal action against a professional, or the state arising out of the matters the panel is reviewing.

#### **Immunity:**

A member of the state panel and a person who furnishes services to or advises the state panel is not liable for damages or other relief in an action involving the performance or failure to perform a duty or other activity of the state panel. (AS 47.14.275)

**Relationship with other agencies:**

The Office of Children's Services is responsible to provide staff support to the Citizen Review Panel. The OCS liaison handles requests for information and data from the Citizen Review Panel.

**Local Social Service Agencies:**

Local social service agencies must cooperate and work with the citizen review panels. (CAPTA Section 106 (c) (4))

**Policy for Consumer Concerns**

1. The Panel will not take a complaint of a protective services report.
2. The concerned citizen/consumer will be referred to the various and appropriate means available in requesting a review of a particular situation, when possible.
3. The individual will be referred to the social service agency's program manager, or other appropriate child protection staff person.
4. The agency's staff person will review the situation and determine if consultation with the Panel will be requested.

**Response by the Office of Children's Services to the Recommendations of the Citizen Review Panel**

The appropriate State agency is to respond to the panel and State and local child protective services agencies in writing citing its plan of action to address issues of concern no later than six months after the panel recommendations (annual report) are submitted.