

DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES

744 P Street, Sacramento, California 95814



March 27, 2006

ALL COUNTY INFORMATION NOTICE NO. I-08-06

TO: ALL COUNTY WELFARE DIRECTORS

SUBJECT: FUNDING FOR CITIZEN REVIEW PANELS

REASON FOR THIS TRANSMITTAL

- State Law Change
- Federal Law or Regulation Change
- Court Order
- Clarification Requested by
One or More Counties
- Initiated by CDSS

I am pleased to announce that the California Department of Social Services (CDSS), Office of Child Abuse Prevention (OCAP), has begun a new round of funding for Citizen Review Panels (CRPs). The OCAP will select up to three county welfare agencies and/or county welfare/nonprofit agency partnerships to implement local panels and provide them with up to \$25,000 per year for State Fiscal Year 2006-07 and SFY 07-08. In addition to these funds, selected panels that are receiving funding for the first time will be eligible for up to \$2,500 for start-up activities during the period of July 1, 2006 through September 30, 2006. Training and technical assistance will be available to support the development and ongoing operation of local panels funded by OCAP. To accommodate funding parameters, the applicant must be a county agency with responsibility for either child protective services, child welfare services (CWS), foster care, or adoptions. For public/private partnerships, the county may enter into a subcontract arrangement with the nonprofit partner that will assist in the implementation of panel activities.

In keeping with suggestions that have been made to OCAP regarding the need to assist more counties in developing CRPs, priority for funding will be given to first time applicants who demonstrate an understanding of the function of CRPs and whose application indicates that they can perform the required functions of a CRP. All funded panels are to conduct a review of some aspect of the local CWS agency; provide for public input and comment; develop recommendations for county and state government; and, develop an annual report that includes these recommendations and a description of panel activities for distribution to the State, the County, and the public at large.

The OCAP would like to fund all viable applicants, however, in order to maximize limited resources and respond to county requests for expanded participation, applicants who have received funding in the past will be given a lesser priority. The longer a panel has received funding from OCAP, the lower its priority. In evaluating applications from past recipients of funding, consideration will be given to the applicant's past performance in terms of the functions described in the paragraph above.

The CRPs bring together CWS professionals; public and nonprofit health, mental health, and substance abuse staff; child advocates and attorneys; representatives from education; former consumers of services; representatives from the CWS agency; Tribal governments; and volunteers from the public at large to review aspects of the CWS system and make recommendations that enhance the delivery of services to children and families. In this era of reform and greater accountability for CWS, CRPs can bring together local stakeholders as partners in a process of growth and development.

California's CRPs must function with a high level of autonomy. County CWS agencies must provide the panel with access to case records and appoint a designated liaison to the panel to facilitate access to these records and other resources needed by the panel to fulfill its mandate. They may provide staff support to the panel or accommodate this need indirectly. Counties are required to respond to the yearly recommendations of the panel.

The attached description provides general information about CRPs. For more information see, [Citizen Review Panels for the Child Protective Services System: Guidelines and Protocols](http://www.dss.cahw.net.gov/pdf/CitizenReviewPanelsGuidelinesandProtocols.pdf) on the CDSS' web site <http://www.dss.cahw.net.gov/pdf/CitizenReviewPanelsGuidelinesandProtocols.pdf> .

Interested county welfare agencies and county welfare/nonprofit agency partnerships must complete and **submit the attached application by April 28, 2006**. The grant awards will be announced on May 15, 2006. For counties submitting an application as a public/private partnership, the application must be signed by both the county agency and the nonprofit partner.

Any additional questions that you might have can be directed to Jacquelyn Sneed of my staff at Jacquelyn.Sneed@dss.ca.gov .

Sincerely,

Original Document Signed By

MARY L. AULT
Deputy Director
Children and Family Services Division

Attachments

California Department of Social Services (CDSS)
Office of Child Abuse Prevention (OCAP)
March 20, 2006

**Citizen Review Panel (CRP)
Program Description**

Under the Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (CAPTA), each state, in order to receive funding under the Child Abuse and Neglect Prevention and Treatment State Grants Program, must establish CRPs. Federal law authorizes these panels to evaluate the policies, procedures, and practices of State and local child welfare agencies. Panels evaluate the extent to which these agencies are effectively discharging their child protection responsibilities in accordance with the State's child protective services (CPS) system plan, which is required for funding under CAPTA and the specific child protection standards which are contained in CAPTA. Panels may review any other criteria that they consider important to ensure the protection of children including the extent to which the State CPS system is coordinated with the title IV-E foster care and adoption assistance programs of the Social Security Act, and the child fatalities and near fatalities in the State.

In California, meeting these federal requirements means that the State's CRPs evaluate the activities of the CPS system in their respective counties in light of:

- The State's CAPTA Plan (Child Abuse Prevention)
- The State's IV-B and IV-E Plans (Child Welfare Services, Foster Care and Adoptions)

They may review the system's coordination with Child Death Review Teams, review child fatalities and near fatalities and evaluate other areas they deem relevant.

Panel membership brings together:

- Volunteers
- Former consumers of services
- Foster Parents
- Court-appointed special advocates
- Children's attorneys
- Law enforcement personnel
- Health and mental health professionals

- Substance abuse professionals
- Representatives from elementary and secondary education
- Representatives from higher education
- Mandated reporters
- Representatives of Tribal governments
- Other persons with an interest in Child Welfare Services (CWS)

The CDSS/OCAP will fund three CRPs in State Fiscal Years 2006-2007 and 2007-2008. Counties may apply for up to \$25,000 for each fiscal year.

All panels will review and evaluate the policies, procedures and practices of the county agency that has responsibility for either CPS, CWS, foster care, or adoptions. Panels may evaluate linkages that exist between this primary agency and the other governmental agencies and community based organizations that deliver child protection, child welfare, and family support services.

Within the past decade, the movements to have CWS systems become more goal and outcome oriented gained momentum. This means that the processes and activities of CWS systems (i.e., court hearings, social worker visits, case planning etc.), are not ends in themselves but means to achieve specific goals that result in positive outcomes for children and their families. While CWS agencies have always been driven by the goal of child safety, the menu of goals with which they must concern themselves has expanded. Below are the goals which are contained in California's Child and Family Services IV-B plan for 2005-2009 and the Annual Progress and Services Report for 2004-2005 which updates the IV-B Plan for the years 2000-2004. The IV-B plan is the State's primary planning document for child protection, child welfare services, foster care, adoptions, and child abuse prevention. These goals are:

- Ensure the Safety of Children
- Ensure Permanence for Children
- Promote the Well-Being of Children and Families
- Facilitate Quality Services for Children and Families
- Ensure Safe, Stable, and Nurturing Families for Children

OCAP is committed to supporting CRPs in becoming creative problem solving bodies that:

- Conduct thorough reviews of issues pertaining to the CWS system
- Perform comprehensive analyses of data
- Recommend effective solutions that support children and families, enhance agency staff, and empower communities

OCAP will retain a training and technical assistance consultant who will conduct:

- An orientation for local panels
- County-level training that will address team building, the structure and function of the CPS/CWS system, the organizational structure of the panel, panel work plans and other topics identified by the local panels
- Orientation and technical assistance activities for county staff who are liaisons to the panels

During each year of the funding cycle, each panel is required to:

- Conduct ten monthly meetings
- Identify a staff person who will be a liaison to the CDSS/OCAP and who will provide support to the panel
- Send representatives from the local panel and the county liaison to project meetings that will be held in the winter of 2007 and winter of 2008
- Conduct a review of some function of the local CWS agency in terms of its policies, procedures, and practices
- Provide for public outreach and comment in order to assess the impact of current policies, procedures, and practices upon children and families in the community and to carry out its review function

- Make available to the State, the County, and the public an annual report that contains a summary of its activities and recommendations to improve CWS at the state and local levels. State and county CWS departments will have six months to respond to recommendations from the panels

During the initial year of the funding cycle, county liaisons will begin preparing for panel activity in July of 2006 so that the panels can be seated and begin their first year activities by October 1, 2006 and complete them by September 30, 2007. The first step in this process is to attend a county liaison orientation in July 2006. Second year activities will begin on October 1, 2007 and end on September 30, 2008. Annual reports are due on October 31st of both years.

To be considered for funding, county child welfare services agencies must complete the enclosed application and submit it to:

Jacquelyn Sneed, Program Consultant
California Department of Social Services
Office of Child Abuse Prevention
744 P Street, MS 11-82
Sacramento, CA 95814

E-mail submissions must be sent to Jacquelyn Sneed at jacquelyn.sneed@dss.ca.gov and all submissions **must be received no later than April 28, 2006 at 4:00 pm.**

APPLICATION

Please complete the following questions and submit the completed application to the California Department of Social Services (CDSS), Office of Child Abuse Prevention (OCAP) no later than **4:00 PM, April 28, 2006**. This application may be e-mailed to Jacquelyn.Sneed@dss.ca.gov; or hand-delivered or mailed to:

Jacquelyn Sneed, Program Consultant
California Department of Social Services
Office of Child Abuse Prevention
744 P Street, MS 11-82
Sacramento, CA 95814

Should you have questions, please contact Jacquelyn Sneed by e-mail at Jacquelyn.Sneed@dss.ca.gov by **April 7, 2006**.

The selection process will be based on points as indicated below and on the following:

- a. First time applicants will be given the highest priority.
- b. Applicants who have received funding in the past will be given a lesser priority. The longer a panel has received funding from OCAP, the lower its priority. In evaluating applications from past recipients of funding, consideration will be given to the applicant's past performance in terms of the functions described in the Citizen Review Panel (CRP) Program Description.

Please complete the following questions.

1. Applicant Information (5 points)

- a. Name of the county child welfare agency and nonprofit agency (if applicable):
- b. Address and telephone number of the county agency and the nonprofit agency (if applicable):
- c. Name, telephone number, and e-mail address of a county contact person:
- d. Discuss the role that a CRP will fulfill in your county:
- e. Attach documentation that addresses the mission, programs, and budget of the nonprofit agency (if applicable).

- f. Has your county received funding from CDSS/OCAP to operate a CRP in the past? If so, what was the first year that funding was received? How many total years has the county received funding?

2. Composition of the Panel (25 points)

- a. Please address how you will recruit members for the panel. List the agencies and organizations from which you will draw the membership and discuss how you will recruit from the public at large, if you intend to do so:
- b. What do the agencies listed in “a” above see as the most pressing child welfare issues in your county?
- c. What does the county consider to be the most pressing child welfare issues at this time?
- d. How will you ensure that the panel is diverse and that it contains representatives from groups that are overrepresented in the child welfare system?
- e. Will your panel be selected and prepared to meet by October 2, 2006?

3. Panel Support (20 points):

County CWS agencies or their contractors are expected to provide “start-up” support to the local CRPs. While the requirement that panels be provided with staff support is on-going, it is expected that panels will function with increasing autonomy after the panel is selected, oriented and trained. Orientation and training resources, including the “Quick Start Process,” may be found in the Training Resource Manual at <http://www.familyresourcecenters.net/pdf/crpmanual.pdf>. The document “*Citizen Review Panels for Child Protective Services, Guidelines and Protocols*,” provides valuable information on the role and function of CRPs. It can be found at <http://www.dss.cahwnet.gov/pdf/CitizenReviewPanelsGuidelinesandProtocols.pdf>

The county is required to ensure that panels have access to information on cases that the panel desires to review and to provide the panel with staff assistance for the performance of its duties. Additionally, it is expected that the county will provide other types of support such as meeting space, training and assistance with the distribution of annual reports.

- a. Please describe the type of support that will be provided to your panel.

4. Panel Work Plan (20 points)

Panels are required to conduct a review of some aspect of the policy, procedures, and practices of the CWS agency. For example, the panel may choose to examine how the agency is handling re-entries into foster care, independent living cases, and emergency response operations, etc.

- a. How will you assist the panel in determining what aspect of the CWS agency's policies, practices, and procedures it will review?
- b. What sources of data will be available to your panel?
- c. How will the panel access case information and information on departmental policies, practices and procedures?

5. Public Input (10 points)

Federal law requires each CRP to provide for public outreach and comment in order to assess the impact of current procedures and practices (of the CWS agency) upon children and families in the community. Some examples of how public outreach and comment may be obtained are through community meetings and by posting documents and/or questions to the web and then inviting comment.

- a. Please describe the ways by which the panel can obtain public input and how the county can support public input processes.

6. Recommendations: (10 points)

Each panel is required by federal law to prepare an annual report that summarizes its activities and contains its recommendations on improving the CWS system at the State and local levels. The annual report containing these recommendations must be sent to OCAP by October 31 of each year; the State will respond to the recommendations by May 1st of the following year. The local CWS agency must also respond to these recommendations by May 1st.

- a. What will be the process of the CWS agency in responding to these recommendations?

- b. Will the CWS agency review and comment upon the panel's recommendations within six months of receiving them?

- c. How will the CWS agency keep the panel apprised of the progress that it is making in implementing those recommendations that it agrees to implement?

7. Panel Performance (10 points)

- a. How will the county assist the panel in the assessment of its performance?

I certify that the above statements are true and correct to the best of my knowledge.

County Welfare Director

**Director, Nonprofit Agency
(If applicable)**

Date _____

Date _____