



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 CAPTA 1997 (P.L. 104-235), and enacted through AS 47.14.205.

MONTHLY PANEL MEETING

MINUTES

Tuesday, April 7, 2015

Noon to 1:00 p.m.

Teleconference

Call to order

Introduction and rules of conduct – Brenda Holden, Information Insights

Roll Call and introductions – Diwakar Vadapalli, Dana Hallett, Donna Aguiniga, Margaret McWilliams, Bettyann Steciw, Rebecca Vale

Diwakar welcomed Rebecca Vale as the newest member of the panel. Rebecca stated that it is a great honor to serve on the panel and to help create systemic change in OCS for the state. Rebecca grew up in Alaska and is a licensed professional counselor who has had wonderful experience helping children and families.

Guests: Yurii Miller from OCS, Tandra Donahue from OCS

Approve previous meeting minutes

March 3rd CRP minutes. Approved. If panel members see minor edits, send to Brenda within the next few days.

Presentation on strategies for recruiting resource (foster) families –

Yurii Miller, NRO/SERO/WRO Foster Care Licensing Manager; and Tandra Donahue, Anchorage and SCRO OCS Licensing Foster Care Manager

Diwakar introduced the topic by explaining that CRP is focusing on foster parents this year, including the entire system of how recruiting happens. We heard from Eileen McInnis last meeting and followed up on her suggestion of having Yurii Miller from OCS give a presentation. This is an informational presentation. Yurii Miller is a foster care licensing manager who oversees 3 regions: western, southeast and northern. Yurii has worked for OCS for 10 years. Tandra Donahue, licensed foster care manager for Anchorage and South Central, has been with OCS for almost 8 years.

Staffing in the five regions:

- Anchorage Regional Office: 2 Licensing Supervisors and 9 Licensing Specialists
- Northern Regional Office: 1 Licensing Supervisor and 4 Licensing Specialists
- South Central Regional Office: 2 Licensing Supervisors and 6 Licensing Specialists
- South East Regional Office: 1 Licensing Supervisor and 2 Licensing Specialists
- Western Regional Office: 1 Licensing Supervisor and 3 Licensing Specialists

As of 3/3/15:

derived Office	Applicants	Licensed Foster Homes or Foster Group Homes
Anchorage CPA	0	232
Anchorage non-CPA	63	463
Bethel	26	94
Fairbanks	44	169
Juneau	13	75
Kenai	23	77
Ketchikan	8	56
Wasilla	48	322
Total	225	1488

As of February 2015 there were 2,396 children in out of home placements: Data for this and other information can be found on OCS Website (go to the statistics link)

Children in Placement:

Region	Children in OOH	Percent
Anchorage	983	41%
Northern	426	18%
Southeast	164	10.4%
South Central	621	26%
Western	202	8%
Statewide	2,396	

Placement settings as of February 2015:

Placement Setting	Total/Percent
Foster Family: Non-Relative Home	1,035/43%
Foster Family Relative Home	864/36%
Institution	113/5%
Other	68/3%
Pre-Adoptive	39/2%
Trial Home Visit	277/11%
Total	2,396

Recruitment and retention efforts

Throughout the state there is a huge need for foster homes. Each region right now has a regional recruitment and retention committee that is formed by OCS and a licensed supervisor is often part of the committee, along with representatives from child protection services, tribal partners, sometimes agencies have staff present, both foster and adoptive parents and others. Historically, the best tools for identifying new foster parents are families currently feeling supported that are able to tell other families that they should consider foster parenting and share their experiences.

Regional Committees focus on both recruitment and retention of resource families. These committees meet quarterly, or more often when they have events such as celebrating May as foster parent month. Membership is comprised of CCLS II, CCLS I, CPS staff including adoption specialists, tribal partners, Alaska Center for Resource Families staff, foster and adoptive parents. Committees develop regional plans and budgets that would cover their goals and action plan. Budgets are due each fiscal year. The regional plans and budgets are reviewed by State Office staff and approved. Once approved budgets/activities are monitored by Licensing Supervisors and Licensing Managers. Some regions have many field offices so are working on more local recruitment and retention efforts that can get rolled into a regional plan.

A Statewide Recruitment and Retention Plan is created by State Office staff and is part of Annual Progress and Services Report.

A few examples of recruitment and retention events were shared, such as recognition of adoption month and May is Foster Parent Appreciation month. For retention purposes, we send thank you cards in May for foster resource families and unlicensed family care. In winter, we have a holiday event where we recognize foster families and support them in getting gifts for children in care. Resource families have meet and greet with staff they work with. One region spotlights a foster parent of the month. Pictures taken and sent out in that region to focus on retention.

Support groups exist in Anchorage and the Western region, and are facilitated by foster parents. Southeast is developing a support group. The intent is to offer a safe environment where foster parents can talk freely, share techniques, and discuss working with OCS.

There are training opportunities, such as one coming up in western region where Alaska Center for Resource Families will go to Bethel (traditionally held each spring) to present on a variety of topics including topics for support relatives, working with difficult children and a question and answer session. Participants receive training credit and can visit with other resource families. Kenai area is fortunate to have great partners who make it possible for foster parents to attend a local conference with speakers and resources in different fields. They feel like they are seen as professionals in what they do, especially with the high level of skills and high level of topics at the conference. Feedback is that they really appreciate the opportunity.

Recruitment outreach examples

- Recruitment outreach is done through PSA's, articles and advertisements in different media sources, OCS Facebook, community events, flyers, on-sight orientations, presentations at churches, businesses, medical facility, i.e., Barrow, Kotzebue, Bethel, etc. Information booths and presentations are provided at a variety of settings around the state, including the state basketball tournament in Anchorage where adults who are obviously active in children's lives could stop by to pick up information or ask questions.
- There is a particular need for foster homes willing to care for sibling groups, medically fragile children, and older teens. Targeted outreach to nurses is done through ads in a nursing magazine and brochures distributed throughout medical facilities, since they have the medical skills needed to administer some of the medical care needed for medically fragile children.
- Onsite orientation is very useful. Presentations are given at businesses, medical facilities, schools or other places that welcome such a presentation. When people are thinking of becoming a licensed foster parent, they can learn more information and begin the paperwork process.
- OCS has tangibles that they distribute such as ice scrapers, pens, tablets, notebooks. The artwork was done by specialist from southeast.
- Lastly, what are the needs – in particular need for foster care that will care for sibling groups, usually more than 2 or 3 children in a setting. We try to identify homes where all of the children can be kept together.
- Older teens are usually difficult to match with foster homes, and foster homes in rural communities so children are not placed out of their community. Alaska Native foster homes to take Alaska Native children. At the end of April, OCS staff are traveling to Albuquerque, New Mexico with representatives of local tribes to strategize on how to recruit and retain Alaska Native foster families. This is a second part series that was rolled out in western initially. This round will incorporate the Northern region and Anchorage.

The Resource Family Advisory Board provides support to foster families and has done a lot of work in identify areas that they could make a difference. They developed a program within each region of backpack starter kits for children going into a family, especially those going into families during the night. Kits include useful things such as books, flashlight, diapers, and formula. This group has a number of goals they are working on.

Questions and Answers of Yurii and Tandra:

Donna – thank you for the presentation, and she had to leave the teleconference.

Dana – 3 or 4 questions.

Diwakar asked for data on the website to be broken down to see the staffing by region.

Dana: Appreciate encouragement to foster parents. Is there a way that the panel can get copies of lists of foster parents who are in support groups to more randomly sample interview when we do site visit? Answer: initial thought – we need to respect those who do not want to be identified. OCS could ask facilitators to ask members in an effort to get regionally based sampling.

Rebecca asked Yurii and Tandra about tracking of support groups. What is the turnout for foster parents participating vs foster parents in the community. Answer: More anecdotal. Those support groups led by foster parents, OCS does not want to have fingers involved so they have ownership and can talk openly about concerns without OCS oversight. Are there if questions come up or concerns that can be addressed by OCS. Other regions like ANC, quarterly foster parent forums where OCS mgmt. is avail in the office and foster parents can talk about a hot topic for more info or ask their questions – info session. OCS facilitated setting. Numbers of attendance aren't available. Western region – facilitated by foster parent in conjunction of AK Center for Resource Families and they take attendance. Not aware of tracking notes. Yuri receives feedback when there tends to be an area of concern such as training or more work with a licensed specialist. Se in infancy stage, and licensing specialist very excited to get it off the ground after lots of advertising, no one showed. When took her name out and said AK Center for Resource Families and OCS, attendance crept up. There is a certain element that if OCS is identified as present, foster parents may be hesitant to participate or speak up.

Rebecca commented that ANMC is preparing for trends on rural moving to urban areas, and asked about the projected need for foster homes in regards to this trend for Alaska Native families. Answer: In general, OCS is taking children into custody at an increasing rate and the challenge is that they have tapped our established resources. For example, in Anchorage where OCS may have had 15 on list available to take placement, the list is getting shorter and shorter based on the amount of children they are taking into custody. This increases the licensing caseloads as they license more relatives, taking

away their ability to go out and do recruitment of families. They are looking at how to strategize on that. In Anchorage in particular over the last couple of years, they are seeing an increase of families moving from rural and finding themselves in need of services or needing family intervention. In particular ICWA, relative searches, and identifying preference placements; these are all hot topics at this time with a multitude of different variables making it a pressure area.

One of the things in last year, the licensing manager had the opportunity to be involved in is the quarterly state collaboration meetings where this has been an ongoing topic of discussions in Anchorage and Fairbanks. OCS is well aware of this need and working closely with tribal partners.

CRP members were asked to send their questions to Diwakar and Brenda who will forward the questions to Yurii. The questions and answers will be added to these minutes.

Check on progress on work plan goals -

Need to revisit where we are at every meeting and receive a monthly update from Sylvan. For this month,

Dana listed his questions regarding the work plan status:

Goal 1: Re: policies guidelines. Is there a flow chart to explain the process and how it works? Answer: Diwakar will send it.

Goal 2: Has Sylvan asked for in home data by region? Diwakar's answer: Have not heard back from Christy. Via grapevine, heard the email was forwarded to Tim, the data person.

Goal 3. Do we know the status? Dana expressed concern at the last meeting about how the backlog continues to grow. Not sure Travis does not have a definitive plan to bring that down. Maybe there are other strategies.

Goal 4. Do we have the list of local partners. Diwakar's answer: No, Nancy has 3 regions complete, and 2 left. Working on it. (NOTE from March minutes of Sylvan's update on this goal: *Specifically Unalaska and morphed into statewide roster of local partners. Information Insights has been compiling a list of partners, but funds are exhausted for this year. Lists of community resources in southcentral, southeast, and Anchorage regions have been identified, however OCS has not been asked if these resources are active partners. Western and northern regions are left to go. Diwakar suggested the CRP considers how to repurpose information gathered for this annual report.*

Goal 5. Are we planning to look at ORCA interface? No, have slides variable on website. We have slides that Ben provided. We should ask for further information.

Goal 6. Minor editing comments will be emailed to Brenda.

Progress on plans to visit Bethel – May 7, 8

Jen, Bettyann and Donna will go to Bethel.

Public Comment (10 minutes)

No one from the public identified themselves or had public comment.

Other business

Margie offered to do training about ICWA placing preferences and will try to schedule this for the May meeting.

Dana commented how much he appreciates Bettyann, Jen and Donna going to Bethel.

CRP Retreat is June 12 - 14. Friday afternoon through Sunday afternoon is the plan. Rebecca will look at the agenda and will see where she can contribute information, since she already had that weekend booked.

Dana asked if Rebecca's name is on the letterhead and website. It has been added for Friday's agenda and the request was submitted to add her name on the website.

Next meeting dates

- Friday, April 10 , noon to 1:30 p.m. monthly meeting with OCS leadership
- Tuesday, May 5, noon to 1 p.m. monthly meeting (include Margie's training about ICWA placement preferences)
- Friday, May 8, noon to 1:30 monthly meeting with OCS
- June 12-14, retreat