



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, February 3, 2015

Noon to 1:00 p.m.

Teleconference

Call to order: Diwakar welcomed everyone and explained that the Panel decided that the meetings should be public. This is the second meeting open to the public, but the first time members of the public are attending the meeting. Diwakar requested patience as the Panel works out the details on how best to incorporate public input into their working meeting. Minutes will be summarized and posted online after CRP approval at the following meeting. Some listeners identified themselves at this time: John Michael Durham, Theresa from Tammy Wilson's office, Carolyn Clift, Eva Kowalski, Christy from Big Lake. Several others joined in at various times and did not identify themselves.

Panel Members present: Diwakar Vadapalli, Donna Aguiniga, Jennifer Burkmire, Bettyann Sticew

- 1) **Public comment period:** People from the public were asked to limit their comments to 2 minutes to give more people a chance to comment.

Comment: John Durham, Fairbanks, asked if the CRP has ever inquired on the percentage ratio that OCS presents on their cases where families are reunified with their children.

Diwakar's response: Short answer is not specifically. The long answer is that we look at various components and issues. We are starting to dig into data and percentages. Eventually we will gain a more comprehensive picture. It is on the radar.

Comment: John Durham: Could you clarify if noncertified social workers are getting paid the same as certified social workers?

Diwakar's response: OCS looked at pay scales and some modifications and largely happy with what they did. Contact OCS to see exactly what was done.

Comment: Kelly, Alaska, is a grandmother of 2 children in OCS custody, wondered if Title 4 funding that goes to OCS includes healthy families reunify; like ICWA.

Diwakar's response: The purpose of the Citizen's Review Panel in looking at systems changes and not individual situations.

BettyAnn gave her perspective in working with a tribe and serves as a panel member: "For us to actually to draw up our individual program within our tribe, we identify what it will look like so it is on an individual basis. You can go to your tribal ICWA person or title services person and see if you can get more info in that fashion. "

Comment: Christy from Big Lake asked about the purpose for having this open public teleconference.

Diwakar's response: CRP is a voluntary panel of citizens mandated by federal statutes to review child protective system in the state, which is OCS in Alaska. The Panel mandate is to look at systemic issues, not individual cases. Both issues raised on this call are valid and individual. Purpose of the monthly teleconferences are to do business as a panel, and continue working on efforts to produce an annual report. The panel meets for an hour every month, which is more than is mandated. The meetings are open to the public because state statute requires. Legally all meetings should be open to the public unless there is confidential info being discussed. In that case we would go into executive session. And then reopen to the public. Since the Citizens Review Panel has not done this in the past, and this is new, we are figuring out to best handle this and appreciate everyone's patience. The timeline may be very different than other processes. Looking at systemic issues takes a year or two at a minimum to get addressed.

Comment: Carolyn Clift commented that the question regarding reunification with families is a huge problem, and CRP would be wise to delve into this at the next meeting. She asked if CRP is aware OCS is allowed to can go into hospitals without a warrant and take newborn babies from their parents without a warrant.

Diwakar's response: Panel members cannot know everything individually. This has not come upon our radar that I know of. Everyone listening on this call is encouraged to use the confidential public comment section of the website found at CRPALaska.org

Approve previous meeting minutes

- December 2 CRP minutes
- January 6th CRP minutes

Minutes approved, with the need to correct Donna's last name in the December minutes.

A grandmother from North Pole tried to ask a question after the public comment period ended and was directed to the website.

Southeast site visit debriefing

The summary report will be out any time now. (Explanation to the public who were on the call: The CRP does 2 or 3 site visits every year and submits a trip report. The CRP has not made trip reports public so far, but will be from now on. CRP also needs to make sure we are not revealing anything confidential. CRP meets with local OCS in various regions of the state, partners and see what is happening and how it is happening and if they are working with them.) Next step is to meet with senior management to see what we found.

Comments: Jen thanked everyone for putting the report together. Diwakar clarified that thank you notes have always been sent for every site visit. From now on, the CRP will personalize them and include their card.

BIA survey findings

Explanation for the public on the call: The Panel presented to a session BIA social services leadership session for ICWA staff and admin throughout the state. Panel presented about the panel's works and also did a survey and produced a survey report from that data.

OCS and BIA Division Directors reviewed the draft, commented and their comments were incorporated. Final report is ready to be released.

Work Plan goals and status, latest Institutional Performance numbers

Table this until Panel receives update from Information Insights.

Updates from the Chair on meetings with OCS on 1/15/2015 Legislative debriefing (dates, content, presentation, coordination with OCS, etc.)

Discussion: Diwakar made a one hour presentation at the senior leadership summit for OCS in Anchorage. Members from around the state including every division you can think of within OCS. About 140 people. Diwakar's presentation explained CRP's role, annual work plan, reason for existence and how OCS can contribute to CRP work. The presentation was well received, and evident on the recent trip, where people understood what CRP does. The CRP would like to present at future opportunities of OCS leadership meetings.

Diwakar met with the OCS Executive Director regarding how CRP works with OCS and our relationship. We have a very constructive relationship and expressed interest in our mutual success.

There is a new policy change in how OCS intake workers make substantiation decisions that have implications of their workload and cases in family services. The primary reason is to make sure they are complying with Alaska state statute in substantiating potential of harm and risk of harm in a consistent manner throughout the state. Diwakar recommended OCS create an evaluation plan for this change in policy. Public participants who asked for more information were directed to the OCS manual online. BettyAnn asked if OCS requested comments from the public or tribes when working on the new policy. Articles were submitted internally in an OCS publication and among state administrators, but Diwakar did not know if there was a public comment period. The policy was based on a model used elsewhere, including air force bases.

Members of the public asked who oversees when OCS misuses their power to get a child, and if there are audits. Diwakar explained that the best resources for individual situations are using the OCS number and the OCS grievance procedure. If all else fails, go to your legislator. There are review processes in place for OCS that may have different names but are part of the checks and balances.

Public members wanted to inform the CRP of situations where they believed OCS misused power or lied in their reporting, or how one concern called in grew to multiple concerns once the staff from OCS began their investigation.

Diwakar acknowledged that there are many hard situations out there, but the Citizen Review Panel (CRP) is not the forum for dealing with individual cases. CRP looks at the system and how the system can be improved, and change can take a year or two. CRP is set up to bridge the gap between the community or public and OCS. Individuals who want to comment and did not have a chance on this call are encouraged to email their comments via the comment section of the CRP website at crpalaska.org and offer suggestions regarding system issues. Diwakar clarified that members of the CRP are volunteers who serve on the panel. They do not get paid for their time. Expenses are covered as well as organizational support through a contract with Information Insights. CRP does not work for OCS but works in collaboration with OCS. Past annual reports available on the OCS website or CRP website may help the public better understand the scope and role of the CRP. More effort is being made to inform the public of the work of the CRP. The CRP Annual Report comes out in June and OCS has until the end of December to respond.

The CRP will finalize retreat dates after Sylvan uses a Doodle poll. The tentative plan is to meet around the Anchorage area, possibly the same place as in the past, and on a weekend.

Next meeting dates

- Friday, February 6, noon to 1:30 p.m. monthly meeting with OCS leadership
- Tuesday, March 3, noon to 1 p.m. monthly meeting (Agenda will be posted on the CRP website in advance of the teleconference. Meeting minutes are posted after they are approved at the following meeting.)