



Alaska Citizen Review Panel

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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, September 12, 2014
Noon to 1:00 p.m.

Present: Travis Erickson, Margie, Diwakar, Dana, Ben
Absent: Christy Lawton, Bettyann, Rodreshia

Minutes

1) Update on turnover and vacancy and continuous recruitment
Per Travis he doesn't have anything with data request as Christy was going to follow-up and she was not present.

The tool is being used as standard practice in Southeast. Each region maintains its own list. Travis said they measure success by the number of happy folks and word of mouth. Diwakar wanted to know about actual measuring tools and Travis said that there were not scientific measures that were being used. Diwakar said that OCS should have information such as how long each position is open and Travis thought they may have those statistics. Travis said the pluses to this are that it's good practice and it's one way to recruit.

Diwakar suggested that it might be easier if these data were just automatically sent to the Panel, rather than us needing to request them every time. Travis noted that sharing the IA data is easier because that's his spreadsheet; he controls those data.

2) Latest IA numbers

Travis said the IA trend is scary. More reports are aging into the trouble zone; cases are remaining open longer. He's monitoring it closely; right now there are 1850 open IAs. They keep getting more and more; he thinks it's because they are screening more in. IA is a hard unit to staff.

Travis will share the latest spreadsheet which includes data by region. WRO is the worst with 24% of IAs open over 90 days, Anchorage has 21% over 90 days, SCRO has 17%, NRO has 15% and SERO is best with just 9% open over 90 days. Anchorage has so many IAs; they get so many cases. Anchorage has half of the IAs open over 120 days (53). Anchorage has had a change in leadership and there are two new supervisors, plus nine worker vacancies right now in IA. Travis thinks the overall IA numbers are creeping up again because of workload issues. Everything can't be on the front burner.

He's looking at the inflow of PSRs; he's been tracking it since January 2012. Their efforts to get workers to screen more cases in has worked. They have had a huge uptick in the number of cases, but no more staff to deal with them. In January 2012 there were ~500 PSRs a month, now there are ~650 PSRs a month. If each one takes two months to close, then there's that many more. In January 2012 the screen-in rate was 35% and now it's 50-55%. There's been a big increase in out-of-home cases. In January 2012 there were 1807 cases (maybe kids?) and now (July 2014) there are 2199. The number of PSRs and the number of custody cases are growing. In 2012 workers were busy, now they are slammed. By region, Anchorage has the highest numbers. In January 2012, Anchorage had ~200 PSRs a month and now it's ~275. Diwakar noted that when we talked last month Travis and Christy has spoken of July being an anomaly, but it seems like it's part of a trend.

Travis said they are focused on completing IAs. The ways to get the numbers under control are to do the assessments faster, do fewer (which he described as cutting corners), screen more cases out...there are only so many options to make it work without adding staff.

Diwakar noted there are fewer allegations now, so a lot more cases are being screened in. Travis stated he was shocked at what used to get screened out—cases with multiple PSRs. He's never seen a report screened-in that he wondered about, but plenty screened out wrongly. More are screened-in now than out. Travis said this is the most important topic and it gets a lot of his attention.

Travis reviewed the chart he send prior to the meeting. He feels that repeat maltreatment is the big measure of whether OCS is effective. Does interaction with OCS break the cycle? The federal measure is whether there is another substantiated case again within six months. The chart shows the number of prior reports for families with a currently open IA. One PSR is first timers. There were two families in Anchorage with 19 PSRs; that was the highest. In WRO more than half the cases (55%) had four or more PSRs. The IAs that are open now are about equal percentages first timers and heavy users (those with at least four PSRs).

Dana wondered what the average number of PSRs was before a case gets screened-in, but Travis didn't know. Margie felt like the overall Alaska column makes sense; people she sees are either first timers or heavy users. Diwakar felt that it was important to look at PSRs after cases were substantiated. Travis said he has no faith in what cases get substantiated. The policy is that they must show harm, but there's a lot of variation in how that gets applied. The rate of substantiation is single digits. He trusts the IA numbers more as a representation of what's happening. Diwakar thanked Travis for sharing and wondered how anyone seeing the numbers could not be outraged. Travis noted that if you look at the families with four or more PSRs, that's a community problem. OCS isn't going to solved that by itself.

3) OCS accompaniment on Anchorage site visit

Travis isn't in Anchorage on those dates. He would love to come with us to Southeast as he doesn't always get to places that aren't on fire so he hasn't been to Southeast enough since there isn't a crisis. Sylvan will send the dates and locations to Travis and Christy again.

4) Foster care and tribal survey data

Diwakar noted that the data are just reported with percentages by question which isn't very useful. There is no analysis by group. The Panel can conduct the analysis and would be happy to share that with OCS if we could get the raw data. Travis said he would be happy to share it with us and is noting that we would like to get the data.

5) Reaction to Canadian model materials shared by the Panel

Travis said he looked it over and didn't have much of a reaction. He didn't see the evidence on the website even though it said it was an evidence-based program. He'd be happy to hear more. He did note that his initial impression was that it was about short, intensive programs. He has wondered if connecting heavy users of OCS with intensive interventions could break the cycle. If they could identify people early, maybe it would make a difference. But people need longer term interventions. The screened out cases with low to moderate risk people...but they have to prioritize who gets services. Families with entrenched issues that lead to repeat maltreatment should be high on the list.

6) Update on Annie E. Casey Foundation site visit

Travis said he was very discouraged and angry because they aren't coming. They said after they reviewed the application they decided it was too logistically hard. A foundation with \$31 billion can't figure out how to come to Alaska. He's still grieving the loss of hope. They might make another request to Casey, maybe implement something new.

Travis advocated for the IV-E waiver pull back. He thought they were trying a whole new program with a pilot. It was too much work for too little impact. If the numbers continue to grow, in two or three years it'll be a nightmare. OCS needs to do something now; it needs to act sooner rather than later. It needs to be a bigger intervention than the IV-E waiver would have been since that just focused on Juneau and Mat-Su.

Casey was so exciting because it focused on the front end. The big question is always, 'why didn't you do something?' It was exciting because it was a good match with OCS needs. The rates of repeat maltreatment are so high. They must interrupt the cycle.

7) OCS choice

Travis talked to IT about ORCA and OCS isn't a priority for IT. OCS' needs are being met and there are other agencies still using DOS based systems.

Travis left the call.

Margie thought Travis' comments were helpful. It's obvious to her that there is a revolving door. Diwakar noted it's not worse, they're just letting more cases in. He noted Christy described July as an anomaly, but the numbers show that's not the case. Margie noted that substantiation rates were higher. Diwakar noted there are fewer PSRs. Margie said things seem to be busier across the state.

New applicant, Chester Ballot. Sylvan stated she'd only successfully contacted one reference so far and after the slightly odd interview would like more, especially since no one has met him. Margie noted she couldn't tell if he was just being polite or really was interested. Sylvan suggested maybe adding a probationary period for new members of six months. Both sides can check in at that point and see if it's working for them.

Diwakar noted we need a policy on how to deal with confidentiality given that we seem to be covered by the open meetings act.

Ben said he will review ORCA before he goes. He'll add it to the work plan.

OCS Action Items

- Travis will share the latest IA numbers.

CRP Action Items

- Sylvan will send the dates and locations to Travis and Christy again.
- Sylvan continue to contact Chester Ballot's references.
- Sylvan will add a probationary period for new members to the Panel's policies.
- Sylvan will add a section on confidentiality and meetings to the Panel's policies.
- Ben will review ORCA prior to his departure and will add his intent to do so to the work plan.

Items for follow up with OCS

- Obtaining raw data for foster care and tribal surveys

Minutes accepted by Panel on October ??, 2014.



Diwakar Vadapalli, Chair