§ 371-b. Citizen review panels. 1. There shall be established at least three citizen review panels. At least one panel shall be established for the city of New York and at least two panels shall be established for social services districts or combinations of districts outside of the city of New York. The panel in the city of New York shall create one subcommittee for each borough for the purposes of evaluating the extent to which the state and the social services district are discharging their child protection responsibilities within that particular borough, in accordance with subsection three of this section. The office of children and family services shall make available resources to support the needs of each citizen review panel.

2. Each citizen review panel shall consist of thirteen members, seven of whom shall be appointed by the governor, three of whom shall be appointed by the temporary president of the senate, and three of whom shall be appointed by the speaker of the assembly. Each panel shall duly elect a chairperson of such panel. Each panel shall be composed of volunteer members who are broadly representative of the community in which such panel is established, including members who have expertise in the prevention and treatment of child abuse and neglect. No person employed by federal, state, county or municipal agencies which directly deliver child welfare services may be appointed to a panel.

3. Each citizen review panel shall, by examining the policies and procedures of the state and social services districts and, where appropriate, specific cases, evaluate the extent to which the agencies are effectively discharging their child protection responsibilities in accordance with: (a) the state plan established pursuant to 42 U.S.C. § 5106a(b); (b) the child protection standards set forth in 42 U.S.C. § 5106a(b); and (c) any other criteria that the panel considers important to ensure the protection of children. Each panel shall meet not less than once every three months. Each panel may hold public hearings on issues within the panel's jurisdiction.

4. Each citizen review panel shall have access to information on specific cases in accordance with paragraph (A) of subdivision four of section four hundred twenty-two of this chapter. Each panel shall also

have reasonable access to public and private facilities which are in receipt of public funds and are providing child welfare services within the panel's jurisdiction. Where necessary, the office shall assist a panel in obtaining access to information or facilities as authorized in accordance with this section. Each panel shall also have access to the report prepared by the state pursuant to 42 U.S.C. § 5106a(d).

5. Each citizen review panel shall prepare and make available to the public, on an annual basis, a report containing: (a) a summary of the activities of the panel; and (b) the findings and recommendations of the panel. Each report shall be submitted by February first and shall omit all confidential information used to prepare the report.

6. The members of each citizen review panel shall not disclose to any person or government official any identifying information about any specific child protection case. A member who knowingly violates this duty of confidentiality may be subject to a civil penalty not to exceed one thousand dollars and removal from the panel.

7. The legal defense of a member of a citizen review panel shall be governed by the terms of section seventeen of the public officers law.