

*It is the mission of the Region 2 Oversight Committee to be a presence in the community by reaching out and advocating for the needs of children and families across Region 2.*

**Region 2 Children's Administration Oversight Committee  
Citizen Review Panel**

**2008 CAPTA Report and Work Plan**

**June 1, 2009**

**Purpose**

The purpose of the Citizen Review Panel (CRP) is to evaluate the extent to which the state is fulfilling its child protection responsibilities in accordance with the federal Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (CAPTA) State plan.

**Areas of Focus**

The Region 2 Oversight Committee also serves as a Citizen Review Panel (CRP) for Washington State. The Oversight Committee CRP invited local community members to meetings to explore whether CA services are accessible, and whether policies, practices and community collaboration support child safety and well-being. Areas of focus last year included: child fatalities, agency performance meeting federal and state targets (data), foster parent support and training, emergency child placement resources, racial disproportionality in CA services, and staff turnover. The committee also continued to follow agency progress implementing recommendations from prior years.

**Process**

The Region 2 Oversight Committee CRP met eight times during 2008. The meetings were conducted in various communities in each of the seven counties which comprise Region 2. Meetings were held in a variety of locations and in additional, smaller communities. Meetings were held as follows:

January 22	Kennewick	(County Human Services offices)
February 26	Toppenish	(Yakima Valley Farmworkers' Clinic offices)
March 25	Walla Walla	(Hospital)
April 22	Yakima	(CA Regional Office)
May 27	Connell	(Community center & juvenile corrections camp)
June 24	White Salmon	(Inn)
August 8	Dayton	(Fire Station)
September 23	Ellensburg	(new DSHS office)
October 28	Toppenish	(Yakama Nation facility)

Meetings included community comment from a variety of invited local key informants knowledgeable about child and family service needs and service gaps. The CA regional administrator, area administrators, deputy regional administrator and regional program consultants regularly attend the Oversight CRP meetings. The CA Assistant Secretary attended part of one meeting. Comments were heard from guests during 2008 including:

Camp Outlook Juvenile Rehabilitation Administration staff and youth residents  
Foster parents

Two elected Superior Court Judges

Educational personnel representing 3 districts

Juvenile justice administrators from 3 counties

CASA volunteers and staff from 2 counties

Law enforcement officers representing 3 jurisdictions

One elected County Commissioner

Domestic violence and sexual assault program staff from 2 counties

Private child-placing and mental health agency staff representing 4 agencies

County Health and Safety Network staff

Local CA supervisors and social workers

## **Findings**

### **1. Community collaboration is essential to child protection and well-being.**

- Discussions with stakeholders in various localities have continued to highlight the importance of engaging with community partners to assure referrals for abuse/neglect are made, strengthen the effectiveness of CPS and to reduce gaps in the service array.
- The expanded and consistent presence of CA social workers in Columbia County has brought more referrals from the community, largely through building confidence in the agency's services.
- Each member of the Oversight CRP agreed to serve on teams to help review child fatalities as needed. The committee reviewed an annual report of child fatalities with the regional CPS program consultant and one CRP member has served so far on a review team.
- At meetings held in very small, very rural areas, the focus was on how youth can best be served in their communities.
- Education summits are good models of collaboration. They were planned and implemented collaboratively with local school and other community partners. While one summit per region was expected by CA state office, Region 2 held five. They facilitated identification of local needs, problem-solving, cross-system education and building relationships. High School graduation rates for youth in foster care have seen a sharp increase.

### **2. Each community needs access to crisis placement resources and suitable foster care.**

- Progress was made in 2008 developing new licensed crisis placement resources. New foster home-based programs for this purpose were opened in Columbia, Klickitat and Kittitas Counties. Funding for rural

programs is complex, and required collaborative efforts among Oversight Committee CRP members, law enforcement, private child-placing agencies, county human services departments and CA.

- There continues to be a shortage of crisis placement resources in the lower Yakima Valley.
- There is a persistent, acute shortage of licensed foster homes.
- The agency's implementation of Adam Walsh legislation left critical holes and delays in background check processing which contributed to the already acute shortage of foster care resources. The agency would not allow community partners to step in to fill the gap in fingerprinting resources.

### **3. Remediation of racial disproportionality in child welfare services will require in-depth study and broad community involvement.**

- The Oversight CRP committed itself to learning and challenging ourselves and all parties in child welfare in our home communities to make sure all children and families have access to quality services.
- One member of the Oversight CRP also serves on the legislatively-mandated CA Disproportionality Review Committee. That committee conducted a thorough study of incidence of racial disproportionality in each region of public child welfare, and released its report in late 2008. She updated the Oversight CRP at each meeting.
- The most significant disproportionality in Region 2 is among Native American children. The Oversight CRP undertook to increase members' awareness and ability to lead change by devoting one meeting to education on Tribal-State relations and the legal framework for Indian Child Welfare.

### **Committee Workplan for 2009**

1. Continue to visit rural communities to investigate whether there are sufficient resources and services provided by Children's Administration (CA) in this geographically large, rural region.
2. Continue to study and keep focus on the problems of racial disproportionality and participate in multi-system remediation work in the region.
3. Continue to oversee efforts by CA and community stakeholders to develop and maintain crisis placement resources and an expanded number of foster homes throughout the region.
4. Offer support to CA regional administration to reduce staff turnover in offices where it is high.

### **Recommendations to the Agency**

- 1. For the agency and communities to be effective partners supporting child safety, CPS must be respected and trusted. As the agency starts new initiatives, resources, and practice change, it should consistently allow both time and funds to inform, plan collaboratively, and work together with communities in each location, attending to local needs and differences.**

2. **The agency at all levels should continue to support the Disproportionality Advisory Committee and commit itself to the remediation plan.**
3. **CA should begin in-depth discussions and examination of the problem of foster home shortages.**
4. **There should continue to be at least one member of the Region 2 Oversight CRP who also serves on the state Children, Youth and Family Services Advisory Committee (as Michael Bates does now).**

**Submitted by:**  
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