

IN THE CIRCUIT COURT OF THE
EIGHTEENTH JUDICIAL CIRCUIT

ADMINISTRIVE ORDER NO.
24-48

**IN RE: DOMESTIC RELATIONS - APPOINTING GRACE LANDING, INC. D/B/A CENTRAL
FLORIDA FOSTER CARE REVIEW TO ADMINISTER THE EIGHTEENTH JUDICIAL
CIRCUIT'S CITIZEN REVIEW PANEL PROGRAM**

WHEREAS, pursuant to Florida Statutes 39.701 and 39.702, Grace Landing, Inc., doing business as Central Florida Foster Care Review, is permitted to conduct judicial reviews in dependency cases upon judicial referral; and

WHEREAS, pursuant to Florida Statute 39.702(2), citizen review panels in Florida must be administered by a non-profit organization and Grace Landing, Inc., is a qualifying non-profit organization and has provided its tax-exempt letter from the IRS to this Court in proof thereof; and

WHEREAS, utilizing the Citizen Review Panels in the Eighteen Judicial Circuit will assist the court in ensuring the best interest of children in the child welfare system; and

WHEREAS, the Administrative Office of the Courts has responsibility for the efficient handling of dependency cases and supporting the effective operation of the Citizen Review Panel Program;

NOW, THEREFORE, it is hereby ORDERED:

1. **AUTHORIZATION TO ADMINISTER CITIZEN REVIEW PANEL PROGRAM.** Grace Landing, Inc., a Florida non-profit corporation doing business as Central Florida Foster Care Review is hereby authorized to create and administer a Citizen Review Panel Program for the Eighteenth Judicial Circuit in accordance with this Administrative Order, applicable laws and the Florida Rules of Juvenile Procedure.
2. **ADMINISTRATION OF THE CITIZEN REVIEW PANEL PROGRAM.** Grace Landing, Inc., doing business as Central Florida Foster Care Review shall administer the Citizen Review Panel Program in accordance with the requirements of Section 39.702(5), F.S., as specifically set forth herein:
 - a. In collaboration with the Department of Children and Families (Department), develop policies to assure that citizen review panels comply with all applicable state and Federal laws.

- b. Establish policies for the recruitment, selection, retention, and terms of volunteer panel members. Final selection of citizen review panel members shall, to the extent possible, reflect the multicultural composition of the community in which they serve. A criminal background check and personal reference check shall be conducted on each citizen review panel member prior to the member serving on a citizen review panel. All members shall be approved by the Chief Judge or designee.
 - c. In collaboration with the Department, develop, implement, and maintain a training program for citizen review volunteers and provide training for each panel member prior to that member serving on a review panel. Such training may include, but shall not be limited to, instruction on dependency laws, departmental policies, and judicial procedures.
 - d. Ensure that all citizen review panel members have read, understood, and signed an oath of confidentiality relating to written or verbal information provided to the panel members for review hearings.
 - e. Establish policies to avoid actual or perceived conflicts of interest by any panel members during the review process and to ensure accurate, fair reviews of each child dependency case.
 - f. Establish policies to ensure adequate communication with the Department and the Court.
 - g. Establish policies to ensure adequate communication with the parent, the foster parent or legal custodian, the guardian ad litem, the child's attorney, if one is appointed, and any other person deemed appropriate.
 - h. Establish procedures that encourage attendance and participation of interested persons and parties, including the parents, foster parents or legal custodian with whom the child is placed, and the children who are the subjects of the cases, at citizen review hearings.
 - i. Coordinate with existing citizen review panels to ensure consistency of operating procedures, data collection, analysis, and report generation.
 - j. Make recommendations as necessary for the court concerning attendance of essential persons at the review and other issues pertinent to an effective review process.
 - k. Ensure consistent methods of identifying barriers to the permanent placement of the children and delineation of findings and recommendations to the court.
 - l. Submit an annual report to the Chief Judge by February 1st of each year.
3. **CITIZEN REVIEW PANEL PROGRAM VOLUNTEERS.**
- a. Grace Landing, Inc., doing business as Central Florida Foster Care Review will recruit, train, and supervise volunteer members of the Citizen Review Panel volunteer members and develop volunteer policies and standards in accordance with Florida statutes and best practices for volunteer management.
 - b. Citizen Review Panel members shall serve without compensation, at the pleasure of the Chief Judge.
 - c. Pursuant to Section 786.1355, F.S., a member or agent of a Citizen Review Panel acting in good faith is not liable for damages as a result of any review or recommendation with regard to a dependency matter unless such member or agent exhibits wanton and willful disregard of human rights, safety, or property.

4. CITIZEN REVIEW PANEL REFERRAL AND REVIEW. Citizen Review Panel hearings shall be conducted in accordance with all applicable Florida Statutes, Rules of Juvenile Procedure, and federal law, as follows:

- a. The Citizen Review Panel will conduct initial reviews of children referred by the Chief Judge or by the Juvenile Division.
- b. The Court shall select the cases appropriate for referral to the Citizen Review Panel.
- c. The Clerk of the Court shall schedule reviews before the Citizen Review Panel in coordination with Central Florida Foster Care Review and the court.
- d. A minimum of seventy-two (72) hours prior to the Citizen Review Panel's hearing, a Judicial Review Social Study Report (JRSSR) and attachments required by Section 39.710, F.S. must be filed by the case management agency with the Court and distributed to all parties and the Central Florida Foster Care Review.
- e. Central Florida Foster Care Review may set a post-judicial review hearing before the Court if the Citizen Review Panel (1) finds the agency in non-compliance with its obligations as specified in the written case plan; (2) has serious concerns that were identified during the panel's hearing; or (3) if the panel is recommending extending the permanency goal of reunification beyond 12 months from the date of removal.
- f. The Citizen Review Panel may not conduct more than two consecutive judicial review hearings without the child and the parties coming before the court for a judicial review.
- g. In accordance with Rule 8.255, Florida Rules of Juvenile Procedure, the child and the parents or the caregivers of the child may be examined separately and apart from each other.
- h. The Citizen Review Panel shall submit its written findings and recommendations report to the presiding judge within 10 days of the review hearing. No party shall be asked to waive their right to file exceptions to the report and recommendations pursuant to Rule 8.257(e), (f), Florida Rules of Juvenile Procedure.
- i. To allow the Central Florida Foster Care Review to comply with all requirements as to recruitment and training of Citizen Review Panel members and to develop all necessary policies and procedures, the Citizen Review Panels shall not convene any sooner than February 3, 2025.

5. This Administrative Order shall take effect immediately upon execution and shall remain in effect until further order of the Court.

DONE AND ORDERED this 13th day of December, 2024.


CHARLIE CRAWFORD
CHIEF JUDGE

Distribution:

All Circuit and County Judges (Brevard County)
Court Administration (Brevard and Seminole Counties)
Clerk of Court (Brevard and Seminole Counties)
State Attorney (Brevard and Seminole Counties)
Public Attorney (Brevard and Seminole Counties)
Sheriff (Brevard and Seminole Counties)
Bar Association (Brevard and Seminole Counties)
Law Library (Brevard and Seminole Counties)
County Attorney (Brevard and Seminole Counties)