

**Supporting Effective  
Citizen Involvement  
in Child Protective Services:**

A Guide for State and Local Officials

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# Foreword

This guide provides an introduction to two different, but complementary, ways in which child protective service systems can improve their ability to protect children through involving citizens and consumers.

The first involves constructing a formal, citizen oversight and review of the child protective service system. Such an oversight process can serve to hold public systems accountable for meeting their child protection responsibilities -- and to provide credibility for this public role when the system fulfills that responsibility. This oversight requires *independence* from the child protective service system administration.

The second involves greater *collaboration* between the child protective service system and citizens and consumers. Such collaboration can enhance the ability of the child protective service system to meet its public mandate to protect children. It can also encourage families and communities to protect their children on a broader level than the prevention of child abuse and neglect alone.

These do not constitute "either/or" strategies. Both are needed. As states and communities move forward on each, the checklists and other materials in this guide should be expanded and modified accordingly.

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# The Need for Citizen Involvement in

# Child Protective Services

Reports of deaths of young children at the hands of those entrusted with their care always bring public anguish. This has been particularly true recently, with the graphic reports of the brutal deaths of Emily Hernandez, a nine-month-old in Connecticut, and Elisa Izquierdo, a six-year-old in New York.<sup>1</sup>

What has added to the public outrage about these cases and others is what they appear to indicate about the failings of state child protective service systems -- those systems designed to investigate child abuse and neglect reports and intervene when necessary to protect children from harm. The picture the public gets of these systems is of caseworkers too busy to monitor clearly dangerous situations for children and of programs unresponsive to the warnings of neighbors and professionals. When pressed to explain their lack of responsiveness, child protective service officials cite confidentiality laws as a reason to say nothing -- thereby appearing to hide behind a "veil of secrecy."

Studies of trends in child welfare reinforce the need to be concerned about the state of protective service systems. Over the decade from 1983 to 1993, reports of child abuse and neglect nearly doubled nationally, and foster care caseloads grew by two-thirds. In 1993, 2.3 million children were reported as possible victims of abuse or neglect, with one million being confirmed as victims after investigation.

One feature of recent efforts to improve child protective services statutes is to loosen confidentiality provisions that can both interfere with the treatment and protection of children involved in multiple systems *and*

Approximately one-sixth of these confirmed reports resulted in a placement into a foster care system that had grown to 450,000 children by 1993.<sup>2</sup> Regardless of their effectiveness, child protective service systems today face increasing stress. In general, systems are now confronting problems that are significantly more substantial and complex than before. As a recent Government Accounting Office (GAO) report declared, "Children are entering care from families more troubled than in the past and with greater emotional, behavioral, and medical needs. Such families today more often face economic hardship, substance abuse, homelessness, mental or physical illness, or the imprisonment of a family member."<sup>3</sup>

At the same time, there is every reason to believe that many child protection systems could be protecting children better than they are today. Indeed, the Connecticut and New York deaths have both led to proposals for substantial change in those states' child protective service systems.<sup>4</sup> At least twenty-one states are presently under court supervision because of their failures to take proper care of abused or neglected children. A federal judge in Washington, D.C., has described "outrageous deficiencies" in child protective services there, while another judge in Illinois has referred to the system in that state as "a bleak and Dickensian picture."<sup>5</sup>

increase the public's access to information in cases where tragedies have occurred. A number of states have developed special teams to investigate thoroughly the circumstances surrounding the deaths of children as a result

of abuse or neglect. Strategies need to be developed to ensure effective public oversight of the child protective service system.

The responsibility for protecting children extends beyond the professional work within the child protective service system, however.

In different but complementary veins, some states (Missouri, Iowa, and Florida) are seeking to develop new, differential responses to reports of abuse or neglect. Each of these states seek to establish an assessment, rather than an investigative, process in many protective service cases. This differential response is designed to better draw in community resources where the major factor leading to current protective service involvement is a need for services. It is also designed to ensure a more timely and intensive response to any situation jeopardizing child safety.

While addressing different issues in state-level child protection, each of these efforts emphasizes the importance of greater citizen oversight of and involvement in the child protective service system. This includes the creation of: 1.) formal mechanisms that offer effective external oversight of the protective service system and 2.) informal mechanisms that encourage and support greater community involvement in keeping children safe.

The former has led to renewed interest in previous reforms to child protective service systems that created procedures for citizen review of children in foster care. These

programs entail regular review by volunteers of some or all cases of children in foster care, thereby affording citizens not regularly involved with the child protective service system the opportunity to review how the system has acted and to provide recommendations for changes in individual cases and, where appropriate, entire systems.

Logically, these programs could be expanded or modified to include review of all types of protective service cases, both those involving child placement and those where the child remains in the family home. Such expansion, however, greatly increases the actual number of cases potentially subject to review.

The latter has led to new efforts to involve families, neighborhood leaders, and consumers in developing effective responses to the needs of children and families referred to the child protective service system.

### ***The Federal Response***

In block grant legislation passed in late 1995 and subsequently vetoed by President Clinton, the United States Congress called

a)  
*ESTABLISHMENT --- Each state to which a [child welfare block] grant is made shall establish at least three broadly representative citizen review panels to provide advice on administration of child protection programs. These panels were to meet at least quarterly to examine specific child protective service cases and determine the extent to which state and local agencies are meeting their responsibilities under federal child protection standards. States must afford these panels access to any information on any case the panel desires to review, and panels must issue reports after each quarterly meeting.*

While not enacted into law, this provision is likely to be incorporated into future proposals, as the federal government seeks to devolve authority to the states. New forms of oversight and accountability are likely to be a *quid pro quo* for greater flexibility in service design and delivery. Whether or not citizen review policy is enacted at the federal level, states may opt to develop new mechanisms along these lines for holding their child protective service systems more accountable. The core of the accountability should be review of what is actually occurring at the frontline, service delivery level.

### ***Purpose of This Guide***

This guide provides advice to states and localities on ways to develop effective citizen review processes for their child protective

service systems. While the provisions in recent federal legislation have served as a partial impetus for writing this guide, the recommendations and suggestions contained here go beyond the limited dictates of this legislation's provisions. They include both formal citizen review processes and ways child protective service systems can involve consumers and community residents in their ongoing work.

As background to writing this guide, its authors reviewed literature on citizen review in several areas, including police actions,<sup>6</sup> housing and community development,<sup>7</sup> group home regulation,<sup>8</sup> and foster care review.<sup>9</sup> The authors also interviewed the executive directors of six state foster care review programs, using both a preliminary questionnaire and a more extended interview protocol.<sup>10</sup> Finally, the authors reviewed a variety of literatures on citizen involvement and parent participation in policy making and service design from the disability,<sup>11</sup> public health,<sup>12</sup> self-help,<sup>13</sup> and neighborhood organizing<sup>14</sup> fields.

Chapter One draws from the experiences of formal citizen review processes, particularly foster care review boards, in describing the elements needed for an effective external citizen review process.

Chapter Two draws from the citizen

involvement and parent participation literature in describing strategies that can enhance the responses to children in need through citizen and consumer involvement in the protection of children.

These two chapters complement one another, but they represent distinct approaches. The first is an external, oversight responsibility that must be independent from the day-to-day administration of the child protective service system. The second is a collaborative, partnering activity that requires day-to-day contact and a shared responsibility for the well-being of children.

# Chapter One

## Developing Effective Citizen Oversight and Review in Child Protective Services

### *The Rationale for Citizen Review*

The rationale for establishing an external, citizen review process to monitor the work of the child protective service system is based upon our government's system of "checks and balances." Citizen review of child protective services provides oversight of a system within our government that must make difficult decisions involving two of our country's most cherished principles -- the well-being and safety of our children and the rights of families to raise children according to their own, rather than the state's, beliefs.

There are several potential roles for this "check and balance" within the child protective service system:

- to review specific, individual cases and ensure corrective action if any of the cases are not being addressed in the manner required by law and policy;
- to foster greater compliance with law and policy on a prospective basis, as workers know that any case might be subject to review;
- to recommend changes in the overall system when individual case reviews show patterns of action that require a

The most visible function of citizen foster care review systems has been to conduct individual reviews of foster care cases. Linked to the requirement in federal law that each state have some form of periodic review for foster care cases,<sup>16</sup> these citizen reviews

systemic, as opposed to individual, case response; and

- to ensure public credibility for the accountability of the child protective service system.

To fulfill these roles requires much more than the pro forma establishment of citizen review boards. This chapter describes the different components required for the development of an effective citizen review process.

### *Features of a Citizen Review Program*

The model of citizen review most relevant to the child protective service system is the foster care review board. The first such board began in South Carolina in 1974, with financial support from that state and the Edna McConnell Clark Foundation. Three years later, the state legislature provided funding for the review system to become a separate state agency with an administrative office and individual case review boards throughout the state. Similar foster care review systems soon opened in other states, including New Jersey (1977), Arizona (1978), Delaware (1979), and Maryland (1979).<sup>15</sup> Citizen foster care review systems now exist in 25 states.

help "assure that children do not linger unnecessarily in foster care, but rather receive the support, benefits and joys of a permanent home."<sup>17</sup> Consistent with this goal, citizen review systems aim to: "reduce the time children spend in foster care; enhance the

accountability of child protective service agencies to their clients and the public; improve case outcomes; make the child protective service system more responsive to the needs of individual children and families; and increase the involvement of families and others in planning."<sup>18</sup>

In addition to their individual case review activities, most citizen review programs have established a significant presence at the state-wide level as well. These programs often comment on and provide support for and against state legislation affecting child welfare systems. Some programs develop and advocate their own legislative agendas regarding children's issues.

The authors believe that any child protective service review should be effective both in conducting individual case reviews and promoting needed policy changes at the state level. Consequently, this guide describes the core components of a review program that will serve *both* these important functions.

These core components are:

- location in a setting that assures that citizen review will be independent, while still having access to persons in authority;
- citizen participation that is committed and effective;

Citizen review programs view their charge as monitoring the public system, which includes monitoring the effectiveness of the

- sufficient administrative and staff capacity to support citizen efforts;
- the capacity and authority to conduct independent case reviews that hold officials accountable for their actions; and
- the ability to participate meaningfully in state-level action affecting the welfare of children and families.

Each of these core components is examined separately.

### ***Independence and Authority***

Deciding where to locate a citizen review program requires drawing a delicate balance between independence and access to information and decision making. At the outset, the importance of independence -- both in actuality and perception -- cannot be overemphasized. The directors of the citizen review programs surveyed all asserted that maintaining the independence of their programs was critical to their integrity and effectiveness. Consequently, citizen review programs absolutely must remain objective when dealing with the politics of internal administrative agendas and develop the ability to deal appropriately with the political dynamics involved in advocating for needed policy changes.

legislative branch in developing child welfare laws and funding mechanisms, the executive branch in carrying out the laws, and the

judicial branch in protecting the rights of children and families involved in the child protective service system. Although each branch of government has its own internal quality controls, proponents of citizen review believe it is necessary to have an independent entity to hold the systems accountable and ensure that the rights of individual children and families do not get lost in the political process of balancing powers and responsibility.

Persons with leadership roles within citizen review programs recommended that one of the most obvious ways of achieving independence is to keep the review program outside of the agency responsible for administering child protective service.<sup>19</sup> Avoiding such a placement does not, however, automatically ensure independence, since location in other agencies may also raise concerns over independence.<sup>20</sup> For instance, directors cited potential problems regardless of where the program is placed. Concerning the judicial branch, one director pointed out that it "presents challenges in that the judicial system at the state level may have a different perception of the value and use of citizen review from that of local judges, who actually

In the absence of any "ideal" location, the directors gave advice of how best to balance independence and access to authority in establishing new citizen review programs.

First, proponents of establishing a citizen review program need to recognize where

receive the review board's reports." Since citizen review programs monitor not only the state human service agency but also the state's judicial system, there can be tension if courts wish to modify or control the independent standing of these programs. Concerning the executive branch, another director cited the need to demonstrate that the citizen review board is in fact functioning as an independent monitor and not just presenting policies that are compatible with the governor's agenda.

Some programs operate as either free-standing entities or are located in agencies not so closely tied to the human services agency, judiciary, or executive branch. While these locations would appear to help programs be recognized as independent, there remain issues of access to authority. Directors of programs located in human service agencies, the judiciary, or the executive branch stressed the value that their locations provided by giving them ready access to agency data or officials, court administrators or judges, or the executive cabinet. With this access came increased authority, which, in their opinion, would not exist in a program without these connections.

support for and opposition to citizen review exists -- to gain an awareness of "the lay of the land." In starting a citizen review program, it is critical that programs have "buy-in up front." In one director's opinion, proponents must "look for a place that is supportive and

nurturing. You need someone who will support the board's mission and purpose." Enabling legislation should establish the program within a supportive agency independent from day-to-day protective service administration responsibilities.

Second, enabling legislation should build in accountability to the state legislature. According to one director, requiring that citizen review programs report to the legislature creates a "doorway to autonomy." This requires that programs must have adequate information and staff to carry out this reporting function and the assurance that their work cannot be censured by the human services agency or the court.

Third, legislation should require official accountability to the citizen review process and recommendations. The citizen review process will be taken seriously only if it is provided real authority and can gain the attention of the system it is designed to monitor. At a minimum, this means requiring agencies to make available to citizen reviewers all the data and records they need, as well as mandating the presence at reviews of workers responsible for each child protective service case. It also should include provisions that ensure agency accountability to the recommendations of citizen reviewers. For instance, in Oregon, a human service agency must respond in writing within

seventeen days to citizen review boards if it does not intend to implement the board's recommendations. In Nebraska, the citizen review program has been granted legal

*Is the citizen review program housed in a supportive agency committed to its principles?*

*Is the citizen review program clearly free and independent from the agency or agencies with day-to-day responsibilities for administering the child protective service system?*

*Does the citizen review program have regular reporting responsibility to the state legislature and the needed resources to do it?*

*Does the citizen review program have access to all needed information upon which to do case reviews and evaluate child protective service policy?*

*Are child protective service officials required to respond to citizen review recommendations?*

standing to bring independent court action to secure agency compliance.

### ***Enlisting an Involved and Committed Citizenry***

In most states, directors and staff of citizen review programs are the most visible figures in these efforts. Nonetheless, all of the directors interviewed stressed that the independence and effectiveness of program efforts depended not on them but on the hundreds of volunteers who regularly donate their time to participate in individual case reviews and develop policy recommendations. It is upon the lay representatives that the strength of the program is built. As a result, recruitment, training, and retention of citizen volunteers are widely recognized among the most important activities of program administrators and other staff.

*Recruitment.* Finding citizen reviewers with the necessary personal characteristics to perform their responsibilities effectively is critical, although these characteristics differ somewhat depending on whether the volunteers will be conducting case reviews or drawing conclusions from those case reviews and making recommendations for needed policy changes.

As to **local case review** efforts, volunteers must be fair-minded, objective, and able to see all sides of situations. They should likewise be culturally sensitive and not have stereotypes about people. For instance, as an example of unacceptable biases or values, one director noted that she had recommended

- contacting Head Start programs and minority churches;

against appointing as reviewers individuals who are biased against single or gay people serving as foster parents or people with a history of drug use ever getting back their children.

Programs should look for volunteers with a demonstrated commitment to children and families. This does not mean recruiting people with strong ideological positions or entrenched and inflexible beliefs. For instance, one director noted that she screened out individuals with a strong, rescuing, "kids are in trouble" bias. Another said that she avoided people ready to "tee off" on human service agency staff whenever there appears to be a problem.

It is important for programs to have diversity within local boards across a number of characteristics including sex, race, ethnicity, and economic status. As desirable as this balance is, achieving it is not easy for most programs. Several program directors noted the difficulty in finding males to serve on local review boards. More stressed the difficulty -- and importance -- of recruiting minorities, at least commensurate with the population drawn into the child protective service system.<sup>21</sup> Directors noted a number of strategies they used to aid in these recruitment efforts, including:

- advertising on minority radio stations or in minority papers; and

- attending minority functions, such as "One Child/One Church" picnics.

Over time, those recruited will be prime recruiters for others, provided they feel their perspectives and work have been valued in the process. Some programs have had success in recruiting individuals from lower income brackets when they have secured resources to reimburse volunteers for their child care costs or "recruited" employers to support their employees in volunteering during the workday.

Programs further need a balance in the backgrounds of those who participate as volunteers on citizen review boards. Some programs seek to ensure that they have a mix by recruiting volunteers to fit into an established configuration. For instance, the Iowa program seeks to achieve a seven-member configuration on its local boards that includes four people with backgrounds in business, medicine, education, and human services; a person with parenting experience (usually a full-time homemaker); a former foster parent<sup>22</sup> or special needs adoptive parent; and a representative of the religious community. Most other programs merely try to avoid dominance by any one professional group, usually by limiting their boards to no more than one person from any one profession. Citizen review does not mean

As to **state-level review** efforts, local board experience in reviewing individual

outside, professional review. Citizen review requires strong lay representation.

An additional factor to consider when recruiting board members is whether the local board will be expected to network back into the community or provide information about available community services and contacts. In several states, when citizen review boards were first created, there was a fear that the citizens would "meddle" in case planning decisions. The system soon learned, however, that the boards were frequently an excellent resource for identifying services within the community that were not necessarily part of the standard list of "child welfare services." If a board wishes to strengthen community ownership of and commitment to child protective services, it should consider the background and level of community involvement in the choice of board members.

Some directors expressly noted the value of recruiting volunteers with no professional background even remotely related to child welfare. Referring to such people as "John Q. Citizen" types, directors stressed the importance of having at least some citizen reviewers who approach cases and problems with no preconceptions, thereby providing a fresh approach and perspective. In the opinion of one director, such boards are then viewed more as truly *citizen* boards than collections of self-interested professionals. cases is valuable to help inform the work of volunteers at that level as they consider policy

change. In addition to the characteristics they look for in local volunteers, directors expressed their desire for state-level volunteers that can think systemically and strategically and help implement strategic planning for system-level changes, as well as evaluate individual cases. They look for people who are "politically savvy," with knowledge of the child protective service system, government operations, and the political process. These include people who "have political skills, know how bureaucracies function, and can be involved in planning for changes that may take two to four years to bring about." Directors also seek to achieve political and geographical balance in their state boards.

*Training and Selection.* Though not required in all states, citizen volunteers almost all participate in some initial training. While programs differ, they routinely offer training in certain areas including:<sup>23</sup>

- federal and state child welfare laws and policies;
- the philosophy underlying these laws and policies;
- child protective service and foster care procedures;
- state and local foster care review processes;
- case permanency plans and their provisions and goals;

- history and philosophy of citizen review;
- citizen review hearing processes;
- an overview of child protective services and placement alternatives; and
- factors that might affect decisions regarding child services or placements.

Aspects of some training programs are noteworthy. The Oregon citizen review program includes a simulated case review, with participants focusing on how to make the required findings in each review. Some programs ask prospective board members to participate in training sessions and use this time to evaluate them prior to actually appointing them to local boards.<sup>24</sup> While many states give all citizen reviewers immunity from liability, South Carolina conditions its grant of immunity on participation in a two-day certification training.

Several programs have some form of in-service training, often consisting of mini-training sessions for local boards to address certain issues. Some include on-going training as part of annual or periodic state-wide gatherings. Despite recognizing its value, few programs have training for new state-level board members on areas of unique concern to those members.

*Retention.* Programs obviously want to retain as volunteers those who have served well. As with many volunteer experiences, recognition for work well done is important to retention. This recognition may include awards for service, thank-you notes, or ongoing support and feedback from staff. Programs also may offer the chance to attend annual conferences or retreats.

What is most likely to encourage volunteers to remain is the belief that their work is making a difference for children. In this respect, seeing positive change in individual cases or on a policy level is critical. Programs continually need to inform citizen reviewers of the impact of their work, through regular updates both on individual cases and on policy changes. They also should track whether system-wide changes are occurring as a result of citizen reviews, potentially through examining outcome-based tracking indicators, such as whether the incidence of foster care placements or the number of movements to new homes have decreased.

***Adequate Administrative and Staff Support***

Citizen review programs vary in the size of their staff and the degree to which they rely on staff to conduct and coordinate case review activities. In some programs, local staff review case records, summarize them for board members, conduct the review meetings, prepare records of the meetings, and ensure that agencies or courts respond to the board's

<p><input type="checkbox"/> <i>Promote the importance of a commitment to children and families with an ability to see many perspectives?</i></p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> <i>Stress the value of board diversity?</i></p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> <i>Reach out to groups that otherwise would be underrepresented?</i></p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> <i>Maintain a strong lay representation and value community involvement?</i></p> <p><b><i>Does the training and selection process:</i></b></p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> <i>Provide pre-service training offering background information on the child welfare and protective service system and the role and responsibility of the citizen review process?</i></p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> <i>Offer interactive and experiential exercises that can help screen and self-select individuals with needed skills and orientations to do the work?</i></p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> <i>Offer continuing in-service opportunities for skill development?</i></p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> <i>Offer more detailed training for those who will be making policy recommendations?</i></p> <p><b><i>Does the overall process help retain volunteers</i></b></p> <p><b><i>Does the recruitment process:</i></b></p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> <i>Keeping volunteers informed of the results of their work?</i></p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> <i>Providing recognition for work and service?</i></p>
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recommendations. In other programs, volunteer board members perform many of these functions, and staff may not even attend

some local reviews.

As programs move toward greater involvement of staff, they may risk losing some of the character of a truly citizen review program. At the same time, it is very difficult for a program with little staff support to maintain the consistency, continuity, and follow-through needed for program effectiveness over time. While staff must not "control" information or seek to steer citizen review boards, an effective citizen review process requires sufficient staffing and an administrative structure to ensure full access to information and support in its case review and policy-level activities. Following are important elements of this staffing and administrative structure.

*Independent administration.* Any program obviously needs some form of centralized administration. Regardless of where the program is located, program administration must be independent from the control of those the program is trying to hold accountable. For that to exist, the program's director must not be directly accountable to those officials. Instead, it is far preferable that

*Local support staff.* As discussed above, citizen review programs vary widely in the extent of their reliance on local program staff in the performance of their individual case reviews. While over dependence on staff can weaken the citizen element of these review programs, programs cannot maintain

the director report to the state citizen review board itself.

*Analytic capacity.* To be effective in its statewide reform efforts, a program must be able to compile and analyze system-level data on the state's child protection program. Without that capacity, a program cannot do the analysis necessary to see what is going on in the "forest" of child protective services throughout the state, regardless of how well the program has examined the "trees" of individual cases.

Some citizen review programs presently compile and analyze extensive data on each case that they handle, as well as those they do not. In Nebraska, that means having over 80 points of information on each case; in Oregon, there are 45. While some of this data comes from human services agencies and courts, the programs generate most from their own individual case reviews. The independent and credible data analysis of these programs has formed the core of their work in recommending and working for policy changes.

consistency in their case reviews without at least some staff support. In addition to facilitating review meetings, local staff can play important roles by:

- ensuring that case data is organized and available to reviewers so that they

can be prepared to carry out their duties;

- recording the recommendations of reviews and forwarding them to the appropriate authorities;
- following up to ensure that authorities respond to panel recommendations;
- conducting periodic training for local boards on relevant issues;
- updating local board members on individual case and system developments relevant to their efforts; and
- recognizing local board members for their valued contributions.

Staff need to be professional and dedicated to their work. While citizen review programs vary in their compensation of staff and the professional backgrounds required for staff, two directors believed it was desirable to enlist some staff with legal backgrounds and experience, and most directors sought staff with experience in social work or child welfare.

### ***Conducting Informed and Fair Individual Case Reviews***

The heart of most foster care review programs is their individual case reviews. The actual proportion of the state's foster care cases that these boards review varies greatly, from only 10 to 20 percent in states like Iowa

<p><i><input type="checkbox"/> Is the director responsible and accountable to a state-level citizen review board, and not another agency?</i></p> <p><i><input type="checkbox"/> Are there sufficient local staff to handle the logistical and administrative functions so the citizen review boards have the materials they need to do their work?</i></p> <p><i><input type="checkbox"/> Do staff have the expertise (legal and professional) to fulfill their roles?</i></p> <p><i><input type="checkbox"/> Is there a data system and an analytic capacity to track the work of local citizen reviews, assess their impact, and identify issues that may require a state policy response?</i></p>
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<p><i><input type="checkbox"/> Are staff roles defined as supporting, but not dictating, the work of the citizen review boards?</i></p>
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to almost 100 percent in states like South Carolina and Oregon. Whatever the proportion, however, these reviews are invariably done at the local, rather than the state, level. Under proposed federal

legislation, states do not have to develop a structure of local boards to conduct child protection service case reviews. There is no minimum proportion of individual case reviews that states will have to perform. As a result, it will be possible for states to take a minimalist view to complying with federal law, potentially by having boards conduct a small number of reviews in a pro forma fashion. Alternatively, however, states can use this mandate as an opening to build an effective review process.

Citizen review board directors stress that the basis for effective citizen oversight lies with individual case reviews conducted at the local level. Local volunteers are familiar with their communities, their resources, and the strengths and weaknesses of those overseeing and delivering child protective services. Local board members often have a credibility in their communities that more centralized board members would not have and are likely to represent better their community's interests and perspectives.

Nonetheless, it may be possible for more centralized structures to conduct individual case reviews that provide them with useful information on which to base policy recommendations and offer oversight of

*Development of a protocol for review.*

Most local boards follow a detailed review protocol that requires them to make specific findings on certain features of each case. Making these findings provides a focus and

individual practice, provided that these reviews meet the criteria discussed below:

*Representativeness of cases chosen.*

Citizen review program directors uniformly warned against the possibility that state-level reviews will not give an accurate picture of what is actually happening in child protection practice unless they are selected in a truly random fashion and are numerous enough to include substantial cases from across the state's child protective services' jurisdictions.

They noted the widely varying practices within their states, with judges and human service agencies acting very differently from county to county. Citing the degree to which human service workers focus their efforts prior to case reviews, they maintained that those cases chosen for review may well end up showing better practice because officials will take care that cases chosen for reviews present the agency in the best light. To avoid these problems, individual case reviews will need to be chosen randomly and copies of case files secured so that reviewers receive an accurate and representative picture of what is actually happening in case practice.

purpose for each case review that ensures productive and consistent action. For instance, in Oregon, the local board must make the following findings in each review:

- whether proper notice was given and an opportunity to be heard was afforded;
- whether the board received necessary materials;
- what the agency's permanency plan goal is;
- when the agency expects the child to leave substitute care;
- whether reasonable efforts to avoid placement were made;
- whether reasonable efforts have been made to provide services to help the child return home;
- whether out-of-home placement is still necessary and the current placement appropriate and least restrictive;
- whether the agency and the parent(s) are in compliance with the case plan;
- whether the parent(s) is(are) in agreement with the plan; and
- whether there has been progress in alleviating the need for placement and toward permanence.

These "core findings" were developed specifically for children in foster care. They

*Fairness and inclusiveness of reviews.*

Individual case reviews must be conducted in a way that is fair to all sides and that gathers information and perspectives from those directly involved with the child and family. Making case reviews inclusive is one important way that local boards ensure their fairness. In conducting individual foster care

must be adapted for use for all child protective service cases (the majority of which do not involve out-of-home placements). They should include findings regarding whether actions needed to insure the safety of the child have been identified and taken, whether parents and children understand and are in agreement with these actions, whether the actions have produced desired results, and whether there has been timely follow-up by the agency.

*Sufficient background information to review cases.* Those reviewing cases must have all relevant agency and judicial material to conduct an informed review. They also should have access to persons knowledgeable about and responsible for case activities and be able to draw upon the expertise of professionals who might inform their opinions. While background information is essential, "paper reviews" are not sufficient to determine how the child protective service system is operating.

case reviews, citizen boards provide notice and the opportunity to be heard to all interested parties, including parents and related former caretakers, children above a minimum age, foster parents or other outside caregivers, and human service agency personnel. Local review boards also may allow anyone else who expresses an interest in

a child's foster care situation to appear at reviews. Boards can be proactive in seeking to obtain perspectives from others who may know the family well, including members of the religious community, community groups, and self-help and mutual aid organizations. If state-level boards cannot be this inclusive during their reviews, they must take other steps to ensure that they hear from all sides.

*Respect for case privacy.* Review programs must respect the confidentiality rights of children and their parents. In their practice, programs take several important steps to ensure privacy, such as shredding notes, limiting the mailing of materials, and requiring reviewers to account for what information they have received. In some states there are explicit penalties for violation of these rights by citizen reviewers. A key to ensuring confidentiality is including a strong component in the recruitment and training process that describes the legal responsibility for maintaining confidentiality and the philosophy behind these legal requirements.

*Keeping systematic data.* Some programs use their individual case reviews to generate data on the child welfare system independent of that available from the agency. A state-***State-Level Policy Reform***

The effectiveness of citizen review programs in monitoring the overall child protective service system and recommending needed policy and administrative changes

level citizen review system can also produce systematic data that can help with analysis of the child protective service system's status and operation.

<p><i>Does the individual case reviews processed are truly representative of all cases and sufficient in number to identify any variations in practice across local jurisdictions?</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li><input type="checkbox"/> <i>Include a clear and specific protocol to review cases that volunteers have the expertise to use?</i></li><li><input type="checkbox"/> <i>Include all relevant background information for cases under review?</i></li><li><input type="checkbox"/> <i>Provide for an inclusive review process that provides all parties the opportunity to be heard?</i></li><li><input type="checkbox"/> <i>Ensure confidentiality to all children and families subject to the review process?</i></li><li><input type="checkbox"/> <i>Produce a data system for all cases reviewed that can be analyzed as a basis for understanding an overall child protective service system's strengths and weaknesses?</i></li></ul>
---

involves more than operating a strong individual case review system. Programs must be independent of governing authorities, but have access to authority. They should have legislative support, including being seen

as a source of valued information. Programs should have sufficient administrative and support staff to enable citizen reviewers to carry out their activities. They should be able to conduct independent data analysis that gives a picture of trends in child welfare and the possible reasons for them and, where applicable, policy alternatives.

In addition to looking at the child protective service system as a set of individual cases, the citizen review program must have a commitment to looking at it in a systemic way. This requires additional skills for citizen volunteers, which best may be deployed at the state level, where information from all individual case reviews can be assembled and used. Where properly chosen and trained, a state-level review team can bring together substantial expertise and experience to make policy recommendations. Foster care citizen review programs have relied upon their state-level boards to:

- analyze system-level issues;
- establish an agenda for reform in child welfare;
- develop a strategic plan for pursuing that agenda;
- meet with legislators and state administrators to build support for that agenda or for other child protective services and funding;
- make public presentations on behalf of the citizen review program or child

protective services generally;

- oversee the general operation of the citizen review system; and
- evaluate administration of the citizen review program and hire/fire staff.

Citizen review programs need to recruit state-level volunteers and provide them with the training and experiences that will build loyalty to the citizen review program and to the goal of improving child welfare. They need training about or direct experience with individual case reviews, and they need training on state policy and administrative processes. Together, these volunteers must bring the varied backgrounds and experiences that the citizen review program needs to carry out the state-level activities listed above. They must approach their duties independent of other influences that may compromise their citizen review activities. They must be capable of doing strategic planning, acting politically, and be willing to settle in for the long haul.

With the assistance of their state-level volunteers, foster care review programs have played major roles in policy reforms in their states. These programs have helped increase overall support and funding for child protective service programs. They have helped reduce the amount of time needed to terminate parental rights and speed adoptions. They have built support for programs like family preservation services that reduce the need for out-of-home care. Most important, they have increased the overall number of children who have meaningful case plans and helped ensure that appropriate actions are taken to implement those plans.

*Is there a state-level board for using local citizen reviews to make policy recommendations that:*

*Includes individuals with strong credibility in the state, recognized for their commitment to the safety of children and support of families?*

*Has access to and support from policy makers to ensure that recommendations for statutory and administrative changes receive careful consideration?*

*Has a deep understanding of and direct experience with local review process?*

*Has appropriate training and expertise in drawing from individual reviews to identify needed policy changes, statutory and administrative?*

# Chapter Two

## Improving Responses to Children in Need through Citizen and Consumer Involvement

External citizen review programs can play an important role in overseeing child protective service systems and insuring that the systems work to keep children safe. The responsibility for protecting children extends beyond the child protective service professional's work within the system, however.

Professionals need to be highly skilled in investigating and treating cases of child abuse and neglect, but professionals cannot do the job of protecting children working alone. They require community support and involvement. And they require the active involvement of the children and families they serve to produce the changes needed to ensure child safety.

This chapter discusses the ways that child protective service systems can enlist the support and involvement of the community in protecting children and can involve the families the system serves in this process.

Research on child resiliency has shown that strong community systems of support afford the best protection of children.<sup>25</sup> This includes a diversity of adult role models and

Second, children referred to the protective service system usually are not removed from their home. In many instances, the reasons for referral are related to the family's economic or social stress, which requires additional support but does not endanger the child. While there may be a reportable instance of abuse or

mentors; a variety of organized activities for children, youth, and families; high levels of civic participation in community life; and strong community norms against reckless behavior. Strong and active community involvement ensures that children are looked out for and provided safe places to reach out and explore.

Research has also demonstrated that the involvement of families is critical to the long-term success of children brought into the protective service system.

First, even when the state takes the extreme but necessary action of removing a child from his or her home for reasons of the child's safety, most children eventually will return to that home. In most instances, children have a strong bond with their family which they need to retain in some form for their own health and well-being. In most jurisdictions, 70 percent or more of children placed into foster care have "reunification" as their permanency plan goal. The involvement of families is needed to insure a healthy return of the child to home.

neglect, the major risk factors for the child relate to the environment around the family.

The engagement and involvement of family members and the development of a supportive community surrounding them is needed to protect the child. The professional system must develop links to these supportive

networks and establish the means to help families get what they need to provide that safe environment.

There are a variety of strategies (many drawn from other disciplines) that can help to bridge the professional child protective service world with the more immediate world of the child and the child's family and community. They include the following:

- incorporating consumer feedback into the protective service process;
- developing bridges to community institutions;
- supporting self-help networks and parent support systems; and
- broadening avenues for participation in policy making and service design.

Each of these is discussed separately.

### ***Consumer Feedback***

One of the best ways for any system to understand how it is performing is to gather information from those who have used it. In the child protective service system, this includes the children and their families who become involved in the system.

A first step is to follow up regularly with

A second way to gather information from consumers is through interviews or focus groups, where more indepth discussion of the system can occur. Focus groups are small meetings of five to ten people with a

families served by asking their opinions about the manner in which the child protective service system responded to them and insured the child(ren)'s safety. This can be done by mail-in survey questionnaire or by personal contact. If constructed well and regularly reviewed by staff, such surveys can be helpful in identifying areas of concern, particularly with respect to whether referrals to other services actually occurred in a seamless fashion and whether families felt they were treated fairly and respectfully in the process.

Written surveys should be aimed at an appropriate educational level, which should presume no more than a seventh grade reading ability. Personal interviews should be conducted at times and locations that are convenient to the families involved.

In constructing surveys, child protection staff should be enlisted to identify what information they would find helpful to guide their future work. Such consumer surveys can be made part of the routine operations within the child protective service system, but they must be regularly reviewed and revised to insure that they remain useful to the agency's work and that they are really providing consumer feedback.

facilitator, where everyone can provide perspectives and participants can build off each others' comments. Conducting such interviews or focus groups in a relaxed and comfortable atmosphere is essential.

Encouraging families to think about their experiences with the system prior to the focus group meeting or individual interview, both the positive aspects and what they found difficult and would like to see changed, is helpful. At the interview or focus group meeting, the role of the interviewer or facilitator is to get the discussion going and to guide it, when needed, so participant comments focus upon issues related to the way the child protective service system operates. This takes a skilled interviewer or facilitator who will do considerable background to identify issues that need to be addressed and prepared questions to help trigger discussions.

A third way to build in consumer feedback is within the overall training and staff development work for the child protective service system. As an illustration, some programs that train foster parents start the training with a foster child explaining the experience of being removed from his or her family and placed into foster care. This provides families with a perspective of how they may be viewed by the foster child. Likewise, families can be enlisted to provide their perspectives within the orientation process for child protective system workers or as part of ongoing training and staff development activities.

The most valuable form of consumer feedback is that which occurs during the time that workers are directly involved with

families and children. This requires that workers actively listen to what children and families are expressing and have ongoing channels to convey this information to their supervisors and the overall protective service system. The following questions (loosely adapted from the Institute for Family-Centered Care publication, *Essential Allies: Families as Advisors*) provides a checklist for assessing whether staff learn from the families and children they serve:

- Do staff believe that families bring unique expertise to the relationship?
- Do staff believe in the importance of family participation in planning and problem-solving?
- Do staff believe that families bring a critical element to the process that no one else can provide?
- Do staff create a comfortable environment in which families feel supported and comfortable to speak freely?
- Do staff clearly state what is required and expected of all family members?
- Do staff help family members set clear goals and follow-up to see how well they are proceeding on them?
- Do staff ask for feedback from families on how well services are meeting their needs?
- Do staff believe that families can provide valuable help in decision

- making at the program and policy
- Do staff regularly transmit family views on how well the system is working to others in the child protective service system?

If the child protective service system can answer these questions affirmatively, it likely has a strong system for using consumer feedback to improve its operations. All the ways of obtaining consumer feedback described here must be conducted in a manner respectful of the families and children whose views are sought. If this is done, consumer feedback can be mutually beneficial.

*Does the child protective service system solicit feedback from consumers on a regular basis and review what it receives carefully?*

*Does the system periodically conduct interviews or focus groups to discuss, in depth, the strengths and weaknesses of the protective service system?*

*Does the system make use of families and youth in its training and staff development activities?*

*Do staff actively listen to families and gather and convey consumer views as a regular part of their work?*

levels?

### ***Developing Bridges to Community Institutions***

It is well known that stress -- social, psychological, and economic -- weigh heavily on many children and families entering the child protective service system. Helping families deal with this stress can usually avert the need for long-term service involvement. Several studies have documented that rates of protective service involvement are much greater in areas of poverty and distress<sup>26</sup> and among socially isolated families.<sup>27</sup>

While the child protective service system may be needed to intervene in these situations, the path to family stability and child safety and growth is unlikely to be taken solely through that involvement. Instead, families need connections to and support from relatives and friends, from informal helpers, and from community institutions, often including religious institutions and community groups.

Child protective service systems can explicitly seek to build bridges with these community institutions. At its best, this bridge provides for two-way traffic. Community institutions can offer support to children and families involved in the child protective service system, through informal or formal referring relationships. Community institutions also can provide valuable

feedback to the child protective service system on how workers are viewed by the community. In some instances, community institutions can provide forums for the child protective service system to speak to community residents and enlist help and understanding. Child protective service systems that make connections with recognized community leaders -- usually including religious leaders, community organization board members and staff, and those involved in youth development programs -- can use these to secure further invitations into the community.

Building these connections takes time and effort to develop, but it provides multiple benefits. It starts with outreach by the child protective system and continues with an open door policy to hear from those community leaders and others they represent. The first step, to identify those leaders and resources within a community and to make "first contact," has been described very well in several publications.<sup>28</sup> Ideally, it expands both the capacity of the child protective service system to respond effectively and the legitimacy to make difficult decisions when those must be made. In the long term, developing these relationships may lead to a community advisory board to the child protective services system, outstationing of staff to the community, and other partnerships in addressing issues that affect child safety.<sup>29</sup>

It may also lead to joint assessment processes

involving community organizations in initial

*Has the child protective system identified supporting community institutions and leadership, particularly in areas with high rates of child protective service system involvement?*

*Has the system made contact with these leaders to explore mutual concerns and the role each can play in working together to protect children?*

*Does the system maintain an "open door" to community leaders and those they represent to address issues identified by the community?*

*Do child protective service staff regularly offer presentations to community groups and organizations about their work and their need for community support and involvement?*

*Do child protective service staff work with schools, child care centers, and parent councils?*

contacts with families.

### ***Supporting Self-Help Networks and Parent Support Groups***

A third way to increase citizen and consumer oversight and support is to foster the involvement of former youth and families involved in child protective services in helping others. Self-help groups<sup>30</sup> can aid many children and families in their own healing and growth. Parents Anonymous provides this type of support, which should, where possible, be connected to the response of the child protective service system. By doing so, responses to families can draw upon both professional and experiential expertise.

Partnering with self-help groups requires that staff in the child protective service system take on new roles. Most self-help groups do make active use of professionals and their expertise but use professionals in different ways -- as resources and often as mentors, but not as paternalistic therapists. Frank Riessman and David Carroll have provided a list of recommendations for training professionals to work with self-help groups. Many of these are applicable to any effort to provide better connections between protective service systems and community support systems:

- Have professionals attend open meetings of existing self-help groups;
- Simulate self-help groups in the training process;
- Have some sessions in the training
- Encourage the professional to join a

process include members of self-help groups, films of self-help groups, or presentations by members of self-help groups;

- Have discussions of the "self-help way" in contrast to the professional way and away from the [professional's] need to control the group;
- Present case histories of professionals working with self-help groups, with particular emphasis on various critical decision points, such as entry, developing a contract, or dealing with a group that is stuck;
- Help the professional accept that there is a natural, useful tension between self-help groups and professionals;
- Help the professional to spot leadership and encourage it;
- Conduct most of the training in an experiential fashion with a minimum of didactic presentation;
- Help the professional assess the organizational setting in which he or she works and the issues involved in introducing self-help groups in the particular setting--how to overcome resistance and develop a strategy;
- Review the many ways in which professionals have related to self-help groups and provide various examples; and  
self-help group and to reflect on this

participation, or to form a group to deal with his or her own issues of burnout.<sup>31</sup>

Where Parents Anonymous and other groups (including Alcoholics Anonymous and other self-help groups addressing issues faced by families in the child protective service system) exist, child protective service systems can do outreach to and establish relationships with these groups. Child protective services systems can also help nurture the development of these groups, providing support where necessary (space for meeting, travel and expenses for representatives from national self-help groups to provide technical assistance in group formation, referrals of families as possible members of groups while respecting confidentiality, etc.). Above all, self-help groups are most likely to partner with child protective service systems if they are truly welcomed and recognized as an asset by child protective service staff.

### ***Broadening Avenues for Participation***

There are a wide variety of ways that members in the community can help insure that children in their community are safe. If the only means for participation is serving on committees and advisory groups, however, many individuals with other talents will be left out. In addition, individuals may feel

*Are staff trained in how to work with self-help groups and understand their purposes?*

*Does the child protective service system enlist the support of existing self-help groups in working with children and families involved in the child protective service system?*

*Does the child protective service system provide support to encourage the establishment, growth, and work of self-help groups?*

*Do staff in the child protective service system recognize the value of working with families formerly involved in the CPS system and working with self-help groups?*

comfortable serving on committees, advisory groups, or as part of citizen review teams until they have engaged in other activities. The Institute for Family-Centered Care includes the following options for using families as advisors, designed first for family support programs but illustrative of

the different ways the child protective service systems could involve community residents:

- Hold a monthly family-staff coffee hour;
- Provide child care when parents attend meeting;
- Ask families to "host" a professional-in-training for dinner;
- Solicit family input in community and program needs assessments;
- Include families on site visit teams to other programs;
- Hold brainstorming sessions with families before developing educational materials;
- Have families review drafts of all written materials;
- Include a family panel during orientation for new staff;
- Ask families to assist in translating materials;
- Develop a "breakfast (or lunch) with the director" program for families;
- Keep a suggestion book in the waiting room;
- Invite men to visit their child's class, share a hobby, go on a field trip, or plan for the children to visit a father's place of work.<sup>33</sup>

The above lists illustrate the importance of thinking of forms of involvement from the perspective of the potential pool of volunteers and their interests and capabilities. The

room; and

- Invite families to present at inservice programs for staff.<sup>32</sup>

In *A Handbook for Involving Parents in Head Start*, the authors provide the following suggestions for involving men, who often are very underrepresented in activities that involve issues concerning children:

- Encourage men to serve on the center committee, policy groups, or special committees with which they have interest or expertise, such as budget, maintenance, or transportation;
- Ask men to help make new equipment -- bookshelves, puppet stages, doll houses -- or repair broken toys;
- Plan activities of special interest to men -- home maintenance workshops, poker nights, meetings with guest speakers such as athletes, or labor leaders;
- Serve refreshments that appeal to men; and

second list, in particular, illustrates the value of thinking in terms of involving fathers as well as mothers in developing community strategies to protect children.

These lists are not complete, but they do provide illustrations of the many ways community members can become involved. In addition to these volunteer activities, child protective systems may also think in terms of

paid staff positions for community members, particularly to serve as links to the community and to support networking with other organizations. Community members may serve in a variety of staff roles that contribute to protecting children and supporting the work of the child protective service system.<sup>34</sup> This use of community workers produces multiple benefits by providing bridges into resources, perspectives, and leadership and enhancing the system's effectiveness and legitimacy.

- Has the child protective service system thought broadly about how to enlist volunteers for individuals to work and promote children's that include, but are not limited to, participation on advisory committees and other groups?
- Are there staff positions that reflect the system's commitment to providing community-based services?
- Do these positions provide employment and career ladder opportunities to community residents and build on their assets?

### ***Conclusion***

Some of the strategies identified above for broadening consumer and citizen involvement may be more familiar than others. They all lead, however, to a more *community-based* child protective service system in the true sense of the word. They bring *new resources* into the work of child protection.

All of these strategies take time to establish and involve a process of trust building. As child protective service systems begin the process and take initial steps, however, they will experience an improved ability to do their work. James Comer has indicated that one of the key challenges to school reform is to reduce the distance between the culture of the school and the culture of the community -- so that schools can effectively help children learn.<sup>35</sup> In essence, the strategies recommended here reduce the distance between the culture of the child protective service system and the culture of those involved in that system and their immediate environments -- so that the child protective service system can effectively protect children.

# Getting Started

Not all the activities identified in this guide need to be undertaken at once. In fact, the process of reform is likely to be an iterative one, taking steps as needs arise and opportunities present themselves.

It is best, however, if state and community child protective systems structure their reform efforts with the following in mind:

- Base reform efforts on clearly articulated and agreed upon principles;
- Insure an inclusive process and inviting community stakeholders in at the early stages of planning and development;
- Assess existing resources and activities and the contributing role they can play in reform; and
- Establish timeframes for taking actions and devote the necessary time and resources to assure these can be met.

Many useful guides have been written about collaborative processes at both the state and community levels that can assist in this planning process.<sup>36</sup> These can be adapted for use in developing effective citizen involvement in child protective services. Of particular importance in this process is determining how current policies and practices, including the work of Court Appointed Special Advocates and other existing community review processes, fit in

and connect to the reforms envisioned. In many instances, states and communities do not have to start from square one or "reinvent the wheel," but can simply build on what already exists.

# Endnotes





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1 The latter death even led to a cover story in a national news magazine. David Von Biene, "Abandoned to Their Fate," *Time*, Vol. 146, No. 24 (1995), pp. 32-36.

2 United States General Accounting Office. *Child Welfare Complex Needs Strain Capacity to Provide Services*. Washington, D.C.: General Accounting Office, 1995, pp.5-7.

3 *Ibid.*, p. 11.

4 Jonathan Rabinowitz, "Rowland Plan Would Ease Early Adoption in Abuse Cases," *New York Times* (Jan. 5, 1996), Section B, p. 1.

5 Robert Pear, "Many States Fail to Meet Mandates on Child Welfare," *New York Times* (March 17, 1996), Section A, p. 1.

6 See particularly: Douglas W. Perez. *Common Sense about Police Review*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1994 and sources cited therein.

7 Pablo Eisenberg, "Monitoring Government: Issues/Challenges/Approaches," *Foundation News* (March/April 1979), pp. 43-47 and Nick Kotz, "Citizens As Experts," *Working Papers* (March/April 1981), pp. 42-48.

8 Thomas Reischl and Madeline Wordes, "Collaborative Evaluation of a Volunteer Monitoring Program to Improve Group Homes for Adults with Mental Retardation," *Community Mental Health Journal* vol. 30, no. 1 (February 1994), pp. 29-43.

9 Elizabeth W. Lindsey and John Wodarski, "Foster Family Care Review by Judicial-Citizen Panels: An Evaluation," *Child Welfare* Vol. 65, No. 3 (May-June 1986), pp. 211-230; E. Sue Wert, Edith Fein, and Wendy Haller, "'Children in Placement' (CIP): A Model for Citizen-Judicial Review," *Child Welfare* Vol. 65, No. 2 (March-April 1986), pp. 199-201; R. Danforth Ross, Janice Reif, and John Farie, "An Administrative Intercase Review System That Works," *Child Welfare* Vol. 66, No. 5 (September-October 1987), pp. 467-475; Bogart Leashore, "Workers' Perceptions of Foster Care Review in the District of Columbia," *Child Welfare* Vol. 65, No. 1 (January-February 1986), pp. 26-32; Mary Ann Jennings, Tom McDonald, and Ann Henderson. *Early Citizen Review: Does It Make a Difference?* Lawrence, KS: University of Kansas School of Social Work, n.d.; Ann Coyne. *Evaluation of the Nebraska State Foster Care Review Board*. Unpublished manuscript, 1986; \_\_\_\_\_ and Nadine Medlin. *An Evaluation of the Nebraska State Foster Care Review Board*. Unpublished manuscript, 1985; and Ann Coyne. *Evaluation of the Nebraska State Foster Care Review Board 1987-1988*. Unpublished manuscript, n.d.

10 The state programs whose directors were interviewed were Iowa, Nebraska, South Carolina, Oregon, Arizona and Maryland.

11 Valerie Bradley, John Ashbaugh, and Bruce Blaney. *Creating Individual Supports for People with Developmental Disabilities*. Baltimore, MD: Paul H. Brookes Publishing Company, 1994 and Betsy Santelli, ed. *Parent to Parent: A Treasury of Best Practices*. Topeka, KS: Beach Center on Families and Disability, 1994.

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12 Elizabeth Jeppson and Josie Thomas. *Essential Allies: Families as Advisors*. Bethesda, MD: Institute for Family-Centered Care, 1995.

13 Frank Riessman and David Carroll. *Redefining Self-Help: Policy and Practice*. New York: Jossey-Bass, 1995.

14 Robert Fisher. *Let the People Decide: Neighborhood Organizing in America*. New York: Twayne Publishers, 1994.

15 Susan Bowling, Cornelia Gibbons, and Denise Ruff. *An Overview of Citizen Involvement in Foster Care Review*, Second ed. Baltimore, MD: National Association of Foster Care Reviewers, n.d.

16 Pub. L. 96-272, Section 427 (a), 42 U.S.C. Section 627 (a).

17 Bowling, *et al.*, *op.cit.*, p. 8.

18 Jennings, *et al.*, p. 1.

19 According to one director, location in the human services agency presents numerous administrative issues including the citizen review program getting lost among the vast array of service programs provided within the state agency, internal competition for scarce resources, as well as the continued need to demonstrate independence while maintaining a "team player" image within the agency.

20 Despite concerns expressed over placement of programs a state's human services agency, the experience of at least one citizen review program shows that such a placement need not compromise its independence. The Maryland citizen review program is located within the state's human services agency, yet enjoys a reputation for being effective in system-level reform. Maryland's director responded that the placement of his agency is a good one because of the access it gives to human services data and officials. He identified three factors that help his program remain independent: (1) the human service agency's recognition that the program has 400 people (i.e., its local and state board members) who are not under the agency's control; (2) the existence of the state-level governing board, which has the authority to hire the citizen review agency director; and (3) a written protocol that defines the relationship between the human service agency and the citizen review board program.

21 According to several directors, recruiting people of color is particularly difficult where they are a small part of the population. By contrast, the Maryland director noted that his program had no trouble recruiting people of color to serve on boards in the Baltimore area, where they represent a high proportion of the population.

22 Iowa's citizen review statute proscribes against appointing *current* foster parents to review boards.

23 In some states, such as Iowa, the areas of training are mandated by statute; in most states they are established by the programs themselves.

24 One director noted that she had decided not to recommend appointment of a prospective board member who showed an inability to listen to the views of others and participate as a group member. Another director decided against appointing someone who seemed unable to understand basic review procedures.

25 Bonnie Benard. *Fostering Resiliency in Kids: Protective Factors in the Family, School, and Community*. Portland, OR: Far West Laboratories, 1991.

26 One study showed the rates of founded cases of child abuse or neglect in Chicago neighborhoods with child poverty rates over 50% were sixteen times higher than in neighborhoods with child poverty rates under 10%. Charles Bruner, with Stephen Scott. *The Effects of Concentrated Child Poverty on Child Welfare Policy and Practice -- Implications from Chicago Kids Count Data and Interviews with Foster Children*. Des Moines, IA: Child and Family Policy Center, 1994. Another study found that child welfare caseloads in high-risk neighborhoods in Allegheny County (including Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania) were 8.6 times higher than in other neighborhoods. Charles Bruner, with Stephen

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Scott and Martha Steketee. *Potential Returns on Investment from a Comprehensive Family Center Approach in High Risk Neighborhoods*. Des Moines, IA: Child and Family Policy Center, 1996. These are not small geographic areas. In Chicago, 16% of all children reside in these high child poverty neighborhoods; in Allegheny County, 19% of all children reside in high risk neighborhoods.

27 The prevention literature on "resiliency factors" is clear on the importance of social interconnectedness in protecting and supporting children. A good review of this literature is found in: Benard, *op. cit.*

28 See, in particular, John Kretzmann and John McKnight. *Building Communities from the Inside Out: A Path Toward Finding and Mobilizing a Community's Assets*. Evanston, IL: Center for Urban Affairs and Policy Research, Northwestern University, 1993. For a general discussion of community assessment strategies, see: Charles Bruner, Karen Bell, Hedy Chang, and Bill Scarbrough. *Charting a Course: Assessing a Community's Strengths and Needs*. Falls Church, MD: National Center for Service Integration, 1993.

29 The community's perception of how to protect children may be broader than that taken by the child protective service system. One of the lessons learned in partnering with community groups is to listen to their agendas. The following is an "early lesson learned" from the federal Healthy Start Initiative, designed to establish comprehensive strategies to reducing infant mortality in distressed neighborhoods:

Ask the community to identify its problems, concerns, and needs. Do not assume the priorities of project leaders are necessarily the priorities of community leaders. In an area with high unemployment and inadequate housing, families may not see health care as a priority issue. These other issues must be dealt with before prenatal and pediatric care can be fully addressed.

M. McCoy-Thompson, J. Vanneman, and F. Bloom. *The Healthy Start Initiative: A Community-Driven Approach to Infant Mortality Reduction -- Vol. II. Early Implementation: Lessons Learned*. Arlington, VA: National Center for Education in Maternal and Child Health, 1994.

30 As used here, self-help refers to groups or networks that convene for a common purpose and provide mutual support and aid. Riessman and Carroll, *op.cit.*, describe the self-help paradigm as follows:

The reconceptualization of the self-help paradigm views people with problems as potential help givers, as more independent than dependent. The paradigm changes the helper-helpee ratio in numerous ways:

1. The number of individuals involved exclusively in helpee roles is vastly reduced, and the number of helpers is increased dramatically.
2. Even when receiving help, the receiver knows that tomorrow, or even later at the same meeting, he or she will provide help to someone else, which removes the loss of status experienced by one who is only a helpee.
3. The help-giving power of the entire unit is expanded because of the power that emanates from so many individuals playing the helping role. pp. 4-5.

31 *Ibid.*, pp. 49-50.

32 Jeppson and Thomas, *op.cit.*, p. 19.

33 *A Handbook for Involving Parents in Head Start*. p. 14.

34 Jeppson and Thomas, *op. cit.*, provide job descriptions for several different possible roles, including parent-community liaison, parent consultant, and family partner.

35 James Comer. *School Power*. New York, New York: Free Press, 1980.

36 For an annotated list of a number of these references, see the bibliography in Deborah Both and Carolyn Marzke. *Getting Started*. Falls Church, MD: National Center for Service Integration, 1994.