

Alaska Citizen Review Panel

2018 – 2019 WORKPLAN



The 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.

www.crpalaska.org

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ABOUT THE PANEL

CRP ANNUAL REPORT:

Alaska CRP's annual report is released on June 30th each year, and covers the Panel's activities through the period beginning July 1st of the previous year. The Office of Children's Services is required to respond to this report and its recommendations within six months of its release.

This report is distributed to all state legislators, Alaska's congressional delegation, the Children's Bureau, and the Alaska Department of Health and Social Services. It is also available for any interested party and the general public on the Panel's website at www.crpalaska.org.

CRP Coordinator
880 H Street, Suite 106
Anchorage, AK 99501
admin@crpalaska.org

AUTHORITY: The CRP is a federally mandated body that operates independently of the Office of Children's Services (OCS) with the primary purpose of reviewing the policies, procedures, and practices of OCS. (1996, 2003, and 2010 amendments to the Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (CAPTA))

FUNCTIONS OF THE PANEL: The primary purpose of Citizen Review Panels is to assist state and local child protection systems to improve services through evaluation, public outreach, and advocacy. In Alaska, the designated child protection agency is the Office of Children's Services (OCS). Therefore, the Alaska Panel:

- **Evaluates** the extent to which OCS is effectively discharging its child protection responsibilities under: CAPTA State Plan (42 U.S.C. 5106a(b)); and CFSP; Child Protection Standards under federal and state laws; and any other criteria that the CRP considers important to ensuring the protection of children.
- **Conducts public outreach** and gathers public comment on current OCS procedures and practices involving child protection services.
- **Advocates** for relevant actions that would help improve the child protection services system in Alaska.

STRUCTURE AND MEMBERSHIP: Membership on the Panel is voluntary, and expected to represent the diversity of the state. The Panel selects its own members through a formal recruitment process. While members are expected to serve for at least two years, there are no stipulated term limits. The Panel membership during 2017 – 2018 included:

JP Ouellette (Chair 2018-2019)

Bettyann Steciw

Donna Daniels

Dylan Conduzzi

Rebecca Vale

Wendy Barrett

Sonya Hull

Cameron Adams

Anchorage

Anchor Point

Anchorage

St. Paul Island

Anchorage

Anchorage

Wasilla

Anchorage

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Panel is grateful to the staff and leadership in the Office of Children's Services for their hard work and dedication to keeping Alaska's children safe. OCS staff and leadership were consistently available to the Panel throughout the year, and their cooperation is much appreciated. The Panel recognizes and appreciates their diligence as they continue to serve some of the most vulnerable children and families of Alaska. The Panel also thanks all the partner agencies and their staff, and looks forward to working with them during this next year. Denali Daniels and Associates (DDA) provides staff support under a contract with the State of Alaska

- **Acronyms**

APSR	Annual Progress and Services Report
ARO	Anchorage Regional Office
BIA	Bureau of Indian Affairs
CAPTA	Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act
CB	Children's Bureau
CFSP	Child and Family Services Plan
CFSR	Child and Family Services Review
CIP	Court Improvement Project
CJA	Children's Justice Act
CRM	Community Relations Manager
CPS	Child Protective Services
CRP	Citizen Review Panel
DHSS	Department of Health and Social Services
HSS	Health and Social Services
IA	Initial Assessment
ICWA	Indian Child Welfare Act
NRO	Northern Regional Office
OCS	Office of Children Services
SRO	Southeast Regional Office
TSCG	Tribal State Collaboration Group
UAA	University of Alaska Anchorage
WRO	Western Regional Office

INTRODUCTION

This document outlines the proposed work and annual calendar of the Alaska Citizen Review Panel for the year 2018-2019. During the course of its work, the Panel often identifies specific practices, procedures, or policies for deeper examination at a later time.

A list of these has been maintained over the years and serves as a primary source of focus areas for the Panel's work. A set of 4-6 goals are identified each year which either address one or more policies, procedures, and practices of the state's child protection agency in Alaska, or are focused on the internal functions of the Panel.

The Panel held a meeting August 25th, 2018 in Anchorage Alaska to discuss the goals and focus areas for the upcoming year. Leadership from the Office of Children's Services were invited to discuss the workplan and calendar with the Panel, and the goals outlined in this document reflect the outcome of these and other discussions. This document consists of three main sections: goals, other major work, and calendar.

- **Goals:** Each goal may start out being broad, vague or containing multiple sub goals. Each goal will be further specified and may be narrowed or broadened through the year. In addition, goals from the previous year may continue to be relevant or may not have been fully addressed. All potential goals are discussed by the Panel before adopting goals for the year.
- **Other major work:** The Panel also continually reviews available data and information on several other components of OCS' work, and addresses selected issues of importance that may surface during the course of the year. Each year's annual report provides specific content on these issues. The Panel also holds meetings to collect public input, maintains and manages an active website, and presents at various venues to increase public awareness about the Panel's work and functions.
- **Calendar:** The Panel meets quarterly, as required by the mandate. In addition, the Panel meets with OCS senior leadership each month, conducts site visits, presents to the legislature, and attends the national CRP conference. Some of the dates identified in the calendar are tentative when this document was approved.

GOALS

GOALS FOR THE YEAR 2017-2018

- GOAL 1: Assess Family Reunification Efforts & Best Practices
- GOAL 2: Evaluate OCS Staff Wellness Efforts and Community Engagement
- GOAL 3: Region-Specific/Culturally-Appropriate Training for OCS Staff
- GOAL 4: Awareness of Tribal-State Strategic Plan
- GOAL 5: Coordinate Panel Activities & Improve Panel Participation

GOAL 1: Assess Family Reunification Efforts & Best Practices

The panel would like to continue an examination of OCS' efforts in promoting family reunification as a goal for children in OCS' custody. Site visits from last year had indicated that current rates of family reunification are low at many OCS sites in Alaska, thus the panel had decided to continue investigating factors that play into reunification success.

- In collaboration with regional and statewide leadership at OCS, the panel will hold pre-site visit briefings before each visit; these briefings will review the facts and figures for the region as well as any other relevant data or information.
- This year site visits should investigate the primary barriers in family reunification and identify available resources that could be leveraged to increase success.
- Have there been improvements in reunification rates? What are the rates of reunification over time?
- Where is reunification succeeding (regions and offices)? Why do these locations have better rates of reunification?
- What specific policies, procedures, and practices help or hinder reunification?

GOAL 2 - Evaluate OCS Staff Wellness Efforts and Community Engagement

Site visits from 2017 - 2018 revealed significant OCS employee burnout and a need to evaluate the available resources and assess employee awareness of those resources for self-care and staff sustainability. In addition, past site visits have shown that the most successful OCS – community relationships involve OCS employees who are personally engaged and invested in the community and have developed support systems. For this goal, the Panel will:

- Collaborate with OCS to determine success of both wellness and community connection efforts; look at employee awareness of resources, assess availability and relevance of current efforts and resources, especially in rural communities.
- Investigate how OCS can foster those successful relationships and employee experiences. Look at barriers to relationship-building with community.

GOAL 3 - Region-Specific/Culturally-Appropriate Training for OCS Staff:

During Site visits conducted in rural Alaska, the Panel members discussed with stakeholders, both internal and external, the training that the OCS staff and caseworkers in the community received. The CRP wants to further evaluate the effectiveness of the current training as well as find ways to better integrate cultural elements and facilitate community and tribal participation in trainings and workshops.

- Examine and evaluate current training for OCS staff; focus on rural locations & indigenous communities. What is working and where are they coordinating? What can the panel see that is lacking or missing from training?
- Are there resources in the community that aren't currently being utilized? CRP would like to make concrete recommendations and facilitate connections between regional OCS staff and local organizations.
- Can there be better integration, communication, and participation with tribes in communities? What actions can be taken to move this goal forward?

GOAL 4 - Awareness of Tribal-State Strategic Plan:

The CRP would like to collaborate better with OCS on initiatives outlined in the Tribal-State Strategic Plan. The CRP discussed the lack of knowledge of the Plan in the communities they visited, and wants to play a more active role in both educating and assessing awareness in members of the community.

- Dedicate time to educating panel members themselves about Tribal-State Strategic Plan and Compacting Agreement. Ask OCS for an overview or briefing for Panelists.
- Participate in relevant working groups, provide updates to other panel members during quarterly and annual meetings. Coordinator will send out information on meetings and subject matter.
- Assess awareness and accuracy of knowledge during site visits, both with local OCS staff and stakeholders.
- What role can CRP play in raising awareness?
- Plan to finish each visit by bringing all interview participants together as a means of distributing information and bridging local connections; also raising awareness of Plan and Compact.

GOAL 5 - Coordinate Panel Activities & Improve Panel Participation:

- **Policies and Procedures** - Update "operating guidelines" and work with OCS on new regulations for CRP.
- **Panel Participation** - Assess panel participation; ways to encourage engagement and improve attendance at panel meetings & other activities.
- **Website** – The CRP Coordinator will continue improvements and regular maintenance of the CRP website, and will distribute the link to panel members on a regular basis. Materials will continue to be posted in a timely manner.
- **Strategic Plan & Legislative 101 Training** - Coordinator will help plan and facilitate legislative 101 training session in January 2019 and a strategic planning session during the next annual meeting in June 2019.

OTHER IMPORTANT WORK

• Data Review and Pre-Site Visit Briefings

The Panel identified the following indicators that are useful in understanding OCS' operation, and helpful in contextualizing the panel's findings. These will be reviewed with OCS prior to each site visit, and will provide background for each region.

1. *Performance of each OCS field office of Quality Assurance (QA) reviews:* CRP collects data from each QA review through the year, and compiles a database to assess relative strengths and challenges of various field and regional offices. This has been very helpful in choosing locations for panel's site visits, and quickly identify the systemic challenges of each field and regional office.
2. *Quarterly data on vacancy and turnover:* The panel will look at this data, specifically among frontline Protective Services Specialists positions. Turnover among these positions has consistently been close to 35% over the last fifteen years. Many other challenges faced by OCS are directly related to this. This data allows the panel to better understand the factors enabling such high turnover.

• Outreach

The panel will continue to present its work to relevant audiences, and will also look to represent the CRP at conferences and workshops. Below are organizations and agencies that we regularly engage with and will continue to pursue:

- Maternal and Child Death Review Summit
- Committees on Health and Social Services in the Alaska House and Alaska Senate
- Advisory Board of the Alaska Center for Resource Families
- Alaska Court Improvement Project
- BIA Providers Conference
- Alaska's Children's Justice Act Task Force
- The National CRP Network

• Community Meetings

The panel also plans to conduct a series of town hall meetings and/or Talking Circles with participants as part of its site visits to the five OCS regions this year. In addition, the panel will be available to any group of stakeholders or individuals for presentations. Much of the information about the panel, and all its published documents, are available on the panel's website.

CALENDAR

2018 - 2019 PANEL EVENTS

***APPENDIX 1 is a comprehensive calendar with all panel events listed

- **Annual Meeting, Workplan Retreat & Quarterly Panel Meetings**

- Each year the Panel will have an Annual Meeting, which is typically held in Anchorage during the first week of June. The Annual Meeting is also considered to be the Quarterly Meeting for the last quarter of the fiscal year.
- Panel members have requested that the Coordinator facilitate a strategic planning session, which would extend the annual meeting to two days instead of one.
- The Panel will hold a Workplan Retreat during the last week of August, also usually held in Anchorage, but subject to change upon Panel request. The Workplan Retreat is separate from the Quarterly Panel Meetings.
- The Panel will meet for 90 minutes on the last Tuesday of the designated month for Quarterly Panel Meetings (by teleconference) unless otherwise noted.
- A public notice of the panel's meeting, along with the agenda and related materials will be posted on the CRP website ahead of the meeting.
- A meeting announcement and draft agenda will be sent out to participants a week before the meetings.
- While these meetings are public, they are business meetings, with opportunity for the public to witness the work of the panel.
- All meeting dates in the table below are tentative, subject to change due to scheduling conflicts.

Quarter	Date	Time
1	Tuesday September 25, 2018	12:00 – 1:30 pm
2	Tuesday December 11, 2018**	12:00 – 1:30 pm
3	Tuesday March 26, 2019	12:00 – 1:30 pm
Annual Meeting	Saturday – Sunday March 1&2, 2019	12:00 – 1:30 pm

*** The last Tuesday of the month for this quarter is December 25th. The OCS/CRP teleconference is on December 18. So this Quarterly Meeting is scheduled for Tuesday December 11.*

- **Site Visits and Pre-Site Visit Briefings**

- The panel intends to complete five site visits this year, one in each of the five OCS regions. We plan to conduct one each during the months of October 2018 through April 2019.
- Panelists will travel Wednesday through Friday, spending 2-3 days on each visit.
- Prior to panelists leaving, they will be provided with pre-site visit information packets from the Coordinator.
- The traveling members will also meet with regional and statewide OCS leadership in-person or by phone for a briefing to review the regional data, provide context, and discuss other relevant information. These will be arranged on the Monday or Tuesday before panelists travel.

Below are the proposed site visit locations and dates:

REGION	LOCATION	DATE
Anchorage Region	Anchorage	November 8 -9, 2018
Southcentral Region	Wasilla/Palmer	January 17-18, 2019
Southeast Region Legislative Visit	Juneau & Sitka	February 2019 , TBD
Western Region	Bethel & Aniak	March 6-8, 2019
Northern Region	Utqiaġvik	April 10-13, 2019

- **Meetings with OCS senior leadership**

- The panel meets with OCS senior leadership every month during the panel's work year (August through June).
- Teleconferences are held on the third Tuesday of each month, an agenda will be sent out for comments or additions a week before the call, and a final agenda the day of the call.
- These meetings are not open to public. The purpose of these meetings is to continue to discuss important matters as they relate to the current challenges and opportunities facing OCS, the panel's progress on its work plan goals, and other matters as necessary.

ACTIVITY	DATE	TIME
OCS/CRP Monthly Teleconference	Tuesday September 18, 2018	12:00 – 1:00 PM
	Tuesday October 16, 2018	12:00 – 1:00 PM
	Tuesday November 20, 2018	12:00 – 1:00 PM
	Tuesday December 18, 2018	12:00 – 1:00 PM
	Tuesday January 15, 2019	12:00 – 1:00 PM
	Tuesday February 19, 2019	12:00 – 1:00 PM
	Tuesday March 19, 2019	12:00 – 1:00 PM
	Tuesday April 16, 2019	12:00 – 1:00 PM
	Tuesday May 21, 2019	12:00 – 1:00 PM
	Tuesday June 18, 2019	12:00 – 1:00 PM

- **National CRP Conference**

- The 2019 National CRP Conference is scheduled for May 15-17, 2018, in Detroit, MI. Two individuals will be representing Alaska's panel at the national conference.

STAFF SUPPORT: Denali Daniels & Associates (DDA) provides staff support under a contract with the Office of Children's Services. The CRP Coordinator can be contacted at:

Alaska CRP Coordinator
880 H Street, Suite 106
Anchorage, AK 99501
Email: admin@crpalaska.org

