

The Vermont Citizens Advisory Board (or "Panel") to the Department for Children & Families

By-Laws

Adopted December 8, 2004

I. Name

The name of this organization shall be the *Vermont Citizens Advisory Board to the Department for Children & Families (VCAB)*, which is authorized under federal law as a citizen review panel. A citizen review panel must be in existence in order for a state to receive federal Child Abuse Prevention & Treatment Act (CAPTA) funds.

II. Purpose

The VCAB, as required by federal law, must be established to examine policies, practices and procedures of the state's child protection agency and where appropriate, review specific cases to evaluate the extent to which the agency is discharging its responsibilities.

Further, the VCAB is required to provide for public outreach and comment in order to assess the impact of current procedures and practices upon children and families throughout Vermont.

The VCAB is empaneled as a child protection team pursuant to Vermont Statutes, Title 33, Chapter 49. Under Vermont's empanelment law, the VCAB shall assist DCF in identifying and treating child abuse and neglect cases and may provide public informational and educational services about identification, treatment and prevention of child abuse and neglect.

It shall also foster communication and cooperation among professionals and organizations throughout Vermont.

III. Membership/Meetings

Pursuant to federal law, citizen panels must be composed of members who are broadly representative of the community, including members who have expertise in the prevention and treatment of child abuse and neglect.

A chair or co-chair will be elected from the voting membership. The co-chairs, after receiving nominations, may solicit additional names to assure that the board represents the broadest possible range of people. The board will seek to have people from such fields as law enforcement, the legal profession, the medical community, victim advocacy, domestic violence, substance abuse, clergy, mental health, public health, social work, education, child abuse prevention, resource parents, families and youth.

The VCAB should have no more than 25 members and with a minimum of 10 members. DCF staff shall not be counted as voting members and may not be considered for any board position, such as chair or co-chair.

As required by federal law, meetings will not be held less than once every three months. VCAB meetings are scheduled for the first Wednesday of March, June, September and December from 9:00 to 12:00 noon unless otherwise stated.

IV. Officers (co-chairs)

The VCAB will be co-chaired by two members selected by a majority present at the March meeting. Terms will be two years in length but will not be limited to a single term as long as the majority present selects the co-chairs. Nominations for co-chairs will be solicited during the December meeting and all members will be informed of the nominations by February 1 preceding the March meeting.

V. Member Responsibility

It is each member's responsibility to be an active participant to assist in the board executing its responsibilities and achieving its goals. Board members are expected to inform the co-chairs when he or she is unable to attend a meeting. Failure to attend three (3) consecutive meetings without informing the co-chairs will be grounds for the board to reconsider membership.

VI. Member Terms

All board members will serve two-year terms with half serving their first year while the other half of the board serves their second year. There are no limits to the number of terms a member may serve. Members are not elected by the board but are appointed by the co-chairs. Nominations to the board will take place during the December meeting with appointments completed during the March meeting. Member nominations will be provided to all current board members by February 1 preceding the March meeting.

In the event, a board member has an issue with a nominee, it is that member's responsibility to communicate that concern in writing to the co-chairs before the March meeting. Final selections will be the responsibility of the co-chairs.

Should a member feel it necessary to resign from the board, a resignation letter to the co-chairs should be submitted prior to the next board meeting.

VII. Vacancies

In the event of a vacancy, the co-chairs will be responsible for selecting a new board member to serve the balance of the term left vacated or to leave the seat unfilled until the beginning of the next term.

VIII. Operations

Notices for board meetings shall be sent one month prior to the meeting and shall include the minutes of the prior meeting and an agenda of the upcoming meeting.

The co-chairs may convene a special meeting at their discretion and may authorize the creation of ad hoc committees and set rules regarding their operation.

All meetings shall be conducted according to the latest revision of Robert's Rules of Order.

A quorum shall not be necessary in order for the board to conduct business including the submission and voting on motions.

December: Board nominations submitted & co-chairs nominated

By Feb 1: Nominations sent to all board members

March: Nominations accepted/not accepted & co-chairs selected by members present

June: Annual report submitted to the board by the co-chairs

September: Response by DCF to the annual report

November: Final report submitted to the board by the co-chairs

IX. Staff Support

DCF will provide staff and logistical support, such as note taking during board meetings. Notes will reflect the date of the meeting, members present/absent, motions and decisions made and tasks assigned by the co- chairs.

XI. Opportunities for Public Comment

The board shall solicit input from community stakeholders including consumers regarding recommendations the board may make.

XII. Confidentiality

The board shall operate under the auspices of the child protection team empanelment section of Chapter 49, Title 33. The co-chairs are responsible for assuring that the board is empaneled each year through the Department for Children and Families.

Prior to the board meeting, the co-chairs may request that the commissioner of DCF empanel a guest for a single meeting.

X. Annual Report

The board shall issue an annual report in November outlining its accomplishments during the prior year as well as its recommendations to the state and the public to improve the state's child protection services.

CAPTAbylaws.doc

12/8/04