



University of
Pittsburgh

School of
Social Work

Pennsylvania Citizen Review Panels



Enacting Positive Changes for the Safety, Permanency and Well-Being of Pennsylvania's Children

CRP Mission

To facilitate citizen participation and provide opportunities for citizens to partner with local child protection systems to ensure that these systems:

- Provide the best possible service
- Prevent and protect children from abuse and neglect
- Meet the permanency needs of children
- Promote diversity, equity, and inclusion.

Purpose

To examine policies, procedures, and practices of

Regional Citizen Review Panel Announcement

In 2022, the Department of Human Services (DHS) will begin rotating Pennsylvania's Regional Citizen Review Panels (CRPs) to ensure representation of all regions of the Commonwealth over time. The counties to be represented within each region are proposed to be the same as those that make up the current [Youth Advisory Board \(YAB\) Regions](#). The rotation will begin by establishing a Southeast regional panel to include representation from members that live and work in our largest and most diverse population center. Recruitment for the Southeast panel will begin in April 2022, with panel work beginning in January 2023.

What are CRPs?

CRPs provide opportunities for community members to take an active role in protecting children from abuse by partnering with county agencies and the Office of Children, Youth and Families (OCYF) to identify strategies for child welfare system improvement. The federal Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (CAPTA) (Public Law 93-247) and Pennsylvania's Child Protective Services Law (23 Pa. C.S. § 6343.1) charge the CRPs with examining policies, procedures, and practices of state and local child welfare system agencies and, where appropriate, specific cases to evaluate the extent to which those agencies are effectively discharging their child welfare responsibilities. CRPs may review the state CAPTA plan, child protection standards, or any other topic that they consider important to ensure the well-being of children served by the child welfare system.

State and local agencies to evaluate the extent to which State and local child protective services system agencies are effectively discharging their child protection responsibilities.

The CRPs are comprised of volunteer members that meet in their respective regions and, while influenced by local, regional, and statewide concerns, are charged to make recommendations for statewide improvements. Currently, 33 volunteers serve among three regional panels, representing hundreds of volunteer hours each year. Since their inception in 2010, CRPs have made dozens of recommendations to DHS within annual reports written by the panel members themselves. The DHS is required to respond annually to the panels' recommendations in writing. The annual reports, which include DHS responses, can be accessed electronically on the [DHS website](#).

Where are the current CRPs located?

Currently, there are three regional CRPs from the [Northeast](#), [Southwest](#), and [South Central](#) areas of the Commonwealth, as well as a statewide CRP consisting of Pennsylvania's longstanding [Youth Advisory Board](#). Please note that no changes are planned regarding the Statewide YAB as a CRP.

Why rotate now?

OCYF is dedicated to correcting the impacts of systemic racism on the child welfare system and is implementing a DHS directive that advisory bodies, such as the CRPs, should reflect the diversity of the communities they serve. The following paragraph is an excerpt from the [DHS Racial Equity Report 2021](#):

*DHS also has countless advisory committees, workgroups, task forces, and boards across the payer, provider, facility, and consumer sectors. **These advisory bodies should reflect the diversity of the communities we collectively serve.** We are evaluating membership of these groups and plan to work with them if needed to encourage diverse and representative membership that accurately represents voices of the people we serve. **As we move forward, a greater focus on diversity and equitable representation among race will be prioritized among other qualifications for serving on these advisory bodies.***

Pennsylvania consists of 67 counties covering 44,817 square miles and is home to approximately 12.7 million residents. The diversity across Pennsylvania's urban, suburban, and rural areas creates the need for consideration of regional, county, and local differences. The rotation of panels would allow for representation of all counties across the state while minimizing the costs associated with facilitation or travel, unlike implementing CRPs in regions statewide all at the same time.

Why begin with the Southeast Region?

The six-county Southeast region includes Philadelphia, Berks, Bucks, Chester, Delaware, and Montgomery counties and encompasses approximately 35 percent of the total statewide population. The Southeast region is the most diverse within the Commonwealth and is home to the Commonwealth's largest African American population. More children and families are served by County Children and Youth Agencies (and their extension Community Umbrella Agencies (CUAs)) in the Southeast than in any other region. The Southeast region has never been represented by a regional CRP.

What will happen next?

As outlined, recruitment for the Southeast panel will begin in 2022, with their work beginning in January 2023. As the new panel is established, the longest operating panel (South Central) will be wrapping up its current work and will disband in December 2022. Over the course of 2023 and 2024, new panels will be established in the North Central and Northwest regions, while work in the Northeast and Southwest panels will adjourn.

Each new panel will remain in operation for a period of five years, until the cycle of re-establishing panels in the South Central, Northeast, and Southwest begins again in 2028. The order of establishing and disbanding panels will be determined based on the needs of the state as well as stakeholder input.

Questions regarding this announcement can be sent to the Regional CRP Coordinator, Kari Coccagna, at PACRP@pitt.edu.

A collaborative effort of the Department of Human Services, The Pennsylvania Child Welfare Resource Center, and Pennsylvania Children & Youth Administrators Association

