
*Citizen Review Panels for
Child Protective Services: An
Overview*

Blake L. Jones, Ph.D.

University of Kentucky College of Social Work

*Never doubt that a small, dedicated
group of citizens can make a difference.
Indeed, it is the only thing that ever
has.....*

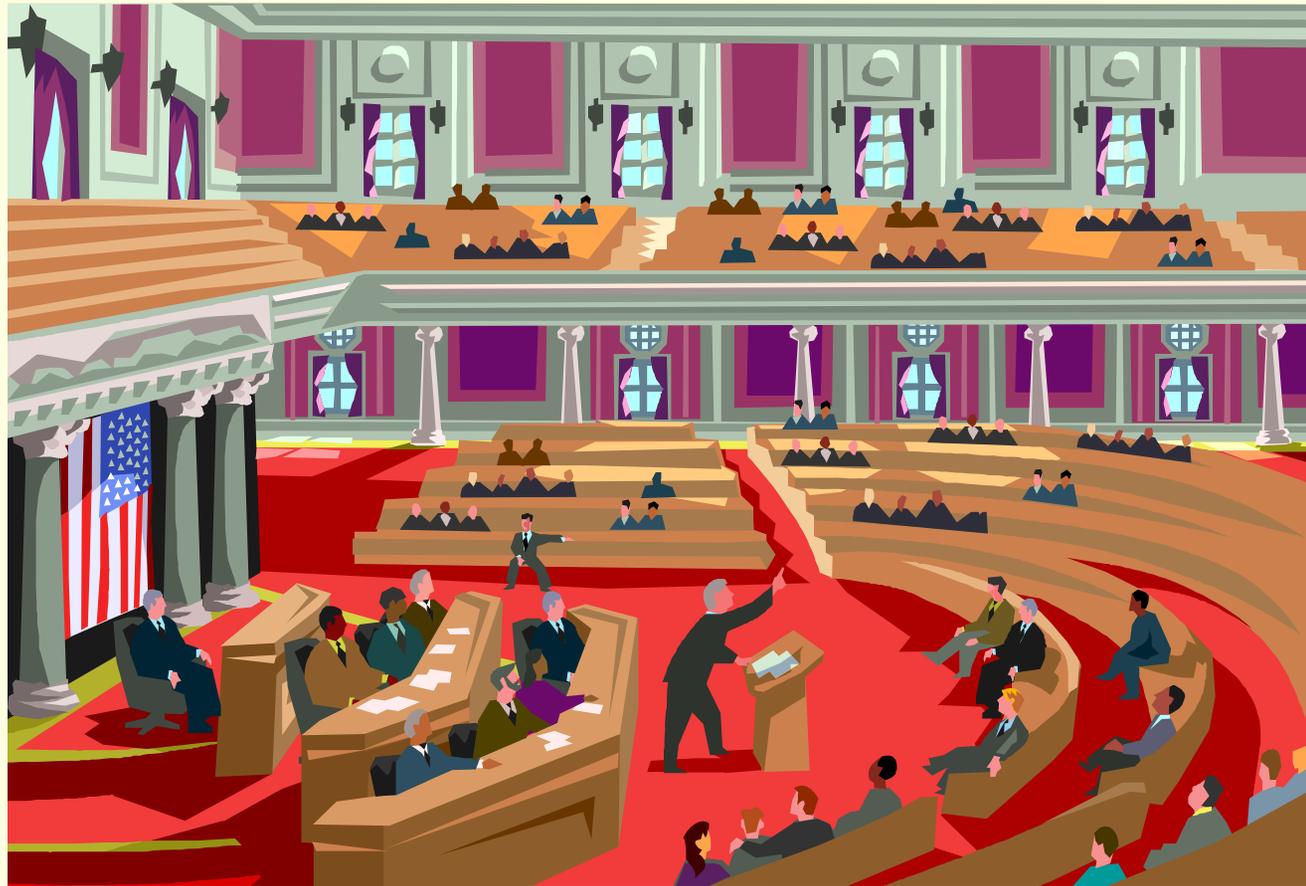
~ Margaret Mead



Overview Objectives

- Review CRP **history**
- Detail what the federal legislation (CAPTA) **requires for CRPs**
- Discuss national **models** of CRP
- Helpful hints to make this process work

Let's Review the History of CRPs



-
- “By allowing the Panels to have complete access to child protection cases, by requiring Panels to publicize their findings, and by requiring states to respond to criticisms and recommendations of the Panels, the Committee intends to subject states to public criticism and political repercussion if they fail to protect children”

~House report 104-081, p. 1

1970s-1990's: National Climate Moves from focus on Reunification to Safety

- Concern over child fatalities in open cases, children “languishing” in foster care, children returned to unsafe home environments
- A call across the country for increased accountability in the child protection system
- Federal statutory change came in 2 waves:
 - 1996 CAPTA reauthorization
 - 1997 adoption and safe families act

1996 CAPTA Reauthorization

- Public disclosure in cases resulting in a fatality or near fatality
- Mechanisms to ensure that the State does not require reunification of a child with a parent who has been found guilty of killing another child or felony assault resulting in serious bodily injury to a child
- Conviction of these crimes is a ground for termination of parental rights (TPR) of surviving children

1996 CAPTA Reauthorization

- Expedited TPR for “abandoned infants”
- And...

Establishment of Citizen Review Panels!



Origins of Citizen Review Panels

1974 Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act

Requires submission of a state plan detailing compliance in order to obtain state child abuse and neglect grant, including:

- **Child abuse and neglect reporting system**
- **Provision of protective services**
- **Confidentiality**

Establishment of Citizen Review Panels

- **3 panels** per state by July, 1999 (some only needed one)
- Each panel has the responsibility to review compliance of state and local CPS agencies with respect to:
 - state CAPTA **plan (basically ANY child protective services)**
 - Other criteria the panel considers important, which may include coordination with foster care and adoption programs and review of child fatalities and near fatalities

Requirements for Citizen Review Panels

- Composed of volunteer members that
 - are **broadly representative** of the community in which they are operating
 - include individuals with **expertise in the prevention and treatment of child abuse and neglect**
- Meet at least **quarterly**
- Examine **policies and procedures** and, where appropriate, **specific cases** of both state and local agencies
- Maintain **confidentiality**
- Prepare an **annual report with activities and recommendations**

The Annual Report

- The culmination of CRP work
- Your team should always be working toward recommendations
- The “public record” of your work
- Should go to Secretary, Governor, Legislators, other child advocates in your state



Panels Can Examine Any of the Following Parts of the CPS System

- Intake and initial screening
- Investigation and/or assessment
- Case determination
- Service planing, implementation, and monitoring
- Case closure
- Crisis intervention;
Emergency placement;
Family stabilization
- Coordination of services
- Staff qualifications, training and workload

What should the state agencies have in place?

- Reporting procedures
- Screening and investigation
- Child safety steps
- Immunity for good faith reporting
- Confidentiality of records
- Public disclosure in fatalities and near fatalities
- Expedited TPR
- Cooperation of law enforcement, courts and state CPS agencies
- Expungement of records available to public
- Appointment of guardians *ad litem*
- Appeal of findings
- Provisions not requiring reunification in certain cases

HOW can a Panel Review these Things?

- In-depth review of a small number of cases
- Broader review of cases
- Analysis of statewide data systems
- Review of agency policy and procedures
- Targeted Surveys
- Quality assurance reviews
- Community forums
- Focus groups or interviews of staff, consumers, service providers, mandated reporters, foster parents, others
- Others?

New Requirements from CAPTA Reauthorization (2003)

- Evaluate PRACTICES as well as policy and procedure
- Develop a means for public comment
- Child welfare agency is to respond in writing to annual report within six months (KY responds within three months)



Examples of Models of CRP in U.S.

- Created new panels (KY, Tenn.)
 - > contract with Universities, other governmental agencies
- Using existing panels (I.e., Child fatality review boards, regional or county QA teams, Governor's task force teams). This appears common.
- Hybrid (create new panels, but coordinate with larger group of existing panels)
- Some states—Maryland, for example--have long history of “citizen review panels.”

*How is Your State
Organized?*

?

Common Themes

- CRP coordinated by someone from state child welfare agency
- Struggle with “diverse” membership and involving “non-professionals”
- Trouble in defining the “mission” and outcomes of CRP (“watchdog” vs. “advocate”)
- Retention of members
- Turnover in state agency (i.e., new administrations)
- Difficulty in connecting with Child and Family Services Review

Examples of Recommendations Made

- Minimum education for a CPS worker should be a Bachelor's degree in social work, psychology, education, etc. (NY)
- Implementation of "user-friendly" training for mandated reporters (MN)
- Do not use children as interpreters during CPS investigations (AZ)
- Develop an Ombudsman system through an independent agency (WV)
- More funding for child welfare system in order to hire more caseworkers in compliance with CWLA standards (OK)

The Kentucky Experience



The Kentucky Experience

- Began in July, 1999
- Full time program coordinator (through contract with U. of Kentucky)
- 5 regional Panels, one statewide Panel
- 68 volunteers
- Money for travel, training, food for meetings
- Meet monthly

Elizabeth Kubler-Ross' Stages of Grief

- **Denial** (this isn't *happening* to me!)
- **Anger** (why is this happening to *me*?)
- **Bargaining** (I promise I'll be a better person *if...*)
- **Depression** (I don't *care* anymore)
- **Acceptance** (*I'm ready* for whatever comes)



The national scene...

- Congress has mandated a national effectiveness study
- National Citizen Review Panel Virtual Community (www.uky.edu/socialwork/crp)
- ACF regional reps becoming more interested in CRPs
- Technical Assistance Available through NRC on CPS

Research on Citizen Review Panels

- Jones, B.L. , Litzelfelner, P. & Ford, J.P. (2003) Making a Change or Making a Report: Change Perceptions of Citizens Review Panel Members and Child Protective Workers. Child Abuse & Neglect: The International Journal., (27) 699-704.
- Jones, B. (2004) Variables Impacting the Effectiveness of Citizens Review Panels For Child Protective Services: A Multi-state Study Children and Youth Services Review
- Jones, B.L. & Royse, D (in press, *Child Welfare*). Citizen Review Panels: A National Profile.
- Jones, B.L. & Royse, D. (in press, *J. of Public Child Welfare*). Correlation of Training and Perceived Effectiveness in Citizen Review Panels.

What have we learned about CRPs?

- Ongoing and meaningful communication/education is **critical** (hold joint retreats/strategic planning sessions, potlucks, awards ceremonies)
- Think Quality, not Quantity.
- Set clear guidelines and goals, check in half way through the year to make sure the group is “on track”

What have we learned?

- Clearly define roles of responsibilities of CRPs and child welfare agency (this should be spelled out in a Memo Of Agreement)
- Give feedback to Panels about what happens to their recommendations. If they are not feasible, say so, and explain why
- Create consistent “point persons” within the agency to answer critical questions.
- Have a way for members to cycle on and off the Panel

What have we learned?

- Work on **team development** (use cohesion scale to assess)
- Work with Chairperson to develop her or his leadership abilities
- Provide at least a part-time paid staff person (be CREATIVE, sub-contract with a University to coordinate CRPs)
- **Celebrate** successes and improvements
- Value citizenship

“The Intent vs. the Reality”



What Makes a “Bad” CRP?

- Unclear or conflicting goals
- Poor leadership from chairperson
- No follow through on commitments
- “axe grinders”
- Lack of communication from child welfare agency
- Vague or unobtainable recommendations
- “Policy overload”



What makes a “Good” CRP?

- *Clear and obtainable goals*
- *A chairperson who keeps the group on task*
- *Committed and diverse members*
- *Good working relationship with child welfare agency*
- *Formal and Informal feedback from child welfare agency regarding recommendations*
- *Group cohesion*



“The best way to predict the future is to invent it.”
~Immanuel Kant

