



## Alaska Citizen Review Panel

### Members

Diwakar K. Vadapalli, Chair  
Dana Hallett, Vice-Chair  
Margaret McWilliams  
Bettyann Steciw  
Jen Burkmire  
Donna Aguiniga  
Rebecca Vale  
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Alaska Citizen Review Panel evaluates the policies, procedures, and practices of state and local child protection agencies for effectiveness in discharging their child protection responsibilities. The Panel is mandated through CAPTA 1997 (P.L. 104-235), and enacted through AS 47.14.205

## CRP Panel and OCS Teleconference Summary Notes

Tuesday, March 8, 2016

### Attendance

Meeting Chaired by: Diwakar Vadapalli

Panel members in attendance: Bettyann Steciw; Jen Burkmire; Joshua Stein; Rebecca Vale, Donna Aguiniga

OCS staff: Christy Lawton, Travis Erickson, Sara Childress from the Anchorage Office

Staff: Brenda Holden, Information Insights

### Anchorage regional site visit debrief

- Diwakar highlighted the key observations from the report and stated that many are applicable to the entire state such as large workloads, frontline workers struggling to prioritize because everything coming across their desk is highest priority, the need for recruitment and training of foster parents and public relations.
- The professional relationship with the AG's office and OCS seems a little challenging, which is not new. Some OCS staff feels they have to yield ground on professional social work principles. This came up in northern region also. From a foster parent or advocate perspective, AG represents OCS and the court. But parent is more tuned into worker's perspective and worker's perspective is very powerful. When in court, it changes flavor. So who is calling the shots – social work position or legal position – clarify who drives the bus. Most of these issues comes up with lack of experience of social workers.
- Public defender office working with DA office on criminal issues doesn't understand why the discovery has to be so laborious with the AG office. Although this is not in OCS control, it impacts OCS work load.
- Lack of training for Team Decision Making (TDM). Protocol seems haphazard. Sometimes weren't notified in time. Also felt they are not being represented well or perceive that this is a legal proceeding while OCS clearly states that they are non-legal, family oriented facilitated discussions to resolve family issues. There may need to be an education component and some clarification.
- OCS had challenges with 5x5 model and high intense model. Specifically, some were uncertain about the effectiveness of screening protocols to curb repeat maltreatment.
- The panel offered seven long term recommendations around training issues.

- Sara will share these results with her team and explore systemic ideas.
- Christy suggested that CRP could help get the foster home recruitment word out with news articles or data and maybe could get some traction with help. Christy will share the report information with staff and explore possibilities to address the issues that are in the report. The reality is that the workload is such that it would be difficult to make changes that are noticeable next year.
- Sara was asked if there is a timeline for the license application process. Sara and Travis gave examples of delays such as incomplete forms needing more information, the timing of core training, respecting family hesitations, and assuring eager families fully understand how this is going to change their lives. Once an application is received, OCS can typically process the application and have the home inspection done within 45 days. About day 30, the staff checks in with the applicant to see where they are at. The panel suggested a timeline with the application would be useful so the applicant knows their window.

### **Employee survey**

- Sara will give Diwakar with a list of six to eight workers with email addresses by the end of tomorrow for his class interviews. Interviews will not be part of the report, but it has to be done as part of the class expectations.
- Waiting for the university IRB to approve the survey and then the survey can go online for two weeks.
- Travis will contact Diwakar about having someone from OCS speak to his class.

### **Results of the BIA Survey report**

- Diwakar gave draft highlights of the annual BIA Survey that is currently being reviewed by the CRP. There were 105 valid responses. The overall local rating this year was 5.99 as compared to 6.1 last year. Rates are higher in some regions than others.
- When asked about the tribal state collaborative group, 40% said they are not aware of it, however 70% said the group could be improved. Christy stated that tribal leaders participate in this rather than ICWA workers. The interaction between front line OCS and ICWA personnel is collaborate on many tasks. Initial assessment stands out as interactive but not necessarily viewed as collaborative.
- Diwakar will share the report on CRP website after it is finalized.

### **OCS update on budget and prep for 2017 CFSR**

- The CFSR – Region 10 review begins April 1. We are ramping up efforts and well positioned. We are likely requesting to do our own review because our QA is very skilled and confident in use of the instrument. Unfortunately we know we are likely going to fail in many areas, knowing our own data. Our family services plan and update are due on January 30. The review includes 23 items and benchmarks are set as 95%.
- The CFSR outcomes – this year’s version is 18 items. All of those have 95% as their target. There are separate national standards on other things but use aggregate data of all cases to come up with rankings. There is a different national standard for each of those areas. They want to see progress, but to pass, you have to meet the national standards. This comes into play in the improvement plan where they set benchmarks and those are built around policy or practice models. They will negotiate how much progress they want to see before they release us from the improvement plan.
- Diwakar asked about state goals, and hopes credit is being given for progress made (using language of falling behind vs. failure). OCS measures themselves in areas that the feds are not measuring. OCS often sets achievable goals to have milestones that can be reached and celebrated that move OCS along the continuum toward the national standards.
- Staff, stakeholders and CRP will be informed of the review period and timeline.



## OCS Update on Budget

- House will finish closing out the budget by Friday. Representative Gara may support to add positions. We have to absorb a small impact of the contractual increases. The department is absorbing most of the one million needed to honor increases. Senate has not indicated any changes in the budget for us yet. Senate has not indicated any changes in the budget for us yet .
- OCS is still under same guidance from earlier in the year in terms of hiring and travel freeze. Some key positions are part of the blanket waiver like front line case workers. The freeze on office and administrative support positions have impacts. For example, Kenai has 1 of 3 office assistants hired and no approval to fill the others. OCS is trying to work with staff to be as responsive as we can but it is difficult in these circumstances.

## Other Topics

- **Strategic planning:** Christy anticipates more information can be shared regarding the second strategic planning session in Juneau with tribal partners and other key stakeholders. The consultant is taking additional feedback for priorities for 5 year plan and putting final touches will be looking at engaging in public and government folks on priorities how to be involved and how to be strategic about putting particular issues forward like self governance and ability to work independently with state dollars similar to how tribal health did. It is exciting and labor intensive and want to move things forward under the current supportive administration. The final report will go on a future agenda.
- **Providing turnover numbers to CRP:** Christy will check if the quarterly numbers are being provided on a regular basis. Diwakar is trying to design an automated to make it as easy as possible for everyone. CRP has 2 basic needs: 1) CRP wants to know most current situation just before each site visit so when workers or managers share info, CRP knows historical and current information. 2) CRP wants to understand the overall perspective when preparing the annual report. Diwakar will copy Christy on emails regarding this.

## Debrief after the call

- According to Senator Coghill's office, the CRP budget is a department allocation, not a legislative appropriation.
- Now that receipts are in for the recent trip, the CRP budget balance will be reviewed to determine future site visits and national conference. Ellen will contact Diwakar
- April CRP/OCS Call to cover Southeast Regional Review: Christy will invite the southeast managers for the April agenda.
- Now that receipts are in for the recent trip, the CRP budget balance will be reviewed to determine future site visits and national conference. Ellen will contact Diwakar.

