



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."

Citizen Review Panel January 9, 2015 Teleconference with OCS

Present: Dana Hallett, Diwakar Vadapalli, Donna Aguiniga, Bettyann Steciw, Jen Burkmire, and Travis Erickson

Absent: Christy Lawton and Margaret McWilliams

Minutes

1) Response to annual report

Travis noted that the new DHSS Commissioner has said one of her two priorities is child welfare, so that's promising.

Diwakar noted the report is reflective of the last couple years; it was vague with no timelines in our report or OCS' response.

Travis said it's complicated because there are lots of plans already. There's the five year plan and alignment with that is important. He hears our issue about the level of specificity, though. Travis said he would talk to Christy about it, but that he would be hesitant to have additional plans with more timelines. They have lots of grand ideas, but then there are political curveballs that change things like with the budget situation now. He noted there will be another PIP after the next CFSR. Too many plans make it hard to focus and nothing gets done.

Diwakar said he wonders why the CRP should exist if there's no commitment from OCS. We need one unifying vision between OCS and CRP about where we want to go. Travis noted that they tried to incorporate the Panel in the CFSP. That should be the master plan. Tribal/state has plans; OCS doesn't need more plans. They need more unification and merging of plans. Diwakar said it sounds like we're all on the same page--we need timelines, but not another plan.

Travis noted that if the annual report lays out our priorities maybe we keep coming back to the recommendations from the report during the monthly calls. Diwakar noted that we want something with more detail than the CFSP. The Panel's job is to be community focused, to provide feedback from the community. Dana offered support for the idea of keeping the recommendations as agenda items. It keeps the focus on them. He also noted there seems to be a

typo on page two regarding opting in/out for reporters. Travis agreed to check on it.

Diwakar said he found the in-home section confusing. Travis noted that OCS needs a comprehensive in-home plan that works for urban and rural Alaska. There is no model they have found that would work. The tribes are working on models, but they need one that works with their efforts and in all areas of the state.

Diwakar moved on to the response to recommendation three about IA and the repeat maltreatment issue. Travis noted repeat maltreatment is a major factor, but there are others too. The issue is on the radar. They are trying to keep the IA numbers under control, but they are also trying not to just speed the cases through IA and close them. That's not good if there is subsequently repeat maltreatment. That's not moving toward the right goal. They are trying to be smarter and address the issues. Repeat maltreatment is a national issue. They are trying to work smart, not just fast.

Diwakar said that was good, but the numbers make it look like they are headed toward a 4,000 case backlog. Travis said he would love suggestions; he running out of ideas. They want high quality responses and to keep the numbers down. Diwakar noted one of our concerns is that it seems like Travis is the only one focused on this. Travis disagreed and said the managers are focused on it too. There is a wider responsibility within OCS for keeping it under control than there was a few years ago.

Jen recounted her experience with the Differential Response program when she was at the CAC. OCS had agencies handle home visits for P3 cases to reduce repeat maltreatment. It was a grant to three sites (Anchorage, Wasilla and Nome). Travis noted it was a small project. In the last few years there has been a national push for those types of programs. OCS thought of trying to revive it with the IV-E waiver, but then didn't apply for the waiver. If there was money, it was a good program. Diwakar asked if there was an evaluation. Jen noted it started in 1999 and lasted ten years. There was some sort of evaluation in 2002 or 2003. Travis remembered hearing anecdotally that it was not going well. If they did it again, he'd want it to be statewide; it has to be a large enough scale to actually have some impact. Bettyann noted it was brought up at Tribal/State. Travis noted that when the program was running the Anchorage and Nome sites were Native grantees.

2) Turnover and vacancy data

Travis said he had not seen the second quarter FY15 data yet, but will share it when they get it.

3) OCS staff as Panel members

Diwakar noted that Rodreshia getting a position at OCS has raised the issue of whether we should have OCS employees on the Panel. Is there any way for it to be useful for OCS and for the Panel? He said he didn't think so, but that maybe we could have a

resource team of people the Panel could tap into for information and then we could meet with Christy and Travis less frequently. Rodreshia could be on the resource team if there was one.

Jen said she thought having a Panel member would be a conflict of interest for the person and awkward for that person. She wondered if we need a resource team or if we have good access now. Travis said he doesn't see it working for an employee to be a member; there's too much conflict. He questioned the need for a resource team; he has time. He doesn't want staff contacted; he and Christy can pass us on to the appropriate person if we need more specific information. He thinks if we start contacting individuals that sounds like chaos. Donna noted she thought we have a good system. They connect us with staff as needed. She felt it would not work to have an employee on the Panel. Diwakar summed up the decision that OCS employees can't be Panel members and we don't need a resource team.

4) Staff evaluations

Dana asked what they look like, what the timeline is, and whether they are the same for line workers and senior management. Travis said performance evaluations are required for all state employees annually. For new employees on probation, they are required at the mid-point of the probation (six months for professional staff and three months for para-professionals). There is a standard document with very general questions. Supervisors may do them more often if they choose. They are required when there is a change of supervisor (employee switches job, or their supervisor is replaced). Some people choose to supplement the standard form. He uses a 360 evaluation with his people. There are stop gaps to make sure they are conducted, namely no evaluation means no raise so employees ask for them. They are also tied to new employee orientation.

Dana wondered if the evaluations are impacting the workers in competency, morale, and retention. Diwakar asked if they are the same for everyone. Travis said there are slight variations depending on which union an employee is part of and whether someone is a professional or para-professional, but otherwise they are the same. Travis said there is no scientific system to evaluate whether the evaluations make a difference. At one point he tried to tie outcomes to some aspect of performance, but couldn't. He noted that OCS has discussed ways to test employees for competency, and discussed the top ten competencies needed, but there was nothing organized.

Travis left the call.

There was a brief discussion of Rodreshia's departure since Diwakar was not able to be on the entire call on Tuesday. Donna and Dana thought she wanted a leave of absence, but it seems she resigned.

Dana noted OCS is getting used to us asked whether things are evidence based.

Bettyann wondered that they want to limit the response we get from OCS to be just from Christy or Travis. She felt it indicated that they don't trust. Diwakar noted it may be that Christy and Travis have a global view. Hearing things from staff with a narrower view might just be confusing. We can get the information we need with the system we have now.

There was a brief discussion of Bettyann attending Tribal/State.

Dana and Donna are going to Ketchikan and Diwakar and Ken are going to Sitka.

