

New York State Citizen Review Panels

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June 19, 2008

Honorable Michael Bloomberg
Mayor
City of New York
City Hall
New York, NY 10007

Dear Mayor Bloomberg:

We write to you on behalf of the New York City Citizen Review Panel for Child Protective Services, a panel of citizen volunteers charged with reviewing the policies, procedures, and practices in child protection and making recommendations for change.

The New York City Panel strongly supports the inclusion of the following items in the final New York City budget:

- **Funding for the 1,000 preventive service slots** that included 200 slots reserved for families with specific linguistic needs in order to ensure more families in need access essential family support services.
- **Funding in the amount of \$6.25 million for the *Child Safety Initiative*** to ensure that child abuse preventive service workers can keep New York City's children safe by having a maximum caseload of 12 families and maintain supervisory ratios of 5:1.

The New York City Citizen Review Panel applauds your support for our most vulnerable children and families and urges your continued support for these families when finalizing the City's budget. We specifically want to emphasize the importance of preserving and increasing vital funding for preventive services by funding an additional 1,000 preventive slots in the City's budget. We know that by offering these preventive services slots we will prevent children from removal into foster care and re-entry of families into the system.

We recognize your support for Commissioner Mattingly's need to reduce caseload sizes as key to increased effectiveness, improvement in outcomes, and retention of workers. It is equally important to reduce preventive services caseloads to a nationally-accepted ratio of 12:1. The Council on Accreditation and New York City service providers both agree that the average caseload for preventive workers should be 12 families, with the flexibility to adjust downward to accommodate complex cases. Only by maintaining caseloads of 12:1 can caseworkers give the attention necessary to protect children in very troubled families, who previously would have been placed in foster care.

For a relatively small city investment, New York City will realize savings by reducing the need for more costly interventions, will bring additional state dollars into the City, and at the same time reduce trauma to our children. The New York City Citizen Review Panel urges your support for funding to increase preventive slots and to reduce caseloads.

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
Co-Chair
New York City Panel



Eric Brettschneider
Co-Chair
New York City Panel

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.