

# *New York State Citizen Review Panels*

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March 6, 2008

Assembly Member Sheldon Silver  
Speaker of the Assembly  
932 Legislative Office Building  
Empire State Plaza  
Albany, NY 12248-0001

Dear Speaker Silver:

We are writing on behalf of the New York State Citizen Review Panels for Child Protective Services to ask for your support for critical funding for child welfare services provided to our state's most vulnerable families.

We strongly support the inclusion in the *Executive Budget* of

- \$153.7 million in additional funding for preventive services,
- \$17 million for the modernization of Connections, and
- funds to extend Medicaid to age 21 to youth who exit foster care.

We know that by offering increased prevention dollars fewer children from struggling families will be removed and placed into foster care and fewer families will re-enter the system.

We wanted to bring to your attention three key items of importance to serving children and families in child welfare and ask that you provide funding for them.

- 1) Child Abuse Provider Network (CHAMP) received no funds in the 2008-2009 Executive Budget 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.

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

- 2) The *Executive Budget* does not include funding to reduce workloads for frontline child welfare workers at a time when the economy is declining and reports to the SCR are expected to increase. In 2006, MacDonald and Associates made specific recommendations 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.





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 workload standards for local districts.

- 3) We also want to stress our strong support for New York's home visiting programs. We support transferring funding for these programs into the general fund and urge you to consider additional funds for these primary prevention programs that work.

The panels join with others 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: Paul Francis  
Dennis Whalen  
Kristin Proud  
Gladys Carrion  
Laura Anglin

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.