



Regional Citizen Review Panel Announcement

The Department of Human Services (DHS), Office of Children, Youth, and Families (OCYF) is excited to announce the recruitment and formation of the Northwest Citizen Review Panel.

In 2022, Pennsylvania's Regional Citizen Review Panels (CRPs) began to rotate to ensure representation of all regions of the Commonwealth over time. The rotation began by establishing a Southeast regional panel to include representation from members that live and work in our largest and most diverse population center. In 2023, DHS continued the rotation by establishing a panel in the North Central region of the Commonwealth, which is a rural and often underserved population. While panels were established in the Southeast and North Central, panels in the South Central and Northeast closed.

In April 2024, DHS will begin recruitment of volunteers who live or work in the following counties to form the Northwest CRP: Cameron, Clarion, Clearfield, Crawford, Elk, Erie, Forest, Jefferson, McKean, Mercer, Venango, and Warren. DHS is looking for diversity in race, gender, background, socioeconomic status, and job title for membership. Some examples of possible roles of members include:

- Guardian ad litem;
- Teacher;
- Employee of a provider agency;
- Former county children and youth caseworker;
- Mental health therapist;
- Medical professionals (doctors, nurses, etc.);
- Retired professional;
- Foster parent; and
- Former consumer of the child welfare system.

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 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.

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 North Central, Southwest, and Southeast areas of the Commonwealth, as well as a statewide CRP consisting of Pennsylvania’s longstanding [Youth Advisory Board \(YAB\)](#). Please note that no changes are planned regarding the Statewide YAB as a CRP.

What will happen next?

As outlined, recruitment for the Northwest panel will begin in 2024, with their work beginning in January 2025. As the new panel is established, the Southwest panel will be wrapping up its current work and will disband in December 2024.

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.

An online application is accessible through the Citizen Review Panel (CRP) website:

<http://www.pacwrc.pitt.edu/CRP/default.htm>

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

