

New York State Citizen Review Panels

*Administered by Schuyler Center for Analysis and Advocacy
150 State St., 4th Floor, Albany, NY 12207
Ph: 518-463-1896 ext. 24 Fax: 518-463-3364 dmastin@scaany.org*

January 25, 2008

Governor Eliot Spitzer
Executive Chamber
State Capitol
Albany, New York 12224

Re: 21-day budget request

Dear Governor Spitzer:

The New York State Citizen Review Panels for Child Protective Services applaud your support for our most vulnerable children and families through increases in child welfare funding in your 2008-2009 Budget for the Office of Children and Family Services. We specifically want to thank you for preserving and increasing vital funding for preventive services. We know that by offering services to struggling families we are preventing children from removal into foster care and re-entry of families into the system. The \$153.7 million addition in the budget will help enormously. We also thank you for increased dollars to support the modernization of Connections and for recognizing that youth who exit foster care at age 18 still need our support. Extending Medicaid to these youth is very important.

We wanted to bring to your attention three key items of importance to serving children and families in child welfare.

- 1) Child Abuse Provider Network (CHAMP) received no funds in the 2008-2009 Executive Budget. This item was a legislative add to the 2007-2008 budget and, in prior years, had been included in the Executive Budget. OCFS contracts with a specific provider to provide important training, mentoring, and a support network for physicians to help assist them in meeting the needs of children who have been sexually abused. The network is designed to help improve access to skilled care so that every child suspected of being sexually abused can receive a specialized medical examination and treatment. Ann Botash, a nationally recognized expert in Syracuse, NY, provides the leadership on this work.

We ask that you include \$500,000 in your amended budget for the Child Abuse Provider Network or CHAMP program.

- 2) In 2006, MacDonald and Associates studied the workloads of frontline child welfare workers in several districts in New York State and made specific recommendations for reductions in a report to the Office of Children and Family Services. The legislature provided start-up funding to allow local districts to add personnel with a goal of reducing the number of cases for which each was responsible at any one time, allow additional time spent working directly with families, and thereby improving outcomes for children.

Your 2008-2009 Executive Budget does not include funding to reduce workloads. We are particularly concerned this year due to the decline in the economy. Many families who enter the child welfare system are economically fragile. We expect the number of reports to increase.




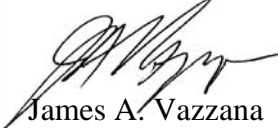
We urge you to consider reinstating \$9,700,000 in funding to support reduced workloads in child welfare. Also, we urge you to consider legislation that would authorize OCFS to set minimum workloads standards for local districts.

- 3) We want to stress our strong support for New York’s home visiting programs and urge you to consider additional funds for these primary prevention programs that work.

The panels join with the many partners involved with Home is Where the Start Is in asking for an additional \$35 million.

We thank you for your leadership in a difficult budget year and for your support to the children and families who need it most.

Sincerely,

			
David Lansner	Eric Brettschneider	Stacy Alvord	James A. Vazzana
Co-Chair	Co-Chair	Chair	Chair
NYC Panel	NYC Panel	Eastern Panel	Western Panel

cc: Laura L. Anglin
Paul Francis
Commissioner Gladys Carrion

Citizen Review Panels are mandated by federal law. In 1999 the New York Legislature passed S371-b of the Social Services Law establishing panels in New York State to evaluate the extent to which agencies are effectively discharging their child protection responsibilities in accordance with the State’s Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (CAPTA) Plan, child protection standards set forth in the federal law, and any other criteria that the panel considers important to ensure the protection of children.