



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

TRIP REPORT

Observations from the 2015 CRP National Conference

Dates of the conference: May 18-20, 2015

Location of the conference: Portland, OR

Attendees: Diwakar K. Vadapalli (Chair), Dana Hallett (Vice Chair)

Purpose of the trip

Alaska CRP has been critically examining its structure and functions for the last two years. Many key components of the Panel's operations are being significantly changed to improve the Panel's relevance and effectiveness. The CRP National Conference was identified as a meaningful resource in this process of critical reflection. The Conference offers an opportunity to learn various methods and means available to the Panels, successes and challenges of other Panels, and various pertinent legislative, regulatory, and legal developments. For several years, Alaska CRP has not attended the conference and felt necessary to reconnect with the resources available at the national level. While it was impossible to be methodical and precise in our observations, we tried to accomplish the following:

- Identify and connect with available national resources
- Examine the work of other Panels from across the nation

This brief report describes our observations and lessons learned. We also note some suggested changes in our operations.

Brief description of the conference

Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (CAPTA) amendments of 1996 required that each state have three Citizen Review Panels, with the exception that the states receiving the minimum allocation under the Community-Based Child Abuse Prevention grant program (Title II of CAPTA) have at least one such panel. The Panels were expected to be operational by 1999.

It was recognized early that in order to fulfil their mandate, Panels need support and technical assistance to identify their roles and responsibilities. In the absence of a national network and community of practice, the first annual conference for CRP coordinators and members was held at the University of Kentucky in 2001. The conference has since evolved and is now attended by close to 200 people involved with CRPs in various capacities. The CRP National Conference 2015 was held in Portland, OR from May 18-20, hosted by the Oregon Citizen Review Panels. Most states were represented, and attendees primarily included CRP coordinators, Panel members, and CPS agency staff from across the nation. Sessions included presentations by nationally recognized experts and resource persons on broad topics (see attached agenda).

Key observations from the conference

The National conference is a useful resource and should be on Alaska CRP's annual calendar. Many Panels have been regular participants of the conference over the last decade, and their current activities reflect the benefits derived from their continued participation. A network of coordinators, long-time panel members, CPS staff, and other interested professionals has developed over the years. These individuals form a community of practice, identifying and resolving several challenges facing CRPs. Alaska CRP can both learn and benefit from this network, and also contribute to the discussion.

Participation in the conference is very diverse. Some Panels are represented by their coordinator and at least one Panel member. Many Panels were represented by either just the Panel member(s) or just their coordinator. Each Panel seem to have their own method of identifying who may attend the conference and the specific purpose of their attendance. There were CPS staff from several states.

Location of the conference varies each year, allowing participants to know the local CRP activities. Most presenters at the conference were from Oregon. There was an extended discussion on how Oregon Panels are organized, how they perform their work, and how they interact with their CPS system. It was instructive to note the differences and similarities with the Alaska CRP.

What we learned about other Panels

Panels across the nation are organized in very different ways. While Alaska has always had one Panel, and appoints its own members, many states have multiple panels and appointment structure varies. Many states have three panels, the minimum number required by CAPTA for states receiving more than the minimum allocation under Title II of CAPTA. States with county-administered CPS often have regional panels covering multiple counties. Panels in some states are appointed by either the Governor's office or individual legislators. Some state's CRP coordinators are staff from the state or local CPS. Some Panels are coordinated by staff of a local university.

Panel's relationships with their state or local CPS varies. Unlike Alaska's panel where members are selected and appointed by the panel, members of panels in some states are appointed by the governor's office or individual state legislators. While appointments and patterns of staffing determined by an external authority ensures representation and full membership, panels often find themselves subject to political influences of these external authorities. Consequently, panels vary greatly in their relationship with CPS agencies and their legislatures. Few panels have a working relationship with their state legislature. Many participants admired Alaska CRP's appointment structure, and its independence, and our continued constructive relationship with both the OCS and the legislature.

Individual presentations were informative. Several nationally recognized experts spoke on a variety of issues. Topics included CPS system; legal developments in child protection; importance of diversity; CRP's role; evaluation of CRPs; importance of CFSR and the need for CRPs to be involved; connections between CRPs, CIP, CJA taskforce, and foster care reviews; relationships with CPS (agenda attached).

Structure and functions of the panels vary. The Conference offers an opportunity to learn various methods and means available to the Panels, as well as successes and challenges of other Panels.



Preliminary assessment of mandated, structural, and functional components Alaska CRP in comparison to other CRPs in the nation

Component	Other states				Alaska
	None	Few	Many	All	
Mandated - Review/Evaluate					
<i>Conducts system-wide annual evaluation</i>	X				
<i>Reviews child deaths or near deaths from maltreatment</i>		X			
<u><i>Identifies and utilizes following data sources:</i></u>					
<i>Surveys</i>			X		X
<i>Interviews</i>			X		X
<i>Focus group discussions</i>		X			X
<i>CPS agency</i>			X		X
<i>Case reviews</i>		X			
Mandated - Public Outreach					
<i>Presenting to the legislature</i>		X			X
<i>Communicating with the media</i>			X		X
<i>Maintaining an active website with regular updates</i>		X			X
<i>Conducting open meetings with public participation</i>			X		X
<i>Publishes an annual report</i>				X	X
<i>MOA with CPS agency</i>		X			
<u><i>Regular communication/meetings with the following:</i></u>					
<i>CPS agency</i>			X		X
<i>Parents of children being served by CPS agency</i>		X			
<i>Children being served by CPS agency</i>		X			
<i>CPS Partner agencies</i>		X			X
Structure and functioning					
<i>Operating guidelines/bylaws/policies are in place</i>			X		X
<i>Regular meetings are held</i>			X		X
<i>Diversity in panel membership is a goal</i>			X		X
<i>Annual workplan</i>			X		X
<i>Adequately autonomous</i>		X			X
<i>Active membership</i>			X		X

While it is widely recognized that CRPs serve an important function, panels across the nation seem to vary greatly on their perceptions of their central purpose. A framework to guide the panels in establishing their internal structure and functions, and their role and responsibilities was proposed very early in the history of the Conference. While many panels perform many of these functions, we did not have an opportunity to assess this for each panel. Table above provides a crude assessment of how Alaska’s panel compares to others.



Funding and membership structure vary.

Levels of annual funding for individual panels vary, and are a mixture of direct funding and staff time. Many panels are staffed by their state CPS personnel, while few other panels have no staff support. Some panels operate with little to no funding, severely affecting their abilities to perform any functions.

Panels across the nation struggle with recruitment and retention of members. Volunteer engagement and management is intensive work and requires dedicated staff time. It is one of the more challenging responsibilities of panel coordinators.

Need for self-evaluation

Alaska's CRP is well ahead on many components listed in the table above. However, the Panel's effectiveness was never evaluated. Gray colored boxes in the table above identify areas that the Panel currently recognizes as needing improvement. A more systematic evaluation of the Panel's work and its effectiveness is necessary.

Conclusion

Alaska's CRP is one of the most active panels in the nation. The Panel enjoys healthy independence and support from OCS, and has a constructive relationship with the legislature. While there are several areas for improvement, Alaska CRP has a lot to offer other CRPs. CRPs are relatively new and very little oversight is provided from any authority. While technical assistance is available from the Children's Bureau, it seems minimal. Essentially, CRPs are left to fend for themselves and the National Conference grew out of the need to fill this gap in oversight and assistance. Panels exchange important tools and techniques, challenges and opportunities, and latest developments in legislative and legal developments. It is important that Alaska CRP is represented at the national conference every year.

The little panel that could...

Among the best sessions at the conference was a presentation by South Carolina Citizen Review Panel on their work reviewing the case of a child fatality.

Reviewing CPS cases with fatalities or near fatalities is one of the suggested responsibilities of a CRP. South Carolina has three panels, but had not reviewed child fatality cases. Summer of 2012 was particularly hard in the state with several child deaths resulting from child abuse and neglect, several of them preventable. A particularly painful death of a four-year old boy who was returned to his father despite high concerns for the boy's safety made the news. The boy died of severe physical injuries. Before his death, the case bounced between the state CPS and a community non-profit agency that provided services to low-risk cases as part of the state's differential response system. The Panel's subcommittee conducted an extensive review of the entire case file, interviewed several staff and supervisors of various agencies involved in the case, reviewed the state's differential response system, and recommended several changes to practice.

The journey from never reviewing a case to thoroughly reviewing a very complex case and associated policies was very inspiring. The perseverance of the subcommittee members in getting the required case files and statistics is illustrative of the challenges CRPs face in establishing their legitimacy and purpose vis-à-vis the state's child protection system. Their pride in their success is reflected in the title of their presentation, "The Little Panel That Could..."



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Piecing Together Successful Citizen Review Panels*



DRAFT AGENDA

**2015 National Citizen Review Panel Conference
May 18-20, 2015**

Monday, May 18, 2015

11:30 am – 5:00 pm	Registration
1:00 pm – 1:30 pm	Welcome and Announcements The Honorable Thomas Balmer, Chief Justice, Oregon Supreme Court
1:30 pm – 3:00 pm	Taking ACES (Adverse Childhood Experiences Study) to Scale – A Move from Program Thinking to System Change Susan Dreyfus, President & CEO, Alliance for Strong Families and Communities
3:00 pm – 3:30 pm	Informal Networking
3:30 pm – 4:45 pm	Increasing Diversity in Public Processes Emmett Wheatfall, Diversity, Equity & Inclusion Director, Clackamas County Oregon
5:30 pm – 8:30 pm	Portland Spirit Dinner Cruise

Tuesday, May 19, 2015

7:30 am	Breakfast Buffet and Registration		
8:00 am – 8:15 am	Announcements		
8:15 am – 8:45 am	Welcome Lois Day, Child Welfare Director, Department of Human Services		
8:45 am – 10:00 am	Youth Panel Facilitated by Darin Mancuso, Foster Care Ombudsman, Governor’s Advocacy Office		
10:00 am – 10:30 am	Informal Networking		
	PEOPLE	PROGRAMS	PERFORMANCE
10:30 am – 11:45 am	Believing the Change is Always Possible – Parent Mentor Panel Facilitated by Ruth Taylor, Director, Parent Mentor Program, Morrison Child & Family Services	Trauma Informed Child Welfare Practices Mandy Davis, Senior Research Assistant, Portland State University	File Reviews, Surveys, and Focus Groups: How to Gather Information to Inform Your CRP Conor Wall, Data Analyst, Juvenile Court Improvement Program, Oregon Judicial Department.
11:45 am – 1:15 pm	Lunch & Plenary - Engaging the Courts in Child Welfare Efforts, The Honorable Nan Waller, Presiding Judge, Multnomah County Circuit Court		
1:30 pm – 2:45 pm	You Can't See What You Don't Know: Addressing the Revolving Door in Foster Homes when Children in Care have Developmental and Mental Health Needs Donnie Winokur, Executive Director, FASDempowered	Oregon's Trail to the Foster Children's Bill of Rights Darin Mancuso, Foster Care Ombudsman, Governor’s Advocacy Office	Using Concept Mapping as a Planning and Evaluation Tool for Citizen Review Panels J. Jay Miller, Chair Jefferson County CRP & Blake Jones, Program Coordinator, Kentucky CRP
2:45 pm – 3:15 pm	Informal Networking		
3:15 pm – 4:30 pm	Native American Culture and Historical Trauma Jillene Joseph, Executive Director, Native Wellness Institute	CRPs Working Toward More Timely Permanency for Children and Youth in Interstate Placements Pennsylvania Northeast CRP	It IS a Matter of Life and Death Child Fatality ACTION Subcommittee South Carolina
4:30 pm – 7:00 pm	Dinner Options Around Portland		

For more information, contact: Amy Church, amy.m.church@ojd.state.or.us or 503.986.4535

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DRAFT AGENDA

**2015 National Citizen Review Panel Conference
May 18-20, 2015**



Wednesday, May 20, 2015

7:30 am	Breakfast Buffet
8:00 am – 8:30 am	Welcome and Announcements
8:30 am – 9:15 am	Federal Updates Howard Davidson, Director, ABA Center for Children and the Law
9:15 am – 10:00 am	The Child and Family Services Review (CFSR) Process - How to Engage CRPs in CFSR efforts Tina Naugler, Child Welfare Program Manager, Children’s Bureau, Region 10
10:00 am – 10:15 am	Break
10:15 am – 11:30 am	World Cafe
11:30 am – 1:00 pm	Lunch & Plenary If Not You, Who? Never Settle - Never Stop! Nancy Miller Systems are institutions. People can become institutionalized. Have you? This presentation will challenge your assumptions and help you find ways to keep the passion alive, never settling for anything less than safety, permanency, and well-being for every child in foster care!
1:00 pm – 2:00 pm	Closing Plenary – Putting The Pieces Together Leola McKenzie, Director of Juvenile & Family Court Programs Division Oregon Judicial Department

Conference Scholarship Opportunity

The National Citizen Review Panel Advisory Board is pleased to offer a limited number of scholarships to attend the 2015 National Citizen Review Panel conference in Portland, Oregon, May 18-20, 2015.

Proceeds from the silent auction held at the previous conference are used to support these conference scholarships. The \$275.00 scholarship covers registration costs only. Applicants will be responsible for paying their own travel, hotel and meals (not provided at the conference).

You will be notified of the Advisory Board’s decision by March 6, 2015. If you are selected, a check for your registration fee will be sent directly to the organizers of the conference.

Scholarship Application Process:

Please email your request for scholarship consideration to Blake Jones via email (Bljone00@uky.edu). Include the following information:

1. Name
2. State you represent
3. Contact information (phone, email, address)
4. Citizen Review Panel you represent, and your role
5. Have you ever attended a National CRP conference and, if so, when?
6. How would attending this conference help you in your work as a CRP member or coordinator?

Scholarship Application Deadline: February 27, 2015

For more information, contact: Amy Church, amy.m.church@ojd.state.or.us or 503.986.4535