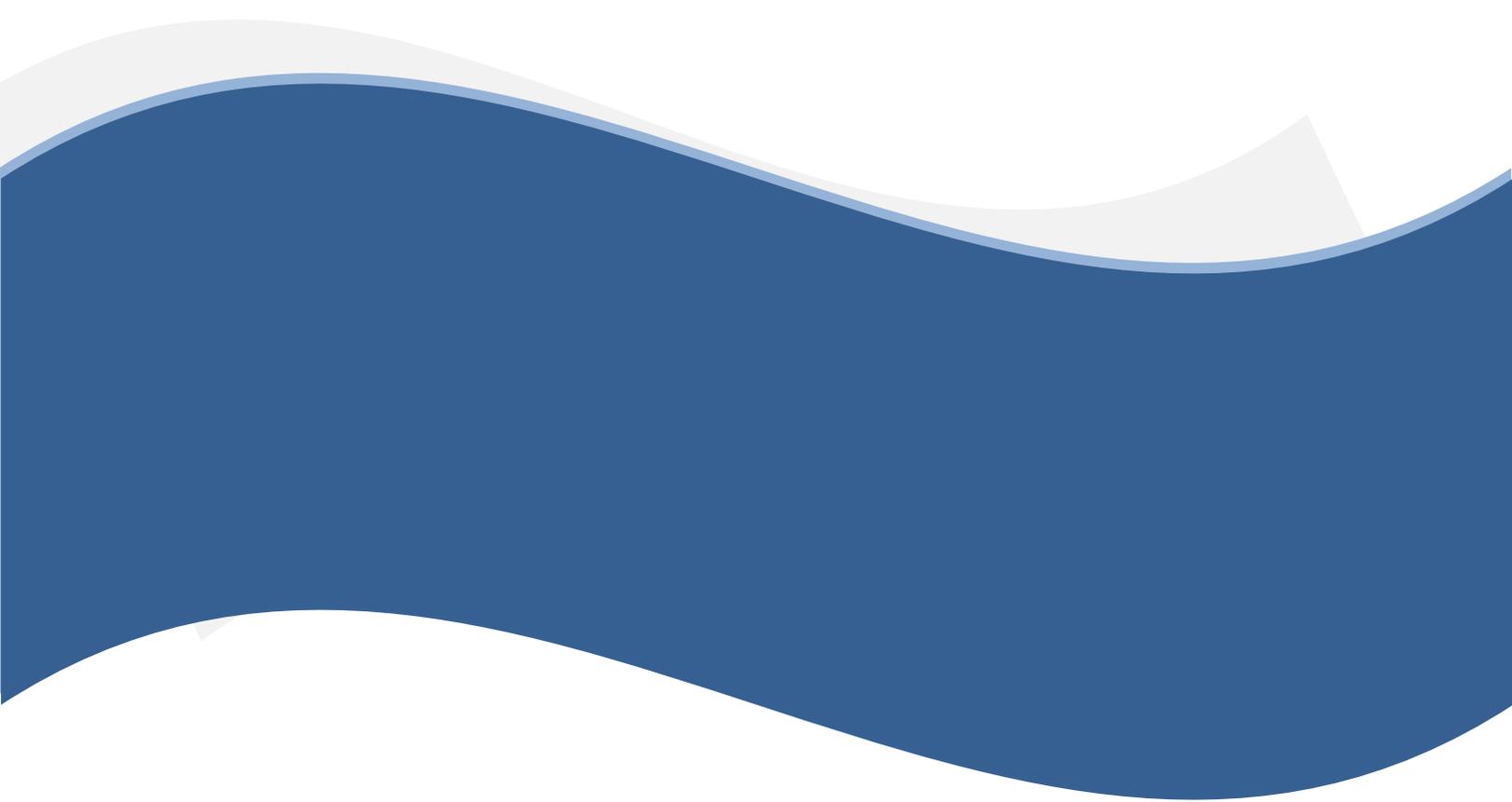


COUNCIL OF JUVENILE COURT JUDGES

Judicial Citizen Review

**OPERATIONAL
PROGRAM
GUIDELINES**

Updated January 2014



INTRODUCTION

The Judicial Citizen Review Program is a program of the Council of Juvenile Court Judges. It is a program designed to assist the court in determining what the most appropriate permanency plan is for children in foster care. The program was established as a response to the Adoption Assistance and Child Welfare Act of 1980 (P.L. 96-272). In many counties throughout the state, juvenile court judges select volunteers from the community to form judicial citizen review panels. Panel members are trained by Council staff and become sworn officers of the court to act in the best interest of the child.

Judicial citizen review panels work closely with the Division of Family and Children Services (hereafter referred to as DFCS), parents, and the children, when appropriate, to review the case plan for the reunification of the family, if possible, so the child can be returned to his or her family as soon as possible. If the court finds that reunification is not in the best interest of the child, the panel will recommend alternatives such as adoption, permanent guardianship, or another planned permanent living arrangement.

CHAPTER I. ESTABLISHING JUDICIAL CITIZEN REVIEW

A. Creation of Judicial Citizen Review Panels

Juvenile court judges or superior court judges exercising juvenile court jurisdiction may elect to establish judicial citizen review panels by:

Filing a Statement of Intent (Appendix A) with the Executive Director of the Council of Juvenile Court Judges

If the Council of Juvenile Court Judges (hereinafter referred to as the "Council") has adequate staff and resources to support the request, the Council will notify the court in writing of its decision to proceed; and

The judge may then establish judicial citizen review panels at a time mutually agreed upon with the Council.

B. Functions and Duties of Judicial Citizen Review Panels

1. Judicial citizen review panels shall:

- a. Review cases of children in foster care in the legal custody of DFCS within four months following the initial court review which shall be held within 75 days following a child adjudicated as a dependent child's removal from the home.
- b. Submit findings and recommendations to the court on each case which, at a minimum, shall address:
 - (i) The necessity and appropriateness of the current placement;
 - (ii) Whether reasonable efforts have been made to obtain permanency for the child;
 - (iii) The degree of compliance with the specific goals and action steps set out in the case plan;
 - (iv) Whether any significant progress has been made in improving the conditions that caused the child's removal from the home; and
 - (v) Any specific changes that need to be made in the case plan, including a change in the permanency plan and the projected date when permanency for the child is likely to be achieved.

2. *Judicial citizen review panels, with the consent of the court, may:*

- a. Assist DFCS and the court in identifying and developing local resources or services needed to promote permanency for children and families;
- b. Assist in coordinating the services of participating agencies; and
- c. Serve as advocates for children on both the local and state level by seeking additional resources and services.

C. *Qualifications, Appointments, Terms of Service, Oath of Office, and Removal of, Judicial Citizen Review, Panel Members*

1. *Qualifications*

- a. The judge shall screen, select, and appoint individuals over the age of 18 who reside or work in the county in which they wish to serve as a judicial citizen review panel member. The judge shall seek to appoint persons who represent a cross-section of the community with respect to race, economic status, gender and ethnic background. Persons selected and wishing to serve on judicial citizen review panels must complete an application prior to training (See Appendix B) and submit it to the court.
- b. Panel members must complete a fifteen (15) hour training program provided by the Council. In addition, panel members shall complete five (5) hours of ongoing training each year of service.

2. *Appointments and Terms of Service*

Panel members shall serve at the pleasure of the judge for a term of one (1) year and may continue to serve as long as the panel member meets the requirements of these Program Guidelines. In the event that vacancies arise, the judge shall recruit additional volunteers to be trained and appointed to serve as a panel member.

3. *Oath of Office (Appendix D)*

Prior to serving on any judicial citizen review panel, each panel member shall take an oath of office administered by the court affirming that he or she shall keep confidential all information discussed or disclosed during the case review, any information learned outside of a review pertinent to a case, all findings and recommendations made by the panel in an individual case, and that he or she shall act in the best interest of the child.

4. *Removal from Office*

- a. Panel members may be removed by the judge for: (1) failure to attend more than one-half of the reviews; (2) failure to meet minimum training requirements; (3) displaying any behaviors which hinder the overall effectiveness of the panel; (4) violating the oath of confidentiality; and (5) conviction of a crime involving moral turpitude.
- b. The judge shall notify the panel member in writing of his or her removal.

D. Organizational Structure

1. *Local Program Coordinator*

The judge shall appoint a member of the court staff or any officer of the court to serve as the local program coordinator.

2. *Support Staff*

The Council shall employ professional staff who shall be responsible for panel training, program assessment and evaluation and providing technical assistance and support services to local courts and judicial citizen review panels.

3. *Panel Officers*

The judge shall annually appoint a chairperson for each panel. Each chairperson will appoint a vice chairperson to serve in his or her absence. In the event that neither the chairperson nor vice chairperson is available at a scheduled review, or at the discretion of the chairperson, another qualified panel member may serve as chairperson for that review.

E. Training of Panel Members

Each judicial citizen review panel member must complete an initial fifteen (15) hours of training, provided by the Council, before he or she is qualified to serve. Following the first year, panel members must annually complete five (5) hours of training provided by the Council or from a curriculum approved by the Council. The Council staff will certify to the court that all panel members have met the training requirements. Failure to be certified shall make a panel member ineligible to serve, until such panel member can meet the required training.

Fifteen hours of training will be provided for judicial citizen review panel members. The Council of Juvenile Court Judges of Georgia staff shall provide the initial training sessions. Certain sections of the training program may be given by juvenile court judges or local Division of Family and Children Services staff.

Training includes such subjects as:

- The Juvenile Court:
 - ◆ Organization, authority and responsibilities, disposition of dependent children, and termination of parental rights.
- Agency: Division of Family and Children Services
 - ◆ Organization, authority and responsibilities, and services.
- Judicial Citizen Review Process:
 - ◆ Authority and responsibilities, confidentiality, and procedures.
- Permanency Planning:
 - ◆ Definition, process, barriers, and steps to resolution.
- Group Processes:
 - ◆ Interviewing and communication skills and working with community agencies.

F. Panel Composition, Quorum and Emergency Substitution Procedures

1. Panel Composition

Each judicial citizen review panel shall consist of no less than three members and no more than eight members. The panel chairperson may designate as many as five (5) members to participate in the review process at one time.

2. Quorum and Emergency Substitution Procedures

Three (3) panel members are necessary to conduct a foster care review. If a panel member cannot attend a scheduled review, he or she must notify the chairperson or local program coordinator. The chairperson or local program coordinator will secure a qualified replacement. In the event that a quorum of qualified members cannot be obtained, the following procedures (listed in priority order) should be followed: (1) a Council staff person or local program coordinator meeting the certification requirements shall serve as a panel member; (2) the judge or associate judge will conduct the review; (3) or the case will be rescheduled for the earliest possible time to comply with statutory time frames.

G. Workload of the Panels

Each judicial citizen review panel shall have no less than ten (10) but no more than eighty (80) active cases on its caseload at any given time. Any county wishing to establish citizen review panels with less than ten (10) cases may combine with another contiguous county to establish review panels. Any county whose panel caseload falls below ten (10) active cases may be required by the Council to combine with another contiguous county if it wishes to continue judicial citizen review.

H. Duties of Local Program Coordinators, Panel Chairpersons, and Council Staff

1. Local Program Coordinators

The local program coordinator shall be responsible for, but not limited to, the following:

- a. Procure and maintain all official case and judicial citizen panel review records for each child reviewed;
- b. Schedule case review dates and times, in consultation with the Council staff person;
- c. Mail out notification letters to all parties to be invited to the panel review;
- d. Distribute judicial citizen review panel recommendations to the juvenile court judge, DFCS, parents, and other appropriate agencies and parties; and
- e. Attend reviews and assist the panel in formulating panel findings and recommendations in the absence of Council staff;
- f. Assist the juvenile court judge in recruiting new volunteers.

2. Panel Chairpersons

Judicial citizen review panel chairpersons will ensure that the review process operates efficiently and focuses on permanency goals and the case plan. Panel chairpersons shall:

- a. Have monthly contact with the local program coordinator for the purpose of general review planning, scheduling, and assigning an appropriate number of panel members to attend each review;
- b. Discuss with the panel members, prior to each review, the agenda for the reviews and any additional information pertinent to the review process;
- c. Call each review to order, explain the nature and purpose of the review, administer the oath of confidentiality to the appropriate parties and advise them of the consequences of relaying information during the panel review. The panel chairperson will also facilitate the review process such as, but not limited to, the presentation of information by involved parties (See Appendix E);
- d. Have the authority to call a recess or dismiss any participant to obtain sensitive information, bring order to a review, or confer with his or her panel members in private; provided, however, that no case planning may occur while those parties authorized to be in attendance are in recess;
- e. At the end of each review, summarize in oral form, the panel findings and recommendations for those persons present, and close the review; and
- f. As needed, request a meeting with the judge to discuss the panel review process.

3. Council Staff

Council staff shall be responsible for performing the following duties:

- a. Assist the panel in formalizing and recording the panel's findings and recommendations made by the judicial citizen review panel and forward them to the local program coordinator for distribution to the judge, DFCS, parents, other agencies and appropriate parties;
- b. Obtain and assess information as required by judicial citizen review panels to formulate permanency recommendations;
- c. Inform judicial citizen review panel members of new statutes, rules and regulations, and training as required.
- d. Evaluate panel performance and work closely with juvenile court judges and local program coordinators to promote cooperation and resolve problems;
- e. Work with the local program coordinator to establish a schedule for panel meetings;
- f. If requested by the court, assist the court with the volunteer recruitment process by scheduling informational meetings explaining the panel program;
- h. Assist the training director in providing the initial fifteen (15) hours of volunteer training and any on-going training;
- g. Serve as the official liaison between the court, DFCS and any other agencies; and
- h. Assist with other duties related to the functioning of the Judicial Citizen Review Program.

I. Conflict of Interest

A. Conflicts of interest:

1. An active Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA) shall not be a panel member.
2. The local program coordinator shall not serve as a chairperson.
3. No panel member or local program coordinator shall be a provider of services, including transportation or legal advice, for DFCS or any family involved in foster care.
4. Any person employed by DFCS, the juvenile court, except for the person designated as the local program coordinator, or any person who serves as a legal guardian or custodian of a child in temporary foster care, including foster parents shall not be eligible to serve unless as provided in Uniform Rule 24.4(a) and these Program Guidelines.
5. Any panel member who has personal involvement with parties in any case shall remove themselves from that particular review.

B. Recommendations to avoid possible conflict of interest:

1. It is highly recommended that a local program coordinator should not also serve as a CASA coordinator.

J. Disbanding Judicial Citizen Review Panels

If a judge chooses to disband the judicial citizen review panel program in his or her county, he or she must inform the Council, the judicial citizen review panel volunteers, and DFCS, in writing at least sixty (60) days prior to this action.

CHAPTER II THE REVIEW PROCESS

Preparation for Reviews

A. Meeting Place

Each judicial citizen review panel will meet at a place designated by the judge. The review shall not be held at the DFCS offices. Designated facilities should have the necessary equipment and supplies to support the review process.

B. Notice of Case Reviews

The local DFCS office shall furnish the local program coordinator with a master calendar of cases to be reviewed on a quarterly basis. A list of individuals to be invited to each review should be provided at least twenty (20) working days prior to the date of the scheduled review.

The local program coordinator shall send written notice of a scheduled review on a form prescribed by the Council (See Appendix F), at least fifteen (15) working days prior to a review. Notice is given to DFCS, the parents of the child, the child, the child's attorney or CASA, the child's foster parents, and any preadoptive parent or relative providing care for the child or, group home/Institution staff.

C. Assignment of Cases in Counties With More Than One Panel

The local program coordinator shall assign cases to review panels. Once a case has been assigned to a panel, it should not be reassigned unless ordered by the judge.

D. Scheduling of Cases

The cases of children who are entering foster care shall be scheduled for review within four months of the initial court review and shall be scheduled thereafter at the discretion of the court.

E. Attendance at Reviews

Participants in Reviews

The following persons may be invited by the panel: family members of the child, legal counsel retained by the parent(s) or appointed by the court for the child, CASA, other professionals and other citizens having knowledge of the case or special expertise which would benefit the review process. Unless excused by a judicial citizen review panel during the course of a review, the caseworker assigned to the case, or his or her immediate supervisor, must be in attendance. The judicial citizen review panel may also request the presence of other specific employees of the local DFCS office or other agency at the panel review.

F. Case Information Required for Review

1. Necessary Documents

The following documents shall be provided to the local program coordinator by DFCS prior to a scheduled case review: social study which presents the basic information needed to develop an appropriate case plan; 30-day report or case plan, which is the initial permanency plan developed within 30 days of the child's placement in temporary foster care; comprehensive child and family assessment; case review form which updates the progress since the last case review; petitions; court orders; and case-related court reports.

DFCS shall also provide copies of psychological evaluations, mental health reports, school records, and other related documents. The local program coordinator is responsible for disseminating this information to the panel members. Any additional DFCS records and court information pertinent to the case being reviewed shall be made available to the panel upon request.

2. Time Frames

DFCS shall submit the case information listed in Section (F) (1) above, to the local program coordinator at least five (5) working days before the scheduled review. Any additional requests by the panel from the DFCS office will be submitted to the local program coordinator within five (5) working days of the receipt of the request. Information requested from other individuals and agencies shall be submitted as soon as possible, but not to exceed a period of thirty (30) calendar days without written explanation of the reason for the delay.

G. Review of Case Information Prior to Panel Meeting

The local program coordinator will make the case information required for review available to the panel members at the court-designated location at least three (3) working days before the scheduled review. Panel members cannot remove information from the facility or take notes that may identify the case participants. Panel members should pre-review scheduled cases to ensure consistent, accurate, and time-efficient reviews.

CHAPTER III

JUDICIAL CITIZEN PANEL REVIEWS

A. Prior to the Review

Prior to each review and in a closed session, the chairperson shall meet with the panel to prepare for the review. No other party shall be in the room at this time.

If any panel member has a potential conflict of interest, such conflict shall be revealed during the closed session prior to the review.

B. Call to Order, Confidentiality

The chairperson calls each review to order (Appendix E) and explains the nature and purpose of the review. He or she administers the Oath of Confidentiality as found in (Appendix G) of these guidelines. All information discussed during a judicial citizen review panel review shall remain confidential. Any release of case-related information must first be approved by the juvenile court. The chairperson must also advise all parties of the possible consequences of statements made during the review. Information received through sources other than documents and testimony comprising the case record shall also remain confidential.

C. Presentation of Cases

The chairperson facilitates the review and invites parties to address the panel. The presentation of each case begins with a brief overview by the caseworker. If the review is an initial review, the caseworker should explain why the child came into foster care. If the case has been previously reviewed, the caseworker should focus her presentation on informing the panel as to what has been accomplished by all parties since the last review.

The panel, through the chairperson, may excuse any party from the review if the panel determines that the exclusion is necessary. The panel may also meet privately with the child if it is determined that this may facilitate the child's ability to communicate his or her concerns to the panel members.

D. Findings and Recommendations

After oral discussion of the case, the panel must submit its findings and recommendations to the court which should, at a minimum, address the following issues:

- Whether a child adjudicated as a dependent child continues to be a dependent child;
- Whether the existing case plan is still the best case plan, whether any changes need to be made to the case plan including whether a case plan for nonreunification is appropriate;
- The extent of compliance with the case plan by all participants;
- The appropriateness of any recommended changes to such child's placement;
- Whether appropriate progress is being made on the permanency case plan;
- Whether all legally required services are being provided to a child, foster parents and his or her parent(s), guardian, or legal custodian;
- Whether visitation is appropriate and, if not, recommend a reasonable visitation schedule consistent with the child's age and developmental needs.
- Whether services for a child age 14 or older are needed to assist such child to make a transition from foster care to independent living
- Whether reasonable efforts continue to be made to reunify child(ren) with family.
- If at any review subsequent to the initial 75 day review the court finds that there is a lack of substantial progress towards completion of the case plan, the court shall order DFCS to develop a case plan for nonreunification or a concurrent case plan contemplating nonreunification.
- At the time of each review, DFCS shall notify the court whether and when they intend to proceed with termination of parental rights.

At the conclusion of the oral review, the panel shall formalize and record the panel's findings and recommendations. (See sample form Appendix H).

The local program coordinator transmits the panel's findings and recommendations to the juvenile court judge along with DFCS' revised plan for reunification. These documents shall be provided to the child's parents at the end of the review; provided, however, if the parents are not present at the review they shall be provided these documents within five (5) days of the review. Any party may request a hearing on the proposed revised plan within five (5) days after receiving a copy of the panel's findings and recommendations. (See sample form Appendix H).

E. Termination of Foster Care Notification

Cases are closed when:

- The juvenile court judge issues an order returning legal custody to the parent(s). The court forwards a copy of its order to the local program coordinator.
- The juvenile court judge issues an order declaring emancipation of the child. The court forwards a copy of its order to the local program coordinator.
- Permanent guardianship of the child has been awarded. The court forwards a copy of its order to the local program coordinator.
- The child has been legally adopted. The Division of Family and Children Services notifies the court, who shall then forward a copy of this notice to the local program coordinator.

F. Recommendations Requiring Agency Action

Panels may make recommendations or request information about the role or actions of placement facilities or other agencies. Panels may request additional information or file a case-related recommendation by:

- Advising the judge of the problem and asking for help.
- Writing a letter to the Director of the Division of Family and Children Services, any other state agency head or any other appropriate party.

CHAPTER IV. CERTIFICATION OF JUDICIAL CITIZEN REVIEW PANELS

CERTIFICATION OF JUDICIAL CITIZEN REVIEW PANELS

The program and all panels shall be conducted in the manner set forth in Code Section 15-11-216 of the O.C.G.A., as now or hereinafter amended, (hereinafter referred to as the "Code Section") and shall employ the standards and procedures mandated by the Code Section, the Uniform Rules of the Juvenile Court and these guidelines. Only those courts which agree to, and do in fact, operate under such terms and conditions shall be deemed to be in compliance. The Council, by and through the Education/Certification Subcommittee of the Permanency Planning Committee, shall, not less than annually, certify to each court that the program operating in that county is or is not in compliance with the Code Section. Certification shall be based on the following criteria:

1. The program and all panels must operate in substantial conformity with the Code Section, the Uniform Rules, and these Program Guidelines.
2. There must be a sufficient number of qualified panel members to staff the number of panels required by that court's caseload in accordance with the restrictions set forth in the guidelines. A qualified panel member shall be a panel member who has completed the initial training, the minimum in-service training for the prior year, and who has attended more than one-half of the reviews by the panel to which said member is assigned; provided, however, a panel member in their initial year of service shall be qualified for that year if they have completed the initial training.
3. The program shall use forms which are in substantial conformity with those approved by the Council and provided in these guidelines.
4. At every review there shall be present at least one of the following: a member of the field staff, a local program coordinator, or an individual who has met the same minimum training requirements for field staff.
5. All cases assigned to panels for review shall be reviewed within four (4) months after the 75 day hearing by the court, any future reviews will be scheduled by the court.
6. The judge of the court shall have such contact and interaction with the panels serving the court as may be reasonably necessary to ensure the proper and effective operation of the program. Such contact and interaction must be not less than two (2) hours per year and may be accomplished by participation in training, organized direct meetings with panel members or chairpersons, or other similar methods.
7. It is recommended that the judge should timely review the findings and recommendations of the panel and should either incorporate the same into a supplemental order within twenty (20) working days or review and modify the same at a hearing called for that purpose, with proper notice to all parties entitled to notice of a panel review.

8. The confidentiality, independence, and integrity of the panel shall be respected by the court and no panel member may be questioned by the court as to his or her reasoning supporting any finding or recommendation.

No panel member or panel may review a case when such panel member or panel has not met the requirements of certification, or where a program has not been certified to be in compliance with the Code Section. When a county is found not to be in compliance, the program may continue to operate for a period of two months at the discretion of the Permanency Planning Subcommittee provided that the judge in the county in which that program operates has submitted a plan to come into compliance within the two-month time period.

CHAPTER V. APPENDICES

Appendix A	Statement of Intent
Appendix B	Citizen Volunteer Application
Appendix C	Consent Form
Appendix D	Oath of Office
Appendix E	Opening Statement and Procedure for Panel Chairpersons
Appendix F	Letter of Notification
Appendix G	Oath of Confidentiality
Appendix H	Panel Findings and Recommendations
Appendix I	Adoption Status Review
Appendix J	Age 18 Transition Plan

STATEMENT OF INTENT

To: The Executive Director of the Council of Juvenile Court Judges

Date: _____

The Juvenile Court of _____ County wishes to establish judicial citizen review panels to conduct foster care case reviews. Request that the Council of Juvenile Court Judges review its current staff resources to determine if panels can be established and supported by the Council in the manner prescribed by the Uniform Rules for the Juvenile Courts of Georgia and as directed in the Council's Program Guidelines.

Judge

JUDICIAL CITIZEN REVIEW PANEL APPLICATION
_____ COUNTY JUVENILE COURT

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ County _____ Zip _____

Mailing Address (if different) _____

_____ e-mail address: _____

Phone: Home _____ Work _____ Ext. _____

Occupation _____

Employer _____ County _____

Social Security #(optional) _____ Sex _____ Birthday _____

Spouse's Name _____ Occupation _____

How did you hear about the Judicial Citizen Review Program? _____

List any panel members you know: _____

Why do you wish to become a panel member? _____

Check if you have any training or experience (practical, volunteer, paid) in any of the following categories. **NOTE:** None is required to be a panel member.

- | | | |
|-------------------------|-----------------------------|------------------------|
| _____ Child Care | _____ Mental Health | _____ News Media |
| _____ Child Development | _____ Counseling/Psychology | _____ Writing/Editing |
| _____ Child Welfare | _____ Medicine | _____ Public Speaking |
| _____ Social Work | _____ Education | _____ Arts or Graphics |
| _____ Personnel | _____ Law | _____ Fund Raising |
| _____ Criminology or | _____ Drug/Alcohol | _____ Advertising/ |
| Law Enforcement | Treatment Programs | Public Relations |

If yes, please describe: _____

Please describe any other volunteer and community activities: _____

List Hobbies, Special Interests/Skills: _____

Have you ever been or are you currently a foster parent? _____ If yes, where? _____

List any arrests, other than traffic citations, and give the charge, date, county/state, disposition: _____

When can you attend citizen panel reviews at the Juvenile Court?

Please check times available:

	Mon.	Tues.	Wed.	Thurs.	Fri.
Morning (8AM-Noon)					
Afternoon (Noon-4PM)					

Are there specific weekdays when you cannot attend? _____

I, _____, hereby affirm that all of the answers provided on my volunteer application are true. I understand that the information requested will be used only for the purpose of determining my suitability as a Judicial Citizen Review Panel Member. I understand that this application does not ensure appointment to a review panel. After the successful completion of my training, I further understand that I will be expected to serve a minimum of one year in the Judicial Citizen Panel Review Program, and that I may be reappointed if I wish to remain active for a longer period of time. If unforeseen circumstances prevent me from fulfilling this obligation, I will submit a written resignation to the program coordinator with as much advance notice as possible.

I am aware that I will be examining sensitive, confidential documents, reports, and other materials in my capacity as a Judicial Citizen Review Panel volunteer. I will discuss these matters only with those persons directly involved in the case at the Court or those who will be consulted for their professional knowledge and expertise.

Signature

Date

CONSENT FORM

I, _____, hereby authorize the _____ County Juvenile Court to receive any criminal history information pertaining to me which may be in the files of any federal, state, or local criminal justice agency. I understand that any information obtained will be considered in determining my suitability to serve as a volunteer. This information may be requested and received on a continuing basis during the period of time that I am an active volunteer for the Juvenile Court.

Full Name, (Printed)

Address

Sex

DOB (mo/day/yr)

Social Security #

Ethnic Origin

Signature

Date

Notary

Please list the cities, counties and states you have resided in the past ten (10) years, listing the most current residence first. (Also include city, county, and state where you attended college or served in the military.)

(To) Dates (From)

City

County

State

JUDICIAL CITIZEN REVIEW PANEL APPOINTMENT OATH

I solemnly swear/affirm that I will faithfully execute my duties as a member of the _____ County Juvenile Court Judicial Citizen Review Panel. In so doing, I shall protect the confidentiality of all information regarding the children and families concerned. Furthermore, I shall act solely in what I believe to be the best interest of the child. (So help me God.)

Panel Members:

Sworn to and subscribed before me this ____ day of _____, 20 ____.

Judge

OPENING STATEMENT AND PROCEDURE FOR PANEL CHAIRPERSON

PANEL MEETINGS

Chairperson Responsibilities During the Review:

1. Facilitate and lead the meeting;
2. Maintain Focus;
3. Keep time restrictions.

Call to Order:

The judicial citizen review panel, appointed by the _____ County Juvenile Court, is called to order to conduct a case review in the interest of

(insert child(ren)'s name here)

It is the belief of the Juvenile Court and the Division of Family and Children's Services that children should not remain in foster care or in temporary custody for long periods of time because children need a permanent home.

The primary purpose of this Judicial Citizen Review Panel is to ensure that the court-ordered goals are realistic by reviewing the progress or the lack of progress being made. The panel will then make recommendations to the court. Final authority rests with the judge.

Our review today is not a hearing. All discussions are confidential. Everyone here will have an opportunity to give his or her point of view so that we can see what progress is being made toward permanence. Any information presented may have future bearing on the case.

Chairperson should make introductions and determine which of the parties should remain in the room at any given time.

All parties present must swear/affirm to the Oath of Confidentiality. (Appendix F) Chairperson should witness signatures.

Presentation of information usually begins by asking DFCS caseworker to present an update on the case.

Child(ren) may be excused if the information to be presented is of a sensitive nature

NOTIFICATION OF CASE REVIEW

Date _____

Case # _____

Name _____

Address _____

The judicial citizen review panel appointed by the _____ County Juvenile Court will conduct a case review of the following children:

on _____, 20 ____ at _____ a.m./p.m. at

Please make every effort to attend this review. The purpose of this review is to consider the progress toward obtaining a permanent home for the child(ren) in this case either by returning the child(ren) to the birth family or by other means. Failure of parents to attend without good reason may show the court a lack of commitment toward the return of their child(ren). Failure to comply with court orders can result in termination of parental rights.

The panel members are citizens from this community trained to review foster care cases. A Division of Family and Children Services caseworker will also be present. The review panel recommendations are sent to the Juvenile Court Judge.

OATH OF CONFIDENTIALITY FOR PARTIES AT PANEL REVIEWS

I solemnly swear/affirm that I shall protect the confidentiality of all information disclosed during the review and of any information related to the case that I may learn of outside the review. I understand that such information may only be disclosed when authorized by law and, in the event that I breach this oath of confidentiality, I shall be subject to the contempt powers of the court.

Signatures:

Witnessed by: _____

JUDICIAL CITIZEN REVIEW PANEL FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Date of Review _____
 Date of Last Panel Review _____
 Panel Number _____
 Date of Last Judicial Review _____

Assigned Judge _____

Reason(s) for Dependency Adjudication/Removal (from Court Order) _____

Date of Initial Removal(s) _____

Name(s) of Child(ren)	Present: Yes/No (If no, Why?)	D.O.B.	Gender/Race	Date of Separation/Removal	Court File Number

Others Present (Print Name)	Signature of Presence at Review	Relationship
		Parent(s)
		Parent(s)
		DFCS Caseworker
		DFCS Supervisor
		CASA/GAL
		Caregiver/Foster Parent
		Attorney for Child

Mother of Child(ren) Address: _____ () -
 Address, City, State Zip Code Telephone Number

Father of Child(ren) Address: _____ () -
 Address, City, State Zip Code Telephone Number

Panel Members/Signature of Presence at Review

CASA

CJCJ Field Staff

Court Staff

CASE PLAN GOALS – PROGRESS AND REVIEW (Page ___ of ___ if multiple pages needed)

CASE NAME: _____ DATE: ___ / ___ / 20___ PANEL # _____			
GOAL # (as from Case Plan)	EXTENT OF COMPLIANCE WITH THE CASE PLAN: (by all participants)	PANEL RECOMMENDED STEP CHANGES: (Recommended changes to complete goals and steps applicable to parties and DFCS)	DATE TO BE ACHIEVED:
# _____			
# _____			
# _____			
# _____			
# _____			

PANEL FINDINGS:

1. DUE PROCESS/NOTICE TO PARTICIPANTS:

	Check (√)	Indicate type of notice (US Mail, Certified Mail, etc.)	Comments
Notice to parents			
Notice to child			
Notice to caregivers (foster parents, group home, etc.)			
Reasonable attempts to find the absent parent			
Attorneys of Record			

2. CHILD WELL-BEING:

A. Child/Children Education (current and meaningful) –

	Check (√)
IEP	
Current Grades (report card)	
Attendance report	
Extra-curricular activities (sports, scouts, etc.)	
On grade level?	
Disciplinary referrals	
Parent/teacher connection	
Special services (tutoring, speech, etc.)	
Comments:	

B. Mental Health (current and meaningful) –

	Check (√)
Psychological Evaluation	
Psychiatric Evaluation	
Counseling (Individual, Group, Family); how often? Level of service.	
Mental Health Medications; compliance? School awareness of medications.	
Comments:	

C. Medical/Physical Health (current and meaningful) –

	Check (√)
EPSDT (Early Periodic Screening and Diagnostic Testing)	
Babies Can't Wait	
Dental	
Vision	
Hearing	
Medications	
Immunizations	
Comments:	

D. Independent Living Program and APPLA Goals and Review – Are Independent Living Services being provided, if the child is 14 years of age or older? _____ Yes _____ No _____ N/A

Comments:
Indicate current status and needs:

3. CURRENT PLACEMENT OF CHILD OR CHILDREN:

(NOTE – if multiple children in multiple placements, please attach additional forms(s))

A. Child(ren) is/are currently in _____ (County) _____ (State)

Birth Parent/Legal Guardian	Relative Placement (by the Court)	Relationship to Child(ren)
_____ Institutional Foster Care	_____ Relative Foster Care (by DFCS)	_____
_____ Regular Foster Care	_____ Group Home	
_____ Emergency Foster Care	_____ Out-of-State Placement	
_____ Pre-Adoptive	_____ Youth Detention Center	
_____ Other _____		

B. How many placements since last panel review? _____

C. How long at current placement? _____

D. Any plans or considerations to move child(ren) from current placement? _____ Yes _____ No

E. Is the placement appropriate for the child(ren)'s needs? _____ Yes _____ No If No, explain:

F. Is it a safe setting that is the least restrictive setting available? _____ Yes _____ No If No, explain:

G. Is it the most family-like setting available? ____Yes ____ No If No, explain:;

H. Is it in close proximity to the home of the parent or parents with whom reunification is planned?
____Yes ____ No If No, explain:_____

4. VISITATION:

A. What is the current ***court ordered*** visitation schedule?_____

B. Is it to be supervised?____Yes ____ No Please explain: _____

C. Is that visitation schedule reasonable; does it allow the parents to maintain meaningful contact with the child(ren) through personal visits, telephone calls, e-mail and letters? ____Yes ____ No

If No, explain:_____

(a) Mother and/or Father exercising the visitation provided? ____Yes ____ No

If No, explain:_____

(b) Is DFCS complying with visitation obligations? ____Yes ____ No

If No, explain:_____

(c) Is there a sibling visitation schedule? ____Yes ____ No

If yes, what is it?_____

(d) Is the current visitation schedule in need of revision? ____Yes ____ No

If yes, explain:_____

5. RELATIVE SEARCH:

Reasonable diligent search for parent, relative, or other persons who have shown an ongoing commitment to the child:

Such search shall be completed within 30 days from the date on which the child was removed from the home or, before final disposition. The results of such search shall be documented in writing and filed with the court at the time of the first review.

1. Has DFCS complied and documented with the court within the statutory time frame, the requirement to conduct a diligent search for parent, relatives, or other persons who have shown an ongoing commitment to the child or children? _____ Yes _____ No

If No, please identify what efforts must be made: _____

6. REVIEW OF PROGRESS IN CASE PLAN:

CURRENT COURT-ORDERED PERMANENCY PLAN - If Concurrent Plan circle all applicable plans (Please circle the # next to the current plan)

1. Return to Birth Family/Legal Family
2. Adoption
3. Permanent Guardianship – (Please Identify): _____
4. Another Planned Permanent Living Arrangement –i.e. long-term foster care, emancipation? (Please identify) _____

If option 4 is circled, why can't child(ren) be adopted or placed with permanent guardianship?

Is the existing case plan still the best case plan for such child(ren) and his/her family?
_____ Yes _____ No If No, explain: _____

A. Has the court made a finding of nonreunification? Yes _____ No _____
If so, give date. ____ / ____ / ____.

7. APPROPRIATENESS OF PERMANENCY OPTION:

If any Panel member or any party is not in agreement with the Permanency Plan, state in detail the reason for disagreement and the alternative recommendation: _____

8. PANEL'S RECOMMENDATION FOR MODIFICATION OF PERMANENCY PLAN:

(Please circle the # that is appropriate)

1. Return to Birth Family/Legal Family
2. Adoption
3. Permanent Guardianship – (Please Identify): _____
4. Another Planned Permanent Living Arrangement –i.e. long-term foster care, emancipation? (Please identify) _____

9. DFCS' RECOMMENDATION FOR MODIFICATION OF PERMANENCY PLAN:

(Please circle the # that is appropriate)

1. Return to Birth Family/Legal Family
2. Adoption
3. Permanent Guardianship – (Please Identify): _____
4. Another Planned Permanent Living Arrangement –i.e. long-term foster care, emancipation? (Please identify) _____

10. Does the child adjudicated as a dependent child(ren), continue to be dependent?

_____ Yes _____ No, If No, explain: _____

11. PANELS' FINDINGS AS TO DFCS REASONABLE EFFORTS MADE SINCE THE LAST REVIEW:

Are all services being provided to dependent child(ren), foster parent(s), parent(s), guardian(s) or custodian(s) per court order? Check as applicable:

	Services	Comments	Dates of Referrals
	Wrap-Around Services		
	Educational Services		
	Drug Screen		
	Parenting Classes		
	Psych Eval		
	Counseling		
	Alcohol and Drug Assessment		
	Visitation		
	Home Evaluation		
	ICPC		
	ILP/WTLP		
	Any Additional Efforts:		

11a. Is there a concurrent permanency plan? Yes_____ No_____ If yes, what is it? _____ Is DFCS making reasonable efforts appropriate to that concurrent permanency plan?

Those efforts are: _____

If no, what additional efforts are being recommended: _____

12. TERMINATION OF PARENTAL RIGHTS

A. Does DFCS intend to petition for Termination of Parental Rights at this time? Yes No
 If yes, give intended date for filing petition: _____

If No, explain: _____

NOTE - If DFCS has not filed a Petition for Termination of Parental Rights, does the case plan document one of the following;

_____ Child(ren) is/are being cared for by his/her relative.
 _____ Case plan documents a compelling reason why termination is not in child(ren)'s best interest;
 if checked – the compelling reasons are: _____

_____ DFCS has not provided to the family of the child(ren) consistent with the specific time frames for the accomplishment of the case plan goals such services deemed necessary for the safe return of the child(ren) to the child(ren)'s home.

If there are compelling reasons stated above, does the Panel request the court to review whether the reasons are sufficiently compelling to permit DFCS not to file a Petition for Termination of Parental Rights? Yes No

If yes indicated above for a compelling reason, complete the following:

DFCS filed a TPR Petition on (enter date)	
DFCS will file a TPR Petition on (enter date):	
Case Plan qualifies under 15-11-233 (not in child's best interest)	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Child/Children in foster care 15 of most recent 22 months?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No

B. Does the Panel recommend Termination of Parental Rights at this time? Yes No

If yes, state reasons for TPR _____

13. REVIEW OF PREVIOUS PANEL RECOMMENDATIONS:

Has the Panel made previous recommendations that have not been implemented? Yes No

Specify: _____

17. PANEL FINDINGS

	FINDS	DOES NOT FIND
The Panel (FINDS OR DOES NOT FIND) that reasonable efforts continue to be made to prevent or eliminate the necessity of the removal, unless reasonable efforts were not required.		
The Panel (FINDS OR DOES NOT FIND) that DFCS has failed in implementing any material provision of the case plan or abused its discretion in the placement or proposed placement of the child/children.		
The Panel (FINDS OR DOES NOT FIND) that all legally required services are being provided to the child or children, parents, foster parents, or guardians.		
The Panel (FINDS OR DOES NOT FIND) that the existing case plan is in the best interest of the child or children		
The Panel (FINDS OR DOES NOT FIND) that the visitation is or continues to be appropriate		
The Panel (FINDS OR DOES NOT FIND) that the case plan for those children over the age of 14, have been provided with services to assist them in transition from foster care to independent living.		
The Panel (FINDS OR DOES NOT FIND) there is substantial progress toward completion of the case plan. (If so, the court shall schedule a hearing within 30 days to determine whether a case plan for nonreunification is appropriate.)		

18. AGREEMENT WITH THE PANEL'S RECOMMENDATIONS:

DFCS Agree _____ Disagree _____ Not Present _____

Child Agree _____ Disagree _____ Not Present/Too Young _____

Mother Agree _____ Disagree _____ Not Present _____

Father Agree _____ Disagree _____ Not Present _____

Legal Guardian Agree _____ Disagree _____ Not Present _____

Other: _____ Agree _____ Disagree _____ Not Present _____

If any party to the case is in disagreement, see request for court hearing of Panel findings and Recommendations.

**REQUEST FOR A COURT HEARING OF PANEL FINDINGS AND
RECOMMENDATIONS**

The undersigned does hereby request a court hearing from the following portion of the Findings and Recommendations:

This _____ day of _____, 20____.

[Signature]

[Printed name and position]

The request for a hearing filed herein will be held on _____ at _____
_____.m. at the same location of this review, or at _____
_____.

ADOPTION STATUS REVIEW

Initial Adoption Status Review: Date of Review: _____.

Date of last Adoption Status Review: _____.

Assigned Judge: _____.

The parental rights of the mother were terminated/surrendered on _____.

The parental rights of the father were terminated/surrendered on _____.

CURRENT PLACEMENT:

_____ Family Foster Care _____ Pre-Adoptive Foster Home

_____ Out-of-State-Placement _____ Group Home

_____ Other _____.

Is the placement appropriate for the child(ren)'s needs? ___ Yes ___ No, explain _____

_____.

Is it a safe setting that is the least restrictive setting available? ___ Yes ___ No, explain: _____

_____.

Are the child(ren)'s medical and educational needs being met?

___ Yes ___ No, explain: _____

_____.

The adoption has been finalized: ___ Yes ___ No Date case closed _____

The adoption has not been finalized because:

_____ Case on Appeal _____ Insufficient time has passed since child free for adoption.

_____ Child has Emotional/Behavioral/Psychological problems

_____ Other: _____

_____.

DFCS/CUSTODIAN has made all reasonable efforts to finalize the Permanency Plan which is Adoption. To wit:

____ Child is receiving counseling ____ DFCS searching for Therapeutic Placement

____ Life History complete **and** ____ Registered with Office of Adoption

____ Foster Home Conversion complete **and** ____ Registered with Office of Adoption

____ Signed **Form 33/37** ____ Scheduled to sign **Form 33/37**

____ Release signed by DFCS Director ____ Release on desk of DFCS Director

____ Document sent to Private Attorney ____ Child registered with _____

____ Child(ren) placed in home that is committed to adopting. If not, explain _____

Other: _____

____ DFCS has not made reasonable efforts to finalize adoption.

Panel recommends the following additional efforts: _____

3. AT 18 YEARS OF AGE, THE CHILD WILL:

- () Sign himself/herself back into care (see attached document)
- () Return to family (not signing himself / herself back into care): Specify with whom and relationship:

() College / Vocational or Technical School / Obtaining GED: Specify _____

() Participate in Independent Living Program: Specify _____

() Other: _____

4. THE CHILD HAS RECEIVED THE FOLLOWING:

- () Copy of Written Transitional Living Plan
- () Original Birth Certificate
- () Social Security Card
- () Medicaid Card (if applicable)
- () State Issued Identification or Driver's License

5. AGREEMENT WITH THE PANEL'S RECOMMENDATIONS:

DFCS	Agree	_____	Disagree	_____	Not Present	_____
Child	Agree	_____	Disagree	_____	Not Present	_____
Mother	Agree	_____	Disagree	_____	Not Present	_____
Father	Agree	_____	Disagree	_____	Not Present	_____
Legal Guardian	Agree	_____	Disagree	_____	Not Present	_____
Guardian Ad-Litem	Agree	_____	Disagree	_____	Not Present	_____
CASA	Agree	_____	Disagree	_____	Not Present	_____

Comments:

NOTICE TO ALL PARTIES

I understand that I have a right to request a hearing within five (5) days of receipt of Panel’s Findings and Recommendations before the judge if I disagree with the Panel’s Findings and Recommendations.

If I decide not to request a hearing before the judge, the judge can include the Panel’s Findings and Recommendations as an Order of the Court.

SIGNATURE

I understand this information and all of my questions have been fully answered.

Parent Date

DFCS Date

Parent Date

Panel Chairperson Date

Child Date

Next Review requested by Panel to be held on: _____

Written update requested on: _____.

Updated information to be provided within ten (10) days to the Local Program Coordinator, as follows:

I certify that I read aloud the completed Findings and Recommendations, in the presence of the parents, the panel members, and the caseworker responsible for ensuring that the plan is implemented (or such caseworker’s designee).

Signature of Panel Chairperson

