

STRUCTURES THAT SUPPORT CRP SUCCESS



Ending Child Abuse and Neglect.

Citizen Review Panels (CRPs) are groups of people—and groups of people need some sort of organizational structure to function successfully as a team. This Tip Sheet describes some ways that CRPs can create and support that structure as they seek to carry out their federal mandate.

The tools below are commonly used to provide structure to decision-making groups. Because there is so much variability in the way CRPs are implemented, they do not represent “one size fits all” suggestions. Panels should spend time talking about tools, and approaches to implementing them, that would best meet their specific needs.

► **By-laws.** Formal by-laws can be very helpful in defining key issues such as the roles and responsibilities of Panel members and how decisions are made. At a minimum, by-laws should contain: an overview of the Panel in terms of its purpose as laid out in CAPTA, membership terms, the role of the Chair, the committee structure (if it exists), how conflicts of interest issues are

handled, how decisions are made (e.g., Roberts Rules of Order), and a statement about confidentiality. Panels may wish to add additional topics, depending on their needs.

► **Membership Application.** Whether or not they are included in a Panel’s by-laws, it is important to be clear about member terms, roles and responsibilities and to have a formal application process that, without being onerous, conveys the seriousness of the task that potential members are taking on. A formal application process also helps with transitions, making clear when and how new members are brought on to replace members who are cycling off. In addition to gathering the basics such as name, contact information, and references, the application should ask about why the applicant wants to serve on the Panel, previous volunteer experience, and any known conflicts of interest. Optional questions about gender or race/ethnicity can help with ensuring diversity. Membership applications can be widely distributed and posted on web sites.

Continued on next page

These tools are commonly used to provide structure to decision-making groups.



Continued from previous page

- ▶ **Meeting Agendas.** No one likes to sit through a disorganized, pointless meeting. An agenda should be prepared for each meeting and sent out to members in advance. The agenda should be a reflection of the strategic plan that is guiding the Panel's action, and should have time for sub-committees to report on or to meet and discuss their work. Agendas should have specific timeframes for each item to help both the Chair and members to keep on task. It may also be a good idea to include standard items on each agenda, such as information sharing by the child welfare agency liaison, reports on the status of recommendations previously made by the Panel, data updates, and/or information about new initiatives.
- ▶ **Meeting Minutes.** Minutes provide an official record of the meeting, so make sure that they reflect what actually took place, with a focus on

any decisions made and actions taken. Minutes should be succinct. When they are longer, the use of a meeting summary with bullet points at the top of the document can be useful. Minutes should be sent to members within a week of the meeting so that they may make additions or corrections while their recollections are still fresh.

- ▶ **Memorandum of Understanding.** As discussed in [Tip Sheet #2](#), the relationship between Citizen Review Panels and the child welfare agency can be a challenging one. A Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) can make an important contribution to heading off conflicts or misunderstandings. The MOU should, at a minimum, clarify each entity's roles, responsibilities, and needs around information sharing. As an example, the MOU might state that the child welfare agency is responsible for informing the Panels of policy changes, and that the Panel will follow a certain protocol when requesting information. The process of developing an MOU collaboratively will likely surface specific issues that need to be addressed in order for both parties to function effectively in their relationship with each other. Once established, the MOU should be reviewed regularly, and modified or re-affirmed yearly or every few years.

Examples of all of the items listed above may be obtained by emailing Blake Jones at Bljone00@uky.edu

Resources

- ▶ National Citizen Review Panel Virtual Community: www.uky.edu/socialwork/crp
- ▶ Non-Profit Ally: <http://nonprofitally.com/>
- ▶ Minnesota Council of Non-Profits: <http://www.minnesotanonprofits.org/>
- ▶ Brushy Fork Institute: <https://www.berea.edu/brushy-fork-institute/handout-and-papers/>

Groups of people need some sort of organizational structure to function successfully as a team. Panels should spend time talking about tools, and approaches to implementing them, that would best meet their specific needs.

September 2015. This fact sheet was developed by Blake Jones, Ph.D., University of Kentucky School of Social Work, under the auspices of the National Child Abuse and Neglect Technical Assistance and Strategic Dissemination Center (CANTASD). CANTASD is funded by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children, Youth and Families, Office of Child Abuse and Neglect, under PSC Contract No.: HHSP233201400025C.

