



Minnesota Department of **Human Services**

Minnesota Citizen Review Panels: Reaching out to protect children

*The safety,
permanency and
well-being of all
children will be
achieved when
everyday citizens
invest themselves in
community services
and child protection.*

In 1996, Congress amended the Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (CAPTA). This required each state to establish at least three citizen review panels in order to receive Child Abuse and Neglect State Grants Program funding. In Minnesota, panels have been established in Chisago, Ramsey, Washington and Winona counties. The Minnesota Department of Human Services (DHS) plans to expand citizen review panels throughout the state.

Working together for children's well-being

Citizen review panels provide opportunities for community members to play an integral role in ensuring the child protection system is protecting children from abuse and neglect and helping find permanent homes for them. While the panels are required to review the state's CAPTA plan, they also evaluate different aspects of the child protection system in their own communities. Made up of 11 to 16 citizens each, these panels represent a partnership among:

- Citizens
- Community agencies
- County child protection systems
- The Minnesota Department of Human Services

Serving multiple purposes

To ensure the state's child protection system is working well, citizen review panels:

- Consults with their county's child protection agency on other important child protection standards in their county
- Prepares and make available to the public an annual report summarizing the panel's activities
- Reviews the consistency of the child protection system's practice and policy compliance
- Offers insight that those working within the system may miss and provide feedback on what is or isn't working
- Analyzes trends and recommends policy changes
- Provides outside validation of the child protection system's successes and staff efforts
- Increases community understanding of and investment in the child protection system
- Provides input on the use of community resources

- Promotes cooperation among community resources and county child protection services
- Advocates for needed resources to protect children from abuse and neglect, and find them permanent homes quickly
- Evaluate how well the Minnesota Department of Human Services complies with its five-year CAPTA plan.

Serving on citizen review panels

Panel members listen well, work as part of a team, are sensitive to diversity, maintain confidentiality, participate in training and serve two-year terms. These community volunteers, appointed by the DHS commissioner and county commissioners, participate in training in:

- Child abuse and neglect issues
- Permanency laws, including family reunification, case plans, and reasonable efforts toward family reunification
- Alternatives to family reunification, including long-term foster care, transfer of legal custody, termination of parental rights and adoption
- Child development and attachment issues
- Cultural considerations, including the Indian Child Welfare Act and heritage preservation
- Dynamics of domestic violence
- Legal and court processes
- Cultural diversity
- Chemical and mental health
- Education and community resources

Working to strengthen the child protection system

Panel members are responsible for giving their outside perspective on the internal workings of the child protection system. To accomplish this, panels:

- Meet regularly (at least once every three months)
- Review records, case files and reports
- Gather information through interviews and observation
- Provide independent insight
- Report findings and recommendations to key leaders
- Receive ongoing support and consultation from county agencies and DHS staff.

To learn more, contact:

Anita Keyes
(651) 431-4704
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Title: Volunteer Citizen Review Panel Member

General Function:

Volunteer community members analyze trends, provide independent insights and outside validation of the child protection system, recommend and advocate for needed changes and resources, promote cooperation among community resources and child protection service agencies and increase community understanding and investment in protecting all children. They examine child protection policies, procedures and practices of the state and county child protection agencies. They evaluate the extent to which the agencies are discharging their child protection responsibilities. Panel members gather information through interviews and observations, and review records, case files and reports. The members prepare and make available to the public an annual report containing a summary of the panel's activities and recommendations to improve the child protection system.

What the Volunteer Experience Can Offer You:

- An opportunity to actively participate on the behalf of abused and neglected children.
- An opportunity to put your interests, talents and expertise to good use for a worthy cause.
- Initial orientation regarding the child protection system that includes: child abuse and neglect issues, case plans and efforts to reunite families, foster care, alternatives to family reunification, the best interests of children, child development and attachment issues, cultural considerations including the Indian Child Welfare Act and heritage preservation, the disparities of the numbers of children and families of color involved in the child protection system, the dynamics of domestic violence, and the court process.
- An opportunity to have a positive impact by addressing the disparities of the numbers of children and families of color involved in the child protection system.
- In-service training on topics such as cultural diversity, chemical and mental health, education and community resources.
- Ongoing professional support and consultation.
- Access to a wide variety of community resources and people.
- A meaningful, important volunteer experience that will add skills, provide insights, interests and challenges.
- An opportunity to update and add to your resume.
- Access to and an understanding of the child protection system and Juvenile Court proceedings.
- Reimbursement for mileage, parking and other approved out of pocket expenses.
- An opportunity to promote and affect positive changes for the well-being of children.

(See next page)

Qualifications and Skills:

- *Genuine concern and compassion for those involved in the child protection service system.*
- Desire to have a positive impact on the child protection service system and those involved.
- Desire to learn about the current child protection service system.
- Desire to promote needed changes in the child protection system as identified by the panels.
- Ability to articulate ideas, concerns and thoughts.
- Ability to listen, be open minded, non judgmental and constructive.
- Ability to work as part of a team.
- Willingness to make an initial commitment of two years.
- Sensitivity to cultural, ethnic and economic diversity.
- Common sense and maturity.
- May not currently be involved in a child protection, child custody dispute or criminal matter.
- May not be a current county attorney's office, district court, social or court services employee, a foster care provider or a paid guardian *ad litem* of a county in which a panel operates.
- Must maintain confidentiality.
- Must sign releases authorizing a criminal records check and a child maltreatment records check.

Duties and Responsibilities:

- Maintain confidentiality.
- Complete initial orientation.
- Attend and participate in all meetings. (Panels meet monthly.)
- Submit reimbursement claims and other requested records in a timely manner.
- Gather information by conducting interviews, reviewing files, records and reports.
- Participate in educational activities to better understand the child protection system.
- Review the child protection service agency's consistency of practice and compliance with stated policies, laws and procedures.
- Assist in the analysis of the information gathered.
- Assist in the compilation of an annual report summarizing the activities of the panel.
- Provide feedback on what is working well.
- Make recommendations for needed policy changes and suggest corrective actions.
- Promote cooperation among community resources and child protection service agencies.
- Increase community understanding, ownership and investment in child protection.
- Advocate for needed resources to protect children from abuse and neglect and to ensure permanent homes for children in a timely manner.

The Power of Community



**Ending Child Abuse
and Neglect.**



Application

Volunteer Children's Services Review Panel Member

The Minnesota Department of Human Services' policy and federal law prohibits discrimination based on race, creed, sex, religion, mental or physical disabilities, age or marital status. Questions of this nature are asked for general background purposes only. **You are not obligated to supply this information.* If you do not answer these questions it will not affect consideration given to your application.

Name: _____

Address: _____ City/State: _____ Zip: _____

Home/Cell Phone: _____ Work Phone: _____

E-mail: _____

*Male: ☐ *Female: ☐ *Birth date: _____

Person to Notify In Case of Emergency: _____

Home Phone: _____ Work Phone: _____

Additional Information

Relevant Training, Degrees, Certificates and Licenses:

Where did you hear about the Citizen Review Panel?

Please list special skills, interests or relevant experiences.

What strengths do you have that would be beneficial to the Panel?

Have you been convicted of a crime, other than minor traffic violations?

If yes, please explain. Yes _____ No _____

Have you or has anyone in your family been involved with the Social Services or Court systems? If yes, please explain. Yes _____ No _____

If yes, did you feel you were treated fairly? Yes _____ No _____ Explain:

Are you willing to serve an initial term of two years on the panel? Yes _____ No _____ (See next page)

Narrative Questions

Why do you want to become a citizen review panel member?

What do you hope to get out of this experience?

Do you have any reservations about serving as a volunteer panel member?

In order to promote the integrity of the citizen review panel, ensure confidentiality is maintained, to protect the safety of the volunteer panel members and those involved with the agencies and cases reviewed, we use many methods of screening, including criminal and child maltreatment records checks.

Are you willing to allow us to conduct a thorough background check on you? Yes _____ No _____

References

Please list the names, **complete addresses, including the zip code**, and daytime phone numbers of three references.

1.

2.

3.

I submit the statements on this application are true, complete and correct to the best of my knowledge. I understand that falsification on this application can disqualify me from consideration or can result in dismissal at a later time.

Signature: _____ **Date:** _____

Thank you for taking the time to fill out this application. Return the completed application to:

Kristen Jackelen
Ramsey County Human Services Department
160 E. Kellogg Blvd., Suite 9800
St. Paul, MN 55101

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