

By-Laws of The District of Columbia Citizen Review Panel

Article I Name

Section 1. The name of this organization shall be the Citizen Review Panel (hereinafter referred to as the Panel).

Article II Purpose

Section 1. The Citizen Review Panel is a statutorily mandated group of community members citizens who are responsible for determining whether District agencies are effectively discharging their child protective responsibilities; pursuant to the 1996 amendments to the Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act and any subsequent amendments.

Section 2. The purpose of the Citizen Review Panel is to serve as an external, independent oversight body for the District's child welfare system, evaluating the strengths and weaknesses of District government agencies involved in child protection as well as neighborhood-based services provided by vendors. The Panel shall examine the policies, practices, and procedures of the Child and Family Services Agency (hereinafter the Agency) and any other District government agency that provides services to children at risk of abuse and neglect, or to children under the care of the Agency, including, as appropriate, the review of specific child cases. Based on this examination, the Panel shall evaluate the extent to which agencies serving children at risk of abuse or neglect, or children under the care of the Agency, are effectively discharging their child protection responsibilities.

Article III Membership

Section 1. Panel membership shall consist of fifteen (15) members. The Panel shall recommend candidates for membership to the Mayor and the Council. Eight members shall then be appointed by the Mayor, and seven members shall be appointed by the Council by resolution. The Mayor shall designate the Chairperson of the Panel and the Council shall designate the Vice Chairperson of the Panel. None of the members shall be employed by the District government.

Section 2. The Panel shall be broadly representative of the District of Columbia community and shall include members who have expertise in the prevention and treatment of child abuse and neglect. The Mayor and Council shall seek to include in its membership a diversity of professional backgrounds, such as children's attorneys, child advocates, parents, foster parents, and other consumer representatives, social workers, educators, and health and mental health professionals who are familiar with the child welfare system.

Section 3. Except as provided in Section 5, Panel members shall be appointed for three (3) year terms. Upon completion of the first term, members may be reappointed to the Panel according to Article III, Section 1. Panel member may resign or terminate membership at anytime with written notification to the Panel.

Section 4. If members of the Panel fail to attend at least three (3) consecutive meetings annually, without good cause or without sufficient justification for their absences, the Panel may recommend to the mayor or City Council that their membership be terminated.

Section 5. Vacancies in membership shall be filled in the same manner in which the original appointment was made, with the newly appointed member serving the unexpired term of his or her predecessor. (See Section 1 of Article III.)

Section 6. A quorum shall consist of 8 members of the Panel.

Section 7. Former Panel members shall be encouraged to serve as participants in Panel Committees or Task Forces without voting privilege.

Article IV

Executive Committee

Section 1. The Executive Committee shall be comprised of Officers of the Panel and the immediate past Chairperson (if available and if still a member of the Panel). The Executive Committee shall meet as necessary to coordinate the affairs of the Panel between full Panel meetings, to deal with urgent matters that cannot wait until the next full Panel meeting, and to carry out any responsibility delegated to the Executive Committee by the full Panel.

Section 2. A quorum shall consist of a majority of the Executive Committee

Article V Committees and Task Forces

Section 1. The Panel shall establish such Committees and Task Forces as may be necessary to carry out its mandate. The Executive and Nominating Committees shall be Standing Committees.

Section 2. The Nominating Committee shall coordinate efforts to maintain a full membership roster by identifying potential new members, including at least one youth who has recently aged out of the foster care system and one representative of foster parents.

Section 3. Members of Panel Committees and Task Forces shall be appointed by the Chairperson. Committees and Task Forces shall include members of the Panel and shall be chaired by Panel members. However, Task Forces shall, where appropriate, include non-Panel members who lend special knowledge or expertise to the work of the Task Force.

Section 4. Committees and Task Forces shall meet as often as necessary to fulfill their particular mandate. However, Task Forces shall meet at least once between full Panel meetings.

Article VI Officers

Section 1. Officers shall be Chairperson, Vice-Chairperson, Secretary and Treasurer. Officers

shall serve two-year terms. Terms begins January 1st, thru December 31st.

Article VII Duties of the Officers

Section 1. The Chairperson shall preside at all meetings of the Panel, establish other Committees as needed and appoint their members, and assume any other duties established by a majority vote

of the full Panel. The Chairperson shall serve as an *ex officio* member of all Committees and Task Forces.

Section 2. The Vice-Chairperson shall perform the duties of the Chairperson in the event of his/her absence, resignation, or inability to perform his/her duties, in addition to other duties that may be delegated by the Chairperson or by a vote of the panel membership.

Section 3. The Treasurer shall monitor all financial matters and report them to the Panel, in addition to other duties that may be delegated by the Chairperson or by a vote of the membership. The Treasurer shall oversee the development of the budget in conjunction with the Facilitator.

Section 4. The Secretary shall assist the Facilitator in keeping the minutes of the meetings of the Panel and the Executive Committee, in addition to other duties that may be delegated by the Chairperson or by a vote of the membership.

Article VIII Duties of Panel Members

Section 1. The Panel shall evaluate the extent to which agencies serving children at risk of abuse or neglect, or children under the care of the CFSA, are effectively discharging their child protection responsibilities in accordance with:

- The State plan required by section 106(b) of the Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act.
- The child protection standards set forth in section 106(b) of the Child Abuse Prevention and

Treatment Act.

- Any other criteria that the Panel deems important to ensure the protection of children.

Section 2. The Panel shall solicit public outreach and comment in order to assess the impact of current policies, practices, and procedures of the child welfare system on children and families in the District of Columbia.

Section 3. The Panel shall submit a report, no later than June 30th of each year (unless the Mayor asks for it sooner), to the Mayor, Council, and Agency, summarizing the Panel's activities and findings during the prior calendar year, containing recommendations on how to improve child welfare services and outcomes in the District of Columbia, and providing information on the progress the District government is making in implementing the recommendations of the Panel.

Section 4. Each member of the Panel shall serve on, and actively participate in the work of, at least one Panel Committee or Task Force that is addressing an issue that the Panel has adopted as a priority.

Article IX

Meetings

Section 1. The Panel shall meet at least once quarterly. Special meetings shall be held upon the call of the Chairperson, or at the request of the majority of Panel members.

Section 2. Panel meetings shall be open to the public, except that the Panel shall meet in closed session when it is reviewing specific child cases. Panel members shall be allowed to invite guests to attend the meetings, however, only members shall vote, review child welfare cases, and other confidential reports. No resolution, rule, act, regulation, or any other official action shall be effective unless taken, made, or enacted at an open meeting as specified in DC official code 1-207.42.

Section 3. A quorum shall consist of a eight (8) Panel members.

Article X

Non-Discrimination

Section 1. There shall be no discrimination on the basis of race, color, ethnicity, sex, creed, national origin, socio-economic status or sexual preference. There shall be no discrimination against an otherwise qualified individual by reason of disability or age, as defined in statute. There shall be special efforts to identify persons who have disabilities and persons from ethnically, economically, and racially diverse groups.

Article XI Amendments

Section 1. Amendments to the by-laws of this Panel shall be made by 2/3 of the members present at any meeting of the Panel, but only after notification in writing to the full membership at least two (2) weeks in advance.

Article XII Confidentiality

Section 1. The CRP shall safeguard confidential all information (whether acquired through verbal communication, written record or observation) pertaining to any child, relative or friend of any family under review of the Citizen Review Panel. In addition, the panel shall safeguard information pertaining to individual staff or panel members, or believe to have a detrimental effect on families or the community at large, obtained or shared among members during full panel and committee meetings. This clause shall specifically exclude formal reports, media releases, and other information approved by the panel or to meet mandatory reporting guidelines.

Section 2. Panel Members shall sign a confidentiality agreement at the start of their term.

Section 3. Failure to uphold confidentiality will result in the member's termination from the Panel.

Article XIII Conflict of Interest

Section 1. Panel members and appointees for membership shall disclose any personal or professional relationships that may represent or may appear to represent a conflict of interest with the Panel. If a conflict of interest arises that may compromise or appear to compromise the individual or the work of the CRP, the Panel may; (a) require that the individual recuse himself or herself from consideration of or participation in the matter in which he or she may have or appear to have a conflict of interest or (b) the Panel may vote to revoke or deny the individual membership on the Panel. Any member affiliated with an organization providing services to children or families, as an officer, director, partner, employee, consultant, or contractor, shall recuse himself or herself from any discussion of specific cases that involve the organization, and shall also recuse himself or herself from any discussion of findings or recommendations that involve the organization.