

CAPTA Georgia's Citizen Review Panels

Annual Report 2006

The establishment of Citizen Review Panels for all state Child Protective Services (CPS) systems was mandated by federal legislation in 1996 under the Child Abuse and Prevention and Treatment Act. Under federal statute, each panel is required to review the compliance of state and local child protective service agencies in the discharge of their responsibilities with respect to:

- 1) the state CAPTA plan;
- 2) coordination with Title IV-E foster care and adoption programs;
- 3) review of child fatalities and near fatalities; and
- 4) other criteria the panel considers important.

Properly established, citizen review panels have the capacity to promote creative problem-solving with the involvement of citizens who represent a variety of disciplines. Legislative guidelines recommend that panel membership include a balance among children's attorneys, child advocates, CASA volunteers, parent/consumer representatives and health/mental health professionals who are familiar with the intricacies of the CPS system. The annual reports of these panels have the potential for recommending not only increased resources but also better collaboration and system change.

The mission of the panels is to assure that children and families in the community are provided the best possible services within the framework of available resources and that children are protected from maltreatment. This mission will be achieved when the broader community has a better understanding of and a voice in:

- Evaluating and assessing the child welfare system
- Promoting quality child protective services practice
- Advocating for the strengthening of resources
- Recommending and advocating for policies and procedures that promote the highest practice standards
- Cross-system problem-solving involving both formal and informal support agencies, groups and individuals

The purpose of these panels is to provide opportunities for community members to play an integral role in ensuring that states are meeting their goals of protecting children from maltreatment. Study results suggest that improved collaboration between state CPS systems and citizen review panels will enhance the panels' effectiveness in offering feedback to improve services to children and families.

CAPTA legislation requires that the state:

- Establish three independent citizen review panels
- Assure that panel activities provide for public outreach and comment in order to assess the impact of CPS policy, practices and procedures on children and families
- Require each panel to prepare and submit an annual report that summarizes activities and makes recommendations to improve the CPS system at state and local levels
- Provide information on the state's progress in implementing the recommendations of the panels
- Provide the support panels require to perform their duties

Georgia's Citizen Review Panels

Georgia has elected to utilize three existing entities to fulfill its CAPTA citizen review panel obligation. Each of these designated committees has a mission closely tied to Georgia's child welfare goals, engages in activities that support positive outcomes for children, and meets the requirements as outlined in Section 106 of CAPTA legislation.

Georgia Child Fatality Review Panel (Panel)

The Georgia Child Fatality Review Panel was established by legislation in 1990 to prevent child fatalities, where preventable, by establishing an effective review and standardized data collection system to:

- Improve response to child fatalities
- Improve understanding of how and why children die
- Influence legislation, policies, and programs that affect the health, safety, and protection of children

The Panel is charged with tracking the numbers and causes of child death as well as identifying and recommending prevention strategies that could reduce the number of child deaths. Their work includes:

- Accurate identification and uniform reporting of the cause and manner of every child death
- Identification of circumstances surrounding deaths that could prevent future deaths and initiate preventive efforts
- Promotion of collaboration and coordination among stakeholders
- Recommendations for legislative, practice and policy change

The Panel has been the driving force for the expansion of Child Fatality Investigative Teams (CFIT), a network of qualified professionals who investigate child fatalities, and an advocate for legislative change to reduce child maltreatment and death.

See Appendix A for current membership.

Children's Justice Act Advisory Committee (CJAAC)

Established in response to the Children's Justice Act (authorized in 1997 as part of CAPTA), the Children's Justice Act Advisory Committee plays a key role in the overall continuum of child welfare service provision by facilitating, supporting and funding innovative practices in child abuse investigation and the prosecution of child sexual abuse and exploitation through activities designed to improve investigative, administrative and judicial handling of child maltreatment and related fatalities.

The goals of the CJAAC are:

- To improve multidisciplinary education and training
- To improve preparation and collaboration among child welfare agencies in the handling of child abuse cases
- To improve the collection, analysis and exchange of data on the investigation, treatment and adjudication of child maltreatment cases
- To improve the formal evaluation process used in determining the effectiveness of support activities

The CJAAC promotes and supports activities that:

- Prevent child maltreatment and repeat maltreatment
- Increase awareness and educate the community about child abuse and neglect
- Strengthen intervention and prosecution in child abuse and neglect cases
- Build and support a network to promote the best response to child maltreatment
- Provide training and education that promotes an effective multidisciplinary approach to the identification, intervention, treatment and prevention of child abuse and neglect

It is in this last area that the CJAAC has excelled in its commitment, having co-sponsored the development and delivery of multidisciplinary training conferences and specialized training for individuals advocating on behalf of abused children or engaged in the investigation and prosecution of cases of child maltreatment.

See Appendix B for current membership.

Child Protective Services Advisory Committee (CPSAC)

The Child Protective Services Advisory Committee was established in 2000 in response to Section 106 of CAPTA Title I to solicit input from citizens regarding the activities of the state's Child Protective Services Unit of the Department of Human Resources, Division of Family and Children Services. CPSAC activity focused on the review of Georgia's 2005-2009 CAPTA plan and examination of strategies identified to improve child safety, permanency and well-being.

CPSAC members agreed that improvement in the following areas were essential to achieve the desired outcomes identified in the state's child abuse prevention and treatment plan:

- Effective intake, assessment, screening and investigation of suspected child maltreatment
- Effective case management, including the monitoring and delivery of services and treatment

- Qualified, trained and experienced staff
- Improved training for mandated reporters
- Effective interagency collaboration among Public Health, Mental Health, Juvenile Justice, Child Protective Services, Department of Education, Child Care licensing(BFTS)and community-based organizations and service providers

The CPSAC has also recommended that the state consider a public relations campaign aimed at providing families and communities a better understanding of DFCS' role in child welfare; take the lead in encouraging families and communities to become more engaged and take ownership of child abuse prevention; and continue its efforts in collaborating with their partners in Georgia's child welfare system.

See Appendix C for current membership.

In Conclusion

In September 2006, the Division sponsored a two-day retreat for representatives from each citizen review panel. The retreat provided an opportunity for members to gain a better understanding of the mandate and purpose of each designated group and to reinforce their roles, responsibilities and obligations as citizen review panels.

State liaison Annie Wright, DFCS Program Administrator, has regular communication with each group to monitor activities and provide technical assistance and support.

Although each of these citizen review panels has a specialized focus in Georgia's child welfare system, they share several common ideals:

- Preventing child maltreatment and repeat child maltreatment
- Educating families, communities and those engaged in child protection about child maltreatment
- Multidisciplinary training to individuals who investigate, intervene, treat and prosecute cases of child maltreatment
- Collaborating with their partners to improve child welfare policy, practice, law and legislation.

These common ideals have resulted in the identification of several key recommendations from the three panels that include:

Supporting legislative, policy, and practice change to improve child abuse prevention and treatment;

Providing training, education and support to parents, communities and individuals involved in child protection services on child abuse and neglect from identification through disposition;

Collaborating with child welfare stakeholders to develop a statewide child abuse prevention plan;

Developing shared information systems for the collection and analysis of data on child abuse prevention and treatment to evaluate the effectiveness of our child abuse prevention efforts.

Sources:

http://www.dhfs.state.wi.us/dcfs_info/num_memos/2000/2000-07.htm

www.dss.cahwnet.gov/pdf/CitizenReviewPanelGuidelines

Georgia Child Fatality Review Panel Summary Report 2005-2006

Georgia Child Protective Services Advisory Committee Summary Report 2006

Georgia Children's Justice Act Advisory Committee Summary Report 2006

APPENDIX A

Child Fatality Review Panel Members

Ed Lukemire, Judge
Houston County Superior Court

Vanita Hullander, MD
Catoosa County Coroner

Velma Tilley, Associate Judge
Bartow Juvenile Court

Gwendolyn Skinner, Director
Division of Mental Health/MHDDAD

Stuart Brown, MD, Director
Division of Public Health

Mary Dean Harvey, Director
Division of Family and Children Services

Vernon Keenan, Director
Georgia Bureau of Investigations

J. David Miller, District Attorney
Southern Judicial Circuit

Kevin Tanner, Chief Deputy
Dawson County Sheriff's Office

Melvin Everson
Member, Georgia House of Representatives

Gloria Butler
Member, Georgia Senate

Kris Sperry, MD, Chief Medical Examiner
Georgia Bureau of Investigations

Nancy Fajman, MD, Pediatrician
Children's Healthcare of Atlanta

DeAlvah Simms
Office of the Child Advocate

Myra Tolbert, Chairman
Criminal Justice Coordinating Council

APPENDIX B

Children's Justice Act Advisory Committee

Dorothy V. Murphy
DeKalb County Juvenile Public Defender, Decatur

Rick Malone, Executive Director
Prosecuting Attorney's Council of Georgia, Atlanta

Duane Hathaway, Executive Director
Georgia CASA, Inc., Atlanta

Honorable Billy J. Waters
Newton County Juvenile Court, Covington

Debbie West, M.D.
Medical Center of Central Georgia, Macon

Charles M. Ferguson
District Attorney, Cuthbert

Yolanda Thompson, Director of Public Relations
Department of Corrections, Atlanta

Jennie Manders, Ph.D.
Institute of Human Development and Disability, University of Georgia, Athens

Honorable Lawton E. Stephens
Superior Court, Western Judicial Circuit, Athens

Suzanne Lindsey, LPC, Child and Adolescent Program Specialist
Division of Mental Health, Developmental & Addictive Diseases, Atlanta

Eric Kiesel, M.D., Ph.D.
Fulton County Medical Examiner's Office, Atlanta

Charles Thurmond, Chief
Byromville Police Department, Byromville

Karen Worthington, Director
Barton Child Law and Policy Clinic, Emory University School of Law, Atlanta

Patricia McCann, Attorney
Public Defender's Office, Atlanta

APPENDIX C

Child Protective Services Advisory Committee

Sandra Barnhill, Executive Director
Aid for Children of Imprisoned Mothers, Inc.

Angie Burda, Program Coordinator
Clayton County Kinship Care Resource Center

Elaine Butler, Parent Education Director
Family Support Council, Inc.

Will Doss, Associate Pastor & Director
Spalding Family Connections Collaborative

Patty Eager, Executive Director
Advocates for Bartow's Children, Inc.

Amy Economopolis, Clinical Director
Anna Crawford Children's Center
Cherokee Child Advocacy Center

Robin Eschman
Consumer Representative (grandparent caregiver)

Liz Ferguson, Services Coordinator
Prevent Child Abuse Georgia

Jana Glass, Community Programs Director
CHRIS Kids, Inc.

Dr. Frankie Holt
CASA Volunteer

Mona Jackson, Program Director
DHR/DFCS/CAPS

Karl Lehman, Executive Director
Childkind, Inc.

Amy Leverette
Attorney

Dee Dee Mize, Executive Director
Prevent Child Abuse Gainesville

Lori Muggridge, Executive Director
Ocmulgee CASA

Dr. William Perry, Executive Director
Euricka Consulting Inc.

Deborah Walker-Little, Program
Coordinator
Interfaith Outreach Homes, Inc.

Christy Ware
Consumer Representative, Parent

DHR/DFCS Support and Consultation

Ann Dennard Pope, Program Director
Promoting Safe & Stable Families

Annie Wright, Project Administrator
Citizen Review Panels

Kym Crooms, Project Administrator
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