



Alaska Citizen Review Panel

Members

Diwakar K. Vadapalli, Chair
Dana Hallett, Vice-Chair
Ben Creasy
Rodreshia Dunbar
Kristin Hull
Margaret McWilliams
Bettyann Steciw

Coordinator

Sylvan Robb
Phone 907.450-2456
sylvan@iialaska.com

www.crpalaska.org

The Citizen Review Panel is a statewide group of volunteers mandated by federal and state law to provide oversight to the Office of Children's Services.

Teleconference with OCS Staff

Friday, April 11, 2014

Noon to 1:00 p.m.

Present: Diwakar Vadapalli, Dana Hallett, Bettyann Steciw

Absent: Ben Creasy, Margie McWilliams, Rodreshia Dunbar

Guests: Travis Erickson, Michael Isom, Gerald, Diane

Minutes

1) Discuss Bethel trip report

Diwakar noted this is not an evaluative report, but based on our trip these are notes to senior leadership. Dana noted that this is a process for us also and we'd appreciate feedback on how to make it more helpful. OCS staff noted that the report was straightforward, appreciated and helpful.

OCS needs to mend relationships with partners. This is an ongoing issue in Bethel. We know it's not just on OCS to improve the relationships. Travis noted that it's part of the five year plan to develop partner relationships, but there isn't a concrete plan. Family to Family started relationships, but didn't maintain them and now that it is gone, there's nothing focused on partners. Team Decision Making (TDM) was part of Family to Family; it still exists in places, but not everywhere. Annie E. Casey stopped providing support for Family to Family. Family to Family was in Anchorage, Fairbanks and Wasilla. It wasn't very deeply integrated into other offices.

Diwakar noted there is good cohesion between workers in the Bethel office and it had improved. Michael noted some gaps for staff that the report highlighted, mainly communication gaps. Diwakar noted that credit for improvements goes to Michael.

Diwakar raised the issue of tablet computers that employees were expecting; they were very disappointed not to have them. Michael noted that the State has changed some technology systems which is what's slowing it down. They have been ordered. Michael had feedback from a supervisor about housing; they wondered if housing is still a pressing issue for us since it's not in the report. Diwakar noted it is still a big priority for us. The trip reports are internal; we'll make sure to include it in the annual report.

Michael noted that they have supply kits available to staff when kids are in the office.

Travis is talking to Nicki [someone] who is taking up the housing charge. He didn't have details, but was encouraged. Michael met with YKHC and they are building housing in Emmonak and Hooper Bay. They offered OCS the opportunity to enter into a lease.

Michael noted that the Salvation Army is considering moving to the area and offering services. That will help families that OCS works with. No one was sure if there's 211 service in Bethel. Travis praised Michael, Gerry and Diane for providing stable management in Bethel for several years. Diwakar and Sylvan seconded the praise for the improvements in Bethel.

Michael, Gerald, and Diane left the call.

- 2) Discussion of the documents shared by Director Lawton, especially the in-home model explained in the IV-E grant application

Travis provided information about the IV-E waiver, but noted he hasn't been as involved as many other staff. IV-E reimburses OCS for costs for kids in out of home placements. The waiver allows you to use the money for anything. Many states are using it for prevention. The OCS grant application is to get this money to the front end. The application had to be turned in by a deadline, but can be modified. It's about differential response... It will engage community contracts to get services to families with lower level reports. It will create a meeting facilitator to help families come up with their own plan (including extended families and friends too). OCS provides no services beyond helping them figure out the plan. And then checks in every quarter instead of waiting for the next PSR. It would allow OCS to work with many families for few resources and connect families with their natural, existing supports. The final decision on approval from the feds doesn't come until the fall.

Diwakar liked the idea of family navigators. Alaska has never submitted a Title IV-E waiver application. Travis confirmed that, but noted many states have done it. He believes no state that has applied has been turned down. The application serves to secure your spot; it's no new money, just an opportunity to use current money differently. Diwakar is enthusiastic that there is an evaluation component to the IV-E waiver.

Travis noted this time differential response will be more professional and organized. Uninvestigated reports will get attention from community providers. He knows it needs to be better than last time.

Travis confirmed that the waiver application sites are Juneau and Mat-Su. Diwakar noted that in-home services in urban areas seem to be working pretty well. The waiver application will focus on other areas with no successful model for in-home. Travis said the CFSP will be largely focused on in-home service delivery. There's a lot that needs to be improved that doesn't require anything new. That is different from the IV-E waiver which will provide services to cases that would have been screened out.

Travis noted that there will be an in-home service plan by the end of June; that is critical. If it's not in that plan, that's a massive failure. Natalie Powers is leader for developing the five year plan. Kim Guay is lead for the in-home services model development. Travis noted that they are trying to figure out how to determine which families should have non-emergency petitions filed since there aren't resources to add all in-home cases to the courts' docket.

Travis said the grant pays for 12 trainees per year for five years. They will be at the University. There will be an occupational endorsement in child welfare that may be pursued by people in any discipline. It will require 18 credits. These are motivated people. There is exciting stuff happening now.

3) Director Lawton's choice

Dana asked about tracking of late initial assessments. Travis said things were flat—not going up or down. Diwakar noted that we will ask for updated numbers for the annual report.

Travis said they talk about workload. In the staff survey, workload was four of the top six things. Many problems won't be solved until workload is lowered. Workload is tied to everything OCS is trying to accomplish. Travis encouraged the Panel to use its platform in any way possible to address workload issues. Diwakar again asked for staff survey data so we can look at only social workers. Travis noted he has the same concerns about the data the way it is currently presented.

Diwakar wondered if he and Christy were on the same page about in-home services data conversation. He noted that our conclusion for the annual report will be that OCS doesn't have any good data on in-home data prior to January 2014. Travis suggested making recommendations about what we would hope to see like clear data about x, y, and z. He suggested listing what data we would like.

Alaska Citizen Review Panel, 212 Front Street, Suite 100,
Fairbanks, AK 99701