



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, March 3, 2015

Noon to 1:00 p.m.

Teleconference

Call in number: 888-829-6301 PIN 4130

Call to order:

Introduction and rules of conduct – Brenda Holden, Information Insights

A brief overview of the role of the CRP was given as well as instructions for the public comment section of the agenda.

Panel members present: Diwakar Vadapalli, Dana Hallett, Donna Aguiniga,

Information Insights coordination team: Sylvan Robb, Brenda Holden

Approve previous meeting minutes

February 3rd CRP minutes: Approved and ready to post.

Update on the legislative visit to Juneau

Diwakar gave an overview of the productive trip to Juneau. More details are in their full report that will get posted on the CRP website.

House Committee thought the presentations were useful. OCS presented an overview of the Office of Children's Services. CRP gave a summary of their evaluation from last year. Then OCS was asked to respond to each recommendation. All recommendations were accepted, and they plan to implement recommendations. CRP can check on implementation next year.

Meetings with individual legislators were held. All are appreciative of CRP efforts and restructuring, with expectations of more from CRP. Tammy Wilson will wait to see how the partnership with UAA School of Social Work with OCS works with case reviews before introducing legislation for CRP to review some cases.

The report is ready to post online. The audio-file of presentation is posted in presentation section.

Status of work plan goals: A quick check on the work plan goals: status, efforts needed and plans to accomplish

CRP instituted an annual work plan model two years ago with four goals and added two additional goals this year for a total of six goals. We are working on figuring out the best model and division of duties between CRP and contractor.

Goal 1: Review the policy guideline for screening of PCRs to review how it works and if there are gaps. After extensive review last year, a flow chart was developed to explain the process and how it works. The flow chart will be posted online after OCS checks for accuracy. Several small fixes for the intake process were identified.

Goal 2: Investigate the model for in-home rural foster care. OCS does not have a good model that is functional for rural Alaska. They examined many models around the country, but could not find one that would work in rural Alaska. The first step is to write up the current model for rural areas and then check with OCS to verify that the Panel's understanding is correct. CRP needs to gather more information on its next site visit to see how it is working in other parts of the state. Last year when CRP asked for data, OCS had minimal data. Sylvan will ask for data for in-home cases by region again. Dana voiced concerns for the rural in-home model because they don't have the support services to back them up.

Goal 3: Investigate the IA backlog and ask how they handle the workload without an increase in workforce. Travis reported that there is a broader group of staff monitoring this. He continues to compile the spreadsheet every Monday and has a good handle on where things stand. However, the number of cases past the deadline continues to grow. Cases in the backlog are processed by date rather than severity of the situation. Dana got the distinct impression this is a direct result of being so short staffed. Should the Panel change the question to how to deal with backlog in the future since they won't be able to solve the staffing shortage?

Diwakar stated that it is meaningful to CRP to how they solved this problem in the past and now, and what they think they have in place to bring down the gaps. Sylvan could start summarizing what was done and add to what was added and how the status has changed. Travis should be able to share data through 2012. Annual report should include latest information and plug this into the template.

Goal 4: Assess the need for services in communities in Alaska in terms of models. 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: Learn more about ORCA software and capabilities. Ben, a former CRP member, met with ORCA administrator at OCS to get a list of preprogramed reports available and list of variables or code book for ORCA. He did get screen shots and they are available on the website. State programmers who make updates for ORCA are not part of OCS staff, so competing for their time with others from DHSS services. If a request for changes is not to meet an audit or federal reporting requirement, it will likely be on the back burner. There was supposed to be a data summit in February; Diwakar hoped to meet with them but it has been postponed. For now we have screen shots. Next the Panel should try to look at ORCA interface as the workers see it. Getting a list of variables is not something that the state programmers can do for us. It took some convincing to get OCS to give us what we need.

Goal 6: Investigate foster care recruitment. There is a shortage and we are trying to find out what happens and what role OCS has in it. The Panel learned a few things during the southeast site visit, and got information from that part of the state. Diwakar suggested drafting a template of the annual report to share with the Panel to preview and comment.

Dana expressed his concern about the backlog goal – the numbers keep inching up there and getting into the area when they had a crisis. How did they solve that problem before? How did they process the backlog of cases? We want to know that the cases not just glanced at and closed, but that there was a process. The emphasis...if the Panel changed gears on the backlog goal - change to what can we do to encourage OCS to process the backlog. Processing the backlog as well as how to keep the backlog down. Ask Travis to explain the threshold.

Karen Covey joined.

Presentation by Alaska Center for Resource Families (ACRF) on how foster care is organized in Alaska, and associated recruitment efforts

Eileen McInnis gave an overview of ACRF, a private nonprofit organization program of Northwest Resource Associates serving as the grantee and contractor for foster care and adoption. The three primary grants are through OCS.

1) Resource Family training grant: provides initial training for foster families. Staff answer inquiries on the statewide 800 number posted on all recruitment material. Ongoing foster parent training is provided in variety of formats. Four offices cover the entire state:

Fairbanks, Juneau, Anchorage, Mat-Su. There are 13 positions, including part time. ARCF keeps foster parent training records as well as ongoing training with families.

2) Services for Adoption Support grant assists families working toward adoption from foster care system as well as international and national adoptions.

3) Special needs grant (PARKA) Prepare 10 families each year that are able and willing to adopt children with special needs

Foster parent recruitment is primarily coordinated through OCS. ACRF supports those efforts. The biggest way the agency is involved is by responding to inquiries called in to the 800 number posted on recruitment materials used in presentations and fair or event booths. This is a long time collaboration based out of the Fairbanks office. Callers receive a consistent response to inquiries about being a foster parent. People call, ACRF identifies which part of the state they want, gives information on orientation for their area and sends them a packet. ACRF does a follow up phone call to see if they need more information, if they went to the orientation or have questions. This grant is called Foster our Future.

Different OCS offices around the state do different things to recruit foster homes in their areas. ACRF office can assist with that. For example, in Anchorage, ACRF sometimes staff and/or pick up registration fees for booths at large events that may be especially helpful in recruiting Alaska Native homes. (Events like Fur Rondy, state basketball tournaments, Native music at ChangePoint Church). The number of foster families don't always correlate to needs, because families identify what will work in their family or what age ages they are most comfortable with hosting. The Anchorage area identified are folks able to take in medically fragile infants and youth children, or sibling groups of up to 6, 7 or 8 siblings. There are also need homes for teens, or Alaska Native homes that comply with ICWA.

Questions from Panel:

Dana: Do you work with ICWA folks for recruitment or training? Eileen explained that the Anchorage recruitment and retention committee has the ICWA staff member on their committee. Points of contact are Kimberly Ford, supervisor of the unit, and April Stahl, ICWA coordinator, both are employees of OCS. Two of our staff members are on that committee. Other folks on the committee are licensing workers or OCS staff. Some Cook Inlet tribal members as well.

That model is probably similar to other regions. In terms of training, regardless how they are recruited, if people are going through licensing process, all foster parents will use our training materials so sooner or later.

Question: Do you keep data on which parts might do better than others. Answer: No, our database we get info from OCS on who is licensed, who is current, training records and requirements.

Question: Do all regions have recruitment and retention committees? Answer: Not sure. Regions do things differently. For example, in the Fairbanks area, the organization that really plays that role is their Family to Family; a group of community organizations and OCS representatives that are looking at foster care system and trying to improve different things. One of our staff members is part of that. They may say we don't have a recruitment committee but Family to Family plays that role, and the group is headed up by OCS.

In the Bethel area, a group looking at treatment foster homes is headed up by Yuri Miller, licensing manager for that region. Alaska Child and Family, Association of Village Council Presidents, Yukon Kuskokwim Health Corp. all participate. Their priority is treatment foster care.

Email or call Eileen with any questions.

CRP budget discussion and prioritization

Sylvan Robb and Diwakar explained the need to prioritize activities to fit the remaining budget; primarily whether a site visit to Nome should be included this year. Sylvan will give share updated QA report information with the CRP and CRP could decide via email before the next meeting. Dana and Diwakar are going to the national conference.

Public Comment

Kelly: Recommended that if the CRP is prioritizing between going to Nome or Bethel, go to Bethel since it is the largest. Look at how they handle the ICWA cases. In looking at the idea of case file reviews, start with ICWA cases to make sure they are complying with ICWA guidelines.

No other comments.

Next meeting dates

- Friday, March 13 , noon to 1:30 p.m. monthly meeting with OCS leadership
- Tuesday, April 7, noon to 1 p.m. monthly meeting