



Alaska Citizen Review Panel

Members

Diwakar K. Vadapalli, Chair
Dana Hallett, Vice-Chair
Margaret McWilliams
Bettyann Steciw
Jen Burkmire
Donna Aguiniga
Rebecca Vale
Joshua Stein

Staff

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CRP and OCS Monthly Teleconference Summary

Tuesday, December 8, 2015

Panel Members: Diwakar Vadapalli, Dana Hallett, Margaret McWilliams, Bettyann Steciw, Jen Burkmire, Donna Aguiniga, Rebecca Vale, Joshua Stein

OCS Staff: Travis Erickson, Christy Lawton

Information Insights staff: Jess Holden Braunlich, Brenda Holden

Agenda

1. The OCS employee survey

- CRP discussed the survey to make sure everyone is engaged and on the same page. This will be a joint project, with CRP being the client, and OCS active in all stages from survey design to report writing. The product will belong to CRP.
- Diwakar asked Christy to have someone from OCS present to the class on January 12 for 30 minutes and then meet a couple of times during the semester to make sure everything is on track, in addition to email communication throughout the project.
- The class will design a section of the survey, which could be redesigning a section of the survey or could be a new section that OCS is interested in exploring. Christy has time to think about the options and preferences.
- The class will design a section of the survey to gain experience designing questions. This could be redesign an existing section or could be a new section that OCS is interested.
- Diwakar has the sets of questions from last year. It is a CRP product and will work with OCS on it.
- Christy and Travis will explore whether Diwakar and students may have access to Survey Monkey for creating the survey which could then remain with OCS in the future. If that is not an option, the students will use UAA software. OCS will need to go through someone at UAA every time they want access in the future. Hopefully there can be a one page agreement so the class can use OCS Survey Monkey.
- Survey should be live around mid-March for three or four weeks, and the final product should be out by May 17th.
- Students could do interviews for qualitative data to combine with the quantitative data. Christy and Diwakar will discuss further.

2. Status of the IA backlog



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- The Panel has discussed this for the past several years. Diwakar wonders if the panel should think about it differently or ask different questions.
- Travis is running the report once/month rather than weekly. Last month, about over 3000 active IAs which is still much too high. OCS has struggled with this for many years, and so have many states. OCS recognizes the boom and bust cycle and would like to get a handle on this. Cases that are not the highest priority go to the back, and energy goes toward big priorities. This is a routine agenda topic with managers. Over past 5 years, OCS has seen increased rates of out of home care, and screening has changed. This creates more pressure and makes it more difficult to stay on top of it. There are completed safety assessments and no need for intervention. Finishing up the paperwork is less of an emergency as staff deals with a record number of intake. Finalizing adoptions gets delayed as well. Many states struggle with this. More resources to help people get the job done.
- Travis wonders if they are doing a disservice by focusing on our inability to keep up. Crunching IA numbers, and of the 7300 new initial assessments – 6800 have been completed. Doing pretty phenomenal doing most of the assessment. Running about 90%, which is worth noting. They are taking more kids into at home care. Discovered this week, despite his prediction that repeat maltreatment would likely go up, our repeat maltreatment has gone down a couple of points so our front end efforts are helping. Of course there is more to do, and there is a lot of good work happening.
- An OCS committee was formed in spring, and charged with building a system to accurately assess safety so that at the end of the day they have a system that works and can be completed. A few weeks ago they culminated with a face to face meeting, starting a pilot project within a month to streamline procedures and still make good decisions. They are creating a single method – structured and flexible for a variety of circumstances. All will be about implementation.
- Diwakar was wondering if the IA backlog is an indicator of something bigger or deeper. It is hard to believe that workers are slacking off. So maybe there are different questions to be asked. Travis: if you were to ask at site visits front line workers what is stopping you from getting these done, 99% will respond workload and some other reasons. So prioritizing means nonpriority files will wait. Christy agreed that staff are running as fast as they can, and getting more work every week. The tedious narratives when there is no safety threat gets delayed for more prioritized situations. If they could use technology vs. documenting on legal pads and then transfer later, it would save time.
- Bettyann asked about the pilot program and timeline. Recent decisions by the committee will be plugged into a work plan and timeline. The first phase is to modify the assessment



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documentation so that it is efficient and drives the decision making process.. The second phase is implementation as a pilot first, and then hopefully broader implementation. Pilot will take at least several months – first part of 2016 and depending on outcome, hopeful it will go into broader implementation after. At that point, will need to look at all components. Not just documentation, culture, leadership, supervision, quality of decisions made.....

- Diwakar wants to report something about each recommendation from the last report to maintain continuity and hopes there will be positive information to share.
 - Travis restated that the biggest positive is that maltreatment is going down slightly when he thought it would rise. Over the last several years, OCS has been trying to build up skills for staff and supervisors to recognize patterns within families and to consider whole situation. If intervention is needed, we do something. Travis says ‘we were under-intervening without changing habits of the family and finally seeing the fruits of our labor.’ He hopes the CRP will ask front line workers what they are doing around high risk infants.
 - Travis stated that in 2015, OCS has expanded the definition of when to substantiate a report to include risk and brought consistency to decision making. Thought that would show an increase but went down. Hope to get down or below national rates. It is 15.8% here – national is 9%. Continuing to implement other changes that may be factors.
3. ARO site visit - thoughts and scheduling with OCS
 - 2nd week of January, is also when Christy and Travis will be with tribal leaders but perhaps Kim could join the team. CRP and OCS will think about how to best involve OCS and maintain the confidentiality of OCS workers during interviews.
 4. CRP National Conference update
 - Alaska CRP will host in 2017. Diwakar asked Christie to share her hesitancy of co-hosting.
 - Christy restated that she is interested in exploring co-hosting further in the future, after she or someone from OCS has an opportunity to attend a conference and can learn more about the time and financial investment that would be needed as well as see what is to be gained from this. She will see if she or someone can attend the June 2016 conference in Phoenix. is a workload.
 - There is no national financial support and the costs are generated from registration fees. Diwakar estimated the conference would be about 50 people out of 130+ members, and Portland’s cost a year or two ago cost in 2013 was about \$35,000. Conference been around 15 or 16 years. After returning from the 2015 national conference, Diwakar produced a 6 page document of observations. Alaska probably has one of the best relationships around the



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country, and he want to look at this as a model. CRP is the only structured public input process for child protection.

5. OCS update.

- The governor's budget is expected to go out tomorrow and should be available on line.
- Christy will forward House Bill 30 final report when it is made public since there are a number of things related to OCS.
- OCS is gearing up for legislative session and hopes they don't have to cut more positions.
- OCS will carry House Bill 200 transmitted to Governor last year, making adoption easier especially for Alaska Native populations. Still have Gara House Bill 27.
- Diwakar will suggest a couple of dates in February when CRP and OCS can coordinate presentations in Juneau.

DEBRIEF:

Anchorage Site Visit

Rebecca asked for clarification on prep needed for her first site visit. Jess explained that the schedule will be coordinated and information packets will be sent to participating panel members about one week in advance of the site visit. All interviews are conducted by two people. The Anchorage region site visit team will be Rebecca, Diwakar and Bettyann. Dana expressed interest if there is an open slot.

IA backlog issue.

- Dana is frustrated that this is a continuous problem. Workload is a big issue and putting fires out gets prioritized. Diwakar explained that Travis is suggesting a process that can be completed in a better timeframe and clearer timeframe and benchmarks. Dana wonders how that will be different.
- Christy talked about lack of technology. Dana wonders if they invest in the proper technology, would time be saved. Donna reminded the panel that they learned on the Bethel trip that if the technology is not connected to ORCA software and staff aren't trained, the technology won't help.
- Diwakar suggested CRP should ask to see the paperwork the task force is working on to better understand what this actually means. Dana wonders if they are doing same thing today as two years ago. One of OCS's constant defenses is that we are not unique and we are working as hard as we can. One legislator suggested CRP explores what other states are doing. Maybe we need to look at what the impact is on children.

National Conference

Dana – good response. Christy seems to have a pretty healthy idea of looking at it.
Rebecca – sound open and promising.



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Employee Survey:

- Should the survey include questions about IA backlog?
- Survey has focused on employee satisfaction and work conditions.
- Diwakar will send the past tool and hopes everyone will weigh in.
- One CRP member should speak to the class (Donna)
-

Drop Box: Jess will put a Word version of Operational Policies and Procedures in Drop Box.

Website task force is meeting tomorrow.

Update on Tribal State working group from Bettyann: talked to Lou who chairs tribal states group (Tribal Caucus). There is also another tribal state group called the Breakout Group and her understanding is that every region is supposed to have one. Bettyann is checking on how they document this and trying to figure out how they operate. Bettyann gets minutes from previous meetings but doesn't know what the resolution is on any of the issues.

Diwakar wants Jess to set up meetings with tribal co-chairs during site visits, and will have to telconference with TCC tribal co-chair.

On the state side, we don't know who is on there besides Travis and Christy. Bettyann and Donna will get on this.

