



Alaska Citizen Review Panel

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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

Alaska Citizen Review Panel | Annual Fall Retreat

August 27-28, 2016

Summary Minutes

Members present: Diwakar Vadapalli, Dana Hallett, Rebecca Vale, Bettyann Steciw

Members Excused: Margaret McWilliams, Donna Aguiniga

Staff Support: None

These are summary minutes and do not follow the timeline indicated by the agenda.

DAY 1

1 Remarks by Rep. Seaton

Thankful for the invite. Respects the role of the Panel as independent entity between community and OCS. Understands the emotions, and said that CRP perspective can help gain trust in the community; appreciates the Panel and OCS before HSS Committee. Feels it has been very productive. He said several issues relate to high caseloads of case workers. Agencies' failures are seen as a reason to not give money. He expressed concern over OCS' work load management challenges.

He suggested a focus on collecting data in specific areas where improvements can be made. Keep looking for data and targeted goals; be strategic and focused. Gov't needs improvement paths. He stressed that it is important to not lose bridges. If there is no communication, no way to know if agency is serving their purpose. CRP speaks directly with Community members and OCS; gets feedback from both, link cause to effect or meet somewhere in between. Appreciated the work with UAA to get an intern. He mentioned Mobilizing for Planning and Partnerships (MAPP) from Homer as a model; CRP can collect resources through community investment. Tight budget times, small federal grant that comes with CAPTA. CRP's budget (\$86K) comes from state GF for running the program. He hopes it is sustainable; He is concerned that a number of people in the legislature are proposing short term solutions and not long term solutions with a sustainable plan;

On OCS, he suggested looking for solution for high case load that is contributing to loss of employees. Workload management system can be highlighted as still a big problem.

DV – asked if Rep. Seaton would be available to speak at the National CRP Conference.

Rep. Seaton said he would be glad to, and asked the panel to work with his staff to schedule it, and provide more details. He reiterated his commitment to CRP by recalling that he worked towards establishing a Wellness Committee modeled after CRP. He confirmed he will continue to spread the word about CRP.

2 CRP Regulations

There was a question about regulations.

DV encouraged all panel members to read through old meeting minutes. Minutes from March 2012 show that OCS Director Christy Lawton suggested bringing Blake Jones (national CRP coordinator) to Alaska to train CRP members and better organize it. Assistant Commissioner Ree Sailors was assigned the task of developing regulations for the panel. So, this is not the first time we are discussing these challenges with OCS. Want to stop this cycle. We should not be starting this discussion all over again with new leadership. We should continue business. This record of past minutes was not so accessible to members before they were all put on the website.

The group noted that CRP needs regulations. DV conveyed that his course this Fall will be working towards broad guidelines on CRP regulations. This will provide CRP with some background research on potential regulations, and will equip the panel for participating in the discussions with OCS and the Commissioner's office.

3 Discussion on possible goals

In the past II kept a parking lot list of topics to keep in mind. Since we do not have the benefit of that list now, the panel decided to review the goals and recommendations from the last two years, and identify possible goals for this year.

In thinking about upcoming goals- review 2016 report goals/recommendations. Rebecca suggested giving some time before we revisit past goals and establish a cyclical process. DV suggested that we should review the work accomplished in response to the FY 2016 goals, and decide if some of the goals need to be retained for FY 2017. Review the recommendations from two years ago, and ask for an update on progress.

DV explained that CRP work plan should identify goals. Every recommendation in the annual report should have some evidence to support it. He clarified that assigning leads on each goal did not work well last year due to the inconsistency of available coordinator support. DV envisions that the coordinator should be keeping track of progress on each goal and motivating volunteers to contribute. Since that did not work as planned, DV suggested we do not assign leads this year. The panel agreed. All members will work on all the goals and keep track of the progress.

Rebecca suggested that every CRP goal have a product, tightly knit product.

The panel revisited the goals from 2015, and associated recommendations:

3.1 2015 Goal Tribal/State relationships

There was some discussion about the role of CRP. DV clarified that although CRP is often termed as a "watch dog" group, the panel has two additional responsibilities – outreach and advocacy. Recommendations should be constructive and actionable. There was concern that many Tribal State Partners do not understand the Panel's role, and there is room for clarification. Tribes and Tribal entities can use CRP as an instrument for change – or choose to ignore it.

DV also reminded the group that the two tribal co-chairs that called in to the June public quarterly meeting (that was cancelled due to low attendance by CRPmembers) had some specific remarks about CRP reports. DV responded to those remarks, and used that opportunity to clarify the role of CRP.

The panel observed that:



1. CRP should continue to connect w tribes on site visits – DV met with Deb Northburg; southcentral region regarding the National Conference.
2. CRP is invited to all workgroups of the Tribal-State Strategic Plan, and should attend as many as possible.
3. While the panel made some progress on understanding the Title 4E maintenance agreements, there is more to understand. CRP should summarize it for the benefit of the general public.
4. CRP should focus site visits on tribal/state relationships with partners in each region to gain better understanding.

GOAL 1: For these reasons, the panel decided to retain this goal for FY 2017.

3.2 Administrative review process:

OCS revamped their administrative review process- OCS had ICWA workers that would review administrative review of a case, federally mandated. 4 specific things to cover; in AK the reviews were growing, much more comprehensive; since then revamped (a lot of time being spent here); spending a lot of time on review and not on ICWA compliance and specific cases.

Reduced time it takes to do an administrative review from 2 hrs to 30 min; go through 4 required questions, done by QA. OCS managers informed the panel during site visits that the new process avoids a lot of duplication and saves resources.

Bettyann expressed concern that there may not be consistency throughout the regions on administrative reviews. DV clarified that the QA unit took over the reviews state-wide only in July, and consistency will likely be established soon.

The group acknowledged that the work last year was limited to the new process in place, and the description was based on just the email conversations with OCS. This year, CRP intends to review both the new and old administrative review process, and produce a flowchart of how the new administrative review process is expected to work.

GOAL 2: Therefore, the goal to review administrative review process was retained.

3.3 OCS Greivance Process

Rebecca reminded the group that OCS Grievance Process was discussed as a potential goal for FY 2017 during the June 2016 Retreat.

DV shared the history of the grievance process. The Alaska Ombudsman's office issued a report in June 2012, recommending that OCS completely revamp its grievance process. OCS accepted all recommendations, and in response, devised and instituted a new grievance policy. During an email conversation between OCS, Sen. Coghill's office, and the CRP in September/October 2014 Christy clarified that OCS completed the new regulations and the new process is far better than the old one. In addition, she also said that the OCS' PR person was tracking all grievances in Excel, and hopes to soon move to a more sophisticated system.

GOAL 3: Therefore, review of the OCS grievance process was identified as one of the goals for FY 2017.



3.4 Experiences of Foster Parents

The group discussed the goal on foster care and decided that work will continue as part of the site visits, and DV said that we failed to follow consistent methods in recording impressions from foster parents, and we will work on the template during this years' site visits.

3.5 OCS Processes and work on flowcharts:

Since Bettyann was not present at the June retreat when UAA intern Mr. Taylor presented the flowcharts he made based on the OCS manual, the group took some time reviewing those flowcharts. DV clarified that OCS is very interested in seeing these happen, and he had a followup meeting with Kim Guay and Lindsay Bothe and concluded that these maps need substantial review and revisions. Bettyann appreciated the work, and felt that these could very useful tools for public awareness purposes.

Since the work involved is substantial, the group decided that it would be best if CRP takes one piece of the puzzle to finish this year. Since Intake is almost clean, the IA process was picked as the next logical step.

GOAL 4: Therefore, CRP identified the completion of the IA flowchart as a goal for FY 2017.

4 National Conference

On the CRP National Conference – DV clarified that the efforts to recruit and form the Conference Organizing Committee are underway, and should be convened sometime in September. In addition, DV is also trying to recruit a student assistant to help with the conference organizing.

Dana noted the results of the Alaska primary elections, specifically the replacement of Rep. Bob Herron in Bethel. The group noted the importance of reaching out to new legislators so they are familiar with the role and purpose of CRP.

5 Rynneiva Moss, Legislative aide to Sen. Coghill called instead of Sen. Coghill.

There was a gap in communication and Sen. Coghill called at noon. Since the panel's agenda scheduled the call for 12:15PM, Sen. Coghill was already on his way out of his office.

Rynneiva asked the panel for specific topics or questions she could address.

DV- panel is in flux; productivity has increased, and is continually being streamlined. We currently do not have any staff support; at the moment II has suspended the contract; OCS requested they stay continue to serve the contract until a new contractor is hired. RFP process for a new contractor could take more than a month. National CRP conference is coming up in May. Given that, 5 site visits; a lot of work and no support.

Rynneiva- what does II provide? Put on meetings and clerical?

DV- I will take that as two questions:

1. What support does the CRP need (4 major things) - research support prior to site visits; volunteer management support; logistics support; and secretarial. All these are written into the contract
2. What does the panel receive – at this time, just minimal logistics support. In the last six months, all logistical support, some secretarial support.



Rynneiva - Did the level of support change since Sylvan left?

DV – There were changes since Sylvan left, but it has never been as minimal as it is now. Sylvan moved on at the beginning of FY 2016. Another II staff member based in Anchorage was assigned the CRP work. But, she moved on in February 2016. Since then CRP had multiple people doing multiple things.

Dana- explained the current tension to Rynneiva.

Rynneiva offered help with transcribing the retreat minutes, but the group conveyed that we are not recording the minutes, and only will post summary minutes.

Other concerns that the panel relayed:

1. There are no regulations in place since the 2005 legislative statute.
2. Contract is handled through OCS and CRP has no control over this. From all indications, CRP budget is an allocation, not a legislative appropriation.

Rynneiva said that she will discuss this with Sen. Coghill and explore the possibility of situating CRP directly in the legislature's budget, make it an appropriation, and make CRP independent from OCS. She asked who CRP reports to? Right now CRP reports to OCS. If directly under the legislature, CRP would likely report to the Executive Director of Legislative Affairs.

DH- what happens to RFP?

Rynneiva- RFP would be put under Legislative Affairs; the other good thing about this; mutual agreement Legislature does not get involved with Gov. Budget and Gov. does not get involved in vetoing Legislative budget. Sen. Coghill serves on Leg. Council; This is good timing because the Council is just now getting involved in FY 2017 conference.

DV – Alaska CRP is hosting the CRP National Conference on May 10th-12th; we do not have a clear agenda; hoping to find common ground w. Sen. Coghill agenda; would like to extend an invitation for his to speak at the conference.

Conference cost 60K;

Rynneiva – Are you finding sponsors, like are you approaching the oil companies to raise money?

DV – Not the oil companies so far, but AK Children's Trust committed 5K, College of Business and Public Policy at UAA committed some support; College of Health at UAA committed at least 5k; Mat-Su Health Foundation might consider it; possibly CITC; Casey Family Programs supported the last year's conference with 3K, but not yet committed this year. So far, no big sponsorship.

Rynneiva offered to chat with Diane Kaplan, and asked DV to send her an email explaining the conference.

Rynneiva left the conference call.

DAY 2

DV stated some clarifications he discovered during his research for the plenary at the last CRP National Conference:



CRP should evaluate OCS against the CAPTA state plan required as part of the 1996 amendments; This is different from the CFSP. State plan identifies any number of priorities areas of the 14 listed in CAPTA, OCS identifies what three areas they plan on addressing.

- improving the skills, qualifications, and availability of individuals providing services to children and families, and the supervisors of such individuals, through the child protection system, including improvements in the recruitment and retention of caseworkers
- developing, facilitating the use of, and implementing research-based strategies and training protocols for individuals mandated to report child abuse and neglect
- supporting and enhancing interagency collaboration among public health agencies, agencies in the child protective service system, and agencies carrying out private community-based programs
 - to address the health needs, including mental health needs, of children identified as victims of child abuse or neglect, including supporting prompt, comprehensive health and developmental evaluations for children who are the subject of substantiated child maltreatment reports #8. Research based strategies

The group discussed these briefly, and decided to revisit this plan at a later time.

6 Meeting with Paul Cornils, Amanda Metiveir, and Aileen McInnes

This meeting was to discuss strategies to reach out to birth parents, foster youth, and foster parents as part of CRP's public outreach mandate.

Several CRP members: CRP has been trying to find ways to collect information from various stakeholders; Tried to reach foster parents last year but faced challenges with selection, and interview protocols. CRP hopes to have a more structured approach such as a statewide survey, or more structured interview process.

Amanda : CRP could attend the quarterly statewide retreats for youth; Survey will not work as well for some of our youth since, for example, western region youth do not have regular access to internet.

Paul: Travis from OCS had the same question – how can OCS tap into the network of AYFN to collect information.

6.1 Paul Cornils, Alaska Youth and Family Network-(AYFN)

AYFN is a Family run organization. Receives substantial funding from SAMSHA. 51% or more are parents with mental health or substance abuse issues. AYFN services are peer delivered – everyone has personal lived experience with the system or some related challenge. Only such organization in the state. Services mostly Anchorage area, but reaches state-wide (20% of its clients throughout the state), mostly because their kids are in treatment in Anchorage. Serve 500-600 families. Paul and wife were foster parents; ACRF helped them go further. They were therapeutic foster parents. A large percentage of clients are referred by OCS; others are through word of mouth. Current waitlist is 75 families. They do not advertise services at all, even for fund raising. People who call are in crisis. AYFN helps with folks who need maintenance- parent determines when they no longer need the services. Biggest challenges for AYFN clients are social isolation; parental stress factors in repeat maltreat.



AYFN works mainly with parents; by and large involved with OCS are birth parents. Very rarely work with parents who still have custody of children. AYFN gets invited to every TDM (Paul suspects, this is part of OCS' community engagement efforts).

Potential for involving this population in CRP's public outreach efforts: No statewide gathering. Population is more sensitive to participating in any data collection or interview process. Serving about 100; quarterly assessments are done for each client to check progress. That might be a way to capture some information. This population has a lot of institutional mistrust. (Paul described a recent experience where he shared the frustrations of the population with their perspectives being underplayed and misrepresented). Average age of parent is 30yr; grandparents are served.

Some stakeholders request vignettes on their experiences (parent perspectives). AYFN gets 15-16 stories a quarter – a potential source of information for CRP. Paul said he will check into barriers for sharing these.

Current challenges that Paul asked CRP to check into:

1. AYFN services are peer-delivered, but they cannot hire someone with a "barrier crime matrix" who has been in OCS system. Having had an open case cannot work in Human Services. Cannot work directly with vulnerable populations.
2. OCS grievance process: It is just not clear.

Another general concern is that legislators take OCS' word as the final word on any challenge to OCS' policy or practice. Paul asked a general question on how that could be navigated.

DV: We believe CRP built a reputation for trying to be accurate and precise, with valid evidence to support the panel's observations. Everyone is welcome to challenge the panel's observations. However, the panel needs to know of such challenges to adequately respond. If CRP's observations and recommendations were being presented to a legislator and are either ignored or challenges, it is best if CRP is notified of it. It benefits the panel's work. It provides the panel to either defend its work, or correct its course.

6.2 Amanda Metiveir, Facing Foster Care in Alaska (FFCA)

FFCA started in 2003 works with older youth (15 yr- 24yr); suggestion of focus group. Totally different connection with OCS; statewide, not a formal agency, more of a network; foster youth and alumni. Bringing foster youth together, peer support, connection and talk through things. Three state-wide quarterly retreats: 3 in Anchorage 1 in Juneau (March). Empower youth to push for changes; have an active law suit; OCS provides funding for retreats (75% of costs). Youth train other youth. Youth select the topics for the training retreats. Anchorage events 35 average Juneau event about 20. Host elections; represent 5 regions of OCS. Young people voted in plan statewide retreats (2 year term). Through peer support, youth help other youth.

Potential for involving this population in CRP's public outreach efforts:

November group- core group that come, some people are new, mostly youth that have been around. Amanda suggest using Kahoot.it to conduct surveys. It works over a cell phone app, it is free

6.3 Aileen McInnes, Alaska Center for Resource Families (ACRF)

ACRF is a project of NW resource associates and NW adoption exchange, grantee and contractor for OCS dealing with foster care and adoption training grant (PARKA project, preparing adoptive



parents special needs). Working on bill of rights. Do have grants from OCS; 13 staff spread 4 offices Juneau, Fairbanks, Mat-Su, and Anchorage

Foster parents in Alaska need a certain amount of training annually. Required by regulations. 1988 training grant received through North West associates. Heart of grant/funding is training, initial training for resource families; meet 15 hours for 2 parent household or 10 hrs for 1 parent household. 1700 licensed foster homes. On-site, teleconference trainings, self-study materials Web based training on website. Foster parents choose the content of the training. Record training, provide a variety of trainings, hold a data base licensing will call for renewal; use data base to get information to folks. Provide on-going support to foster parent.

Foster parent toll free number is staffed by ACRF; Staff get basic information, encourage callers to go to local orientation, do f/u call. The 800 # using 15-16 years. Work closely with OCS licensing folks; works most closely with licensing staff. Also works closely with adoption planning. OCS put together the recruitment and retention plan for foster parents. ACRF helps

DV reminded the group about the panel's work on foster parent recruitment and retention – Major observation is the lack of outcome measures on these plans. Thus, success cannot be identified and measured.

Bettyann- partner w tribes? In ARO there is OCS effort for tribal partnership. Generated by OCS.

Potential for involving this population in CRP's public outreach efforts:

Aileen requested earlier notice of planned CRP site visits. This allows ACRF to work with CRP to identify foster parents in each region.

As survey of foster parents is possible, but response rates can be quite low.

CRP was invited to speak to the ACRF Foster Care Advisory Board.

7 Site visits

The group decided to conduct one site visit each month from October through February. Present to the legislature in March. Decided to follow the calendar as closely as possible to the one from last year.

RETREAT ACTION ITEMS FOR CRP Now- Dec 2016

- Leadership transition plan, check with other CRP panel members
- Meet with Rep. Seaton
- October site visit
- Meet with FFCA during quarterly retreat in November to survey foster children; use Kahoot.it
- Meet with AYFN staff to share more about CRP- look into barrier crimes that prevent from working for AYFN; OCS grievance policy work plan supported by AYFN, they requested this...
- Plan for Providers conference
- Plan for Child Maltreatment conference/presentation
- National Conference planning, on-going

