INTRODUCTION

The Prevention and Early Intervention (PEI) Committee of the California Child Welfare Council (CWC) became a statewide Citizen’s Review Panel (CRP) in December 2013. The PEI Committee was selected as the statewide CRP because it meets the requirements of the federal Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (CAPTA), by having a broad range of membership, regularly reviewing child welfare practices, and is charged with making advisory recommendations for improvement to the California Child Welfare Council, and thus to the Department of Social Services (CDSS), a key member. Becoming a statewide Citizen’s Review Panel has brought the added value of focusing advisory recommendations through the lens of prevention.

This Orientation Manual was written to assist with:

- Role orientation for members of the California Prevention and Early Intervention Statewide Citizen’s Review Panel (PEI-CRP) of the Child Welfare Council
-Specification of the relationship between the California Child Welfare Council and PEI-CRP
-Clarifying guidelines for PEI-CRP activities and decisional processes
-Developing and organizing PEI-CRP policy review activities

Resources have been included that may be utilized to train the PEI-CRP members as well as to assist the CRP in connecting to various resource avenues that may be useful during the course of their work. It does not provide an overview of the California Child Welfare System, as it is assumed that members will already have some familiarity with the system.

For members interested in deepening their knowledge of the system, a resource list has been provided that includes an introduction to the child welfare system in California, its data collection mechanisms, current system improvement processes and the laws and regulations pertaining to child welfare. As the focus of the California PEI-CRP will be on the prevention and early intervention of child abuse and neglect, a few key prevention resources are also included.
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CITIZENS REVIEW PANEL OVERVIEW

The Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (CAPTA) authorizes federal funding to states in support of prevention, assessment, investigation, prosecution, and treatment activities. CAPTA also lays out requirements states must meet in order to maintain eligibility for federal funding. The Office of Child Abuse Prevention administers CAPTA funding and oversees the implementation of the Act for the California Department of Social Services.

CAPTA allows the federal government to provide leadership and assist communities in their child and family protection efforts by:

- promoting coordinated planning among all levels of government
- generating and sharing knowledge relevant to child and family protection, including the development of models for service delivery
- strengthening the capacity of states to assist communities in prevention efforts
- allocating financial resources to assist states in implementing community plans
- helping communities to carry out their child and family protection plans by promoting the competence of professional, paraprofessional, and volunteer resources
- providing leadership to end the abuse and neglect of the nation’s children and youth
- establishing Citizen Review Panels as a mechanism for ensuring states and communities are meeting their established goals for children and families

CAPTA provides an important source of funding for child welfare agencies, as well as funding for innovative dependency court programs. Amendments have been made to expand and refine the law with each reauthorization. CAPTA, particularly through its state grant eligibility requirements, has influenced law, policy and practice changes in state and county child protective services (CPS) for 36 years.

CITIZEN REVIEW PANELS

Citizens Review Panels (CRPs) for Child Welfare are groups of citizen-volunteers who are federally authorized through the CAPTA legislation to conduct an evaluation of their state’s child protective services agency. CRPs were established as a requirement in the 1996 CAPTA reauthorization. The 2003 and 2010 CAPTA reauthorizations confirmed the importance of Citizen’s Review Panels and added requirements and specificity. The Congress established Citizen Review Panels to evaluate the extent to which states are meeting the goals of protecting children and their responsibilities related to the State Plan. Citizen Review Panels are required to review the state’s CAPTA Plan, which includes the child abuse and neglect reporting system, child welfare system, and confidentiality. The panels are also charged with examining the policies, procedures, and practices of state and local agencies to evaluate the extent to which child protection system agencies are effectively meeting their child protection responsibilities. They may also review additional policies, procedures, and practices that they consider important to ensure the protection of children.

Specifically, CAPTA requirements state that each Citizen Review Panel must:

Examine the policies, procedures and practices of state and local agencies to evaluate the extent to which the agencies are effectively discharging their child protection responsibilities (Section 106 (c)(4)(A));
Provide for public outreach and comment in order to assess the impact of current procedures and practices upon children and families in the community (Section 106 (c)(4)(C)); and

Make recommendations to the state and public on improving the child protection services system at the state and local levels. The appropriate state agency is to respond to the panel and state and local child protective services agencies in writing no later than six months after the panel recommendations are submitted. The state agency’s response must include a description of whether or how the state will incorporate the recommendations of the panel (where appropriate) to make measurable progress in improving the state and local child protection systems (Section 106 (c)(6)).

While CAPTA requires every state to convene Citizen Review Panels, it also allows a great deal of flexibility in terms of focus and structure. In New York, for example, the CRP is appointed by the governor and state legislature. In Connecticut, two different entities coordinate CRPs: the State Advisory Council on Children and Families (SACS), which is legislatively mandated by the State to meet on a quarterly basis; and a statewide Family Advocacy Organization for Children’s Mental Health, comprised of many parent leaders, which meets according to CRP guidelines without State mandates. In North Carolina, every county has a Community Child Protective Team which also serves as their Citizen Review Panel. Information about CRPs across the United States is available at the Citizen Review Virtual Community http://www.uky.edu/SocialWork/crp/.

CALIFORNIA’S CITIZEN REVIEW PANELS
California’s state-supervised child welfare system is administered at the local level by 58 counties, each governed by a county board of supervisors. Funding for child welfare services is a combination of federal, state, and county resources. Most states, including California, are required to have three Citizen Review Panels based on population. Over the past 15 years, California has had between three and five county level panels. While these local panels have had significant impact on the counties with a CRP, a Citizen Review Panel has never existed at the state level that could assist with providing recommendations that could impact the overall child welfare system in California.

Because of their leadership role in administering CAPTA for the California Department of Social Services, in June 2013 the Office of Child Abuse Prevention committed to establishing a new statewide Citizen Review Panel and documented their intent in the Annual Progress and Services Report (APSR) on CAPTA activities. With a goal of reducing duplication of efforts and maximizing access to key state-level decision makers, OCAP sought to engage an existing statewide stakeholder group as the California statewide Citizen’s Review Panel. Since the state already has processes and systems in place for Child Death Review, Program Improvement Plan (PIP) review, Quality Review Improvement System (QRIS), and evaluation, these functions are not embedded in CRPs. Also, among the various types of state review of child welfare systems, there is no community based process for reviewing prevention and early intervention services. With this in mind, OCAP, in consultation with the Child Welfare Council, proposed integration of the responsibilities of a Citizen’s Review Panel into the Child Welfare Council’s Prevention and Early Intervention Committee.
Based on an analysis of four options outlined in the 2011-12 APSR, OCAP made the determination that the existing Prevention and Early Intervention Committee (PEI) of the California Child Welfare Council (CWC) is well suited to meet the needs of California. In October 2013 the CDSS/OCAP engaged the Council to explore their willingness and ability of the Prevention and Early Intervention Committee to assume the statewide CRP role. The Statewide CRP was established in December 2013 as the Prevention and Early Intervention Subcommittee of the California Child Welfare Council. The PEI-CRP now joins with the two local panels in San Mateo County and Ventura County, as the third Panel for California.

**OBJECTIVES OF THE PEI-CRP**

The objectives of the statewide Prevention and Early Intervention Citizen's Review Panel are:

1. To assist the state child protective services system to evaluate the extent to which it is fulfilling its responsibilities in accordance with the state Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (CAPTA) plan.

2. To prepare and make available to the public an annual report containing a summary of the activities of the Citizen's Review Panel.

3. To review the consistency of child welfare practices and compliance with stated policies.

4. To analyze trends, provide valuable insights that those working within the system might miss, and provide feedback on what is and what is not working.

5. To make data-driven advisory recommendations for policy changes as needed.

6. To provide outside validation of the achievements of the system and the efforts of those working in the system.

7. To increase community understanding, ownership and investment in child welfare.

8. To promote cooperation among community resources and child welfare services.

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

**RELATIONSHIP TO THE CALIFORNIA CHILD WELFARE COUNCIL**

The California Child Welfare Council (Council) was established as a statewide multidisciplinary advisory body by the Child Welfare Leadership and Accountability Act of 2006. It is responsible for improving services to children and families in the child welfare system, particularly emphasizing collaboration among multiple agencies and the courts. It is also charged with reporting on the extent to which child welfare programs and the courts are responsive to the needs of children in their joint care.
The Council meets quarterly under the leadership of its Co-Chairs: (1) the Secretary of the California Health and Human Services Agency, and (2) Chief Justice of the California Supreme Court or designee. The Council meets quarterly and is comprised of 54 members representing a broad spectrum of agencies, advocates and consumers involved in the child welfare system who address issues from a statewide perspective, consistent with CAPTA requirements. The Council is structured to encourage participation by Council members and all other stakeholders, both during these quarterly meetings and in between through standing committees and task forces. The Council’s Prevention and Early Intervention Committee identifies and promotes services and support systems that prevent the need for families to enter the child welfare system.

The full Council and its committees and task forces must all operate in accordance with the California Child Welfare Council Operations Manual, June 2012. The Operations Manual lays out the Council’s vision, mission and guiding principles. It also outlines the decision-making process to be used, as well as challenge criteria. The PEI-CRP will utilize the challenge criteria in selecting outcome areas for policy review. Recommendations formulated by the PEI-CRP in accordance with each policy review cycle will be considered advisory to both the Council and CDSS/OCAP.

**RELATIONSHIP TO THE OFFICE OF CHILD ABUSE PREVENTION (OCAP)**

OCAP has the primary responsibility for the development, on-going support and evaluation of California’s Citizen’s Review Panels. The state and county-level CRP’s are required to submit an annual report to OCAP as well as to apprise OCAP of progress and challenges. OCAP staff and/or consultants are available to provide technical assistance upon request.

OCAP staff members prepare the Citizen Review Panel Annual Report to the federal government, manage the CRP budgetary process and arrange training and technical assistance to county and state panels. OCAP keeps panels updated on legislative changes affecting CRP’s and provides information on organizational and programmatic updates within the state’s child welfare system.

**CALIFORNIA’S STATEWIDE PEI-CRP ORGANIZATION AND OPERATIONS**

The Prevention and Early Intervention Committee has incorporated the responsibilities of a statewide Citizen’s Review Panel inclusive of:

- Promoting the consideration of policies, practices and procedures, with a specific focus on prevention.
- Meeting and exceeding CRP requirements for membership, assuring informed and meaningful review.
- Tapping into expertise of the PEI committee to avoid duplication and promote integration of systems.
- Maintaining a broad policy perspective so that recommendations may result in statewide impact.
MEMBERSHIP
CAPTA requires CRPs to include “volunteer members who are broadly representative of the community in which the panel is established, including members who have expertise in the prevention and treatment of child abuse and neglect”. Potential members, for the PEI-CRP will be identified from their participation as members of the California Child Welfare Council or other community or organizational entities with interest and concerns about the child welfare system in California. Once identified, a potential member will be engaged in a brief discussion with the PEI-CRP Chair to determine interest, fit, and ability to meet participation requirements. Individuals with interest in joining the PEI-CRP may self-identify, and will be vetted by the Chair. The PEI-CRP Chair will review membership criteria and discuss with OCAP partners prior to extending panel membership in writing.

MEMBERSHIP CRITERIA
Members of the PEI-CRP must sign a letter of commitment indicating they are:

1. Knowledgeable (or becoming knowledgeable) of the child welfare system in California

2. Willing to actively fulfill roles and responsibilities for a term of no less than two years

3. Agree to maintain confidentiality as required

Panel members and nominees for membership shall disclose any personal or professional relationships that may represent a conflict of interest to the CRP. If a conflict of interest arises in the course of service on the Panel it should be disclosed to the chair as soon as it is recognized.

GENERAL ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES
The roles and responsibilities of Citizen’s Review Panels are defined by law as well as by the needs of individual states. The extent and quantity of what is reviewed is variable, thus allowing for flexibility. Panels are required to review the state’s CAPTA Plan, which includes the child abuse and neglect reporting system, child welfare system, and confidentiality. Panels are also charged with examining the policies, procedures, and practices of state and local agencies to evaluate the extent to which child protection system agencies are effectively meeting their child protection responsibilities. CRPs may also review additional policies, procedures, and practices that they consider important to ensure the protection of children.

CRPs are required to maintain confidentiality whenever case information is shared and are also required to conduct public outreach to gain additional input, which is done in partnership with the Office of Child Abuse Prevention.

Panels have the capacity to promote creative problem solving with the involvement of community members who represent a variety of disciplines and perspectives. In addition, panels have the potential to bring about system change as they recommend needed changes, highlight successes and encourage creative collaborations among child welfare systems, other service delivery systems and community members.
SPECIFIC RESPONSIBILITIES FOR CALIFORNIA’S PEI-CRP

California’s statewide CRP is committed to meeting and exceeding the minimum requirements, particularly in light of its dual role as the Council’s Prevention and Early Intervention Committee. Specific responsibilities include:

1. **Attend Quarterly Meetings (Minimum):** Per CAPTA, CRPs are required to meet at least quarterly. Members must attend, in person or via teleconference, all scheduled meetings. Members who miss two consecutive meetings without notice to the Chair may be contacted to assess their ongoing interest and ability to serve and/or be dismissed from the CRP.

2. **Bring Working Knowledge of CWS:** Members are required to have (or gain) a working knowledge of the California Child Welfare System (resources to orient members to the system are included in the reference section of this document).

3. **Follow Policy Review Criteria:** Adhere to the policy review criteria as described in this document, as well as the Child Welfare Council Operations Manual, June 2012.

4. **Inform Prevention-Focused Recommendations:** Based on outcome areas selected for policy review, participate in researching and developing advisory recommendations aligned with prevention and early intervention aspects of the California Child Welfare System.

5. **Maintain Confidentiality:** Sign and adhere to the confidentiality agreement which is included in sign-in sheet. (Members joining via teleconference will be asked for a verbal acknowledgement.)

6. **Provide Input into Annual Report:** Assist with development of an annual report to the California Department of Social Services (CDSS) to present findings. Help disseminate to partners and other interested individuals.

7. **Follow Up with OCAP:** Discuss CDSS’s response to PEI-CRP annual report and follow up as needed.

PEI-CRP STRUCTURE

The PEI-CRP is a committee of the California Child Welfare Council and will adhere to the guidelines and processes described in the California Child Welfare Council’s Operations Manual, June 2012. Leadership will be provided by at least one chair (co-chairs or a chair and co-chair are encouraged). The chair of the PEI-CRP is appointed by the Co-Chairs of the California Child Welfare Council.

Discussion Highlights from the PEI-CRP meetings will be available within one month of each meeting and will be posted on the Council’s website, along with the Annual Report. The PEI-CRP will regularly review the impact of its work. Consistent with the national CRP model, the PEI-CRP will consider outcomes achieved in terms of results, process, and relationships.
SAMPLE EVALUATION CRITERIA

• Results (Outcomes)
  • Has CDSS indicated they will act on one or more recommendations?
  • Has/will that action lead to better outcomes for families?
  • Are children and families better served as a result of action on the PEI-CRPs recommendations?
  • Is this result attributable to the work of the PEI-CRP?

• Process
  • Were recommendations adequately researched and well-thought out?
  • Do the current recommendations fit within a broad, cross-systems framework?
  • Do the recommendations bring attention to systemic factors that could be leveraged or improved?

• Relationship
  • Is there a collaborative relationship between the PEI-CRP and CDSS/OCAP?
  • Is the relationship mutually respectful?
  • Is the joint work of CDSS/OCAP and the PEI-CRP considered by the Child Welfare Council and other partners?
  • Were the recommendations reached by working together to identify solutions?

PEI-CRP DECISION-MAKING PROCESS
As specified in the California Child Welfare Council’s Operations Manual, June 2012 the PEI-CRP works through a consensus process whenever possible for making advisory recommendations. This means that all members of the panel agree with a particular action to the degree that they will not take any action to block or undermine its implementation. If consensus is not possible, the Chair, in consultation with OCAP partners, will make the decision and note opposing viewpoints.

POLICY REVIEW AND RECOMMENDATION PROCESS
The policy review and recommendation process is based on an annual rotating cycle and can be modified as required to align with priorities of the Child Welfare Council and PEI Committee, as informed by OCAP staff. It begins in June with review of the state’s CAPTA Plan which informs identification of a priority outcome area(s) by September. Policy review is initiated as soon as an outcome area is identified. Preliminary findings are presented to the Child Welfare Council in December, and recommendations are finalized in the Annual Report submitted to the California Department of Social Services, Office of Child Abuse Prevention by the following March.
The following process will be used for selecting and reviewing key child welfare policies by the PEI-CRP:

1. **Review:** Annual review of California’s CAPTA Plan, Child Welfare Services IVB Plan, and other plans (such as the Program Improvement Plan) that include proposed child welfare improvements and identify potential priority outcome(s) and related policies for review.

2. **Conduct/Update Environmental Scan:** An environmental scan will be conducted statewide every 3 – 5 years with annual updates. An environmental scan is intended to surface opportunities for action and challenges inherent in the state’s child welfare system. This may include a review of existing national, state and select local CWS standards, policies and procedures related to the outcome area. It also involves identifying current statewide efforts related to the outcome to discover areas for alignment.

3. **Select Priority Outcome Area(s) for Policy Review:** Based on prior review and environmental scan, one or more outcome areas will be selected by the Citizen Review Panel to examine.

4. **Identify sources of information:** Sources related to the outcome will be identified by the CRP to assist with the examination of identified outcomes. This may include some or all of the following:
   - Relevant statewide policies and procedures related to the priority outcome
   - Statewide data management system (CWS/CMS)
   - Quality assurance system
   - Stakeholders’ interviews (e.g. for “practice” information)
5. **Secure and review pertinent sources of information:** Thorough review of identified sources of information by CRP members to ensure all relevant data, legislation, and reports are incorporated into any recommendations developed. This may require the scheduling of additional meetings and/or teleconferences.

6. **Develop recommendations to CDSS regarding the selected outcome(s):** This step will involve providing clear statement of findings, including outcome indicators; and proposed timeline for implementation, if appropriate. Engaging in a regular communication process between the PEI-CRP and OCAP to ensure feedback throughout the process regarding implementation of the CRP recommendations will be necessary.

7. **Develop annual report:** An annual report will be developed based on PEI-CRP recommendations, consistent with CAPTA guidelines. The annual report is a summary of the activities of the panel and considerations to improve the child protective services system at the state level.

8. **Present findings to the Child Welfare Council:** The annual report will be submitted to the Child Welfare Council for review and discussion. This step ensures broad input from the full representation of the Council as a means of securing additional perspective from stakeholders and the public at large. (Per Bagley-Keene, information presented to the Council is posted ten days in advance of quarterly meetings and is thus subject to public review.)
9. **Forward Annual Report to the Office of Child Abuse Prevention:** The annual report will be submitted to OCAP, following review and input by the Child Welfare Council. As the annual report is a key product of the panel, it is recommended that it be widely distributed. Within six months of receipt of report, OCAP will provide a written response that describes whether or how the State will incorporate the recommendations of the panel and provides the panel with staff assistance for the further performance of the duties of the panel.

10. **Assist with implementation of recommendations:** Based on OCAP’s response, the CRP will continue to work with the State to assist with implementation of recommendations and/or addressing challenges to their implementation.

Choose the next priority outcome/policy review focus and repeat the process.

**CRITERIA FOR SELECTING POLICIES TO REVIEW**

The outcome area(s) selected by the PEI-CRP becomes the focus of policy review. The following criteria is based on the Council’s “Challenge Criteria” and will be utilized to assist with the selection and to ensure an effective, implementable focus:

- The proposed outcome area is one of the identified priority areas for the state.
- The outcome area represents an urgent priority (short-term or long-term) upon which the CDSS/OCAP could have a positive impact and which could be realistically initiated within the next 12 to 24 months.
- The proposed outcome area supports the State’s work in meeting Federal and State child welfare/foster care system outcomes.
- The proposed outcome area is not being addressed at a statewide level outside the PEI-CRP, or the PEI-CRP will identify any groups that already have addressed or are addressing this challenge where the PEI-CRP could glean lessons learned, avoid duplication of effort, or build on existing work.
- The proposed outcome area falls within one of the thirteen areas initially identified under AB 2216 as requiring Council focus, summarized below:

a. **Monitor and Report:** The Council is to work closely with the Secretary of California Health and Human Services and the Chief Justice’s designee as Co-Chair in reviewing and reporting on issues related to policies for the effective administration of the child welfare and foster care programs and judicial processes. The Council is to consider policy recommendations regarding foster youth and their families about the effectiveness and quality of program services and judicial processes, and help ensure that the interests of foster youth are adequately addressed in all policy development. From time to time, the Council may review statutory provisions related to child welfare and foster care programs and the courts, and report on the timeliness and consistency of the implementation.
b. **Coordination & Collaboration:** This area of focus involves increasing collaboration and coordination between county agencies, state agencies, federal agencies, the courts, community-based agencies and other key partners. The goal is to ensure that all state child welfare, foster care and judicial funding and services for children, youth, and families is coordinated to eliminate fragmentation and duplication of services so that children and their families benefit from integrated multiagency services. This area of focus also extends to coordinating available services for former foster youth and improving outreach efforts to those youth and their families.

c. **Quality Assurance:** The Council is charged with working to increase the quality, appropriateness, and effectiveness of program services and judicial processes delivered to children, youth, and families who would benefit from integrated multiagency services to achieve better outcomes for these children, youth, and families. This may include making recommendations to modify program practices and court processes, rate structures, and other system changes needed to promote and support relative caregivers, family foster parents, therapeutic placements, and other placements for children who cannot remain in the family home. Also the Council is to monitor the adequacy of resources necessary for the implementation of existing programs and court processes, and the prioritization of program and judicial responsibilities.

d. **Uniformity with Flexibility:** The primary task under this area of focus is to promote consistent program and judicial excellence across counties while allowing for the demographic, geographic, and financial diversity among the counties.

e. **Data Linkage and Information Sharing:** The Council has a distinct role in helping to develop data and information sharing agreements and protocols for the exchange of data across program and court systems that are providing services to children and families in the child welfare system.

The Chair will lead the PEI-CRP in a rigorous discussion and analysis of potential outcome areas for policy review, utilizing the criteria for selection outlined in this document. Members of the PEI-CRP will be asked to indicate their preferences for number and content of outcome areas for review, with the Chair making the final determination on number of policy reviews to be undertaken in a given cycle. The Chair will also hold final the decision as to which outcome area(s) to focus policy review on, subject to discussion with the PEI-CRP as indicated.

Similarly, the Chair will engage the PEI-CRP in developing advisory recommendations to CDSS/OCAP based on policy review. Final recommendations will be based on consensus, meaning that all members of the panel agree with a particular action to the degree that they will not take any action to block or undermine its implementation. If consensus is not possible, the Chair, in consultation with OCAP partners, will make the decision and note opposing viewpoints.
This document outlines the mission, vision, and values of the California Child Welfare Council. It also lays out the challenge criteria and decision-making process to be used by all Council structures.

A diagram of federal child welfare outcomes and their relationship to the Child Welfare Council and CDSS.

Provides a concise overview of the public institutions, laws, funding streams, and key issues that one must understand to navigate, serve, and improve California's child welfare system.

Overview of the purpose and history of CAPTA legislation.

Details accomplishments implemented through CAPTA planning.

Outlines California's priorities for child welfare system improvement and prevention activities.

Citizen Review Panel virtual community hosted by the University of Kentucky.

The mission of the California Evidence-Based Clearinghouse for Child Welfare (CEBC) is to advance the effective implementation of evidence-based practices for children and families involved with the child welfare system. The primary goal of this website is to provide a searchable database of programs that can be utilized by professionals that serve children and families involved with the child welfare system. Each program description contains easily accessible and vital information, including, at a minimum, a CEBC Scientific Rating, citations and summaries of relevant published peer-reviewed research studies conducted on the program, a brief description of the program, and training and contact information.

In 2011, the Prevention and Early Intervention Project conducted a statewide assessment of child abuse and neglect prevention and early intervention efforts across California.

The purpose of the assessment was to assist the California Department of Social Services, Office of Child Abuse Prevention (OCAP) in implementing Strengthening Families™ and integrating county prevention plans into the Outcomes and Accountability System. We completed a statewide survey of child abuse prevention partners and conducted focus groups in nineteen California counties. The findings of the survey and the focus groups were then discussed with key stakeholders across the state in a series of in-depth interviews. The findings of the survey, focus groups and interviews formed the basis for a final report which outlined results and recommendations for the field.