



CRP

New York State
Citizen Review Panels for
Child Protective Services

20 ANNUAL 24 REPORT



New York Continues to Fail its Families

Urgent Change is Needed



New York State Citizen Review Panels for Child Protective Services

The New York State (NYS) Citizen Review Panels (the Panels) for Child Protective Services (CPS) are important conduits for informed public input and provide an external perspective on the efficacy of New York State's child protective policies, practices, programs, and fiscal priorities.

Panel members, appointed by the Governor or the NYS Legislature, are volunteers with a breadth of experience and knowledge in child welfare practice, policy, law, social work, education, and technology, among other areas. Each of the three Panels has up to 13 members. Of those members, the Governor appoints seven, and the Senate Temporary President and Speaker of the Assembly appoint three each.

The Western Panel covers the 17 counties in the Western region of the state. The New York City Panel covers the five boroughs of New York City. The Eastern Panel covers the remaining 40 counties.

The Panels are authorized by both state and federal law to examine policies, procedures, and practices at both the state and local levels, and, where appropriate, to review the outcomes of specific cases. The Panels are authorized to hold public hearings and to evaluate the extent to which agencies are effectively discharging their child protection responsibilities. The Panels have reasonable access to public and private facilities receiving public funds to provide child welfare services within each Panel's jurisdiction.

The Panels also advocate for legislation that can have a positive impact on child welfare services in NYS. The Panels are active on social media platforms, including Facebook and X (formerly Twitter), to raise awareness of the issues surrounding child protective services. See the inside back cover for more information on the Panels' legal role and authority. For [summaries of Panel activities](#) and a list of [Panel members](#), refer to the Appendices.

Federal Law and the Citizen Review Panels

The 1996 amendments to the federal Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (CAPTA) require states that receive federal funding under that legislation to create volunteer Citizen Review Panels. The purpose of these Panels is to assess whether state and local agencies are effectively carrying out their child protection responsibilities. The federal statute broadly defines the work of the Citizen Review Panels. The Panels must meet not fewer than once every three months and produce an annual public report containing a summary of their activities and recommendations to improve the child protection system at the state and local levels.

They must evaluate the extent to which the state is fulfilling its child protective responsibilities under its CAPTA state plan by:

- Examining the policies, procedures, and practices of state and local agencies;
- Reviewing specific cases, when warranted; and
- Reviewing other matters the Panel may consider important to child protection, consistent with Section 106(c)(A)(iii) of CAPTA.

Following the order of federal CAPTA Amendments in 1996, the NYS Legislature passed Chapter 136 of the Laws of 1999, establishing no less than three Citizen Review Panels, with at least one in New York City. The other Panels were established to serve Eastern and Western New York.



Introduction

The New York State Citizen Review Panels (the Panels) for Child Protective Services (CPS) are vital to a transparent and accountable child welfare system. Established under state and federal law, the Panels serve as a bridge between the public and CPS by providing an informed, external perspective on the policies, practices, programs, and fiscal priorities that affect New York’s children and families. Comprised of up to 13 members each, the three Panels draw on a diverse array of expertise, including child welfare, social work, law, education, and medicine. Appointed by the Governor or legislative leaders, these dedicated volunteers elevate the voices of children, families, and community. By actively examining systemic challenges and proposing actionable recommendations, the Panels strive to ensure that every child in New York has the opportunity to grow up in a safe and supportive environment.

Each Panel serves a specific region: the Western Panel oversees 17 counties in the Western region, the New York City Panel focuses on the five boroughs, and the Eastern Panel covers 40 counties in the Eastern region of the state. These Panels are empowered to evaluate agency effectiveness, review case outcomes, and advocate for reforms.

Statement of Position

The NYS Citizen Review Panels remain steadfast in their mission to enhance the fairness and efficacy of child protective services across the state. However, this year’s report underscores a shared frustration among Panel members regarding systemic inaction on past Panel recommendations. Despite clear, evidence-based proposals, many critical recommendations have not been implemented at all, or only partially enacted (see [Appendix A](#)). This undermines the Panels' work but also compromises the safety and well-being of vulnerable children and families. Also hindering the Panels effectiveness are Panel vacancies. A cumbersome appointment process leaves the Panels far short of the number of members needed to enact their charge.

As we present this year’s recommendations, which are intentionally brief and immediate action-focused, the Panels reaffirm their commitment to advocating for meaningful change. We call upon state leaders to prioritize the implementation of this year’s recommendations, as well as those of prior years.

In addition to advancing legislative reforms and systemic improvements, the Panels pledge to continue amplifying public awareness of child welfare issues. By leveraging both traditional and digital platforms, we aim to foster a deeper understanding of the challenges and opportunities within New York’s child protective services system. Together, with collaborative action, transparency, and genuine accountability, we can achieve a safer and more just future for the children and families of New York State.



To provide feedback on this report, visit the 2024 Report feedback survey at <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/2024ARCRPfeedback>; scan the QR Code to the left; or contact the Panels at www.citizenreviewpanelsny.org/contact-us



2024 Annual Report

Families and children in New York State continue to suffer needlessly from intrusive investigations initiated by a report of child abuse made to the state's hotline, only to have the report be declared unfounded. This act of government intrusion into family life impacts a disproportionate number of Black and Brown families, resulting in increased stress and anxiety for communities already dealing with adverse impacts from poverty, housing and food insecurity, a lack of access to health care, and higher likelihood of neighborhood violence. More than one-third of all children, and more than half of Black children, will endure the trauma of a child abuse investigation before they turn 18 — frequently in response to a false report or a case in which family poverty is confused with neglect (Children's Rights, 2023). As shown within the state's 2023 Child Welfare Data Monitoring and Analysis Profiles (MAPS) data, more than 60% of all the calls to the Statewide Central Register of Child Abuse and Maltreatment (SCR) are determined to be unfounded (New York State Office of Children and Family Services, n.d.). This startling number has been consistent for years. Most of these reports are for child neglect (Child Trends, 2023) which is frequently the consequence of the impoverished environment where families must live. Despite a commitment from the Governor of NYS to reduce child poverty by 50% in 10 years, little progress has been made towards this goal. In addition, NYS has not revised the child abuse reporting requirements to more clearly define neglect that creates imminent risk to a child's safety, thereby requiring a protective services response.

While New York has started some excellent pilot projects to provide guaranteed incomes and cash supplements, the programs are only offered to a very small number of families in select counties. Those families benefit, but others must wait until the findings from these pilots are reported. We urge NYS to set aside funding now for program expansion as data from many other communities, such as New York Can End Child Poverty, has demonstrated the value of these cash transfer programs (New York Can, n.d.).

Recommendations for 2025

The State needs to immediately address the following:

- ▶ **Eliminate anonymous reporting** and bar the SCR from accepting reports unless they can confirm the identity and contact information of the caller.
- ▶ **Provide equitably funded services outside of CPS**, in hospitals, schools and communities, so that mandated reporters will not feel the need to report families to the SCR in order to get services.
- ▶ **Provide Miranda-type warnings for parents during CPS interviews**, coupled with the provision of legal counsel from the outset of investigations to ensure fair and consistent procedures.
- ▶ **Comply with the definition of neglect.** The SCR should confirm the family has been offered services to address the concerns, and that the circumstances that resulted in the SCR report were not due to poverty.
- ▶ **Fill the current 16 vacancies on the Citizens Review Panels.** The work of the panels has been hampered due to the lack of appointments and, establish and implement a procedure to remove inactive members.
- ▶ **Implement past Panel recommendations and provide a continual feedback loop** which includes current and complete data showing the effectiveness of the programs implemented (see [Appendix A](#)).

In addition, the Panels support the **Schuyler Center for Analysis and Advocacy (SCAA) Policy Priorities for Child and Family Wellbeing**, attached to this report as [Appendix B](#).



References

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Appendix A

<p>Previous NYS Citizen Review Panel Recommendations <i>Of 28 categories of recommendations, only 7 (25%) were implemented.</i> <i>New York State can do better!</i></p>	
Recommendation	Status
Restore the 75% rate of reimbursement to local governments for preventive services. (2023) (2021) (2017) (2014)	Not implemented.
Universalize Home Visiting Programs by ensuring at least two home visits for every newborn child, continuing for up to two years as mutually agreed upon by the parents and the Home Visiting Agency. (2023) (2016)	Not implemented. While home visiting services are technically available in all counties and extended enrollment periods have been authorized, full implementation at the county level remains incomplete. Current state funding levels are insufficient to meet the potential demand if all eligible families were to be offered and accept these services. Important data gaps still need to be addressed, including the current percentage of eligible families being enrolled in home visiting programs and OCFS's specific plans and strategies to support counties in maximizing utilization of this resource.
Reduce child poverty with attention to racial equity by strengthening the Empire State Child Credit. Ensure the maximum tax credit reaches the poorest New Yorkers, who are currently excluded from the full credit, and increase the credit amount to meaningfully impact family budgets. (2023) (2020)	Implemented.
Restrict Child Protective Services (CPS) interviews at public schools unless a court order is obtained. (2023)	Not implemented.
Provide Miranda-type warnings for parents during CPS interviews, coupled with the provision of legal counsel from the outset of investigations, to ensure fair and consistent procedures. (2023)	Not implemented.



Previous NYS Citizen Review Panel Recommendations
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Recommendation	Status
Reduce unnecessary investigations of children and families by CPS. (2022)	Not Implemented. While OCFS has new training programs and a service line, the number of reports to the SCR has not been substantially reduced. OCFS still accepts reports from sources that it has good reason to believe are false and malicious, and requires district to conduct a full, repetitive, traumatic investigation. Indeed, the percentage of reports being indicated has been declining based on county indication rates, showing that even more unnecessary investigations are being conducted. Only a small percentage of cases are being diverted to Family Assessment Response programs (FAR).
Reduce harmful practices in CPS investigations. (2022)	Partially implemented. While OCFS has noted a number of initiatives designed to reduce harmful practices, the state has not implemented practices such as changes to investigation practices and anonymous reporting that could significantly improve the fairness of system response and reduce trauma to families.
Reduce unnecessary placements in foster care. (2022)	Partially implemented. Foster care placements have declined in the past two years (10% reduction).
Eliminate anonymous reporting to the SCR. (2021)	Not implemented.
Remove poverty-related neglect allegations from the child welfare reporting system. (2021) (2020)	Partially implemented (mandated reporter training updated; concrete support portal created). Some states are changing their laws to explicitly remove poverty as an allegation. Others have developed a protocol for sending poverty-related reports to Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) first for financial assistance. New mandated training is only a small beginning for turning around a reporting system that is 40+ years in the making. A much more robust and system-wide effort is needed to create essential changes that will reduce trauma to families.

Previous NYS Citizen Review Panel Recommendations
Of 28 categories of recommendations, only 7 (25%) were implemented.
New York State can do better!

Recommendation	Status
<p>Increase funding for concrete supports for families. (2021)</p> <p>Invest significant new funding and resources to prevent and treat the public health crisis of child abuse and neglect in New York State. (2015)</p> <p>Allow for more flexibility in the use of preventive services funding and allow new applications for COPS programs. (2014)</p>	Partially implemented; evaluation pending.
Expand Family Assessment Response (FAR) statewide. (2021)	Not Implemented statewide. Without adequate state funding and universal implementation, FAR remains an underutilized tool that has yet to reach its full potential. Unlike other states that have adopted FAR statewide, New York has made FAR implementation optional at the county level, resulting in inconsistent availability of this alternative response across the state.
Adopt the American Bar Association's (ABA) guidelines for observing injuries on a child's body (aka strip searches). (2021)	Not implemented.
Study the impacts of the implementation of the Blind Removal Process and Kin-First Firewall Practice. (2021)	Partially implemented; counties are encouraged to implement but not required to do so. The implementation is challenging so counties need help with evaluating their approach, (more than just placement percentages), and using the findings to improve the processes locally.
<p>Differentiate poverty-related neglect from child maltreatment. (2020)</p> <p>A Public Health Approach to Child Welfare - Reframe child abuse and maltreatment as a public health issue to place policy focus on primary prevention and early intervention, using a collaborative approach. (2014)</p>	Partially implemented through Direct Cash Transfer Research Pilot, but more data/evaluation needed.
Remove educational neglect as an allegation type. (2020)	Not Implemented.



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Recommendation	Status
Increase preventive services and community-based supports for families in need. (2020)	Implemented, but counties are not required to participate. The data is lacking on the impact of FAR on family outcomes, repeat reports, and best practices being tested in districts. A robust evaluation is needed with a commitment to use the findings to make program improvements.
Reduce racial inequities in the child welfare system through policy and practice innovations. (2020)	Not Implemented. Counties can choose whether to participate or not in racial disparity work. What is the evaluation strategy that OCFS is implementing with districts that are participating? How are the findings being fed back to the counties and used to adjust the programs to continue to be more effective? Changes are needed at the Front Door of the child welfare system to reduce the unnecessary intrusion and trauma that families face. The reporting disparities are still the same with Black and Brown families being reported at higher percentages for their demographic. A comprehensive assessment of the entire system is needed to begin to address the inequities that we see in NYS's child welfare system.
Support efforts to purposefully address and eliminate child poverty. (2020) (2021)	Partially implemented.
Invest in a three percent increase in contracts and rates for human service organizations over each of the next five years, as outlined by the current 3 for 5 Campaign. (2019)	Implemented.
Maximize federal IV-E dollars and State funds to expand opportunities for scholarships and loan repayment for students in Bachelor and Master social work degree programs. (2019)	Not implemented.
Expand university-agency partnerships. (2019)	Not implemented.

Previous NYS Citizen Review Panel Recommendations
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Recommendation	Status
Continue to explore, prioritize and implement strategies to improve the recruitment and retention of child welfare workers (2019) and promote nationally accepted workload standards (2014)	Implemented.
Reauthorize the child welfare financing structure that is due to sunset in June 2017. (2016)	Implemented.
Develop a five-year strategic plan with achievable goals and measurable outcomes that are posted on the agency website. (2016)	Implemented.
Reduce disproportionate minority representation and promote race equity in the child welfare system. (2016)	Partially implemented. The Panels repeated this recommendation in 2020. A more comprehensive system-wide view of the underlying conditions that result in this inequity is needed along with ongoing data analysis to support program modifications.
Improve outcomes for children of incarcerated parents by facilitating family contacts and raising awareness of the unique needs of this special population. (2016) (2014)	Implemented. The Panels would like to see the results of the evaluation that was done with Osborne Association to improve outcomes for children of incarcerated parents.
Develop, with stakeholder input, a five-year Child Welfare Agenda for Change that includes aggressive, achievable goals and targets to be accomplished by 2020. (2015)	Partially implemented.



Appendix B



2025 Policy Priorities for Child and Family Wellbeing

In 2025, the Schuyler Center continues to prioritize policies that **improve health, wellbeing, and economic security of New York’s families, children, and communities, with a focus on New Yorkers who are working hard to make ends meet.** In 2022, New York made a statutory commitment to cut child poverty by one-half in a decade. Yet, the number and rate of children experiencing poverty in New York has remained high, with [718,000](#)—or 19% of all New York children—experiencing poverty in 2023. Due to systemic, historic, and ongoing racism, Black children continue to experience poverty at [more than twice the rate](#) of non-Hispanic white children. **New York’s leaders must act with urgency to advance the policies we recommend below: policies proven to reduce child poverty, strengthen families, and set up all New York children to thrive.**

Goal 1 **Child Poverty Reduction — Reduce child poverty and racial inequity statewide, starting by investing in tax credits, housing, and nutritional supports that reach all families, no matter where they were born.**

▶ **Improve New York’s refundable tax credits:**

- Ensure the State child tax credit reaches New York families living in the greatest poverty, who are currently excluded from the full credit, and increase the credit amount to meaningfully impact family budgets.
- Strengthen the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) so all working New Yorkers may access the credit, including those filing with an Individual Tax Identification Number (ITIN).
- The NY Working Families Tax Credit (S.277-B/A.4022-B) would accomplish all of these things.

▶ **Expand access to food and nutritional supports:**

- Establish and fund a permanent, statewide Healthy School Meals for All program that provides school breakfast and lunch at no cost to students in schools participating in the National School Lunch Program.
- Secure a State investment to provide food benefits to all income-eligible New Yorkers who are excluded from the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) due to their immigration status.
- Establish a SNAP minimum benefit amount of \$100.
- Strengthen connections between Medicaid and WIC to increase WIC outreach and participation.

▶ **Stabilize housing and reduce costs for [thousands of families](#), by funding the Housing Access Voucher Program (HAVP).** HAVP would create a state-funded voucher, much like the federal Section 8 program, for people experiencing homelessness and low-income tenants facing eviction.

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Goal 2**Child Care — Make a substantial and sustained investment in New York’s child care workforce and continue to expand child care access, including for children with special needs.**

- ▶ **Create a permanent state child care fund to increase child care worker compensation.** This fund should be robustly resourced and sufficient to offer all members of the child care workforce a significant boost in income. (\$1.2 billion)
 - Develop a plan for subsequent years to establish a minimum pay scale and career ladder using agreed-upon criteria. This pay scale will inform compensation supplement levels after the base pay scale for all has been increased.
- ▶ **Make child care assistance guaranteed for families making less than 250% of the federal poverty threshold.**
 - Increase state funding for the Child Care Assistance Program by **\$300 million** to account for growth in CCAP enrollment.
- ▶ **Increase the enhanced CCAP reimbursement rates for children with special needs to 130% of the market rate** (up from 115%). (\$5 million)
 - Take steps to make it easier for child care programs to receive the enhanced rate.
- ▶ **Provide state-funded assistance to immigrant children barred from accessing federally-funded subsidies,** building on the statewide pilot created in the 2023-24 NYS Budget and the Promise NYC program.

Goal 3**Children’s Health — Expand and increase investment in child and family health.**

- ▶ **Track, monitor, and influence implementation of continuous Medicaid and CHP coverage for young children to age 6,** both programs which provide no cost or low-cost health coverage for eligible children.
- ▶ **Ensure NYS’s recently-approved Medicaid waiver, which allows NYS Medicaid to address social care needs with Medicaid funding, has robust expectations regarding children.** There must be a focus on prevention, including the youngest children, and children at-risk of or experiencing child welfare involvement.
- ▶ **Ensure robust coverage and payment for pediatric care,** with a particular focus on behavioral health and dyadic/family-oriented care.
- ▶ **Expand oral health care for children by strengthening the oral health workforce.** This includes changing the scope of practice for dental hygiene to allow them to provide more of the services they are trained to perform and assisting parents in preventing dental disease by allowing them to apply fluoride varnish to their children’s teeth under the supervision of a dental professional.
- ▶ **Support the Early Intervention program** by passing loan forgiveness legislation for providers practicing in shortage areas (A.8455 (Paulin)), increasing in-person rates by 5%, and ensuring that the State conducts a comprehensive review of the EI program, including program models and financing.

Goal 4**Child Welfare — Transform the child welfare system by investing in policies that prevent unnecessary, harmful family investigations and separations, reduce institutional placements, foster transparency and accountability, and support child, family, and community wellbeing.**

- ▶ **Establish the Child and Family Wellbeing Fund with \$30 million**, to invest in community-based programs and services that contribute to child and family wellbeing. The Fund would support children’s growth and development by investing resources in communities that have been historically disenfranchised and overrepresented in government intervention through the child welfare system.
- ▶ **Require child protective services caseworkers to advise parents and caregivers of their rights at first contact.** (A.1980-A (Walker)/S.901-A (Brisport))
- ▶ **Require reporters to the State Central Register (SCR) to confidentially provide their name and contact information—accessible only by the Office of Children and Family Services and counties—** to prevent reports being used as a form of harassment. (A.2479-A (Hevesi)/S.902-B (Brisport))
- ▶ **Require medical care providers to seek the informed consent of pregnant people and new mothers before they or their babies are drug tested.** (A.109-B (Rosenthal)/S.320-B (Salazar))
- ▶ **Extend Family Court jurisdiction to ensure young people discharged from foster care can secure enforcement of transition plans** so they have the supports they need to successfully transition to independent life. (A.9321-B (Hevesi)/S.8724-B (Hoylman-Sigal))
- ▶ **Prohibit automatically referring parents of children who enter foster care to child support collection**, a counterproductive practice that costs New York millions each year. (A.4027-A (Kim)/S.7054-B (Hoylman-Sigal)) (A.2479 (Hevesi)/S.902 (Brisport))

Summary of Panel Activities

In an effort to promote unity and to respect the time commitment of Panel members, the Panels agreed to convene more frequently as Joint Panels for the 2024 year, rather than primarily meeting as separate Panels.

New York City (NYC) Panel

May 6, 2024

The current chairs sought volunteers for Chair or Co-Chair of the NYC Panel. Due to the lack of volunteers, the current chairs agreed to continue in their roles. A survey will be sent to Panel members to validate the vote during the Zoom meeting. The NYC Panel debated reviewing a case but noted they had not yet discussed or agreed upon goals for case reviews or how they would structure the process. The Panel tabled the discussion.

NYC Administration for Children's Services (ACS) Commissioner Jess Dannhauser reported on various topics, including the Collaborative Assessment, Response, Engagement & Support Approach (CARES), court appearances, removals, fatalities, and agency diversity. Updates included retraining mandated reporters, a 12% decrease in school reports, increased preventive calls, and more childcare vouchers for low-income children. New school-based support programs and training for rights communication to parents were launched. He acknowledged concerns about CARES, noted organizational improvements, and discussed health projects and a decrease in cases involving parental drug misuse. Efforts to address racial disparities, promote equity, and improve court reports were highlighted, including efforts to engage with and support fathers. The meeting concluded with plans for further discussions.

Joint Panels

February 6, 2024

The Panels discussed their potential 2024 advocacy efforts focusing on issues within their scope of authority and utilizing the experience of individual Panel members. A decision was made to push the Annual Report out as a press release in March, to tie into April being Child Abuse Prevention Month. The Panels discussed at length doing joint case reviews and how those case reviews might be conducted. Panel members did feel that the process might

require more of a time commitment than was possible but agreed to continue to consider it. The Panels discussed plans for future meetings, looking to hold an in-person meeting with OCFS in June. They additionally looked to reschedule the previously canceled data meetings regarding the Statewide Central Register of Child Abuse and Maltreatment (SCR) and the Help, Empower, Advocate, Reassure and Support (HEARS) Family Line.

March 20, 2024

The Panels convened with OCFS for a discussion covering topics such as the SCR hotline, HEARS hotline, and ad hoc queries. Following this, the Panels discussed the appointment of a new OCFS Commissioner and expressed intentions to draft a welcoming letter to establish a collaborative relationship and address CRP recommendations. Panel members decided to discontinue the review of open cases unless referred by a county. Additionally, the Panels revisited the issue of membership engagement and the possibility of member resignation. The Panel sent a letter to members who have not been engaging with the Panel emails and/or meetings to hopefully encourage greater participation.

May 13, 2024

Panel members inquired about the HEARS line and referral procedures, but no information was currently available. Some members highlighted the lack of guidance on family referrals and the need for better follow-through from OCFS. Representatives of the NYC Panel discussed ACS's Wellness and Resilience Model (WARM line), seeking feedback on referrals. Suggestions were made for service outcome feedback from HEARS and WARM lines. Concerns about the Plan of Safe Care in hospitals were raised. Progress on Panel appointments was discussed. Representatives of the Western Panel noted issues with the waiver process for filling DSS positions in Western counties and questioned if this was a statewide issue. Regional chair votes were confirmed with the Eastern Panel, electing Mary McCarthy and Kathy Halas as Co-Chairs, and the NYC Panel electing David Lansner as Chair and Jocelyn



Brown as Vice Chair. Western elections will occur in September/October. The Informed Consent Bill was raised with members seeking the majority Panels' support. A support statement was proposed, leading to a unanimous vote in favor.

June 11, 2024

Brad Hansen, Public Policy Director at Families Together in New York State, discussed the need for prevention services to combat poverty and housing insecurity. He highlighted efforts and reviewed recent progress, including universal school meals and direct cash transfer projects. Key topics included the workforce crisis, childcare support, and housing affordability. Proposals included extending Medicaid and Child Health Plus, expanding the housing access voucher program, and preventing evictions through the 'Good Cause' bill. He suggested creating a Social Housing Development Authority and highlighted the impact of child welfare system requirements on housing stability. As the Panels debriefed this information, challenges in passing bills were noted. Suggestions included a roundtable discussion, publicizing task force work, and addressing population decline due to families moving for better conditions. The group agreed to highlight positive actions and engage decision-makers. The Panels considered hosting a roundtable for their October meeting with Senator Jabara Brisport and task forces on childcare, social housing, and poverty, with collaboration from the Schuyler Center for Analysis and Advocacy (SCAA).

September 15, 2024

Panel members summarized their presentation to the State of Georgia's Citizen Review Panels, as that state recently revamped its CRP model. Panel members reviewed the Child and Family Services Review (CFSR) stakeholder interview set for September 16. A suggestion was made to clarify the format and prepare a statement. A draft would be made outlining a discussion on unresolved CRP recommendations. Guest speakers from the Schuyler Center for Analysis and Advocacy (SCAA), emphasized expanding the child tax credit as The New York State Child Poverty Reduction Advisory Council's (CPRAC) focus. Panel members discussed including the CRP member recruitment processes and vacancies on the Panels as part of their Annual Report. A new formal communication protocol was unanimously approved, requiring all OCFS communications to go through the Panel chair(s) and

WRI, rather than Panel members directly speaking on the Panels' behalf without the approval and authority of their peers.

November 14, 2024

OCFS announced that Prevent Child Abuse New York (PCANY) has been selected as the winning bidder to provide administrative support to the Panels beginning February 1, 2025. Discussions around the annual report highlighted differing perspectives among Panel members. Some Panel members questioned the value of issuing a report, while others suggested aligning it with SCAA's 2025 Policy Priorities and emphasizing Panel vacancy concerns. Suggested structure for the annual report includes an introduction, a statement of position, recommendations, and references to the SCAA report. Some Panel members suggested including a chart illustrating the state's response to past recommendations. The Panel chairs will draft and later be sent to members for a vote.

December 16, 2024

During the OCFS presentation, updates were shared on the Blind Removals report, currently in development, with plans to address implementation measurement at the next Joint Panels meeting. Commissioner meeting dates were shifted to March, and Patti Effner was announced as the new OCFS Liaison, succeeding David Haase. Discussions also highlighted where to access budget insights via live-streamed Budget Hearings and the State of the State Address, with links to be provided. The Panels outlined priorities for their upcoming March meeting with the new Commissioner, including her five-year vision for child welfare, addressing Panel vacancies, improving recommendation implementation, and establishing regular meetings. The finalized Annual Report was sent to Panel members for a vote, with concerns over specific language noted as part of the voting process. Chairs emphasized the report reflects a compromise and will be decided by majority vote.



Citizen Review Panel Members 2024

Eastern Panel

**Kathleen Thornton Halas,
Panel Co-Chair**

Executive Director (Retired)
Child Care Council of
Westchester, Inc.
Appointed by the Assembly

**Mary McCarthy, Ph. D., LMSW,
Panel Co-Chair**

Director, Social Work
Education Consortium, School of
Social Welfare, SUNY Albany
Appointed by the Senate

Sharon M. Chesna

Executive Director (Retired)
Mothers & Babies Perinatal
Network of South Central
New York, Inc.
Appointed by the Governor's Office

Eunju Lee, Ph. D.

Associate Professor
School of Social Welfare,
SUNY Albany
Appointed by the Assembly

JoAnn Merriman, MS, PA-C

Physician Assistant
CCP Developmental Pediatrics
Appointed by the Governor's Office

Erin Christopher-Sisk, Ph. D.

Clinical Director
ECS Psychological Services
Appointed by the Senate

Carrie Jefferson Smith

Associate Professor
School of Social Work,
Syracuse University
Appointed by the Governor's Office

Kellyann Kostyal-Larrier

Executive Director
Fearless! Hudson Valley, Inc.
Appointed by the Senate

New York City Panel

**David J. Lansner, Esq.,
Panel Chair**

Partner
Lansner & Kubitschek
Appointed by the Assembly

**Dr. Jocelyn Brown,
Panel Vice Chair**

Director, Child Advocacy Center
Columbia Presbyterian
Medical Center
Appointed by the Governor's Office

Wayne Ho

President/CEO
Chinese-American Planning Council
Appointed by the Governor's Office

Sania Andrea Metzger, Esq.

Director of Policy
Casey Family Services
Appointed by the Assembly

Carole Levy, Esq.

Attorney-At-Law
Appointed by the Assembly

Mathea C. Rubin

Parent
New York City
Appointed by the Senate

Jorge Saenz de Viteri

Parent
Appointed by the Governor's Office

Karen Steinberg, Esq.

Attorney-At-Law,
Steinberg & Ross
Appointed by the Senate

Marion White

Senior Program Director (Retired)
New York Foundling Child Abuse
Prevention Program (CAPP)
Appointed by the Governor's Office

Western Panel

**Todd Sage,
Panel Co-Chair**

Clinical Associate Professor
University of Buffalo School
of Social Work
Appointed by the Assembly

**John Treahy,
Panel Co-Chair**

President
Treahy Consultation Services LLC
Appointed by the Senate

Linda C. Brown, CSW

Former Assistant Commissioner (Retired)
New York State Office of Children
and Family Services
Appointed by the Assembly

Sarlyn Tate

Social Worker
Buffalo Psychiatric Center
Appointed by the Governor's Office

Melissa A. Cavagnaro, Esq.

Partner, Mattingly Cavagnaro LLP
Matrimonial & Family Law
Appointed by the Senate

Ellen T. Kennedy

Associate Professor of Social Work
Emerita
Buffalo State College
Appointed by the Governor's Office



Panel Membership

All new members participate in a virtual orientation session and receive orientation materials.

Efforts continue to be made to reach out to Legislative and Executive Branch leaders and staff to raise awareness of the Panels and the process for appointment. Vacancies remain on all three panels, however, and the Panels continue to seek new candidates to apply for appointment. For an up-to-date list of vacancies, visit the Panels' membership lists at:

<http://www.citizenreviewpanelsny.org/who-we-are>

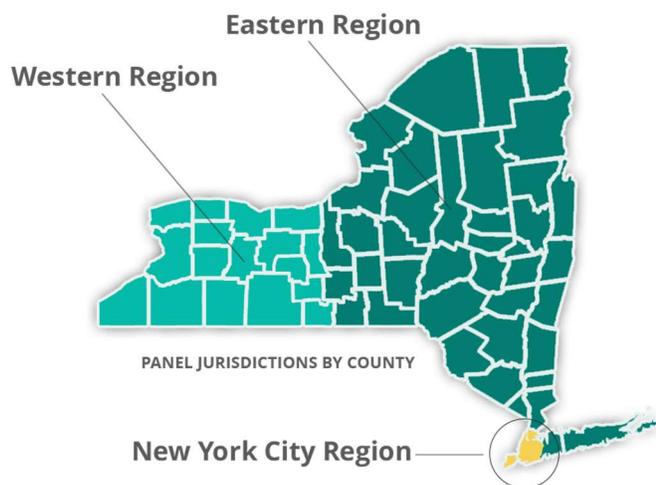
Potential members may self-nominate; be recommended by a current Panel member or other community leader; or be nominated directly by the NYS Senate, NYS Assembly, or the Office of the Governor. A letter of interest and resume must be submitted to a State Senator, State Assemblymember, or the Office of Governor. When an individual seeks appointment by the New York State Legislature, the appointment must be approved by the Temporary President of the Senate or the Speaker of the Assembly.

While the Panels strive for volunteer members who broadly represent the communities in which the Panels are established, no person currently employed by federal, state, county or municipal agencies that directly deliver child welfare services may be a Panel member.

The Panels continually strive for diversity in their membership in these areas:

- Geographic location within New York State including rural, suburban, and urban areas;
- Experience related to the child welfare system including professional experience or lived experience (birth parent, foster parent, relative, or former youth in care); and
- Knowledge base such as advocacy, technology, education, law, and program development and evaluation.

For more detailed information on the appointment process, a sample letter of interest, and description of member responsibilities, visit <http://www.citizenreviewpanelsny.org/recruitment/>.



Western: Allegany, Cattaraugus, Chautauqua, Chemung, Erie, Genesee, Livingston, Monroe, Niagara, Ontario, Orleans, Schuyler, Seneca, Steuben, Wayne, Wyoming, Yates

Eastern: Albany, Broome, Cayuga, Chenango, Clinton, Columbia, Cortland, Delaware, Dutchess, Essex, Franklin, Fulton, Greene, Hamilton, Herkimer, Jefferson, Lewis, Madison, Montgomery, Nassau, Oneida, Onondaga, Orange, Oswego, Otsego, Putnam, Rensselaer, Rockland, Saratoga, Schenectady, Schoharie, St. Lawrence, Suffolk, Sullivan, Tioga, Tompkins, Ulster, Warren, Washington, Westchester

New York City: Manhattan, Bronx, Brooklyn (Kings County), Queens, Staten Island (Richmond County)



**New York State
Citizen Review Panels for
Child Protective Services**

For further information, please visit the Panels' website at www.citizenreviewpanelsny.org or contact:
Welfare Research, Inc. d|b|a WRI Solutions
14 Columbia Circle, Suite 104
Albany, NY 12203
(518) 713-4726

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Administrative support is provided to the Panels by WRI through a contract with the New York State Office of Children and Family Services.