

**NEW JERSEY**  
**TASK FORCE ON CHILD ABUSE AND**  
**NEGLECT**  
**CITIZEN REVIEW PANEL**

**June 30, 2004**

**ANNUAL REPORT**



*State of New Jersey*

DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES  
TASK FORCE ON CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT  
CITIZEN REVIEW PANEL

Post Office Box 717  
Trenton NJ 08625-0717

Richard J. Codey  
*Acting Governor*

James M. Davy  
*Commissioner*

June 30, 2005

Dear Commissioner Davy:

On behalf of the New Jersey Task Force on Child Abuse and Neglect Citizen Review Panel (CRP), we respectfully submit our June 30, 2005 Annual Report. As you will see, the CRP worked diligently this year. Along with examining and reviewing the child protection system, the panel focused on recruitment strategies, membership applications and screening, intense public outreach, Review Panel rules and regulations, the Child Welfare Reform Plan, particularly SCR, and the future directions of this panel.

The CRP's work is accomplished through the combined efforts of committed and dedicated individuals from various sectors of the child welfare community and concerned citizens from the community at large. Without them, the work of this panel could not be accomplished. Of particular note, the CRP recruited two college students, who played an integral part in the creation and distribution of the CRP's Statewide Public Outreach DYFS Survey. The inclusion of these students is indicative of the broadening of the constituents the panel both seeks and needs. We look forward to incorporating the skills and resources of a more diverse network of citizens to better serve the purposes of the panel.

This year has also seen a change in leadership. After successfully heading the panel since its inception, Dr. Rachel Modiano stepped down as the Chairwoman, but continues to serve on the panel. We are thankful for her stalwart leadership and are grateful for her continuing service to the panel.

Though the panel has yet to receive a response to its June 30, 2004 Annual Report, we anticipate a prompt response to this year's report (as well as last year's). We feel strongly that our recommendations are important to improving New Jersey's child protection services.

Though the task and calling to which we committed are difficult and often frustrating, we continue our work on behalf of the children of New Jersey. We are grateful for the opportunity to serve this great State through our dedicated efforts to its most vulnerable citizens. Furthermore, on behalf of the Panel and the children we serve, we want to thank and commend you for your commitment to the cause of New Jersey's children. We also invite you to attend one of this CRP's meetings next year. We would greatly appreciate the opportunity to speak with you about the issues we have identified and are reviewing, as well as hear from you regarding the future of New Jersey's children.

We look forward to your response.

Sincerely,

Keeva Kase  
Chairman

Kathleen Roe  
Vice-Chairwoman

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**Citizen Review Panel Directory**

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# **New Jersey Task Force on Child Abuse and Neglect Citizen Review Panel 2004-2005 Report**

## **Introduction**

In 1996, the Federal Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (CAPTA) was amended to direct states receiving the CAPTA Basic State Grant to submit a five-year State plan and establish citizen review panels to evaluate the extent to which the State is effectively fulfilling its child protection responsibilities.

## **NJ Comprehensive Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act**

In July 1997, the New Jersey Comprehensive Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (CCAPTA) was enacted to comply with Federal CAPTA amendments. The NJ CCAPTA required the Commissioner of the Department of Human Services (DHS) to designate entities to evaluate interagency coordination and compliance with State and Federal mandates for the protection of children.

## **Panel Membership**

The Federal and State law requires states to establish panels composed of volunteer members who are broadly representative of the community, as well as members with expertise in the prevention and treatment of child abuse and neglect.

## **Citizen Review Panel (CRP)**

In 1998, the Department of Human Services Commissioner designated the New Jersey Task Force on Child Abuse and Neglect as a Citizen Review Panel. The responsibility of identifying Panel members was assigned to the Task Force Protection and Prevention Subcommittees. On June 30, 1999 the New Jersey Task Force on Child Abuse and Neglect Citizen Review Panel convened its first meeting. Meetings have continued on a monthly basis since that time. A report of the Panel's deliberations and findings are published each year in June. The term "Panel" heretofore, will refer to the Citizen Review Panel.

## **Selection of Chair and Vice-Chair**

In August 2004, the Task Force Citizen Review Panel selected a new chairperson. Having served in this capacity since the Panel's inception, Dr. Rachel Modiano decided to step down but would continue as a member. After a discussion concerning the amount of time required to perform the duties of the chair, the Panel voted to appoint a Chair and a Vice-Chair.

## **Federal Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (CAPTA)**

- A. In 2004, the Citizen Review Panel discussed the Keeping Children and Families Safe Act, Public Law 108-36, signed into law on June 25, 2003 that reauthorized CAPTA through 2008. Panel members evaluated numerous methods regarding the most effective means to comply with two of the new requirements that were effective immediately.
- Each Panel shall provide for public outreach and comment in order to assess the impact of current procedures and practices upon children and families in the community and in order to meet its obligations.
  - Not later than six (6) months after the date on which a report is submitted by the panel to the State, the appropriate State agency shall submit a written response to State and local child protection systems and the Citizen Review Panel that describes whether or how the State will incorporate the recommendations of such panel to make measurable progress in improving the State and local child protection system.
- B. In 2003, the Panel sent a letter to the Commissioner of Human Services advising that CAPTA requires the State to provide a written response within six months of the Panel's report.
- On December 30, 2003, the Commissioner of the DHS provided a written response to the Panel's 2003 report.
  - On June 30, 2004, the Panel issued its annual report.
  - In January 2005, the DHS requested a 30 day extension.
  - As of June 1, 2005, the Panel has not received a written response to its June 30, 2004 report.
  - The Panel will follow up with a letter to the DHS commissioner requesting a written response to the CRP 2004 report.

## **Child Protection System Review 2004-2005**

- A. In September 2004, the CRP discussed how to proceed with monitoring the areas of domestic violence, prevention, youth aging-out of foster care and structured decision-making while the child protection system is in a state of transition.
- B. Panel members agreed that due to the uncertainties of how the new child welfare structure and policies will interact with these areas, an accurate assessment of these systems cannot be performed at this time. The Panel will return to the 2003-2004 areas of interest next year when the new child welfare structure is operational and the training component vital to the transition is complete.
- C. In 2004 - 2005, the Panel identified the following key areas of activities for the year:
  - Public Outreach
    - Public Survey on the DHS Division of Youth & Family Services (DYFS)
    - Public Forum
  - Recruitment
  - Membership Application Packet
  - Citizen Review Panel Rules and Regulations
  - Child Welfare Reform
  - Department of Education & DYFS

## **Public Outreach**

In 2003 - 2004, various strategies for obtaining input from the public was discussed. The Panel decided that a survey questionnaire was the most efficient method to gather information concerning the public's experience and perception of the State's child protection system. The public was identified as persons who are part of the child welfare system, providers of services, consumers and persons who are not involved in the child welfare system. There was a consensus that the public could help identify issues for the Panel's future consideration.

## **DYFS Survey**

- A. In 2003 – 2004, Panel members formed a committee to develop a DYFS survey questionnaire and a statewide distribution plan. The data analysis and reporting would take place in 2005.
  - 1500 survey questionnaires, in English and Spanish, were distributed to media outlets, Human Services Advisory Councils, DYFS contract providers, Court Appointed Special Advocates and participants at the September 10, 2004 NJ Task Force Conference on Child Abuse and Neglect.

- With the collaboration and assistance of DYFS the survey was available online.
  - A press release to announce the purpose and availability of the CRP survey was developed and released for publication in newspapers throughout the State with the assistance of the Department of Human Services Office of Public Affairs.
- B. In February 2005, a meeting was held with the DHS Office of Planning & Evaluation to discuss assistance with analyzing the survey data. The Panel was pleased to learn that the DHS was receptive to analyzing the data and providing a report to the Panel.
- 271 Citizen Review Panel surveys were returned to the Panel and presented to the DHS Office of Planning & Evaluation for data analysis.
  - In May 2005, a representative from the DHS Office of Planning & Evaluation met with the Panel to discuss the data analysis and report. The Panel was pleased to learn that the DHS data analyst will work with Panel members next year to design and distribute another survey. **(A copy of the data analysis report is attached.)**

### **Public Forum**

- A. In 2004, the Task Force invited the three Citizen Review Panels to hold a public forum at the September 10, 2005 NJ Task Force Conference on Child Abuse and Neglect: *A Vision for Children: Strengthening Families and Communities* in Parsippany, NJ. Panel members recognized that this was an opportunity to gather information from professionals working with children and families throughout the State.
- Several meetings were spent planning the public forum. The Task Force CRP, the Child Fatality and Near Fatality Review (CFNFR) Board and the Staffing and Outcome Review Panel participated in planning the forum. Each CRP identified representatives to hear testimony from the public and answer questions. Participants were assigned a specific time to speak and all testimony was tape recorded.
  - An announcement of the public forum was inserted in the Task Force conference registration mailing and CRP hearing registration forms were available at the conference table. In addition, CRP survey questionnaires were included in each conference participant's information packet.
- B. Approximately 15 conference participants testified at the forum. Many of these were teachers who testified about their experience in reporting incidents of abuse and neglect.

- Teachers voiced their concerns regarding a lack of communication on the part of DYFS to inform the school of the action taken after a report was filed.
  - The Panel agreed that the concerns expressed by teachers regarding the interface between DYFS and the Department of Education should be explored further. A DOE representative will be invited to meet with the Panel.
- C. The Panel discussed who would be responsible for transcribing the tapes and who would be responsible for payment. It was agreed that funding is an issue that must be resolved in order for the Panel to perform its federal mandate. Up to this point, the Panel had relied on the DYFS, DHS and the Task Force to provide printing and mailing services and a small allocation for refreshments.
- In April 2005, the CFNFR Coordinator informed the Panel that DYFS would provide funds to transcribe the tapes from the September 10<sup>th</sup> public forum. The CFNFR Coordinator arranged for this service and the transcribed testimony. A copy of the summary testimony is attached. (A copy of the entire public testimony is available through the CRP).

### **Membership Recruitment**

- A. In September 2004, the Panel established a committee on membership recruitment. The Panel charged the committee with studying the issue and recommending strategies to recruit members to represent the State's diverse populations and the northern and southern regions. The committee was asked to identify organizations and individuals that would create a Panel broadly representative of the community.
- B. Several meetings were spent discussing how to reach out to current member agencies and the Task Force subcommittees for nominations. The Panel explored ideas to insure that the process would accomplish the Panel's goal of ethnic diversity and geographic representation. Term limits were discussed and rejected by the Panel.
- C. Members agreed that meeting location, travel time and expense was a consideration for citizens from the extreme regions of the State. The Panel considered changing the meeting location to accommodate the southern and northern regions and agreed to table this issue until new members are recruited.

### **Membership Application**

- A. The Panel agreed that a formal CRP application process would be implemented for prospective members. Information regarding the CRP membership application process utilized by other States was reviewed.

- The Panel decided that prospective members will be contacted by the Panel Chair or Vice-Chair to explore their interests prior to receiving a membership application. The application will be reviewed by the Panel before extending an invitation to attend a meeting. A cover letter will accompany materials sent to prospective members. Existing member organizations will not be allowed to change representatives without prior approval of the Panel.
  - Panel members reviewed and approved the CRP new membership application process.
- B. In 2004 – 2005, the Panel decided to develop a membership application packet for prospective new members. Several meetings were spent analyzing the type of information potential members would want to know before making a decision to apply for membership. Panel members agreed that materials should include (1) information about the Federal Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act and creation of the CRP (2) the purpose, manner and scope of the Panel’s investigation (3) membership requirements including qualifications and expectations concerning the amount of time necessary to accomplish the Panel’s mandate (4) the latest Panel report and, (5) a list of current members and organizations.
- Panel members reviewed and approved revisions to the membership application packet for prospective new members.
  - In December 2004, the membership application packet was submitted with the draft CRP rules and regulations to the Task Force for final approval. (See attached.)

### **Citizen Review Panel Rules and Regulations**

Several meetings were spent discussing the requirement under the New Jersey Comprehensive Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act to establish rules and regulations for the three Citizen Review Panels. After the rules and regulations were approved by the three Panels they were submitted to the Task Force.

- The draft rules and regulations were reviewed by each of the three CRP’s and presented at the Task Force meeting on December 17, 2004. Following a discussion of the proposed rules and regulations, the Panel recommended the following language to reflect the Panels’ autonomy “*Each Panel, whose membership is not designated by statute, shall have the autonomy to select, screen, appoint and/or dismiss members, and retain the discretion to appoint officers and establish subcommittees.*”
- On February 5, 2005, the CRP rules and regulations were approved by the Task Force and subsequently submitted to the DHS for promulgation and inclusion in the New Jersey Administrative Code.

## Child Welfare Reform

- A. In 2003, the State settled the Children's Rights lawsuit and as part of the settlement agreement, a Child Welfare Panel was established by the court and charged with the responsibility of providing approval and oversight for the DHS plan to restructure the State's child protection system. The Plan entitled *A New Beginning: The Future of Child Welfare in New Jersey* was approved by the Governor and the Child Welfare Panel.
- B. The DHS reform plan established the Office of Children's Services to oversee the DHS divisions of: Youth and Family Services, Child Behavioral Health, the Office on Training, and Prevention and Community Partnerships. The Plan contains both short and long term strategies for systemic reform across all child serving systems with emphasis on Safety, Permanency and Well-Being. In 2003-2004, the Panel reviewed the reform plan and provided written comments to the commissioner of DHS and the Child Welfare Panel.
- C. In 2004-2005, the CRP decided to continue its function of examining the impact of the new structure on the State's ability to respond more effectively to child maltreatment and the safety and well-being of children. The Panel will continue to invite DHS representatives to provide periodic updates on the progress of the reform initiatives. Panel members also shared information about the reform at each meeting.
- D. A copy of the "Enforceable Elements of the NJ Child Welfare Plan, dated July 19, 2004" was reviewed by the Panel. The Panel learned that the DHS reform plan will take five years to fully implement and contains benchmarks by which to measure the State's progress.
- E. Panel members reported on reforms implemented to accelerate the court process in child abuse and neglect cases and the evaluation process of resource homes.
  - 63 new Law Guardian staff attorneys, investigators and support staff will be hired as part of the Child Welfare Reform Plan.
  - Compensation for Law Guardian "pool attorneys" to represent child victims in-court and out of court has been increased.
  - A committee has been formed to explore changing the training that is currently provided to foster resource families to the "PRIDE" training.
- F. On December 31, 2004, the DHS published the *Child Welfare Reform Plan Quarterly Report to the New Jersey State Legislature* describing the Office of

Children's Services' progress on initiatives relating to the safety, permanency and well-being of children and families in the State.

➤ Panel members reviewed the DHS *Child Welfare Reform Quarterly Report to the NJ State Legislature* released in December 2004 and made the following comments:

- The Report does not include training for current DYFS employees beyond the new worker training. The new worker training curriculum was being re-written prior to a domestic violence policy being reviewed and included in the policy manual.
- Housing subsidies for DYFS families and for victims of domestic violence were added to the reform plan. DHS changed State regulations to loosen requirements for emergency housing services for DYFS families.
- No allocation of funds for the PALS program.
- Financial compensation (board rate) for kinship/relative resource families was increased to the same level as non-relative resource families.
- Caseloads were reduced by 8.4% a reduction of 3,050 families and 9.9% or 6,834 children. DYFS caseloads declined to 16.53 families per worker.

G. The Panel discussed the DHS Child Welfare Quarterly Report with mixed reactions. Panel members support the increased focus on prevention services, the medical needs of children in foster care, and developing community partnerships. However, the Panel questioned whether the decrease in caseloads represented a real reduction in child abuse or the result of cases being screened out inappropriately. The Panel decided to scrutinize the new DYFS SCR screening process.

➤ In 2004 - 2005, the Panel reviewed changes in the new DYFS SCR system for reporting and screening cases of child abuse and neglect and training of SCR personnel.

➤ The Panel learned that the Task Force Protection Subcommittee sent a letter to the DYFS Assistant Commissioner articulating concerns about the new reporting and screening system. The subcommittee and other professionals are concerned that too many reports of suspected child abuse and neglect are being screened out without investigation.

➤ Members of the Task Force Protection Subcommittee were especially concerned that reports of 'child on child' sexual abuse were not being investigated. The Panel learned that a meeting was scheduled between the DHS Commissioner and co-chair of the Task Force and Protection Subcommittee to discuss this issue.

- The DYFS Staffing and Outcome Review (SORP) Panel sent a letter to the DYFS Assistant Commissioner to express concerns with the new screening and referral system and requested a presentation on the new SCR system. The Task Force CRP chair agreed to attend the SORP meeting on behalf of the Panel.
  - The Panel agreed to send a letter to the DYFS Assistant Commissioner requesting a presentation by the SCR Administrator on the recent changes to the system. Questions have been raised by Panel members regarding the following:
    - Staffing;
    - Training;
    - Criteria used to screen a referral;
    - Percentage of referrals from schools;
    - Number of cases investigated compared to the previous year; and,
    - SPIRIT screening instrument.
- H. The Monthly SCR Call Statistics dated October 2004 were distributed to the Panel in preparation for discussion with the DYFS SCR Administrator.
- I. In January 2005, the DYFS SCR Administrator attended the CRP meeting and presented the following information:
- The new SCR system was implemented on July 1, 2004.
  - The new NJ SPIRIT (New Jersey's version of SACWIS-State Automated Child Welfare Information System) application enables SCR to document calls received and the problem.
  - The NJ SPIRIT application process takes 15 to 45 minutes to complete in order make a referral to the appropriate District Office.
  - Prior to implementation, the Division held meetings with the Communication Workers of America union to discuss how the changes might affect workers. DYFS screeners were given the option of transferring to the new SCR Unit or another office.
  - The SCR staff level of 40 positions included screeners, supervisors and clerical staff. He commented that the former screening system consisted of two (2) fulltime screeners in each of the 37 District Offices plus back-up screeners in addition to clerical support. Taking into account sick leaves and scheduled time off, the SCR Unit has approximately 30 staff available at any given time. When the SCR system is fully operational, staffing is expected to increase to 90.

- Low staffing levels along with the increased volume of calls during the school year, were cited as reasons that some calls were missed, placed on hold for up to 45 minutes, or the caller was told to call back.
  - Every DYFS District Office has a liaison to the SCR Unit and conference calls between SCR and District Offices take place weekly to discuss SCR issues.
  - Screeners are required to attend a three (3) day training program. After the initial training, supervisors provide an abbreviated training for new staff.
  - Supervisors review three (3) reports per worker per day.
  - A request to develop a customer service package was submitted to the DYFS Training Office by the SCR Administrator.
  - The DYFS SCR Administrator informed the Panel that, after the training programs, some screeners misunderstood the criteria that would initiate an investigation.
  - Services are listed by county on the computer for DYFS referrals.
  - Reports concerning problem adolescents are referred to Value Options/Division of Child Behavioral Health Services.
  - The data from the Monthly SCR Call Statistics, July through October, (except for September) indicates that 19,000 to 20,000 reports of potential abuse and/or neglect were made each month and approximately 10% of the reports were accepted and assigned for investigation as abuse/neglect.
  - According to the SCR Administrator, the data shows an 8-10% decrease in referrals for investigation.
  - A backlog of 1500 reports containing errors or omissions must be reviewed. However, an incomplete report can still be referred to the DYFS District Office.
  - The SCR Administrator encouraged Panel members to visit the SCR Unit to observe the operation.
  - SCR has two (2) casework supervisors and an administrator.
- J. The SCR presentation raised concerns about the decrease in referrals and what happens to those cases that may have been inappropriately screened out due to a lack of training or mishandling of the call.

- K. The Panel was pleased to learn from the SCR Administrator that the Division was aware of the problem of inadequate staffing and training and was taking steps to hire more workers. The Panel was also encouraged to learn that in March 2005, the SCR would operate 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.
- L. Panel members discussed the October 2004, Monthly SCR Call Statistics report with the SCR Administrator. Questions were raised by members in regard to the categories listed in the report; i.e., Information and Referral, Value Options, Other Information, Child Welfare Services reports.
- The Panel learned that Information & Referrals are forwarded to community agencies and the child welfare reports are presently routed to the DYFS District Offices for follow-up. The child welfare reports will eventually be handled by the Division of Prevention and Community Partnerships, when the community partnerships are fully implemented.
- M. During the DYFS SCR Administrator's presentation, the Panel attempted to understand the process from the time a call is made to the SCR and the decision is made to accept or reject the case for investigation or make a referral.
- N. Panel members discussed the information presented by the DYFS SCR Administrator and raised the following questions and concerns about the SCR process.
- Staffing levels should be increased to insure that screeners have the capacity to respond to all reports adequately and callers are not put on hold for long periods of time.
  - Panel members want to review the SPIRIT application being used by the SCR staff.
  - Who is the person to contact when a caller is not satisfied that the report has been handled properly.
  - What types of cases are not accepted for investigation by SCR.
  - How is the new Division of Child Behavioral Health Services being operationalized.
  - Panel members are concerned that reports of "child on child" sex abuse are not being accepted by SCR. The Panel will follow up with the Task Force to learn the outcome of the meeting to discuss this issue.
  - Panel members are concerned about the training for SCR screeners.
- O. The Panel responded to the DYFS SCR Administrator's invitation to visit the SCR "call center" and to review the NJ Spirit Application by sending a letter from the Chair to Assistant Commissioner Cotton's office requesting both the visit and a copy of the NJ Spirit Application. After no response to the written request was received, the Chair telephoned the Assistant Commissioner's office to inquire, at which time the Chair was instructed to call back in two (2) weeks. After two (2)

weeks the Chair called back and was told that the Assistant Commissioner's office would respond to the letter within two (2) weeks. To date, the Panel has not heard back from the Assistant Commissioner's office regarding the Panel's request to visit the SCR and to receive a copy of the NJ Spirit Application for review.

- P. In 2005, the Panel learned that the following concerns were expressed at the SORP meeting in December 2004.
- A concern about using "Value Options" as the default agency for child behavioral health service referrals from the SCR.
  - In order for a child to be referred to "Value Options," the parent must be in agreement with SCR's assessment of the call. The parent may be placed on hold until the call is connected to "Value Options."
  - Questions were raised concerning whether calls identified as child behavioral health service referrals by SCR are precluded from becoming a DYFS case.
  - SORP members noted that there have been differing versions of SCR presentations that left the impression that SCR staff does not have a clear uniform screening protocol.
  - Complaints that repeat callers have been continually screened out by SCR for unexplained reasons.
  - SCR has no system for tracking the numerous rejected or "screened out" calls.
  - There needs to be a system in place to monitor whether the District Office has followed through on a referral.
- Q. In March 2005, the Panel was pleased to learn of improvements in the DYFS SCR unit. Staff levels at SCR have increased to 60 full time screeners and ten (10) supervisors. Supervisors are required to listen in on two (2) calls per screener per day and a log is kept on reports that are not accepted. Reviews are conducted on these reports by the casework supervisors and the administrator. Regarding the concern that cases of "child on child" sex abuse were being screened out, the DHS Commissioner has since requested that these cases be investigated.

### **Department of Education**

- A. In December 2004, the Panel began to explore the interface between DYFS, the Department of Education (DOE) and local school districts. This effort was in response to testimony by teachers at the CRP public forum held at the September 10<sup>th</sup> Task Force conference on child abuse and neglect. Teachers expressed concern that there was a lack of communication on the part of DYFS to schools after a report of suspected child abuse and/or neglect had been made. As the Panel delved into the topic, it became clear that this was a fertile area for exploration.
- B. Two members of the Panel conducted an informal survey of school personnel to test how widespread this sentiment was. The random telephone survey indicated

mostly positive statements regarding feedback from DYFS. However, the issue that emerged was a lack of training for teachers on identifying abuse and neglect and confusion about school policy and who is responsible for reporting incidents of abuse to DYFS. A summary was provided to the Panel, including schools contacted, the title of the professionals who responded, and the four basic questions asked regarding responsibility for reporting abuse/neglect and school protocol. It was decided that a letter of introduction should be drafted for Panel members who are involved in future surveys of this type.

- C. Several meetings were spent discussing the interface between DOE and DYFS. Panel members relayed anecdotal information of teachers reporting abuse and/or neglect to their school principals and the reports were not made to DYFS. Teachers often felt intimidated by school principals and were reluctant to make reports to DYFS for fear of making the school “look bad” and in some instances teachers feared retribution by parents. The information gathered at the CRP public forum and the random telephone survey led the Panel to decide to explore the issue of training for school personnel. Questions raised by the Panel include:
- Who is responsible for training local school personnel in identifying and reporting child abuse and neglect?
  - Is there a DOE curriculum?
  - How often is training required and who monitors this training?
- D. The Panel was advised that the DOE Commissioner is a member of the NJ Task Force on Child Abuse and Neglect and a designee regularly attends meetings.
- E. Panel members learned that the DOE Administrative Code (6A:16-10.1 and 6A:16-10.2) requires that “District Boards of Education shall adopt and implement policies and procedures for the reporting to, and the cooperation with, the Division of Youth and Family Services in investigations of child abuse and neglect” and “the establishment of a liaison to the Division of Youth and Family Services from the district board of education.”
- F. It was reported that the Task Force and the DOE coordinator of School Health & Social Services collaborate on regional training seminars for educators. However, due to DOE staff changes, training has been sporadic and not all schools participate. In 2004, the Task Force hosted three regional training seminars for approximately 400 educators and nurses. The demand exceeded expectation and resulted in a waiting list of over 200 teachers, nurses and guidance counselors. The program is conducted by a DYFS community education specialist, an Assistant Prosecutor and Task Force staff and includes the following topics:
- The Role of the School Liaison to DYFS: Reporting Suspected Child Abuse and Neglect
  - Safe Haven: Infant Protection Act
  - Guidelines for School Personnel on Student Sexual Misconduct

- A Teacher Saved My Life Video
- Questions & Answers

G. In February 2005, the Panel invited the DOE liaison to the Task Force to attend a CRP meeting and clarify questions concerning training of school personnel on reporting suspected child abuse and neglect. The Panel identified the following issues to be addressed:

- Compliance with the NJ DOE Administrative Code 6A:16-10.1 and 6A:16:10.2
- Are school employees required to attend annual in-service training on reporting abuse and neglect, and is attendance regularly monitored?
- Are school employees aware of DYFS' responsibility with regard to providing feedback following a report
- Who is responsible for reporting abuse and neglect in the schools
- Is reporting done individually by the person who suspects abuse, or are reports handled by the school nurse, guidance counselor or principal
- Who in the school is responsible for tracking/monitoring reports of abuse and neglect
- How are neglect issues handled by the school
- Do schools have a standard form available containing questions that are routinely asked by DYFS screeners
- If not, will the DOE consider developing one
- What is the extent of DOE's involvement in the Child Welfare Reform effort
- Are DOE representatives on the Child Welfare Planning Councils and the Community Collaboratives

H. In March 2005, the Panel was advised that the DOE Coordinator of the School Health & Social Services will update NJ Administrative Code and meet with the Panel at a later date. The DOE Coordinator agreed to consider recommendations from the Task Force and the Panel during the revision process.

- In April 2005, Task Force staff and the Panel chair met with DOE Coordinators of the School Health and Social Services. It was agreed that the DOE Coordinators would meet with the Panel within the next few months and provide the Panel with information pertaining to training of school personnel.
- DOE Coordinators of the School Health and Social Services expressed their intention to continue to collaborate with the NJ Task Force on Child Abuse and Neglect to provide training seminars for school personnel. Training opportunities include: four (4) annual regional training seminars; the NJ Education Association Convention; a training package/video; and the DOE annual continuing education credit program.

- I. In March 2005, Panel members were informed that the DHS Office of Children's Services (OCS) had designated a liaison to the DOE. The OCS liaison invited Task Force staff to serve on the planning committee to develop a training package for DOE. Panel members were invited to attend a presentation on March 22, 2005 about the new DYFS screening and reporting procedures. The program was developed by the DHS Office of Children's Services (OCS) for DOE superintendents, principals and union representatives.

### **National Citizen Review Panel Conference**

- A. Panel members were delighted at the opportunity to attend the fourth national CRP conference, which was held in Nags Head, NC from May 25-27, 2005, on issues relevant to improving the Panel's ability to fulfill its mandate. Panel members felt energized by the prospect of networking with Panel members from other states and to learn what methods states are using to review their child protection systems. In preparation for the conference the Panel identified the following issues:
  - Recruitment
  - Is Child Welfare a "culture of life" issue?
  - State Response Report on Impact & Penalties
  - National Training/Speakers on Citizen Review Panels
  - Public Outreach
  - Funding
- B. The Panel struggled for several months over the question of how to fund travel and hotel expenses for the national conference. In February 2005, the Task Force agreed to pay airfare and hotel for six members of the three Panels to attend the national conference.
- C. Please see attached summary report of and list of states which attended the national CRP conference.

### **Funding**

- A. In 2004-2005, funding emerged as an issue for the Panel. During discussions concerning the development of an effective public outreach method, it became clear that the lack of a dedicated source of funds pose a challenge for the Panel. The issue arose again during the Panel's decision to distribute survey questionnaires and in planning the public hearing at the Task Force conference. The Panel was confronted with this issue again while discussing how to send representatives to the national CRP conference.
- B. To date, the Panel has relied on resources from its member organizations for printing, mailing, and analyzing survey data. In addition, the DYFS, Task Force and DHS have provided funds for specific short-term projects. The uncertainty of

funds, however, hampers the Panel's ability to plan and execute projects. Panel members agreed that in order to fulfill our mandated responsibilities, the issue of funding must be resolved in the coming year.

### **Citizen Review Panel Recommendations**

1. The DHS should respond immediately to the Panel's June 30, 2004 annual report.
2. The DHS should allocate funds for the purpose of carrying out initiatives related to the Panel's Federal and State mandates under CAPTA.
3. DYFS should implement a quality assurance program to insure that the SCR Unit is operating at its highest level to keep children safe.
4. The initial training for SCR screeners should be expanded beyond the current three (3) days and include annual in-service training.
5. DYFS should implement a tracking system to monitor whether DYFS District Offices follow through on referrals.
6. The DYFS Assistant Commissioner should respond to the Panel's written request to visit the SCR and to receive a copy of the NJ Spirit Application for review.
7. DYFS should implement a policy on domestic violence for inclusion in the training curriculum for workers.
8. All reports of "child on child" sex abuse should be investigated.
9. DHS should keep the Panel informed of its progress in implementing community prevention services and community collaboratives.
10. The DOE should identify a liaison to work with the Panel to improve training on child abuse and neglect for school personnel.
11. CRPs should be included in the Child Welfare Reform Plan.

## **Recommendations Gained From Public Outreach (Recommendations of the Public)**

The following section reflects the comments of those who provided testimony at the Task Force Conference on September 10, 2004 at the CRP Public Hearing and via the CRPs Statewide DYFS Survey. The Panel realizes that some of these issues are in the process of being addressed. The opinions reflected in the recommendations of the public do not necessarily reflect those of the Panel members. Please see the attached documents: “Summary of DYFS Panel Hearing” and the analysis of the DYFS Survey for these results. Though the suggestions and other identified themes from the public are outlined in the attachments, some of the themes identified from the CRP’s public outreach efforts include:

- Lack of partnership between schools and DYFS
- Cases closed without input from school personnel who still see abuse occurring
- DYFS turnover, no relationship with caseworker, no feedback
- Schools need feedback from DYFS, especially nurses and social workers. Calls are not being returned.
- DYFS worker with regionalized foster care is unaware of local services
- Reform changes trickling down slowly, front line workers still have high case loads/high stress—still lack of case planning in case practice
- Interstate Compact to place children with family members out of state takes too long
- Foster parent retention, “[Some] Foster parents are feeling misled, left out of the process, untrained, treated like a number, feel unheard, discounted, treated rudely by their casework, unsupported.”

## **Future Directions and Areas for Review in 2005-2006**

1. The Panel will continue to examine and provide comment as to how the DHS reform structure impacts the State's ability to provide safety, permanency, and well-being for children.
2. The Panel will continue to examine and review the SCR system and make recommendations for improvement.
3. The Panel will analyze the DYFS survey for the purpose of identifying new areas to review.
4. The Panel will continue to work with the DHS Office of Planning and Evaluation to discuss methods to improve the questionnaire, develop a new distribution plan, and create future surveys.
5. The Panel will continue its outreach efforts to the public.
6. The Panel will recruit additional members to reflect the State's diverse ethnic populations and geographic regions.
7. The Panel will continue to examine the areas of domestic violence, youth aging out of foster care, DYFS structured decision making and prevention as previously identified in 2003-2004.
8. The Panel will reach out to the two other Review Panels with the intention of collaboration and to coordinate which child welfare topics are to be covered by whom, to reduce duplication of work. This Panel recommends an annual meeting among all three (3) CRPs.
9. This Panel recommends that the leadership of all three (3) CRPs meet, semi-annually.
10. This Panel will develop a checklist to track recommendations made to the State and future directions made for the Panel to ensure compliance.
11. The Panel will pursue a steady source of funds from DHS to facilitate the Panel's ability to plan and execute projects necessary to comply with its Federal and State mandates, and to improve the quality of work performed by this Panel.
12. The Panel will attempt to increase public awareness and visibility of the work and benefits of the CRP.
13. The Panel will continue to foster its relationship with the National Citizen Review Panel network.

14. The Panel will pursue CRP volunteer recognition.

15. The Panel will continue its review of the relationship between the DOE and DYFS.

Summary of DYFS Panel Hearing Dated: September 10, 2004  
From Transcription Dated: April 13, 2005

Titles of people providing testimony:

- Social worker at school for children with special needs (ages 5 to 14)
- Child therapist with St. Claires Child Abuse Treatment Center
- Camden County educator, representing NJE
- President of NJ Association for Infant Mental Health, Professor of Psychology at Richard Stockton College
- Professional under judiciary, Family Crisis (?)
- West Milford Board of Education, Student Assistant Specialist in Elementary Schools
- Morris and Sussex County Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA)
- Essex County Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA), Case Supervisor
- Janet Gould, Case supervisor with CASA
- Pamela Kerr, Hunterdon County, home schooler, private practice, domestic violence counselor
- Victor M. Solomon, Teaneck, Bergen County, teaches at UMDNJ, Director of Teaneck Counseling and Psychotherapy Center (He only inquired about educational/professional requirements of DYFS employees)
- Pam Farrell, licensed social worker in private practice in Lawrenceville, researcher with Developmental Disabilities planning Institute of NJ, member of National Association of Social Workers, serves on National lesbian Gay Issues Committee
- Ronnie Bassman-Egins, Deron School (private special ed school), New Jersey Association of School Socialworkers
- Vanette P. Rose-White, Newark Preschool Counsel, Family Worker Coordinator

**School Focused Testimony**

<b>Problem Identified</b>	<b>Suggestion</b>
Lack of partnership between schools and DYFS	Provide feedback to school officials about the plan for a child
Shut out of the process once the abuse/neglect report is made	Include school personnel during case plan and monitoring progress
Cases closed without input from school personnel who still see abuse occurring	Consult with school personnel before closing a case
Panel hearing was held while school was in session so school personnel are unable or not likely to attend	Hold hearings and conferences when school personnel are able to attend
Teen Suicide, just out of rehab, huffing	Keep school personnel informed and updated so they can implement their supports or services
This educator noted children were inappropriately placed with family members; they often know the problems of children's extended family	Consult school personnel before placing a child with an extended family member
DYFS turnover, no relationship with caseworker, no feedback	
Suicide of Robert Devine, schools want to help and need input to DYFS cases	DYFS presentations to schools and kids
Poor response time from DYFS; machine answers "leave message" or "box full" calls not returned	Prompt return of calls by caseworkers and supervisors

Upper Passaic County has one mental health agency that will take indigent, Medicaid, etc government assistance.	Identify sources for mental health needs
Schools need feedback from DYFS, especially nurses and social workers. Calls are not being returned.	Provide feedback, return calls promptly
Salary disparity between DYFS and the private sector in respect to degree/experience level	District office unaware of policy change in Trenton

### **Foster Parent Focused Testimony**

<b>Problem Identified</b>	<b>Suggestion</b>
Foster parent retention <i>[Some] Foster parents are feeling misled, left out of the process, untrained, treated like a number, feel unheard, discounted, treated rudely by their caseworker, unsupported,</i>	Prompt reimbursement of expenses Inform foster parents fully and honestly on child's true condition (sexually abused, mute, developmentally disabled, legally blind, violent, etc.) Provide training to foster parents in working with violent, sexually abused children or children that have special needs Provide therapy for all children that are removed from their homes as well as those abused and traumatized.
Children need therapy. <i>This unidentified speaker stated that just being removed from their family is "trauma" and children need therapy for that.</i>	Keep informed about case plan Return phone calls promptly Provide referrals to appropriate local providers
DYFS worker with regionalized foster care is unaware of local services DYFS caseworkers lack professionalism	Train caseworkers to dress appropriately, professionally- no t-shirts, jeans, exposed naval rings, etc. Involve workers in the recruitment and training of foster parents
Lack of continuity, caseworkers or cases transferred because of regionalized foster care	

### **Mental Health / Medical Focused Testimony**

<b>Problem Identified</b>	<b>Suggestion</b>
Starvation of children (ref: Jacksons, Viktor Matthey) DHS links to bad parenting web sites and encouraging parenting practices that are "systematically abusive" and "directed toward adopted and foster children." (Goal of these practices was "complete and instantly obedient" to parents.)	Remove harmful links. Review, evaluate and monitor links to DHS and DYFS regarding parenting, foster care, discipline, etc. Provide appropriate links proven parenting methods and information.
Upper Passaic County does not have enough mental health services for their children	Provide access to nearest services available
Lack of mental health services/resources for evaluations in Sussex County	Sussex needs a judge and more timely evaluation services
Sexual orientation programs and support groups for kids such as High Tops need more financial support	Improve gaps in services, education and training with regards to gender issues

**Family Crisis / CASA / Judicial & Other Focused Testimony**  
**Problem Identified** **Suggestion**

Difference in approach to family/teen by DHS and FCIU, changes in DHS protocol

Provide cross-training, unify approach or response to teen/family problems with Family Crisis Units with structured process so families will know where to go for help.

Sussex County does not have a family court judge, fill-in judges provide inconsistent recommendations

Appoint a Family Court Judge for Sussex County

Courts/judges inconsistent in decisions (Three different reviews, judges- no consistency)

Appoint a Family Court Judge for Sussex County or have the same judge review each case.

DYFS workers unaware “who” CASA is

Inform DYFS workers during training that CASA is there to “help”

Reform changes trickling down slowly, front line workers still have high case loads/high stress- still lack of case planning in case practice

Hire more trained workers, train current workers, get rid of workers not doing their job  
Lessen case loads so case plan is realistic and implementable.

Dos are running out of space and don’t have enough offices for supervisors to do their work.

Retrain case practice specialists, supervisors and DO managers in case planning.

Interstate Compact to place children with family members out of state takes too long

Come up with more office space

Advocate to change the Compact (Senator Tom Delay of Texas is working on this- it has passed the House)

Not enough group homes or therapeutic foster homes

Locate more group homes

Concern expressed about a broad impact law coming up about a home schooling and involvement with DYFS-stories were in the news but home schooling had no relation to the case- it [abuse/neglect] would have happened regardless.

Look at individual cases, discourage broad ban that may have no impact

More improved, effective communication on behalf of kids with regards to policy, voice of schools is disregarded

Involve schools in policy decisions

### Ethnicity

	Response Total
White/Cauc	25
Hispanic	1
African Am	5
Asian/Pacif	0
Biracial	0
Other	0
Total Resp	31
(skipped th	0

### Household Income

	Response Total
\$0-\$15,000	1
\$16,000-\$3	3
\$31,000-\$4	7
\$46,000-\$6	3
\$61,000-\$7	2
\$75,000-\$9	6
Above \$90	9
Total Resp	31
(skipped th	0

### Age

Total Resp	31
(skipped th	0

### Marital Status

	Response Total
Single	10
Married	17
Divorced/W	4
Other	0
Total Resp	31
(skipped th	0

### Number of Children

Total Resp	31
(skipped th	0

### Gender

	Response Total
Male	6
Female	25

Total Resp	31
(skipped th	0

#### City/Town

Total Resp	30
(skipped th	1

#### Primary Language

	Response Total
English	31
Spanish	0
Haitian/Cre	0
Russian	0
Other	0

Total Resp	31
(skipped th	0

	Response Total
A. Parent	6
B. Foster P	2
C. Adoptive	2
D. Client/S	0
E. Social W	1
F. Service	2
G. DYFS W	1
H. Concerr	7
I. Unfamilia	0
Other (Des	9

Total Resp	30
(skipped th	1

	Strongly Aç Agree	Disagree	N/A		Response Average
1. DYFS hç	1	8	18	1	2.63
2. DYFS st	1	16	8	3	2.28
3. I have bç	3	13	12	0	2.32
4. If you ha	1	1	7	19	2.67
5. DYFS of	2	12	12	2	2.38
6. DYFS is	2	15	10	1	2.3

7. DYFS e) 2 18 4 3 2.08

Total Resp 28  
(skipped th 3

	Excellent	Good	Average	Below Ave	Poor	N/A	Response Average
If you have	1	1	3	8	9	6	4.05

Total Resp 28  
(skipped th 3

If you were aware of or suspected abuse of a child how likely is it that you would report your concerns to

	Response Total
Highly Like	22
Somewhat	5
Unlikely	1

Total Resp 28  
(skipped th 3

If you responded "Unlikely" what factors influenced your decision?(Choose one.)

	Response Total
Concerns e	0
Past negati	0
Lack of cor	1
It is not my	0
I don't belie	0
I don't knov	0
Other (plea	0

Total Resp 1  
(skipped th 30

How likely is it that you would call DYFS if you needed help with your own children?

	Response Total
Highly Like	3
Somewhat	3
Unlikely	20

Total Resp 26  
(skipped th 5

If you responded "Unlikely" what factors influenced your decision?(Choose One)

	Response Total
Concerns e	1

Past negati	6
Lack of cor	9
I don't belie	1
Other (plea	3
Total Resp	20
(skipped th	11

If you responded "Unlikely" whom would you call for help?(Choose One)

	Response Total
Family mer	11
Friend	0
Clergy/Reli	2
Police/Law	2
A hotline	0
A medical p	1
A mental h	2
No one	0
Other (plea	2
Total Resp	20
(skipped th	11

If you responded "Highly Likely" or "Somewhat Likely" what factors influenced your decision? Please I

Total Resp	4
(skipped th	27

Please tell us in your own words what you feel can be done to improve DYFS and other child protection

Total Resp	23
(skipped th	8