




B. J. Walker, Commissioner

Georgia Department of Human Resources • Division of Family and Children Services • Mark A. Washington, Assistant Commissioner
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December 22, 2009

MEMORANDUM

TO: Citizen Review Panel Steering Committee Chairs

FROM: Mark A. Washington, Assistant Commissioner 

RE: CAPTA Citizen Review Panel
FY2008 Annual Report and Panel Recommendations

The Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (CAPTA) requires that all states establish Citizen Review Panels to review the compliance of state and local child protective service agencies in the discharge of their duties. Georgia is fortunate to have three entities that have assumed this responsibility, the Child Fatality Review Panel, Children's Justice Act Advisory Committee and the Child Protective Services Advisory Committee, to satisfy this federal requirement. The purpose of this communication is to acknowledge the work of the panels and to describe whether or how the state will incorporate the CRP recommendations to make measurable progress in improving the state and local child protection system

The mission of Georgia's Citizen Review Panels (CRP) is to assure that children and families in the community are provided the best possible services within the framework of available resources and that children are protected from maltreatment. This mission, which is shared by DFCS, can only be achieved when the broader community has a better understanding of and voice in:

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

Georgia Citizen Review Panel – FY 2008 Activities and Recommendations:

The activities and recommendations provided by each of Georgia's Citizen Review Panels have been helpful in improving interagency collaboration and services to children and families throughout the state. We commend the dedication and commitment demonstrated by the panel membership. The coordination of activities among the three panels has provided a unique opportunity for inter-panel collaboration to identify shared priorities and goals, support collective objectives and coordinate activities and planning with Georgia's child welfare agency.

Representation from each panel at the national CRP conference provided additional insight into the role, opportunities and potential for significant contribution at both the state and national level. A detailed description of the panel activities are described in the FY2008 Annual Report.

Key CRP Recommendations: The state has incorporated a number of CRP recommendations into ongoing efforts to make measurable progress in improving our state and local child protection systems. Specific CRP Panel recommendations and the state response follow:

CRP Recommendation #1: **Develop and implement statewide policy, consistent practice models and minimum standards/guidelines for an effective alternative response system that includes:**

- **Best practice family support and early intervention strategies**
- **An evaluation component to monitor outcomes, assess effectiveness and track results;**
- **An allocation plan that provides for sufficient resources to support the array of services necessary to fully implement and support an effective alternative/early intervention response system.**

State Response to Recommendation #1:

- *The state Policy and Program Development (PPD) Unit has developed draft diversion policy which has been shared with Division leadership for review and approval.*
- *The state will obtain consultation from subject matter experts to accomplish the following objectives:*
 - *Engage in ongoing discussions with external and internal stakeholders the benefits in using Diversion as a mechanism toward building a more comprehensive differential response system*
 - *Assess current practice and solicit input regarding how a more fully developed differential response system that begins with Diversion can integrate with the family centered practice model and support the CFSR PIP.*
 - *Make recommendations based on assessment regarding external stakeholder, legislative and county involvement that will support the future development for a differential response system*
 - *Develop broad recommendations for practice guidelines/structure/training for a comprehensive differential response system- consultative in nature and not policy*
 - *Recommend a timeline and strategy for statewide implementation of differential response system*
 - *Maintain continuous contact with leadership at DFCS to apprise of progress and schedule monthly de-briefings.*
- *Initial feedback from the field indicates a desire to retain flexibility in the local diversion protocols and strategies and ensure policies are not overly restrictive for the sake of uniformity.*
- *UGA Carl Vincent Institute has conducted a Diversion Study to assess Georgia's current Diversion protocols and practices and provide a set of recommendations for improvement. Findings from this study are being reviewed for incorporation into policy.*

- *Data Analysis and Reporting (DAR) is tracking the Number and Disposition of Child Abuse and Neglect Reports by month, including those screened out and diverted from CPS intervention. DAR is also tracking substantiated CAN reports that have been previously diverted.*
- *County Directors now utilize a Field Operations Review Guide (FORGE) which models the CFSR and includes a section specific to Diversion. The PEAS review helps to assure quality and monitors practice to assess alignment with county Diversion protocols*
- *Findings and recommendations from a statewide prevention system assessment may inform current service array, gaps and recommendations for resource allocations*

CRP Recommendation #2: Implement a policy development and review process that allows for consistent consultation with child welfare stakeholders prior to adoption and field implementation.

State Response to Recommendation #2

- *On the recommendation of the CRP the state has developed a protocol for policy development and review which provides an opportunity for staff and stakeholders to provide assistance in the assessment of policy impact as well as to recommend changes to policy purpose, language or process before it is approved for practice implementation. See Attachment: PPD Process Flow chart*
- *Q-TIP: The Division has also implemented a standing workgroup to facilitate policy coordination and review between program areas, SHINES, field operation and CFSR*
- *The **Policy To Practice** (P2P) field level review is done electronically via Survey Money. State and Regional Staff as well as external stakeholders are consulted in the review of draft policy and have an opportunity to provide feedback electronically. External stakeholders included in the policy development and review process include, CRP members, private providers, foster parents, current or former foster youth and birth parents.*
- *A representative group of CRP members have been asked to serve on this stakeholder policy review committee.*

CRP Recommendation # 3: Develop in collaboration with child welfare stakeholders a statewide child abuse prevention plan that includes:

- **Common prevention language**
- **Effective prevention strategies which include evidence-based models, promising and proven practice models as well as initiatives already making a difference.**

- A thorough assessment of existing and needed state and community based assets and resources necessary to successfully implement the plan.
- A child abuse prevention awareness component.

State Response to Recommendation #3

- *The state is currently undertaking a prevention system assessment and analysis to document the current array of internal and external prevention and early intervention resources, review current policy, integrate strategies into practice and make recommendations for systems improvement in this area.*
- *It is our hope that this system assessment be developed in consultation with the CRP to engage a broad array of stakeholders in the assessment and planning process for prevention services and strategies statewide.*

CRP Recommendation # 4 Expand the scope of the statewide injury prevention plan developed in collaboration with Public Health and the CDC to include the full range of abuse and neglect related injuries.

State Response to Recommendation #4:

- *While no immediate plans exist to expand the scope of the statewide injury prevention plan conducted last year by Public Health, DFCS and the CDC, the state is currently planning for full compliance with CAPTA requirements for public disclosure of serious injuries and child near fatalities. Stakeholder recommendations under consideration, include reconstitution of the multi-disciplinary Child Death and Serious Injury (CDSI) review team, the conduct of on-going trend analysis by this group and public disclosure of findings and recommendations.*

CRP Recommendation # 5: Expand and enhance Mandated Reporter Training
Expand the distribution of existing MR training. Enhance or update current training tools and consider an annual renewal or refresher training requirement and provide training, education and info to parents, communities and individuals on all aspect of the CAN continuum with emphasis on the identification and reporting of abuse and neglect.

State Response to Recommendation #5

- *A workgroup as been formed between PPD unit and Education and Training to develop a computer based MR training curriculum which offers users a certificate of completion. The use of training curriculum developed by PCA Georgia for staff and stakeholder training staff is under review and consideration.*

CRP Recommendation # 6 – Developed a shared information system for the collection and analysis of child abuse and neglect data. Info system would improve collective efforts to evaluate the effectiveness of Georgia’s CAN and Treatment efforts.

State Response to Recommendation #6:

- *Data Analysis and Reporting is working on the development of a centralized data collection and reporting systems to support the collection of all provider, service and outcomes data.*

As key stakeholders, your participation, observations and recommendations are critical to our efforts as we work to assess and improve our child protection service delivery system. Your analysis of our strengths and needs were reflected in the federal Child and Family Service Review (CFSR) self-assessment and are reflected in the CAPTA PIP and State CAPTA Plan for FY 2009 – 2014. . We look forward to our common work and to your ongoing participation and input into the implementation of these recommendations.

It is our hope that together we can develop and implement strategies for improved collaboration, shared accountability, resources allocation and needed system change. On behalf of the children and families of Georgia, we thank you.

MAW/adp

cc: B.J. Walker, Commissioner Department of Human Services
Ruth Walker Simpson, Region IV ACF Program Manager
Tracy Fava, Region IV ACF Program Specialist
Isabel Blanco, Executive Director Family Outcomes & Practice Standards
Susan Denney, Director Strategic Planning
Deb Farrell, CRP Program Coordinator.



B. J. Walker, Commissioner

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January 8, 2009

MEMORANDUM

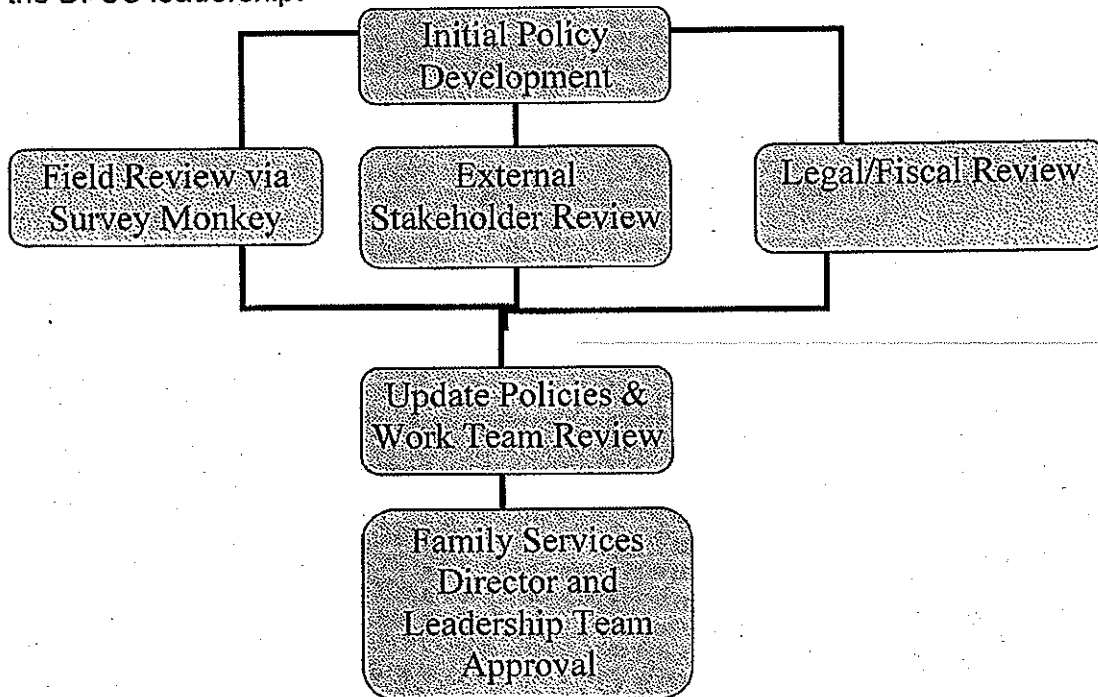
To: All DFCS Regional Directors, County Directors
Bobby D. Cagle
FROM: Bobby Cagle, Family Services Director
Angela Coulon, Program Planning and Policy Development Unit Manager
SUBJECT: Policy Review

Purpose

The Program, Planning and Policy Development Unit (PPPDU) is currently updating the DFCS Child Welfare Policy Manual. The manual will be written with input from field staff. It is our goal to reflect current DFCS practice as well as best practice which has shown to be effective in other states.

Policy Development Process

The PPPDU has developed a new process by which all policy will be approved. Policies will receive two levels of field input as well as review by legal, fiscal and the DFCS leadership.



Field Input via Survey Monkey

Field operations staff will review each new chapter of the DFCS policy manual as well as ad hoc policies that will be released. It is the responsibility of the regional manager or their designee to recommend a representative sample (urban, rural, small, large county) of their staff to review policies so that all views are represented. Staff should be chosen based on the expertise in the area under review. The regional breakdown is as follows:

| Region | Regional Directors | Management (County Directors, Administrators, FPS, etc) | SSCMs |
|--------------|--------------------|---|-----------|
| 1 | 1 | 3 | 3 |
| 2 | 1 | 3 | 3 |
| 3 | 1 | 3 | 3 |
| 4 | 1 | 3 | 3 |
| 5 | 1 | 3 | 3 |
| 6 | 1 | 3 | 3 |
| 7 | 1 | 3 | 3 |
| 8 | 1 | 3 | 3 |
| 9 | 1 | 3 | 3 |
| 10 | 1 | 3 | 3 |
| 11 | 1 | 3 | 3 |
| 12 | 1 | 3 | 3 |
| 13 | 1 | 3 | 3 |
| 14 | 1 | 3 | 3 |
| 15 | 1 | 3 | 3 |
| 16 | 1 | 3 | 3 |
| 17 | 1 | 3 | 3 |
| Total | 17 | 51 | 51 |

Please submit names of staff to review the Intake, Investigation, Family Preservation and Independent Living chapters of the policy manual to PPPD Unit at PPPD Unit@dhr.state.ga.us no later than the close of business on Friday January 16, 2009. Please ensure each chapter review will meet the numerical representation indicated by region.

Work Teams will consist of 5-7 field experts, including SSCMs and management staff, which will meet to review each chapter of the policy manual. Regional Managers will be contacted to recommend staff to participate in the work teams.

Thank you in advance for your time and participation.

Cc: Kathy Herren, Deputy Director Program and Planning
Isabel Blanco, Deputy Director of Field Operations